The interview with Dr. Christine Hahn and Dr. Anne Marie Butler, Kalamazoo College was conducted on 3/13/2026. This transcript has been edited for clarity and readability.

Rebecca Tucker (RT): Hello! You are back with Rebecca Tucker - that's me, I'm professor at Colorado College.

Deborah Hutton (DH): And me, Deborah Hutton, professor at the College of New Jersey.

RT: We're so excited to continue our interview series, Art History on Fire. In this series, we are exploring the current state of the field of art history through conversations with a variety of U.S. art historians.

DH: Basically, we're here to talk about the future of our field, and the threats that higher ed and the arts are facing. The discipline of art history is certainly not exempt from these challenges.

RT: And yet, at the same time, we want to celebrate the dynamic and innovative phase that art history is currently in, with new research, new teaching strategies, and exciting museum exhibitions.

DH: In this series, we talk to art historians on the ground to learn from them about what is happening and why, and to gather ideas for the future.

RT: For the fifth installment of our series, we are doing something a bit new - we are interviewing two people together. It is our pleasure to welcome Christine Hahn and Anne Marie Butler. Christine Hahn is a lifelong Midwesterner, born in Detroit, raised in Lansing, and a professor of art history at Kalamazoo College since 2008. She is a graduate of Carleton College and received her MA and PhD at the University of Chicago. While Christine is rooted in the Midwest, her research questions have taken her around the world. She digs through archives in Paris, New York, and Seoul, which I find very impressive. Her work on modern Korean artists and exhibitions has been supported by fellowships from the Fulbright and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

DH: Anne Marie Butler is Associate Professor of Art History and Women, Gender, and Sexuality also at Kalamazoo College. Her research focuses on Southwest Asia and North Africa studies, including contemporary art of the region and its diaspora. Her work also encompasses surrealism studies, gender and sexuality studies, and queer theory. She has published in a wide variety of journals including *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, and *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*, *a*nd she co-edited two recently-published volumes..

RT: So, we're excited to talk to Drs. Hahn and Butler. As always, you can find a transcript of this interview, as well as more information on our interviewees, on our substack, Art History on Fire, and on the project's website, hosted here at Colorado College.

DH: Okay, so let's get started!

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RT: Today, we're delighted to welcome Dr. Christine Hahn and Dr. Anne Marie Butler. Christine and Anne Marie, thank you so much for joining us on this beautiful Friday, and for being part of our interview series. Deborah and I are excited to hear more about your work and your thoughts about the current state, and particularly the future, of art history.

Anne Marie Butler (AMB): Thank you so much for having us. We're really excited to be here.

DH: We are super excited to have you both here. This is our first time interviewing two people rather than one, so this is exciting for us as well. As we do with all of the interviews, we have a pre-recorded introduction where we briefly introduce you, but we keep those introductions deliberately brief so that you have the opportunity to introduce yourselves. And so that brings me to our first question, which is the first question we're asking everyone: “how would you describe yourself and the type of art history that you practice?” We're going to have each of you answer this. Christine, would you begin for us?

Christine Hahn (CH): So, I really loved this question when I saw it, because it made me think a lot about my training. My first initial answer was, I have no idea what kind of [art historian I am]. [laughs] For the past 18 years, I've been teaching at a small liberal arts institution where I'm asked to be very much a generalist. But, as a generalist, I was thinking back to my own undergraduate education, and I came of age at a really exciting time. It was the early 90s, and I was part of, again, a two-faculty member department of art history. And one of my advisors was an old-school, NYU-trained - his advisor was Panofsky - total formalist. And then my other advisor was Allison Kettering, who was fresh out of Berkeley. She had been trained by Svetlana Alpers. Lauren Soth and Allison Kettering, with these two really different backgrounds and disciplinary approaches, would co-teach our survey classes together. And they would just get into the best arguments about how to interpret these works of art. I remember there was this really extended conversation about the Arnolfini portrait, and how to interpret various aspects of that portrait, and I just thought, “This is so exciting! I mean, they are debating and arguing over meaning and interpretation, and they are seeing really different things in the work,” and that's just what got me into this discipline, and what keeps me excited about it.

DH: That's amazing.

RT: Christine, I love that you grew up that way, in that debate, which was the animating issue of the field for so long.

CH: Oh, absolutely, and I think it's sort of why I have trouble situating myself, because I was reading your transcripts about how you were describing yourselves as art historians, and I was like, “oh, this is really interesting. I don't know how…I don't know where I put myself on this spectrum.” [laughs]

DH: I think that's fair. I think that we answered the question ourselves, but I think it took us a while to come up with answers as well, for sure.

RT: All right, I want to hear Anne Marie's answer to this one.

AMB: Yeah, so I have struggled to think of myself as an art historian for a long time. I did my undergrad in art history and French, but that is some of the only kind of formal art historical training that I have. I did my master's in arts politics at NYU, and then I did my PhD in gender studies. But I focused in visual culture, and my advisor was Jonathan D. Katz (not Jonathan N. Katz). I took many courses in what was called the Visual Studies department in graduate school. So I ended up at that intersection. But I don't even publish what I consider to be … very (sort of) historically grounded art history. I would call myself more of a cultural art historian, a sociocultural art historian, trying to figure out how in contemporary art people are making meaning from their social experiences, and how that speaks to people, and what we can understand when we look at what they're creating - about how they feel, about how that makes us feel. I've always been at that intersection of gender and visual studies/art history, looking at things. I also had a formative undergrad experience where I went to college right after 9/11, and I was on the art history track. I was taking Renaissance and Baroque, and I absolutely hated ancient [art]. I was like, “this is so boring.” And maybe it was just that I did have a very formalist professor, who wanted me to use the term *contrapposto*, and I was like, “I'm just writing this word, I don't understand it.” [laughs] So, I took a class called, “Arab American Feminist Cultural Production Post-9/11,” and I was like, wow, “This is it. This is the thing.” How they are interpreting their moment, and their position, and expressing that. From then on, I was contemporary, contemporary, contemporary.

DH: So, Anne Marie, I was just trying to look it up in your bio, and I don't see it. Where did you do your undergraduate?

AMB: Scripps College.

DH: Ok! I just had just begun teaching at Skidmore College. It was my second semester there when 9/11 happened. I was teaching Islamic art the semester that it happened, and so I remember, on the other side of what it was like to teach [and] to be in those classes at that moment, which was a particular moment in U.S. history where there was actually an openness to trying to understand that experience that I think has since gone away. I think it's fascinating for me to hear what drove you to study what you study, of being an undergraduate at that moment and taking those classes. And you said you got your Master's in Arts Politics?

AMB: Yeah, it is a course at NYU, an MA at Tisch. It's called Arts Politics. It's in a small department called Art and Public Policy. It's a very interdisciplinary and open program. I took classes in intellectual property, film studies, I took a whole variety of arts-related classes.

RT: That's fascinating, I didn't know about that program, but it makes sense for the way Tisch is, that they would have something that's pretty innovative like that.

DH: I love hearing your two different approaches, your two different trajectories, and I'm so curious now if this is what fed into the way you've rethought the art history program at Kalamazoo, but I'm getting ahead of us, so Rebecca take it away…

RT: So let me jump in there. You work together at Kalamazoo College, a small liberal arts college in Michigan. Can you briefly tell us a bit about the college and about the art history program there?

CH: Yeah, so we are a small institution. We have approximately 1,300 students, and I just want to give a shout out to Dr. Billie Fischer, who really founded the art history program at Kalamazoo College. She began 45 years ago, offering classes within the studio art department, and then over a period of decades, really built up art history into its own separate major, and lobbied for years and years and years to add a second, full-time position next to her as a partner in that work. And when she retired, she lobbied the provost and said, “take my salary, divide it in two, and then hire in two new art historians.” That, of course, didn't happen. [laughs] So I was Billy's replacement, and she was an amazing mentor to me, so incredibly generous. And she was an expert in Renaissance art, so she offered courses in Renaissance art for a couple of years after she retired, and I could just sit in the back of the room. She had, like, made all of her own slides. She had no support in teaching art history. It was just a total labor of love for her. I still have her slides. So she photographed books, went to Italy, photographed things in person, cut everything and made the labels and organized everything. So for years and years and years, she had taught this with really no support. Luckily, I started during the digitized age, and so I was the sole art historian for about 10 years. At which point, we had a really wonderful provost, Mickey

McDonald, who is currently president of the GLCA, our academic consortium. He was really supportive of these interdisciplinary programs in the humanities in particular, and so he charged my colleague in WGS and myself to develop a joint position that would become the first tenure-track position at the college dedicated to women, gender, and sexuality. But we wanted to house that person within a discipline so that they had a home and all the resources and things that come with that. I think we did that in 2017. I was trying to remember, Anne Marie, did you start in 2018?

AMB: 2019.

CH: I mean, you could not have asked for a better colleague to join us when Anne Marie arrived on campus. To not have a partner in the work of doing art history – [then] to suddenly have this fresh voice who was full of such great ideas, it was a really exciting time. And the origin story of our curriculum change is during Anne Marie's first year. She and I would meet regularly, just to talk about classes and how things were going. And we were at lunch, and she paused, and she just bravely asked me, she was like...

AMB: I remember this.

CH: “What do you think about the curriculum?” I think it was probably kind of scary, I'm guessing, Anne Marie, because you don't know me that well, you don't know how wedded I am to these things! But I was like, “oh my gosh!” I had inherited a curriculum. But, as the sole person, I had just kind of nibbled around the edges and added a couple classes here and there, but I never had the energy for a full-scale change. But then when Anne Marie asked me that question, it was kind of like, “okay, we're off to the races!” We spent that year just talking, workshopping, thinking about ideas, and then, as Anne Marie knows… She's just such a great partner in this, because we can have these conversations, but then she actually knows the process for implementing these changes, and so we implemented those changes over the course of, I want to say, about a year. And so that's the origin story of how we got to this place.

RT: That does sound like quite an act of bravery, Anne Marie, on your part.

AMB: So, this is a little bit of reminiscing for Christine and I. When I read the job ad for this job, I felt like it was written for me. I was like, “there is not one single thing that could be different in this job ad.” Like, you wrote this for me. This is for me. You don't know me yet, but this is my job! [laughs] So then, when I did get the job (and I was hired right out of grad school), when I did get the job, I thought, this is exactly what I want to do, with that 50-50 art history/WGS [load]. They're going to let me teach the classes that I want to teach, with the 101 and the WGS Core courses, which I love. I love intro classes, I love feminist theory, so I was like, “I get to do

everything I want to do at this place." And, then when I did start thinking about, what are we teaching in art history, and why are we teaching this? I think I had just read the article about Yale revitalizing their curriculum and doing away with the survey model. I was wondering if that is something that we would be open to or interested in. I didn't want to come in and dictate "let's get rid of the survey model like Yale did." But I was like, "hey, what do you think about it?" And then when Christine [said] "oh, this is just something I inherited and I'm not attached to it," I was like, "perfect. Let's go!"

DH: But do you think that, Anne Marie, do you think that the fact that your training was so interdisciplinary and not this PhD in art history maybe allowed you to be able to see, to push for that change in a different way, or see it in a different way?

AMB: I think maybe. I mean, it's hard to know what I would be like with a different sort of training, but I don't think that I would have necessarily thrived in a very traditional art history program. I just feel like that doesn't work for me or speak to me. I do think that I'm always kind of wanting to "undiscipline" or push boundaries in some way, yeah.

DH: So just to dive into these changes a bit more in the question. You all wrote an article about the changes that you made ("Decolonize this art history") that Rebecca and I have both read. It's an excellent article, and it documents your curricular revisions there. In your own words, could you all talk a bit more about the revisions that you made? I think you've gotten into the motivations, but exactly what did you do, and how long did that take, and when did you start implementing it? Just a little bit more about that, please.

AMB: So, it was actually a really exciting process, and we are so lucky and grateful that we got to involve students in the process as well, which was really important to us. This was actually the summer of COVID shutdown, but we did manage to work virtually. We have funding through Kalamazoo College that supports students who are doing research with faculty over the summer. So I had my own research student who was partly working on some of my independent research, and then partly working on this project, and then Christine also had a student who was fully working on this project. So, we kind of started out doing research on what have other people done in terms of revitalizing their curriculum. But we quickly arrived at an understanding that we wanted our curriculum to do away with, or get away from the survey model, because that model prioritizes certain ways of knowing certain art historical histories, and ways of teaching them, that we felt didn't align with our values anymore. Those students helped immensely, and we also were able to consult some of our course evaluations, think about student responses to a survey that we sent out, and really take that student voice into account when we were thinking about how to approach this. And then a great amount of research about decolonial methods and hierarchies and ways of knowing also went into our thinking about the

curriculum. So, we essentially arrived at: we don't want 10 new classes, because that's a lot of work for us, but let's take the classes we have and make them not as rigidly time or geography bounded. Let's make sure that in our introductory courses, that we're really emphasizing transnational exchange, and Christine can talk more about how she does that in what used to be our survey courses. Transnational exchange, understanding how ideas and objects and knowledges circulate. And then in my classes, because my appointment is joint, and we are on the trimester system, so I teach 3 art history per year and 3 WGS per year. I teach one each, each term. So I don't have as many classes to play with. We did have this class called “Art Power & Society” that Christine had developed, and then I taught it a few times, that first year, and then I was thinking, “why don't we take that class and make it one of our core classes? Let's make it an introduction to visual methods.” So we're really focusing on **how** are you learning something versus **what** are you learning? And that was sort of our whole shift. I don't care that you know the date of such and such painting, you know? I barely care that you know the artists, because no one is going to remember that in 10 years, 20 years. They're not going to remember that from your class. So I care that you can look at something and see what is happening: “Ask yourself, what does this painting want to communicate? Who does it think its audience is? When I am in an immersive installation, how does that make me feel? Is that what the artist intends?” So, to be more in a questioning mode than a receiving knowledge mode. A lot of different scholars have talked about that kind of education as well.

CH: And just to add to that a little bit, our work was also supported by the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership that funded the development of that Art Power & Society class initially. Also, both Anne Marie and myself have done fellowships with the Center, which gives us space, time, and money to research these projects, and also help pay for student researchers as well. So, a lot of this work would not have been possible without their support, and I know that we're both really, really grateful for the Arcus Center for supporting that. The other thing about this curricular shift that I think was really impactful, intentional, and just a lot of fun was - so much of Humanities work is done solo, and this was the first project that I had worked with a collaborator with. And I just realized, I was like, “oh my gosh, the scientists and the social scientists, they already know how fun it is to be with a group of other scholars.”

DH: Yeah. [laughs]

CH: Anne Marie and I, I remember, we'd be in the backyard, because it was COVID, and we'd have this huge table between us, and we'd be sitting outside and workshopping our writing together on Google Drive, and it was just really generative, and I felt like we were modeling a type of interdisciplinary scholarship that was really fun and exciting, and kind of demonstrating

that we're trying to convey skills and outline systems, as opposed to really focusing on content, which I think - in the past, art history has been really focused on content.

DH: You just said a couple things there that are really interesting to me, because I think part of what Rebecca and I are doing in this survey is thinking about ways to save art history… and then I wonder if some of that switch is because it's traditionally so much on content rather than process. But also, is collaboration the way of the future? Like, is that the way to move forward and save it [art history], or rethink it. I don't know.

RT: I think art history is just late to that party, also. Because it is fun, and as you say, intellectually generative and boundary-pushing, and all those things. And I guess I would argue that it would benefit art history to be more networked, to what you do, Anne Marie, to span boundaries instead of sticking within the confines of what our discipline long has been. I didn't mean to cut you off, CH, tell me.

CH: It's also, we're following where the artists are going, too, right? I always tell my students, for shorthand, when we're talking about earth art, we're saying this is a “Robert Smithson,” or what have you, or a “Nancy Holt.” But it took so many people to actually install those things. It's that because we have to talk in shorthand it really can reduce the complexity of these things, but if you're an art historian tracing it [the work], it's always collaborative. It's always in conversation, so I feel like we're just doing a better job as art historians of marking those collaborations and making those more visible.

AMB: Yeah, and I think it's important also that as art history goes forward, to mark those collaborations, like Christine said, and to make visible that art history has always had something to say to many other disciplines. Understanding the visual world, this fundamental tenet of art history, is so valuable, and that will never not be valuable. We just have to have people understand that and make it clear that that's what art history does. Which has not always been what we say we do.

DH: [laughs] This is true. This is absolutely true.

RT: And now I'm thinking, wow, how do we do that? What's our mechanism to do that? Which may not be what we want to talk about at this precise moment. I did have one follow-up question for you all. It seems like you enjoyed a lot of institutional support for this re-envisioning project. Is that something that you think is specific to Kalamazoo? Could you have done it without your college's support - the helpful provosts and the institutes and things that you're suggesting. I'm just curious, as we think about other folks listening to our interview here, what would you

recommend if you were living or working in a place where there wasn't that kind of generous value-driven support that you all had.

CH: Well, I always said that the benefit of being a small department is that you have a lot of autonomy, so, [one of] the trade-offs of being a small department is obviously that you can't do all the things that you would love to be able to do, but the autonomy and the ability to direct the curriculum in the way that you want to. I would say, so many of us, I think you both, all three of us included, are in really tiny art history departments, and the benefit of that is that you can kind of shape your own destiny, so to speak. Anne Marie, what do you think?

AMB: Yeah. I mean, I think that we are super lucky, and I always say, when people ask me, oh, how do you like your job? And I'm like, “listen, I love my departments. And that’s probably the most important. I love my departments, and I love my students. I mean, what more could you want in a job?” So yeah, I think that, especially having the kinds of relationships that we do in our departments, makes it smooth to say, “hey, we're thinking about doing this thing, can we talk about it?” And our colleagues are receptive to that. We are in a joint art and art history department with three Studio artist faculty. So I think that, in the case that people don't have institutional support in the form of hiring students to participate or course leaves to focus on that, that is certainly difficult. But I would say, if that is something that people are interested in, then you need more collaboration, you need more people saying, okay, if each of us are contributing some part of this together, then it makes it so much more manageable, and so much more. You're motivated to work with your colleagues in that way, and not say, “oh, I'm supposed to do this, and it's so overwhelming, I can't do it myself.” Well, of course you can't do it yourself. It's a huge task, so don't do it yourself!

DH: Yeah. Great, wonderful.

AMB: I would just add to that, because we did talk about small departments, people - and this kind of goes back to our previous topic - to collaborate across departments. Say, “hey, art history wants to think about XYZ things. Sociology department, are you interested in thinking about, like, visual sociology, visual methods with us, in this way.”

CH: We actually just had a chemistry professor cross-list a class with art history for an art conservation course.

DH: Very cool.

CH: So, we have been really, really fortunate that we get a lot of support from other departments in contributing classes to the major.

RT: Super interesting. And just to fill out our data here, how many majors do you graduate each year? And you are part of a joint program, and what's your relationship with Studio? Are there more of them and less of you, or…?

CH: Yeah, so, we roughly graduate about 5 to 7 art history-specific majors per year. Studio typically has about 18 to 20. I should know this because we just went through a major assessment. But one of the things, when I was arguing for this line to be housed in art history, and I had just recently had our institutional research person pull numbers for me again, it's really interesting to see that 84% of Kalamazoo College students will take an art history class during their four years at the college, so we have a robust major for having one-and-a-half lines dedicated to it. But at the same time, I think we do a really great job of meeting general education courses, which is phenomenal. When I think about how I've changed over the past 18 years since I've been teaching, when I first got out of grad school and started this job, I very much taught like I was trying to train these micro-little grad students, so my emphasis was really in that direction. And over time, I realized that really what will bring me the most joy is if a student who is only ever going to take one art history class in their four years at K, but will, after they graduate, go on and get a museum card, and make art a part of their life, and enjoy looking at art, and feeling like art is something that they belong to, and belongs to them, and that they can communicate with others with. And so, because that's my goal, my joy is, I tell my students, and they do, “when you graduate, when you get your museum card, email me and let me know.” And then they do! I just had an alum recently that I met with for lunch, and he pulled out his Metropolitan Museum of Art membership card. I don't even know how I got on that tangent!

RT: I love how enthusiastic you are about that.

DH: I know, I know. Well, first of all, 5 to 7 majors a year at a school with 1,300 students is great. That's actually a pretty impressive number, so it is healthy in that way. I don't know that much about Kalamazoo College, so I'm not sure how much pressure is on you all, because a lot of schools, of mine in particular, departments are literally ranked by the number of majors and the number of student credit hours that we offer. With majors, there's a formula, right, that majors count for this much, and that a lot of resources are dedicated to that, and so even things like what you're saying (I 100% agree) on interdisciplinarity being the way forward. But at my school recently it's becoming even difficult to cross[list] those classes, because each individual department wants those seats to count for their major, because our departments are literally being ranked against each other. Just to go back to the question that Rebecca asked, these things that you're saying (that I love and I 100% agree with) are, in many places, becoming difficult to do because of the institutional pressures. So, it sounds to me like Kalamazoo College is still a place where cross-listing things is encouraged, rather than kind of penalized. I don't

know if that's true, but there must be some accounting, because you're pulling institutional numbers to show that 84% of students take an art history class. So I'm just curious, again, to return to this idea - maybe there are ways that you are presenting what you're doing to the administration that's helpful, that might help other people make that same argument?

AMB: I think it's very tricky, as you describe, all institutions are experiencing some form of dramatic neoliberalization and departmental siloing, pitting departments against each other for resources. And we are not immune from that, but as a faculty, on the majority, our faculty has spoken out against that. So I would say to people in that situation, remember that your department across the hall is not your combatant. They are in the same position as you, right? Direct your attention towards the administration, not the department that you're supposedly in conflict [with], that's small beans. That's not where to focus.

CH: I want every college administrator to read this book called *The Score* by C. Thi Nguyen. He's a professor of philosophy at the University of Utah, and he just published this book, but it's all about the difference between game scoring and metrics. Counting the number of majors you have only makes sense if you're focusing on a really concentrated form of where students are choosing to devote the bulk of their development of expertise. But one of the things that I think that Kalamazoo College really prides itself on is that we hope to educate citizens of the world that this narrow specialization has to be in concert with, a broader understanding of how multiple systems of knowledge work. One of the examples that I love is that our biology department, actually, as a requirement to major in biology, you have to take 2 or 3 classes in different divisions of the college, because it's that important to the biology faculty that their students are graduating with some breadth to their education. And because our curriculum is open, we have students creating purposeful interdisciplinarity by double and sometimes even triple majoring, which I know frustrates a lot of faculty with this whole uptick in credentialing. But in a way, their double majors or triple majors are a way of their constructing their own type of breadth across the curriculum, so when I was pulling the numbers, I was looking to see, where are our majors also majoring in? What departments, which divisions? And it was really fascinating, because while we have a lot of studio art and art history majors who are double majoring in either subject - they're getting a studio major, art and art history double major, but 50% of our classes and our majors are majoring in completely different divisions across the college. And there's no continuity, so we've got math/art history majors, bio, chemistry, anthro, business, econ… there, there was no through-line that I've identified so far as a common grouping. I find that really promising, because I think it shows that students inherently understand that they want this breadth to their education, and they're constructing it for themselves.

DH: That is exciting, that's great. Yeah.

RT: That's a really unique scenario you all have with such an open curriculum. And we're kind of sliding into our next question here. Maybe we can continue on this track, because one of the things we wanted to talk to you about, since it's been a couple years since you instituted the new curriculum, right? So you're probably now starting to graduate these students who've come through the new plan? How's it going? In this moment of challenge for all of us in our discipline and in higher ed in general, do you feel like the changes that you made worked out as you hoped? Do you feel like there were some things that happened that were unexpected? What are you doing now, and what do you think is next, also?

AMB: You want to go first, Christine? Want me to go? I can go.

CH: Yeah, you start.

AMB: We have made some adjustments. As we were implementing the curriculum, as we got rid of subject areas in art history, we transitioned into what we call “breadth” and “topics” [courses]. For our major, [students] take two courses that are called “breadth”. These are courses that are larger in geography and time scope. Then [they] take 3 courses in what we call “topics”, and these are courses that are categorized as more specific, into certain movements or geographies, something like that. So we implemented the curriculum, and then we were saying, “oh, okay, we said they're going to take this and that, how many of these are we actually offering? So let's, like, look more closely to make sure that what we're offering aligns with what we're asking them to do.” And then, let's see, another change we've recently made is, we had our intro class, “Art Power & Society.” They don't have to take that in order, they just have to take it. And then they take these breadth and topics electives, and then they take a senior seminar, which is part of a liberal arts curriculum set forth by the college, but we offer our own senior seminar. Well, we don't have, you know, more than 10 people in that class a year, for sure, and sometimes there's less than that. So, we adopted, actually, the model of our colleagues in Classics who are offering a junior-senior seminar, so now it's going to be a combined course. They're reading and dealing with the same material, which is going through different methodological approaches to art history. But juniors are working on assignments that are going to lead them into, potentially, their senior thesis, and then seniors are working on assignments that are graduate school preparation, career preparation, understanding leaving college and going into the world. Next year is the first year that we're going to teach it that way.
I don't know, what else do you want to add, Christine?

CH: No, I feel like that covers a lot of the changes. I think one of the things that I've noticed in the classroom is that over time, our students have become more sophisticated in understanding

the sort of systems that we're trying to talk about, and the decolonial lens. I had this moment this quarter where a student was able to explain to the class, a decolonial framework on this piece of artwork that we're looking at, so much more beautifully than I could have done, and I just thought, “oh wow, this, to me, feels like a tangible manifestation of the changes that we put in.” And that was really great to see.

AMB: We do also have a survey that we don't administer 100% regularly, but we attempt to administer at the end of each class, that kind of asks them to measure what was your experience with intersectional ideas coming into this class, now after this class? What was your experience with, like, decolonial ideas coming in and now after? And then we also, ask them, what was your experience of where was the emphasis placed? Was it what you were asked to learn, or was it how you learned something? So that is something that we are trying to measure and to understand.

RT: I saw those surveys in your article, and I was so grateful that you included them. I was like, “oh, I love it when you can actually see the instrument.” So what kinds of results are you seeing from those surveys?

AMB: Overall, really good. I would say I've never… I mean, I think it would be strange if they did, but I've never had a student rank their knowledge higher on entering and lower on exiting! [laughs] But in the cases where people say, “oh, I came in at an 8, and I'm still an 8 on understanding this,” then they're writing something like, “I was already very familiar with this, I've taken 4 of these other classes where we talked about this.” I think that, at the very least, we're aligning with and bringing their other knowledge into conversation. And then a lot of them are saying, “yeah, I learned to look at this in new ways, I didn't know that art history could do this.” So yeah, it's been very positive overall.

DH: Excellent. Actually, I wanted to say something about the article, which, when we post the interview and the transcript, we'll put a link to it there. [Butler, A. M., & Hahn, C. (2021). Decolonize this art history: Imagining a decolonial art history programme at Kalamazoo College. *London Review of Education*, 19(1). https://doi.org/10.14324/lre.19.1.22]

I had a moment, a lightbulb moment went off in my head when I was reading your article, because in the article, when you first say rubrics…this is my confession as a professor. When I hear the word rubric, my mind just closes down in the same way that when you're signing the agreement and you see the terms of service for your Apple iPhone thing, it just shuts off. Obviously assessment's important and all of those things, but it just shuts down. And when I was reading your article, and you talk about Bloom's Taxonomy, I was like, oh, this is what it is. Early on, someone showed me an assessment rubric that was based on that from, like, the

School of Ed 15, 20 years ago, and it had all of these boxes and, like, the ranking of the different forms of knowledge. And in my head, they said this makes it more objective to be able to assess what students are learning, and my response to it was, this doesn't reflect what happens in my classes. Like, I don't know what to do with this. When you talk about this, and then you show the rubrics that you have, and these questionnaires that are much more straightforward, it's like, oh, right, this makes sense in my brain. Like, this kind of assessment, I can understand. I had never put it forward that the type of learning that I want my students to do doesn't align with the rubrics that I was being given by traditional methods of assessing things. So, thank you for that!

AMB: Yeah, I will say that there is a tension that we struggled with in saying, “we're doing a decolonial method, apparently, and we're also doing assessment,” because those things do not, should not be able to be housed together. So we definitely did struggle with that.

CH: And to add to that, one of the things that we're doing that I think is really working well is living with that tension by asking students to self-assess by reflecting. So, that's probably led to some of the most, interesting data for us, I think, what comes forward, is rubrics are all about expressing what values you're hoping to press upon as important for those students to receive. And it's just interesting when you give students the rubric, and you ask them to reflect on it, and to sort of rate where they are, on the rubric. It's a very honest self-assessment, and that's been really interesting to see, because ultimately, as I say to students, “you know, when you go out into the world, it's your intrinsic response and understanding that [matters]. There's nobody going to be scoring you on how well you analyze this piece of art. So, you have to ask yourself, what am I getting out of this? How am I seeking to see this better? How is my understanding increasing?” And so, I've just found that they're incredibly skilled, and oftentimes way harder on themselves than I would be when they're faced with these sort of goals and objectives, and then to see where they are on that spectrum.

RT: That's a powerful thing, to put their own control over their own learning, and their own value system at front and center like that.

CH: Absolutely, yes.

DH: And feeds right into exactly what you're trying to do, the objectives of decolonizing the curriculum and the experience. So, it's great.

RT: So I'm going to ask a slightly larger version of this question. I, too, am at a small liberal arts college. Do you feel like we're insulated in some way from the sorts of pressures that departments of art history are facing in other kinds of institutions? I mean, Deborah's at a more regional school. Certainly some of the folks we've talked to at state schools, the challenges

they're facing are real. It doesn't sound like you're facing those challenges quite the same way. Do you think that's the kind of school that you (and I also) teach at, or is it maybe the curriculum that you've designed? What do you think is, perhaps, responsible for the happier place that you're at.

CH: As a historian, if you read CAA's documents from the early 1900s, art history has never been a discipline where we feel settled and there's all the resources in the world and people are really supportive of it and just think it's a really important thing for students to know. So I… in that sense, I just try to remind myself that the humanities are always under fire, it's the nature of studying the humanities, it's what makes [that study] really interesting. And that the debates around [the discipline] are fundamental to the study and practice of it. So, I do think that larger universities are in a much more challenging place. We don't take in a lot of federal dollars. Our administration has been incredibly supportive of academic freedom and for the ability for us to teach in our area of expertise. But, like every higher ed institution in the country, it's a struggle for dollars and resources. But then I just remind myself, the small liberal arts colleges were started by these two or three abolitionists who wanted to read books together and talk about them, and grew into this uniquely American institution where we have the space and time to have these types of debates, to educate citizens for our democracy. I just think teaching our students the importance of how to have that debate, and to recognize the importance of it, is always going to be a challenge. It was never going to be easy, and so I just try to fortify myself in that way. As Anne Marie knows, and both of you know, just the administrative load of being a faculty member … I spent countless hours of my life last year doing the data pulling and writing up a report to argue for a tenure line in our department to be returned to us after a retirement. Yeah, it's a very, very challenging time, but I also just want to remind myself that there's never been a time when it was easy.

DH: I think that's a great reminder… I like that. I'm going to take that in for myself. And also that the struggle's worth it, and it's a privileged struggle to have, in many, many ways. Building on that, because you're talking about the past of art history, our final question for each of you is, what do you think the future of art history is, and are there actions that we can take now to ensure the best outcome for the field? I don't know if one of you wants to take it first, but we'd love to hear from both of you on this one. And we're just asking you to predict the future, I mean, it's a really easy question. [laughs]

AMB: Well, I think I'll just say what I hope the future of art history is, rather than what I think it is. I don't know. I hope that it's things that I and Christine and I, all of us, have been conversing around in this discussion. It is interdisciplinarity, is not siloing subject areas. It is responding to students and what they want, and what they want is to know why they're doing a thing. I can't

tell you why you should memorize a date. It literally has no purpose for me. Or you. It's my belief. So, okay, well, why do I need to understand, you know, how / what an advertisement is communicating to me? I think everyone can get on board with that. So, yeah, just, just, kind of responding to those things that are coming up for students, and then also preempting, where we have perspective on those many different real-world things that are coming to bear on art history, humanities, liberal arts, knowledge access, information in general, all of those different levels, and up-playing the parts of art history and visual culture and visual studies that are relevant to understanding those things, because we really do have something to say to all of those things.

CH: So, my area of specialty starts in mid-19th century French painting, and so whenever I talk about it in class, I always say to my students, you know, the best way to understand Courbet is that Courbet was punk, before punk was a thing. He was an anarchist, he very much challenged the process, he was in your face to this mainstream hegemonic culture, and he radically changed vision throughout. And the way that artists saw his work radically changed the ways in which we understand the art world today. And so when I think about the art history of the future, I think, hegemonic forces are always going to want to have a mainstream, normative narrative that they tell about who we are, what we do, but humans are fundamentally creative people. It's in our DNA to create and be creative, and so the future of art history is really telling the story of how humans have been creative at times of struggle. Sheila Pepe, this really wonderful feminist artist, once said that she doesn't see any value in trying to maintain boundaries, she wants to blast through them. And I think that Anne Marie's training is a really great example of where the future of art history is headed, which is that we're less concerned with maintaining these disciplinary boundaries, and instead really expanding our field of vision to what this future art is going to be, and what it's going to do to help change society.

DH: That's a lovely answer. It reminds me of the article!

RT: I don't know if y'all saw that, the article by Joan Key in the *Brooklyn Rail*. It was recommended to us by one of our interviewees and was a really interesting piece on this “house” of art history, and how to dismantle that house, go outside the house, and think about art history out of its own boundaries, to what you were saying, Anne Marie, out in the world in certain ways.

DH: And I think what you all just said resonated with that article but gave some concrete examples of how to do that while still preserving the future of art history. So things like, getting your undergraduate, master's, and PhD in different subjects, right? And combining it. This is something that we think about when there's less places where art history is offered as an undergraduate option. This is something that concerns me. As you might know, I teach at a

public school, it's a regional school, it's part of the New Jersey state school system. And our art history major was closed last year because we didn't have enough majors. And William Patterson also had theirs closed. We talked to Maggie Williams, who was, unfortunately laid off after their art history program was closed. And so now, I think within the New Jersey state school system, Rutgers is the only place that you can major in art history, or your other options in New Jersey are Princeton, right, or Drew. And so, I'm thinking about who goes into art history, and that people who come from lower economic backgrounds, who might be first-gen in college, are not even going to have that as an option to study when they go to college, or to major in, for sure. But as long as we can preserve it, that it's offered in some way, then maybe it's actually the best way to preserve the field, because then when they go to graduate (if they do decide to go to graduate) school, they're going to come with this interdisciplinary understanding – they are going to create these connections, in this new way of doing [art history]. So maybe it's the necessary pruning for the new growth to come in, that new way of thinking about [art history]. I don't know, I'm feeling optimistic this morning, maybe that's an optimistic way of thinking about it.

RT: I would love to be on board with that, Deborah, but today is not a day for me to say that pruning is the answer. [laughs]

DH: No, I know, I know.

RT: What I love about your story is that you have maintained the visibility of art history, it's in the title of your department, even though you're joined and collaborative and interdisciplinary, you still have a major, students are still graduating in it. That's not the reality for a bunch of folks we've talked to. So I think it's really exciting what you all are doing.

DH: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I think that you're showing how to make it collaborative, interdisciplinary, think about it in new ways, but still make it visible as a discipline. To change people's perceptions, in some ways, of it, is really exciting. So thank you for doing that work.

Right now, what I really appreciate about the work that you all have done, and that article that you published, is that you're taking the work that you did that's happening at a small liberal arts college, and you're putting it out there in a publication that other people can see and can refer to, and so in that way, it is available to a larger audience of people. I think that kind of visibility, that, “look, art history isn't what you think it is, these things are happening and changing,” is really important work to do. So, thank you.

RT: Yes, and from my perspective, thank you for taking the time a bunch of years after you've implemented these changes to talk to us about how it's going, and I hope that [this conversation,

among] all the positive things you have accomplished, is also part of your decolonial agenda - to let people know that you did it, and it's working, and that there's hope for the future. So, thank you for making the time to share that message.

CH: Well, thank you both so much for doing this project. It's been enormously rewarding just getting to gather together to have these conversations, and I've loved having the opportunity just to reflect on the past and think about my hopes for the future, so thank you.

AMB: Yeah, thank you so much. I've really enjoyed our conversation. I mean, the decolonial work is never done, and I just think that, as troubled as times are right now, and in our institutions, it won't be this way forever, but we do have to do the work to make it not be this way. But this will not last forever. So, yeah, just have to continue on.

RT: Well, this might be our most optimistic interview so far. Kudos to everyone!

DH: Yes. Thank you so much. Thank you.

AMB: Thank you all so much.

CH: Yeah, thanks!