

GENERAL COMMENTS

In the 2011 Studio Arts examination, most students wrote enthusiastically about art exhibitions they had visited during the year. Some students demonstrated a high degree of interest and involvement in the procedures and processes of exhibiting art. Students and teachers should note that it is a requirement of the *VCE Studio Arts Study Design 2010–2014* to visit at least two art exhibition spaces in the year of study.

The 2011 examination assessed the students' ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to the images in the exam's detachable insert and to respond to questions. Some students did very well, but many struggled to fulfil question requirements.

A common issue this year was students not answering questions fully. For example, many students did not address all parts of multiple-part questions. This year, as in past years, few students discussed aesthetic qualities, style and artistic influences. Each question asked students to respond to a specific instruction that is often the first word of the question. In 2011 the key instructional terms were 'describe', 'discuss', 'define' and 'analyse'. Students must understand the meaning of these words and how to apply them in a response to a question about artists, artworks and the art industry in order to develop an appropriate response.

Areas of strengths and weakness

Students who were awarded high marks:

- used appropriate art terminology
- demonstrated a sound understanding of the key knowledge required for each question
- responded appropriately to the first word of the question and applied their knowledge accordingly
- addressed all parts of the question
- discussed specific examples of artworks where appropriate
- demonstrated knowledge and understanding of Outcome 3 in Units 3 and 4 of the *VCE Studio Arts Study Design 2010–2014*.

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 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	13	22	21	17	14	10	3.2

Students needed to select one artwork from the insert and describe how materials and techniques had been used to make the artwork. Materials are the substance or substances with which the artwork is made. Techniques are the ways in which the materials have been used. Under each image on the exam paper was information that included the dimensions of the work, the title of the work and the materials with which it was made, and students needed to describe how the artist used these materials to make the artwork. Some students had a very good understanding of artistic procedures and processes and could logically outline the ways in which the artwork was made. Other students were unable to discuss how the artwork was made, nor how the artist used techniques to manipulate materials. Unit 3, Area of Study 3 in the study design states, 'This area of study focuses on professional art practices in relation to particular art form(s)' and, given that each image in the insert corresponded with the list of art forms published in the examination specifications, it was disappointing that for some students this question was not well done. For example, artwork number 1 was a charcoal and pencil drawing on primed canvas. The materials were stated under the image of the artwork in the insert. A good response would have described the techniques of stretching the canvas, preparing the surface with a primer and/or gesso, applying a warm colour to the ground, drawing the figure with pencil and charcoal using a hard outline and rendering some areas with cross-hatching to create areas of tone. When finished, the work was dated and possibly sealed with fixative.

Artwork number 2 was a hand-coloured linocut. The artist would have drawn the image onto the lino, cut around the shapes of the animals carefully with a sharp V-shaped cutting tool and cut the negative areas of the design in an intricate

and detailed way. The lino would then have been rolled with black oil-based ink. Damp white paper would have been placed on the lino, and the lino and paper would have been put through a printing press. The paper would then have been lifted carefully from the lino and when dry been hand coloured with earth-coloured watercolour. The process was repeated to make an edition of 75 prints.

Many students did not demonstrate a detailed understanding of art-making processes. Lino is not etched or painted with acrylic paint, and it is put through a printing press, not a linen press. Kristin Leek's textile garment (artwork number 8) was made by sewing; this technique was seldom mentioned by students. A variety of incorrect answers were given for how Margaret Dodd coloured her ceramic car (artwork number 3). This was particularly disappointing as the information that accompanied the artwork indicated it was glazed earthenware.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response (artwork number 4) that addresses all criteria.

The artist when making his canvas would have first built a wooden frame called a 'stretcher'. He would then have stretched the canvas over the stretcher using pliers and secured it using staples and rabbit-skin glue. He then would have applied 2 or 3 thin coats of gesso, a calcium carbonate filler which prevents bleeding of the paint and gives a smooth working surface. The image would have then been sketched onto the canvas using pencil or charcoal and then he would have begun to paint from the background to the foreground, painting the sky first and the girls last. He would also have worked from light to dark to create his realistic shadowing. As he worked towards the surface he would have used a thinning oil such as linseed oil so that the painting wouldn't crack. The artist would have painted in many layers, waiting for each one to partially dry before beginning the next one. Fine brushes would have been used for detail.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	7	20	30	19	14	9	3.4

Question 2 required students to select one artwork from the insert and discuss the ideas and meanings communicated in the artwork. In works of art, ideas and meanings are the concepts, content and intention of the artwork. The artwork is the vehicle of communication between the artist and the viewer. Many students wrote about artwork number 10 as the climate change meaning of the work was very apparent, and some responses were very good. There were some very good responses to artworks 4 and 5. Weaker responses simply described what could be seen in the artwork, rather than discussing the idea communicated. Good responses identified symbolism, metaphor and narrative. It was not necessary for students to articulate prior knowledge of an artist or artwork as marks were awarded for how a student read the artwork, proposed ideas and employed art language.

The following is an example of a good response (artwork number 5).

Max Dupain, a renowned modernist photographer, who saw beauty in the unnoticed, was beautifully captured by Jill White. This gentle portrait gives the viewer an insight into a photographer's mind. The camera held parallel to Dupain's face demonstrates his view of the world; that he looks at the world with a photographic and aesthetic view. Once a photographer learns the skills of photography and art it is hard not to view the world in a certain way. Jill White has explored that the eye of a photographer will always be the eye of a lens and this juxtaposition demonstrates this.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	4	5	13	16	23	14	14	7	5	4.1

Question 3 required students to select one artwork from the insert and discuss how two art elements had been used to create aesthetic qualities in the artwork. The *VCE Studio Arts Study Design* lists art elements as: line, colour, texture, form, shape, movement, sound and light. Aesthetic qualities in an artwork are developed by the artist using the elements and principles of art, together with the application of materials and technique, to elicit a response from the viewer. Many students think that art elements in isolation constitute aesthetic qualities but do not understand that they are only one part of the multiplicity of the artwork's aesthetic.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response (artwork number 4). The student has discussed how colour as an art element has been used to create the aesthetic qualities of warmth, beauty and harmony. Most students are able to write about colour as an art element but do not then discuss how colour has been used to create aesthetic qualities. Students who responded in this way did not answer the question fully and could not be awarded full marks.

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Analogous colours contrast with the complementary colours to add variety and hold the interest of the viewer. Millais uses bright, deeply saturated colours to evoke warmth and harmony. Millais has focused mainly on the selection of colour in order to generate beauty and harmony.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	9	16	20	22	17	14	3.5

This question was about appropriation and understanding the consequences of one artist making a new artwork from another artist's artwork. Students were asked to define the terms 'moral rights', 'originality' and 'copyright law', and many students were able to define copyright law and mention the *Australian Copyright Act 1968*. Most students had some understanding of artists' moral rights enshrined in this Act but nearly all struggled to define the word 'originality'. Unit 3, Area of Study 3 of the study design states, 'Students identify and review the issues, legal obligations and ethical considerations that may arise from the use of other artists' work in the making of new artwork, including a familiarity with appropriation and originality, copyright law, licensing agreements and the moral rights of artists'. Originality in art refers to the original, authentic, individual, unique, first and genuine form of something. Appropriation can be seen as original when it takes a concept or idea and reworks it to create a new meaning. Students who showed that they had some understanding of this meaning were awarded some marks.

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

Moral rights of artists

Legislation was passed in December 2000 awarding artists moral rights effective immediately upon the creation of a new artwork. These rights include a right of attribution, that the artwork may not be falsely attributed to someone else, as well as the right of integrity, that the artwork may not be used in a way that is prejudicial to the artist's reputation or honour in any way.

Originality

The art world holds originality very high in their priorities. Originality can be defined as being an artist's own work which has stemmed from their individual, creative and innovative mind. The first or initial piece of something can be referred to as original.

Copyright law

The Australian copyright law of 1968 protects artists from having their work exploited, plagiarised or used without permission. In Australia copyright law lasts 70 years after the artist's death but the copyright license may be sold before this under certain circumstances. Although people will always do what they want the Copyright Act offers legal regress for artists if copyright is breached.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	3	3	6	12	16	17	15	13	8	5	5

This question asked students to select an artwork from the insert and discuss what the artist, curator and public could do to preserve or conserve the artwork in a public gallery. Many students were able to apply their knowledge to this question and gave innovative and appropriate answers to propose the responsibilities and actions of the artist, the curator and the public.

For example, in artwork number 4 the artist would ensure that the canvas was properly prepared and sealed so that the oil paint would not rot the canvas and that the colours were permanent, not fugitive, and had been finely ground and mixed with a suitable medium such as linseed oil. The artist could ensure that there was no bitumen in the dark colours and that the painting, when fully dry, was protected with a non-yellowing varnish. The artist would store the painting carefully to ensure that the canvas was not dented. If the canvas became slack, the artist would tighten the stretcher with wedges.

In artwork number 9 the sculptor would choose the block of marble carefully in order to ascertain that it was without flaws and was of an acceptable grain and quality to allow fine detail. The sculptor designed the artwork with a tree trunk attached to the left leg of the figure to strengthen the lower part of the sculpture so that it would not break, and for the same reason has not detached the right knee and the left hand of the figure.

Kristin Leek, in artwork number 8, could ensure that her cotton or silk thread was of sufficient strength to hold the material, and make sure the scarlet dye was permanent, lightfast and sympathetic to the silk. She would ensure that the feathers and grass plumes were securely attached to the fabric of the costume.

Most students understood that the public could help preserve an artwork in a public gallery by not touching it and by not running, carrying bags, eating, drinking or using flash photography. Others suggested that making a financial donation to the gallery was a good way of ensuring that the artworks were looked after properly.

Responses about the curator or artist were, on the whole, well done, although it is highly unlikely that a curator would put an oil painting or a marble sculpture in a solander box. Weaker responses tended to be rote-learned lists of information about temperature, humidity and lux levels, which were inappropriate for the conservation of the particular artwork under discussion.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response for Question 5 (artwork number 2).

The artist could use archival quality materials to produce their linocut such as cotton rag paper for longevity. They could place the artwork in a frame under glass to ensure that damage from pests and rodents as well as high light levels was minimised. If the artwork was placed beneath mount card the artist could specify that the material should be acid-free to ensure that the life of the linocut was prolonged. They could liaise with the curator to ensure that the public gallery followed conservation standards.

As the artwork is on paper it is in the highly sensitive to light category and the curator would need to place it under lux levels of no more than 50. They would also use tungsten or halogen light globes as they have no UV output. The curator would ensure that the temperature in the gallery was 20-22 degrees and that the humidity (controlled by a thermo-hygrograph) was 50 + or - 5% as at 67% mould grows. White, cotton gloves would be used by the curator when handling the artwork.

The public wouldn't consume food or drink in the gallery space in case it spilt and damaged the work. They wouldn't carry large bags into the gallery in case they caused accidental damage to the artwork. They could not touch the artworks as perspiration from hands can cause damage marks to appear on paper and hand-coloured linocuts. The public should adhere to the standards of conservation specified by the gallery and not take photographs of the artwork or bring any harmful or sharp objects into the gallery space.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	3	2	3	5	7	8	10	11	10	10	9	6	7	4	2	3	7.7

This question 6 asked students to identify and discuss the role of an art space, the intention of the artist or curator and the presentation of the artworks. Students who had studied generic information about the National Gallery of Victoria and did not refer to a specific exhibition had difficulty fitting their general information to the question. Many responses were basic; for example, 'some artworks were hung on walls and other artworks were put in glass boxes'. It was concerning that some responses appeared to have been prepared from notes rather than a visit to an art gallery or other art space. Students need to examine a variety of exhibition spaces and review the methods and considerations involved in the preparation, presentation and conservation of artworks. It is a requirement that students visit at least two different exhibition spaces in their current year of study.

Some students wrote about the role of the curator in general instead of the curator's intention in relation to a particular exhibition. The question did not ask about the role of the curator but their intention for a specific exhibition. The discussion needed to focus on the curator's or artist's intention for the exhibition.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The Brunswick Street Gallery is a commercial gallery and is therefore run as a business. The gallery's main purpose is to generate revenue through the sale of art and the hiring of exhibition space. The gallery does not receive government funding or hold educational tours for schools like a public gallery as its main audience are art buyers. Earlier this year the gallery had a feature exhibition for Sean O'Carroll and his collection of artwork called 'Ritalin'. The exhibition was in the largest room of the gallery and the walls were painted white. On the walls were 13 similar artworks differing in size. The artworks were photographs on canvas of small boys in cages representing the social response to young boys with ADHD. (Ritalin is a drug given to those diagnosed with ADHD). The lighting in the room was bright to match the brightness of the photographs. The curator would need to consult with the artist as to how bright the lights could go without causing damage to the artworks. As printed on canvas the light must be less than 150 lux. Temperature was also controlled in the room using an air-conditioner to maintain a temp. of 20 degrees centigrade + or - 2 degrees and RH of 50% + or - 5%. The curator would have set up the exhibition with the help of the artist to ensure the artworks look their best to maximise sales. Around the gallery soft acoustic music was playing to calm viewers, however in the Ritalin exhibition it was silent. The exhibition did not only aim to sell the art but promote a message and

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feeling. Therefore the lights were bright,, the room was quiet and the walls were white. The room had a cold feeling that matched the expressions of the boys in cages. This created a very successful atmosphere.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	13	5	9	8	13	12	13	8	10	5	5	4.6

This question asked students to analyse two artworks with reference to art elements and how the art elements had been used to develop aesthetic qualities and style. Most students made some reference to art elements but did not go on to say how they had been used to develop aesthetic qualities and style. The words ‘aesthetic qualities and style’ were very rarely mentioned or discussed. Students are reminded to read questions carefully and ensure they answer the question asked. Simply writing about or describing art elements does not address aesthetic qualities and style or explain their development. Teachers and students would do well to research and understand this key knowledge in Unit 3, Area of Study 3 in the study design.

Reference to the principles of art and composition, among other things, is fully justified under the term ‘aesthetic qualities and style’, and it would be to the student’s advantage to do this in their responses. The concept of style was again not dealt with well by many students. This issue has been addressed in previous Assessment Reports, but it is important to state again that ‘style’ is understood to be the personal and distinguishing characteristics of an artwork or a group of artworks. Many students chose not to address this part of the question and consequently were awarded fewer marks.

The elements of art, such as line, colour, texture, tone, form, shape, movement, sound and light, are the basic units of the visual language of art. They are part of the vocabulary of visual art. The means by which the art elements are successfully organised into a composition may reference things such as: emphasis, balance, harmony, proportion, rhythm, variety and unity. When students are fully conversant with art elements and how they can be organised, they will have developed an appropriate art vocabulary with which to write about art. In this way they will fulfil the requirement to ‘employ appropriate art language and terminology’.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response to Question 7. The response makes a clear reference to the art elements of texture, colour and shape, and uses appropriate art language to analyse how these elements contribute to the style and aesthetic quality of the work discussed.

Artwork 1, Euan Macleod, ‘Painting Mountains’, 2009

Artwork 2, Euan Macleod ‘Self Portrait; head like a hole 1998-99

Macleod uses extreme textural effects and a figurative painting style in his work to achieve movement. The colours he uses in ‘Painting Mountains’ create warmth in the work as he paints the reflection of light on the mountains creating a mellow, relaxed aesthetic to his painting. The ways in which he applies paint in gestural motions using a ‘scrapper’ is especially distinctive and his paintings all contain figures in a landscape that have been slightly abstracted so that they are merely human shapes with no characteristics. He focuses on movement with many of his figures painted sketchily as though they are moving like the man in the bottom right corner in ‘Painting Mountains’. In ‘Self Portrait: head like a hole’ the aesthetic is more eerie and disturbed as there are multiple figures all painted in cool colour swimming around in the black ocean. His use of texture is more limited than it has otherwise been but still uses thick blobs and scrapings of paint to create texture around the rocks but it is a work that is more still and cold. The tones are more blended and the colours more subdued and dark. The two artworks are clearly by Macleod as he has carried his style throughout the years making slight variations and he has become more relaxed, painting more warmly and figuratively.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	9	3	5	6	7	7	10	11	8	8	7	4	6	3	2	2	6.6

Question 8 required an analysis of one artwork to show how it reflected the artist’s historical and cultural context, artistic influences and the communication of ideas and meaning. This was an opportunity for the student to discuss, in depth, the time period and/or culture in which the artwork was made, the lifestyle of the artist, context and culture, artists and artworks that may have influenced its creation and the ideas and meanings embedded in the work. Some students did this very well, and it was clear that these students thoroughly understood the context of the artwork and the influences acting upon it. They relished the opportunity to discuss an artwork at length and wrote eloquently about the communication of ideas and meaning. Some students who had not studied an artist or artwork wrote about an artwork in



the detachable insert and were not awarded high marks if they were unable to fully address the historical and cultural context, artistic influences or the communication of ideas and meaning.

To write about an artwork's historical context requires the student to locate the artwork in time. This means using dates or indicators such as c.1650 or mid-17th century. It is very difficult to discuss historical context without reference to dates and periods of time; some students attempted to do so but with little success. To understand the cultural context of an artwork requires an understanding of the social, political, religious and artistic climate of the times in which the artwork was made. Some students had a good grasp of this, but others could only say that the artwork was made in Madrid or Mexico City; such a response is not an analysis of an artwork's cultural context. It is important that artworks are not studied in isolation but are studied as part of a wider movement and are seen as a response to a particular set of circumstances at a particular point in time.

'Artistic influences' refers to the artworks and artists that have influenced the artwork under discussion and the impact of the surrounding artistic context when the work was made. These influences can be seen in the subject matter, concepts and techniques of each artwork. Most artworks are influenced by other artworks and in this question the task for students was to identify the connections between one artwork and another. Successful responses did this very well, but in far too many cases students had no understanding of how the artwork they had studied had been influenced by the ideas and techniques of other artists.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response to Question 8.

Stephen Haley's lightjet diptic prints 'Here and There' conveyed his influence from Andreas Gursky's enormous images conveying suburban cityscapes. Haley's portrayal of a suburban office block linked to Gursky's 1993 photograph 'Paris Montparnasse'. Haley used the symbolic binary of life and death in his photographs to portray the number of people who are born (255) and die (107) every minute within the world. In 'Here' he appropriated Jean Watteau's oil painting 'The Embarkation for Cythera' 1717 and used digital media to insert it into every office block window within the image. The frivolous oil painting conveying cupids and lovers frolicking conveyed ideas of love and reproduction and amplified the message of new life within the photograph. In 'There' Haley used a similar technique to inset Arnold Boecklin's painting 'The Island of the Dead' 1885 into every window of the office block. The low key toned painting conveyed a solitary figure travelling alone to a dark and mysterious island emphasised the artist's idea that our current rate of reproduction isn't sustainable. His symbolic meaning of life and death was also shown in the images through the placement of the people. In 'Here' every figure within the image was facing towards the viewer as they entered the world while in 'There' the sparsely populated office block included figures which were all facing away from the viewer symbolizing a disconnection to life. This disconnection was amplified by the deep low key colours in the image which contrasted with the high key vibrancy of the tonal palette of 'Here'. Haley's method of production was in contrast to his artistic influence from Gursky who often used helicopters and large scale productions to produce his images unlike Haley whose photographs were sourced from internet images.

Stephen Haley's diptic of lightjet images conveyed the suburban, industrialised world in which we live and our dependence on artificial man-made structures and high-rise buildings. He also presented the social issue of the greed and sustainability of our current 21st century lifestyle and the concept that too many people exist within today's society for the amount of resources which we have available to us.