

Studio Arts GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Studio Arts written examination required students to address short-answer and extended-response questions. The examination drew upon key knowledge and skills required for Outcome 2 in Unit 3 and Outcome 2 in Unit 4. Students were required to answer the four compulsory questions in Section A. In Section B, one extended response of the two alternatives provided was to be answered. In Section A, students were required to respond to previously unseen artworks. Visual material was used for both Question 1 and Question 2. A total of 50 marks was allocated for the paper; 30 marks for Section A and 20 marks for Section B. Students were given 90 minutes to complete the examination.

Section A was handled better by students than Section B. Students are now familiar with the format of the examination and are able to provide more informative responses to the short answer questions. There is still room for improvement in student responses to the visual material. Question 1 required students to discuss the way/s in which subject matter was interpreted in an artwork and secondly the use of materials and techniques in that artwork. It is important that students have a very clear understanding of the difference between description and interpretation. The question did not ask students to describe what they saw. It asked them to discuss what was happening or what the artist was trying to say. To talk about the meaning of a work is very different to talking about what one sees when one looks at an artwork. The interpretation is personal, but it will be firmly based on the information provided in the artwork. The credits assist students to understand some of the features of the work. The second part of Question 1 required students to discuss how the materials and techniques were used in the artworks. Students should select a work for discussion that uses materials or techniques they are familiar with. The responses should clearly demonstrate an understanding of the qualities and effects that can be achieved using particular media and how the technique chosen by the artist produces a particular result.

Extended responses in Section B were not as comprehensively handled as the short-answer questions. The detail required to fully answer the question selected in order to score full marks was then not evident. This may be due to students allocating too much time in Section A relative to Section B. Some students found it difficult to apply their knowledge of artists and artworks to the questions asked. While the marking scheme of 10 + 10 marks is allocated for knowledge of two artists and their works, it does not mean that students have to write two separate responses to the question. The responses that generally attracted the highest marks were those that were written in a fluent and comprehensive manner and linked both artists and their works. It is important students understand that they need the skills and knowledge to answer both specifically focused questions and more general questions. Pre-prepared answers are readily identifiable because students are not able to adjust their understanding or the information prepared to the specific requirements of the question.

Equal attention needs to be given to both Outcome 2 in Unit 3 and Outcome 2 in Unit 4. Students need to be thoroughly prepared to apply their knowledge in both short-answer and extended-response questions. There should be multiple opportunities provided to students during the school year to consolidate their visual literacy skills and apply the key knowledge and skills required to demonstrate completion of outcomes.

Areas of strength and weakness

Strengths

Responses that were awarded high marks:

- answered all aspects or issues raised by the question
- provided relevant and factual information
- used correct art terminology
- were clearly articulated, displaying critical and aesthetic awareness
- provided detailed information within the context of the question
- provided clear examples relevant to the discussion
- coherently developed ideas.

Weaknesses

Responses that were awarded low marks displayed:

- lack of understanding of basic terms
- questions partly or largely unanswered
- misinterpretation of the question or a lack of understanding of the issues raised by the question
- limited discussion pertinent to what was being asked
- factual inaccuracies in relation to the interpretation of given terms
- repetition of information provided in the question
- inappropriateness of some examples and issues used for discussion
- selection of visual examples with no clear understanding of the art form
- inability to use specific examples to support discussion.

The most common faults in Section A were:

- providing a description of the visual image in Question 1 and using the title of the piece to introduce the response rather than an interpretation of the subject matter
- limited understanding of the techniques associated with the various materials and media used in the visual examples chosen for discussion and lack of appropriate terminology
- misunderstanding of terms such as appropriation, copyright and plagiarism in Question 2
- inability to articulate the context that gave rise to the art industry issue selected in Question 3
- lack of understanding of methods used by people in the presentation of artworks to an audience in Question 4.

The most common faults in Section B were:

- limited preparation for the extended responses evidenced by factual inaccuracies, superficial discussion and no reference to specific artworks
- pre-prepared responses that did not answer the questions provided
- biographies of artists rather than a discussion of relevant information and works pertinent to the question asked
- inability to clearly demonstrate the links between influences and work created by artists.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A – Short-answer responses

Students were required to answer four compulsory questions from this section. Students needed to use information directly related to the focus of the question. Each question was allocated marks according to the specific requirements of the individual question. Question 1 required two discussions of one artwork. Question 2 required discussion of two issues. Question 3 required the explanation of more than one point of view and Question 4 required the selection of the methods used by two individuals. If students only answered one of the requirements they could not score higher than the mark allocated for that requirement, regardless of how comprehensive the answer may have been.

Question 1 (Average marks 5.18/Available marks 10)

The most popular artworks selected were Brett Whiteley, *Self Portrait in the Studio*, 1976, Athol Shmith, *Elements in montage*, 1948, Constantin Boym, 'Deconstruction Clock', *Mona Lisa*, 1988, Ken Done, *Sydney Harbour*, 1982. The two least popular were the works by Jeff Koons, *Bear and Policeman*, 1988 and Richard Burkett, *Cup for an Industrial Worker #18 and 21*, 1997.

Students were required to demonstrate:

- an understanding of the way/s in which subject matter is interpreted in the selected artwork
- a capacity to analyse technical and visual characteristics of the selected artwork using correct terminology
- a capacity to discuss the use of identified techniques and the qualities of materials
- a comprehensive and relevant discussion of the chosen example
- an ability to discuss the meaning of the artwork based on the information provided.

The following are examples of excerpts from responses where students achieved a high mark. One sample is provided for each of the three artworks.

Artwork 1: Constantin Boym, 'Deconstruction Clock', *Mona Lisa*, 1988

Interpretation of subject matter

Constantin Boym's deconstruction clock *Mona Lisa* is aptly named as it appears to be questioning the deconstruction or, rather, the deterioration of artworks over time ... The hands of the clock are made up of part of her face as a metaphor for time slowly, but surely working on famous and old artworks to reduce them to nothing until her whole face is gone-taken by the hands of time ...

Use of materials and techniques

... The cracks have been manipulated, as has the colour of the original image to portray a look of deterioration-faded colour and ageing. Using browns and yellows whilst keeping ... the original work is a technique used by Boym to achieve an ageing look effectively. Placing this image on board further adds to the realistic quality of the image as possibly being the real original Da Vinci painting ...

Artwork 2: Brett Whiteley, *Self Portrait in the Studio*, 1976

Interpretation of subject matter

...Whiteley explores self portraiture as a means of teasing out and exposing one's identity both as a person and an artist. the array of objects depicting the human body (the blue torso/the female model and even the giraffe) points to us the direction of the artists' sexual orientation and interests. The familiar (to the artist) surroundings evoke a surreal atmosphere hinting that the inner self is not rational or "red" ... The presence of an easel/brushes and the model hint to the viewer that the creator and inhabitant of this space is an artist – an important if not vital aspect of this man's identity ...

Use of materials and techniques

... There are places where the application of paint is very smooth and flat (such as the white area) and those where it has been used to make more expressive and painterly marks (such as the artists' own face). On the carpet. The painting is full of motion and elongation, an energy derived from the very loose and gestural application of paints which

contrasts with more controlled and defined areas ... Some areas have been carefully blended taking advantage of the smooth and sensual quality of paint, others even transparent an effect achieved through the use of a brush as a drawing medium. Some areas are collapsed, giving the work a somewhat surreal feel to contrast with the almost naturalistic rendering of some forms (such as the artist's face) ...

Artwork 9: Athol Shmith, *Elements in montage*, 1948

Interpretation of subject matter

Athol Shmith has taken a contemporary approach to the relatively traditional subject matter, hands, a sheet of music and a violin. The overlaying of these elements, hands on the background, violin in middle ground, and sheet music and bow in the foreground can be interpreted as representing the connection between the creator (hands) and the creation (music) ... Predominantly low-key image the juxtaposition of textures, skin, wood and the flat surface or paper possibly implies a comment on how music is similarly made by a montage of elements ...

Use of materials and techniques

The overlaying of negatives is displayed by the images seemingly fading ... There a two layers of negatives, a shot of hands and a secondary still life of a violin and music. Both images have been constructed, presumably indoors with heavy emphasis on light. This contrast of light and shadow is effectively created by overhead lighting. The softness of the photo lights at a possible filtering of the light, a stocking has perhaps been placed over the lense. The depth of field is shallow a black darkness and textured floor sends off the objects from any possible distraction. The black and white film is not harshly used and a soft toning may also have been applied in he darkroom.

Question 2 (3.0/6)

Students were required to demonstrate:

- knowledge of ethical considerations and/or regulations with reference to such issues as appropriation, copyright, plagiarism, licensing or cultural considerations governing the ownership and use of images
- a capacity to apply their knowledge of ethical considerations and regulations to examples of artworks provided
- relevant terminology and detail
- an ability to link issues to examples provided
- a clear understanding of the difference between ethical issues and regulations where this was raised as part of the discussion of issues
- an ability to use the information provided with the visuals to inform their response.

Question 3 (3.78/8)

Students were required to demonstrate:

- an understanding of a contemporary art industry issue
- knowledge of the context that gave rise to the points of view in the issue
- clear reference to at least two different points of view relating to the specific issue chosen
- terminology and vocabulary that is specific and correctly used
- an ability to distinguish between the context, the issue and the different points of view.

The following are examples of excerpts from responses where students achieved a high mark.

Sample 1

Public Art is a controversial and ongoing issue in society with questions being raised such as 'What is public art'. ... An example of debate surrounding public art was the selection and installation of Ron Robertson-Swan's largely yellow metal sculpture 'Vault' in 1978 ... the councillors could not see any artistic merit, in the work, likening it to "harvester machinery" and "a broke down barbeque". The media and the public also objected the choice. The public were disconcerted due to lack of consultation and felt that it was a waste of tax payers valuable money. This negative debate was also facilitated by the daily newspaper who christened it "The Yellow Devil" ... This decision to override the committee's selection terrified the arts industry. They argued that by altering the site they were altering and censoring the piece as 'Vault' was site specific ... an, architecture critic spoke out saying "do we allow untrained, ill informed people to decide our artistic taste ...

Sample 2

Appropriation in the Aboriginal art industry is a large problem ... The small percentage of top artists targeted, like Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri; are claiming the illegal copies of his works should not be accepted by galleries and buyers alike. Aside from his rightful claim for the profit made off his image, the painting's created by him tell a story which loses its sacred nature when wrongly recreated ... The Australian version of ownership (the physical creator is the owner) contradicts that of the Aboriginal people. They claim the glorifying of one person is unjust because a group of people contribute to the creation of one work and are therefore liable to claim ownership for it ...

Question 4 (3.55/6)

Students were required to demonstrate:

- an understanding of the methods involved in the displaying of artworks to an audience
- a clear insight and knowledge of the specific methods used by two selected individuals
- a capacity to distinguish between the methods used by individuals in the presentation of artworks

- relevant terminology and vocabulary
- an ability to discuss how selected people went about their work.

The following are examples of excerpts from responses where students achieved a high mark.

Sample 1

An exhibition designer must consider the functional and aesthetic elements of an artists work in its presentation. They are involved in organising the layout, and have in consultation with artist and curator determine the order of the works whether it be chronological or thematic groupings. They will also decide how visitors are to physically flow through an exhibition which can be determined by the use of furniture and movable walls. They must also consider intended audience and concepts to be conveyed; this was the important factor in the exhibition 'A person looks at a work of art ...' at Heide in which the suggestive nature of Bill Henson's work meant that it was displayed in separate room. This was also done for aesthetic reasons ...

Sample 2

Curators work for galleries and are in charge of building on the gallery's collection, choosing works for exhibitions and negotiating with all those involved with the exhibition, such as artists, technical staff, other galleries etc. They may organise touring exhibitions, or organise to borrow certain pieces from other galleries for an exhibition. Generally the curator writes the information on cards and catalogues that accompany the exhibition. The curator may work in a team and have a specialisation – eg traditional ... Conservators ensure the works in a gallery are stored and displayed in ways that lengthen the lives of the pieces and ensure deterioration is minimised ... Conservators may also act to restore damaged work to a condition similar to its original condition.

Section B – Extended responses (6.92/20)

Students were required to answer one question from two alternatives provided. About 58 per cent of students attempted Question 1. Each question attracted 20 marks. However, the marks were broken down into two parts requiring students to discuss two artists and their work. Students who only discussed 1 artist could not score higher than 10 marks.

Depending on the question chosen students were required to demonstrate:

- an understanding of the effect of changing materials and techniques on artistic practices
- an understanding of the ways that changing materials and techniques have affected the artistic practices of artists studied
- a knowledgeable discussion of how particular artists have influenced chosen artists style/s
- a clear link between influences of other artists and how this is evidenced in the selected artists discussed.

Each question required students to:

- provide a clear explanation of examples using relevant vocabulary and terminology
- present coherent and specific responses using names and terms correctly
- provide a range of appropriate and relevant examples related specifically to the issues raised in the question
- discuss two artists and their artworks with the same degree of depth
- provide personal interpretations and opinions that reflect knowledge of the artists' work.