2026



TRENDS

The Journal of the Texas Art Education Association

Creative Writing, Research, & Visual Stories



Letter from the

PRESIDENT

Hello TAEA Membership,

As we begin another school year together, I am reminded how fortunate we are to be part of a community that believes deeply in the power of visual arts education. Every day, TAEA members inspire creativity, advocate for students, and strengthen our profession.

This year, we will continue to be guided by three words: Grace, Gratitude, and Growth. These pillars remind us to lead with kindness, appreciate those who serve alongside us, and continually seek opportunities to learn and improve.

I am especially encouraged by the positive momentum that came from our recent Sara Chapman Leadership Retreat. TAEA members gathered with a shared commitment to collaboration, thoughtful planning, and strong governance. The conversations were productive, the energy was inspiring, and the dedication to serving our membership was evident throughout the retreat.

As we move forward together, I am excited about the opportunities ahead. Thank you for your continued support, your passion for art education, and your commitment to TAEA. It is an honor to serve as your president, and I look forward to all we will accomplish together.

We look forward to seeing you in Galveston in November 2026!

With Appreciation,

Sandra Newton

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TAEA BOARD
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MEL BASHAM

Mary Ellen “Mel” Basham is a retired art educator with twenty years of teaching experience from day care owner/ director to high school. Mel has taught a variety of classes from Art 1 to Advanced Placement Studio and Art History as well as English and Creative Writing. She is a graduate of Sam Houston State University with a Bachelor of Fine Art in Studio Art and English minor. In 2021, Mel was recognized by Sam Houston Education Department as a Distinguished Educator of the Year in 2021. Mel is an active member of TAEA and has served TAEA in a number of positions. She currently is Distinguished Fellows Chairman.



ANGELICA MARTINEZ

Angelica Martinez, Ph.D. is an academic researcher and educator whose work examines the construction of motherhood identity at the intersections of technocapitalism and care labor. She holds a doctorate in Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communications from the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) and serves as Adjunct Faculty at UTD and Dallas College, teaching courses on visual culture, design, and transnational film. Beyond the classroom, she is the Speaker Series Coordinator for the Labor Tech Research Network.



EDITORIAL

> **“The presence of artificial intelligence in art education also raises challenges and critical concerns regarding authenticity, authorship, and human voice.”**

With technological advancements evolving rapidly and impacting all areas of modern day life, art educators must consider the complexities of how emerging technologies are being integrated into the teaching and learning of art. Technologies such as artificial intelligence are expanding creative possibilities, generating new ways of visualizing ideas, and providing alternative pathways to communicating and learning. However, the presence of artificial intelligence in art education also raises challenges and critical concerns regarding authenticity, authorship, and human voice.

The 2026 issue of TRENDS explores pedagogical approaches and critical issues in art education through the lens of emerging technologies in K-12 and higher education settings. The featured articles pose recommendations for interpreting and integrating artificial intelligence into educational practices. This year's issue acknowledges the risk and reward of integrating emerging technologies into art education as educators navigate how technology and machine intelligence coexist with human imagination.

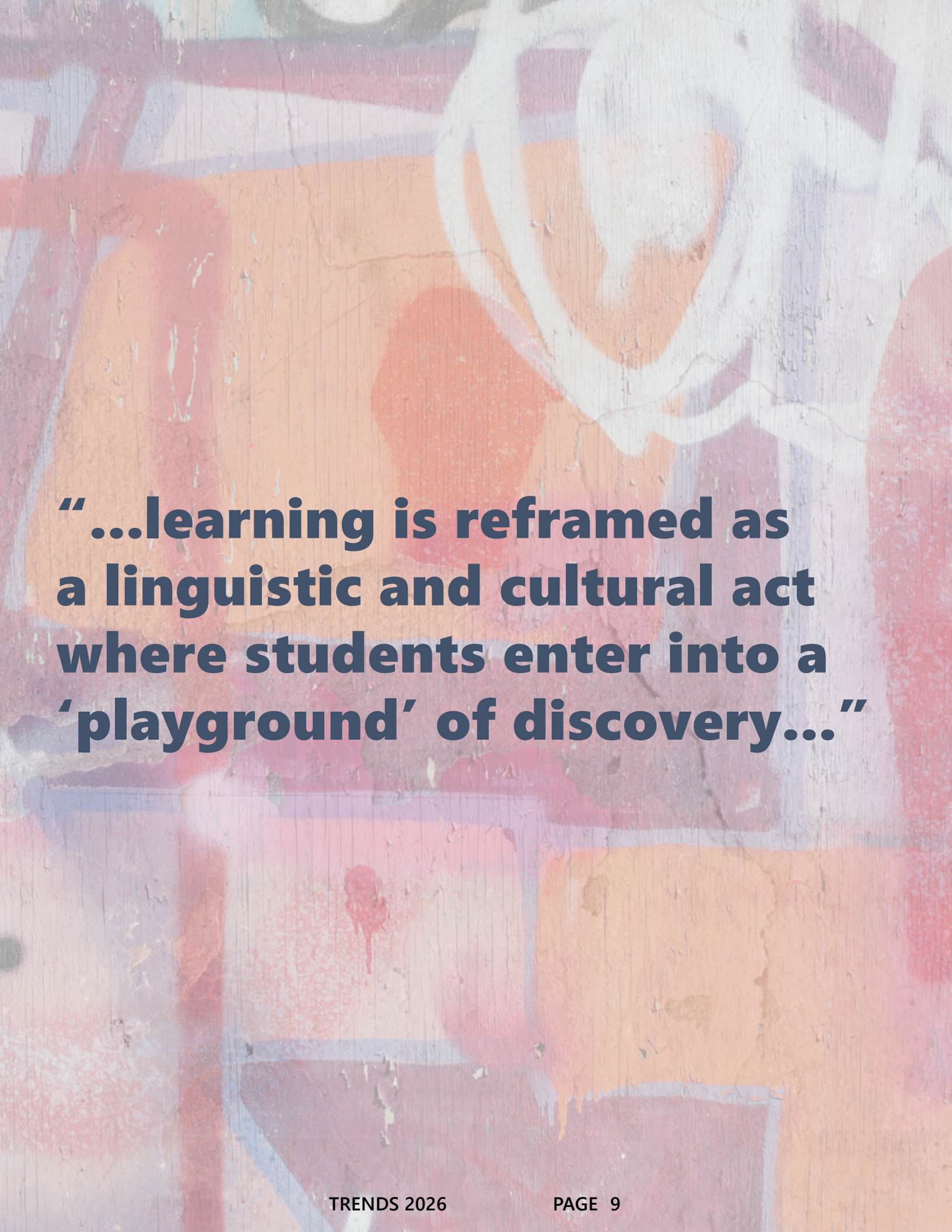
The first article embraces technology as a resource to engage students in reflective artmaking. Elementary age students apply technology to photograph and reinterpret self-portraits in Neo-Expressionistic styles while maintaining authenticity and personal meaning. Reflection, critical thinking, and visual literacy are addressed in the second article which delivers actionable tools and frameworks for integrating artificial intelligence at the secondary level. Recommended guidance is also provided through a tiered structure that clarifies the boundaries of creative authorship for students.

The third article honors the traditions of previous TRENDS issues by highlighting influential contemporary art through artist interviews. The interview highlights the perspectives and experiences of contemporary artist GONZO247, who is known for transforming public spaces across Texas and beyond through large scale murals, situating the dialogue of art within the changing landscape of art education. With a focus on Surrealism, the fourth article explores how artificial intelligence functions as an anatomical guide, encouraging students of all ages to develop understanding of gesture and anatomy while reinterpreting the human figure through surrealist practices.

Transitioning into the use of artificial intelligence at the university level, the fifth article provides curricular suggestions for reclaiming autonomy within a state of technological dependency in art appreciation coursework. By examining the gravitational pull between academic intuitions, artificial intelligence, and students, learning is reframed as a linguistic and cultural act where students enter into a “playground” of discovery while combining technical vocabulary and applications of artificial intelligence. The concluding article examines generative artificial intelligence policies in university art syllabi across a large community college system. The research proposes an artificial intelligence integration tool kit and designation system to support policy development and offset the lack of existing models for responsible artificial intelligence usage.

As Co-Editors we hope this issue will inspire you to reflect upon the possibilities of how you might incorporate emerging technologies into your art education practices.

David Moya, TRENDS Co-Editor
Keri Reynolds, TRENDS Co-Editor



“...learning is reframed as a linguistic and cultural act where students enter into a ‘playground’ of discovery...”

CO-EDITORS



DAVID MOYA

David Moya, Ed.D., serves as Department Chair of Visual Arts & Humanities at Dallas College, School of Creative Arts, Entertainment & Design, overseeing faculty and curriculum across seven campuses and online delivery. His research focuses on faculty technology adoption, syllabus policy development, and institutional frameworks for responsible AI integration in art education. Dr. Moya is co-editor of TRENDS, the journal of the Texas Art Education Association, and has presented on AI policy frameworks at regional and national conferences.



KERI REYNOLDS

Dr. Keri Reynolds is a National Board Certified Teacher and Secondary Fine Arts Lead in Houston, Texas. Her teaching experiences transcend across a variety of age levels ranging from kindergarten to adults in various capacities and community settings and include specialization in teaching studio art courses at the secondary level. She serves as the Secondary Research Commissioner for NAEA, and her research interests focus on contemporary art and community-based art education. Her recent publications include articles published in TAEA's TRENDS Journal and School Arts as well as presentations at TAEA, CEDFA, NAEA, and AP Annual Conferences.



GABRIEL FLORES

With 15 years of experience in art education, Gabriel currently serves as the Assistant Director of Fine Arts for the Pasadena ISD. He holds a BFA in Media Arts and Design and a MS in Educational Leadership. Gabriel has expertise in graphic design, 3D animation, and film, having previously worked in the oil and gas industry before making the transition into education. His work has garnered multiple Telly, Pixie, and Summit awards. Under his guidance, his students have achieved significant milestones in numerous local, state, and national visual art competitions. Gabriel also serves as the Texas Art Education Association's Media Facilitator and Photographer.



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Cover art courtesy of GONZO247.


Au

uthenticity in Digital Art

Samantha Hernandez

In my elementary art classroom, I am constantly navigating a tension that feels increasingly present in education: How do I embrace digital tools without losing the authenticity, struggle, and voice that make student artwork meaningful? As a first-generation Mexican American educator, my approach to teaching art is deeply rooted in identity, access, and expression. I want my students, many of whom are multilingual and come from diverse cultural backgrounds, to see themselves in their work and to feel that their voices matter. At the same time, I recognize that technology is already a part of their daily lives. The question is not whether to include technology, but how to use it intentionally.

This question came into focus during a recent self-portrait unit inspired by Jean-Michel Basquiat and elements of Neo-Expressionism. Traditionally, self-portrait projects in elementary classrooms can be intimidating. Students often equate success with realism, and many become discouraged when their drawings do not match what they see in the mirror. I have watched students disengage before they even begin, convinced they are not good at art because they cannot draw a perfect face. I wanted to disrupt that narrative.

Instructional Context and Approach

Rather than introducing a completely new tool, I built the lesson around resources students already had access to: classroom iPads. By incorporating styluses available in the art room, students photographed themselves and began the process of digitally editing their images. This initial step immediately lowered the barrier to entry. Students who might have struggled with proportion could now begin with an image that felt familiar and accurate.

The goal was never perfection, instead, the photograph became a starting point, a reference, and not the final product. From there, students layered digital marks, colors, and textures, and eventually incorporated hand-drawn elements inspired by Basquiat's expressive style. Crowns, symbols, repeated lines, and words began to emerge, transforming what could have been a simple edited photo into something more personal and complex. What I observed was a shift not just in process, but in mindset.

Figure 1. Student Artwork, *"Five Nights"*



“I wanted my students, many of whom are multilingual and come from diverse cultural backgrounds, to see themselves in their work and to feel that their voices

Relocating Creative Struggle
One of the most significant realizations from this unit was that technology did not eliminate struggle, instead it relocated it. In traditional self-portrait assignments, students often get stuck in technical frustration:

“My eyes don’t look right.”

“This doesn’t look like me.”

“I messed up.”

With the digital scaffold in place, those frustrations softened. Instead, I began hearing different kinds of questions that shifted from how to draw to what to say:

“What colors represent me?”

“Can I add words about how I feel?”

“What symbols should I use?”

This distinction matters, because when students are freed from the pressure of realism, they are more willing to take creative risks. They begin to experiment, layer, revise, and reflect. Their work becomes less about accuracy and more about meaning. In this way, technology serves as a support system.

Authorship and Student Voice
As students worked, our classroom conversations naturally expanded into questions of authorship, ownership, and exploration for a tool they normally use to learn with but not so much to create art with. Even at the elementary level, students are aware of how easily images can be altered, filtered, or generated. This awareness created an opportunity to introduce critical dialogue:

If you start with a photograph, is it still your artwork?

What makes something original?

These were not questions with simple answers, but they were important ones. Together, we discussed the difference between using technology as a resource versus relying on it to create for you. Students began to understand that their choices, the colors they selected, the marks they added, and the words they included, were what made the work theirs.



Figure 2. Student Artwork, *"A Flower Away From Home"*

To reinforce this idea, I intentionally required moments of hand-drawn intervention. Students drew over their images, added text in their own handwriting, and incorporated symbolic elements that could not be generated with a single tap. These choices anchored the work in their physical, human touch. The result was a balance between digital experimentation and personal expression.

Implications for Practice

Maintaining authenticity in the classroom is not about rejecting technology, it is about ensuring that students remain at the center of the creative process. As someone who creates outside the classroom, I understand the value of tools. In my own practice, I translate ideas across mediums, experimenting with process while holding onto meaning. I bring that same mindset into teaching. My students are not just learning how to use tools; they are learning how to make decisions. This is especially important for students who may not always see their identities reflected in traditional art spaces. By encouraging students to incorporate language, symbols, and personal references, I am inviting them to claim ownership over their narratives. Technology, when used thoughtfully, can support this process by providing additional entry points and ways of working.

In conversations around digital tools and emerging technologies, there is often a fear that they will diminish creativity or eliminate the need for skill. While these concerns are valid, my experience in the classroom suggests something more nuanced. By intentionally designing lessons that balance digital tools with authentic expression, we can ensure that students are not only prepared for the future of art and design, but also grounded in their own creative voices. In the end, the most important question is not what tools students use, but whether they recognize that the work they create still belongs to them.



Figure 3. Student Artwork, *"Blue Doodles"*

THE INFINITE SKETCHBOOK A AUTOMATED R

Navigating the AI Frontier in

Jamie Sainz

The Ghost in the Kiln

For decades, the art room has been the final sanctuary of the analog—the only place on campus where the cloud refers to the dust from a poorly ventilated clay bag rather than a server in Silicon Valley. It is a place of tactile resistance, characterized by clay under fingernails, the scent of fixative, and the happy accident that occurs when a student discovers that neon pink acrylic doesn't actually neutralize forest green.

But recently, a new guest has arrived in the studio, and it doesn't need to wash its brushes. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has entered the discourse of art education with the subtlety of a glitter explosion in a carpeted room. To some, it represents the end of real art; to others, it is just another tool, like the camera obscura or the first digital tablet (Benjamin, 2008). As we look forward, we must ask: How do we invite this ghost into the kiln without letting it burn the building down? More importantly, can this technology actually help us find the time to eat a real lunch for once?



AND THE UBRIC

the Art Classroom

"AI doesn't know wh
feels lonely, or why a
a scream, only the st

The Infinite Sketchbook: Creative Expression and Foundations
In the Texas Art TEKS, the Foundations strand emphasizes "observation and perception," while Creative Expression focuses on "communicating ideas with innovation" (TEA, 2026). Traditionally, we have relied on physical sketchbooks to bridge these two—the same sketchbooks that are often 40% high-level concepts and 60% doodles of cool S shapes. However, the blank page syndrome remains a formidable foe (Gude, 2007).

Generative AI tools like Nano Banana 2 or Canva Magic Studio act as an infinite sketchbook. Instead of replacing the student's hand, AI can be used to kitbash ideas:

> ***Scenario:*** *A student struggling to visualize a Surrealist landscape inspired by the Texas Gulf Coast can use AI to generate 20 variations. They aren't turning in the AI image; they are analyzing why version four has better lighting than version twelve, then physically painting a synthesis of both.*

This process elevates the student from a maker of marks to an Art Director, teaching them to curate and refine—skills that are increasingly vital in a digital economy where having an idea is often harder than holding a brush (Eisner, 2002). There are many AI tools that are particularly effective for the K-12 environment:





y a Gulf Coast sunset
jagged line feels like
tudent knows that."

Table 1

AI Tools for the Art Classroom

Tool	Classroom Use	Why it works for Art Educators
Gemini (Nano Banana 2)	Ideation & Research	High-fidelity generation that allows you to add/remove objects
Canva Magic Studio	Graphic Design & Layout	Accessible tools that help students understand visual hierarchy
Diffit	Differentiation	Takes one complex text and creates versions for on-level and ESL learners
NotebookLM	Art History	Upload your curriculum; it answers student questions based *only* on that data

The Automated Art Teacher: Streamlining the Admin-Monster
The modern art teacher is expected to be a master artist, a child psychologist, a supply chain manager for 4,000 pipe cleaners, and a social media influencer for the school's Instagram. This is where AI moves from creative tool to a lifesaving raft (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). To reach the heart of the TEKS while saving time, we can utilize Prompt Engineering:

> • ***Observation and Perception:*** Use AI to draft a visual scavenger hunt for seventh graders to find examples of asymmetrical balance in the school's architecture.
>
> •***Historical and Cultural Relevance:*** Ask AI for a list of ten contemporary Texas artists from underrepresented communities and a bell-ringer question for each.
>
> • ***Critical Evaluation and Response:*** Use AI as a supportive art critic to provide constructive feedback on 150 student artist statements so you don't have to spend your Sunday afternoon staring at a screen until your eyes cross.

Visual Literacy 2.0: Deconstructing the Black Box
Visual literacy is a forensic act. Our students are living in a world of deepfakes and slop (low-quality AI filler). This is the perfect time to teach the Uncanny Valley and Algorithmic Bias (Mori et al., 2012; Rollins, 2025). The Uncanny Valley describes the dip in empathy we feel when something looks almost human but is jarringly off. As an object becomes more human-like, our affinity increases—until it hits The Uncanny Valley. Suddenly, a frozen smile or skin that looks a bit too much like deli meat triggers a biological danger response.

> • **Teachable Moment:** Have students analyze an AI portrait for "High-Definition Eeriness". Is the lighting consistent? Does the ear attach to the head, or is it just floating nearby as a suggestion?

AI doesn't know what a doctor looks like; it only knows what 10 million photos of doctors look like. If the data is 80% Western and male, the AI will default to those aesthetics. For example, prompt for a successful CEO will get a middle-aged white man, while prompt for a nurse defaults to a woman. Even words like sensitive can shift a generation toward female faces.

> • **Teachable Moment:** Challenge students to break the bias by writing prompts so specific that they force the AI out of its stereotypical comfort zone.

Ethics and the Human-in-the-Loop
We cannot ignore the ethical elephant in the server room. The Human-in-the-Loop model is our best defense: the machine is the subordinate tool, and the human remains the ethical and creative compass (UNESCO, 2025). Authorship resides in the intent, not the execution. If the work was done entirely with a single click, the artistry is absent. We must guide students to use AI as a layer, not as a destination.

Sample Syllabus Language for the AI-Integrated Classroom
The following sample syllabus disclosure excerpt is designed to be a practical resource for educators. It uses a tiered approach to clarify the boundaries of creative authorship in an age where the undo button has been replaced by a generate button:

> ***Green Light: Encouraged Use*** *(The Assistant Phase)*
> *You are encouraged to use AI tools (e.g., Gemini, Canva Magic Studio) for:*
>
> - ***Brainstorming:*** *Generating ten "What if?" scenarios for a project.*
> - ***Research:*** *Summarizing the historical context of an art movement or finding contemporary artists with similar themes.*
> - ***Administrative Aide:*** *Drafting your initial* ***Artist Statement*** *or checking the grammar of your portfolio reflections.*
> - ***Compositional Sketches:*** *Using AI to quickly test how asymmetrical balance looks before committing to a final canvas.*

Yellow Light: Limited Use *(The Reference Phase)*
Using AI-generated imagery as a ***direct reference*** for physical work requires:

- ***Transformation:*** You must change at least 60% of the composition, color, or concept.
- ***Intentionality:*** *You must be able to explain why you chose that specific AI-generated element and how you improved upon it.*
- ***Disclosure:*** *Any work heavily influenced by an AI sketch must include a small* ***Prompt Citation*** *(see below):*
  "Initial concept generated via [AI Tool Name] using the prompt: '[Your Prompt Here]'. The AI output was used to help visualize lighting, but the final composition and color palette were developed manually in charcoal."

Red Light: Prohibited Use *(The Counterfeit Phase)*
The following actions will be considered a violation of academic integrity:

- ***Direct Submission:*** *Submitting an AI-generated image (printed or digital) as your own original artwork without significant physical or digital manipulation.*
- ***Ghost-Writing:*** *Using AI to write your final reflection or critique without your own personal voice and specific classroom context.*
- ***Plagiarism of Living Artists:*** *Using prompts that specifically name living artists to mimic their style is ethically discouraged in this studio to protect the intellectual property of our peers.*

Conclusion: The Human Heart of the Studio
AI offers a unique opportunity to replace the administrative drudgery that keeps us from our students. AI doesn't know why a Gulf Coast sunset feels lonely, or why a jagged line feels like a scream, only the student knows that. Let's embrace the future—extra fingers, weird artifacts, and all—and get back to the art of teaching.

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Figure 1.

SFORMING MMUNITY SPACES

nterview with Artist GONZO247

Keri Reynolds

Photograph of Gonzo247. Photograph courtesy of the artist.


GONZO
GONZO



Figure 2. Untitled. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

Colorful, collaborative, colossal, and transformative are just a few words that come to mind when describing the artwork of internationally acclaimed artist GONZO247. GONZO247 is a native Texan, born and raised in Houston, whose work has transformed public spaces through large scale artworks that blend graffiti art with ingenuity and creativity. He is a self-taught artist with a career spanning over three decades and is known for pioneering the graffiti and street art movement in Houston. His murals can be seen across Texas and the United States as well as abroad in several countries around the world. GONZO247's work is collaborative and community-driven, celebrating culture, community, and creativity that captivates and engages the public through meaningful works of art. I had the pleasure of interviewing GONZO247 at his studio to delve into what fuels his passion for art. This article aims to inform, inspire, and situate the dialogue of contemporary art within community contexts and the evolving landscape of art education.

"How do you color outside the line, if you're not allowed to? Most artists don't color inside the lines."

KR: Can you share some of your earliest memories related to art?

GONZO247: I've always been artistically inclined, and I knew that I liked being creative. At a very young age, it was something I wanted to do, but I didn't know it was called art. Initially in my neighborhood, there really was not a lot of public art. The only major piece of art I had access to was a mural called The Rebirth of Our Nationality painted by an artist in the neighborhood at the time named Leo Tanguma. My entire childhood and my earliest memories in life were driving past this mural. I was six years old, and the mural was just humongous. It was free, and it was on the street level. I remember thinking to myself, I don't really know what this is, but one day I really want to do something like that. I believe that mural planted a seed in me.

KR: How do you translate your ideas into such massive spaces?

GONZO247: I will say that we're in Texas, and everything's bigger in Texas! I think one of the advantages for me is I had plenty of large spaces to practice, so by default I started working on a large scale. On top of that, I am just not good at working small. A small painting that's two feet by three feet can take me months, but I can do a 17-story building in eight days. The bigger I go, the more free I feel. I feel like what I'm creating is larger than life. I have room to mess up and room to be loose. The smaller you go, it almost seems like everything, every line matters.

There are different methods to transfer an idea to a larger scale. If you can draw it on a piece of paper, you just got to go bigger. Nowadays, there are so many different tools. I've seen very cutting-edge technology where people are wearing virtual reality goggles and using the goggles to trace their images onto an actual surface. That's the cutting-edge technology, but personally, I like to sketch to get the image up in the quickest way possible.

Figure 3. Piping Technology Mural Project. Photograph courtesy of the artist.



KR: How do you think new technologies are going to influence artmaking in the future?

GONZO247: Technology is a double-edged sword. We have people that are now relying on AI to come up with the visuals of creative content, saying it was their idea, and using AI to help put an image to the idea. I understand that, but you can't try to pass that off as art.

But on the flip side, I think with everything going digital there's a whole new world of projection mapping where static spaces come to life through moving digital light and art. A young person might not know how to draw, but they're creative and good at computers. Through projection mapping there are so many different ways to use that creativity in something that they're familiar with or good at.

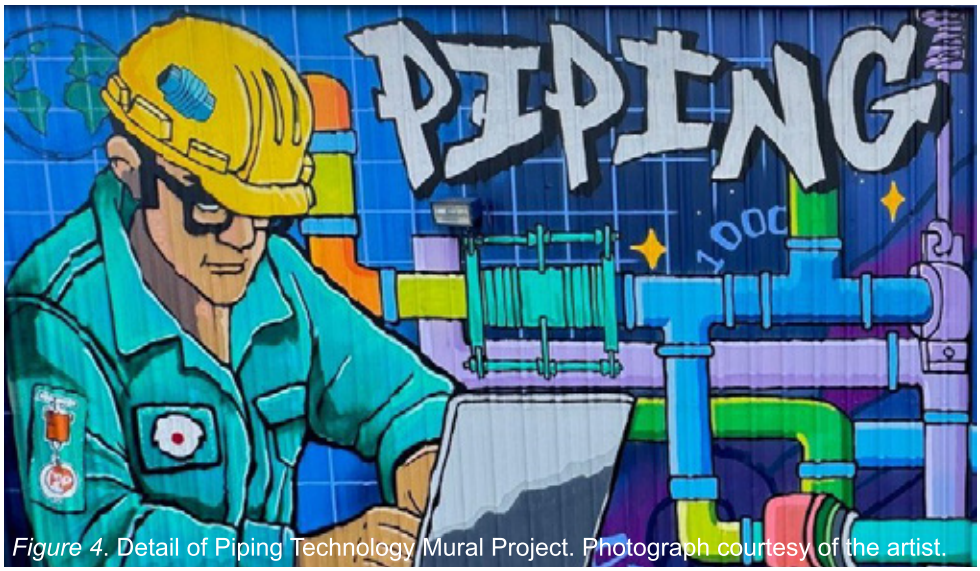


Figure 4. Detail of Piping Technology Mural Project. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

I think technology is something that can be used as long as the technology is used in harmony with the intent. Don't necessarily rely on it, because you have to learn the rules before you can break them. I would suggest that you should know how to do these things on your own, because what happens when the power goes out? What happens when there's no internet or Wi-Fi? You still have to create something, and you have to be able to rely on your skills.

Figure 5. Detail of Piping Technology Mural Project. Photograph courtesy of the artist.



KR: How did your artistic practice and studio space develop?

GONZO247: We are currently sitting inside of the Charles W. Lucky Schoolhouse, and this building is super important. I'll tell you how I found the building first, and then I'll tell you about the building. Back in 1992, my friend and I were driving around this area looking for buildings that we could explore artistically to paint. I saw this old dilapidated building and this massive wall. It was like Disneyland for graffiti, walls everywhere, with no one here! All of a sudden, we hear some commotion, and there's a lady behind us.

> She said, "What are you doing on my property? I didn't hire any painters."
>
> I responded, "We're artists."
>
> She said, "I don't see any art supplies."
>
> I popped the trunk of my car, and it was all filled with spray cans, "We use spray paint to make art!"
>
> She said, "Well, I've never heard of that."
>
> We explained to her we are artists, and we were looking for a safe place to paint. After talking to her for a while, she was like, "Okay, you guys can come back anytime you want."

This back wall became one of Houston's first legal walls to do graffiti, and we've been painting on and off this wall since. On top of that, she and I became really good friends, and she became my art mom. In a sense, she gave me a place where I could exist and my first studio space. She allowed me to paint, and later we started Aerosol Warfare, which is Houston's first graffiti and street art gallery space.

I have a lot of history with this building, and this was the Charles W. Lucky Schoolhouse. This building was originally built in 1909, burned down in 1917, and was rebuilt in 1918. This was the only African American elementary school at the time, and this was the first elementary school in this area that was named after a prominent African American educator. There's a lot of great cultural history here with the building. On top of that, there's this subculture history with graffiti that runs literally parallel with the story of the schoolhouse, because this was something that was unheard of. Fast forward to 2020, and Mickey decided to retire and sell the building. My life has had a lot of amazing full circle moments, and [buying this building from her] being one of the greatest. What we're working on is a legacy that is going to outlive all of us. We are going to bring the Lucky Schoolhouse back to life, pay honor to the past, and have it ready for future generations.

"What we're working on is a legacy that is going to outlive all of us."



Figure 6. Wall of Fame behind the Charles W. Lucky Schoolhouse. Photograph courtesy of the artist.



Figure 7. Houston Zoo Mural Project. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

KR: Can you talk about a recent project of yours?

GONZO247: I'm just coming back from Asia. I was in Taiwan pretty much all of last month. I had a really awesome, large-scale bureau project at the Taipei Zoo. This mural project actually was the sister to a mural project that I did at the Houston Zoo. Also, during my trip I had my first international solo show. I'm really excited to be back, because I'm super inspired by my experiences in Asia. I've been going over there on and off since 2015, and I have a really good perspective now and direction on the work that I can produce here.

KR: In addition to being a professional artist, you focus on giving back to the community. Can you talk about why this is an important part of your artistic practice?

GONZO247: When you have the opportunity, show someone else what you're doing. Don't hoard your information. I've taught many artists, and a lot of them on their very first major scale projects. I've also gone into classrooms at every level, from elementary to collegiate, teaching about graffiti history or talking about my story and art in general.

We had the opportunity to do a really awesome large sculpture for the Museum of Fine Arts [Houston] and invited people to come help build the sculpture. Again, I could do it, but it'd be more fun to have help and get the community involved. Then, also show people, this is how you use chicken wire, paper mache, and plaster to create a sculpture.

> It's like someone saying, "I would love to do a sculpture, but I don't know how. I don't know when I would do it, and I don't know where to start."
>
> I say, "I have this project, why don't you come help me? That way, you don't have to worry about it. I'll just teach you everything, and if you mess up, it's no big deal. We'll figure it out."

In the end, people walk away with that knowledge, and they're not afraid to tackle things because now they've actually been a part of it and it's been collaborative.

"Unless you try it, you're not going to know if you're good at it."

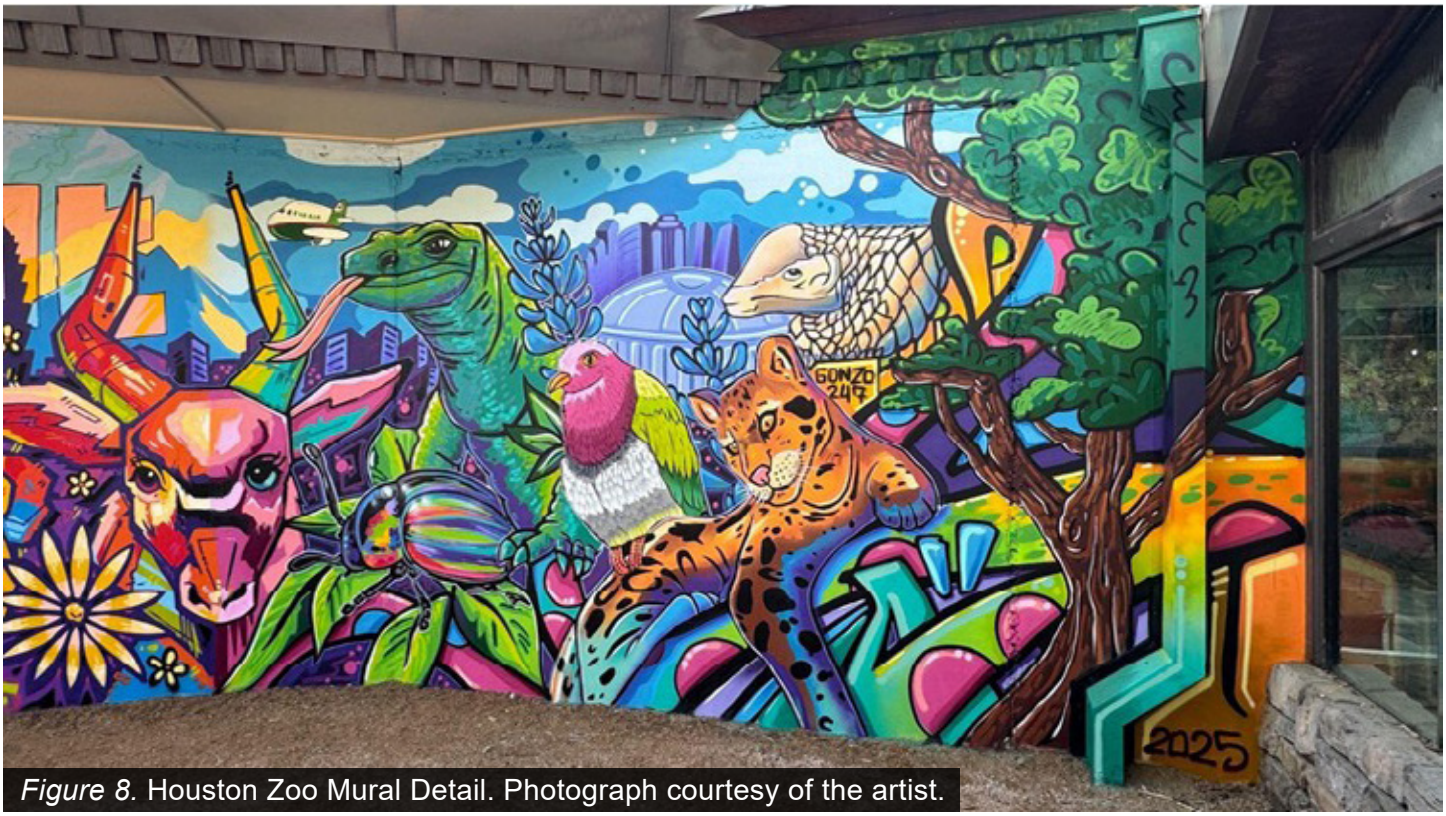


Figure 8. Houston Zoo Mural Detail. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

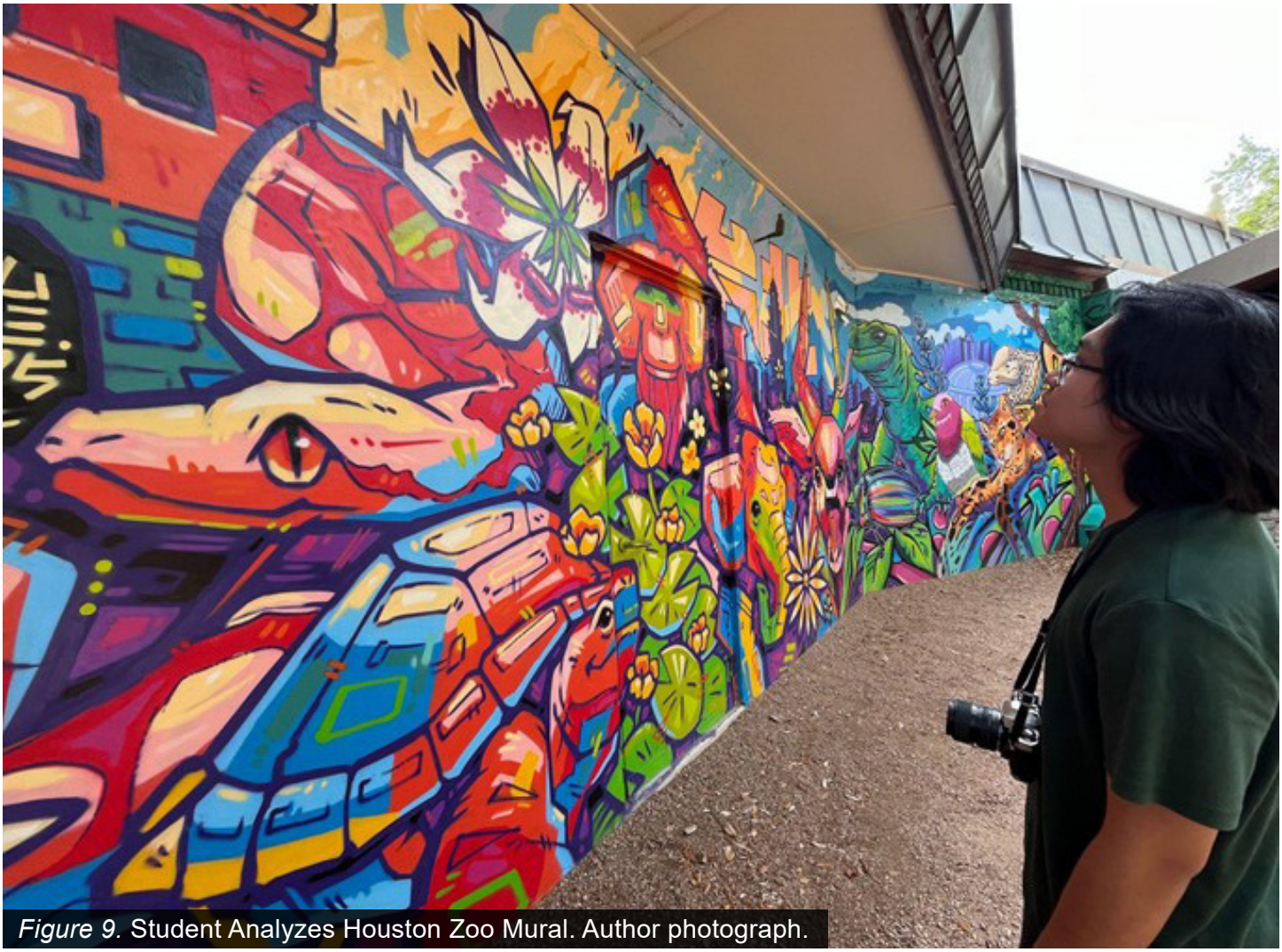


Figure 9. Student Analyzes Houston Zoo Mural. Author photograph.

KR: What advice would you give to budding student artists?

GONZO247: For students who want to pursue the arts, I would say try everything. Try everything, even if you don't think you're good at it. The more things you can learn, the more you know and tools in your tool belt. Don't be afraid of using a jigsaw, and don't be afraid of using a crazy adhesive. Everything is an art supply! I've seen an artist that created amazing murals using mud from the surrounding areas. They collected mud samples from the city and then painted an entire mural using mud. Who would have thought of that?

For a budding artist, unless you try it, you're not going to know if you're good at it. You have to treat art as a profession. Work at it every day, the same way a boxer goes to the gym every day, and the scientist is in the lab every day. You have to make it a point to work on that memory muscle and practice every day.

KR: What advice would you give to art teachers?

GONZO247: First of all, I would like to say thank you to all the art teachers who are putting in the time. I know it's not always easy, but the fact that you're sticking to it, I commend that tremendously. Everyone loves the idea of being an artist, but not everyone has the same skill set or the same trajectory of what they're going to do in art. Open up the door as wide as possible to everything that can be considered as a career in art. There are curators, managers, and so many different things you can do within the art world.

You don't necessarily have to be just an artist. I think opening that door can give a kid inspiration that they can still be in this even though they don't see themselves fitting within a teacher-led assignment. School was always very structured, but I think with art sometimes the structure is too restrictive. How do you color outside the line, if you're not allowed to? Most artists don't color inside the lines. Imagine that there were no lines, how far can these students go?

Author Note: I would like to thank GONZO247 for his collaboration on this article and his support and advocacy for the importance of the visual arts across our schools and communities. For more information about GONZO247's work, visit: https://www.gonzo247.com



Figure 10. Sculpture Installation, Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS ANATOMICAL M AND SURREALIST CATALYST:

Expanding Creative Development Th Transformation, and Visual Inquiry

Fred Lockwood



S
ENTOR
T

rough Structure,

Navigating Structure and Imagination in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into art education presents both opportunity and complexity. AI tools can generate visual imagery instantly, offering students access to anatomical references, hybrid forms, and imaginative compositions that were previously difficult to obtain. However, this accessibility introduces an important tension: while AI can expand creative possibilities, it may also reduce the productive struggle that is essential to meaningful artistic growth.

The study of anatomy has long served as a foundation for understanding the figure. From the observational investigations of Leonardo da Vinci to contemporary studio practices, artists have relied on anatomical knowledge to inform expressive representation. AI extends this tradition by providing not only realistic depictions but also manipulated, hybridized, and surreal reinterpretations of the human form. At the same time, the emergence of AI must be understood within a broader shift in digital visual culture. As Odabaşı et al. (2024) argue, students are increasingly immersed in image-saturated environments shaped by algorithms, filters, and generative systems. In this context, art education must move beyond technical production toward fostering visual literacy, critical thinking, and reflective engagement with images.

This article proposes that AI's greatest educational value lies in its dual role as an anatomical mentor, supporting structural understanding through varied visual references and as a surrealist catalyst, enabling imaginative transformation through distortion and symbolism. When intentionally integrated, these roles create a continuum from observation to invention, aligning with contemporary expectations for art education.

AI as Anatomical Mentor: Deepening Structural Understanding

AI-generated imagery provides students with access to a wide range of anatomical perspectives, including variations in musculature, posture, and expression. Unlike static textbook images, AI allows for iterative exploration, enabling students to generate multiple versions of a pose, adjust proportions, and analyze movement from different angles. This approach aligns with constructivist theories of learning which emphasize that knowledge is constructed through active engagement rather than passive reception. AI supports this process by allowing students to interact with visual material dynamically, comparing, analyzing, and adapting references.

Recent research reinforces this potential, indicating that AI-enhanced tools support individualized learning pathways and increase student engagement and creative confidence (Li et al., 2026; Zhang & Chen, 2025). However, Odabaşı et al. (2024) emphasize that the effectiveness of these tools depends on the educator's ability to guide students toward inquiry-based use rather than passive consumption. These experiences shift anatomy from a fixed set of rules to a flexible system for exploration and understanding. In practice, AI can support exploration of facial expressions across emotional ranges, analysis of gesture and movement, and comparison of human and animal anatomical structures.

From Observation to Interpretation: Developing Critical and Creative Thinking

While AI expands access to visual references, its educational value depends on how students engage with those resources. When AI outputs are treated as final products, learning is limited. When they are used as starting points for inquiry, learning deepens. Hetland et al. (2013) identify key Studio Habits of Mind, including observing, envisioning, and stretching and exploring. AI can support these habits when framed as a tool for interpretation rather than

replication. Odabaşı et al. (2024) further emphasize that AI-integrated learning environments require students to move beyond technical production toward critical interpretation.

This shift positions learners as active participants in meaning-making rather than passive users of technology. However, research also highlights potential risks indicating that while AI tools may increase productivity, they can also lead to reduced originality if overused (Doshi & Hauser, 2024). This reinforces the importance of instructional strategies that prioritize transformation over replication. The implication is clear: AI must be used to support decision-making, not replace it.

AI as Surrealist Catalyst: Expanding Imaginative Possibility

Where anatomical study emphasizes structure, surrealism emphasizes transformation. Artists such as Salvador Dalí and René Magritte reimagined the figure through distortion, symbolism, and unexpected juxtapositions. AI tools provide new opportunities for this kind of exploration by enabling students to manipulate proportions and scale, combine human and animal characteristics, and create dreamlike or symbolic compositions. Importantly, surrealist exploration is most effective when grounded in anatomical understanding. Students who understand structure are better equipped to distort it meaningfully. In this way, AI supports not only imaginative exploration but also conceptual depth.

"When AI outputs are treated as final products, learning is limited. When they are used as starting points for inquiry, learning deepens."

From Blueprint to Transformation: Supporting Originality in AI-Assisted Learning

A central challenge in AI-assisted art education is preventing imitation. AI-generated imagery can be highly refined, making it tempting for students to replicate rather than reinterpret. To address this, educators must emphasize the distinction between a blueprint and a template:

- A template invites copying
- A blueprint invites construction

This distinction aligns with guidance from National Art Education Association's (NAEA) *Position Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Visual Arts Education* (2023), which cautions that over-reliance on AI-generated imagery may hinder students' understanding of the creative process and diminish the development of their artistic voice. As Boden (2004) notes, creativity involves meaningful transformation rather than novelty alone. AI provides raw material, but students must interpret and reshape that material to create original work. Students who engage in iterative modification of AI-generated imagery demonstrate higher levels of originality than those who rely on single outputs (McLoughlin & Lee, 2023).

Ethical and Cultural Considerations in AI-Integrated Art Education

The integration of AI also raises important ethical and cultural questions. As students navigate AI-assisted creation, they must consider issues of authorship, originality, and intellectual property. NAEA (2023) emphasizes that educators have a responsibility to guide students in ethical decision-making, ensuring that AI is used in ways that respect artistic integrity and human creativity. Generating imagery without critical reflection may parallel forms of appropriation or plagiarism, particularly when students fail to transform or reinterpret source material. Odabaşı et al. (2024) further situate these concerns within digital visual culture, noting that students must learn to critically analyze the images they encounter and produce. In a world shaped by algorithmic image generation, visual literacy becomes essential. Classroom discussions might explore:

- Who is the author of an AI-assisted artwork?
- How do we define originality in digital environments?
- What responsibilities do artists have when using generative tools?

Pedagogical Implications: The Evolving Role of the Art Educator

The integration of AI requires a shift in the role of the educator. Rather than simply teaching technical skills, educators must act as facilitators who guide students in navigating complex relationships between technology, creativity, and meaning. Odabaşı et al. (2024) describe this as a shift toward pedagogical competencies that emphasize critical engagement, adaptability, and conceptual understanding. Similarly, NAEA (2023) highlights the importance of integrating emerging technologies in ways that support human expression rather than replace it. A structured approach reflecting the evolving expectations of art education, emphasizing both technical skill and creative agency may include:

Phase 1: Study (Observation)

- Students analyze AI-generated references to understand anatomy, focusing on structure, proportion, and movement.

Phase 2: Adapt (Interpretation)

- Students modify and combine elements, exploring variation and developing personal interpretation.

Phase 3: Transform (Surrealism)

- Students distort, hybridize, and reimagine forms, creating original compositions that reflect personal voice and meaning.

Conclusion: Reclaiming Creative Agency in an AI-Enhanced Classroom

In art education, AI can be understood not as a replacement for human creativity, but as a collaborator that opens new possibilities. It is neither inherently transformative nor detrimental; its impact depends on how it is used. When framed as an anatomical mentor, AI can deepen students' understanding of structure. When approached as a surrealist catalyst, it can expand their capacity for imaginative thinking. The challenge for educators is to ensure that AI enhances rather than replaces the creative process. By emphasizing interpretation, transformation, and critical engagement, educators can help students maintain authorship and develop authentic artistic voices. In an era defined by rapidly evolving digital visual culture, art education must remain grounded in human creativity while embracing new possibilities. AI does not replace the role of the artist, but it expands the pathways through which artistic understanding and expression can emerge.

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THE THREE-BODY PROBLEM:

Navigating the Autonomy of Dependency in the AI Global Classroom

Angelica Martinez Ochoa

Classroom

I was new to teaching at the college level when the world stopped. After spring break in 2020, the entire country (and most of the world) went into lockdown, and I experienced the educational transformation firsthand as both a student and an educator. It took less than a year for Microsoft Teams to become the digital classroom. In the shock of the global pandemic, no one dared to question this overnight catapult into digital space. The Teams classroom was the first shift, followed by the transition to the asynchronous environment, with no virtual meetings, no real-time chats, just video lectures and digital assignments. These were the quiet antecedents of the AI moment in which we find ourselves immersed today, yet no one talks about them when discussing AI in education. For the past two years, I have been grappling with what I call the Three-Body Problem. I use this metaphor as a reference to the chaotic and unpredictable nature of a universe governed by three competing forces. In education, these forces are the human (students and teachers), the machine, and the institution. While other scholars speak of wicked problems (Corbin et al., 2025) to describe the irresolvable quality of AI or the black box (Pasquale, 2015) to describe the opacity of knowledge production, the Three-Body metaphor captures the constant, shifting tension of these forces pulling against one another. In this system, there is no correct solution, only the continuous effort to maintain a stable orbit.

The moment I decided to confront this problem happened while I was grading students in one of my asynchronous Art Appreciation courses in 2025. I began finding responses that were clearly AI-generated, but one stripped away all doubt. A weekly journal submission from a student read: “In the lecture, the teacher gave many good examples. One artwork that stood out to me was [insert example, such as ‘a painting made with sand and paper’ or ‘a sculpture using metal and wood’].” This was unacceptable. Throughout that summer, I found similar AI-generated responses from several students. I simply could not handle it anymore. There was something fundamentally wrong, not only with my students but with my assignments and the use of AI itself. I realized that traditional essays, journals, and other written assignments were no longer viable vessels for assessment. I started questioning everything about the usage of AI in the classroom. Was it that the student was simply throwing ideas and asking AI to organize them in a coherent format? Was it that the student shared the entire lecture with AI and attached the assignment, only for AI to return this result? Was it that the students simply lacked the English vocabulary or grammar to write a journal entry and were using AI as a language assistant or proofreading tool? For more than fifty percent of my students in the art appreciation classroom, English is not their first language. Some of them have not even been in this country for a year, and the language barrier is a significant issue. I did not have the answers to those questions, but three things were certain: the student was using AI to complete this task, the assignment was not designed for this context, and finally, the student did not take the time to read what AI returned before making a final submission.

However, student usage is only one string stretching the AI problem. The second force is the institution. For the past year, we have seen a massive increase in webinars and workshops pushing faculty to embrace AI to provide enhanced feedback or to redesign courses. The incentives are everywhere, including professional development credits, fellowships, and research publications. We are told to integrate these tools, yet we are simultaneously cautioned that AI detection software is unreliable. We are given a continuous, open invitation to use a tool we never asked for, with no clear map of how to do it.

To understand why I stopped assigning essays, we must acknowledge that AI has become a master of the identification tasks that once formed the backbone of Art Appreciation. It is not that AI is the best student in a holistic sense. It lacks the lived experience, emotional resonance, and personal critical thinking that a human brings to a gallery, yet it is an unparalleled expert in pattern recognition. Through deep learning and neural networks, AI is learning to see by recognizing the same elements and principles of design I teach. With vision-language models (VLMs), AI can describe what it sees at a microscopic level to identify the medium, tools, and techniques employed in an artwork with extreme precision.



Figure 1. Real examples of visual outcomes generated by Copilot using student prompts.

Advanced models even utilize 3D topography to analyze paint texture, identifying individual brushstrokes to determine authenticity. I put this on the table not to argue that we should stop teaching these concepts, but to acknowledge the environment in which we teach. Students still need to learn the elements and principles of design, but we must move beyond identifying what is on the canvas to exploring how that knowledge can be used to navigate the world of art. An essay that merely identifies a medium or elements and principles is now a task that can be easily done by a machine, and I have learned this the hard way.

I chose to navigate this reality by granting myself permission to experiment within what I call the Autonomy of Dependency. I draw the term dependency from Theotonio Dos Santos and his 1970 work, The Structure of Dependence, which explores how technology serves as a primary mechanism of subordination. For Dos Santos, dependent groups expand only as a reflection of the dominant

group's expansion. This describes exactly how AI feels in higher education: we are pushed and forced (by the students, the institution, and machines) to integrate our pedagogical styles, frameworks, and philosophies into a technology we did not choose. This is not a new phenomenon; for years, faculty have had to adapt their teaching to e-learning platforms. As a faculty member who teaches fully online, I know that my assignments are often limited by the features of the platform. I can only do as much as the interface allows. In the AI Global Art Classroom, this dependency is amplified. We rely on infrastructure controlled by multinational corporations and are excluded from the decision-making processes of our institutions. We operate within a black box of institutional governance where our pedagogical discoveries are extracted to fuel corporate innovation, effectively transforming our refined classroom methods into free training data for proprietary systems that absorb our labor without acknowledgement or compensation.

This structural dependency requires a critical shift in how we perceive the act of learning itself. In my art appreciation course, I discuss how frescoes were the technology used in the Middle Ages to enhance the sacred message of the Roman Catholic Church inside cathedrals, just as oil painting was the specific technology used in the seventeenth century to allow the wealthy to depict and possess their world. I use Berger's (1972) Ways of Seeing to bridge these historical technologies with our current electric age, and I bring in McLuhan (1964) to help build that connection. Both Berger and McLuhan are scholars who smartly blend the analysis of the visual world with a deep understanding of how culture is shaped. Following this tradition, I introduce McLuhan's (1964) famous quote that "the medium is the message" to argue that one of the messages of AI, at least for this class, is that seeing has become a literal linguistic act. Art appreciation is the acquisition of the vocabulary—the mediums, techniques, principles, themes, and histories—required to describe, and therefore see the work. The Visual Prompt Studio, which is the assignment I will discuss in this article, makes the metaphor of knowing as seeing materialistic. Words literally build outcomes. When a student prompts Copilot, they are experiencing the McLuhan-esque revelation: our words are the tools through which we appreciate and construct our reality.

"The professor and student relationship is something I resist letting go of in the AI era. The machine cannot take this away from me, and I will not let it."

This transition from seeing to speaking to creation signals a broader shift in the purpose of the modern classroom. In 1967, Marshall McLuhan observed that the classroom was "getting in the way of learning," as students were finding more information outside the classroom than inside of it, therefore the classroom must turn into a space for discovery and involvement. In following McLuhan's (1967) ideas on education in the electronic age and this AI moment, I believe we must shift from instruction into discovery. Today, AI has rendered the instructional classroom entirely outdated. My Visual Prompt Studio assignment aims to transform the classroom into a playground of discovery. Students are not just told what an Impressionist painting is, they are invited to discover how to speak it into existence. This involvement culminates in a final act of agency: a letter to AI. I tell my students that they are the architects of the next generation's classroom. By writing these letters, they move from being dependent users to being involved participants in the future of art education.

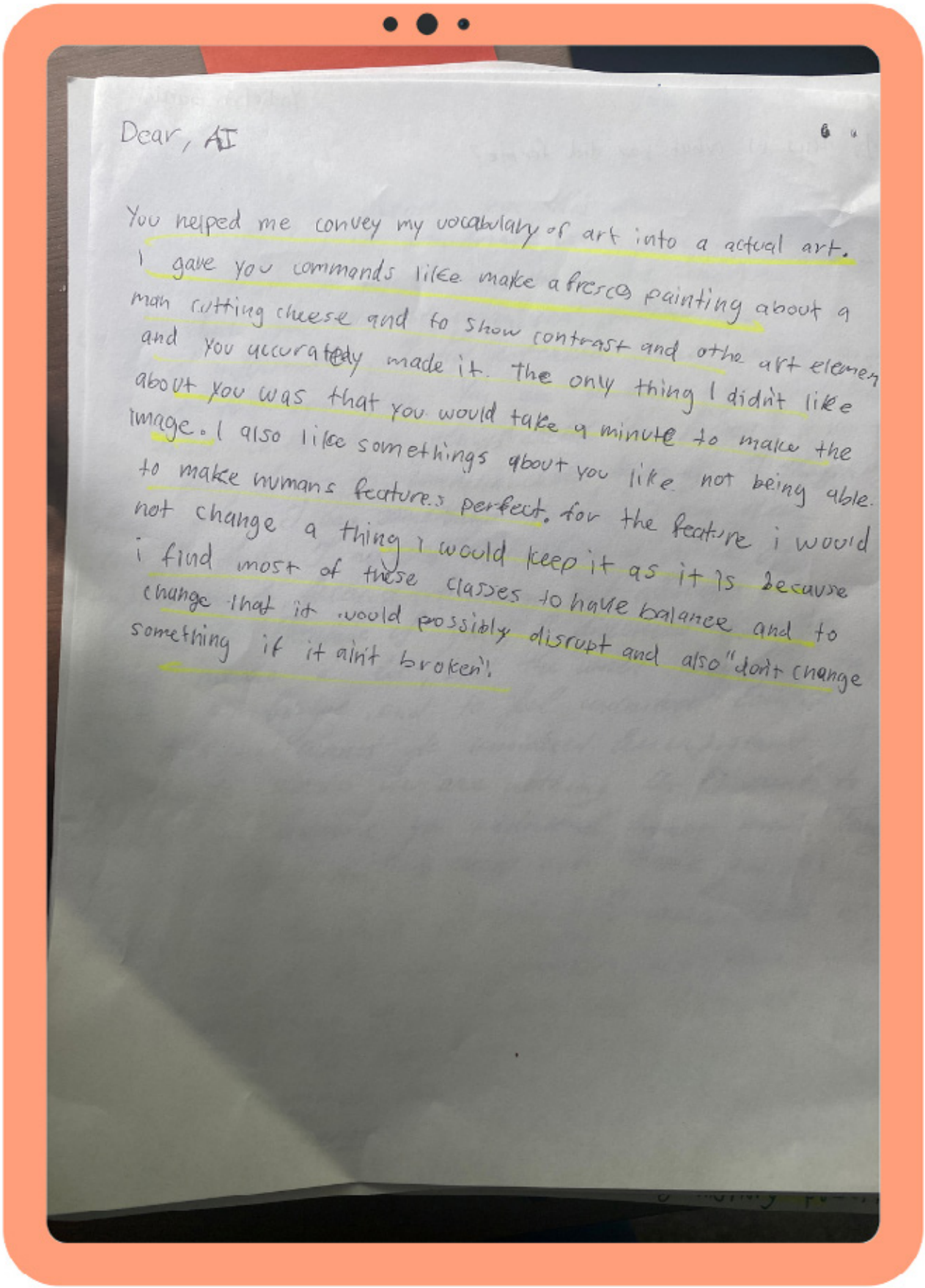


Figure 2. AI-generated image of a real handwritten letter submitted by student.

The Studio functions as a structural intervention within this framework, utilizing institutional access to Copilot as a laboratory. I use the first week to set up the environment, onboarding students to GitHub and the Anatomy of a Prompt. A common submission consists of the prompt, the visual outcome, and a mandatory handwritten reflection. This is the abra kadabra of the course. In Aramaic, Avra kehdabra means “I will create as I speak.” By translating a technical sentence into a visual outcome, students engage in conceptual conjuring. They might reverse-engineer a historical work, recreate a masterpiece, or generate an original composition.

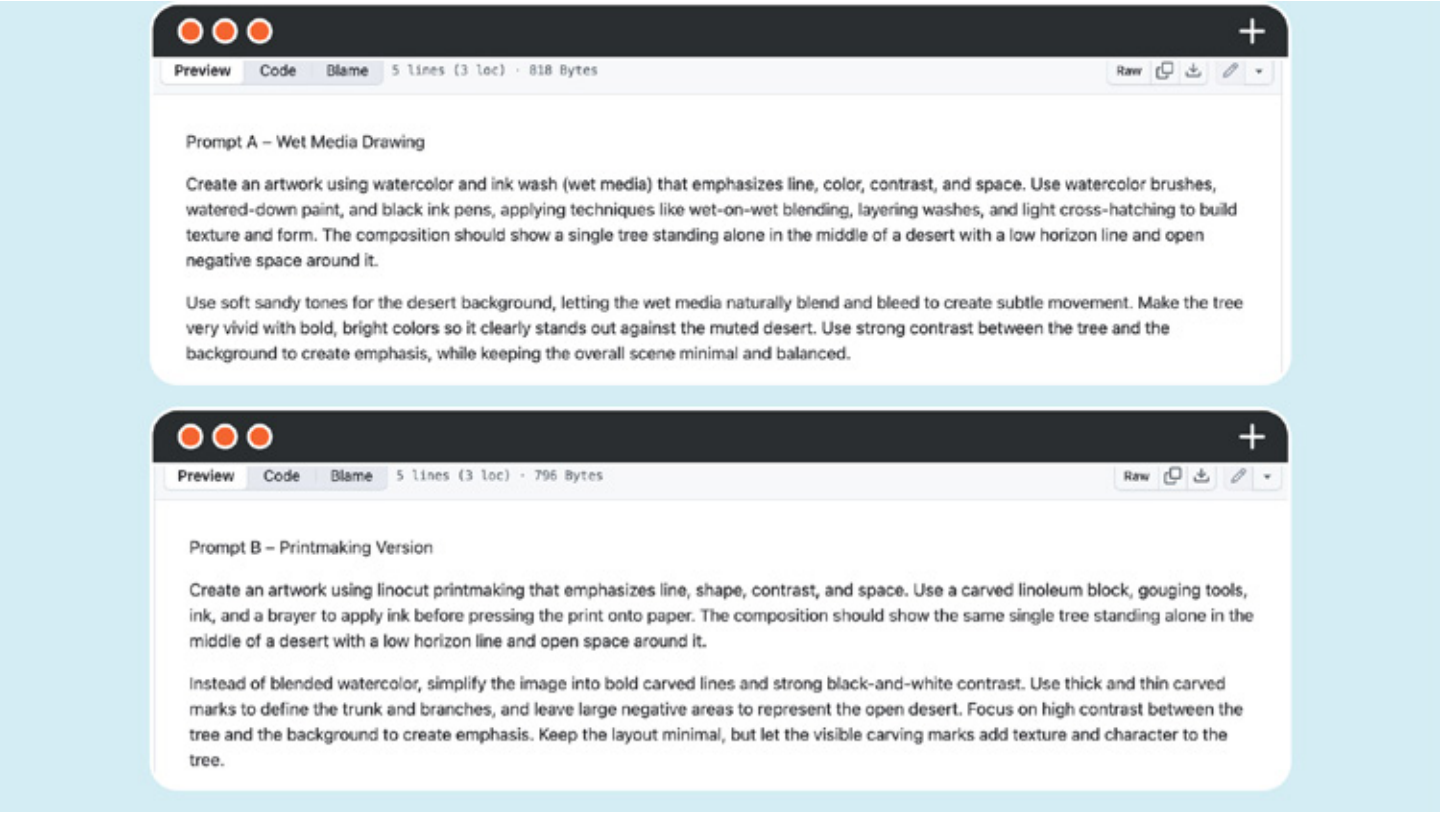


Figure 3. Screenshot of the prompts submitted by the student.

In all these options, the student is visually experiencing how a concept functions. This is vital for my students at Dallas College, where approximately 55% are non-native English speakers. As the international student I was once, I understand how many of these students use AI to write essays as a mask; they do not want to make grammatical mistakes or lose points in their grades because of their language skills. AI serves as a protection that allows them to appear like any other student, even in classes not focused on language. In the Visual Prompt Studio, that mask is no longer necessary. I judge prompts on conceptual accuracy, not grammar. The handwritten reflection then slows the process down, ensuring the human mind remains the primary agent in the loop.

It is important to clarify, however, what the Visual Prompt Studio assignment is not. It is not an advocacy for the replacement of traditional creative processes, nor is it a statement on the inherent value of AI in the arts. My course remains a lecture-based space for deep historical inquiry. It includes other hands-on assignments, such as cyanotype workshops, lab visits, and the final assignment consists of a ten-minute face-to-face interview with every single student. This interview aims at giving them a literal and metaphorical voice while also building a strong and warm bridge between them and me. The professor and student relationship is something I resist letting go of in the AI era.

The machine cannot take this away from me, and I will not let it. Thus, the Visual Prompt Studio is simply a pedagogical response to the specific realities of the AI Global Art Classroom.

This adaptation is, at its heart, student-centered. This was made clear to me by a student who expressed a deep moral rejection of AI. Because my teaching is about the student and not the tool, I re-designed every phase of the Visual Prompt Studio for him in a non-AI format. He wrote the same technical prompts, but as a talented cartoonist, he generated his own outcomes by hand. The pedagogical intervention is not about the machine. It is about reclaiming faculty autonomy and adapting the classroom to the students of today, whether they choose to embrace the machine or entirely reject it. By turning the black box into a specimen and a playground, we allow students to discover their own voices through the very technology that once threatened to silence them.

Ultimately, the Visual Prompt Studio is more than just an assignment; it is a strategic navigation of the Three-Body Problem. While the machine, the institution, and the human continue their unpredictable and chaotic pull, this model allows us to carve out a stable orbit. I acknowledge dependency, yet I exercise autonomy. By giving myself permission to experiment, I exercise the same creativity, discovery, and involvement I aim to give my students in the classroom. The abracadabra mantra is our final act of pedagogical magic, transforming the rigid, always evolving digital structures thrown at us since the pandemic into a fluid playground where we create as we speak and ensure our agency is never lost to the machine.

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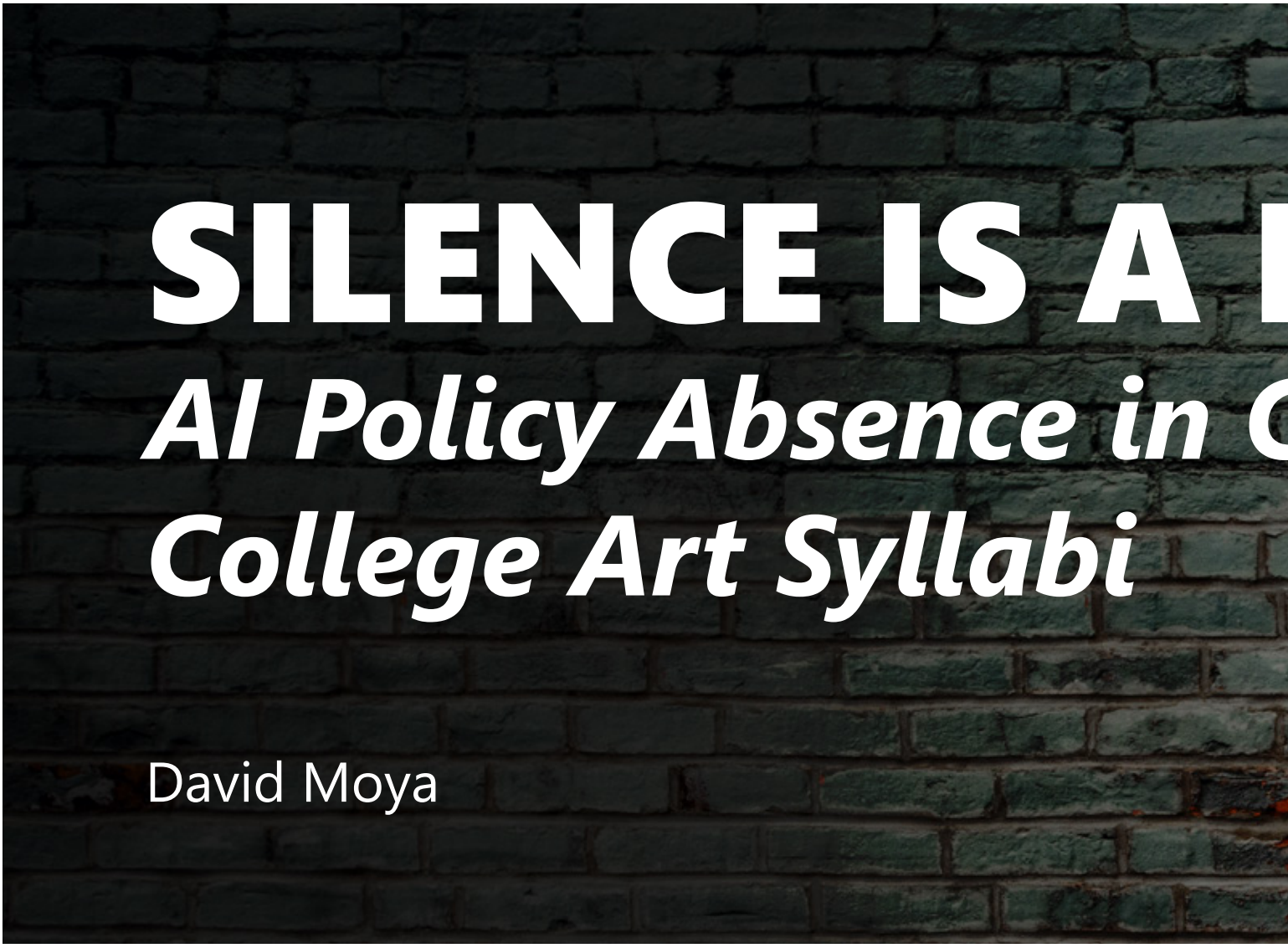
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SILENCE IS A
AI Policy Absence in C
College Art Syllabi

David Moya

The November 2022 public release of ChatGPT marked a watershed moment in higher education. Within months, surveys revealed widespread student adoption: by early 2023, over 30% of college students reported using generative AI for coursework (Wang et al., 2023), a figure that climbed to 70% by 2025. Yet institutional responses remained fragmented and reactive. While debates about ChatGPT and academic integrity dominated headlines, a more fundamental question persisted: What are faculty actually telling students about AI in their syllabi?

The syllabus functions as a pedagogical contract, institutional document, and statement of values (Parkes & Harris, 2002). When faculty remain silent about AI, that silence itself constitutes a position of leaving students navigating ambiguous expectations across courses and semesters. UNESCO's (2023) Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research emphasizes that education systems must "develop clear policies and frameworks" rather than defaulting to prohibition or unstructured adoption. Yet research on the top 100 U.S. universities found that fewer than 40% had developed institution-wide AI policies by late 2023 (Wang et al., 2023), suggesting that guidance has not reached classroom-level implementation.



POSITION:
Community

This study analyzes 330 art syllabi from a large community college in Spring 2026 to document faculty AI policy positioning. Art disciplines offer a particularly revealing case study: creative work challenges traditional plagiarism detection, while generative image and text tools (Midjourney, DALL-E, ChatGPT) directly impact disciplinary practice. Studio courses emphasize original creative production, while lecture courses (Art Appreciation, Art History) focus on analysis and interpretation—creating distinct AI integration considerations. The analysis reveals a troubling pattern: 72% of syllabi make no mention of AI, prohibition dominates among those who address it, and zero syllabi demonstrate the critical engagement with AI that UNESCO (2021, 2023, & 2024) frameworks recommend. These findings suggest not merely a gap in faculty knowledge, but an institutional failure to provide frameworks for thoughtful AI policy development.

Theoretical Framework

Syllabus studies emphasize the document's role as a pedagogical contract and values statement (Harrington & Thomas, 2018). When faculty choose not to address emerging technologies, students interpret that silence variably as permission, prohibition, or institutional uncertainty (Fink, 2013). The syllabus thus functions not only as a course roadmap but

as an implicit policy statement: what faculty do not mention signals either irrelevance or discomfort.

UNESCO's (2023) frameworks for AI in education provide normative guidance for institutional responses. The Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research identifies three core principles: (1) human-centered design ensuring AI enhances rather than replaces human agency, (2) ethical validation requiring privacy protection and pedagogical appropriateness, and (3) transparency in AI use including disclosure requirements and critical evaluation. The AI Competency Framework for Teachers (2024) outlines progressive skill development from basic AI literacy through pedagogical integration and ethical reasoning. These frameworks are positioned as thoughtful AI engagement rather than prohibition or uncritical adoption.

However, translating UNESCO's (2023) normative frameworks into classroom practice requires institutional infrastructure. Wang et al.'s (2023) analysis of the top 100 U.S. universities' AI policies revealed that institutions adopting "open but cautious" approaches primarily offered resources (syllabus templates, workshops, consultation) rather than mandates. Primary faculty concerns centered on ethical usage, accuracy, and data privacy suggesting that prohibition stems from uncertainty rather than pedagogical conviction. Most universities provided detection tool access (Turnitin, GPTZero), but fewer than half offered guidance on integrating AI pedagogically. This gap between policy aspiration and implementation support helps explain why faculty default to silence or prohibition.

Academic integrity frameworks traditionally emphasize detection and punishment (McCabe et al., 2012), but generative AI challenges these approaches by producing work indistinguishable from student writing. Beale (2025) argues that universities must shift from policing-based models to principle-based frameworks emphasizing transparency, attribution, and authentic assessment redesign. Detection tools remain unreliable, with false positive rates as high as 26% and systematic biases against non-native English speakers. This technical limitation necessitates pedagogical rather than punitive responses.

In art education specifically, discussions have focused on ethical implications and creative authenticity (Henrickson, 2023) rather than practical syllabus policy development. Henrickson argues that generative AI represents proceduralism in creative work and algorithmic mediation replacing direct material engagement. This positions AI as fundamentally opposed to studio art pedagogy's emphasis on hand skills, material knowledge, and embodied making. Yet such philosophical critiques rarely translate to concrete syllabus language, leaving faculty without models for articulating disciplinary values in policy form.

Faculty technology adoption literature reveals that institutional support structures significantly impact implementation success (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Without clear models, policies, or professional development, faculty default to prohibition or silence rather than thoughtful integration of AI. This study contributes an empirically-grounded framework for categorizing AI integration levels and documenting current faculty positioning. The AI Integration Continuum extends beyond binary permission/prohibition to map developmental trajectories from absence through immersive implementation, which provides both descriptive documentation and a normative roadmap for institutional support.

Methods

This research employed Claude (Anthropic, 2026), a generative AI assistant, for specific methodological and analytical tasks. AI use included: (a) inter-rater reliability coding of 19

syllabi to calibrate the AI Integration Continuum framework, (b) operational definition refinement through iterative discussion of coding criteria, (c) framework documentation and visualization development, and (d) literature search and synthesis support. All syllabus coding decisions, thematic analysis, interpretation of findings, and theoretical framing represent the independent judgment of the researcher.

Data Collection
All publicly accessible Spring 2026 art syllabi (N=330) from a large multi-campus community college were collected through the institutional database. The corpus includes studio courses (Ceramics, Design, Drawing, Painting, Photography, etc.) and lecture courses (Art Appreciation, Art History I, Art History II). Syllabi represent diverse modalities: in-person, online, and hybrid delivery.

Operational Definitions
AI was operationally defined as large language model-based generative systems (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) and generative image systems (Midjourney, DALL-E, Stable Diffusion). This excludes non-generative tools (spell-checkers, grammar tools, calculators) but includes any system producing original text, images, or code through machine learning.

Framework Development and Coding
A hybrid qualitative content analysis identified AI policy language patterns across syllabi. Initial open coding of 19 syllabi revealed six recurring integration levels, leading to the AI Integration Continuum framework: Absent (no AI mention), Prohibitive (AI forbidden), Selective (AI permitted in bounded contexts), Augmentative (AI as critical engagement tool), Integrative (systematic AI incorporation), and Immersive (AI as central medium).

Inter-rater reliability was established through independent coding of 19 syllabi by the researcher and an AI assistant using operational definitions. Initial agreement was 63% (12/19); after calibration discussion resolving boundary cases, agreement reached 84% (16/19). Refinements included: (1) distinguishing curricular AI mentions from usage policies, (2) clarifying that Selective requires affirmative permission for bounded uses rather than partial prohibition, and (3) separating Integration Level from Clarity Index as independent dimensions.

All 330 syllabi were then coded for Integration Level (Absent, 1-5), Framing Tone (F1-Punitive, F2-Neutral, F3-Instructional, F4-Affirming), Tool Designation (Restricted/Unrestricted), and Clarity Index (0-No Policy, 1-Vague, 2-Partial, 3-Clear). For Prohibitive policies, strength was coded (Weak/Moderate/Strong). Actual AI policy language was extracted and documented for qualitative analysis.

“Ultimately, silence is a position and one that institutions can no longer afford to maintain.”

Findings

Institutional Silence Dominates

Analysis reveals 239 of 330 syllabi (72%) make no mention of AI whatsoever. This silence spans studio arts and art-based lecture courses, online and in-person modalities, and all institutional campuses. Students enrolling in art courses receive no guidance about AI tool expectations in nearly three-quarters of their coursework. Table 1 presents the complete distribution of integration levels across the corpus, revealing the concentration of syllabi in the Absent category compared to Wang et al.'s (2023) finding that 60% of 100 universities had developed some form of institutional AI guidance by late 2023.

Table 1

AI Integration Continuum: Institutional Distribution (N=330)

Integration Level	Definition	n	%
Absent	No mention of AI in syllabus	239	72.4%
Level 1: Prohibitive	AI use forbidden	51	15.5%
Level 2: Selective	AI permitted in specific contexts	29	8.8%
Level 3: Augmentative	AI as critical thinking tool (citation required)	0	0.0%
Level 4: Integrative	AI systematically incorporated	5	1.5%
Level 5: Immersive	AI as central medium/subject	0	0.0%
TOTAL		**324**	**98.2%**

Note: Six syllabi (1.8%) contained ambiguous language and were excluded from level coding.

Prohibition Prevails Among Those Who Speak

Among 91 syllabi mentioning AI, 51 (56%) prohibit use. However, most prohibitive language employs weak framing (82%) rather than strong punishment. Typical weak prohibition examples include: "Assignments should be the intellectual work of the student" (ARTS 1301 syllabus) or "You should not use generative AI to complete assignments" (Drawing I syllabus). These statements lack definitions, enforcement mechanisms, or consequences. Only one syllabus uses strong prohibition: "Use of AI tools including ChatGPT, Midjourney, or similar systems is strictly prohibited. Failure to comply results in automatic assignment failure and potential course-level consequences" (Painting II syllabus). This pattern suggests faculty discomfort with AI rather than outright rejection, framing restrictions pedagogically ("I want your authentic voice") rather than punitively.

The Missing Middle: Zero Augmentative Integration

No syllabi demonstrate Level 3 (Augmentative) integration, where AI serves as a tool requiring citation, reflection, and critical evaluation. Faculty jump directly from Selective restriction (29 syllabi, 8.8%) to Integrative incorporation (5 syllabi, 1.5%), bypassing the pedagogical

scaffolding that would position AI as a critical thinking tool. This gap is particularly notable given UNESCO's (2024) AI Competency Framework for Teachers, which identifies "critical evaluation of AI outputs" as a core competency. Example augmentative language might state: "Students may use AI tools for brainstorming and editing, provided they cite specific tools used, document their prompts, and reflect critically on AI's role in their creative process" (hypothetical example based on UNESCO framework). Such policies are completely absent from the corpus, despite being the recommended middle ground between prohibition and uncritical adoption.

The Clarity Crisis

Among 85 syllabi with AI policies, 50 (59%) are vague (Clarity Index 1), providing insufficient guidance for students to navigate expectations. Only six policies (7%) achieve Clarity Index 3 (Clear and Comprehensive), offering definitions, boundaries, citation expectations, and examples. Of these six syllabi, five were classified as Prohibitive and one as Selective revealing faculty apprehension in integrating AI as a pedagogical tool or integrative learning process. Most policies state simply "AI is prohibited" or "AI may be used for editing" without defining AI, specifying acceptable tools, or addressing disclosure requirements. One exceptionally clear policy (Digital Media Design) states: "Generative AI tools (ChatGPT, Midjourney, Stable Diffusion) may be used for concept development and reference generation only. Final submitted work must be created by the student. All AI use must be documented in your process journal with specific tool names, dates, and prompts used." This level of specificity appears in fewer than 2% of syllabi. Students navigating multiple courses face inconsistent, ambiguous guidance that undermines rather than supports academic integrity.

Framing Patterns Reveal Faculty Anxiety

Framing Tone analysis reveals 55 of 85 policies (65%) employ punitive enforcement language (F1), emphasizing scanning, detection, and academic dishonesty: "All work will be scanned for AI use" or "AI use constitutes plagiarism and will be treated as academic misconduct." Only two policies (2.4%) use affirming, exploratory framing (F4) that positions AI as a learning opportunity: "Understanding AI tools is becoming increasingly important in creative fields. This course will explore how designers use AI thoughtfully" (Graphic Design II). The dominant discourse reflects faculty anxiety rather than pedagogical curiosity, focusing on what students should not do rather than how AI might support learning objectives. This pattern aligns with Beale's (2025) observation that institutional policies emphasize risk mitigation over pedagogical innovation.

Discussion

The 72% silence rate represents institutional failure, not individual faculty neglect. Faculty lack models, professional development, and clear institutional frameworks for addressing AI in syllabi. When institutions provide no guidance, faculty default to omission rather than risk articulating unclear or contradictory policies. This silence creates cascading problems: students receive inconsistent messaging across courses, academic integrity becomes unenforceable, and opportunities for thoughtful AI integration disappear.

Comparison to Wang et al.'s (2023) analysis of the top 100 U.S. universities reveals that this study's 72% silence rate substantially exceeds national patterns. Wang et al. found that 60% of elite institutions had developed some form of AI guidance by late 2023, though most guidance remained at the institutional rather than the course level. This suggests that community colleges may lag research universities in AI policy development, potentially due

to differences in professional development resources, faculty governance structures, or institutional priorities. However, the faculty-level policy variation observed (from complete silence to thoughtful integration) mirrors patterns Wang et al. (2023) observed: even institutions with centralized guidance show wide faculty interpretation and implementation gaps.

The complete absence of Augmentative-level policies reveals not just what faculty aren't saying, but what they aren't imagining. Zero syllabi position AI as a tool requiring critical engagement and the pedagogical middle ground between prohibition and uncritical adoption. This gap suggests faculty need exemplar policies demonstrating how AI can support learning when paired with citation, reflection, and metacognitive scaffolding. UNESCO's (2024) AI Competency Framework for Teachers explicitly identifies "evaluating AI-generated content" and "understanding AI's limitations" as core teacher competencies, yet these competencies find no expression in art syllabi examined. The jump from Selective to Integrative, skipping Augmentative entirely, indicates faculty either ban AI or incorporate it without the critical engagement that UNESCO (2024) frameworks recommend.

Findings point toward two complementary interventions: an AI Integration Toolkit (faculty-facing) and an AI Designation System (student-facing). The toolkit would provide plug-and-play policy templates for each integration level, decision trees for determining course fit, discipline-specific adaptations, and citation requirement examples aligned with UNESCO's (2024) human-centered design principles. This transforms the framework from an analytical tool to an implementation guide, addressing the institutional support gap that Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) identify as critical for faculty technology adoption.

The AI Designation System, modeled on existing modality designations (Online/Hybrid/In-Person), would require faculty to designate courses as AI-Free, AI-Restricted, AI-Integrated, or AI-Immersive during scheduling. Students could then select courses aligned with their learning preferences and skill development goals. This operationalizes student autonomy as a pedagogical principle: a ceramics student seeking traditional hand-building skills has legitimate reasons to prefer AI-free coursework, while a digital media student preparing for industry work has legitimate reasons to seek AI-immersive experiences. Both preferences are valid; the designation system makes both paths visible and accessible. This approach aligns with UNESCO's (2024) emphasis on ensuring "AI for all" means equitable access to both AI-enhanced and traditional pedagogical approaches.

Institutional AI detection tools like Turnitin provide enforcement mechanisms but require policy-level guidance to function ethically. The AICI framework enables threshold differentiation: prohibitive courses maintain zero tolerance (any detection triggers review), selective courses allow 15-20% to account for grammar tools and legitimate editing assistance, augmentative courses permit up to 40% with required citation (shifting focus from detection to documentation), and integrative courses treat percentages as informational rather than punitive (grading strategic use quality instead). This threshold approach addresses Beale's (2025) concern that detection tools' unreliability (26% false positive rates) makes enforcement-focused approaches untenable. Instead, detection becomes a pedagogical feedback tool rather than a gotcha mechanism.

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Conclusion

This study documents faculty AI policy positioning across an entire community college art department, re vealing patterns that extend beyond individual practice to institutional systems. Silence dominates (72%), prohibition prevails among those who speak (56%), critical engagement is absent (0% Augmentative), and clarity remains elusive (59% vague). These findings challenge higher education to move beyond debates about AI detection toward institutional frameworks supporting thoughtful policy development.

The AI Integration Continuum framework, refined through inter-rater reliability testing, provides both descriptive documentation and a normative roadmap. Empty categories, particularly Augmentative and Immersive levels, are not methodological flaws but aspirational benchmarks revealing what faculty aren't yet imagining. Future research should examine student perspectives on AI policy variation, track longitudinal changes as institutional support develops, and assess learning outcomes across different integration levels.

Ultimately, silence is a position and one that institutions can no longer afford to maintain. By making AI integration explicit through toolkits and designation systems informed by UNESCO's (2021, 2023, & 2024) frameworks and comparative institutional research, higher education can transform reactive prohibition into proactive pedagogical design, respecting both traditional skill development and emerging technological literacies as legitimate educational pathways.

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2027 CALL FOR SU

Advocacy: Making the Case for Creative Thinking

The TRENDS 2027 Call for Manuscripts invites artists, educators, and researc the case for advocacy in art education across K-12, higher education, museu on art education across Texas and nationally. Workforce-first accountability m arts programs and departments are closing as budgets and legislative suppo fine arts, advocacy can foster proactive dialogue communicating and demons

Last year's issue of TRENDS reflected on how Artificial Intelligence influen authenticity, authorship, and a human voice as generative tools take on more and have become part of the case that must now be made for why creati overreliance on new tools can stifle creative growth in the studio, what happ creative thinking itself goes undefended? The 2027 TRENDS Call for Manusc to raise awareness and advance knowledge in the field of art education:

We encourage submissions addressing:

·Policy and legislative advocacy, arguments for arts funding and prog

·Classroom-level advocacy approaches that help students articulate a

·What is at stake for original thought as generative tools absorb more look like?

·Visual and material culture as advocacy signifying how creative work

·Community, museum, and cross-sector partnerships that build public

·How do program heads, department chairs, and teachers make the provosts, and board members for sustained investment in art educati

The editors welcome arts-based submissions, creative writing, book review reflection on applications of advocacy in art education across all learning env

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chers to share research, experiences, and action-oriented solutions that make um, and community contexts. This issue arrives at a moment of real pressure etrics increasingly frame program value in narrow, credentialing terms. Liberal ort are shrinking. With increasing societal and economic pressures impacting strating the critical role of art education in cultivating creative thinking.

nced the teaching and learning of art and inquired how educators maintain of the work of ideation and production. These issues have not been resolved ve and critical thinking deserve protection and investment at every level. If pens at the level of policy, funding, and public perception when the value of cripts extends that inquiry outward focusing on advocacy as a powerful means

ram preservation in the face of workforce-first accountability frameworks

and defend the value of creative and critical thinking as a durable skill

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