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Authentic Assessment in Art History:
A Case for Video Podcasts

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More than just entertainment, podcasts today are increasingly blurring the boundaries between popular culture and academic research as a new form of public scholarship.[1] For decades, scholars of teaching and learning have argued for their use in the classroom both as an accessible replacement for traditional textbooks and as a project-based assignment that integrates digital tools and technologies.[2] Historians in particular have shown that learner-generated podcasts are an especially effective form of "authentic assessment," encouraging students to practice "independent meaning-making while foregrounding the historian's process," as Jennifer Mara DeSilva argues.[3] Relatively little, however, has been written about the implementation of podcasts within the field of art history specifically.[4] This is surprising, given longstanding efforts to shift art historical pedagogy towards a constructivist approach rooted in creativity and higher-order problem solving, as argued for by Marie Gasper-Hulvat, Alysha Meloche and Jen Katz-Buonincontro, and Julia Sienkewicz in previous volumes of this journal.[5] For art historians teaching in art and design departments, video podcasts in particular offer a compelling opportunity for authentic assessment by synthesizing art historical research with studio and design skills central to a BFA curriculum.

In this essay, I present a rationale and implementation strategy for assigning a research-based video podcast project in an upper-division art history course geared toward BFA students. This reflection stems from my experience teaching art history in an art and design department at a large polytechnic university, where I began implementing this assignment in 2024. Most scholarship on learner-generated podcast assignments focuses on their use in introductory surveys. Podcasts can, however, also be highly effective in an upper-level context given the right scaffolding and research requirements, particularly for students majoring in creative fields. As a narrative form of communication, podcasts reframe art historical research and writing as a creative process of storytelling. This can help students connect the subjective modes of thinking emphasized in their studio classes to the open-ended, inquiry-based nature of the historical process. Video podcasts are particularly effective as an authentic assessment for BFA students because they ground these skills in an explicitly visual medium. In doing so, a research-based video podcast assignment can encourage students to make what Karen

Manarin has identified as "a key conceptual shift from seeing research as an exercise in finding and using information to seeing research as the creation and communication of knowledge."[6] In what follows, I describe the rationale behind my decision to develop this assignment, detail its implementation, and offer examples of student learning outcomes.

Podcasts as Authentic Assessments

I teach art history at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly), which is perhaps best known for its motto "Learn by Doing." More than a symbolic gesture, "Learn by Doing" is an active pedagogical ethos on campus. Many students in fact choose to attend Cal Poly with the expectation that their classes will prioritize project-based assignments and other applied learning methods. Art history is part of the Art & Design department, which is under the College of Liberal Arts. The department serves around 240 BFA majors at any given time, with concentrations in Studio Art, Graphic Design, and Photography and Video. Though we currently do not have an art history major, we do have an art history minor, which attracts students from across the university. Art history's role at Cal Poly, then, is primarily to support the BFA program, as well as the minor and university-wide general education (GE) requirements.

To teach upper-division art history courses effectively within a BFA program at a polytechnic requires different strategies than teaching art history majors at a research university or liberal arts college. While creative, project-based methods are certainly useful in all educational contexts, traditional writing assignments remain significant for art history majors who might go on to graduate school or other writing-focused studies or careers. For BFA majors, upper-level art history courses play a different role. In the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) guidelines, art history forms part of a BFA major's "common body of knowledge and skills" outside of their particular specialization.[7] In other words, it plays a supporting role, helping students develop skills in analysis and critical evaluation that they can use in their studio or design practice.

In my experience, BFA students tend to treat research papers or other traditional essay-based assignments as merely rote tasks required for course credit rather than an "authentic assessment" of skills relevant to their major field of study. This disengagement prohibits students from making important connections between art history's tools of analysis and their own visual practice. The ability to "synthesize" "capabilities in studio, analysis, history, and technology," however, is another central NASAD requirement for a BFA degree.[8] Video podcasts offer an effective solution to this problem by grounding art historical research and writing in an applied, creative modality that better integrates into a BFA curriculum. In order to generate a video podcast, students must synthesize art historical context and analysis with visual communication strategies from their studio and design courses. Furthermore, as a digital medium, students gain experience integrating these skills in a specifically digital environment.

While the visual component of a video podcast makes them particularly effective forms of authentic assessment for BFA majors, podcast projects are also effective alternative research assessments for art history minors and GE students. All of the key learning objectives of a

traditional research paper are present in the podcast project, such as how to pose an effective research question, identify and find appropriate sources, develop a thesis, and marshal evidence in support of an argument. These objectives are simply reframed through a narrative lens, giving students more creative freedom to shape the form and rhetorical style of their argument. By granting more creative control, podcast projects as a whole encourage students to center their own voices and thereby explore the relationship between subjective framing and objective fact that lies at the heart of historical writing. In another volume of this journal, Alpesh Kantilal Patel similarly argued for the power of framing art history as a form of storytelling:

> Indeed, embedded in art history is an element of fiction that underscores that it is partial. There can always be another story, another way of looking at seemingly the same set of assumptions (or "facts"). Thinking of art history as storytelling empowers students to create the histories they deserve and consider them in dialogue with those they may not see in the classroom.[9]

To do this effectively, however, faculty must scaffold the project through activities that support skill acquisition as well as staged assignments that provide students with feedback during the development of their project, rather than simply at the end. As DeSilva shows, "authentic assessment cannot be tacked onto a course, but exists as an integral organizing component that spurs activities that develop skills, direct knowledge acquisition, and result in a culminating 'product.'"[10] This scaffolding is also crucial for avoiding what Brian Hotson and Stevie Bell have identified as the "fetishization of digital writing projects"—that is, a tendency to think of assignments like podcasts as "fun alternatives" to research papers without providing the needed structure to support student engagement and learning.[11] As Hotson and Bell describe, this leads to the ultimate failure of these assignments as students do not have the tools or support to treat the project seriously. Below, I outline the entire pedagogical framework of my assignment, including learning objectives, detailed descriptions and rationales for each stage of the project, as well as reflections on my experience leading students through this process. I conclude by offering observations on how it has improved student engagement and learning in my classes through examples from past student projects, as well as ideas for future developments. While this assignment takes the form of a video podcast meant to integrate with a BFA curriculum, it could easily be adapted to an audio podcast in cases where video editing might pose accessibility issues.[12]

Assignment Description and Methodology

Beginning in 2024, I replaced traditional research papers with research-based video podcasts in two of my 300-level art history courses: "Art Since 1945," which is required of all BFA majors and usually taken in their sophomore or junior year, and "Nineteenth Century Art," which is a BFA elective and also a popular GE course. Both courses have a class size of 25-30 students, the majority of whom are BFA majors. Two of the learning objectives for both courses are to formulate interpretations of artworks based on their visual features and their social, cultural, and political contexts, and to develop original arguments using research and supporting evidence.

The podcast assignment has four learning objectives to help students meet these overall course goals: 1) develop a focused research question from your own interests that can be used to guide the project, 2) find and evaluate appropriate research sources using the university library and scholarly databases, 3) craft a structured narrative that creatively communicates your research findings to a general audience, and 4) find and employ images to support and enhance your narrative.

For the project, students are asked to produce an eight-to-ten-minute video podcast focused on a single work of art using a minimum of three substantial, scholarly sources. Students have the option to work in pairs or by themselves. If they choose to work in pairs, the project length and research requirements are doubled, so that each student remains responsible for the same amount of work. To ensure that students meet the learning objectives, I break the project into four separate stages with feedback at each stage: an initial proposal, a research statement and annotated bibliography, a script/outline and draft recording, and the final project. I spread these assignments out over the duration of the course alongside two in-class workshops. The first workshop, conducted at the beginning of the course, introduces students to podcasts as a narrative form of scholarship by analyzing rhetorical structures and techniques across different podcast styles. The second workshop, conducted around the mid-point, focuses on research methods and navigating institutional research platforms. The final project is due during finals week and consists of an mp4 file, a written synopsis, and their final bibliography.

The first workshop examining the narrative structure and style of podcasts is crucial and should not be skipped. Unlike a static resource page, an in-class workshop helps to combat the fetishization of digital writing projects by building a collective methodological framework through active learning techniques grounded in students' own analysis of different podcast styles. The primary goal of the workshop is to help students identify and evaluate different rhetorical and stylistic techniques they can use to transform research information into a compelling narrative for a public, mainstream audience. I begin by asking students to break into small groups and discuss what podcasts they already listen to and what they like about those podcasts. When we come back together, I make a list of their observations on the board as a collective starting point. We then turn to look at professional examples they can use as models for their project. I screen clips from three different styles of video resources, all of which are focused on single works of art: a lightly scripted conversational example with two speakers (*Smarthistory*), a scripted but casual example with a single speaker (*The Art Assignment*), and a formal, scripted example with a single speaker (*Great Art Explained*). While they watch the clips, I ask students to take notes on the narrative structures and rhetorical techniques in each, such as the opening hook, the speaker's tone and language, how they transition from one point to the next, the relationship between the images and the narrative, the inclusion of text on screen, and the use of music. I also ask them to identify the core takeaway each video tries to communicate and what kind of information the speaker(s) use to present and support that core takeaway, such as a visual, historical, political, or cultural lens. After each example, the students break into their small groups to compare notes. After we've watched all three examples, students then discuss which of the three they felt most drawn to, what specific strategies they

liked or didn't like, and how those strategies affected their ability to follow and learn from the video.

For example, one strategy that often gets debated is whether to use music under the entirety of the video or only in key moments. Many students find the former distracting, while others argue that it helps them focus. Through these discussions, students gain awareness that their communication preferences are not universal. This encourages them to think about how the rhetorical strategies they choose for their podcasts represent subjective acts of communication oriented towards a specific audience, similar to writing-based assignments like op-eds. Because video podcasts include visual and audio components, however, they must also consider how the aesthetic qualities of their projects might engage (or deter) potential audiences. By connecting the narrative strategies to these aesthetic components in the workshop—which I record on Zoom and post on our learning management system (LMS)—students gain a ground level awareness of basic podcast tools and mechanics, which they can use to build their own projects.

For the first stage of the assignment, students submit a project proposal in which they must describe 1) their chosen work and what interests them about it, 2) what style of podcast they plan to create, and 3) a proposed bibliography with at least three substantial, scholarly sources. The only limits on their topic are that it must fall under the time period covered in class and it cannot be a work already discussed in lecture. The primary factor I underscore at this stage is that they must choose a topic that is either relevant to their own practice or is something they would actively like to learn more about, whether it be a painting or sculpture, poster design or typeface, or work of fashion or architecture. Because the BFA program serves studio art, graphic design, and photography and video, my students have a wide range of artistic and professional concentrations. By encouraging them to choose objects outside of the traditional art world and by centering the proposal around their interest in the work, students are more likely to feel personally invested in their projects, which helps support stronger research and engagement. This also helps break down traditional art historical hierarchies and teaches them that their interests are significant and worthy of scholarly research.[13]

To ensure that they develop the content of their project in tandem with its form, students must also identify what style of podcast they plan to create from a list of six examples I provide. These examples include the three video resources covered in the workshop, as well as *Art History Babes* (conversational and informal), *Art Off the Wall* (single-speaker with an emphasis on pop culture references), and *Nerdwriter* (single-speaker with an emphasis on detail-driven visual analysis). As with their choice of work, they must provide a brief description of their interest in this podcast style and identify what rhetorical elements in particular they plan to emulate—both in terms of content and production. This proposal allows me to identify any issues in their understanding of the project and give them feedback and recommendations if their chosen work or podcast style presents any potential hurdles.

Once students have received feedback on their proposal, the next step is to begin their research. To support this, I hold a second workshop specifically on research methods near the mid-point of the course. In the early years of my teaching, I took for granted that students

understood what it meant to do research. As Karen Manarin has discussed, students often "see literary [or artistic] research as an exercise in finding and repeating what others have said," rather than a process of developing "an original intellectual or creative contribution."[14] In the research workshop—which I also record and post on our LMS—I begin with a basic overview of how to use the university library database, WorldCat, and Interlibrary Loan, as well as how to find high-resolution images. This gives all students a reminder on how to navigate institutional resources and also ensures that any transfer students who might be taking the class are brought up to speed. The majority of the workshop, however, is spent discussing how to conceptualize the research process in general. The most consistent problem I see among my students is a tendency to limit their research to secondary sources that explicitly say what a work is *about*. This method produces podcasts that are more like reports, in which students simply reiterate information without considering their own perspectives or interests. One core objective of this assignment, however, is to teach students that writing history is not merely finding and reiterating facts, but about interrogating the past through a series of increasingly focused inquiries and communicating the knowledge that results from that process. For this reason, the research workshop must be more than simply how to navigate institutional resources. It must break down the research process step-by-step.

To help students develop these skills, I encourage them to approach their research as a three-step process. This is where the project's storytelling framework meets the argument form of a traditional research paper. The first step I describe as "information gathering." I encourage students to start with a broad survey of online sources about the work and artist to help them get a sense of the key issues and contexts, paying special attention to information that relates to the interests they described in their initial proposal. Their goal in this stage is to develop a specific question through which they will research and tell the story of their chosen work. Once they determine this question, then they begin their substantial research. In this second stage, which I call the "critical take," students must dig deeper into scholarly sources to uncover information beyond what can be found online. I encourage them here to read not only about the work itself, but about any events, contexts, or issues that will help them answer their guiding research question. The goal in this stage is to build their own "critical take" on the work. I use the term "critical take" rather than "thesis" because this shift in language supports a subjective mode of thinking that better integrates with the narrative form of the podcast. They are presenting their own take, thereby telling their own story, about the work. The last stage of research, which I call "loose ends," comes after they've written their script and before they produce their final recording. In this stage, they must look for any holes in their story and find any additional resources or images needed to make sure their take is focused and well-supported.

Two weeks after this workshop, students submit a short research statement with their guiding research question, a description of their "critical take" on the work, as well as an annotated bibliography with at least three substantial, scholarly sources. This allows me to double check that their research is on track, while still leaving time for them to course correct if there are any major issues. The last developmental stage of the project asks them to submit a written outline or script, a practice audio recording, and a reflection on the recording, as well as a video

production plan. Here, at the outline and script stage, is where they must apply the rhetorical techniques discussed in the podcast workshop by weaving their research into a narrative that draws viewers in through a clear and compelling flow of information. To support this, their outline or script must include an opening hook, a statement or rhetorical question that sets the stage for their "critical take," detailed points that build and support that take, and a satisfying (or deliberately unsatisfying!) conclusion. While this in some ways mimics the structure of a traditional essay, by shifting my language to emphasize narrative rhetorical strategies, students are more likely to develop their script using a personal, creative voice, which is essential for a successful podcast.

The practice recording is the most recent addition to my assignment. As Hotson and Bell note, instructors must consider how the shift from written to digital media "lead(s) to changes of experience and perspective that modify authorial thinking and, therefore, shape content."[15] To develop a podcast effectively, students must develop their content in tandem with its audio/visual format. The first time I assigned this project I did not require a practice recording. Students inevitably treated the recording itself as a secondary task, which resulted in podcasts that were little more than research papers read out loud. The practice recording is highly effective for helping students hear for themselves how written and spoken voices differ in communicating a narrative. To ensure that they are listening to and analyzing their practice recordings, I require them to submit a short reflection identifying issues they need to improve for the final project. While I have considered requiring students to submit a practice recording that includes the video component, video production can be a significant amount of work. It's more important that this draft is an easy and approachable step to help them develop the tone and flow of their script. The video production plan is sufficient to double check that they are thinking about which platform and methods they plan to use for the final recording.

For the video component of the project, I instruct students to create a slideshow of images that corresponds to their script. Beyond a basic image of the work, they must include a title slide for their podcast and enough details and contextual images to support their "critical take" and make their narrative easy to follow. One element they are graded on, for example, is the degree to which the images on screen support what is being discussed. Additionally, students must also consider whether they'll use text, arrows, or other visual tools to point out key details, whether or not to include speaker view, and if so when, as well as additional images that can be interspersed to help shape the style of their podcast, such as memes or other pop culture references. I encourage students to practice their scripts with the slideshow before recording, and to indicate in their scripts when they should advance to the next slide so that transitions are seamless.

While video production can become extremely complex, I provide a list of highly accessible platforms that students can choose from according to their comfort with technology or previous experience with video. For students with no video production experience, I encourage them to choose a simple screen recording platform, such as Zoom, ScreenPal, or Powerpoint, all of which are provided to faculty and students at the university free of charge. Though ScreenPal requires some set-up, it is a straightforward screen recorder with an easy-to-use edit-

ing feature that allows students to edit out any mistakes or pauses, making it particularly useful for those creating a conversational podcast. Recording in either Zoom or Powerpoint are the most straightforward options, but neither have an editing feature and so are most suitable for students who chose to do a formal, scripted podcast that can be practiced ahead of time and done in one take. For students who have experience with video production, I encourage them to use iMovie or Adobe Premiere if they already have access to the software. While there are many paid online platforms for video podcast recording that offer free trials or basic services, I discourage students from opening personal accounts with outside companies for this project.

For the final project, students are required to submit an mp4 file of their finished eight-to-ten-minute podcast as well as a written synopsis and bibliography. The synopsis includes information they would need to develop if they were to post their podcast publicly. This includes a podcast title and brief description of the podcast as a whole, an episode title and brief synopsis of the episode, as well as names and brief bios for the podcast hosts and any guests. To grade their final projects, I use a rubric that weights content, organization of information, and video production equally. "Content" focuses on the quality of research and evidence provided for their "critical take," "organization of information" focuses on the structure of their narrative, and "video production" focuses on the quality of the recording, including any necessary edits to cut errors as well as the timing, amount, and quality of the images and other design elements.

Student Learning Outcomes

Here, I offer some concrete examples of the ways in which this project has improved student engagement and learning outcomes in my classes. In summary, for all students (BFA majors, art history minors, and GE students), the greatest improvement across the board has been in their ability to develop an original argument rooted in their own interests and perspectives—one of the key learning objectives of the class. The narrative framework of the podcast has also helped improve their core research questions, which on the whole have become more focused and nuanced. Requiring them to consider and describe their rhetorical style has also helped them center their own perspectives in their arguments. For GE students, the freedom to choose a work that interests them coupled with the emphasis on personal narrative has led some students to more clearly connect their project to their major field of study. For BFA students, the creative freedom to shape the visual aesthetic of the video component has encouraged more synthesis between their art historical research and their own studio and design practices, helping our program fulfill a key NASAD requirement. Somewhat unexpectedly, the project has also encouraged all students to do more primary source research, both through historical documents and through interviews with contemporary artists. Below, I describe a few examples of student projects to better detail these improvements.

By having to choose a specific rhetorical style in which to present their argument, students on the whole developed original arguments more consistently and were more frequently able to situate their arguments in relation to a larger scholarly conversation. For example, one senior studio art major used a "hot take" rhetorical style in their podcast, which centered their

argument against a mainstream opinion. Here is their opening hook: "Welcome to "X's Cozy Ranting Corner! Today we're going to talk about El Anatsui's *Behind the Red Moon*, currently on view at the Tate Modern. As you all know, in the Ranting Corner it's obligatory to start off with a strong statement, so here we go. I hate the way art critics talk about this work!" After providing a rich visual description of the installation, the student then launched into a nuanced close reading of the language used in reviews of the Tate exhibition. They found that most reviews shallowly described El Anatsui's use of discarded metal bottle caps as turning "trash into treasure." The student then showed why this was problematic by situating the artist's work in the context of postcolonial Ghana, where reclaiming scrap metal is a common and necessary act of survival. The "hot take" rhetorical style bolstered their confidence in their argument and supported their critique of the way El Anatsui's work is often situated in contemporary art criticism.

The podcast project's reframing of argument in terms of narrative and storytelling has also led students to develop more nuanced and engaging research questions. This, along with the creative freedom in both the rhetorical style and visual component, allowed many BFA students to synthesize skills from their studio practice into their research narrative. Jordan Mendelevitch, a junior photography and video major, for example, produced a compelling analysis of Léon Ferrari's The Western Christian Civilization (1965), a controversial assemblage sculpture featuring a figure of Christ affixed to a US bomber jet.[16] Using advanced video editing skills acquired in other classes, this student was able to produce a professional level video podcast that clearly synthesized art historical writing with studio-based skills. His opening hook is also an excellent example of a strong narrative supported by a strong research question. The podcast opened with a dark screen and ominous music. A spotlight began to flicker over an image of the work, before snapping on with an audible crack. Over this, Jordan narrated his introduction:

> You walk into a dimly lit gallery. A single spotlight illuminates Christ, not on a cross, but crucified onto the body of a US military bomber. The sacred and the violent collide, compelling us to ask, what does it mean when symbols of faith and war become indistinguishable? Today's episode focuses on León Ferrari, whose work confronted the darkest alliances between religion and power. We'll analyze his sculpture The Western Christian Civilization and its historical, visual, and cultural significance. But first, let's take a step back into the world Ferrari inhabited: Cold War Latin America.

Jordan then provided rigorously researched background information on US military interventions across Latin America in the 1950s and '60s, focusing especially on the way the Catholic Church supported these interventions and the brutal dictatorships that rose to power in their wake, particularly in Argentina where Ferrari was working. To support this narrative in the video, he wove together found footage of military jets, protest marches, and UN meetings, which effectively communicated a visceral sense of political violence and instability. After a close reading of the imagery and materials in the sculpture, he situated Ferrari's tactics in relation to the modernist tradition of using shock value to communicate raw truths about war

and brutality, comparing the work to Francisco Goya's *Third of May* (1814) and Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937). He concluded by addressing the work's ongoing significance, focusing on Ferrari's 2004 retrospective, in which the sculpture became the center of protests, vandalism, and debates on censorship following its public denouncement by the future Pope Francis. Jordan ended the podcast with his own views on the work's contemporary relevance: "In today's world, where authoritarianism is on the rise, his work remains as relevant as ever. Through his art, Ferrari asks us what happens when faith is weaponized for violence. His message challenges us to stay vigilant. Art can and must question those who hold power." While Jordan's podcast was certainly one of the standouts, it shows how this project can support advanced students by giving them creative freedom to follow their interests and flex their skills.

This is true of BFA students from all three concentrations, not just those with experience in video editing. One junior graphic design major, for example, used the project as an opportunity to develop their skills in 3D animation. They chose an image from the early years of computer art called *4 Byte Burger* (1985). What the student found compelling about the image is that it only exists today as a photograph of the original computer screen, since the work predated the ability to save graphics files. Already a proficient illustrator, this student chose to experiment with a new 3D animation software they were concurrently learning in another class by creating a digital art historian avatar of themselves. Their project is an excellent example of the ways podcasts encourage students to think about the relationship between the content of their research and the form in which they communicate that research, as their podcast about a lost digital image took place entirely within an illustrated, digital environment. One of their big takeaways was a thoughtful reflection on the importance of conservation in digital media.

Unexpectedly, the podcast format also encouraged students to conduct more primary source research. Students on the whole included more quotes from artists and contemporaneous figures than they had in my experience assigning traditional research essays. Some students also produced original interviews with contemporary artists using the option to do a conversational style podcast. One senior GE student, for example, chose to do their podcast on a work by a Bay Area contemporary landscape painter the student knew from their surfing community. First, the student conducted their "information gathering" research by having an initial, informal conversation with the artist. They discovered that many of the artist's works aligned with the concept of the sublime, which we had studied in class. To develop their "critical take," they read more deeply into the aesthetic theory of the sublime, researched its historical relationship to landscape painting, and also how contemporary artists have continued that tradition. In their final podcast, they presented this research as background context and conducted a structured conversational interview with the artist that focused on their work's connection to the sublime and where they fit into the contemporary use of it. It's important to note that this student had only taken one introductory survey course in art history before this class and had very little experience with humanities-based research. Their project is another excellent example of the power creative freedom has to inspire students to step outside of their comfort zone.

One more example shows how the creative freedom of a podcast project can be particu-

larly effective as an authentic assessment for GE students. In my experience, GE students often struggle to connect the content of an art history class with their major field of study. Because I encourage students from the beginning to frame their project around their own personal voice and interests, many GE students have found ways to make these connections clearer. For example, in my "Nineteenth Century Art" class, one student majoring in Agriculture Science chose to do their podcast on Jean-François Millet's *The Angelus* (1857-59), which depicts two peasant farmers stopping to pray during a potato harvest. This student researched nineteenth-century farming practices in France in order to contextualize Millet's engagement with Realism as an artistic style. On top of this clear connection to their own major, the student was also able to incorporate deeply personal reflections on this painting. Having grown up in a family of farmworkers and having worked on seasonal harvests themself, this student could attest personally to the power of prayer and faith within these working conditions. Their project is an excellent example of how creative freedom and an emphasis on personal voice can transform art historical research into powerful stories.

Future Developments

To conclude, I offer some reflections on ways I plan to develop and improve this assignment in the future. One relatively straightforward improvement is to require a peer review for their practice recordings. A peer review would offer students more opportunity to identify issues with the tone of their writing and the narrative flow of their information, potentially leading to a deeper understanding of the way style and technique can shape the effectiveness of a podcast as a form of communication.

I have additionally been developing ways to deepen the assignment's engagement with the ethos of authentic assessment. Because my university is located in a rural area without access to a major museum collection, students have primarily produced podcasts on works they are unable to see in person. I am currently working with the university archives, however, to identify works of visual art and culture in their collections that would fit existing course topics, such as "Nineteenth Century Art" and "Art of the Americas." By collaborating with the university archives, students will have the chance to produce original research on objects they can study in person. They will also have the option to make their podcasts publicly available through the library website. If podcasts are effective forms of authentic assessment in part because they "foreground the historian's process," as DeSilva argues, then part of that process should include the public presentation of research. Through this collaboration, students will be able to engage more fully with podcasting as a form of public scholarship, including how to shape the tone of the narrative to reach a specific public audience.

I wish to underscore, however, that public posting should always be optional. Requiring students to post their work publicly online is a potential FERPA violation. It can also cause harmful levels of stress and anxiety and risks exposing vulnerable students to the public eye. For example, while I have considered creating a class channel on a public video platform such as Vimeo or YouTube, the risks associated with this, even for students who opt-in, seem greater than the educational benefits. Even if the channel were to remain privately accessible to stu-

dents in the class, uploading student material to a for-profit corporate platform poses unnecessary risks and complications that can be avoided by working with educational or non-profit institutions. Lastly, if public posting of any kind were to be made an option, instructors would also need to add a component on image rights and intellectual property to the research workshop.

While in-class presentations are a potential solution to these issues, in courses with high enrollment caps such as mine, the time required to do this can pose a major difficulty. Students also miss out on the added level of seriousness that comes with the public presentation of scholarship. Another solution I have considered is to organize an optional on-campus screening event during finals week. This event would give students an accessible space to present their work publicly, regardless of their topic, without the risks associated with online publication. It would also give them an opportunity to share and celebrate their hard work with their peers and the larger university community. The spirit of fellowship and learning is, after all, at the heart of the historical process.

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Notes

1 Glen Thompson and Karen Graaff, "Thinking with/in Surfing: Podcasting as Public Pedagogy and Scholarship in/for the Global South," *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning* 11, no. SI2 (2023): 38-54, https://doi.org/10.14426/cristal.v11iSI2.1692; Jonathan Bentley Singer, "Podcasting as social scholarship: A tool to increase the public impact of scholarship and research," *Journal of the Society of Social Work and Research* 10, no. 4 (2019): 571-590, https://doi.org/10.1086/706600.

2 Jessie Lovett Allen, "Teaching with Narrative Nonfiction Podcasts," *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia* 28, no. 2 (2019): 139-164; Erin D. Besser, et al, "Engaging Students Through Educational Podcasting: Three Stories of Implementation," *Technology, Knowledge and Learning* 27, no. 3 (2022): 749–64, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-021-09503-8; Emanuele Fantini, "Podcasting for Interdisciplinary Education: Active Listening, Negotiation, Reflexivity, and Communication Skills," *Humanities & Social Sciences Communications* 11, no. 1 (2024): 1583–89, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-04119-6; Raphael Struck et al., "Podcasts as Learner-Created Content in Higher Education," *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design* 1, no. 2 (2011): 20–30, https://doi.org/10.4018/ijopcd.2011040102.

3 Jennifer Mara DeSilva, "Historical Practice and Artifact-Focused Authentic Assessment in an Introductory World History Course," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 48, no. 1 (2023): 5, https://doi.org/10.33043/TH.48.1.3-25.

4 One excellent example, however, is Fran Altvater, "Words on the Wadsworth: Podcasting and the Teaching of Art History," *Journal of Effective Teaching* 9, no. 3 (2009): 77–88, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1092131.

5 Alysha Meloche and Jen Katz-Buonincontro, "Creativity-Integrated Art History: A Pedagogical Framework," *Art History Pedagogy & Practice* 3, no. 1 (2018), https://doi.org/10.14713/ahpp.v3i1.2166; Julia A. Sienkewicz, "Against the 'Coverage' Mentality: Rethinking Learning Outcomes and the Core Curriculum," *Art History Pedagogy & Practice* 1, no. 1 (2016), https://doi.org/10.14713/ahpp.v1i1.2151; Marie Gasper-Hulvat, "Active Learning in Art History: A Review of Formal Literature," *Art History Pedagogy & Practice* 2, no. 1 (2017), https://doi.org/10.14713/ahpp.v2i1.2155.

6 Karen Manarin, "Interpreting Undergraduate Research Posters in the Literature Classroom," *Teaching and Learning Inquiry* 4, no. 1 (2016): 55, https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.4.1.8.

7 National Association of Schools of Art and Design, *NASAD Handbook 2025-26* (NASAD, 2026), 112, https://nasad.arts-accredit.org/accreditation/standards-guidelines/handbook.

8 *NASAD Handbook 2025-26*, 112.

9 Alpesh Kantilal Patel, "Visual Diaries: Towards Art History as Storytelling," *Art History Pedagogy & Practice* 7, no. 1 (2022), https://doi.org/10.14713/ahpp.v7i1.2189.

10 DeSilva, "Historical Practice and Artifact-Focused Authentic Assessment," 4.

11 Brian Hotson and Stevie Bell, "'A Podcast Would Be Fun!': The Fetishization of Digital Writing Projects," *Discourse and Writing/Rédactologie* 32, no. 1 (2022): 5, https://doi.org/10.31468/dwr.915.

12 By requiring a video component, this project implicitly requires access to a computer, which in some institutional contexts might make this assignment less accessible for students. Most of the benefits of the podcast project can be achieved with an audio only format in these cases. At my university, students have access to computer labs within the department as well as a limited number of loaner laptops provided by both the department and the university library. I make sure to remind students of these resources at the beginning of the project.

13 Sometimes, objects outside of a traditional fine art context can present challenges for the student, either in conducting a clear visual analysis or finding appropriate research sources. I've found, however, that because students choose their objects out of personal interest, they are much more willing to work at surmounting these challenges. This often requires one-on-one meetings to ensure they are meeting assignment guidelines.

14 Manarin, "Interpreting Undergraduate Posters," 55.

15 Hotson and Bell, "A Podcast Would Be Fun," 10.

16 Many thanks to Jordan for granting me permission to quote his podcast at length. I've included his name at his request.