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Editors' Introduction: Continuing the Conversation

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Editors' Introduction: Continuing the Conversation

Renee McGarry and Virginia B. Spivey

Welcome to the second issue of *Art History Pedagogy and Practice*. We are excited to continue conversations we started in our first issue, which concerned the introductory art history survey or—as argued by Melissa Kerin and Andrea LePage—surveys.¹ As “The Survey” is probably taught more frequently than any other art history course at the college level, it made sense as a place to begin to form a common vocabulary for SoTL-AH. In our second issue we bring together four articles that introduce new research into teaching methods and pedagogical practices that are applicable not only to introductory survey courses but also to any others we may teach.

The lecture model has remained a strong tradition in the art history classroom, but we are starting to notice a sea change in formal and informal conversations with colleagues. Each year at the College Art Association conference we see new models for actively engaging students in the classroom, and Art History Teaching Resources has made a practice of regularly publishing new approaches to delivering art historical content.² We have been particularly interested in projects that go beyond the written and verbal—those that ask for student’s corporeal and tactile engagement in the classroom. Several authors in this issue consider these alternative modes of student learning that go well beyond verbal and aural experience.

In her article “Active Learning in the Art History Classroom,” Marie Gasper-Hulvat provides an in-depth survey of the formal academic literature concerning active learning in the art history classroom. She begins by establishing the roots of active learning in the discipline of art history, describing a long tradition of such practices that may be unknown to many in the field. Of particular note, Gasper-Hulvat remarks upon the difficulty and resistance faculty who utilize active learning methods may face in their departments. Gasper-Hulvat’s thorough analysis and survey of the existing literature provides more than a starting point for those looking to bring active learning in their own classroom. It also provides evidence of an established history that will prove invaluable to those of us using these practices and raises new questions for additional research that will contribute the development of SoTL-AH.

Laetitia La Follette further discusses the value of active learning practices in her article “Bloom's Taxonomy for Art History: Blending a Skills-Based Approach into the Traditional Introductory

¹ Melissa R. Kerrin and Andrea Lepage, “De-Centering “The” Survey: The Value of Multiple Introductory Surveys to Art History.” *Art History Pedagogy & Practice* 1.1 (2016). <http://academicworks.cuny.edu/ahpp/vol1/iss1/3>

² See for example Sherry Freyermuth, “Hands On History: Learning the History of Typography with a Letterpress Workshop,” *AHTR Weekly*, May 3, 2017; <http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/2017/05/hands-on-history-learning-the-history-of-typography-with-a-letterpress-workshop/> and Cory Dzenko, “Walking on the Grass: Using Campus as Source Material” *AHTR Weekly*, March 27, 2017. <http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/2017/03/walking-on-the-grass-using-campus-as-source-material/>

Survey,” which considers the value of introducing these methods in a large-enrollment, lecture-based course. While recognizing the value of inspiring lectures, La Follette follows through on research that demonstrates that watching a professor model skills is not as pedagogically effective as students practicing those skills themselves.³ Her translation of Bloom’s Taxonomy to art history will assist art history instructors in better using the principles of “backward design,” in which instructors first determine learning outcomes and appropriate assessments before structuring activities that move students toward these goals.⁴ In La Follette’s case, she explores the the value of team-based learning in her own lecture classroom.

In “Making Pictures, Writing About Pictures, Discussing Pictures and Lecture-Discussion as Teaching Methods in Art History,” Jari M. Martikainen discusses his research involving picture-based methods in the art history classroom and integrating contemporary art history into class activities and assessments. He argues that this student-centered, learning-by-doing approach allows for deeper engagement with the discipline of art history and affords students the opportunity to participate in the practice of art history in unique ways. Martikainen’s description of emotional and affective approaches to art history as an introduction to picture-based visual and verbal teaching methods and his analysis of the student experience provide a new entry point into thinking about and researching SoTL-AH.

The final article in this issue, “The Living Syllabus: Rethinking the Introductory Course to Art History with Interactive Visualization,” describes an experiment in adopting mapping and timeline technologies into an art history survey course at Duke University. Caroline Bruzelius and Hannah L. Jacobs worked with students in the course to build a visualization based on the course syllabus and designed for use in the classroom. Bruzelius and Jacobs argue that the Omeka and Neatline project generates new ways for students and instructor to make connections between important objects, peoples, and civilizations, even connecting present day events to this history of art.

These articles were taken from an open call for participation, and we were enthusiastic to see the common theme of active, student-centered learning in the art history classroom emerging from nearly every submission. As the discipline continues to grapple with the questions of classroom practice, we are certain that the perspectives of these authors will provide guidance and direction, not only for pedagogical techniques and teaching methods, but also for additional avenues of research.

³ Jana Hackathorn, et al. "Learning by Doing: An Empirical Study of Active Teaching Techniques." *Journal of Effective Teaching* 11.2 (2011): 40-54.

⁴ See Grant P. Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design*. ASCD, 2005.