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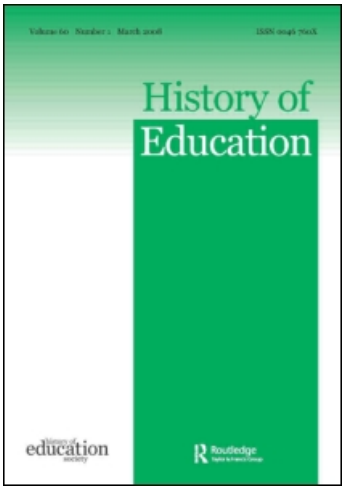

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Classrooms as installations: a conceptual framework for analysing classroom photographs from the past

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SOURCES AND INTERPRETATIONS

Classrooms as installations: a conceptual framework for analysing classroom photographs from the past

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This paper suggests a new way of working with and analysing school photographs in history of education research, especially photographs of school classrooms. It advances a new methodological approach for inquiring into the spatiality and materiality of schooling. This approach is located in the practice of installation art and draws from the theory of relational aesthetics and postproduction. As demonstrated in the paper, thinking about school spaces and places as installations, and place-making practices as a form of installation making, presents opportunities for posing new and different types of research questions. It also provides opportunities for generating new inquiry and representational practices in educational research. Conceptualising school spaces and places as installations that demand spectator participation to function as intended requires educational researchers to think critically about the spatial dimensions of educational experiences and the experiences of place in educational contexts.

Keywords: research methodology; classroom photographs; installation art; relational aesthetics; visual history

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Introduction

In this paper, I present a series of ideas that suggest new ways of working with and analysing school photographs in history of education research. This paper contributes to previous work done by education historians who have attended to photographs as historical documents and data rich with interpretive possibilities.[1] Conceptually, it resides in the ever-growing scholarship in the history of education that focuses on the meaning and culture of classrooms.[2] Informed by installation art practice, the theory of relational aesthetics[3] and postproduction,[4] and influenced by the recent 'turn to things' in the history of education,[5] the ideas I present in this paper identify ways of addressing the spatiality, visuality and materiality of classrooms of the past in new ways. An encounter with an art installation at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada in the summer of 2009, at a time when I was analysing a collection of historical photographs of secondary school art rooms of private boys' schools in Canada, prompted me to ask the following question: If researchers were to consider classrooms as installations, what types of understanding about classrooms and classroom life might emerge? The more I reflected on the question, the more it made sense to me as a productive framework for enquiry and analysis, and is, therefore, instructive to my

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thinking in this paper. As Claire Bishop observed, 'installation art plays on an ambiguity between two types of subject: the *literal* viewer who steps into the work, and an abstract, philosophical model of the subject that is postulated by the way in which the work structures the encounter'.[6] Classrooms, too, play on this very same ambiguity and duality. These spaces, entered and inhabited by students and teachers, are structured in accordance with a set of particular ideas about what constitutes teaching, learning, and the teacher and the learner. The layout, design, and associated disciplinary and spatial practices of this space, to a large degree, determine in advance the types of engagement students will have here. In other words, similar to art installations, classrooms are immersive spaces to be entered into, but are constructed with a particular purpose in mind; they are to be experienced in particular ways. What types of questions might emerge if we, as researchers, were to approach classroom photographs as photographs of installations? To apply Nicholas Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics to that analysis complicates it further, but it focuses attention on the inter-human exchanges that are promoted and advanced in this space.

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Installation art

Before I present the series of ideas mentioned above, articulating them in and through an analysis of the installation that I encounter at the Vancouver Art Gallery, I think it is important to define what I mean by installation art. As a relatively new term, installation art is used to describe artworks that are produced at the exhibition site; that are usually dependent on the configurations of that space; and that require viewers to

[1]P. Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001); P. Devlieger, I.D. Grosvenor, F. Simon, et al., 'Visualising Disability in the Past', *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 44, no. 6 (2008): 747–60; I.D. Grosvenor, 'Geographies of Risk: An Exploration of City Childhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education*, 45, no. 1 (2007): 215–33; I.D. Grosvenor, 'From the "Eye of History" to "a Second Gaze": The Visual Archive and the Marginalized in the History of Education', *History of Education* 36, nos 4&5, (2007): 607–22; I.D. Grosvenor and C. Burke, 'The Progressive Image in the History of Education: Stories of Two Schools', *Visual Studies* 22, no. 2, (2007): 155–68; 'The Challenge of the Visual in the History of Education.' *Paedagogica Historica* 36, no. 1 (2000); 'Ways of Seeing', *History of Education* 30, no. 2 (2001); 'Imaging Past Schooling: The Necessity of Montage', *Review of Education/ Pedagogy/Cultural Studies* (Winter 2000); E. Margolis, 'Class Pictures: Representations of Race, Gender and Ability in a Century of School Photography', *Visual Sociology* 14 (1999): 7–38; E. Margolis and S. Fram, 'Caught Napping: Centuries of School Surveillance, Discipline, and Punishment', *History of Education* 36, no. 2 (2007): 191–212; K. Myers, U. Mietzner and N. Peim, *Visual History* (London: Peter Lang, 2005); U. Ni Bhroiméil and D. O'Donoghue. 'Doing Gender History Visually', in *Gender and Power in Irish History*, ed. M. Valiulis (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008): 159–82. K. Rousmaniere 'Questioning the Visual in the History Of Education', *History of Education* 30, no. 2 (2001): 109–16.

[2]I.D. Grosvenor, M. Lawn, and K. Rousmaniere, eds, *Silences and Images: The Social History of the Classroom* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

[3]N. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les Presses du Réel, 2002).

[4]N. Bourriaud, *Postproduction* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005).

[5]M. Lawn and I.D. Grosvenor, eds, *Materialities of Schooling. Design–Technology–Objects–Routines* (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2005); C. Burke, 'Light: Metaphor and Materiality in the History of Schooling', in *Materialities of Schooling. Design–Technology–Objects–Routines*, ed. M. Lawn and I.D. Grosvenor (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2005), 129–33.

[6]C. Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 130.

physically enter into the work and experience it in place.[7] Installation art emerged in the 1960s and came into prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. As an art form, it draws from several disciplines including architecture, cinema, performance art, sculpture, theatre and set design. While difficult to present an all-inclusive definition of this art form, installation art has a number of specific qualities. First, installation art is both an art form and a mode of artistic practice. Second, first-person experience of the artwork is one of its core and defining features. As Bishop explained, 'Installation art differs from traditional media (sculpture, painting, photography, video) in that it addresses the viewer directly as a literal presence in the space',[8] and this, she argued, is a key defining characteristic of this art form. Third, installation art requires active spectatorship, which might be more meaningfully understood as participatory engagement. The nature of this participatory engagement is not just visual or sight orientated, but draws from several of the senses – touch, smell, taste, hearing, and so on. Julie Reiss emphasises the 'desire [of the art installation] to shake the spectator out of a passive, spongelike state and instead have a self-determined, active experience'.[9] Fourth, the spectator is considered to be an integral part of the production of the work. As Reiss observed, 'there is always a reciprocal relationship of some kind between the viewer and the work, the work and the space, and the space and the viewer'.[10] Fifth, art installations tend to present rather than represent, which not only exposes viewers to a different mode of receptivity, but also emphasises sensory immediacy.[11] Usually, installations are one-off pieces that are not reconstructed or restaged again. They are usually dismantled and destroyed when the period of exhibition expires. Traditionally, installation artworks were made and presented in alternative spaces, outside the gallery and museum system, but recently we have witnessed a 'gradual assimilation [of installation art] into mainstream museums and galleries' with the result that installation art occupies a central position in the art world of today.[12]

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Reece Terris: Ought Apartment

The art installation I encountered at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada in the summer of 2009 was Reece Terris' *Ought Apartment*. Commissioned by the Vancouver Art Gallery and installed in its neoclassical rotunda, Terris' 60-foot-high six-storey structure resembled a high-rise residential apartment block, with six individual fully furnished living spaces stacked one on top of the other. Starting at ground level, the first apartment reflected the ground plan of the 'typical' 1950s home in Western Canada. The decades from the 1960s to the present were represented chronologically in the remaining five floors. Each apartment comprised a full-sized kitchen and dining area, a living room and a bathroom. None of the apartments had a bedroom. All apartments were constructed using authentic building styles, and materials, fixtures, appliances and furniture from their respective periods. In the typical style of installation art, viewers could enter into two of the six apartments: the 1950s and

[7]Julie H. Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); Bishop, *Installation Art*.
[8]Bishop, *Installation Art*, 6.
[9]Reiss, *From Margin to Center*, xxiv.
[10]Ibid., xiii.
[11]Bishop, *Installation Art*.
[12]Reiss, *From Margin to Center*, xv.

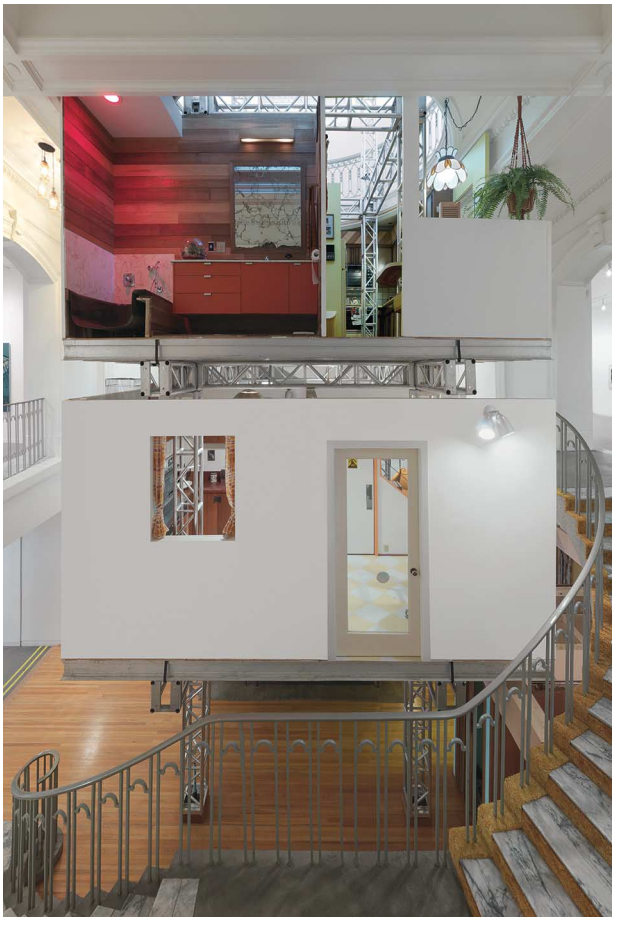

Figure 1. *Reece Terris*: *Ought Apartment*, exhibit at the Vancouver Art Gallery, May 6 to September 20, 2009. Photo: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery. Courtesy of the Artist.

1980s apartments. Inside, viewers could freely interact with the objects of the installation. They could sit on the couch or at the kitchen table; viewers could open kitchen cabinets, place logs on the unlit fire, switch on or off the reading lamps, read the books lying around on the coffee tables, sit in front of the TV, and so on and so forth. From the stairs, escalators and upper-storey foyers of the gallery, visitors could peer into the 1960s, 1970s, 1990s and 2000s interiors through cutaway walls and ceilings. For four weeks prior to May 6th 2009, when the installation first opened to the public, Terris and his seven assistants built the installation on site using objects and materials that Terris had gathered over several years as a general contractor specialising in residential renovations. In the process of making *Ought Apartment*, Terris assembled many objects and created a collection of actual spaces that never existed, rather, the spaces that he created were imagined and recalled spaces from a time past. The artist explained, 'these created spaces stand-in for what people have created on their own'. But, no one space is a precise reconstruction of a space that once existed in the period it represents. He elaborated, noting that the creation of *Ought Apartment* 'was a real

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Figure 2. *Reece Terris*: *Ought Apartment*, exhibit at the Vancouver Art Gallery, May 6 to September 20, 2009. Photo: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery. Courtesy of the Artist.

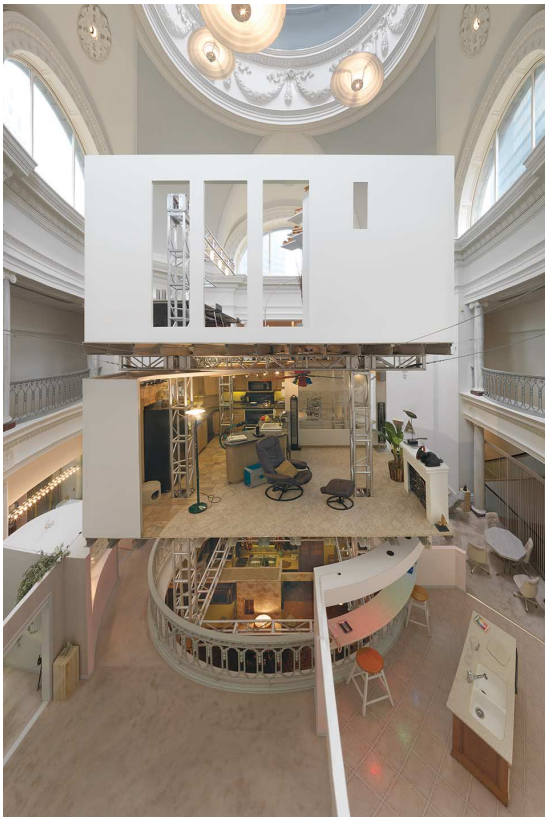

Figure 3. *Reece Terris*: *Ought Apartment*, exhibit at the Vancouver Art Gallery, May 6 to September 20, 2009. Photo: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery. Courtesy of the Artist.

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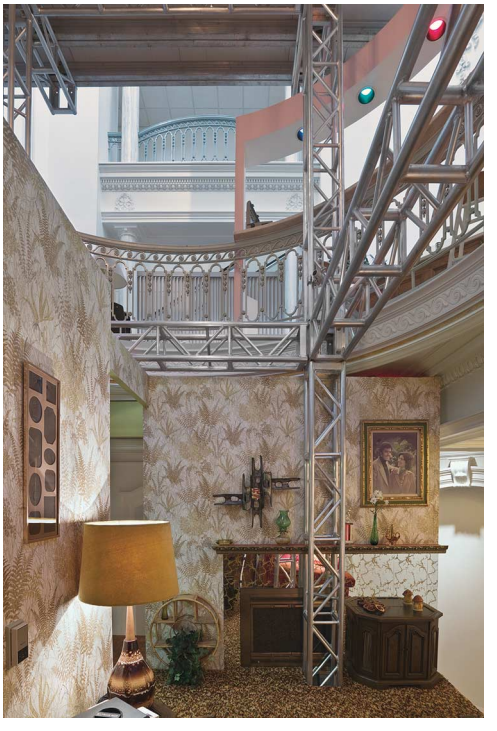

Figure 4. *Reece Terris: Ought Apartment*, exhibit at the Vancouver Art Gallery, May 6 to September 20, 2009. Photo: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery. Courtesy of the Artist.

process of subtraction. I always started by overdressing each decade and I eventually removed everything that I felt was extraneous to the commentary.'[13]

The objects that Terris worked with and used in this installation were of multiple provenances. Many were objects of another time and evidence of practices of living differently in and across time. In *Ought Apartment*, these objects became Terris' mode of art making. Coming together for the very first time in this installation, each object (whether it was a bottle of Woodward's Fish Sauce, a viridian-coloured plastic butter-dish, a collection of recipe books, or a Fleetwood television set), individually and collectively, invited viewers to consider how they learn about and live in the worlds in which they participate. Terris explained that it was his intention to provoke 'personal memory and dialogue through a careful arrangement of specific objects'.[14] And, this goal was achieved, as the comments of many of the viewers would suggest. For example, Grant Arnold, the Vancouver Art Gallery's Audain Curator of British Columbia Art, observed:

> When you look at the domestic spaces, you have a sense about how they imply something about who lives in them…. If you look at the bottom one, from the '50s, compared with the top one, which is from the current decade, the '50s [set] is more modest, which implies the potential for a one-income household or family unit. None of the material in it is super-expensive. Whereas if you look at the kitchen appliances on the top floor,

[13]Personal correspondence with the artist, Reece Terris, February 15, 2010.
[14]Ibid.

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> those are fairly upscale … and they suggest a certain level of income on the part of the people who live there.[15]

Arnold's observations echo Kannike's idea that 'things and their users are active culture-creating factors'.[16] Choi, Howard and Dave, in their paper 'The secret life of the domestic object', provided an example of this. They stated:

> For example the introduction of the VCR enabled users to rearrange or change radically their routine activities at home – to stretch and distort time. Secondly, highly personal domestic objects may have a multi-dimensional relationship with their owners, and perform 'multiple functions', functions that grow from the user's experience and extend the object beyond its original given roles.[17]

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Objects always signal something beyond themselves

In conceptualising and building the installation, Terris paid attention to the material qualities of objects; the relations between objects; the stories and histories that objects hold; the types of interaction they call forth; and the forms of remembering and retelling they invite. In doing this, Terris created a space for viewers to engage with the narrative potential of objects in and out of place. As a result, much like classroom objects, all objects in *Ought Apartment* served a function; they all contributed in different ways to the narratives that invited viewers to reflect, engage, and interact with the work, and to move through the installation. Individually and collectively, in their various configurations, these objects invited viewers to wonder, to make connections, and to understand that which they encountered and made sense of through their own evaluative and meaning-making frameworks. And yet, the artwork is greater than the sum of the objects contained therein; similar in many respects to the classroom, which is always more than the sum of the objects contained within it, as the pioneering work of Philip Jackson in the late 1960s showed.[18] The form of Terris' installation cannot be reduced entirely to what he produces and presents at the Vancouver Art Gallery, for, as Bourriaud reminds us, 'form only exists in the encounter and in the dynamic relationship enjoyed by an artistic proposition with other formations, artistic or otherwise'.[19] Coming to an understanding of the work is dependent on factors outside the work itself, such as viewers' ability to decode the work, and place it within larger practices of representation. That being said, objects nonetheless play a significant role in how meaning is made in the work, and because of the work.[20] Moreover, Terris' installation promotes the idea that objects always signal something beyond themselves. This is an idea that the late Irish writer Nuala O Faolain took up in a radio interview six weeks before she died. Asked by Marian

[15]Robin Laurence 'Reece Terris Renovates the Art World', http://www.straight.com/article-216491/renovating-art-world (accessed October 20, 2009).
[16]Anu Kannike, 'Rahvakunstist Esemeuurimuse Ttaustal. Summary: Folk Art and the Study of Material Objects', *Eesti Rahva Muuseumi Aastaraamat* XLI, Tartu (1996), 108.
[17]Youngmi Choi, Steve Howard and Bharat Dave, 'The Secret Life of Domestic Objects', in *Proceedings of the 17th Australia Conference on Computer-Human Interaction: Citizens online: Considerations for Today and the Future* (Narrabundah, Australia: Computer-Human Interaction Special Interest Group, 2005), 1–5.
[18]Philip Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968).
[19]Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 21.
[20]Ibid.

Finucane, the programme presenter, why she had travelled back to New York during the same week she had flown to Paris from Ireland, while suffering from a terminal illness, O Faolain replied:

> I am trying to say goodbye, I had to say goodbye to my room [her apartment in Manhattan] except it absolutely broke my heart. If you look round any room of your own, you remember buying those good pillow cases and you remember buying that series of books … and I had beautiful yellow silk curtains that I spent $1000 on, and you're thinking look at all the stuff I have acquired, just to leave it.[21]

Terris' attention to objects as informants, always signalling something beyond themselves, is instructive for historians of education. It encourages historians to ask: What histories of classrooms can researchers write by attending to classroom objects, and by focusing on the communicative potential of these objects in relation to each other, to their configurations in place, and to the nature of the relationships they generate between teacher and learner, and learner and learner? By studying classrooms of the past through an analysis of their objects, what new understandings of present-day classrooms might be gleaned? Building upon and expanding the exceedingly important research into the materialities of schooling that has been conducted to date in the history of education,[22] Terris' installation invites researchers to consider not only the meanings that were assigned to classroom objects, but also the types of interactions and engagements that these objects invited, promoted, generated or denied in the past. Inquiring into the relationships produced between objects of play, objects of pedagogy, objects of discipline, objects of learning, and focusing on how they have come to be defined as such, is important work to do in the history of education. Terris' installation offers researchers ways of doing this work. The installation demonstrates that objects too have practices that stem from, or reside in, the way they have been used. Morever, *Ought Apartment* encourages us to consider the following questions: what types of objects have been identified as pedagogical objects; who has deemed them as such; what position do they take up in the classroom; in what ways have they been taken up and used in and over time? And, how, and in what ways did these objects shift or shape the nature of teaching and learning?

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Where meaning resides in the study of objects

As demonstrated in *Ought Apartment*, meaning resides not only in the material qualities and function of objects, but also in the ways in which they are taken up, used and understood by their users, as well as by those who will come upon them later in a different context, as was the case in *Ought Apartment*. Meaning is also inextricably bound up in what objects suggest about practices of living. Moreover, as demonstrated in *Ought Apartment*, meaning is made in the act of encounter (which is itself a creative act) and it is carried in individual objects as well as in their collective identity. In the time that I spent in the installation, I observed viewers make meaning individually and collectively. In some instances, the installation simply provoked an act of remembering – remembering a childhood home, a first apartment, a family home, a home of a relative and so on. For some, this also involved sharing that remembrance with fellow

[21]N. O'Faolain, 'Interview with Marion Finucane', *Raidio Telefis Éireann*, April 12, 2008.
[22]See for example, Lawn and Grosvenor, eds, *Materialities of Schooling. Design–Technology–Objects–Routines*.

visitors. In other instances, it was the first time that certain objects from the past were seen. For example, I observed a mother demonstrating to her two young sons how the old-fashioned rotary dial telephone was used, which suggested to me that *Ought Apartment* served as a site of pedagogy as much as it served as a site of memory. To those not familiar with the sorts of interiors that Terris constructs, *Ought Apartment* invited questions of the objects similar to those one might apply to getting to know a person. The questions, as articulated by Igor Kopytoff below, resonate with the work of the historian interested in the materialities of schooling:

> In doing the biography of a thing, one would ask questions similar to those one asks about people: What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its 'status' and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? … how does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?[23]

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The choices that Terris made in the conceptualisation and creation of *Ought Apartment* were instrumental in setting conditions for particular understandings to emerge. His choices invite particular forms of interpretation. In his book *Postproduction*, Bourriaud identified that much art in the past decade has been created on the basis of pre-existing work. Artists, he claimed, 'interpret, reproduce, re-exhibit, or use works made by others or available cultural products'.[24] Moreover, he suggested, 'appropriation is indeed the first stage of postproduction: the issue is no longer to fabricate an object, but to choose one among those that exist and to use or modify these according to a specific intention'.[25] As noted earlier, this is precisely what Terris intended in the making of *Ought Apartment*. In doing so, Terris presented a set of conditions that enticed certain forms of meaning-making to occur. Terris invites the viewer to make connections between what she/he sees, knows and experiences. Meaning is not immediate. Rather, the installation required viewers to engage in a dynamic process of meaning-making that was contingent upon searching for and making connections between what is represented, what is suggested and what is imagined. These meaning-making processes operated at the intersection of the real and the remembered, the present and the absent, and the known and the unknown. Terris created a work that generated relations between people.[26] As a researcher, having observed what Terris managed to do through his installation, I am curious about whether research texts expressed in three-dimensional form might achieve a similar result. For example, *Ought Apartment* operates as a way of creating conditions for bringing together differing histories and memories to generate meaning. It models how stories can be told using multiple modalities. What new ways of engaging audiences in relational understanding of history of education might historians create based on what Terris' installation suggests? In what ways might the representation of research findings in new and different ways productively serve to enlarge, advance and deepen our historical consciousness? In what ways might the representation of research findings in such formats extend our understanding through multiple

[23]I. Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 66–7.
[24]Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 13.
[25]Ibid., 25.
[26]Ibid., 33.

modalities? These are the types of research dissemination questions that *Ought Apartment* invited me to think about. There are, of course, several more.

Searching for ways of representing interpretations of research data has been an ongoing concern of arts-based educational researchers for some time now. They have argued that the arts have the ability to contribute particular insights into, and enhance understandings of, phenomena that are of interest to educators and policy-makers. In a paper written over a decade ago, Elliot Eisner asked: What can alternate forms of data representation offer for expanding knowing and deepening understanding about the worlds that we wish to understand better? He answered his question claiming that:

> alternate forms of data representation promise to increase the variety of questions that we can ask about the educational situations we study … we can expect new ways of seeing things, new settings for their display, and new problems to tackle … put another way, our capacity to wonder is stimulated by the possibilities the new forms of representation suggest.[27]

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Terris' installation *Ought Apartment* serves as a generative site from which researchers can begin to think further about and articulate new possibilities for representing interpretations of research data. Indeed, *Ought Apartment* provides a model for inquiring into data at its representational stage. Importantly, in representing a material and spatial history of practices of living in Western Canada over six decades, *Ought Apartment* did not offer closure; rather it offered multiple openings for ongoing inquiry from which new understanding about past and present cultural practices emerged. The example I provided earlier about the mother showing her two sons the way in which the old-fashioned rotary dial telephone was used is a case in point. The installation served as a further point in the inquiry process that brought it into being. As an artwork, it extended and reinterpreted the narratives it depicted. It gave visual form to Bourriaud's idea that an artwork 'is no longer an end point but a simple moment in an infinite chain of contributions'.[28] As I noticed when I spent time in the installation, *Ought Apartment* offered generative possibilities for involving different publics in understanding the topic under investigation from different viewpoints and different perspectives. Constructing it in the central rotunda of the gallery enabled it to be viewed from a multitude of vantage points on all four floors of the gallery as well as from the stairs and the escalators. Juxtaposing one era beside another (in this case one on top of another), provided an opportunity to see difference as expressed across time; this is rarely afforded to individuals in their daily lives. Its placement in this central space invited viewers to think about how the act of looking from a particular perspective gives a particular viewpoint, while simultaneously closes off another. Seeing from multiple perspectives invited different interpretations, and different viewing positions allowed for new configurations and formations. *Ought Apartment* could never be viewed in its entirety from any one single viewpoint. Rather, meaning resided in the fragmented nature of viewing it. For the historian of education, I believe Terris' installation invites a commitment to seeing multiplicities as well as singularities simultaneously. It calls attention to the fragmented nature of knowledge, and the multiple ways in which we come to know, experience, make sense and represent. Furthermore, for historians of education, it

[27]Elliot Eisner, 'The Promise and Perils of Alternative Forms of Data Representation', *Educational Researcher* 26, no. 6 (1997): 4–10, 8.
[28]Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 20.

introduces other dissemination possibilities and dissemination modalities. Specifically, it provides an opportunity for education historians to rethink the nature of research texts and the relationship between such texts and their readers.

Representing interpretations of data in their material form, and in configurations that invite the viewer to experience firsthand the qualities of the data, enables new and different questions to be asked of the data. Given the precise configurations in *Ought Apartment*, the following questions surfaced for me as a researcher and an artist: What do objects tell us about the past? How and for what reasons are collections put together? How are collections narrated and how do collections narrate? What is being preserved in the act of representing or presenting again? How does the mode of presentation (in this instance the way in which the various objects are configured) set up the terms and conditions for interpretation? What shapes decisions about what is included and excluded in a research text? How might an analysis of these decisions inform us about the pedagogic and curricular values of the past? What objects/artefacts are important to show and not show? Moreover, for the historian of education, what new understandings might emerge and what new lines of inquiry might be followed if researchers began to think about their data spatially? This means paying attention to the interaction between the physical and social in any given space. Thinking spatiality about data and inquiring from a spatial dimension 'means recognizing the integral spatiality of things and processes and recognizing too the difference that spatiality may make',[29] as Terris' installation so eloquently demonstrates. In *Ought Apartment*, meaning is made spatially.

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Thinking about classroom photographs as photographs of installations

Thinking about classroom photographs as photographs of installations invites educational historians to imagine the three-dimensional quality of that which is captured in two dimensions. It invites the researcher to imagine what it might possibly mean to inhabit this space, to walk into and around it. Considering the classroom as an installation offers an opportunity to imagine it as a space of relations, as a place of encounter, as a place of exchange and interaction, and as a place with smells, sounds and sights/views. What would it mean for knowledge generation in the history of education if the education historian embodied the practices of artists in his/her research practices and the interpretation of his/her research data. The artist today, Bourriaud explains, 'sets his sights more and more clearly on the relations that his work will create among his public, and on the invention of models of sociability', and that 'artistic practice is always a relationship with the other, at the same time as it represents a relationship with the world'.[30] He coined the term relational aesthetics to explain and theorise these forms of art practice and to articulate ways of engaging with such work. Grant H. Kester uses the term *dialogical* in an effort to make visible the ways in which these works operate based on collaboration, communication and exchange. For him, as he explains, 'The concept of a dialogical art practice is derived from the Russian literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, who argued that the work of art can be viewed as a kind of conversation – a locus of differing meanings, interpretations, and points of view'.[31] How, then, might practices of history-writing change if

[29]D. Massey, 'Foreword', *Forum* 46, no.1 (2004): 1.
[30]Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 28.
[31]Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004): 10.

educational historians became more concerned with notions of site, audience, issues of temporality and intersubjectivity that present-day artists hold so dear? I believe the concept of classroom as installation provides a generative opening to explore writing and research of this nature. There are several interesting ways in which researchers can make use of the classroom images they uncover in their research, thereby engaging in what Bourriaud would theorise as postproduction.

The idea that objects always signal something beyond themselves, developed above in relation to Terris' *Ought Apartment*, is also taken up masterfully by Leanne Shapton in her novel, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, including Books, Street Fashion and Jewelry.* While this is a slight diversion and, furthermore, while it is not my intention to describe this work in any great depth at this juncture, I want to briefly introduce her novel here as an example (similar to *Ought Apartment*) of another way of writing histories with and through objects. Shapton's novel, which tells the story of how Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris (both fictional characters) met, fell in love, quarrelled and eventually parted, was written in the style of an auction catalogue, with short descriptions accompanying photographs of items listed. Focusing entirely on the objects that Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris bought, shared, exchanged, collected and valued during their time together, Shapton succeeds in making visible ways in which objects become meaningful through processes of interaction and engagement. For example, item 1006, the sixth item in the catalogue, is a crumpled green-coloured paper cocktail napkin that is described as follows:

> A short handwritten notation in ballpoint pen on a green cocktail napkin. Reads: Lenore_doolan@nytimes.com Some wear and creasing. 5 × 5 in. $15–20.

This entry, which appears at the early stages of the book, invites us to imagine the events that lead up to this particular moment – the exchanging of a contact address – and how it was the beginning of what was to follow. Central to the success of this book was the way in which the writer drew attention to what we take for granted: That is, our knowledge and understanding of the world is intimately tied to objects, with what we do with them, and the ways in which they shape interaction and engagement. We acquire objects, seek them out, interact with and through them, discard them when they are no longer of any use, leave them behind when we move on, and remember them. If we, as researchers, were to take on board the type of reporting that is common in auction catalogues, in what ways might our scholarly inquiries change? How would our way of doing and representing historical research come to be altered? I present these questions here as an invitation to education historians to think further about how their research texts operate in different settings and, furthermore, how the process of rethinking the form of their texts might lead to new opportunities for understanding differently.

Discussion and conclusion

In this article, I have engaged in a series of conceptual meanderings in an effort to consider how practices of inquiry into material and spatial qualities of classrooms of the past might be taken in new directions for the purpose of honouring multiple modes of meaning-making and reaching larger audiences. The analytical framework advanced in this paper centres on the following question: If the historian of education

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approaches the study and analysis of classroom photographs of the past from the premise that classrooms are essentially installations and classroom photographs, by extension, are photographs of installation, how and in what ways might this change the research questions asked of the photographs and the meaning-making that ensues? This paper suggests that there are two ways of doing this.

One is to approach the analysis of classroom photographs from the perspective that classrooms, similar to installations, are (a) spaces to be entered and inhabited that are structured in accordance with a set of particular ideas about what constitutes teaching, learning and the learner, and (b) the layout, design and associated disciplinary practices and spatial organisation of this place, to a large degree, determines in advance the types of experience students and others will have in this place. In other words, similar to art installations, classrooms are immersive spaces to be entered into but are constructed with a particular purpose in mind, to be experienced in particular ways. Drawing on Bishop's work, this idea elaborates two types of subject, be they students, teachers or others: the literal subject who enters and occupies the classroom, and an abstract, philosophical model of the subject that is proposed by the way in which the classroom structures an encounter and subsequent experiences.[32] Given this, attention ought to be paid to the types of subjects that classrooms construct in time and place. While approaching the classroom as an installation requires the researcher to pay attention to the subject that is formed in place, it also requires attention to the sensory environment of the classroom as well as its size, scale, spatial organisation and the objects contained therein. Attending to classrooms as installations brings about a focus on spatial (organisational and relational), material and visual qualities. As Terris' installation demonstrates, knowledge is rooted in material entities – in his case, interiors and objects from the 1950s to the present day. Attending to classrooms as installations draws attention to the spatiality of teaching, learning and knowledge generation. Classrooms, like installations, acquire and transmit meaning in several ways.

A second approach is to consider (re)constructing classrooms of the past as installations, as Terris did for living spaces in his installation *Ought Apartment*. This, of course, is a far more radical departure from current inquiry practices in the academy, and it is one that is likely to involve conceptualising new research collaborative models – ones that differ from existing models with which researchers are already familiar. The call to consider (re)constructing classrooms of the past as installations is not a call to (re)create classrooms as found but rather as a way of giving three-dimensional form to the observed patterns, practices, materialities and visualities arising from a sustained inquiry into classrooms. This is the process that Terris followed in the creation of *Ought Apartment*; he created a collection of actual spaces that never existed, but which were imagined and recalled places from a time past. In other words, such research installations would serve as a 3D research text, different, of course, from the traditional research text in so far as it provides a different narrative structure, rupturing the linear nature of such text and comprising a series of discontinuous and partial stories in a space where meaning is generated through interaction and negotiation. This form of working, as noted earlier, could lead to new forms of collaborative research and dissemination. It could, for example, involve historians of education working with artists (rather than as artists) in situations that require different and multiple visualising strategies for inquiring into, interpreting and making

[32]Bishop, *Installation Art*.

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sense of visual records of the past. The ability and freedom of artists to work on an edge and between borders of the familiar and the emergent would complement and extend the work practices that educational researchers mobilise in their research inquiries. (Re)constructing classrooms of the past in the form of an installation requires a commitment to ongoing inquiry. It provides new opportunities for inquiring further into how objects trigger memory in the moment of encounter. To observe and investigate participants' response to objects and spatial arrangements in such a situation would offer other research data for expanding consciousness and enlarging knowledge, and would probably raise questions such as the following: What are memory spaces, learning spaces, reflective spaces, nostalgic spaces, negotiation spaces, tension-laden spaces? Furthermore, it would provide an opportunity to inquire further into how individuals recognise, remember, connect, forget, in the moment of encounter and so on and so forth. (Re)constructing classrooms as installation offers a way of bringing history of education research to different audiences in venues vastly different from a scholarly conference.

In short, new inquiry questions, new analytical frameworks and new ways of disseminating history of education research are possible when we present classroom photographs, which have already been produced and circulated, in new and unexpected configurations. Through the act of placing six apartments, spanning six decades, one on top of another, Terris invited viewers to ask the following questions: who constructs these spaces; for what reason; what values are embedded in their structural nature; who controls these spaces and under what regulatory regimes; who furnishes them; and how do these spaces visualise and prioritise certain value systems? All of these questions could be asked of learning spaces. Moreover, Terris' installation provides a framework for inquiring into the complexities of, and the relations between, objects, space, place and memory. By attending to the spatiality of their writing and their topics of inquiry, as Terris has done in terms of cultural production, in what ways can historians of education expand their mode of communication, which is predominantly text-based and written?

In conclusion, in *Ought Apartment*, Terris selected objects and presented certain spatial arrangements to evoke particular responses, to invite certain associations, and to trigger memory. How might research texts operate in a similar manner? How might they create conditions for evoking particular forms of memory work? As a researcher, faced with the task of analysing a collection of historical photographs of secondary school art rooms of private Canadian boys' schools in the summer of 2009, *Ought Apartment* offered me an invitation to ask questions of these photographs that not only concerned the spatial arrangements and the materialities of teaching and learning that I observed, but also the types of interactions and engagements that these spatial arrangements and materialities invited, promoted and generated. As an installation, *Ought Apartment* required that the viewer become a participant and a co-creator of the work, which thereby placed a greater responsibility on the viewer to find his/her own meaning. How might the practice of becoming an imagined participant in a photograph shape how a researcher analyses, makes sense of and interprets the meaning of the photograph? How might educational historians invite the readers of their research texts to become more active participants in interpreting these texts? Is it desirable to leave texts in an unfinished state, as Terris did in *Ought Apartment*? While his installation encouraged and created conditions for identification, it provided several openings for interpretation. It invariably required the viewer/participant to bring it to some form of completion in the act of interpreting. An examination of Terris' *Ought*

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Apartment shows how conditions for knowing and knowing differently are created in the form of an artwork; how meaning is made in an encounter with an artwork; and how the medium is closely linked with the types of understanding that can be gleaned from an artwork, which are useful for educational researchers to think about.

In this paper, I have chosen to discuss Terris' installation, *Ought Apartment*, because Terris presented a visual, material and spatial history of domestic life, interior architecture and cultural patterns of the second half of the twentieth century in Western Canada, albeit incomplete and partial, that I believe offers educational historians some interesting ways of thinking about doing and representing research that focuses on the material culture and spatiality of classrooms. Terris' *Ought Apartment* allowed us to view a past and to see it alongside the present. In his configuration of familiar and less familiar objects, Terris created a place for the viewer to come into contact with a time that has now passed and to encounter some of its associated objects and practices of living. In doing so he created the conditions for viewers to remember, recall and engage in complex meaning-making practices that rely on recursive, multidirectional and associated and disassociated meaning-making practices. In the installation, Terris used actual objects from the past rather than a representation of them. He constructed rather than represented. For me, as a researcher, Terris' process of making *Ought Apartment*, and the many forms that the installation assumed, suggests ways of inquiring into, and making sense of, as well as representing, classroom cultures and classroom-making practices of the past in the present moment.

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