EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Photography and Audiovisual Department

Technological Educational Institute of Athens
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External Evaluation Committee

The Committee responsible for the External Evaluation of the Photography and Audiovisual Department of the Technological Educational Institute of Athens consisted of the following four (4) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

1. Panayiotis Zaphiris, Professor, School of Fine and Applied Arts, Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus (Coordinator)

2. Paschalis Paschalis, Associate Professor, Department of Design and Multimedia, University of Nicosia, Cyprus

3. Efthimia Bilissi, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Media, Arts and Design, University of Westminster, United Kingdom

4. Angelos Stefanidis, Head of International Development, Faculty of Computing, Engineering & Science, University of South Wales, United Kingdom
**Introduction**

**I. The External Evaluation Procedure**
- Dates and brief account of the site visit.
- Whom did the Committee meet?
- List of Reports, documents, other data examined by the Committee.
- Groups of teaching and administrative staff and students interviewed
- Facilities visited by the External Evaluation Committee.

**II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure**
Please comment on:
- Appropriateness of sources and documentation used
- Quality and completeness of evidence reviewed and provided
- To what extent have the objectives of the internal evaluation process been met by the Department?

The external evaluation committee (henceforth ‘the Committee’) visited the Photography and Audiovisual Department (henceforth ‘the Department’) of the Technological Educational Institute of Athens (henceforth ‘TEI Athens’) on 24-26/2/2014. Members of the Committee were initially invited to attend a briefing at the ADIP headquarters. Assistant Prof. Aristidis Kontogiorgis welcomed the Committee on behalf of the Department at ADIP and assisted with transportation to TEI Athens. Upon arrival the Committee met with the director of the Department (Professor Kostis Antoniades), and the members of OMEA (Prof. Gregoris Vlassas and Prof. Athanasios Aravantinos) who provided a detailed description of the Department, its educational activities, historical development and achievements. This background information became the basis for the formulation of the schedule of meetings for the following two days.

On 25/2/2014 the Committee met the department academics who had a chance to present in detail the academic program and the blocks of modules they were each in charge of. The entire cohort of faculty and technical staff attended and actively participated to the proceedings. The presentations encouraged useful and elaborate discussions on all aspects related to the academic provision of the Department, the wider issues relating to TEI Athens, the Greek tertiary educational system, and departmental operations. Parts of the presentations focusing on the academic provision, included student work samples and an overview of learning and teaching strategies. In the afternoon of the same day the Committee visited the teaching facilities of the Department (this included: digital media labs, computer and printing labs, dark room and digital techniques lab, advertising photography lab) and had an opportunity to see an art exhibition organized by current photography students. The day’s proceedings continued with an extensive discussion at a well attended meeting with students. During the meeting, students (20-25) expressed their views openly and honestly, in
a spirit of mutual respect and support. The day ended with separate group meetings with academics, technical staff and part-time teaching staff.

On 26/2/2014 the Committee first met with the Administration staff of the Department and then with the Assistant Professor Aristidis Kontogiorghis who gave an overview of the ERASMUS program of the Department. Subsequently, there was a fruitful meeting with alumni and employers affiliated with the Department. This particular meeting was well attended and comprised wide range of professionals, offering broad representation of the job market open to future graduates of the Department. The Committee also had the opportunity to visit the TEI Athens library and additional lab facilities of the Department, before finally meeting briefly with the deputy-president of TEI Athens.

The day’s proceedings were concluded with a final meeting with the director of the Department during which the Committee offered a brief preliminary outline of its findings.

Prior to the scheduled visit, the Committee was provided with the Department’s internal evaluation report, the Department handbook and a document summarizing the research and creative outputs of each academic staff member along with links to the website with extensive additional information.

Furthermore, the Committee was given access to samples of student theses and other work, put on display in one of the meeting rooms. The Department also provided volumes of published work by faculty.

Overall, the Committee is pleased with and commends the welcoming and openly cooperative attitude of the Department who made every effort to ensure that the Committee had ample and open access to all pertinent materials.

The internal evaluation report was helpful. The Committee feels that the on-site visit was the main source of information and should continue to be the major component of all evaluation procedures.
A. Curriculum
To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programme.

APPROACH
• What are the goals and objectives of the Curriculum? What is the plan for achieving them?
• How were the objectives decided? Which factors were taken into account? Were they set against appropriate standards? Did the unit consult other stakeholders?
• Is the curriculum consistent with the objectives of the Curriculum and the requirements of the society?
• How was the curriculum decided? Were all constituents of the Department, including students and other stakeholders, consulted?
• Has the unit set a procedure for the revision of the curriculum?

The goal for the Department of Photography and Audiovisual is the theoretical, visual, and technological education of its students in the fields of photography and video. The curriculum is in line with international standards. The aims of the curriculum are to develop the understanding of contemporary culture and its relationship to photographic and video practice (digital and analogue), and to develop technical skills that will enable graduates to respond to: the requirements of postgraduate study, keeping up with the developments in photographic technology, the demands of creating artistic work and the competitive industries of photojournalism, advertising, digital image manipulation and multimedia.

The Department of Photography and Audiovisual is the only department in the Greek tertiary education sector which provides a degree in Photography and Video. It was founded in 1985 as “Department of Photography”. During a revision of the curriculum in 2005 it was decided to introduce video in the curriculum and therefore the name of the department changed to “Photography and Audiovisual Arts”. This decision was driven by the advances in digital photography and video over the previous twenty years, and the evolving link between these two fields. In a further revision of the curriculum in 2008 it was also decided to reinforce the modules covering theoretical and aesthetical subjects, aiming to develop further the creative skills of the students. Regrettably, the name of the Department was changed in 2013 to “Photography and Audiovisual” dropping the word “Arts” from the title.

The curriculum requires a compulsory thesis and a six month long industrial placement.

The Department’s committee of Curriculum Monitoring and Evaluation oversees the implementation of the curriculum and evaluates it.

IMPLEMENTATION
• How effectively is the Department’s goal implemented by the curriculum?
• How does the curriculum compare with appropriate, universally accepted standards for the specific area of study?
• Is the structure of the curriculum rational and clearly articulated?
• Is the curriculum coherent and functional?
• Is the material for each course appropriate and the time offered sufficient?
• Does the Department have the necessary resources and appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum?

A program handbook is available to the students. It includes an introduction, the aims and
objectives of the program, regulations, a table with the modules in each semester and module details such as ECTS credits, hours etc., and individual module guides which include the aims of the module, learning outcomes, indicative syllabus, and bibliography. The program handbook is also available online on the department’s pages of the TEI Athens website.

The curriculum focuses on digital photography and video with analogue photography being taught as an advanced optional module. Through discussions with students, alumni and academic staff the Committee developed the impression that the analogue photography component of the curriculum needs further strengthening. This will equip the students with basic but essential required knowledge of principles of photography, and a deeper understanding and appreciation of the discipline.

Following current Greek education practices, the curriculum is delivered in its totality by department run modules. The nature of this specific department requires a multidisciplinary exposure of students to various additional sets of skills and knowledge, such as Graphic and Visual Communication, Marketing and Advertising and Fine Arts. For this reason, the Committee believes that sharing modules with other departments would strongly improve the student experience and strengthen cross-discipline collaborations. For example, since the Department has no provision of Graphic and Visual Communication modules, the student attainment in the area of Multimedia was deemed relatively weak. The Committee suggests exploring opportunities for co-teaching or/cross-registration of courses with related departments (e.g. the Department of Graphic Design of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design).

As explained to the Committee by academic staff, policy decisions at institutional and national level have highly affected the development of the curriculum. For example, recent attempts to increase the theory component of courses at TEI Athens have put pressure on the Department to reduce practical work conducted in labs and replace it with theoretical components.

As part of discussions with academic staff, it also became evident that the lab space is not sufficient for the number of students taking modules which include practical work, partly because of the recent change that sees the entire annual student cohort being admitted as one intake in September instead of two.

The curriculum does not appear to include any sessions in career development and professional practice, which would prepare the students for entering the industry by offering them appropriate employability skills. Sessions on ethics, codes of practice and copyright are included only in one optional module.

RESULTS

- How well is the implementation achieving the Department’s predefined goals and objectives?
- If not, why is it so? How is this problem dealt with?
- Does the Department understand why and how it achieved or failed to achieve these results?

In relation to academic achievement, the student work that was reviewed by the Committee was judged to be of high standard. Consequently, the students are deemed to be given appropriate knowledge and skills by following the prescribed curriculum.

Despite the overall student attainment, the recently revised distribution of contact hours resulting in the reduction of practical lab work is causing the unwelcome result of students not receiving sufficient exposure to the practical techniques of photography which require
further hands-on training.

Valuable feedback from alumni shows that the range of professional opportunities for fresh photography graduates can be wide. However, students appear unaware of such opportunities due to rather limited emphasis on employability and career development opportunities as part of the existing curriculum.

IMPROVEMENT

- Does the Department know how the Curriculum should be improved?
- Which improvements does the Department plan to introduce?

Given the above, the Committee recommends that:

1. Future revisions of the curriculum should involve all stakeholders. Meetings with alumni, students, employers, cultural entities and other stakeholders should inform curriculum decisions where appropriate.

2. Although, TEI Athens offers career services at institutional level [http://www.teiath.gr/career_office/?lang=el](http://www.teiath.gr/career_office/?lang=el), the nature of the photography profession necessitates more specific advice on career development, which ought to be seen as an additional provision. The Department should investigate the best way this could be offered, especially at the early stages of the program (e.g. as a stand alone module, as part of other compulsory modules, as part of extra activities etc) but it should at a minimum include:
   - Alumni talks to students about professional development (the Committee’s discussions with alumni showed that there is genuine interest to contribute).
   - Workshops to include career skills / management, professional practice (ethics, copyright, etc), portfolio development (website), presentation skills, project management skills.
   - Experience in curating and exhibiting art work.
   - Visits to studios, museums, organizations.

3. The Department should investigate cross-registrations and co-teaching with other departments.

4. Analogue photography courses and facilities should be strengthened.
### B. Teaching

**APPROACH:**

Does the Department have a defined pedagogic policy with regard to teaching approach and methodology?

Please comment on:

- Teaching methods used
- Teaching staff/student ratio
- Teacher/student collaboration
- Adequacy of means and resources
- Use of information technologies
- Examination system

The academic staff employ a variety of teaching methods, including lectures, laboratory exercises, software demonstrations, in-class discussions, and individual guidance. The assessment of student work is based on project development, oral and written examinations as well as ongoing coursework portfolio development. Due to the practical nature of the program more emphasis is given on practical projects and laboratory exercises although all modules do have a theoretical written component (usually weighted at 40% of the overall grade). Students are sometimes provided with syllabi and assessment criteria at the beginning of modules, but the Committee is unclear whether this is a common practice across all modules.

The student-to-staff ratio is reasonable, especially when considering that Greek tertiary institutions have a large number of inactive students who remain registered.

However, the Committee notes that the recent increase in theoretical lecture hours (implemented due to institutional and national regulations/legislations – as explained earlier) and subsequent decrease in the time students spend in the labs, seems to have had a negative impact on the students’ practical experience gain, which is a significant asset to their future employment prospects.

The student-to-equipment ratio is satisfactory with regard to computer equipment but the department is in need of a larger darkroom, equipped with a substantial number of enlargers, as analogue photography is vital for deeper understanding and appreciation of the discipline.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Please comment on:

- Quality of teaching procedures
- Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources.
- Quality of course material. Is it brought up to date?
- Linking of research with teaching
- Mobility of academic staff and students
- Evaluation by the students of (a) the teaching and (b) the course content and study material/resources

Based on student interviews, the Committee finds that the teaching in the Department is of high quality. Likewise, interviews with academic staff demonstrated great enthusiasm and passion toward their content areas and their students. A commitment to deliver high quality and relevant curriculum was evident across all ranks.
The Committee notes that permanent staff reported confusion regarding promotion criteria. Similarly, part-time teaching staff, essential to carrying out some of the practical aspects of the curriculum, have been in non permanent (annual contract) employment for up to 24 years.

There is limited evidence of academic staff incorporating their research into teaching usually through the use of their own textbooks.

Some of the textbooks used in this program are outdated.

Students make excellent use of the ERASMUS exchange program due to the outstanding efficiency and international connections cultivated by the designated academic.

Hard-copy module evaluations have been replaced with online evaluation procedures across TEI Athens. The Department report low completion rates leading to statistically unreliable results that are not distributed to the academic staff. The Department recognizes the importance of such feedback and are currently in search of ways to improve participation.

RESULTS
Please comment on:
- Efficacy of teaching.
- Discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses and how they are justified.
- Differences between students in (a) the time to graduation, and (b) final degree grades.
- Whether the Department understands the reasons of such positive or negative results?

Interviews with students have shown a great degree of satisfaction from the program. As a result, there is evidence that the course is producing competent graduates, currently pursuing successful careers in the field of photography both nationally and internationally.

IMPROVEMENT
- Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?
- What initiatives does it take in this direction?

The Committee recommends that:
1. As a procedural matter, the Department would benefit greatly from implementing its own Academic Staff Handbook. Such a document would clarify promotion and permanence criteria. Included in such a handbook would be procedures and policies concerning periodic but regular pre-tenure review in the areas of teaching, research, service, outreach, and other field related accomplishments, such as photography exhibitions.
2. TEI Athens and the Department should explore all possible ways so that completion rates of module evaluations are increased. Through a variety of initiatives TEI Athens and the Department could increase the interest of students in this process. The use of online completion should be reconsidered. High completion rate will lead to statistically reliable results that should then be shared with the academic staff involved in order to act as feedback for improvement.
3. A uniform procedure for providing students with syllabus and clear assessment
criteria should be implemented. As an example, it should be made compulsory for an ECTS format course outline to be given to students during the first session of each class.
### C. Research

*For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.*

#### APPROACH

- What is the Department’s policy and main objective in research?
- Has the Department set internal standards for assessing research?

The Department has an Art related focus. In such cases, some academic staff who specialize in theoretical subjects (e.g. history of art, aesthetics) tend to have research that take the form of traditional types of outputs (published journal and conference papers) but the majority of academics (artists, photographers etc) produce work such as exhibitions, photo books, visual productions and art work.

A number of academic staff have published work while others have participated in a number of individual and group exhibitions at national and international level, some in well known venues (e.g. Benaki Museum).

Although some academics have been relatively active in research (especially in the form of exhibitions – some of them having presented their work in more than 20 or 30 exhibitions), the overall volume of research output of the Department could be substantially improved.

The Department lacks a clearly articulated long-term strategy as well as an internal process for assessing research activity, but this shortcoming is not uncommon in multi-disciplinary departments in which academic staff pursue diverse research agendas and objectives.

It should also be noted that the current financial situation makes some forms of research outputs almost impossible, for example academics have reported high costs for organizing individual exhibitions that end up being funded purely from their own personal resources.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

- How does the Department promote and support research?
- Quality and adequacy of research infrastructure and support.
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.

See above.

#### RESULTS

- How successfully were the Department’s research objectives implemented?
- Scientific publications.
- Research projects.
- Research collaborations.
- Efficacy of research work. Applied results. Patents etc.
- Is the Department’s research acknowledged and visible outside the Department? Rewards and awards.

See above.

#### IMPROVEMENT
• Improvements in research proposed by the Department, if necessary.
• Initiatives in this direction undertaken by the Department.

To cultivate and strengthen the Department research culture, the Committee recommends that the Department and TEI Athens consider implementing the following recommendations:

1. Utilize its excellent ERASMUS network with European Universities to (a) cultivate further research activities (e.g. research exchanges and visits, research seminar series with visiting academics from collaborating universities) (b) join new research proposals (especially under the HORIZON 2020 EU program) for project grants.
2. Explore opportunities for financing art exhibitions of their work through sponsorship.
D. All Other Services

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

APPROACH

• How does the Department view the various services provided to the members of the academic community (teaching staff, students).
• Does the Department have a policy to simplify administrative procedures? Are most procedures processed electronically?
• Does the Department have a policy to increase student presence on Campus?

The Committee dedicated a substantial amount of time to the exploration and evaluation of the infrastructure and provision of academic support services. Given the organizational structure of TEI Athens, which includes a number of different departments, it became necessary to differentiate between those peripheral services that are directly ‘controlled’ by the Department (e.g. Departmental student administration) and those which concentrate on more generic support services affecting the entire student population of TEI Athens (e.g. library).

Departmental Student Support Services

The Department’s administration office provides a key service to students and staff alike. Its function is seen as a key organizational support operation, which is broadly separated into student administration services and academic support. Both members of staff manning the office are knowledgeable, very welcoming and willing to engage in an open and frank discussion on the issues affecting their work. Overall, the Committee found a well-functioning unit which interfaces well with internal (students and staff) and external (central TEI Athens Administration) entities. The separation of duties among the staff in the office is sufficiently clear, with a student-facing provision being a demonstrably visible aspect of the overall operation.

Student Support Services

As part of the Campus tour, the Committee visited the TEI Athens Library, which provides ample space for individual and group student work, extensive IT and audio/visual equipment, expert library support staff and specialist support facilities. As expected, different sections of the library are dedicated to varying disciplines, with the aim to providing relevant reference material to all students of the institution. The assessment of the available material specific to photography by the subject experts of the Committee, suggests that there is room for improvement in relation to the key reference titles which need to be held by the library.

Labs

Given the substantially applied nature of the program, the availability of well-equipped labs was one of the main areas of interest of the Committee. Apart from visual inspections and discussions with academic staff, the Committee discussed extensively with students and alumni their views on the number of labs, available space, different types of specialized equipment to support the curriculum in its totality and their collective views on the appropriateness of the overall lab provision. Overall, the Committee found that the equipment available is sufficient, appropriate and of high specification, but the allocated lab space is insufficient in relation to the number of students registered on the program.
Counseling and Disability Services

As a key support provision for students, the prominent presence of counseling and disability services across TEI Athens and the Department is exemplary. At institutional level TEI Athens offers dedicated expert support by professional staff who specialize in medical, counseling and other types of student welfare. Additionally, as mentioned to the Committee by the administration staff, the Department has two designated academic staff with a student-facing role, responsible for identifying, assessing and referring (where necessary) students in need of specialist support. Completing this tight support network, there was clear evidence available from discussions with the administration staff, that they too engage well with this process by referring students to the central units. TEI Athens and Department facilities are fully accessible for people with disabilities.

Departmental Estates and Facilities

A key element of any academic institution relates to its ability to provide adequate space, satisfying its teaching and research requirements. The complexity of the issue of space and its allocation across any university campus is a sensitive matter, commonly accepted as difficult issue to balance. The Committee was very careful in collecting the views of all stakeholders, and assessing them in a balanced way that took into account the physical restrictions of buildings and monetary costs associated with offering additional space. Ultimately, the Committee formed its view on the provision of space guided primarily by the academic needs of the discipline, the quality of the overall student experience and the needs of academic and support staff to discharge their teaching, research and admin duties in an adequate way.

The Committee felt that the overall provision of a) teaching space b) staff offices and meeting rooms is wholly inadequate.

a) Despite being well-equipped, student labs are insufficiently large for the annual student intake, notwithstanding the large number of existing student still registered. Both current students and alumni expressed their strong dissatisfaction with the lab space available. Collectively, they felt that the student experience is affected in a significant way. Equal frustration was expressed by academic staff who struggle continually with hosting large student groups in small teaching rooms. It is important to note, that the academic and senior management of the Department constantly try to optimize the use of existing space but the limitations are so great that their efforts result in further frustration and very limited success.

b) The space available to provide even the most of basic hosting facilities for academic staff, with the exception of a director’s office and a tiny meeting room, is exceptionally absent without any type of individual, shared, common, open-plan or any other type of space. In addition to being bemused, the Committee is extremely concerned about the profound effect the total lack of space has on their ability to carry out their duties, and support their students even at the most basic level. Meetings with students for academic and pastoral support are organized on an ad-hoc basis through personal efforts beyond the expected ‘call of duty’. Opportunities to meet, interact and privately discuss day-to-day issues are very problematic, causing significant frustration to everyone involved.

Other

The Committee notes that the Department has developed a nicely designed, user friendly and frequently updated website. Part of the website hosts an online magazine (IRIS) with student work showcasing the excellent work of the students once a semester.
### IMPLEMENTATION
- Organization and infrastructure of the Department’s administration (e.g. secretariat of the Department).
- Form and function of academic services and infrastructure for students (e.g. library, PCs and free internet access, student counseling, athletic- cultural activity etc.).

See above.

### RESULTS
- Are administrative and other services adequate and functional?
- How does the Department view the particular results?

See above.

### IMPROVEMENTS
- Has the Department identified ways and methods to improve the services provided?
- Initiatives undertaken in this direction.

The Committee recommends:
1. Provide the Department with the necessary lab space.
2. Provide staff with office space.
3. Strengthen and update the library collection relevant to this department.

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### Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations

Please, comment on quality, originality and significance of the Department’s initiatives.

Due to its nature, the Department has links with a number of social, cultural and production organizations. These are primarily based on: the compulsory work placement program, alumni links and affiliations, personal contacts of academic staff with industry etc. Some alumni are employed in prominent organizations and positions (e.g. Athens News Agency, ministry of culture, museums etc). Also an Alumni Association was formed in the past but it is currently inactive.

These links offer potential for even stronger collaborations to be established in the form of visits to organizations, invited lectures, common activities like exhibitions and competitions, strengthening of the alumni association etc.

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### E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors

For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.

Please, comment on the Department’s:
• Potential inhibiting factors at State, Institutional and Departmental level, and proposals on ways to overcome them.
• Short-, medium- and long-term goals.
• Plan and actions for improvement by the Department/Academic Unit
• Long-term actions proposed by the Department.

The absence of funds for hiring additional or even replacing retiring staff depends on limited and competitive state funding and continuous changes cause both confusion and uncertainty. This makes strategic planning by the Department difficult.

The Department expressed an interest in establishing a post-graduate provision. The Committee believes that such attempts should follow after careful discussion and consideration of all factors. The existing human resources and available facilities make the offering of a Master’s program not viable. A Continuing Professional Development program is more viable and could potentially result in income generation that could fund other priorities of the Department (e.g. travel to conferences, funding for hosting exhibitions etc).

**F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC**

*For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.*

Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC on:

- the development of the Department to this date and its present situation, including explicit comments on good practices and weaknesses identified through the External Evaluation process and recommendations for improvement
- the Department’s readiness and capability to change/improve
- the Department’s quality assurance.

The Committee acknowledges the strong current academic leadership of the Department and the cooperation that exists among the academic staff and students. The Department serves an area of studies that is unique and important for the Greek education, industry and culture. Given the aforementioned constraints the Department achievements are commendable and substantial. Invariably there are areas for improvement which are listed below. The Department should:

1. Where appropriate, inform its curriculum through meetings with alumni, students, employers, cultural entities and other stakeholders.
2. Enhance its curriculum by providing career development content.
3. Investigate cross-registrations and co-teaching with other departments.
4. Strengthen its analogue photography courses and facilities.
5. Establish a departmental academic staff handbook.
6. Establish a uniform procedure for providing students with syllabi and clear assessment criteria.
7. Cultivate further research activities (e.g. research exchanges and visits, research seminar series with visiting academics from collaborating universities)

8. Join new research proposals for project grants.

9. Explore opportunities for financing art exhibitions of their work through sponsorship.

TEI Athens should:

1. Explore all possible ways so that completion rates of module evaluations are increased.

2. Provide the Department with the necessary lab space.

3. Provide staff with office space.

4. Strengthen and update the library collection relevant to this department.
Members of the Committee

TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE IF ATHENS
DEPARTMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY & AUDIOVISUAL ARTS

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