The Role of Short-Form Video in Students' Aesthetic Learning: Opportunities, Challenges, and Educational Implications

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ABSTRACT

Short-form video has become an important part of students' digital visual environment, creating new opportunities for learning through highly accessible, visually intensive, and interactive content. This review examines the role of short-form video in students' aesthetic learning, with particular attention to its educational opportunities, potential challenges, and pedagogical implications. Drawing on recent literature concerning TikTok, short-form video, digital art education, visual learning, student engagement, and algorithmic recommendation, the review synthesises evidence on how short-form video may influence students' aesthetic experiences. The findings indicate that short-form video can attract visual attention, support cognitive and emotional engagement, stimulate creative interest, and expand access to artworks, museums, cultural practices, and other forms of visual content. However, these opportunities are accompanied by challenges, including fragmented attention, superficial consumption, entertainment-oriented engagement, problematic use, and repeated exposure to algorithmically recommended content. The review therefore distinguishes aesthetic exposure from aesthetic learning. Exposure to visually attractive content alone does not ensure interpretation, reflection, or independent aesthetic judgement. Meaningful aesthetic learning is more likely when short-form video is integrated with guided observation, questioning, discussion, creative activity, and critical reflection. Based on the reviewed literature, a conceptual progression from visual exposure to attention, interpretation, emotional response, reflection, and aesthetic learning is proposed. The review concludes that short-form video should be regarded as a conditional educational resource rather than an inherently educational medium. Its contribution to aesthetic learning depends on the interaction between content quality, patterns of engagement, algorithmic environments, and pedagogical mediation.

Keywords: Short-form video, TikTok, aesthetic learning, art education, visual engagement

INTRODUCTION

Short-form video has become an increasingly common part of students' digital experience. Platforms such as TikTok provide brief, visually intensive, and highly interactive content that combines images, movement, sound, text, and algorithmic recommendation. These characteristics have changed how young people encounter and engage with visual information. TikTok has consequently attracted growing educational interest, with recent studies examining its potential for teaching, learning, communication, and student engagement [11][15][23][24].

The educational potential of short-form video is particularly relevant to aesthetic learning. Digital environments provide students with frequent access to artworks, museums, creative processes, visual culture, fashion, design, and other forms of aesthetic content. Research has shown that TikTok can support art appreciation and visual arts education when incorporated into structured learning activities [1]. Museums have also used TikTok to communicate artworks and cultural collections to digital audiences [6], while recent applications of digital technology in art education have demonstrated opportunities for visual learning, creative thinking, and reflective participation [5][12][18]. TikTok therefore represents not only an entertainment platform but also an emerging environment in which aesthetic experiences can occur.

However, increased visual exposure does not necessarily produce meaningful aesthetic learning. Short-form video platforms encourage rapid transitions between visually stimulating content, while recommendation algorithms continuously personalise what users encounter [19][20]. Problematic short-form video use has been associated with difficulties in attention, learning engagement, and academic behaviour [4][22][25]. Research has also distinguished moderate TikTok use from addictive use, suggesting that educational outcomes depend partly on patterns and intensity of engagement rather than platform use alone [3]. These findings reveal an important tension between the accessibility and engagement offered by short-form video and the sustained attention and reflection required for meaningful learning.

This tension is especially significant in aesthetic education. Short-form video can attract visual attention, stimulate emotional responses, introduce artistic practices, and provide access to diverse aesthetic experiences. At the same time, repeated algorithmic exposure and rapid visual consumption may influence what users view, prefer, and repeatedly engage with [2][10][21]. The educational issue is therefore not simply whether students use short-form video, but how these digital experiences can be transformed from passive visual consumption into purposeful aesthetic engagement.

Although research on TikTok and short-form video in education is expanding, existing studies have primarily examined general learning outcomes, disciplinary applications, engagement, communication, or problematic use [14][23][24]. Comparatively less attention has been given to the relationship between short-form video and students' aesthetic learning. This article therefore examines the role of short-form video in aesthetic learning by synthesising recent literature on its educational opportunities, potential challenges, and pedagogical implications. It argues that short-form video should be understood as a conditional educational resource whose value depends on the quality of visual content, patterns of engagement, and the educational guidance surrounding the viewing experience.

SHORT-FORM VIDEO AND AESTHETIC LEARNING

Short-form video differs from conventional educational media through its brevity, visual intensity, multimodal presentation, interactivity, and algorithmic distribution. Images, movement, narration, music, captions, and editing effects are often combined within a limited viewing period, allowing information to be presented in a condensed and accessible form. Recent reviews have identified short-form video as an increasingly relevant educational resource, particularly for student engagement, knowledge communication, and flexible learning [23][24]. Research has also shown that TikTok can support learning when its familiar and interactive format is connected with specific educational purposes [11][15].

These characteristics are particularly relevant to visual and aesthetic education. Aesthetic learning involves more than exposure to attractive images; it requires students to observe visual qualities, interpret meaning, develop responses, and engage with artistic and cultural experiences. Digital technologies have expanded the environments in which such experiences can occur. Virtual museums, digital art resources, and technology-supported visual arts activities provide students with new ways of encountering and responding to artistic content [12][13]. More recent approaches involving collaborative digital portfolios and interactive technologies further demonstrate how digital environments can support viewing, reflection, creativity, and participation in art education [5][18].

TikTok extends this digital environment by integrating visual communication with short, highly accessible forms of content. Research has demonstrated how museums use TikTok to communicate artworks and collections to online audiences [6], while TikTok-based activities have also been found to support art appreciation among secondary school students [1]. Similar educational potential has been reported in folk-art education. A TikTok-supported flipped classroom was found to provide accessibility, visual demonstration, interaction, and opportunities for autonomous learning [7], while structured TikTok-supported folk-art instruction produced positive learning outcomes [8]. These studies suggest that short-form video can connect students' familiar digital practices with formal experiences of art and aesthetic learning.

Nevertheless, the relationship between short-form video and aesthetic learning is not determined by exposure alone. Contemporary TikTok culture is shaped by rapid visual communication, participation, and continuous

circulation of creative content [2][10]. At the same time, algorithmic systems influence which content becomes visible and repeatedly recommended to users [19][20]. Technology affordances can encourage sustained engagement with short-form video platforms, while repeated platform engagement may also contribute to problematic patterns of use [16]. Consequently, students' aesthetic experiences on short-form video platforms are shaped not only by the visual content itself but also by the digital environment through which that content is encountered.

For educational purposes, a distinction must therefore be made between aesthetic exposure and aesthetic learning. Short-form video can provide immediate access to visual materials and stimulate initial interest, but meaningful aesthetic learning requires further interpretation and reflection. The educational potential of the medium depends on whether students move beyond viewing towards understanding, evaluation, and creative response. This distinction provides the basis for examining both the opportunities and challenges of short-form video for aesthetic learning.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR AESTHETIC LEARNING

Short-form video creates both opportunities and challenges for students' aesthetic learning. Its visual and interactive characteristics can attract attention, stimulate emotional responses, introduce creative practices, and expand access to aesthetic content. However, the same environment may also encourage fragmented attention, entertainment-oriented engagement, and repeated exposure to algorithmically selected content. These effects should therefore be considered together rather than treating short-form video as either entirely beneficial or harmful.

Visual Attention and Cognitive Engagement

Visual attention is an important starting point for aesthetic learning. Short-form videos use movement, colour, sound, transitions, and close-up presentation to attract viewers rapidly. In art-related content, these features can direct students towards visual elements such as colour, composition, form, texture, and artistic technique. TikTok-based art education has shown that visually presented materials can support students' engagement with art appreciation, while short-video demonstrations can make artistic processes easier to observe [1][7].

Short-form video may also support cognitive engagement when viewing is connected with a clear learning purpose. A TikTok-supported folk-art course reported positive outcomes in students' theoretical knowledge, creativity, practical ability, and discourse ability [8]. Recent reviews similarly suggest that TikTok can contribute to educational engagement and learning across different disciplinary contexts [23][24].

However, attracting attention is not the same as maintaining it. Rapid transitions and continuous short-video consumption may encourage fragmented viewing when use becomes excessive or poorly controlled. Short-form video addiction has been associated with greater distraction and difficulties in attentional concentration [4]. Attentional control has also been identified as an important mechanism in the relationship between short-form video addiction and academic procrastination [22]. Therefore, the educational value of visual stimulation depends on whether initial attention develops into sustained observation and interpretation.

Emotional and Creative Engagement

Aesthetic experience includes both cognitive and emotional responses. Short-form video can combine images, music, movement, narration, and visual transformation within a brief period, creating immediate experiences of curiosity, enjoyment, surprise, or interest. Research comparing short-form video formats has shown that media presentation can influence enjoyment, perceived learning, and memory [17]. Such emotional engagement can be useful in aesthetic education because it may motivate students to continue observing and responding to visual content.

Short-form video can also provide creative inspiration. TikTok contains demonstrations of drawing, painting, design, crafts, fashion, photography, and other forms of visual production. Students can observe techniques and creative processes before attempting their own responses. Research in art education has shown that

digitally supported learning can contribute to creative thinking and active participation [5][18], while TikTok-supported folk-art instruction has demonstrated potential for creativity and practical learning [8].

Nevertheless, emotional engagement should not automatically be interpreted as meaningful learning. Students may enjoy visually attractive content without examining its artistic meaning or context. Problematic short-video use has been negatively related to learning engagement among vocational students [25]. Similarly, addictive TikTok users have shown poorer outcomes than moderate and non-users [3]. These findings suggest that aesthetic education should use emotional attraction as an entry point for learning rather than allowing entertainment to become the endpoint of the experience.

Access to Diverse Aesthetic Experiences

One important advantage of digital media is increased access to artistic and cultural experiences. Students who have limited opportunities to visit museums, galleries, studios, or cultural sites can encounter visual materials through digital environments. Virtual museum resources have long been recognised as potential tools for fine arts education [13], while TikTok has provided museums with an additional means of presenting artworks and collections to digital audiences [6].

Short-form video further enables students to encounter artistic techniques, cultural practices, visual styles, and creative work from different communities. Contemporary TikTok culture has become an important environment for visual communication and aesthetic participation [2][10]. Such accessibility can broaden students' aesthetic experiences beyond the materials available in formal classrooms.

However, accessibility does not guarantee understanding. Complex artworks and cultural traditions may lose important historical or cultural context when presented through very brief videos. Students may remember an attractive image while understanding little about its meaning or origin. For aesthetic education, short-form video should therefore serve as an introduction to visual material rather than a complete substitute for contextual explanation, sustained observation, and discussion.

Algorithmic Recommendation and Aesthetic Autonomy

Algorithmic recommendation distinguishes short-form video platforms from many conventional educational resources. TikTok continuously recommends content according to viewing behaviour and previous interaction. This personalisation can help students discover artistic content that corresponds to their interests, but it can also repeatedly expose them to similar styles and visual preferences [20][21].

This process has implications for aesthetic autonomy. Repeatedly recommended visual styles may become increasingly familiar and attractive, while alternative forms of artistic expression may receive less attention. TikTok's algorithmic environment raises broader questions concerning platform responsibility and algorithmic pluralism [19]. At the same time, the affordances of TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts can encourage intensive platform engagement and potentially addictive patterns of use [16].

For aesthetic education, algorithmic awareness should therefore accompany visual engagement. Students need to recognise that their feeds are selectively organised rather than neutral representations of artistic and cultural diversity. Teachers can encourage comparison between different visual sources and introduce content outside students' usual recommendation patterns. This can help students distinguish between personal aesthetic judgement, repeated exposure, and platform-driven popularity.

Table 1. Opportunities and Challenges of Short-Form Video for Aesthetic Learning

Dimension	Opportunities	Challenges	Educational Response
Visual and cognitive engagement	Attracts attention; supports observation and visual demonstration	Fragmented attention; superficial processing	Guided observation and focused questioning
Emotional and	Stimulates interest, emotional	Entertainment may	Connect viewing with

creative engagement	response, and creative inspiration	replace deeper engagement	interpretation and creative practice
Aesthetic access	Expands access to art, museums, cultures, and visual practices	Limited context and surface-level exposure	Provide cultural context and extended resources
Algorithmic environment	Supports personalised discovery of visual content	Repetition, narrow exposure, and reduced aesthetic autonomy	Develop algorithmic awareness and diversify visual sources

Overall, short-form video offers meaningful opportunities for aesthetic learning, but these opportunities remain conditional. Visual attraction can initiate attention, emotional engagement can stimulate interest, and digital access can expand aesthetic experience. However, deeper learning requires students to move beyond immediate consumption towards observation, interpretation, comparison, and reflection. The educational challenge is therefore not simply to increase exposure to short-form video, but to structure that exposure in ways that support meaningful aesthetic engagement.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The opportunities and challenges identified in the literature suggest that short-form video should be integrated into aesthetic education purposefully rather than used simply because it is popular among students. Its educational value depends on content selection, viewing activities, and the guidance provided before and after exposure. Studies involving TikTok in visual arts and folk-art education have demonstrated stronger educational value when video content is connected with structured learning activities [1][7][8].

Content selection is therefore an important responsibility for teachers. Videos should correspond to learning objectives and provide visual elements that students can observe, compare, or interpret. In art education, these elements may include colour, composition, form, texture, technique, style, and cultural symbols. Digital resources can also extend students' access to museums, artworks, and creative practices beyond the classroom [6][12]. However, popular or highly viewed content should not automatically be considered educationally appropriate. Teachers need to consider visual quality, accuracy, cultural context, age suitability, and the potential for further discussion.

Short-form video should also function as a starting point rather than the complete learning experience. A useful instructional sequence is view → observe → question → interpret → create → reflect. Students may first watch a selected video and identify important visual features. Teachers can then use questions, comparison, discussion, or creative activities to extend the experience. TikTok-supported flipped learning provides an example of this approach, in which accessible video resources are combined with further interaction and practice [7][8]. Digital portfolios, reflection-based visual activities, and socially interactive approaches can similarly provide opportunities for students to connect viewing with reflection and creative production [5][9][18].

Critical viewing is equally important. Students should be encouraged to consider not only what they see but also how visual content is constructed and distributed. Questions concerning editing, music, framing, visual emphasis, source, and cultural context can help students move beyond immediate reactions. Algorithmic awareness is particularly relevant because recommendation systems influence which videos repeatedly appear in users' feeds [19][20][21]. Comparing different representations of the same artistic subject or deliberately exploring content outside students' usual recommendations can broaden visual experience and support more independent aesthetic judgement.

Finally, educators should distinguish engagement with the platform from engagement with learning. Short-form video can generate immediate interest, but frequent viewing does not necessarily indicate meaningful cognitive or aesthetic processing. Evidence concerning attention, problematic use, and learning engagement demonstrates the importance of controlled and purposeful use [3][4][22][25]. Short-form video should therefore supplement rather than replace sustained observation, discussion, artistic practice, and reflective

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learning. When these activities are combined, familiar digital experiences can be transformed into opportunities for deeper aesthetic engagement.

DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed in this article presents a balanced picture of short-form video in aesthetic learning. On the one hand, TikTok and related digital environments can provide accessible visual resources, support art appreciation, stimulate engagement, and connect students with artistic and cultural experiences [1][6][7][8]. On the other hand, problematic patterns of short-form video use have been associated with attentional difficulties, weaker learning engagement, and academic problems [3][4][22][25]. These findings indicate that short-form video should not be classified simply as beneficial or harmful. Its educational influence depends on what students view, how they engage with it, and how the viewing experience is incorporated into learning.

A central distinction emerging from this review is that aesthetic exposure does not necessarily result in aesthetic learning. Short-form video can substantially increase students' exposure to artworks, museums, visual styles, creative processes, and cultural practices [2][6][10]. However, exposure alone does not ensure interpretation, reflection, or independent judgement. Similarly, engagement with a short-form video platform should not automatically be interpreted as engagement with learning. Technology affordances can encourage continued platform use [16], while meaningful educational engagement requires students to actively process and respond to the visual content.

Based on the reviewed literature, Figure 1 presents a conceptual pathway through which short-form video may contribute to aesthetic learning. The pathway suggests a progression from visual exposure and attention towards interpretation, emotional response, reflection, and aesthetic learning. Short-form video is particularly effective at the beginning of this process because its visual and multimodal characteristics can provide immediate exposure and attract attention. Educational intervention becomes increasingly important at the later stages. Interpretation requires students to examine visual meaning, emotional response connects the experience with personal engagement, and reflection allows initial impressions to develop into more considered aesthetic understanding. Research involving digital portfolios, interactive art education, and TikTok-supported learning supports the importance of connecting digital exposure with active participation, creativity, and reflection [5][8][18].

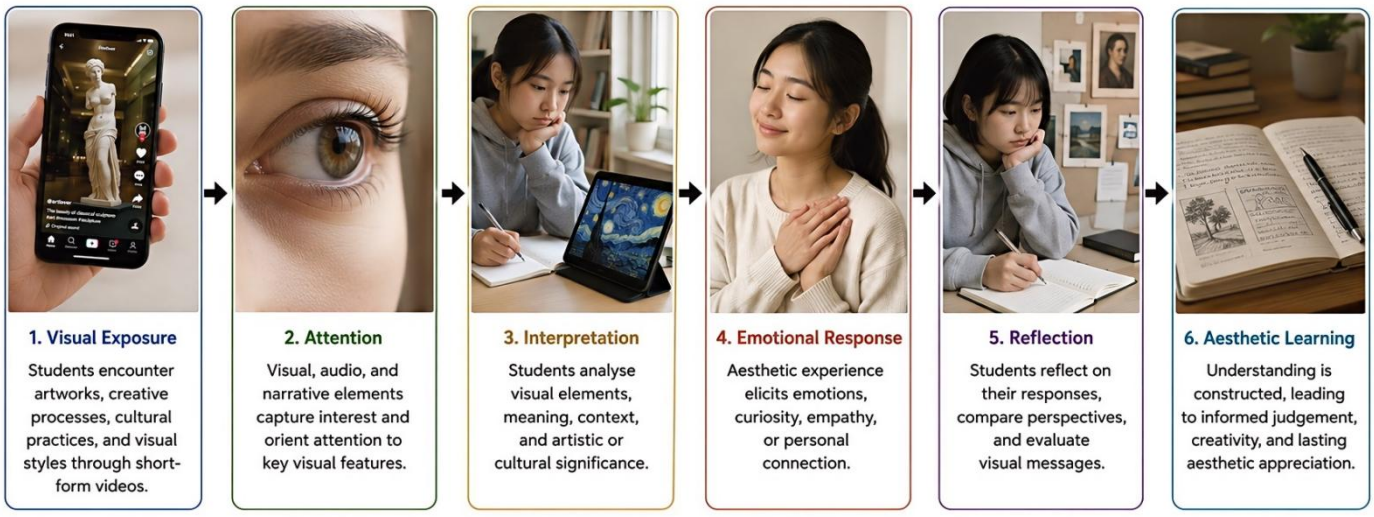


Figure 1. Conceptual Pathway from Short-Form Video Engagement to Aesthetic Learning

Algorithmic recommendation adds another dimension to this relationship. TikTok does not merely provide visual content; it also organises the content that users repeatedly encounter. Recommendation systems can facilitate personalised discovery, but they may also narrow exposure and reinforce existing preferences [20][21]. Algorithmic awareness should therefore be considered part of contemporary aesthetic learning.

Students need opportunities to recognise how digital platforms shape their visual environment and to compare algorithmically recommended content with broader artistic and cultural perspectives.

Current evidence nevertheless remains limited. Recent systematic reviews demonstrate increasing interest in TikTok as an educational resource, but research continues to focus largely on higher education, general learning outcomes, disciplinary applications, and engagement [23][24]. More research is needed on younger students and on aesthetic outcomes specifically. Future studies should also distinguish between different types of short-form video content and examine mechanisms such as visual attention, emotional response, reflective processing, and algorithmic influence. Experimental and quasi-experimental research would be particularly useful for determining how structured short-form video experiences contribute to aesthetic learning over time.

Overall, short-form video is best understood as a conditional educational resource. Its educational value does not arise from the technology alone but from the relationship between visual content, patterns of engagement, algorithmic environments, and pedagogical mediation. When viewing is connected with interpretation, creative activity, critical discussion, and reflection, short-form video can provide a meaningful bridge between students' everyday digital experiences and aesthetic education.

CONCLUSION

Short-form video has become an important part of students' digital visual environment and offers new possibilities for aesthetic learning. This review indicates that short-form video can attract visual attention, stimulate emotional and creative engagement, and expand access to artistic and cultural experiences. Studies involving TikTok in art appreciation, museum education, and art-related learning demonstrate its potential as a supplementary educational resource when it is integrated into structured learning activities [1][6][7][8].

However, aesthetic exposure does not necessarily result in aesthetic learning. Fragmented viewing, problematic use, entertainment-oriented engagement, and algorithmic recommendation may limit sustained attention and independent interpretation [4][21][22][25]. The educational value of short-form video therefore depends on how visual exposure is transformed into attention, interpretation, emotional response, and reflection.

For educators, the objective should not be to reproduce everyday social media consumption in the classroom. Short-form video should instead serve as a starting point for observation, questioning, discussion, creative activity, and critical reflection. Appropriate content selection and pedagogical guidance can help students move from passive visual consumption towards more meaningful aesthetic engagement. Short-form video is therefore best understood as a conditional educational resource whose contribution to aesthetic learning depends on the interaction between digital content, patterns of engagement, and educational mediation.

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