

PICA FILES

2016



Projects in Contemporary Art (PICA) is a pioneering art class at Riverdale Country School in New York City that explores the potential of contemporary art to engage and inspire a high school community. Developed by artist/educator Nicky Enright in 2010, it may be the first studio class in contemporary art for high school students in the nation.

Projects are highly collaborative and based on the particular concerns and reflections of the students in the class. They employ a wide range of strategies and materials, often working in public at the centrally-located PICA wall or throughout the school. Students participate in all aspects of the work - concept, execution, documentation, and written statements. PICA students become an art collective, investigating the communal value of art while expressing themselves in innovative ways.

Projects 2010 - 2016 >

Welcome

The first PICA project, in collaboration with lower school students, was to welcome the community back to school after summer break. The illusion of text was created by rendering the negative space around the letters, with sidewalk chalk.



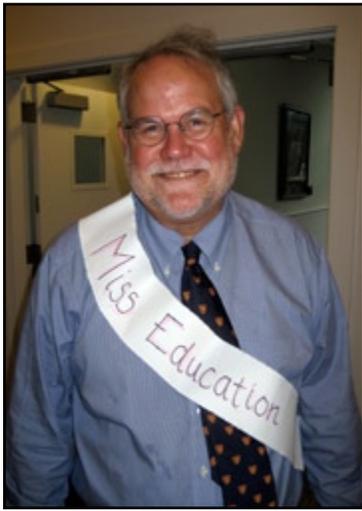
Banned Books

PICA's first video installation was inspired by a list of books, courtesy of the library, that had once been banned. We recreated these books out of an old encyclopedia with markers, tape, and pushpins, and we created a video of the process that played on a loop.



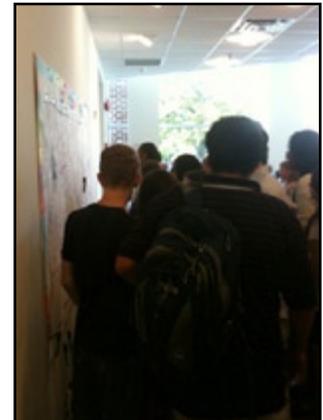
Pageant Sashes

To address gender issues in a performative way, PICA created beauty pageant sashes with names like “Miss Behavior,” for teachers and students to wear.



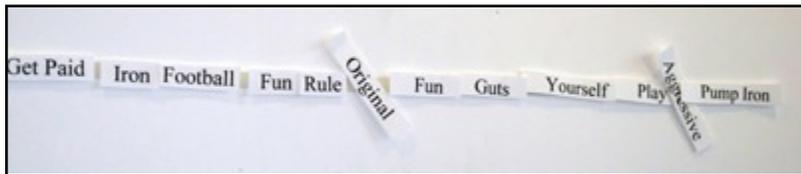
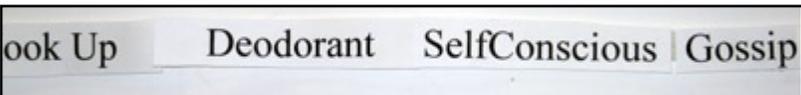
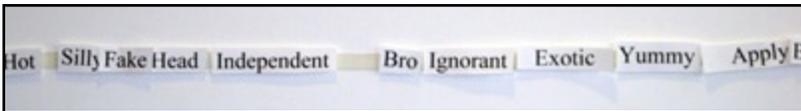
Instruction Manual

An ironic image presented the community with the opportunity to interactively create an instruction manual on "How to be a Boy/How to be a Girl." All were invited to participate by writing or drawing notions of gender stereotypes freely on the piece.



Instructions Poem

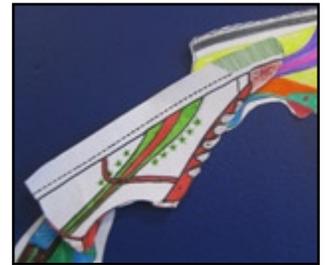
PICA chose some key words from their previous *Instruction Manual* to place on strips of velcro along the wall. This created an ever-changing, interactive poem, like fridge poetry.



Sneakology

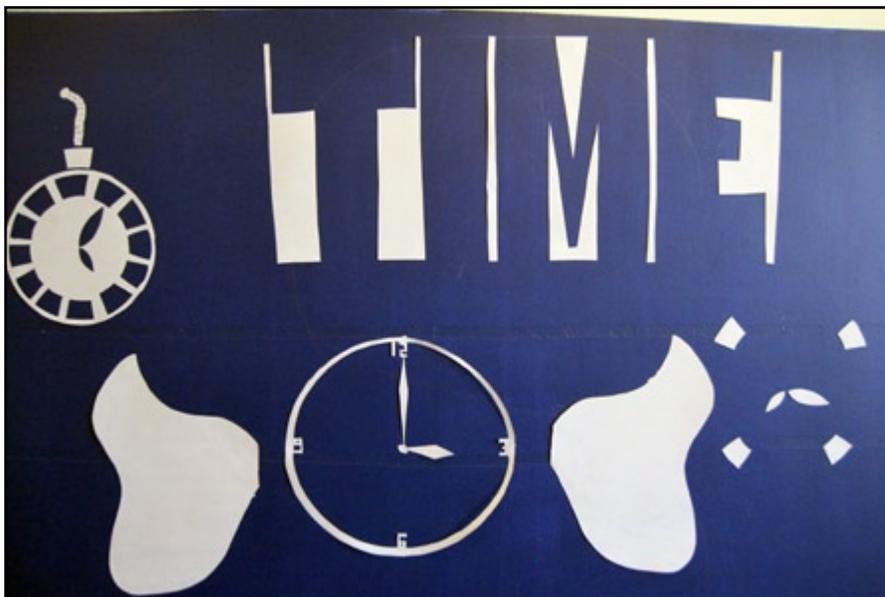
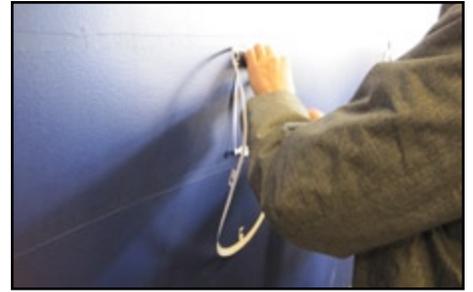
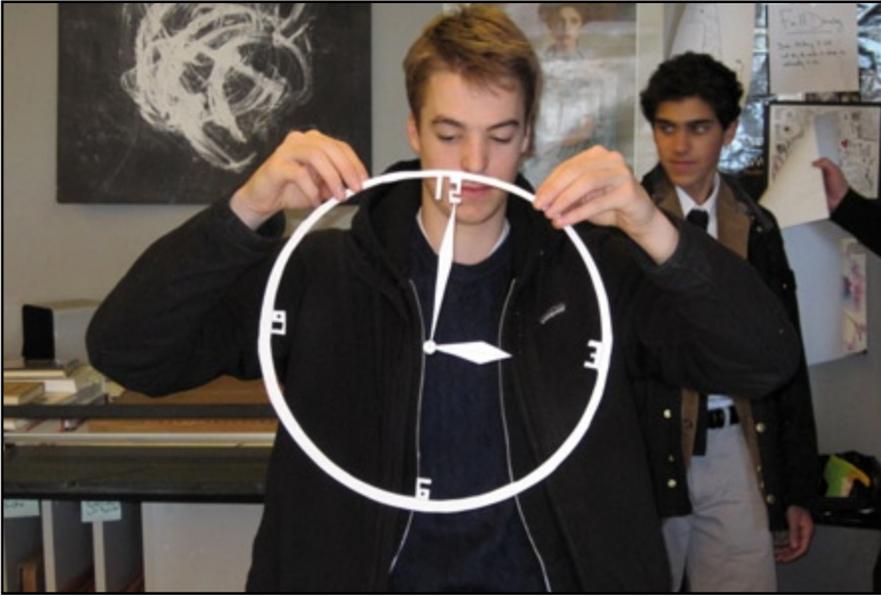
Do you know how your sneakers are made?

People all over the world wear sneakers manufactured in poorly regulated factories in China, Vietnam, Thailand, India, and other countries. While star athletes make millions through sponsorships, workers slave over the sneakers we wear.



Time

PICA sometimes creates conditions that lead to art creation. For example, this piece was the result of a challenge to create a work about time, in record time, using nothing but white paper on the blue PICA wall.



Connections

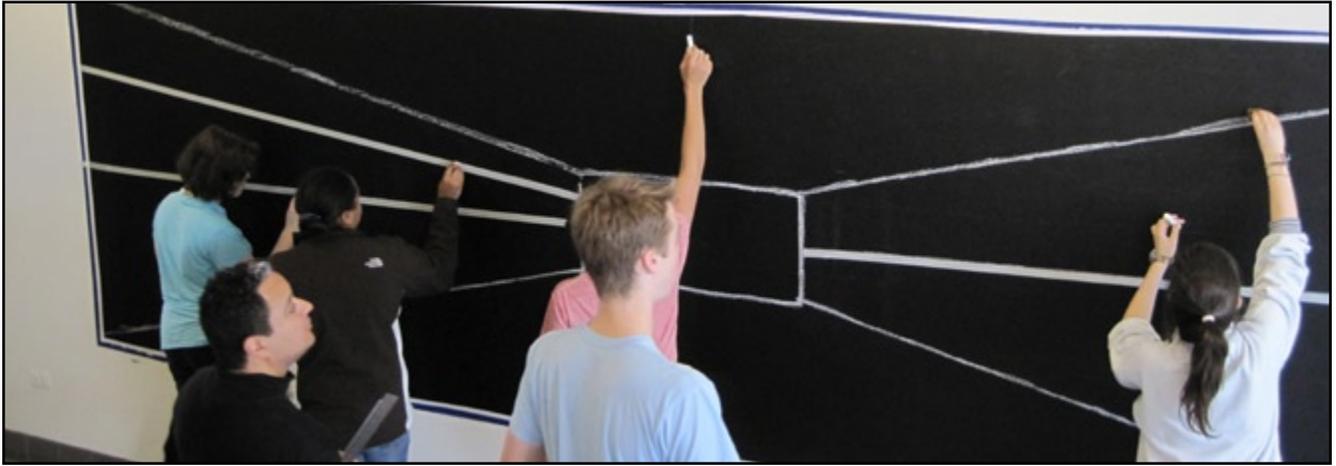
This work began as a collage of pages chosen by PICA students from art magazines. They then traced chosen elements from those pages onto a roll of translucent mylar. When the original collage was removed from beneath it, the task was to make stimulating connections of the disparate elements.



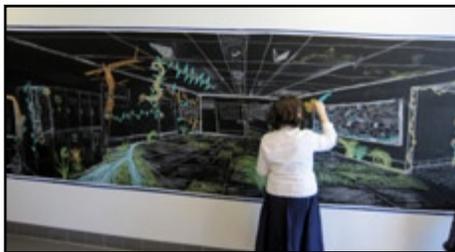


Chalk Perspective

Inspired by perspective lessons, we began a hard-edge depiction of a school hallway, learning two-point and three-point perspective along the way, but then filled it with a colorful jungle. Some saw it as a metaphor for the organic life that gives vitality to the institution that is a school.

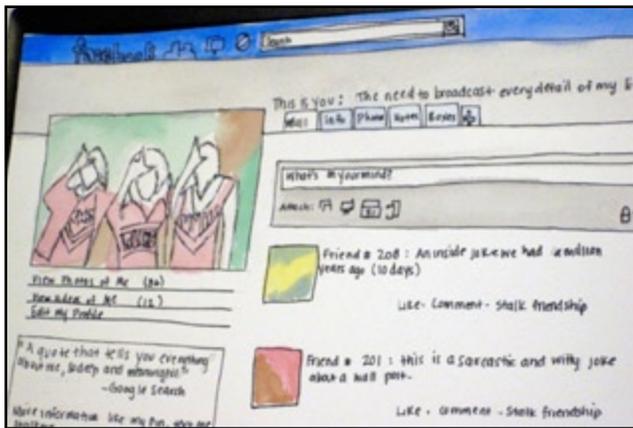
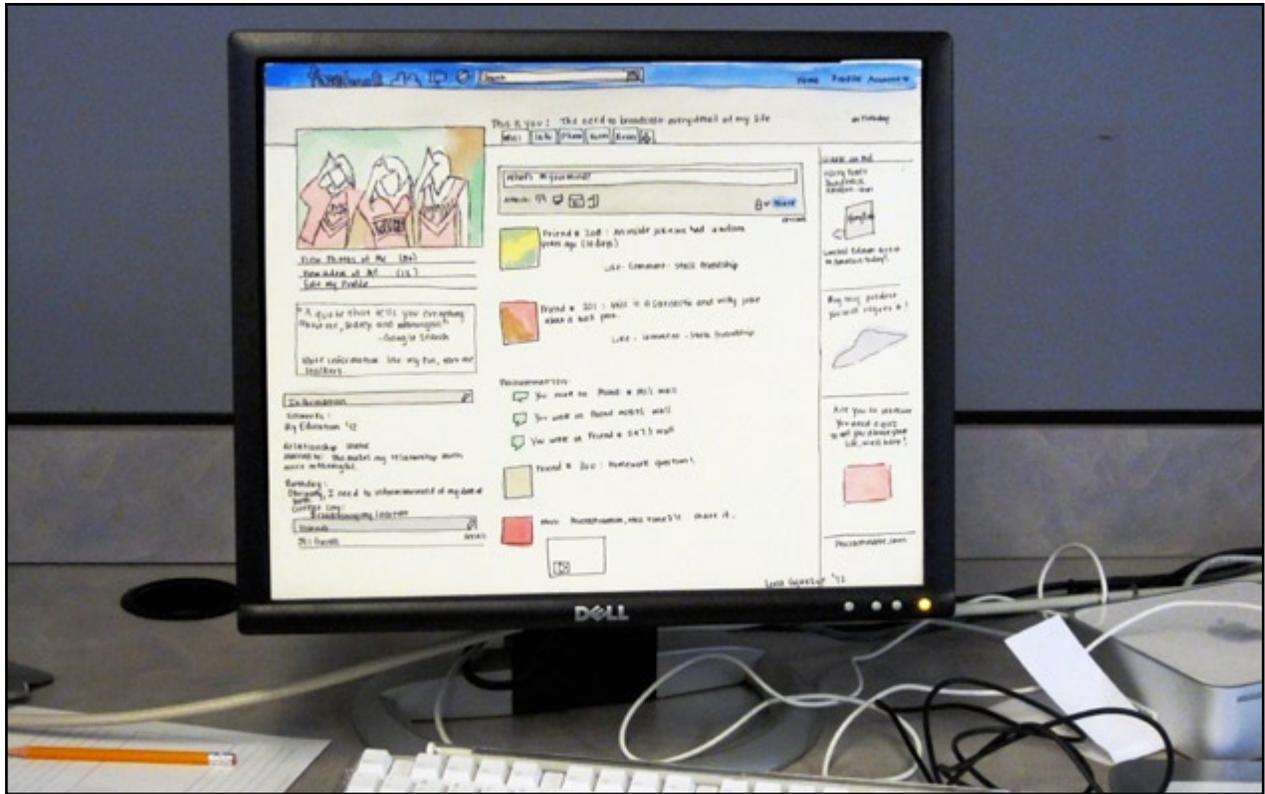


Watch the time-lapse video - click here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbqTyPa-tQg



Teen Tech

A sculptural exploration of the technology used currently by teenagers, installed in the library.



Dance Studio Installation: Temporadas

PICA transformed the dance studio with the dance teacher playing the role of public art client. Students developed and pitched ideas before designing for approval. The result was a series of paintings on four blinds installed over a painted gradation. These could be rolled up fully or partially, thereby creating limitless variations.



“Untitled”

PICA created a wall drawing to commemorate the 10th anniversary of September 11th, 2001. A cloud of circles represents the casualties of that day while creating the illusion of the Twin Towers in negative space. This simple gesture evokes the presence and absence of a NYC landmark, and deals with the human loss in a poetic way.



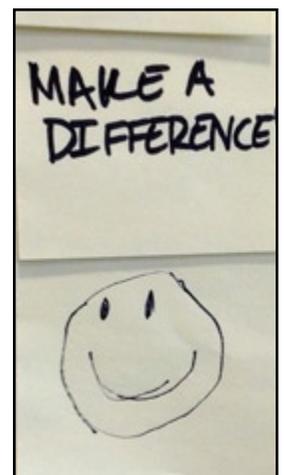
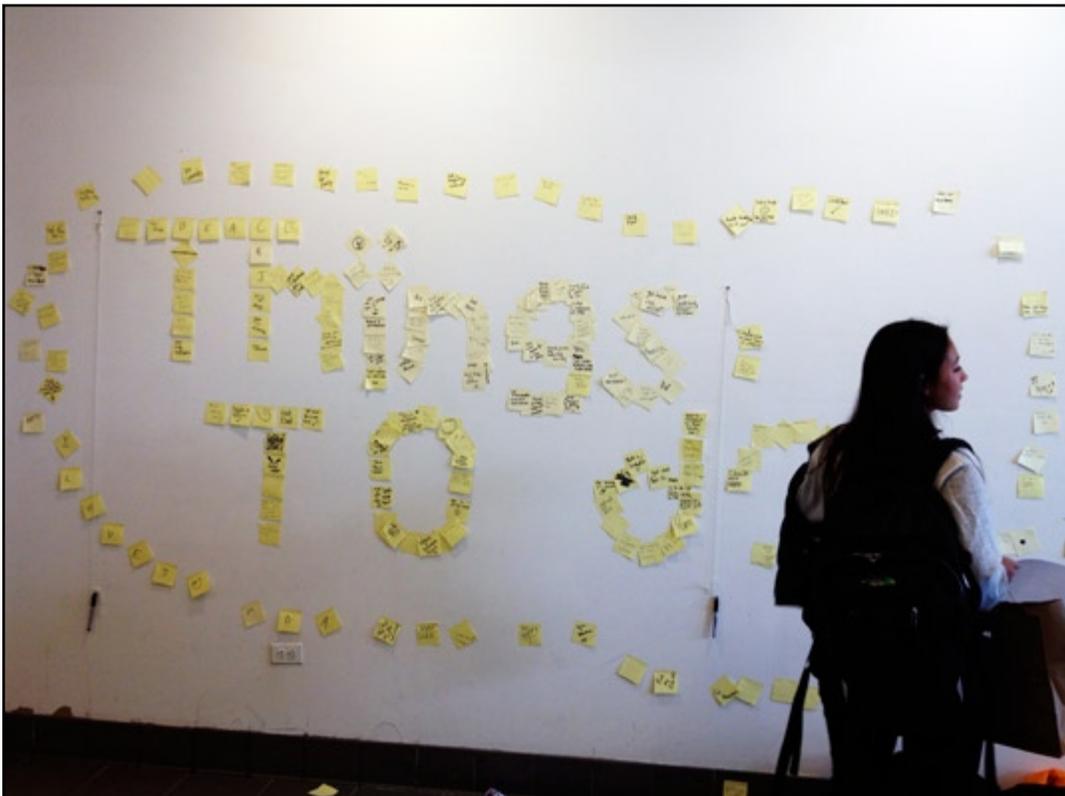
Monument

Leading to the school library, PICA created a small, outdoor monument dedicated to books. This work may evoke the demise or the rebirth of books in the digital age.



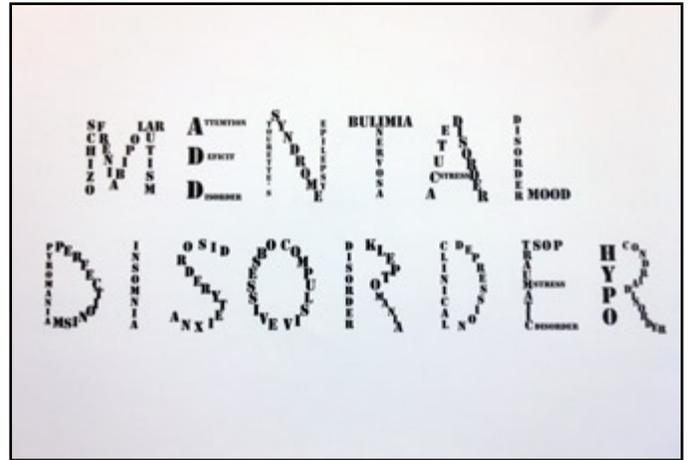
Things To Do

The classic yellow post-it spells out the phrase "things to do." By hanging a few sharpies on the wall PICA invited everyone to share something from their busy agendas with the community.



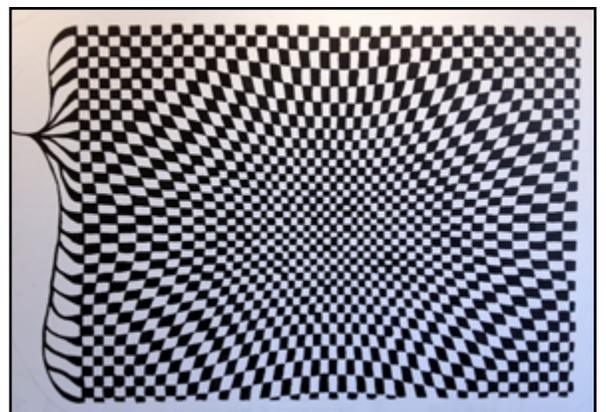
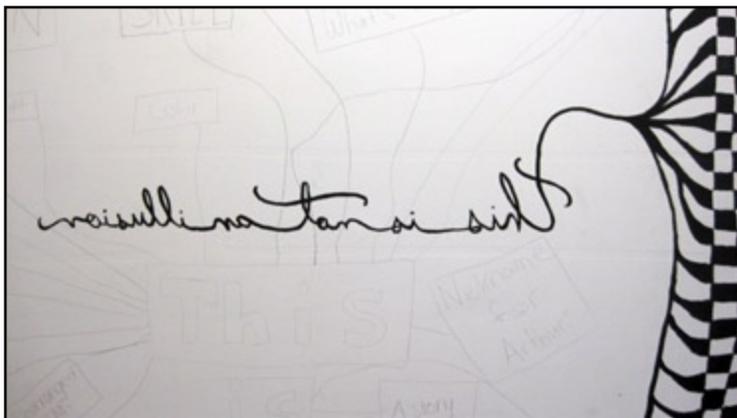
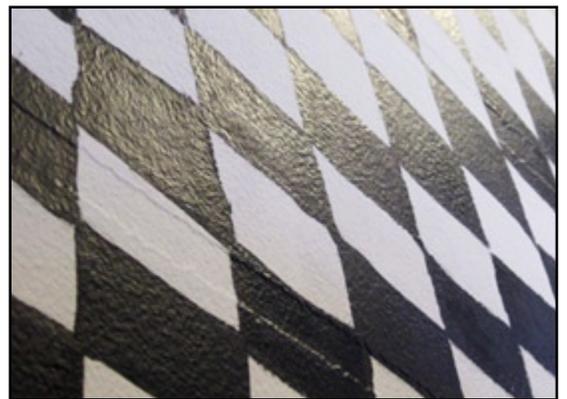
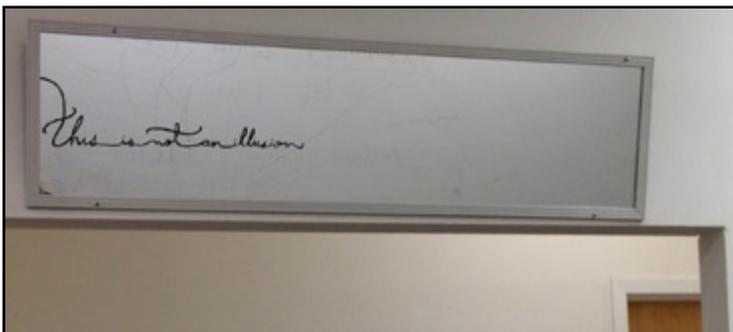
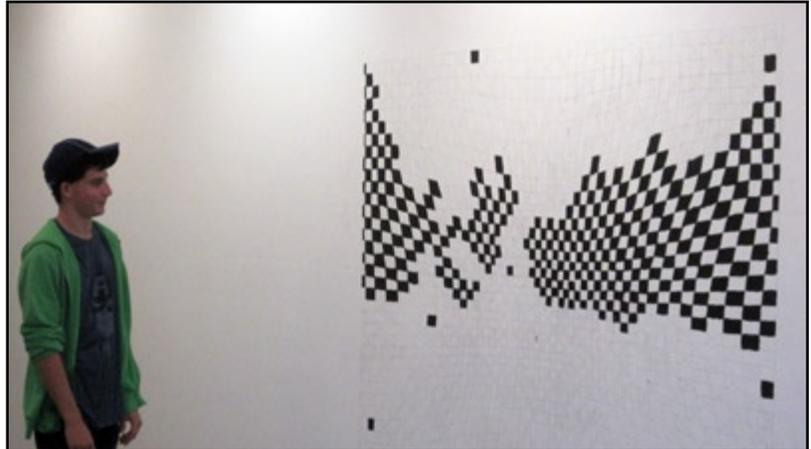
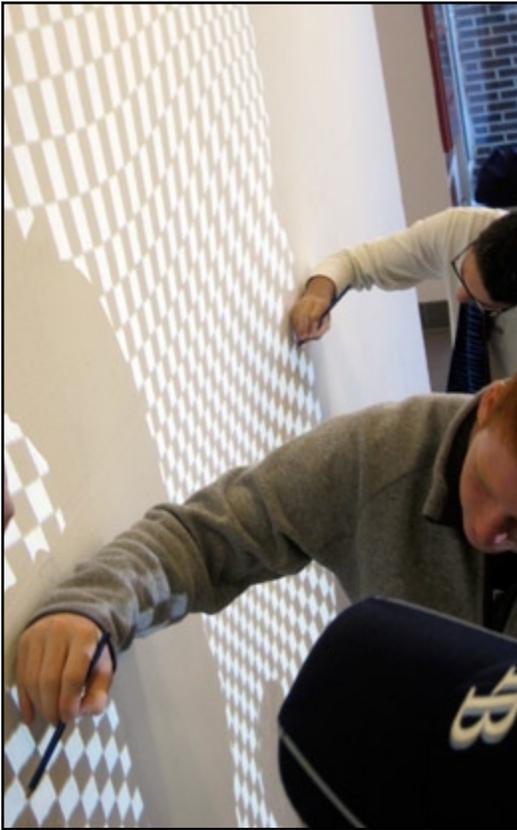
Independent Projects

Inspired by their analysis of various works of contemporary art, PICA students occasionally work individually or in smaller groups and then collaborate to curate and mount an exhibition. The challenge is to produce a show that consists of distinct and inventive works of art.



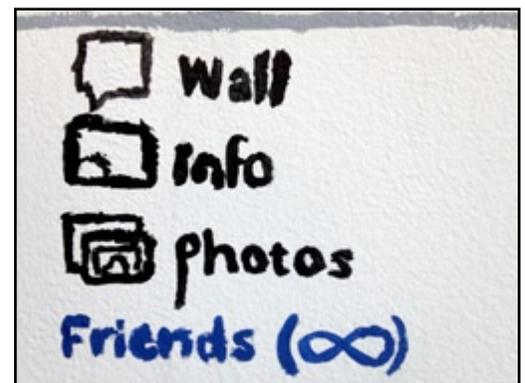
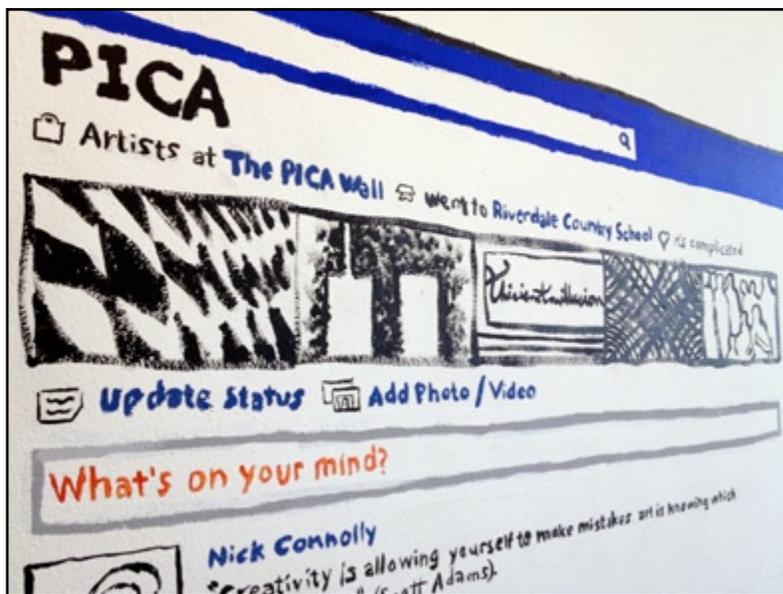
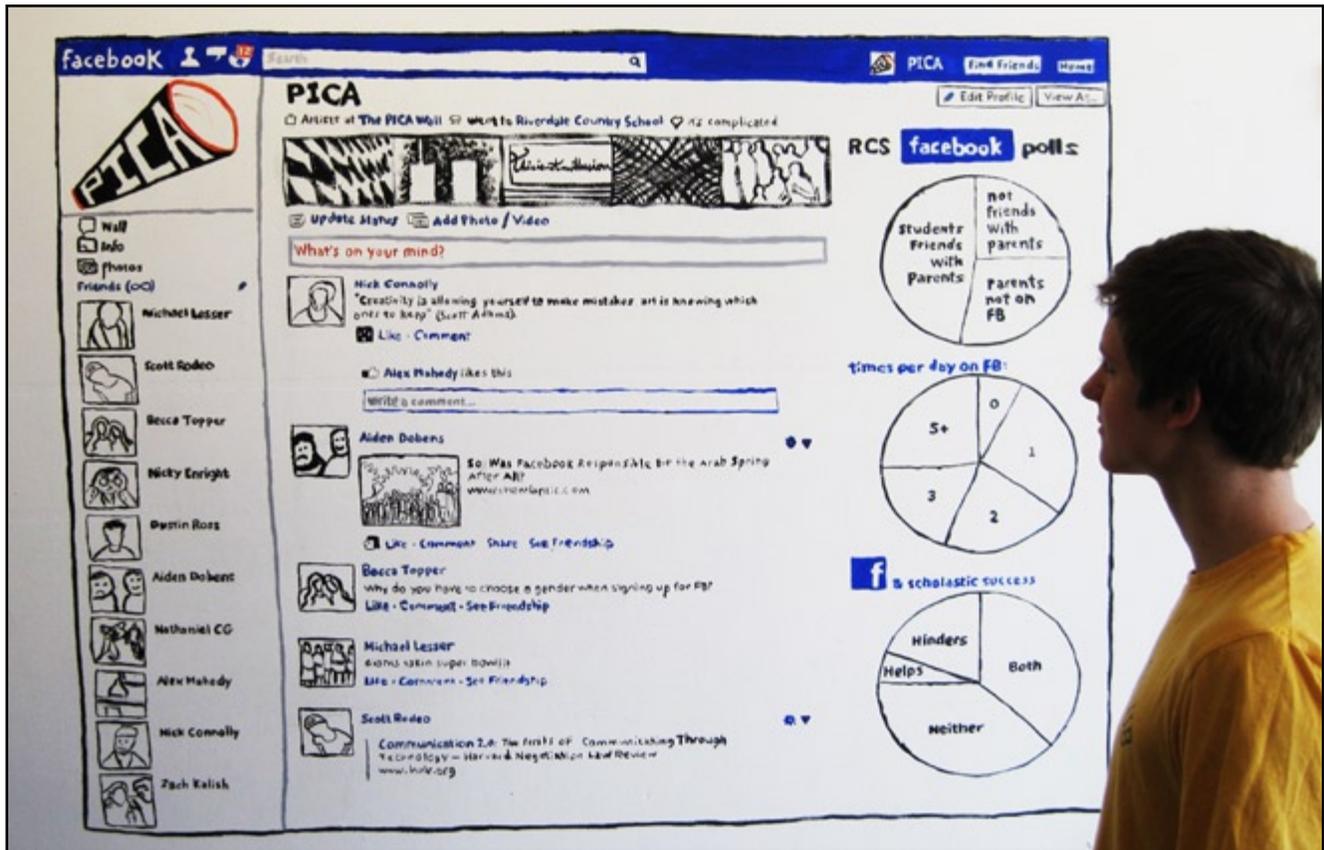
Op-Art

PICA decided to boggle the minds of the community by creating a mesmerizing Op-art painting. This piece then evolved, as PICA projects often do, to include hanging a mirror across the hall from backwards-written text stating, "This is not an illusion."



Self Portrait (facebook)

PICA created a facebook page as a conceptual self-portrait. Students researched how facebook is used with a survey of the entire upper school. They presented the information with original data charts in this hand-painted website that ironically exemplifies the creation of a digital self.



Character Strengths

This series was inspired by the character strengths our school has been engaging with. PICA developed creative ways to graphically represent the meaning of the text.



Scape Evolution / Stormscape

This evolving exploration of the concept of “scapes” began with a clothing-scape. It turned into a landscape and then a seascape. Then, after Superstorm Sandy, students channeled their unease by transforming the calm beachscape into an angry sea and stormy sky.



What is a Scape?

A simple horizon line? Again making use of our mirror across the hall.



The SAT is...

In this stitched project, students (literally) question the meaning of this standardized test. With a scantron background and letters made of the SAT itself, it is an example of the cathartic potential of art.



Beauty

The word “Beauty” floats across funhouse mirrors that distort the viewer’s reflection. The letters consist of photographs of every single middle and upper school student. The centrally located letter “U” becomes a play on the word “you.” This project suggests that all students are beautiful, invokes fraught relationships to mirrors, and explores distorted standards of beauty in an interactive way.



VioLense

A 14-monitor video installation exploring the relationship between media screens and gun violence in America. The piece presents statistics, images, words, and video loops of recent gun law news footage, the video game Black Ops, an explosion, and scenes from an FBI gun lab. The previous project was incorporated with relevant goals like, "Before I die I want to see peace."



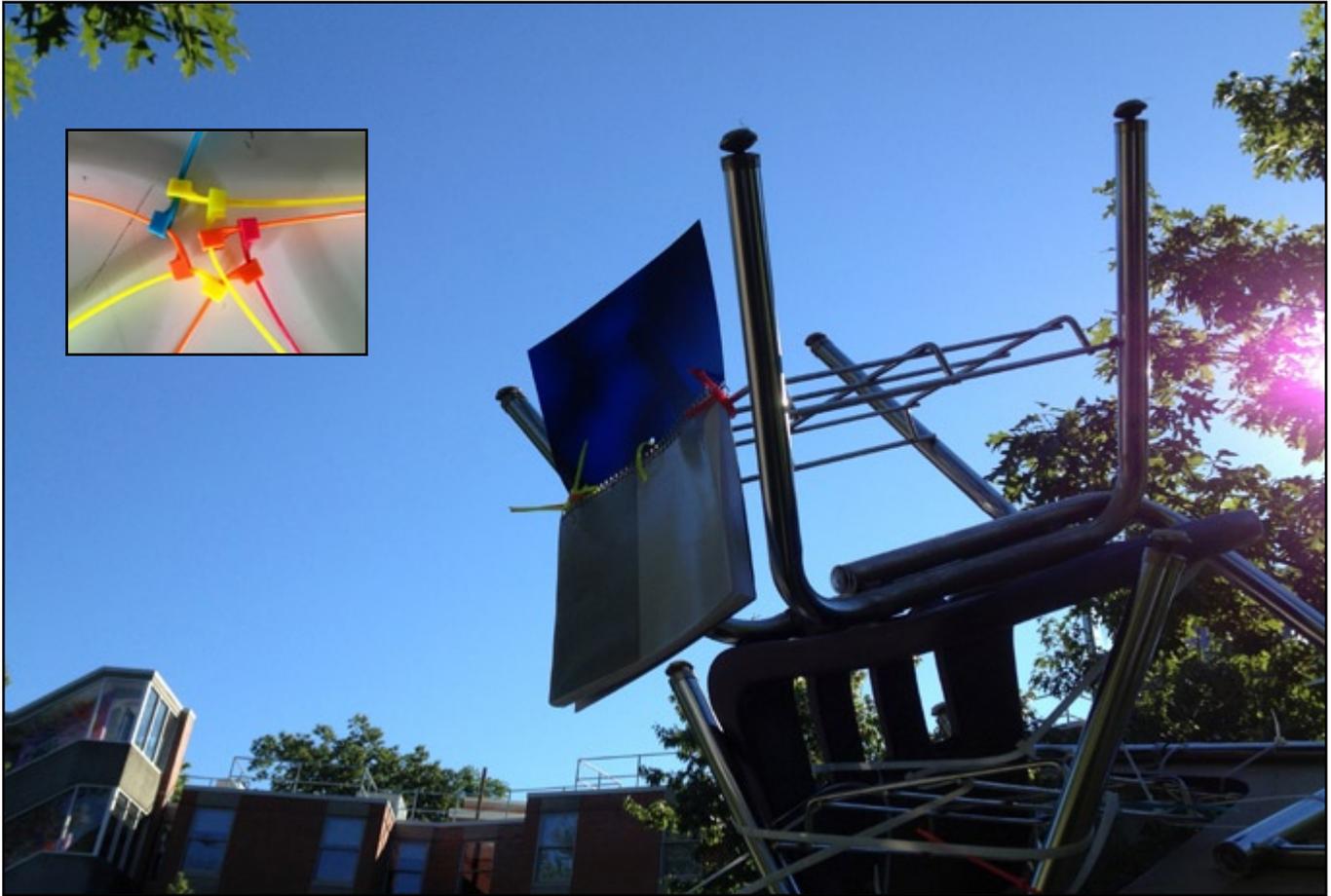
PICA PENNY

PICA spray painted 6000 pennies gold and scattered them around the school to create good fortune. Expanding on the idea that picking up a penny is good luck, we exchange a penny for your thoughts (your .02 cents), manifest pennies from heaven, and turn the entire school into a giant wishing well.



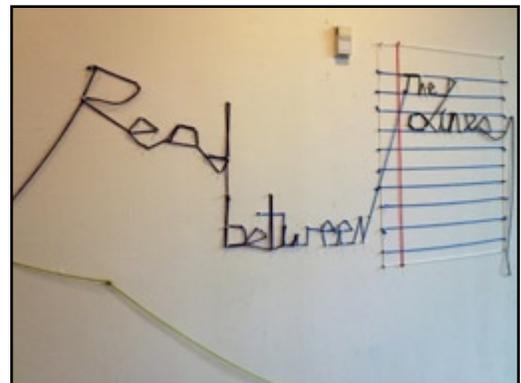
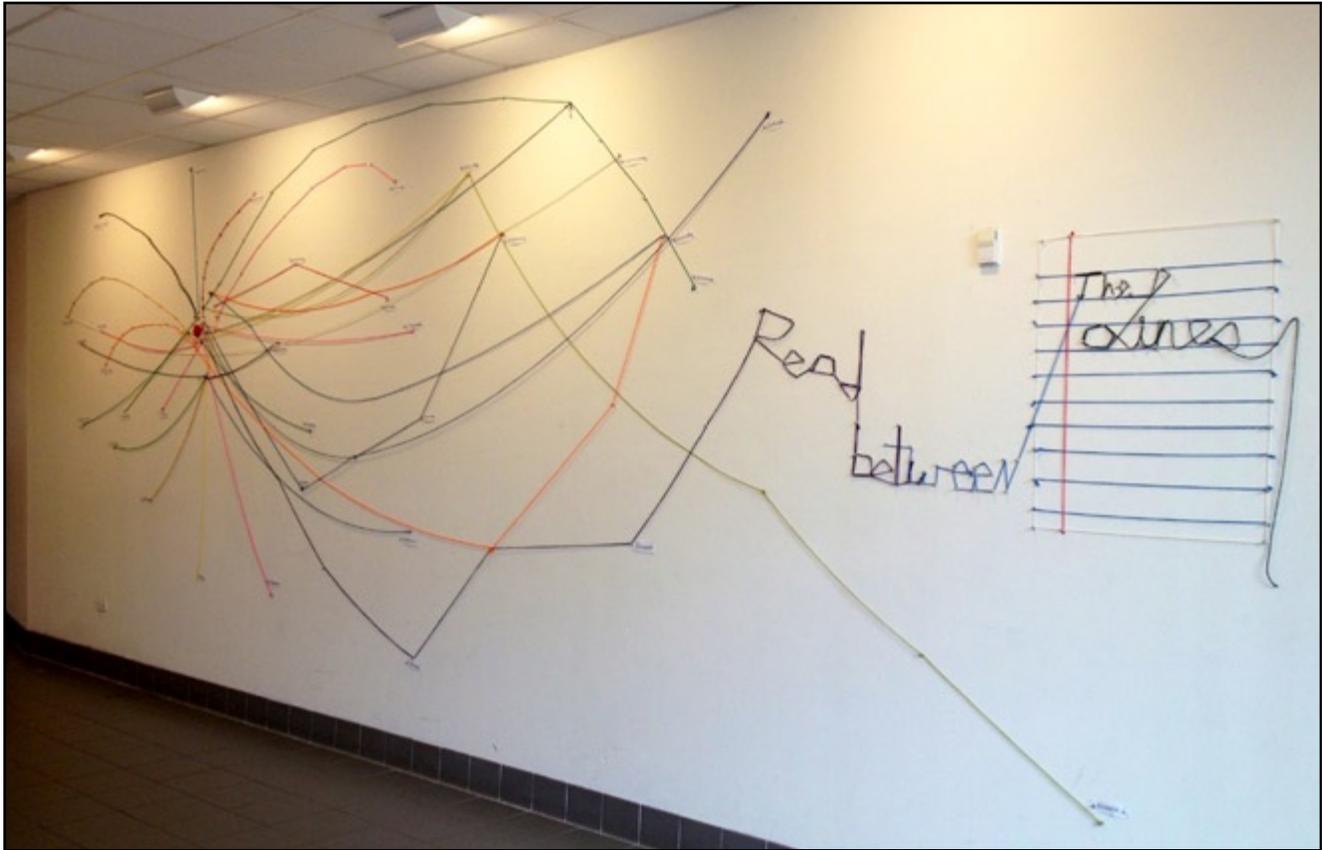
Higher Education

Using stacked school desks, zipties, and a single, attached spiral notebook, PICA created a large sculpture about school - academic ambition, stress, and achievement.



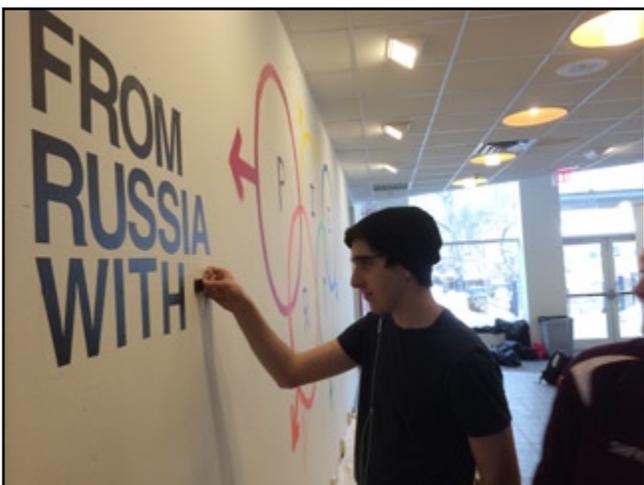
Between the Lines

A flight-connection map made from an interwoven yarn design, this piece is a metaphor for connectedness. All the lines begin at a central point (PICA Airport). The destination map is connected to a sheet of college-ruled paper, also made out of yarn, with the text. Constructed in stages, it started with what seemed like a three-dimensional doodle, and ended with a unique worldview. This work represents our physical and metaphysical journeys, based on but not bound to geography.



Between the Lines

Inspired by the 2014 Sochi Olympics where homophobic laws were being enforced, PICA turned the Olympic rings into gender symbols whose colors reference the international nature of the Olympics and the LGBTQ flag. The word "pride" evokes national pride and gay pride, representing inclusiveness.



You(r) Ad(her)e

The love child of capitalism and consumerism, this evolving work began by painting text. Then advertisements and logos slowly invaded until they consumed the entire billboard. A “Jordan” logo was cut – a human engulfed by and literally shaped by ads. The title says many simply “adhere” to logos and ads that physically overwhelm and suffocate us.





Forever Dream (with Shantell Martin)

Shantell Martin visited PICA to collaborate on a large-scale drawing. Using her artistic philosophy of free drawing without a plan, PICA allowed their subconscious mind to be in control, resulting in a dream-like work.



Spring Break



Nature Calls

This piece was inspired by Marcel Duchamp's infamous "Fountain" of 1917, which introduced the concept that a normal object could be transformed into a work of art. Each student signed a urinal following Duchamp's invented signature "R. Mutt." A series of miniature urinals filled with real spring flowers in different colors welcomed spring and all its rain.



SIGNature

An array of negation signs evokes the feeling of being blocked or denied. And the writing on the wall says the wall is closed (until after the break).



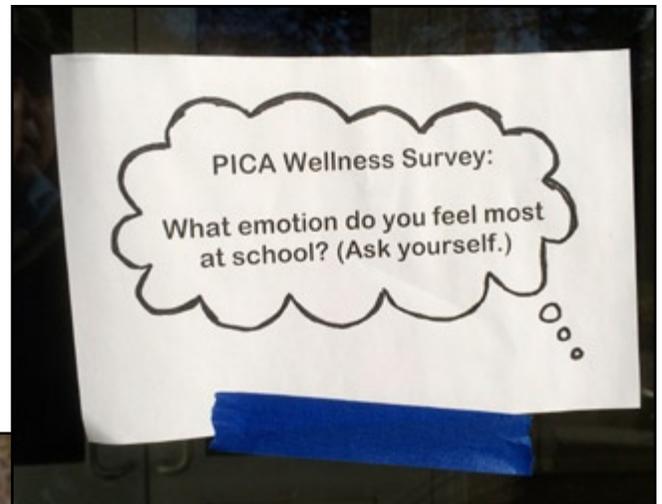
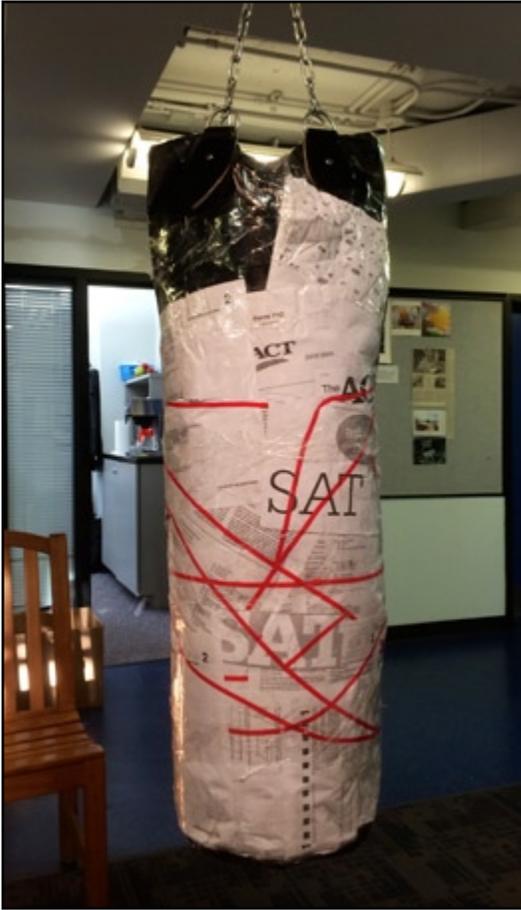
Climate March 2014

PICA chant: "Hell No! We won't go! We won't be no Dinosaur!" PICA became "People Increasing Climate Awareness," and joined the Life Drawing class at the historic Climate March in 2014. They used their vocal and artistic voices in a powerful way, contributing to the best art seen there.



PICA Stress Relievers

PICA contributed to a health-themed “One World Day” by addressing mental health in daily life. Students in competitive schools need outlets for stress, so PICA created multiple projects including a wellness survey, stress-reliever balls, and an SAT/ACT punching bag (filled with tests).



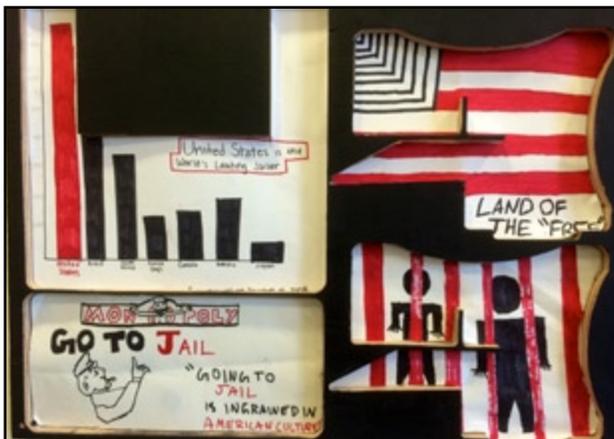
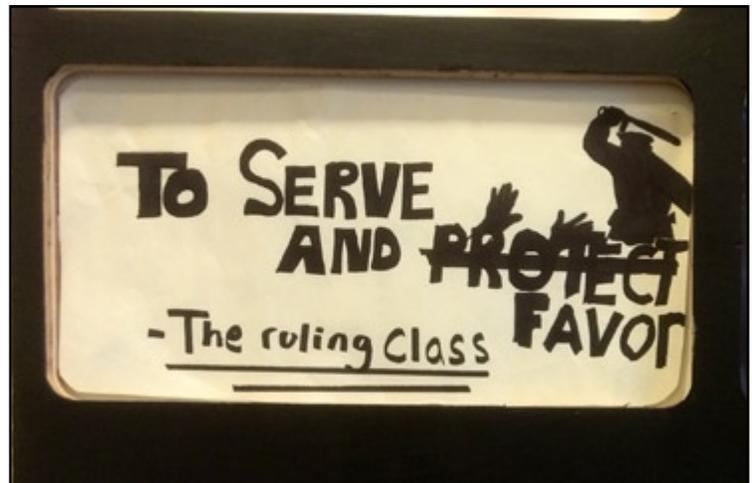
Where Do We Stand?

Inspired by *Measuring the Universe*, by Roman Ondak, PICA measured everyone to create a community-horizon-line on the PICA wall. This interactive piece evoked growth, from childhood to adulthood, before the addition of bubbles citing other ways we may be measured and categorized.



[In]Justice

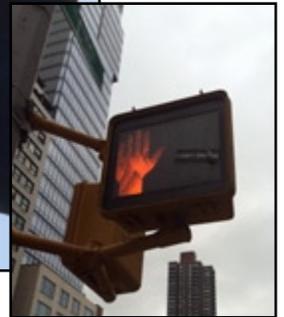
A reflection on the mass incarceration of American citizens, this piece not only exposes the percentage of the American population in prison, but also the unfairness revealed by the demographics. No other country has as many people behind bars as “the land of the free.”





Can You Breathe?

PICA responded to the Eric Garner non-indictment affair, which set off protests all over NYC and beyond, by inverting the widely-used phrase “I can’t breathe.” The word “you” is made out of a distorting mirror that implicates the viewer.



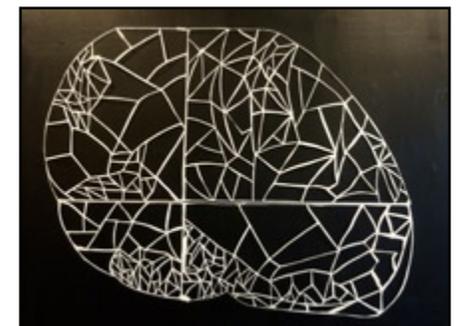
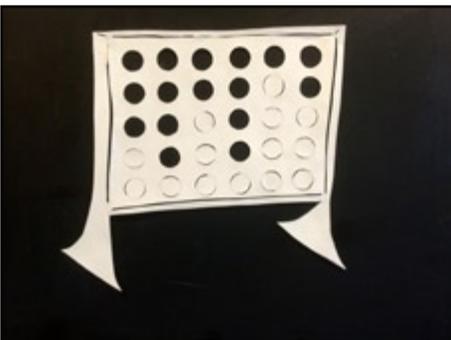
All-Gender Bathroom

PICA worked as a design firm, with the school’s Community Engagement Team as a client, to design signage for the all-gender bathrooms on campus. This was the result of combining many ideas:



Connections

How does one illustrate the concept of connectedness using nothing but cut white paper?



Average/Beautiful

Inspired by the Dove “Choose Beautiful” campaign, PICA installed “Beautiful” and “Average” signs on the entrance to the PICA wall. It was intended as a thought-provoking interactive project about standards of beauty, choice, and self perception.



Gender Blender

To raise awareness about stereotypes men and women deal with, PICA created an interactive composition that turned a venn diagram into interlocking gender symbols, including randomly-listed gender stereotypes, and a gender-neutral symbol in the center.



Free Speech (C. Hebdo)

PICA coped with thorny issues of free speech during the time of the “Charlie Hebdo” shootings in Paris, France (2015).



#SameWorldSamePain

PICA represented feelings of solidarity in mourning in response to shooting tragedies around the world. They projected a digital collage of grieving citizens in France, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, with their country's flag and peace sign superimposed. They created a flag for war-torn Syria, combining both government's flags. Although these citizens are all members of different countries, they are all united in the shared weight of unbearable grief.



EREHWWHERE

A video installation about the refugee crisis of 2016. Silhouette people, made of maps, scatter around the border, also made of maps, that frames the projection. Soldiers guard the box. The video features news footage and an animation borrowed from Kurzgesagt, a German design studio. Presenting statistics and facts about refugee movements around the world, it relates to American immigration debates. The title is a destabilizing reflection: the word “where” is preceded by the same word in reverse.



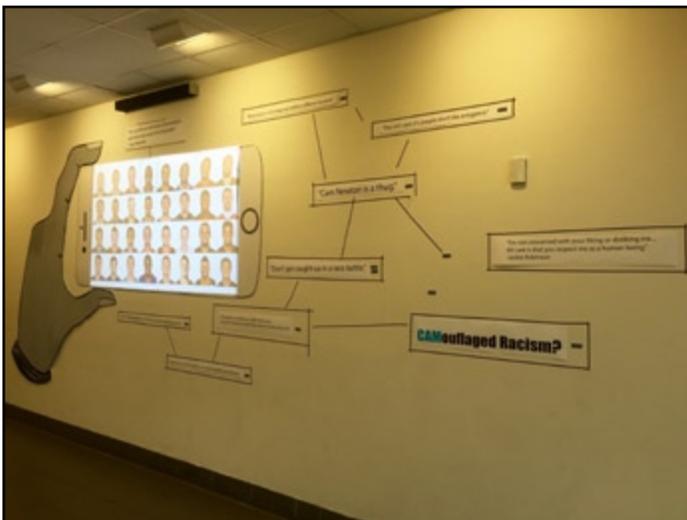
Las Ventanas del Alma (The Windows to the Soul)

When one eye closes, another is opened. This looped video, shot with a macro lens, is about perspective, surveillance, and the mystery and complexity of the human eye. PICA invited many peers to participate, thereby showcasing a wide variety of differently-colored eyes (with each blink).



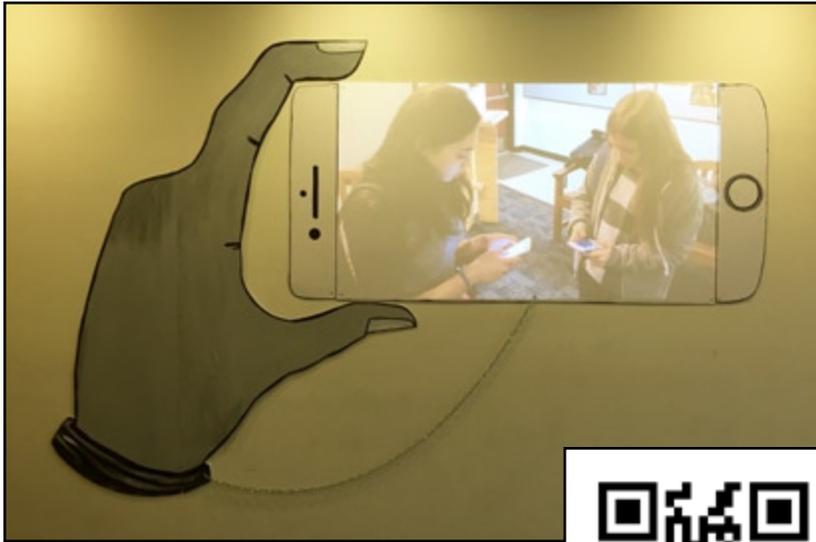
(CAM)ouflaged Racism?

PICA wondering aloud. This project was created during superbowl 50, explor the language surrounding Carolina Panther's quarterback, Cam Newton, one of the first Black quarterbacks in American history.

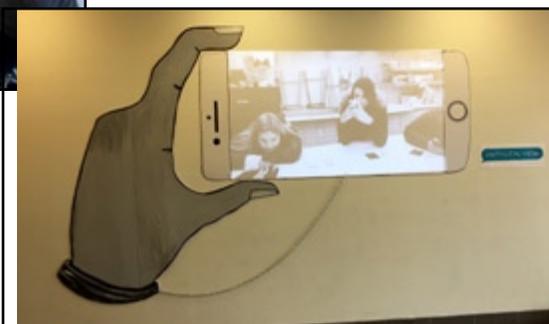
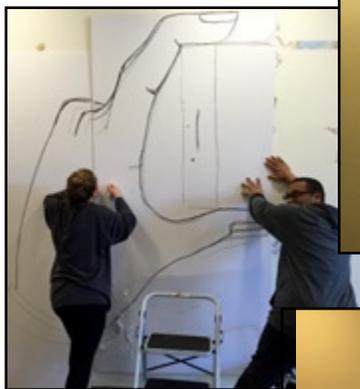
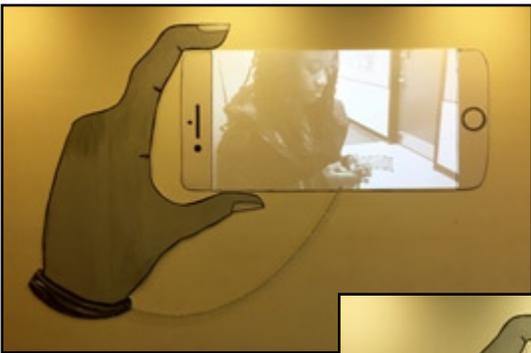


[ANTI]SOCIAL MEDIA

A giant hand holding a giant phone, handcuffed to its wrist, explores how attached we are to our phones. The projection demonstrates how distracting phones can be to teachers and students. PICA encourages everyone to reflect on their phone use and how it affects our everyday lives. Look up!



^watch the video!

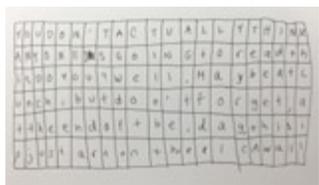


Reader's Block

PICA learned how to use a laser cutter to create all these stencils just so they could spell out a simple message to the school. Like many projects, this was a lot more complicated than it may look!



< watch a time-lapse video of the process.



World Records

120 vinyl records were outfitted with a country's flag. In addition, several original flag designs were created by PICA students. They manipulated records, played with words, and portrayed music as a universal language that connects the world - no matter where you come from.



^ Listen to the Fire Beat PICA created for this work.



Tribute to the Artist Formerly Known as Prince

Prince died on April 21, 2016. PICA created many stencils of the symbol he substituted for his name, in different sizes, and painted them in multiple layers, in positive and negative, using many shades of purple spray paint. A live concert from 1982 was added, on loop, encouraging the community to reflect on Prince's legacy and on his influence on so many artists today.



PICA Teaches~

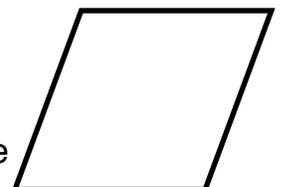
- To Trust (the genius of) your individual intuition; =\ your subconscious mind //={ To collaborate & work with & learn from Others }
- To embrace (Complexity & Paradox) To avoid over-simplification ; > dichotomies <
- To appreciate Art, actively and creatively < beyond an artist's intentions ~ or a label on a wall. a viewer's -interpretation- is just as valid >
- ["to think critically"]
- To be creative % unique * even in a standardized Environment
- To take risks } to venture out of your safezone\ To stick to something ; even when it gets difficult)
- To value and trust Experimentation <exploration, wandering, brainstorming, digging, investigation>
- To accept making mistakes (To Value mistakes) } To turn mistakes into assets ;
- To Find & appreciate beauty, in unlikely places ._.
(to recognize and avoid clichés)
[To understand the difference between art & advertising)
- To find metaphor & meaning in the physical world [to create it]
- To be an active participant [a producer] / rather than a passive consumer
- To express yourself [confidently] > To defend the right of Others to express themselves
- To ask questions [curiously] - - - - to find creative solutions to problems
- To Finish.
What. You. Start.. (((to embrace the struggle with closure

-To think big ..(Literally & symbolically)))))))))
analytically,

for yourself,

and

Outside the



PICA Students 2010 - 2016:

Megan Arden
Robert Bertagna
Emily Birge
Eliza Borish
Brittany Brown
Andrew Cohen
Nicholas Connolly
Andrew Davidson
Jack Delaney
Aiden Dobens
Sophia Durka
Georgie Edelstein
Max Feld
Julia Forster
Ryan Friedsam
Nathaniel Gibbs
Abbie Ginzburg
Federico Girardi
Emma Green
Lovia Gyarkye
Gabrielle Herzig
Izzy Hilder
Madeline Hopper
Sashie Israel
Nairobi Jeanniton
Russell Johnson
Zachary Kalish
Sophia Kanavos
Emilie Kern

Aliza Klingenstein
Charles Knudsen
Jenny Kronish
Salome Lasry
Michael Lesser
Ian Lipman
Alexander Mahedy
Jake Margolis
Jacqueline Marin
Timothy Mentor
Matthieu Miller
Abby Normal
Lucas Onetti
Nathaniel Pollack
Andrew Ravaschiere
Johnnie Roberts
Scott Rodeo, Jr.
Jay Rodriguez
Yomalis Rosario
Dustin Ross
Justin Sandler
Katherine Shifke
Alex Shinder
Andy Steinberg
Alex Sudolsky
Rebecca Topper
Will Trammel
Jaime Weisfelner
Chris Worrell

PICA Teacher:

Nicky Enright
www.Lightbolt.net

Riverdale Country School Visual Art Department Chair:

Peter Simon
www.riverdale.edu

