

# 2015 VCE Studio Arts examination report

## General comments

The 2015 Studio Arts examination offered a range of questions that required students to use their knowledge of the theory component of the study as well as to incorporate their broader knowledge of the subject into their responses.

A number of students did not complete all of the questions on the examination. This was often due to poor time management, where some students spent too much time on the first section of the examination and did not have time to attempt the later questions. It is a good technique to read the examination carefully during reading time and decide how much time needs to be spent on each question. Students should use the mark allocation and the amount of space given for the response as a guide to the length and depth of response required.

Students need to understand that the words in each question are carefully chosen and that there are no superfluous or redundant words. Information given in response to one question should not be repeated in further questions. This was evident in this examination where storage and preservation methods were often confused with displaying artworks in a gallery and some students gave rote-learned responses. High-scoring students were able to differentiate the response for each question.

High-scoring responses:

- addressed each part of the question
- addressed the intention of the question
- used appropriate art language and terminology
- used the key words of the questions
- met the assessment criteria
- referred to works of art where appropriate
- were clear and to the point.

## Specific information

**Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.**

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

## Section A

For each of the questions in Section A, students were asked to select one artwork from artworks 1 to 10 in the detachable insert and use the artwork as the basis of their response. Students were able to select the same artwork or a different artwork for each question in Section A.

Approximately 10 per cent of students answered one or more of the questions in Section A by referring to artworks 11 or 12. The VCAA communicated to schools in November the treatment of these responses. The instructions for the 2016 paper will be revised to ensure that all students follow the directions.

### Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	9	22	27	20	13	6	3.1

In Question 1, students were asked to explain how techniques and processes were used in the production of the selected artwork. Students are advised to read and follow instructions. Most students were able to describe relevant techniques and processes but a number still wrote at length about materials, which was not part of the question. Some students mentioned specific tools and equipment used in the creation of the selected artwork. Only a small number wrote about the specific application of the techniques in relation to how the artist may have used them. This seems to suggest that students' understanding of particular art-making practices was more general, or that students have some difficulty 'reading' an artwork in order to understand how it was made.

In high-scoring responses, students demonstrated that they were familiar with the techniques and processes associated with the work, and were able to use specific technical terms in their explanation. These students also drew evidence from the selected artwork to support their response. Low-scoring responses included very vague or incorrect explanations with no specific terminology that related to how the artwork was produced.

### Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	7	22	27	18	16	8	3.3

Many students misinterpreted this question. Instead of discussing the preservation methods of the selected artwork on display, these students addressed preservation methods for storage. The question required students to demonstrate their knowledge of conservation in relation to the impact factors such as the handling of the artwork for display, the temperature, lighting, humidity and display time will have on the preservation of the artwork. It was also very important for students to carefully select an artwork in an art form with which they were familiar in order to best demonstrate their knowledge of conservation methods. Each art form will have specific conservation requirements depending on its level of sensitivity. Some students wrote only a general response and did not give the specifics such as the RH levels or the exact temperature requirement; for example, (22°+ or -2°). Students who scored in the high range covered in detail the temperature and humidity factors, knew the importance of lux levels and understood the monitoring of conditions, the need to rotate artworks, the use of condition reports before and after exhibition and the protection of the artwork as required from human intervention. High-scoring responses were tailored to the art form in question; they were very specific about the details of the work. These responses mentioned rotation or resting of sensitive artworks, and most understood that this was only necessary for sensitive works such as works on paper.

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

*As the artwork is a sensitive work on paper, temperature and humidity must be carefully monitored. The use of a thermohydrograph or similar technology may be used to maintain a constant 18-22° and 40-50% humidity. This ensures that the work does not dry out and distort to become corrugated or become too moist to encourage mould growth. Light must also be carefully monitored as the black and white print is at risk of fading or yellowing. No natural light should enter the exhibition space and flash photography should be banned. Tungsten halogen light globes should be used to emit no more than 50lux, measured by a luxometer. Pests and insects similarly need to be controlled and the gallery may employ the use of ...and rodent traps. Moths particularly need to be controlled in order to protect this work paper. Automatic doors may also be used to ensure that unwanted bugs and pests do not enter the exhibition space.*

### Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	10	26	31	17	9	3	2.9

Few students could fully formulate a high-scoring response to this question. They either wrote solely about storage and conservation or they wrote only about the exhibition space in terms of viewing proximity for the artwork, lighting and keeping the artwork safe from viewers.

High-scoring responses acknowledged the exhibition designer and how they would liaise with the curator to make sure conservation issues were considered, that the work should be set in context and that walls could be painted to create a certain ambience. High-scoring responses considered what colours could work, where in the room/on the wall it could be placed, how it might be conceived within a larger exhibition, what information should be included and acknowledged that an artist could play a role in its display, especially with more contemporary works. Many students tended to discuss preservation in terms of presentation of light, control of humidity and temperature to ensure the work was presented according to what they knew as public gallery standards, but this was not relevant to the question. Responses to the three-dimensional works scored highly where they were able to acknowledge the designer's role in placing these works so they could be viewed from all angles. Responses that included information linked closely to exhibition designer over curator/conversation roles were often generic, suggesting rote-learning of some key facts.

### Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	7	22	29	21	12	5	3.1

Many responses described the elements but often did not discuss how the elements were manipulated, what the elements were achieving or what effect they created. Well-articulated responses often used adjectives or descriptive words to help convey the aesthetics of the work.

Describing where the elements are in a work could demonstrate an understanding of aesthetics but students should be aware of how to do more than identify these. It is suggested that students should discuss how the elements develop the aesthetic qualities.

Students tended to rely heavily on the subject matter when trying to discuss the emotion, mood, feeling or look of the artwork. Artwork 5 was a popular choice for many students. Students often linked the colour palette or use of line to the subject matter. However, often the analysis then remained on the subject matter and did not fully address the question. The structure of higher-scoring responses entwined an analysis with evidence, whereas lower-scoring responses appeared to list adjectives as a description of the aesthetics.

The term 'aesthetically pleasing' was overused; it does not describe the detail of aesthetic qualities.

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

*Goodwin's use of metallic line, protruding from the centre in a chaotic manor. The lines all intersect at awkward and uncomfortable angles, giving a sense of disarray that is quite distressing...the rigidness of the metal lines gives...a sense of harshness and almost brutality to the bombarding mess of metal.*

## Section B

### Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	5	11	14	17	17	13	9	7	3	1	4.5

The highest-scoring responses to this question gave a complete and thorough discussion of the legal and ethical issues, the Acts and their dates, and then applied these to the artworks in a comprehensive manner. They discussed Daniel Boyd's work from an Indigenous perspective, posing deeper philosophical questions beyond appropriation. They also looked at the elements of both artworks and compared their differences and similarities.

Many students tended to simply list all of the considerations that they had learnt in relation to the general appropriation of artworks, rather than adapting what they knew to the two particular artworks on the examination. Students rarely gave their own thoughts on the examples apart from general agreement that copyright had expired. Students seemed less confident writing about the issue of moral rights. Students raised issues in regard to copyright, appropriation and ethics but did not argue the worth of these in relation to these two artworks specifically. Many could not accurately identify the date for the *Copyright Act* of 1968.

Many students simply presented a discussion about Indigenous issues, ignoring the question. They focused more on the political implications of the changes made to the image.

### Question 6

#### Venue 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	8	31	37	24	1.8

#### Venue 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	14	33	35	19	1.6

This question asked students to select two different exhibition spaces from a list of three and discuss the role of each venue when displaying artworks. The choices were between a virtual exhibition space, an alternative art space and a public gallery. Generally students discussed the role of the public gallery very well but many found the other exhibition spaces more difficult to respond to. High-scoring responses included three correct and distinct roles for both venue 1 and venue 2. The provision of an example of a type of gallery added to the response but was not essential to score full marks if students were able to name three roles that were distinct to that

space. A response such as 'The role of the space is to display artwork' does not distinguish between any of the given types of exhibition space.

Others discussed virtual galleries in terms of virtual reality or only galleries that use projectors to display artworks, which indicated that they did not understand the question. For the virtual exhibition space and the alternative art space, students tended to describe features of the space more than the role. It was obvious from some responses that students had not visited two exhibition spaces during the year. Some wrote about two public galleries, while others gave only a vague account of another type of space they had visited.

The study design states, 'Students examine a variety of exhibition spaces and review the methods and considerations involved in the preparation, presentation and conservation of artworks. As part of this requirement, students visit at least two different exhibition spaces in their current year of study' (page 28).

The key skills state, 'describe and compare the roles of public galleries, commercial galleries and other art spaces'.

### Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	10	5	10	21	20	17	11	6	3.6

Responses to this question showed the ability to analyse an artwork using specific aspects of that artwork in reference to a historical or cultural context.

Some students introduced previously studied artists as an added influence and then linked them to the cultural or historical aspects. High-scoring responses were able to locate an artwork in time and place by linking it to an art movement or period of art. High-scoring responses referred to dates or specific events and this gave the response more authenticity.

Lower-scoring responses tended to discuss the events in the artist's own life. Frida Kahlo was a popular choice, with many students making references to her Mexican heritage but not its relevance to the artwork discussed. Her accident, marriage and symbolism were used as examples but were not linked to either a historical or cultural context.

If students have studied a particular artist or artwork, they must know when and where the artist lived and when and where the artwork was created.

The following is a high-scoring response to Question 7.

Name of artist: Steve McCurry

Title of artwork: Afghan Girl

*Steve McCurry's 'Afghan Girl' is a digital image that was captured in 1984. The shot portrays a young refugee with deep, haunting eyes that captivate the viewer. McCurry uses a typical portrait posture to emphasise the subject matter. The large, green eyes of the young girl contain a sense of grief and sorrow, which is further emphasised by her sullen facial expression. The clothing of the subject is torn and the darkened skin of the girl is withered and lifeless portraying a loss of innocence. The vibrant colour palette of the image creates a strong juxtaposition between the bright shades of the subject's traditional clothing and her dull skin. The image depicts Sharbat Gula; a young refugee who had lost her family during the bombings of the Afghanistan War. McCurry has captured the epitome of loss and death by capturing a victim of the war and producing an image that honestly displays the consequences of war and conflict. By contrasting the presence of the young girl with her actual appearance, McCurry conveys the strong sense of loss due to the war. The elements of the image intertwine to communicate the way in which the subject has lost her future due to the circumstances of this Afghanistan War.*

## Section C

### Question 8

#### Artwork 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	8	7	15	21	21	16	10	4	3.4

#### Artwork 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	15	8	15	20	19	14	7	3	3

In this question higher-scoring responses demonstrated students' ability to synthesise their discussion across the three components, showing an in-depth understanding of the way each artist employed materials, techniques and processes. Having a highly logical and sequential awareness and expert knowledge of the differences in materials, the order of production (such as in an oil painting) and the constraints associated with materials contributed to the success of their responses. This was evident in the specialised knowledge that some students had; for example, being able to identify the difference between generic materials, such as canvas, instead identifying the use of linen or cotton duck; specific makers and suppliers of paints and inks; the use of specialised brushes, including hog bristle; the shape and type of brushes; specific camera and darkroom techniques as opposed to generic discussions. They could articulate the process of laying down materials, working with specific terminology such as the use of a dry brush to create scumbling or discussing the way underpainting is employed by the artist to achieve the intensity of highlights in a work or using the fat-over-lean method.

### Question 9

#### Exhibition space 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	12	8	18	22	19	13	6	2	3.1

#### Exhibition space 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	19	9	18	21	17	10	4	2	2.7

Many students found this question difficult. There were a number of students who did not attempt the second part of the question.

The higher-scoring responses incorporated the influence of curation and the exhibition design of those exhibitions visited during the year. The 'Masterpieces from the Hermitage', at the NGV, was a popular choice and those students who scored highly discussed how their experience and understanding was enhanced by the visual appeal of the artworks enhanced by the carefully coordinated colours, wall and floor decorations along with multimedia presentations. The layout of the exhibition was also discussed, in particular the allocation of each gallery space to a different country, along with carefully prepared labels in each room to educate and inform the viewer about the artwork.

However, a number of students struggled with this question, sometimes referring only to the question at the end of their response. Very few integrated their understanding of the artworks and the space throughout their answers. Many responses described the curation and design of

artworks, but did not include any personal understanding or reference to an exhibition. Very few students were able to articulate their personal response to what they had seen.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response to Question 9.

#### Exhibition space – Caves Gallery

*Caves Gallery in Melbourne, a hybrid space of an ARI and a commercial gallery, held their exhibition of photographs 'Plaid' in a quite rustic environment. As the space has no natural lighting, a small 3m x 3m area and no use of special lighting their exhibition of 'Plaid' along with all other exhibitions was united by their rustic and alternative space. However this did allow for an alternative and increasingly contemporary/rustic interpretation of photographs. The curation and design of the space only allowed for three prints to be hung respectively on all of the walls, however the artist curator's only pinned the top 2 corners of the prints, allowing for the photos to hang effortlessly down the halls. The small space also allowed for the photographic prints to be experienced intimately and moreover the lack of natural light meant that the audience was forced to examine them up close to truly realise the beauty. Ultimately the nature of artists acting as creator's allowed for 'Plaid' to be received intimately and quite genuinely. As there were no external and technological influences projected onto the exhibition, what the audience was left with, by virtue of the space and curation, was entirely contemporary and raw.*