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The Praxis Method: Utilizing Ai as A Scaffolding Tool for Critical Thinking in Art History

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Abstract

Traditional art history pedagogy often creates a "museum effect," where artifacts are viewed as static aesthetic objects rather than dynamic political manifestos in the historical context. This paper introduces The Praxis Method, a three-phase pedagogical framework that integrates Generative AI as a "Co-Teacher" to bridge the gap between historical context and contemporary classroom application. Using Michelangelo's David and the political crisis of 1504 Florence as a case study, this research demonstrates how AI tools can scaffold deep inquiry and curriculum design. The study highlights two proprietary AI integrations within the Praxis workflow: the "AI Historian" and the "Curriculum Architect". In Phase 1 (Theory), the "AI Historian" functions as a context-aware query tool, allowing students to actively interrogate the political landscape, such as the threat of the Medici or the Pope, before engaging with the visual artwork. This enforces the method's core tenet of establishing "context before content". In Phase 3 (Reflection), the "Curriculum Architect" supports the "Translate & Synthesize" goal by automating the creation of structured, grade-specific lesson plans based on the user's field analysis. This paper argues that Generative AI, when used as a scaffolding tool rather than a replacement, restores the rigorous critical thinking essential to the humanities.

Keywords: Art History Praxis; Critical Thinking; Generative AI in Education; Inquiry-Based Learning; Pedagogical Scaffolding