

# Art as a Means of Historical Inquiry

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## Innovative Potential

We explore the integrative and applied potential of liberal arts education in the rigorous context of the humanities. By making the kinship of science, humanities and the arts experienceable through practical exercises, we bring intellectual stimuli from artistic work into the process of research design. This opens wider epistemic spaces to multi-variant problem solving and helps train the critical leadership and informed communication skills necessary for researchers to enhance their social impact.

## A Lasting Impact

The materials created during the funding period will be made available on our prospective online platform. Teaching segments include innovative mind-mapping, storytelling, audience engagement, and non-textual communication. They are implementable as semester-long curricula, or as individual teaching blocs in research design workshops. They contribute to scientific outreach, civil engagement, and creative problem solving beyond the humanities.

"Avatar Tours" Mapping Exercise  
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## Idea

We develop didactical tools for historians and artists to explore each other's fields and inspire critical ways of engaging with the past. In two semester-long courses, we collaborate with instructors and students from ZHdK as an inter-university team and develop the contents and strategies necessary to teach historical research as a creative and exploratory process. Unlike conventional uses of art as a source of information in historiography, we engage in artistic work as a cognitive process that helps identify tensions, voices and perspectives otherwise hidden by the archive.

## Greatest Challenges

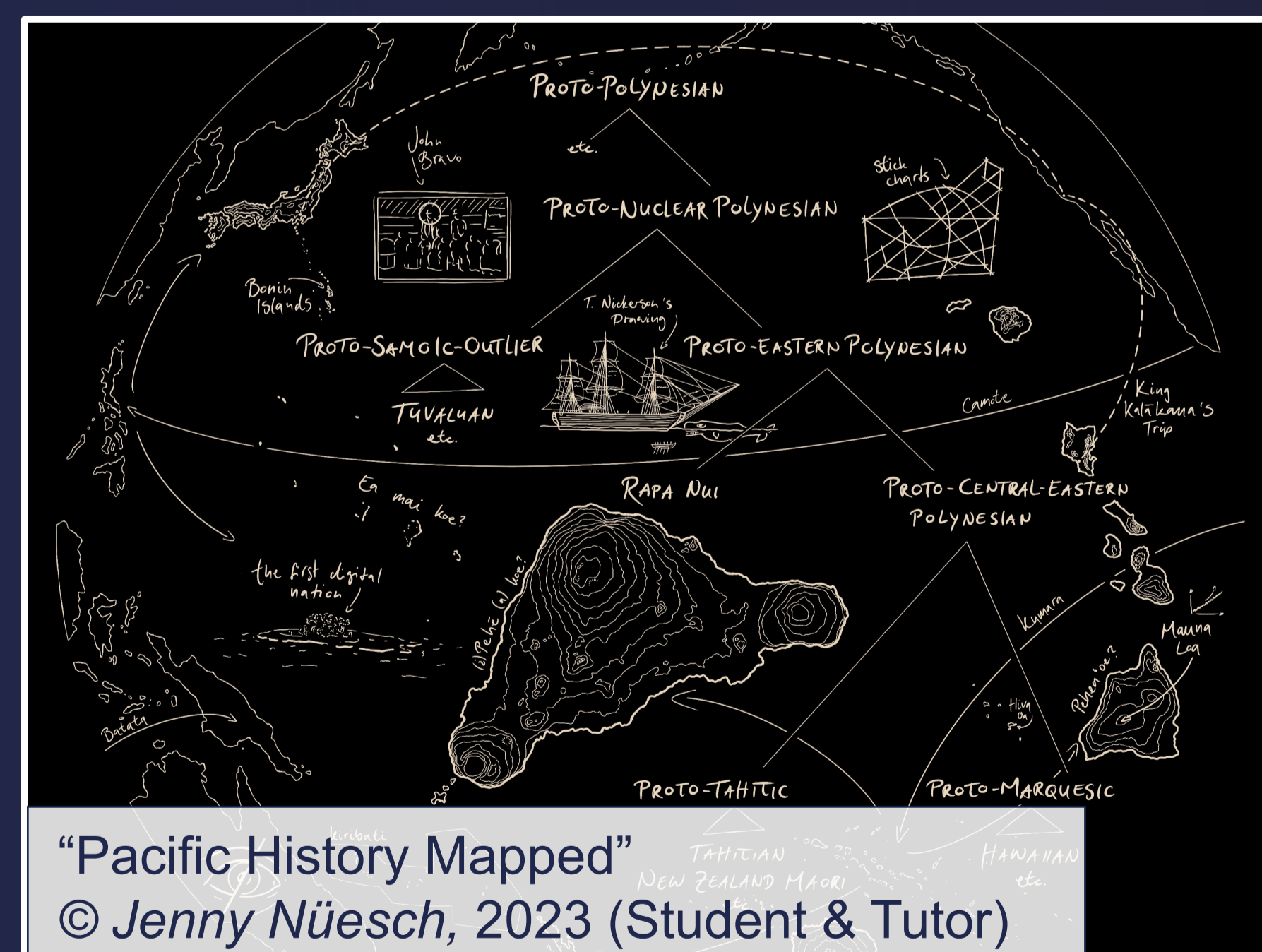
Inter-university teaching means to navigate a classroom full of divergent expectations, assumptions, and skillsets. Many of our prompts are group assignments in the spirit of generating an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional conversation. Experiencing different cultures of collaboration, project management, and ideas of possible outputs is part of our didactical concept.

Rather than engaging with art in an extractive manner—using artworks as mere sources—this project offers opportunities to actively cross disciplinary boundaries and engage with art as a creative, cognitive process, a piece of the analytical toolset. Project assignments are therefore open-ended and may take on a variety of directions, shapes and medialities. The very openness of the assignment will require active conversations between instructors and students throughout the course. The unpredictability of project outcomes keeps it open what parts may be suitable for didactical reimplementation.

## Goals

We ask how creative techniques can be transferred between artistic work and academic research, and how the ways of observing, asking and analyzing differ between the two fields. The results we expect from this exchange include identifying concretely applicable skills such as design thinking, public engagement and storytelling beyond academic language. We further explore the power of unconventional media and categories of analysis to stimulate conceptual thinking.

The curricula we design make abstract problems relatable in a playful manner: What power relations have left their imprint on records of the past? How do we tell the story of those absent from the archive? Creative writing assignments, graphical narratives, or the telling of history as an interactive practice sharpen observational and analytic skills, and they bring the power of design choices in historical writing to the fore. Our syllabi can be re-implemented or sourced for creative assignments in the humanities and beyond.



"Pacific History Mapped"  
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Ein Projekt unterstützt durch die  
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