



GENERAL COMMENTS

This report is based on the *VCE Studio Arts Study Design* accredited for the period 2003–2009. A new study design was published in 2009 and will be implemented in 2010. This report is designed to provide valuable information to students and teachers on the performance of students in the 2009 examination.

The structure and format of the examination has remained reasonably consistent over recent years. While this has profited some students, others have not taken advantage of the benefits of this consistency. It is clear that not all students are taking heed of the advice given in Assessment Reports and this year the number of low level responses was disappointing. Many students did not apply their knowledge and understanding to the requirements of the question and therefore did not answer the question as asked.

The 2009 written examination tested students' ability to **apply** the knowledge learnt in Outcome 3 in Units 3 and 4 so they could clearly demonstrate their understanding. Some students tended to assume that they could supply rote-learned information without taking into account the wording of the question. Too often, key terms used in the question such as 'analyse' or 'compare' were ignored and a more general and pre-prepared response was given. This made it difficult for students to achieve high marks. Students must ensure that the knowledge they have acquired throughout the year is applied to the specific requirements of each question. An example of this was Question 3, where students were required to compare the role and purpose of two art spaces. Some students simply described or defined each art space without including evidence of comparison.

Many students seemed to have taken the advice in previous Assessment Reports and completed the extended response question first. Time management is critical in this examination and it is vital that students preparing for the 2010 examination sit practice examinations to test their ability to write against the clock. It is also important that students practise responses to a wide range of question types.

Areas of strengths and weakness

Students who were awarded high marks consistently:

- used appropriate art terminology that was applicable to the question
- demonstrated a sound understanding of the knowledge required for each question
- responded appropriately to the key words of the question and applied their knowledge accordingly
- discussed specific examples of artworks where appropriate
- demonstrated a sound knowledge of the area under discussion
- provided in-depth and comprehensive responses that revealed a thorough understanding of the *VCE Studio Arts Study Design 2003–2009* content.

Students who were awarded low marks consistently:

- did not apply appropriate art terminology in their responses
- did not demonstrate a depth of knowledge to adequately answer the question
- did not respond adequately to the key words of the question
- did not discuss examples of artworks or provided a discussion that was shallow and descriptive, demonstrating little knowledge of the work
- did not demonstrate an understanding of the key knowledge of Outcome 3 in Units 3 and 4.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

For each question, an outline answer (or answers) is provided. In some cases the answer given is not the only answer that could have been awarded marks.

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	20	35	30	15	1.4

Question 1a. required students to select an artwork from the detachable insert and use appropriate art terminology to discuss ways in which the artist had employed techniques and processes.



The materials used in the making of the artworks were given in the detachable insert and students were asked to discuss the ways in which they were used. Most students were unable to do this and did not score well on this question. Scores for this question were the lowest on the examination paper. Students who discussed techniques and processes scored well. For example, if students selected James Gleeson's *Ikons of Hazard*, an oil painting on Belgian linen, the expected responses should have included a discussion of the techniques and processes of oil painting including possible references to the stretcher, linen canvas, stretching pliers, gesso or rabbit-skin glue, turpentine or solvent, oil painting mediums, colour mixing, glazing, scraping, brushes and painting knives. If students selected Picasso's *Still Life with Violin and Fruit*, a charcoal drawing on collaged paper, they would have been expected to discuss the techniques and processes of collage and drawing with charcoal, including such things as the selection of papers (wallpaper, newspaper, white, black and coloured papers), cutting, pasting, layering, drawing, smudging and composing.

Following is a high-scoring student response.

Artwork: André Kertész, New York

Because of the small scale of this work it was probably produced using a small format or 35mm camera. As the photograph is in focus from foreground to background, a large depth of field is evident, created using a small aperture of f. 22. To compensate for the unreliability of natural light the artist probably used a higher film speed such as 400 ISO which is more sensitive to light and therefore effective in low light situations. A fast shutter speed of over 1/60th of a second has been used to freeze the movements of the men. Traditional darkroom chemicals such as developer, stop bath and fixer would have been used to print this work.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	5	7	14	23	24	14	9	4	3.5

Question 1b. required students to analyse the ways in which the artist developed aesthetic qualities and a distinctive style in the selected artwork.

Many students simply described what they could see rather than analyse how the artist developed aesthetic qualities and a distinctive style in the artwork. Some high-scoring students explained how the aesthetic qualities directly contributed to the artwork's distinctive style. Once again, many students had a very limited understanding of the terms 'aesthetic qualities' and 'distinctive style', which is unusual given the emphasis on these terms in the study design. Students must understand that the elements of art, line, shape, colour, etc., do not constitute aesthetic qualities but contribute to the aesthetic qualities and are building blocks in the multiplicity of the artwork. Aesthetic qualities might include such things as composition (a term very rarely used in examination responses), mood, temperament, expression, intensity, sensitivity, simplicity, unity, light and space. Too often students appeared to have a checklist of art elements (for example, line, colour and texture) that they tried to fit, often quite inappropriately, to the selected image. Aesthetic qualities relate to the wider artistic qualities of the artwork (including the elements and principles of art). In its contemporary and most widely accepted form, the word 'aesthetic' is generally understood to be a critical reflection on specific qualities of art and culture. Students may employ the elements and principles of art to support their analysis of the aesthetic qualities.

Students must be conscious of the requirements of the question rather than thinking that a list of art elements will suffice. Students must be prepared to think deeply at the beginning of the examination about what the question is asking in order to determine the required response.

Similarly, the term 'distinctive style' was not well understood by students and many did not address this part of the question. This term is clearly defined as the personal and distinguishing characteristics of an artwork. When it is understood that the characteristics of the artwork constitute its style, it is much easier to write about the artwork's style. This point should be emphasised to students.

The following excerpt is from a high-scoring student response.

Artwork: James Gleeson, Ikons of Hazard

James Gleeson has developed his distinctive style through his use of varying implied textures that regularly differ among the several broken forms with flesh, cloud, water, glass, metals and other incongruous qualities to further emphasise the abstract nature of the work and beg the audience to look twice. Gleeson has also utilised colour relying on the strong contrasting elements of complementary yellow and purple against the dark, turbulent cloud forms to project the objects.... Contrast is used in the colours and the forms; the abstract objects differing from known bottles to free flowing organic abstractions in vivid yellows

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and oranges against the stark nature of the black smudge-like cloud. The blurring used in these 'abstractions' creates a dreamlike aesthetic and adds a surrealist element to the piece.

Question 2i.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	19	40	24	12	2.2

Question 2ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	22	39	21	10	2

Question 2 required students to identify an art industry issue of the last two years and present two differing points of view generated by the issue. Students must choose an appropriate issue very carefully. It requires an appreciation of a carefully considered issue that can only come from valid investigation into the background of the issue and the ensuing implications. To score a high mark, students needed to demonstrate a depth of knowledge of the issue under discussion, and include reference to media and other sources. It was disappointing that some students used an under-prepared and ill-considered personal point of view.

The issue of censorship of Bill Henson's photographs was again overwhelmingly the most often cited in the responses. However, many students gave responses which lacked any real understanding of the work of Bill Henson. Students who could see beyond the popular media's presentation of the issue and looked at the issue of Henson's work in the context of freedom of expression and censorship, wrote well.

The following is a high-scoring response to Question 2.

Issue: The use of dead bodies as art

Point of view 1

The use of dead bodies as works of art 'is simply disrespectful to both the deceased and their family' argues Martha H. from Blogspot.com who acknowledges that while a person's body is simply a 'husk' after their death, their body stands as 'a symbol, a remnant of life and love' and something that should 'return to the earth and not be disrespected' in such a way. Martha also pleads parents to consider if one of Van Hagen's 'so-called artworks' was their son or daughter, arguing that they would want them to rest in peace and not 'to profit some freak show'.

Point of view 2

'Those involved had volunteered and were content with the decision' argues Jean Ryesdale also of Blogspot.com, reasoning that all of Von Hagen's plastination students had offered to and that the fault lies with them, labelling Von Hagen simply 'another artist who pushed the boundaries too far for some'. Many in the art world agree, arguing that as long as consent was given it is 'a viable means of expressing ideas' and not unlike conventional artistic methods.

Question 3i.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	4	40	56	1.5

Question 3ii.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	9	49	42	1.4

Question 3 required students to compare the role and purpose of two selected exhibition spaces.

This question was generally well done. Students seemed well prepared for this question and most students had a good understanding of the role of different types of art spaces. Some students, however, could describe each space but did not compare them. A comparison requires the student to state what is similar and what is different in each exhibition space. High-scoring answers gave the name, and sometimes the address, of an example of each type of art space.

The following is a good response to Question 3.

Public art galleries are dedicated to the establishing, conserving and promoting to the public an established collection of both national and international works. They are expected to present to the public a variety of changing exhibitions dedicated to conservation practice, and are known as an educational resource.

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On the other hand commercial art galleries exist solely to make a profit. They do not present works to the public for leisure but rather market and promote their artists for monetary purposes. Whilst they have some awareness of conservation they primarily operate as a business in order to sell works to collectors and the public.

Question 4i.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	7	44	49	1.4

Question 4ii.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	19	43	38	1.2

Question 4 required students to choose two factors and explain why they should be considered when using another artist's work to make a new artwork.

Students could choose copyright law, appropriation and originality, licensing agreements and moral rights of artists. This question was generally well done. High-scoring students defined the term they were addressing and several students were able to cite the Copyright Act and the Moral Rights Act. The best responses included an example of the factor under discussion.

The following is a high-scoring response to Question 4.

Copyright law

The Copyright Act of 1968 prohibits anyone from copying or recreating the work of another artist without permission or consent to do so. It automatically exists when a work is created and extends for the life of an artist plus an additional 70 years after their death. Artists appropriating from other works need to ensure they do not breach copyright in order to avoid legal issues and prosecution. Copyright also entitles the artist to place their work in the public domain and therefore it is illegal for anyone else to do so without consent.

Moral rights

These protect the basic rights of an artist to not have their work physically damaged, altered or recreated in a derogatory manner. There are two basic rights which appropriating artists must be aware of to avoid legal action, prosecution and a damaging reputation.

Right of attribution: The right to be identified as the original creator of the work.

Right of integrity: The right to prevent work from being treated in a derogatory manner.

Both laws stand to facilitate and preserve the originality and integrity of artists and their work.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	6	14	21	18	15	17	3.5

Question 5 required students to select one artwork from the detachable insert and identify three factors that should be considered in the conservation of the artwork and explain how these factors could be used to conserve it.

In general, this question was well done and it was obvious that most students were well prepared. Students generally had a good understanding of the key knowledge required to respond successfully.

The following is a high-scoring response to Question 5

Artwork: Pablo Picasso, Still life with Violin and Fruit

As this work was created on paper it should be kept at about 50 lux as a greater light intensity risks fading the work. Also, while on exhibition, a hydrothermograph should be present in the room to ensure temperature remains at a constant 18-22 degrees centigrade (higher and lower temperature may cause the piece to expand or shrink causing deterioration to the artwork) and that humidity levels remain at 45-55 % (lower humidity than this will cause the work to be dry and brittle and higher will cause water to be stored in the particles in the work causing deterioration and mould growth at 67% humidity). The work should also only be on display for a ratio of 1:3 meaning for every month on display it should spend 3 months in storage. It should be stored in a

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Solander box which is airtight (oxygen may cause deterioration), light tight so the work doesn't fade) and acid free (harmful chemicals eat away at the work).

Question 6i.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	5	5	10	14	16	15	15	10	6	4	4.5

Question 6ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	12	5	11	14	15	13	13	9	5	2	4

Question 6 required students to identify two artists from different historical and/or cultural contexts and analyse specific examples of their work in terms of the use of materials and techniques, the interpretation and communication of subject matter, ideas and meanings, aesthetic qualities and distinctive style. Most students were well prepared for this question and many answered it very well. Many students wrote two separate responses, choosing a different artist for each and analysing them according to the requirements of the question. While the wording of the question allowed for this particular approach, many high-scoring responses successfully integrated the analysis of the two artists into one well-structured response and demonstrated a coherent development of ideas. It is imperative that all students write the title of the work, and date if known, so the work under analysis can be clearly identified.

In general, students responded well to this question with a clear understanding of how to analyse the artworks. However, some under-prepared students chose to discuss artworks from the detachable insert and found they had little they could say about them. It is important, and expected, that students come to the examination adequately prepared with a body of knowledge to apply to the examination questions. It is not sufficient to only refer to artworks from the detachable insert and write only about those images. Students are expected to have undertaken a considerable amount of research and investigation throughout the year in response to Outcome 3 of both Units 3 and 4 of the study design.

Students were expected to use the three dot points in order to discover meaning in each artwork. Most students were able to do this but unfortunately some students' analysis of artworks was superficial or did not address all dot points equally. The concept of 'distinctive style' was again almost universally neglected.

The following is the first and last paragraph of a high-scoring response to Question 6.

Artists are often subject to influences which are prominent in everyday society. They utilize the resources, opportunities and materials which are available to them and aspire to create works which have not yet been created and suit their particular purpose. Edgar Degas, a 19th century French Impressionist/Realist was influenced by the invention of the camera, He devoted his career to developing and experimenting with new art styles and techniques. Intrigued by the movement of the dancers at the ballet & women. Nearly half of Degas's works were inspired by this concept. On the other hand Post-Modern Australian artist Anne Wallace challenges the viewer to question certain aspects of modern day society such as youth, isolation and alienation through her unique portrayal of women.

Both artists aim to convey and create their works for very different purposes. Degas, fascinated by the movement of the dancers at the ballet, pushed his creative limits through a gradual and continual search for new meanings and techniques. On the other hand, Wallace dedicated her career to focusing on themes of youth, isolation and alienation through a stark and boldly confronting portrayal of women. Both artists managed to capture and develop a unique style to their own era and purpose throughout history.