

# Innovative Approaches in Video Art Education: Peer Review Mechanism, Somaesthetics, and Evaluation System Reform

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**Abstract:** *This paper uses the Digital Media Arts program at Xianda College of Economics and Humanities, Shanghai International Studies University as a case study to explore three new methods in video art education. These methods aim to solve problems such as too much focus on technical skills, low student motivation, weak theoretical knowledge, and difficulties in expressing ideas due to psychological issues. The first method is the introduction of a peer review system, which encourages more interaction and feedback between students, increasing their motivation to create. The second is adding somaesthetics courses, which help students express their inner feelings through body experiences, improving their mental health. Lastly, the evaluation system was reformed to make the educational process more complete and varied. Through case studies and data analysis, this paper shows that these changes have had a strong positive impact on students' artistic expression, creativity, and mental well-being.*

**Keywords:** *Video Art Education, Peer Review Mechanism, Somaesthetics, Evaluation System Reform*

## 1. Introduction

In contemporary art, video art has changed from traditional media like video and installation in the 1960s to using different types of media together. This creates an interactive mix of visuals, sound, body, and performance, allowing the audience to be part of the artwork and expanding human senses. The main goal of video art education is to help students understand video art, learn different creative methods, ideas, and ways of expressing themselves, and eventually create works that show their personal style and meet industry standards. Currently, video art education in China is generally divided into two directions: one focuses on contemporary art, stressing individual expression and experimental creation, while the other emphasizes the industrial production of film and television, focusing on technical skills and teamwork. In today's cultural environment, video has become a tool for personal expression, and video art education should pay more attention to developing independent video creators.

Although many art schools and universities have started to explore experimental video art education systems, they still face several challenges. The Western video art education system is relatively developed, but because of differences in cultural background, educational beliefs, and social environment, simply copying Western methods does not suit China's situation (Gao, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to redesign a teaching system that better fits local needs. Drawing from my experiences in studying and teaching video art both in China and abroad, this paper suggests innovative practical solutions to the problems in video art education[1].

## 2. Issues in teaching

### 2.1 Overemphasis on Technical Skills and Lack of Student Motivation

At Xianda College of Economics and Humanities, Shanghai International Studies University, the Digital Media Arts program currently emphasizes technical skills like editing, special effects, and

image processing, while overlooking the conceptual and theoretical aspects of artistic creation. The course content mainly focuses on technical elements, which leads to students' works often lacking creativity and depth, making it hard for them to develop a personal style. Because the curriculum is monotonous, many students have low interest during their studies and lack motivation to be innovative. This situation negatively impacts their creative thinking and artistic perception skills.

## ***2.2 Weak Foundation in Art Theory and Humanities***

Many students lack essential art theory and humanities knowledge, which prevents them from conducting in-depth artistic analysis and criticism in video art creation. This gap not only limits their understanding of complex social phenomena and cultural themes but also results in superficial works that lack cultural reflection and social critique. Additionally, some students view video creation merely as a technical operation, ignoring its potential as a tool for artistic expression and social criticism.

## ***2.3 Expression Difficulties Due to Psychological Issues***

In recent years, an increasing number of students have been affected by psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and social anxiety. These issues lead to noticeable difficulties in expression during class discussions and creative presentations. According to a 2023 survey of 207 students in the Digital Media Arts program, 40% reported experiencing some level of social fear and difficulty in communication, while 30% believed these issues directly impacted their performance and confidence in the creative process. Additionally, 25% admitted feeling “shy to express” or “struggling to express” themselves in classroom discussions, reflecting the serious impact of psychological issues on their learning in artistic creation. These mental barriers not only hinder their artistic development but also affect their performance in teamwork and public settings.

## **3. Innovative Approaches**

To address the issues mentioned above, this paper proposes three innovative teaching practices: establishing a peer evaluation mechanism, incorporating somaesthetics courses, and reforming the evaluation system. The aim is to enhance student participation and creativity while improving their artistic literacy and mental health.

### ***3.1 Establishing Peer Evaluation Mechanism: Promoting Communication and Diverse Feedback***

To boost students' creative motivation and broaden their artistic perspectives, the course incorporates a peer evaluation mechanism. This idea stems from my experience at the University of the Arts London, where I discovered that such a system encourages students to participate more actively and openly in class discussions and assessments. During each presentation, the creator must remain silent while their peers provide evaluations and feedback based on their interpretations.

After receiving this input, the creator is tasked with organizing and reflecting on it in their personal blog or learning platform. Students are expected to listen quietly after showcasing their work, taking in feedback from their classmates. The instructor also requires that each student offers at least one positive comment and one constructive suggestion to ensure well-rounded and helpful feedback.

Following class, students must document the feedback and their reflections in their blogs, considering how they can apply these insights to future projects. This feedback-reflection cycle not only encourages ongoing learning and improvement but also sharpens their critical thinking and self-reflection skills. By implementing this peer evaluation system, students become more receptive and positive when it comes to feedback, greatly enhancing the classroom environment and providing valuable insights into their creative processes[2].

### **Teaching Case: Experimental Film**

In the Digital Entertainment Short Film Creation course for the 2023-2024 semester, Lin Jingyun's experimental video work was often critiqued during peer evaluations for lacking clarity (Figure 1). Because Lin included Japanese subtitles and voiceovers, viewers found themselves relying heavily on their imagination during the audiovisual experience, making it difficult to grasp the content. Many classmates expressed in the feedback session that they couldn't understand Japanese, which diminished the text's intended explanatory role—something Lin had not anticipated. This language barrier caused

some viewers to disengage completely from the piece.

This feedback prompted Lin to engage in a deep reflection about the balance between personal expression and audience accessibility. She realized that while her artistic intent was important, she also needed to consider how her work would be received and understood by a broader audience. In response, she began to reframe her creative process, incorporating the viewers' perspectives and finding ways to make her work more inclusive without compromising her artistic vision. This shift in approach allowed her to develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between creator and audience, adding a new layer of depth to her artistic thinking. By the time of her next presentation, Lin had reworked her approach, taking into account the importance of clear communication alongside personal expression. As a result, her revised work resonated much more strongly with her peers, receiving far more positive and constructive feedback.

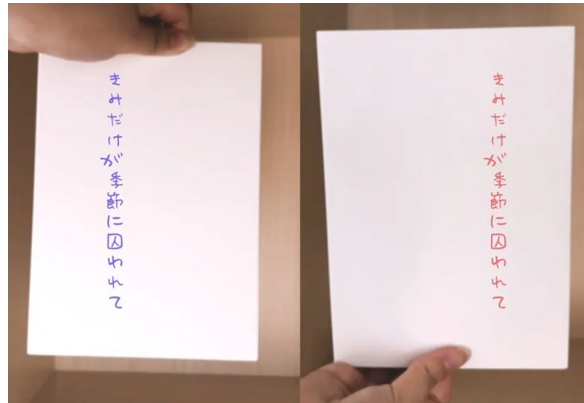


Figure 1: Lin Jingyun, *To You, in the Season That is About to Die* (2024)

In the teaching evaluations conducted over the past three years, 85% of students noted that the peer evaluation system helped them gain a clearer understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, while 78% felt it boosted their creative motivation. Furthermore, 90% of students reported that it increased their interest in and understanding of video art. From my perspective as a teacher, this system not only enhanced students' creative skills but also fostered better interaction and camaraderie among classmates, creating a more dynamic and engaging classroom atmosphere.

### 3.2 Incorporating Somaesthetics Courses: Authentic Expression of Inner Experiences

To tackle students' weaknesses in art theory and humanities, as well as their difficulties in self-expression, we introduced Somaesthetics courses into our video art curriculum. This interdisciplinary course focuses on the body as a creative medium, emphasizing the expression of inner emotions and thoughts through physical movement and actions. Drawing on Richard Shusterman's theory of somaesthetics, the course highlights the significance of direct bodily experiences and perceptions in forming a deep connection with the world.

Throughout the course, students engage in various practices, including physical exercises, performance art, and meditation, using their bodies to explore self-awareness and their inner spiritual landscape. This approach fosters a heightened awareness of themselves and their environment. Students then capture these experiences on video, turning them into rich material for artistic expression.

#### Teaching Case: "Body, Space, Video"

In the "Body, Space, Video" course, students are invited to participate in a range of body awareness exercises aimed at deepening their connection to space, time, and their own physicality. These exercises go beyond simple physical movements, encouraging students to engage with their senses and surroundings in a more mindful and introspective way. One of the key activities involves meditation, where students are asked to find a comfortable position—whether standing, sitting, or lying down—and meditate for 20 minutes. This meditation allows them to tune into their inner selves while attuning to the subtle details of their environment. In some exercises, they close their eyes and focus solely on listening to the ambient sounds around them. Once the exercise concludes, they share their auditory experiences with the class, offering insight into how each individual uniquely perceives and interacts with their surroundings. Other exercises push the students to engage with mundane tasks in a more conscious, deliberate manner, such as drinking water in slow motion or walking mindfully through a

grove of trees. These practices aim to break down habitual ways of moving and perceiving, encouraging students to interact with their environment in more creative, reflective ways.

As we delve deeper into spatial awareness and embodiment, we also introduce thematic creative prompts to spark artistic exploration. Some of these exercises, like "I want to stand under that tree," "I am a straight line," and "A blank sheet of paper," ask students to translate abstract concepts into physical actions, challenging them to rethink their relationship to the space they inhabit. These seemingly simple prompts invite students to bring a performative element into their work, merging body and space in ways that reflect both their internal landscapes and the external world. One particularly striking example from the 2020 somaesthetics course was a performance piece by a student named Mei Han (Figure 2). Han chose to slowly bury herself beside a tree, a profoundly symbolic gesture that resonated deeply with her personal experiences. In her reflective blog post, Han described the exercise as a moment of spontaneous, raw creativity: "Every time we have an impromptu art exercise in class, it feels like my brain is on fire. This time, though, I didn't overthink it; I just acted on a fleeting thought. While burying myself in the earth, I closed my eyes and listened, feeling a deep connection to the land. Everyone stayed quiet during the process, which made me really happy."

Han's performance was not just a simple physical act but a powerful expression of her inner emotional landscape. She has long struggled with feelings of gender inequality within her family and has sought to channel her feminist ideas through her artistic practice. The act of burying herself in the ground became a metaphor for reclaiming space and power, as she literally and symbolically grounded herself. The moment she stepped into the hole she had carefully dug was imbued with a sense of personal strength and defiance, marking it as a turning point in her creative journey. In that instant, Han was not only connecting with the earth but also confronting the societal and familial pressures she had long faced. The act of burial became a form of silent resistance and a means of embodying her feminist ideals.

If we consider art as a means for exploring and expressing personal and societal tensions, then Han's performance stands out as a vivid and deeply personal exploration of her inner conflicts. Her choice to physically immerse herself in the earth became a powerful act of self-expression, reflecting not only her emotional struggles but also her desire to find resolution and empowerment through her art. Through this performance, Han was able to articulate her spirit in a way that transcended words, using her body as the medium for a deeply felt, visceral statement on identity, gender, and autonomy[3].



*Figure 2: Mei Han, Burying Myself in the Earth, Performance (2021)*

These seemingly simple exercises help students break free from the constraints of visual and verbal expression, allowing them to develop a new awareness of space, time, and self through bodily experience, which significantly enhances their inner growth. As a result, students begin to learn how to use their bodies as a medium to express their inner experiences and emotions. One student noted, "These exercises have deepened my understanding of where my creative inspiration comes from and encouraged me to express my feelings more directly."

The somaesthetics course not only enhances students' bodily awareness and artistic expression but also greatly improves their mental well-being. Among the 40 students participating in the somaesthetics course, reflections shared in their blogs revealed that 65% felt the course helped them better understand their inner worlds, while 82% believed it boosted their self-expression and confidence.

### 3.3 Updated Evaluation System: Comprehensive and Multidimensional Assessment

To thoroughly assess students' learning outcomes, a dual-standard evaluation system has been established, addressing both artistic and commercial talent development. This system adopts a dual-directional approach and dual evaluation criteria, assessing students from two angles: academic performance and overall competencies. The academic evaluation focuses on research, analytical, comprehension, technical, and innovative abilities, with grades assigned based on students' performance in research tasks, video production projects, and theoretical studies. These are divided into five levels, referencing assessment criteria from European art institutions such as the University of the Arts London.

The evaluation of overall competencies includes communication and expression skills, independent working abilities, and teamwork. This is assessed through multiple dimensions, including project presentations, oral reports, and collaborative group projects. The specific criteria are as follows (Table 1):

*Table 1: Evaluation System in Digital Media Arts program*

Evaluation Criteria	F	D	C	B	A
Research Ability	Little or no evidence provided to demonstrate this ability	Information provided is irrelevant to the task	Sufficient information	Accurate information	Well-rounded judgment and information from a wide range of sources
Analytical Ability	Little or no evidence	Attempts to analyze, but lacks persuasion	Key factors present in the information, but lacks accurate explanation	Accurate interpretation	Both accurate and offering unique insights
Comprehension Ability	Unable to demonstrate understanding	Limited understanding	Reasonable and justified understanding	Accurate understanding	Contributes to the discussion of the topic
Experimental Ability	Little or no participation in experiments	Unable to identify problems	Some evidence of exploration	Evidence of experimentation	Able to explore unfamiliar conceptual areas
Technical Ability	Very limited technical proficiency	Basic technical abilities are limited	Skills can express creative ideas	Skills facilitate communication of ideas	Ideas and techniques are unified
Communication Skills	Ineffective use of visual/oral/written communication	Unclear structure, lacks audience awareness	Meets basic standards	Able to adhere to basic standards	Unites basic standards with personal style
Independent Work Ability	Lack of reflective evidence, unaware of personal strengths and weaknesses related to the task	Limited understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses	Able to develop awareness of strengths and weaknesses	Actively works to develop strengths and minimize weaknesses	Takes full responsibility for own learning and development
Teamwork Ability	Does not collaborate; ineffective when working alone	Reluctantly collaborates; struggles to complete work independently	Able to work both collaboratively and independently	Effective both in team settings and when working alone	Integrates a strong sense of personal identity
Innovative Ability	Lacks creativity and originality	Basic creativity but no actual novelty	Shows some innovative thinking	Demonstrates significant innovation and creative expression	Exhibits high levels of innovation and a unique artistic perspective

In the new evaluation system, innovation is a key dimension that assesses students' originality and creativity in their work. It encourages them to explore new forms of expression and ideas, pushing beyond traditional boundaries to enhance the uniqueness and impact of their artistic creations. This system takes a holistic approach, considering both technical and artistic abilities, as well as individual and team skills. Its goal is to offer students a well-rounded development pathway, equipping them to better tackle future challenges in artistic creation and career growth.

#### 4. Conclusion

After two semesters of teaching, the outcomes have been outstanding. To begin with, students' creative energy and artistic expression saw a notable rise. Roughly 80% of the students exhibited strong visual storytelling and innovative abilities in their work. Independent projects earned widespread recognition from both peers and instructors, and many students began to show a more refined artistic style and individual voice. Their video art projects collectively won over 30 international awards, including honors like the Taiwan International Student Art Award, G Gross Award, and the Hong Kong Contemporary Design Award. These accolades spanned across various categories such as photography, experimental video, and documentary film, demonstrating that students had not only mastered essential video art skills but also applied them successfully in international arenas.

Additionally, there was a clear enhancement in students' grasp of art theory and humanities. Their selection of topics and forms of expression became increasingly varied, ranging from personal storytelling to addressing societal issues, and adopting both abstract and figurative approaches.

Moreover, the introduction of somaesthetics courses contributed significantly to improving the self-expression and mental health of students facing psychological challenges. Engaging in activities like meditation, automatic writing, and performance-based training, students reported a stronger sense of self-awareness and connection between mind and body. Those who initially found it difficult to express themselves emotionally began to break through these barriers, showing notable growth in their ability to articulate emotions.

These outcomes indicate that video art education must embrace more flexible and diverse approaches to better meet the evolving needs of contemporary art creation and societal development. As globalization and digitalization continue to advance, video art programs need to adapt and update, preparing students with a wide range of skills and a global perspective for their future as creative professionals.

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