

# 2016 VCE Art examination report

## General comments

The 2016 VCE Art examination was based on content from the *VCE Art Study Design 2010–2016*. This examination report should be read in conjunction with the study design, the 2016 VCE Art examination and the examination assessment criteria.

The following criteria were used in context to assess the Art examination paper.

- understanding and appropriate use of art language and vocabulary
- knowledge of artists and interpretation of artworks made before and after 1970
- knowledge of a range of relevant resources used to support the interpretation of artworks
- comparing and contrasting the meanings and messages of artworks produced before 1970 with artworks produced since 1970
- understanding and applying all analytical frameworks to the analysis of artworks
- analysis of artworks to comment on their messages and meanings
- ability to develop a personal point of view on ideas and issues about art
- ability to discuss and debate issues with the use of supporting evidence; reference to the different points of view and opinions expressed in commentaries on art and relevant aspects of the analytical frameworks

Where possible, students should practise writing responses under timed conditions to ensure that they understand the time it takes to respond to each question and to complete an examination paper.

## 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 errors resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

## Section A

This section required students to apply key knowledge and skills to answer questions on unseen stimulus material.

### Questions 1 and 2

#### Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	16	45	37	2.2

#### Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	15	47	36	2.2

In Questions 1 and 2 students were asked to discuss how texture and shape were used as formal elements in two given artworks. High-scoring responses were well developed and showed an understanding of the vocabulary associated with each art element; this vocabulary is needed to explain how the element is used in the artwork. Some students chose appropriate adjectives to link the art elements with the art principle, improving their response and score; however, some students tended to merely describe the formal element rather than discuss how the artist had used it.

Students should avoid restating the artist's name and title of the artwork as doing this uses up valuable time and writing space, and they should also avoid writing too much – the marks allocated and the answer space provided should be used as a guide to the length of the required response. Students should avoid providing a description of the subject matter without any discussion of the art element.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response for Question 1.

*Smooth and expressive texture is created through the use of thick oil paint and unblended brushstrokes. Some areas of the baby's face eg. the right cheek and forehead are characterised by smooth swaths of paint, capturing the soft skin of a baby through texture. Other areas, for example, the mouth, nose and left side of the face have a rough texture to highlight the crevices of the face as it crumples when a baby cries and also exaggerates the physical qualities of the smooth and full faces of babies.*

The following is an example of a high-scoring response for Question 2.

*Geometric triangular shapes are created through blocks of earthy colours to create distinct shapes which mimic the shapes of 'Texas Hills'. The interconnected imperfect triangles fit together like a puzzle, creating the sense that the landscape consists of simplified shapes that are connected. There is also a sense of rhythm in the works through repetitive shapes.*

#### Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	2	1	3	9	17	23	21	16	9	5.2

In this question students were asked to compare the meanings and messages of the two artworks on page 2 of the insert.

This question required students to apply relevant aspects of any analytical framework to compare the meanings and messages of the two artworks illustrated.

The instruction 'compare' requires a discussion of both similarities and differences. Simply listing an interpretation of one artwork and then the next is not a comparison.

High-scoring responses sustained insightful comparison throughout and used many comparative words and phrases, such as 'compared to', 'whereas', 'in contrast to', 'comparatively', 'conversely', 'however' and 'contrary to'. They explained meanings and messages by citing specific evidence in the artwork and what it symbolised.

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

*Ruysch and Kaine's work can be seen to comment on the impermanence of life, but Kaine's does so in a much more brutal way than Ruysch's. Ruysch's work uses the chiaroscuro technique combined with the melancholy droop of the still life flowers to show that whilst they are in a current moment of beauty, it cannot last forever. The darkness from the background seems to be creeping into the foreground, implying the innocence of death that is unavoidable where the flowers are concerned. The delicate depiction of the flowers demonstrates their impermanence, providing a contrast to Kaine's structural and harsh metal creation, which instead demonstrates the permanence of the death that follows the fragile life shown by Ruysch. Kaine's work is lit from behind with a clear light, which aids in the implication of permanence in the work, as the darkness can neither be seen or will not be able to approach. The words "dead roses" show that it is this state in which we expect the contents of the vase to be, the blatancy of the statement and the block letters leaving no room for deniability. Whereas, Ruysch's work comments on the impermanence and fragility of life subtly, Kaine's is a brutal expression of the permanence of death.*

#### Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Average
%	4	2	3	5	8	12	16	12	12	12	8	6	6.4

This question required students to apply their knowledge of the contemporary analytical framework to discuss the presentation of an unseen artwork and the content/subject matter.

The contemporary analytical framework is used to examine an artwork, irrespective of when it was created, in the context of contemporary art ideas and issues. For the purpose of this study, contemporary art ideas and issues are those originating in the late 20th century onwards.

In response to the selected artwork, students should have considered the following.

- How does the means of presentation in a contemporary artwork affect the viewer differently from that in a more traditional object-based artwork?
- Does the audience behave differently in a space showing contemporary art compared to one showing more traditional object-based artworks?
- What is the role of the audience in a gallery space when viewing contemporary artworks?
- How do contemporary artworks challenge traditional understandings or myths about art?
- How does contemporary art occupy space in comparison to traditional object-based artworks?
- What is the role of the artist? What does contemporary art practice say about the role of the artist?

When responding to a question that requires a response to the contemporary analytical framework about unseen artworks, it is important that the student:

- follows each instruction in the question carefully

- refers directly and specifically to evidence and details in the artworks illustrated
- uses the commentaries, and the ideas in those commentaries, to advance the development of their answer
- cites any commentaries used, where appropriate.

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

*From a contemporary perspective, Kimsooja's work 'To Breathe - A Mirror Woman' invites viewers to enter the space within a building and experience a change in their physical perception. The presentation of the installation in the Crystal palace in Madrid enables viewers to have a physically immersive experience, because they walk through the space, across the mirror floors and view the work from various perspectives. The use of soundscape is also a contemporary media, and it allows viewers to hear "Kimsooja's breathing and integrate with the rhythm". The reliance on viewers for meaning also connects with the contemporary nature of this artwork as the focus is on the conceptual side of the work and the viewer's experience as they feel they "enter someone else's body". The interesting transformation of architecture into a body, an "empty space" with the sound of breathing that "occupies the whole space" is very immersive and conceptual. Furthermore, the use of diffractive grating film gives the work a mesmerizing and magical atmosphere. The building is almost given a human quality as it comes alive with breath, light and movement when viewers walk through.*

## Section B

This section required students to respond to the written and/or visual stimulus material provided on the examination and assessed students' ability to analyse and interpret artworks and refer to commentaries.

### Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	1	0	1	1	4	6	8	15	13	15	12	7	4	6	4	4	8.7

Students were required to apply the cultural analytical framework to discuss the different ways in which the two artists had depicted the beach in art. They were also required to reference both the illustrations and the ideas raised in the commentaries. There were several elements to be addressed and students needed to cover all requirements of the question.

Many students responded well to the cultural analytical framework. They were able to advance their discussion with reference to the commentaries but occasionally struggled to apply this equally to each artwork. Furthermore, some students neglected to focus their discussion on the depiction of the beach in the artworks selected. Low-scoring responses relied heavily on the commentaries and grappled with interpreting the work beyond merely describing it or simply restating the commentaries.

In response to Question 5, students should have:

- followed each instruction in the question
- referred directly to specific evidence in each artwork illustrated and linked it to a clear point about the cultural analytical framework
- used and clearly referenced the commentaries to advance the development of their answer.

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

*The notion of going to the beach for relaxation is depicted in both Conder and Parr's artworks. Conder depicts an aristocratic view of leisure, as he portrays citizens attending the beach in*

*“formal” attire. Though the mannerisms of the people suggest a “relaxed and casual” feel, the formal wear suggests otherwise. Conder portrays the classic ideology of a relaxed Australian beach, however the clothing featured in the piece suggests that such leisure was only available to those of wealth. Whereas, in Parr’s photograph, there is a giant crowd with people of all ages and social status enjoying the beach. The “artificial environment” comments on the technology ridden culture that younger generations are born into. Though it “resembles a tropical beach”, this false portrayal of reality further presents the technological era that has consumed society. Unlike Conder’s artwork, Parr’s artwork displays people enjoying the water, playing in the sand and being relaxed. Parr’s artwork shows a more carefree way of life that is detached from the concern of status. In Conder’s painting, the people are subtly smiling, barely showing enjoyment. The contrast of “fun” and “relaxation” is immense. As Conder portrays a more stoic and “staged” beach day, Parr contrasts this as it captures a beach day where image and social status is not of immediate concern.*

### Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	1	1	4	12	19	13	16	14	10	7	6.2

Students were required to write a response as if they were a community member who supports or objects to the exhibition of artworks by Arne Svenson in a public art gallery. Students were also required to refer to the work illustrated and to the ideas raised in the commentaries.

High-scoring responses referred to the ideas realised in the commentaries and the image of the artwork, and they engaged with the artworks to present a clear and compelling justification that supported or denied the artworks’ exhibition.

Low-scoring responses simply reworded the commentaries rather than analysing the content and engaging with it, ignored the illustrations and provided no clear idea about whether the work should or should not be exhibited.

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

*I am fascinated by Svenson’s photographs. They break down barriers between the observer and the observed, creating an intimate viewing experience that has not been explored much with the art world. But should they be part of this exhibition? No, definitely not. We all get an exciting kick out of voyeurism, whether it be watching the next door neighbours trying to control their rampant children, or spying on the mysterious man at the end of the street as he takes out the bins, yet the action itself is inherently wrong and if these works were allowed to be exhibited, then it would be seen as a nod of the head to the more sinister voyeurs out there. Like ‘lalaland’ discussed in her comment on ‘The Voyeur Next Door’, I enjoy my privacy and “pray” that people are “decent enough to leave me alone”, and I would see it as a complete violation of my privacy. At what stage did ‘high-art’ get the ‘all-clear’ when it comes to the exploration of the public? Yes, his photographs are magical in their capturing of “large doses of humanity”, but when I look at his photo ‘Neighbours #1’, I can’t help but feel that the mundane, routine breakfast occasion depicted is trivialised and exploited, and that intimacy conveyed is now tainted by its being viewed by thousands of art lovers who now adopt the voyeuristic role. It is sickening just as much as it is fascinating, but out of respect and the prevention of things like this becoming ‘the norm’, I don’t think it should be exhibited.*

## Section C

This section gave students the opportunity to provide extended responses to two questions. In Question 7, students applied the formal and personal analytical frameworks to interpret the meanings and messages of one artwork they had studied during the year. In Question 8 students had to discuss the statement ‘Artists use their artworks to communicate themes and issues to the public’ and apply this to an art issue they had studied during the year with reference at least one artwork and two or more viewpoints.

### Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Average
%	5	0	1	3	5	6	7	12	10	12	13	11	8	8	8.2

High-scoring responses to this question demonstrated:

- a clear understanding of both the formal and personal frameworks
- knowledge of one selected artist and artwork from Unit 3, using either a pre- or post-1970 artwork
- points about the artist’s life that related to specific details in the artwork selected
- appropriate use of art terms and vocabulary associated with the formal nature of the artwork selected.

Low-scoring responses to this question included:

- generalised biographies about the artist that were unrelated to the artwork selected
- generalised descriptions of the artwork selected.

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

*Name of artist: Ai Weiwei*

*Title of artwork and approximate date: Dropping of the Han Dynasty Urn, 1995*

#### **Formal analytical framework**

*Weiwei’s dropping of the ancient urn is a series of three photographs and these three large prints seek to emphasise the very motion of the drop. Seen as very expensive and sacred artefacts, Weiwei swiftly and seemingly uncaringly destroys this ancient piece of history. The sheer size of the photographs when displayed also makes the audience perhaps slightly uncomfortable with its offensive nature. Moreover, the progressive movement that is showcased throughout the 3 consecutive prints showcases the destruction in close detail and the monochromatic colour palette also allows the audience to only focus on the focal point, Weiwei and the urn. Furthermore, the composition of the artwork in a gallery coupled with its size has the viewer face to face with Weiwei and the audience is almost engulfed within the frame, in essentially interacting with the audience in such a way Weiwei invites the audience to consider the implications of his actions but also lends a certain amount of guilt onto the audience. As such, the audience is reminded by the height of the decision and perhaps how culturally and socially actions effect everyone.*

#### **Personal analytical framework**

*The very act of dropping or destroying this urn is an ode to Weiwei’s childhood. Born in a time of revolutions in China, Weiwei grew up during the Cultural Revolution. In a bid to reinstate his power, Mao (then leader of Communist China) ordered certain intellectuals to be exiled into*

*hard labour. His father a poet, Weiwei and his family were exiled out of their own motherland. This caused a permanent psychological scar for Weiwei and this artwork emphasises and denigrates the very ideas and concepts that saw Weiwei and his family without a home. During his childhood he saw many ancient and “imperialist” artefacts destroyed. As such, Weiwei harks back to his childhood and copies this phenomenon. The shattering of the urn in a way demonstrates and highlights Weiwei’s broken trust and faith in the Chinese government. The very subject matter a Han Dynasty urn also allows Weiwei to showcase the juxtaposition between the “old China” and Weiwei and products of the “new China”. As such Weiwei makes poignant commentary on how his childhood has ultimately shaped his view of his own country and its people.*

### Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	7	1	2	4	4	10	15	14	7	10	11	8	6	6.9

High-scoring responses:

- responded clearly to the prompt by agreeing or disagreeing with it
- compared two or more viewpoints regarding an art issue
- referred to specific details in at least one artwork
- Referred to the prompt in their conclusion.

Low-scoring responses:

- did not address the prompt in the answer
- did not respond to an art issue using at least two dot points
- used unauthoritative sources to compare two viewpoints
- did not attribute at least two viewpoints to reliable, recognised and relevant sources.

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

*Name of artist(s): Emanuel Phillips Fox and Daniel Boyd*

*Title(s) of artwork(s) and approximate date(s): ‘The Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay’ 1902 and ‘We Call Them Pirates Out There’ 2006*

*Art issue that you have studied: Changing perception of Australian colonial history in art*

*Art can be used to communicate themes and issues to the public. As Dr. Catherine Koerner (research fellow at Charles Darwin University) states “narratives of Australian colonial history are highly contested in contemporary Australia”. The capacity to alter the constructed image of the nation’s past and come to terms with complex issues in the present is facilitated in art. The commissioned work by Emanuel Phillips Fox ‘The Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay’ conveys European perspective of colonisation. Cooks steps “ceremoniously ashore” in the painting which is “recognised as one of the nation’s most iconic images” (Bronwyn Watson, journalist, The Australian). Whilst the image may be considered iconic and a representation of the era it fails to compare the event from the perspective of Australia’s original population. Contemporary indigenous Australian artist Daniel Boyd has appropriated this work in his painting ‘We Call Them Pirates Out There’ as he believes “aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should continue to create dialogue from their own perspective to challenge the subjective history that has been created”. For Boyd, art is a means for this communication. His painting is structurally similar to the original but the British flag has been transformed to a “hybrid jolly Roger” and Cook wears an eye patch, revealing their “true status as pirates” and*

*the “moment of invasion for the original inhabitants” (Museum of Contemporary Art). This viewpoint suggests that art is powerful in revealing a different perspective, in this case the sense that the land was stolen rather than discovered. In addition Boyd’s replacement of two indigenous men with two xanthorrhoea plants (also known as ‘black boys’) creates a sense of satire in the work. Through appropriation and satire, Boyd communicated the issue of the perception to the change in attitudes, reminding viewers that history does reverberate into the present.*