

2019 VCE Studio Arts examination report

General comments

Students who were well prepared were able to answer the eight questions in the examination with some depth in their responses, and were able to complete all questions in the specified time.

For some questions, it appeared that many students had memorised a prepared response. They found it difficult to adjust and apply their prepared answers to the questions. Students are advised to focus on responding to the requirements of each question, rather than relying on memorised material.

Specific information

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

The 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 the five artworks provided and use it as the basis for their response. Students were able to select the same artwork or a different artwork for each question in Section A.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	3	2	9	18	21	18	15	10	5	4.5

This question required students to describe the studio process in the production of the artwork. The higher-scoring responses started with the initial drawings and, working from inspiration, progressed through a variety of processes, describing how the work was constructed and what materials were required. They were also able to describe how materials, techniques and processes played their part in creating the work.

Lower-scoring responses tended to give a general description of the subject matter of the work and did not address the specific areas of the question. These students wrote about the artist's use of art elements and principles, which was incorrect. Often 'process' was not addressed, and the responses did not refer to the sequential steps involved in the making of the artwork.

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

Mary Cassatt's oil painting, "in the Loge" would have begun its creation by stretching canvas over a wooden frame and nailing the canvas in place in order to create the desired proportions for the piece. After using a primer to enhance the colour of the pigment that would later be applied, Cassatt would then have added the imprimatura, or ground to the piece, which would unify the different colour of the piece under a single hue, which was likely a warm yellow. Then, she would begin the light underpainting to establish the shapes and composition of the painting, before beginning her painting itself, building up tones in a fat-over-lean process, adding thicker layers as she went. Her final piece's appearance is indicative of a use of sfumato technique in order to create the slightly hazy, dreamlike effect by the blurring of colour, as can be seen in the face of the woman. This would require some direct painting, despite the predominantly traditional method. A chiaroscuro painting method was also used, to ensure the harsh, untainted whites of the highlighted barriers of the loge, while also maintaining deep shadows on the woman's dress and hat. In the final layers, in order to enhance the texture and the brightness of the highlights, a less diluted, thicker use of paint would be employed to create stark contrast between the light and the dark. This is evident in the texture of the people in the background of the piece, who are highly abstracted, and was likely achieved with a mixture of impasto and scumbling techniques.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	1	2	6	16	19	19	18	14	6	4.8

The considerations of artists and or curators in conserving a chosen artwork in a public gallery was the focus of this question. Higher-scoring answers elaborated on the effects of light, humidity and temperature and how these could affect the specific mediums used to create the artworks. and not just a general comment of keeping humidity and light at specific levels. They also discussed the purpose of a condition report and the use of storage systems such as solander boxes, crates or racks. Higher-scoring responses also mentioned detailed precautions specific to the artwork, such as the use of cotton/nitrile gloves when handling artworks.

The response should not be a general comment about keeping humidity and light at specific levels without mentioning the purpose these have in conserving artworks. Generalised answers about the problems of conservation methods, such as putting a large oil on canvas work in a solander box, were not appropriate for the selected artwork.

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

As this artwork is on paper special conservative considerations would need to be made in regards to display, temperature, light and humidity levels. Because paper is a organic material it is susceptible to light damage, meaning the artwork would ideally be presented under a light of 50 lux to avoid the paper becoming brittle or discolouration to the artwork. The temperature would ideally be kept at 20° and humidity level 50% to avoid mould or drying out which could be monitored in a public gallery through a thermograph. The artwork may also be displayed in a frame to avoid human interaction, providing a protective glass case. Integrated pest control would also be considered to ensure pests don't feed on artworks. This could be achieved by insect traps, frequent cleaning of the space and no food or drink policy for the exhibition. To conserve this artwork when in storage it may also be placed in a solander box, allowing no light, insects or dust particles to affect the artwork.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	2	1	4	13	22	20	14	12	8	4	5.0

This question required students to discuss how the artist has used art elements and principles to communicate ideas and meanings in an artwork. Students who performed well in this answer ensured that they were explicit in identifying where in the artwork the art elements and art principles were evident, and used consistent art terminology such as:

...the variations in tone quality and directional line markings were strongly scrawled across the desolate and lifeless sports stadium located in the background of Kentridge's charcoal drawing.

Limited responses simply listed art elements and art principles and did not describe how they were applied. They often neglected to refer to the impact of their use. Responses needed to link the art elements to art principles (for example, by referring to art elements as the building blocks and how they are utilised to align with the art principles). Some responses made no reference to the selected artwork; the discussion could therefore have been about any artwork.

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

Xiuwen creates balance, through the even amount of girls communicating ideas of the battling sides of emotions within the centre girl. Repetition in the uniforms and haircuts communicating a sense of predictability further-more creating an eery and unusual feel. The feature of the colour red in an other wise tonal colour palette draws attention to the scarves creating the idea the idea they hold a significant importance in the girls identities. The suggestion of movement through the suspended actions of the girls suggest there is great deliberation and thoughts taking place. Xiuwen's stark off white background colour summons a sense of monotony and blandness. The focal point, the centre young girl, suggests her as the mediator between two sides, perhaps suggesting a sense of conflict between two ideas within her. The variety of actions taking place, parallels with those of 'The Last Supper' further accentuating a sense of deliberation and communication between many parties. Furthermore, the variety suggests a sense of many conflicting ideas. Xiuwen's repetition of features in the girls bolsters a sense of monotony and dismay within the pieces overall mood.

Section B

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	1	1	5	18	25	21	17	9	3	4.6

This question gave students the opportunity to explain the focus and subject matter of their exploration proposal. The question had two components: the focus and the subject matter. Higher-scoring answers broadened their explanation of focus to include ideas and meaning, conceptual possibilities, aesthetic qualities, inspiration, art forms, materials and techniques. In these responses, the selected subject matter was discussed in a concise and articulate manner using sophisticated vocabulary, and the discussion clearly showed how the subject matter would be developed further.

Many lower-scoring answers outlined the focus but not the subject matter. Subject matter is what one sees in an artwork; this is not to be confused with ideas and meaning. Many students limited their interpretation of focus to the exploration of ideas and meaning, and this limited their response.

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

In my exploration proposal I explored my theme of memories, more specifically family memories and how family memories play a vital role in forming a families future as "memories are the building blocks of life (quote from my exploration proposal). I focused on how I could create a personal family memory through my artwork by exploring with subject matter that was important to my family and I, such as family artefacts, objects, places that my family have lived and infrastructure that is relevant to my family background. Just like my inspiration artist David

Hockney in his artwork 'Garden' (2015, oil on canvas) I decided to focus on subject matter that is familiar to me as it would create a more personal focus to my artwork, allowing my artwork to be passed down to future generations as it represents my own family history. In my exploration proposal I also focused on specific family experiences that may have been positive (celebrations, birthdays) or negative (death, sickness) to family members to convey extremely personal memories.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	1	1	5	15	25	23	16	10	4	4.7

Students were asked to discuss the development of one potential direction in the studio process. Higher-scoring responses identified influences and often one or more artists. They were able to fluently write about materials, techniques and processes and how these were used in creation of the potential direction. They also wrote about the development of their ideas and how these evolved throughout the process.

Many responses focused solely on how they applied materials and techniques, rather than describing how their ideas shaped their studio process. Some responses also did not discuss how art elements and principles were developed through the potential direction to reflect their ideas and demonstrate aesthetic qualities.

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

One of my potential directions explored using paint to convey childlike behaviours. From researching my own art I made as a child, I discovered that children have a relaxed, approach to painting. Often splattering paint onto paper. In this potential direction I explored this use of splattering paint. I used different mediums of paint, Guace was too thick and was often difficult to come off the brush onto the paper. I resolved this by adding a small amount of water to the paint, thinning out the mixture to allow for the paint to come off the brush and create splatts of paint. I originally tried my arm backwards and onto the paper, the movement allowing for the paint to come off the brush, however I found this unsuccessful. I then explored with different techniques and found that using my hand to pull and release the bristles of the brush worked best to splatter the paint and create the best texture and was most visually appealing. I developed this technique in this potential direction as it showed the fun and freedom of making art as a child, removed from the rules of adult society.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	2	1	4	11	20	21	18	13	7	4	5.2

This question required students to explain how materials and techniques were used to communicate ideas in their finished artworks. Higher-scoring responses explained in detail how materials were used and how effective the use was in communicating ideas. These responses tended to flow from the use of materials to the aesthetics of the work and how these came together to communicate their ideas. They also tended to be highly articulate and effectively told the story of the creation through the materials and techniques of the finished artworks.

Lower-scoring responses tended to describe their finished artwork or what materials and techniques were used without any explanation of how they contributed to the communication of ideas in the artworks. Lower-scoring responses tended to have limited art vocabulary and often did not include the correct terms for the techniques, processes or materials used.

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

My first final consisted of 36 woven squares which I attached in a grid layout to a large canvas. Naturally, this final featured the process of weaving, yet I used my own abstract geometric style to create the composition of each square. The process of weaving enabled me to directly connect with my theme of “craft” and communicate the idea that craft can be used by anyone. Additionally, by attaching the weavings to a canvas, effectively converting ‘craft’ to ‘art’ I aimed to subvert the notion of art as more elite or so sophisticated than craft by proving that craft (weaving) can be equally if not more, modern sophisticated and aesthetically pleasing. For my second final, I created six frames depicting the buildings in the village of Pattadai. As a unique process, I separated the two-dimensional illustrations into three layers, which I mounted onto foam before sticking down. This allowed my to create a unique effect in which I conveyed form through flat two dimensional illustrations, simply by mounting them. The process helped my bring the buildings to life by giving them this quirky sense of depth, allowing me to communicate the wonderful vivacity of this artisanal community, which I feel manifests itself in their beautiful buildings.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Average
%	5	2	2	4	7	8	11	15	12	10	9	8	5	3	7.1

This question gave students the opportunity to write at length about the artists they had studied during the year in terms of the aesthetic qualities used in their artworks. Many students were able to respond to this question in a sophisticated way, demonstrating an excellent understanding of the aesthetic qualities. They also wrote about both artists and about selected artworks giving a very good background to the works and the way the aesthetic qualities were used to express ideas. Overall, there was a good variety of artists researched and a good selection of contemporary artists being used in the responses. However, in the extended responses for Questions 7 and 8 it appeared that many students came into the examination having memorised a prepared response. They found it difficult to adjust and apply their prepared answers to the questions. For example, in Question 7, responses only needed to describe how two artists have used aesthetic qualities in two artworks. Many of the prepared responses used the works of Frida Kahlo and Peter Booth and went into great detail about the artists’ personal lives without addressing aesthetic qualities.

Lower-scoring responses only dealt with one artist and one artwork and so were unable to address the entire question. Some responses described the background of the artist and described the artworks without analysing the aesthetic qualities. This question attracted prepared essay responses, where students found it difficult to apply their knowledge to the specific question.

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

The oil on canvas piece ‘Venus of Urbino’ 1534, by artist Titian as well as oil on canvas piece ‘Olympia’ 1863 by Edouard Manet both display aesthetic qualities. It is clear that Manet was more interested in conveying a two dimensional looking piece, through his smoothing of all textures. An example of this is Olympia’s body which gleams like a polished marble. Her slabs of cold flesh which are represented through the thick applications of Manet’s paint strokes, encourages the audience to feel almost uncomfortable, due to her ghost like appearance. In contrast, Titian’s ‘Venus of Urbino’ exudes a downy texture, delicate and soft. This communicates a more comfortable and pleasant feeling within the audience due to Titian’s translucent coating, as opposed to the cold surface of Olympia. In terms of the colour palettes used by Manet, and the warm and luscious hues by Titian. Manet has blocked in his figures and forms in his painting with an underpainting of creamy off white or pale grey, after a loose sketch with a fluid paint of dark umber. Olive green and creamy beige is prominent in Olympia, signifying a dull and tranquilised mood within the audience, where as red, crimson and golden light, symbolising purity, royalty and glory floods Titian’s ‘Venus of Urbino’. This aims to create a sense of admiration and feelings of ‘awe’ within the audience as opposed to Olympia. It is clear

the space displayed with both artworks also differs. In Titians 'Venus of Urbino' it is clear that Venus situated in a large room, due to the small window at the back, signifying great depth in the painting – she is lying on an unmade bed in a luxurious room, complete with two maids who are preparing her daily garment from a trunk or 'cassa', therefore signifying the use of resources and wealth of this figure. This aims to create feelings of gratitude within the audience as they are lead to believe that a beautiful goddess like Venus, has shaped what is seen as beautiful in our society today. Although Olympia is also lying on an unmade bed along with a maid who presents her with flowers, ger claustrophobic room which is smaller and confined, reveals to the audience, that this local prostitute is 'everything'. In essence, she is lead to make the audience feel intimidated as opposed to Venus.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	5	1	2	4	6	10	12	11	12	12	13	8	5	7.1

This question required students to compare the methods of presentation, conservation and promotion of artworks in two different exhibition spaces studied during 2019.

In this question students demonstrated an understanding of the differences between exhibition spaces, and how preservation, conservation and promotion can vary depending on the space. Excellent responses addressed the unique conservation measures put in place by specific exhibition spaces giving particular attention to lux levels, humidity and temperature concerns as well as less costly measures such as the use of drawing down blinds to block out ultraviolet light, and the banning of food, drink and bags, which can potentially damage artworks. These responses were able to personalise their viewing experience, articulating the height at which artworks were displayed, the presence or absence of labelling, didactic panels, wall colour, framing, the flow of the spaces and arrangement of the artworks, and comment on how this all contributed to the presentation of the artworks.

Lower-scoring answers did not specifically discuss exhibitions visited during the year and discussed in general the differences between two gallery spaces, giving no indication of visiting these spaces or the exhibition on show.

Promotion methods were generally well discussed; however, sometimes the responses tended to list the various methods galleries use to advertise or promote exhibitions rather than explaining how some of these methods are effective in attracting the public to an exhibition. Some responses mentioned brochures and social media but did not explain the purpose of these in bringing visitors to an exhibition. Lower-scoring responses did not nominate any methods of promotion a gallery may use.

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

Hans and Nora Heysens two generations (3 march to 26 may) at the NGVA encapsulates seven rooms of classic Australian bushland where Sidney Nolans Ned Kelly series (8th June to 28 July) at the Geelong art Gallery a one room exhibition showcases a narrative of Ned Kelly an Australian icon. Two Generations has been presented with multiple shades of gum grey paint to compliment the different shades found in the Australian bushland. Nolans exhibition space is painted a hot cerulean blue reminiscent of the hot Australian summer days, the one room creates flow allowing the audience to see the entirety of the narrative. Heysens exhibition is sectioned into home/handorf, bushland, still lifes florals, abroad/studies, war and Flinders. Heysen exhibition has all the art framed to create cohesion and luxury and is hung many different ways such as eye level saloon and on plinths to raise the art from the ground. In Nolans exhibition the art is unframed with the raw composition board showing like the untamed Australian outback, it is all hung at eye height with two rectangular ottomans for people to sit and enjoy the art.

As both of the galleries are public they have values of preserving and conserving art. They both include climate control of a thermohydrograph to keep the room at a constant of 20-22° and a relative humidity of 50-55. If the temperature were to increase than paper will become brittle, below 45 RH the paper becomes brittle and metal will corrode, above 65 RH mould will grow and organic material will warp. The Heysen exhibition has varied lux levels as there is many different materials, 200 lux for paintings and 50 lux for paper are measured by a luxometer. Nolan's also has rope bollards to stop people – getting too close. To promote the Galleries both have social media pages like facebook and Instagram where they can post to the public. Both have hero images on Brochure and on websites which advertise them for free. They also both have subscribers who pay to get access to tickets through email. Nolans exhibit had a high tea where people can eat and enjoy art. They are both sponsored by the government and local state members, Nolan is sponsored by the Greater City of Geelong, Mercedes bens and V-Line. As the VGVA is a large gallery it is mostly self sufficient but takes sponsorship from companies like Quantus and educational groups.