

2017 VCE Art examination report

General comments

The 2017 VCE Art examination was based on content from the *VCE Art Study Design 2017–2021*. This examination report should be read in conjunction with the study design, the 2017 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 vocabulary and terminology in the analysis, interpretation and comparison of artworks
- understanding of visual language to discuss and evaluate ideas and concepts in artworks
- understanding of artistic practice to conceptualise, create, present and view artworks
- knowledge of artists, their artistic practice and artworks
- knowledge of a range of relevant resources used to support the research and interpretation of artworks
- ability to substantiate interpretations of artworks with evidence taken from artworks and a range of referenced resources
- comparison of the contexts, characteristics, meanings and messages of artworks produced before 1990 with artworks produced since 1990
- understanding and application of all analytical frameworks (structural, personal, cultural, contemporary) to analyse and interpret the meanings and messages of artworks
- analysis of a range of viewpoints in relation to art ideas and related issues regarding the role of art in society
- ability to use commentaries and viewpoints from a range of resources to examine and evaluate interpretations about art ideas and related issues regarding the role of art in society
- ability to develop a personal point of view about art ideas and related issues regarding the role of art in society
- ability to use artworks and a range of attributed commentaries to support viewpoints about art ideas and related issues regarding the role of art in society

The examination required students to have a highly developed understanding of the analytical frameworks and how these can be applied to interpret the meanings and messages of artworks. For detailed information about the analytical frameworks, refer to the cross-study specifications in the *VCE Art Study Design*.

It is essential that students understand how the analytical frameworks function to interpret the structural, personal, cultural and contemporary meanings and messages. Practice with both studied and unstudied artworks will help students to test their knowledge and skills with using the various frameworks to construct and justify their interpretation.

Another aspect of the examination that students must demonstrate an understanding of is the art process. The art process is defined in the cross-study specifications in the *VCE Art Study Design*. In this study the art process is integral to the conceptualisation, development and making of artworks. The art process is an iterative component of the practice of artists and includes the application of analytical frameworks when interpreting and making artworks. The various components of the art process include:

- exploration of ideas through a conceptual and practical investigation
- experimentation with art elements and art principles, materials, techniques, processes and art forms
- development of ideas, concepts, style and visual language
- refinement of materials, techniques and technical processes to provide visual strength to artworks
- resolution of ideas, directions and concepts.

There were three sections in the 2017 VCE Art examination and all questions were compulsory.

- Section A consisted of four questions that assessed theoretical understanding and application of key knowledge and skills in Units 3 and 4. Questions referred to a range of unseen visual stimulus material. Section A was worth a total of 25 marks.
- Section B consisted of two extended-answer questions that required students to examine, evaluate, analyse and interpret a range of unseen visual and written stimulus material from a broad range of sources. Section B was worth a total of 25 marks.
- Section C consisted of two extended-answer questions that required responses in the form of an extended piece of writing that developed ideas in depth. The questions required students to explore all outcomes in Units 3 and 4 through discussion of the meanings and messages of artworks studied throughout the year, and the ideas and related issues about the role of art in society. Responses discussed artists and artworks studied throughout the year and informed opinions with reference to artists and artworks, selected viewpoints and relevant aspects of specific analytical frameworks. Section C was worth a total of 25 marks.

Advice to students

- Read the requirements of each question carefully.
- Use specific descriptive art language and vocabulary.
- Practise applying the vocabulary associated with specific art elements and art principles to unstudied artworks.
- Practise responding to questions within time limits.
- Use specific evidence from the artwork to justify and consolidate the answer.
- Ensure all parts of the question are addressed in the answer.
- Do not rely on pre-written responses. Prepare to apply the key knowledge and key skills to a range of question types.

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.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	1	8	39	52	2.4

Most students understood how to answer this question, and many students used descriptive and expressive art language and vocabulary to discuss the use of line. If the student linked the use of line with the art principle of movement, this inevitably led to the development of a high-scoring answer.

Responses that did not score well tended to merely describe the image without addressing how line was used and to what effect. Some responses restated the name of the artist and title of the artwork, but this was not necessary. Other students wrote too much for the three marks allocated to this question, which impacted on the quality of subsequent responses.

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

Lichtenstein employs sweeping gestural lines. The calligraphic lines are used to suggest brushstrokes while the curves and undulations invoke a sense of fluid movement. The tapered ends of the lines in the top right corner convey swift, quick movement, evoking the gestural application of paint. Lichtenstein accentuates the line by using dark, bold line and juxtaposing it against the lighter, dotted background.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	3	14	46	36	2.2

Responses that scored highly were able to discuss the symmetrical or asymmetrical balance and distribution of weight in both colour and form, the distribution of the figure's limbs coming from the central vertical axis and the repetitive patterns, rhythm, and soft and gracious curves. Responses that did not identify symmetry or asymmetry were not able to score full marks.

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

Balance is created through the application of similar shapes across both halves of the figure. Though the pose is asymmetrical, the use of similar circles and lines in the clothing give the impression of increased symmetry. The limbs are notably posed in such a way as to shift the figure's centre of balance, hence the literal balancing on one foot. It can be noted that the figure's silhouette is slightly distorted but is so all the way around, creating a sense of continuity and rough balance. Images across the clothing are unevenly distributed, such as the 5 hearts against the 2 flowers, but are placed equally against the y-axis, and with similar sizes, giving the impression of balance.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	0	1	3	6	15	21	20	14	10	8	6.6

Responses that scored well made direct and numerous comparisons discussing the visual differences in the artwork. This included discussion of the poses of the female figures, the role of the crowd/cherubs in the artwork and the representation of the two women. Students also discussed the musical genres. Some responses commented on feminism and the perception/representation of women in art throughout history. Some responses made reference to the symbolic use of colour.

Responses that did not score well did not make comparisons of the meanings and messages in the artworks. Instead, responses described the subject matter of each artwork. To improve the response, there could have been discussion about the role of female musicians, the role/representation of women, a description of the sound that might be heard and the impact of this on the viewer.

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

Both artworks depict women playing music, yet in very different ways. Both artworks suggest the meaning that music can be consuming and peaceful at once, able to transport the player and listener. This is indicated by the harmoniously colour grading of both artworks. Boucher's painting uses calming colours, most of which are analogous - close together on the colour wheel - to suggest peace and serenity. This is further emphasised by soft billowing fabrics and

the delicate use of light in the work. Similarly, Mott uses analogous pinks and blues in his work to create an overall sense of calm, however the gentleness is absent. Mott presents a woman passionately consumed by music, shown by her concentrated facial expression. Her dynamic body position emphasises a sense of physical involvement in the music. This contrast greatly with the detached body language and expression of the woman in Boucher's painting. In Mott's photography, the crowd is blurred out showing the focus of the musician directly on the music and nothing else. This is unlike the woman in Boucher's painting who interacts with the figures around her. The traditional medium of oil paint and inclusion of sheet music suggest traditional values of structure in music. However, Mott's photograph emphasises passion and emotion, concentrating on the interaction between figure and instrument.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	8	3	4	9	12	15	16	16	11	5	5.1

This question provided an opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge of the art process. Many students adequately described what the artist was doing and the stage of the art process he was at. Many made reference to the life model that was positioned in his studio, and would have been there for quite some time, so that the artist could accurately complete the finishing touches on his sculpture. Some commented that this was a completed sculpture that he was referencing.

Many students described the process of making a sculpture by making observations such as 'the artist was using a chisel to complete the final touches' and that 'the sculpture was positioned on a stool so the artist could better access it and that the artist hadn't finished carving the marble around the base of the sculpture'. Students also made reference to the apron the artist was wearing, making him look like he took his craft very seriously. Responses that scored well described the contents of the artist's studio.

Many students seemed to struggle with this question. Most responses made very little reference to details in the artwork that could have supported the response. Some high-scoring responses mentioned the refinement process (and, even fewer, experimentation), but few students explicitly mentioned the points in the study design that define the art process.

More sophisticated and detailed knowledge of the stages of the art process as described in the study design needed to be demonstrated. Students should attempt to imagine themselves within this artwork and use evidence from the artwork to relate to the different stages of the art process. Regardless of the type of artform, material or technique used by the artist in the studio, an artist will work in stages to explore, experiment, develop, refine and resolve an artwork.

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

Gerome's 'Working in Marble' (1890) portrays the artist in the final stages of an extensive process of art making. The figure is depicted working on a marble sculpture of his muse Tanagra. Her presence in the studio evidences the artist's use of inspiration in his art making, as found in the model for the work. Gerome also suggests the artist's use of preliminary artworks and sketches that may have contributed to the final piece - a culmination of smaller paintings and sculptures. The purpose of those other works depicted in the studio is simultaneously the accumulation of the artist's practice and distinctive style, as well as development for the very sculpture he is working on. Gerome's focus is however on this critical stage of making and bringing the artwork to its manifestation. The artist is depicted working on a sculpture in a traditional manner. He works individually and is himself dressed in the wear required for physical art making. Holding tools of his trade, the artist is shown producing his marble sculpture with the intimacy of a artisan artist.

Question 5

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

Students who responded well to this question wrote with empathy to show that they had read and understood the information conveyed in the two commentaries. The responses discussed in detail the young people at work and interpreted and discussed the meanings and messages communicated by Hine and Moffatt. Responses that scored highly also demonstrated an understanding of how context affects the different ways an artwork can be interpreted by integrating information contained in the commentaries into their responses.

Many students did not apply the personal and cultural analytical frameworks appropriately. Sometimes the name of each framework was not evident in the response and it was difficult to tell from which viewpoint the student was writing. The responses were also descriptive rather than analytical.

The personal analytical framework was discussed too generally. Very few students chose to write from their own viewpoint and of those who did, many gave an opinion of the work and how they felt about it, rather than how their own experiences affected their interpretation of the artwork. Students needed to make specific references to the information contained in the commentaries. It may be beneficial for students to use quotation marks to demonstrate the use of commentaries or attribute the commentaries to specific sources. Responses that did not score well tended to avoid using specific art terminology and vocabulary associated with the personal and cultural analytical frameworks.

To improve this type of response, students can practise the application of each analytical framework on a range of unseen artworks. Students can also prepare by carefully reading the cross-study specifications and by practising using specific language and vocabulary related to the selected analytical framework.

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

Personal analytical framework

Whilst Moffatt's benevolent experience of factory work led her to depict a "scene from her youthful past...happily at work", Hine's exposure to the horrors of child labour, having "travelled the country photographing young children" informs his far more sombre depiction. Moffatt includes "an image of herself smiling at the viewer" to express her joy and good memories of this first job. Whilst Moffatt's brightly coloured image evokes "nostalgia for an earlier time", Hine's use of a monochromatic palette carries far more melancholy connotations, demonstrating how he was upset by what he saw in these factories. Furthermore, he demonstrates his own political activism, having "helped change the nation's labour laws" through the awareness he created through the series".

Cultural analytical framework

Moffatt depicts a crowded, busy work environment. In a time of commercialisation and prosperity (1970's), Moffatt explores the vivid environment of work at this time in Australia. Her use of tropical pastel and bright colours further evoke the setting in Queensland along with the patterned shirts, evoking the relaxed tropical culture. Whilst Hines employs realism to enhance the horror of child labour in the early 1900's he depicts, Moffatt "enhanced the image to make it look like an old-hand-coloured postcard or magazine illustration" to evoke the 1970's period. In contrast to the vibrant work environment teeming with people that Moffatt depicts, Hine uses one point perspective to enhance the isolation of the young girls to foreground the "hardship experienced by countless children". Addressing the problems in America's work force at the time, Hine suggests that children were "exploited by depicting the young girl with her head down looking miserable. Thus, the artists create diametrically opposed depictions of work culture in their respective contexts.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Average
%	4	0	0	2	7	12	16	16	16	12	8	6	6.9

Most students were able to provide strong, logical and passionate arguments in response to the use of animals in the production of art. High-scoring responses demonstrated the ability to use both commentaries and specific details from the artwork to present a logical argument about the issue. Lower-scoring responses did not use the viewpoints presented in the commentaries, simply restated the commentaries, did not make their viewpoint clear or did not provide direct reference to the artworks to consolidate their argument.

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

This artwork is a disgrace, an act of pure cruelty and should not be allowed to be performed. This work is cruel, subjecting pigeons to disorientating and frightening experiences. As was said on the Animal Cruelty Exposure Fund website, "animal cruelty and abuse cannot be tolerated regardless if humans consider it art or not". This is a dangerous work, jeopardising the lives of pigeons by increasing their "risk of drowning". While I do understand that animals are used in many aspects of human culture for acceptable gain; such as starting political debate in some works or for use as food, I do not see the value in this art. This artwork is not even particularly aesthetically pleasing. The last photograph showing a disarray of pigeons and mess. This work is more frightening and overwhelming than beautiful or enjoyable. The most beautiful part of this work is of course the natural landscape and sunset, which can be achieved without senseless cruelty towards birds. Roberta Smith argued that this was a "touching unity of human and animal behaviour". However, I disagree, this is a blatant exploitation of animals, emphasising human brutality towards animals. I do not see this "beauty" and "intelligence" instead a sky full of scared and frightened birds, tortured for human enjoyment. If humans want to enjoy a spectacle of animals in their wild and natural habitats - a more respectful collaboration of man and nature, where humans do not interfere in animal lives. This work is cruel and violent, a disgrace to the meaning of art and collaboration.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	5	1	1	3	5	6	9	16	12	13	12	8	10	7.6

In most instances, students were confident in responding to the structural analytical framework. Higher-scoring responses identified a wide range of structural qualities and used these as evidence to discuss the artwork in greater depth. Lower-scoring responses required more detail in identifying the structural qualities and were unable to transfer these into deeper meaning as coherently.

Lower-scoring responses tended to find it difficult to respond to the contemporary analytical framework. The answers lacked the conceptual depth that the contemporary analytical framework requires. Responses that received a low score were unable to discuss the selected artwork in relation to contemporary practice or society.

Students can improve this type of response by discussing the structural analytical framework in greater depth and detail. Students should aim to identify numerous different relevant structural qualities as evidence to support their interpretation of the artwork. This will in turn enable greater conceptual depth and knowledge when understanding either one of the remaining analytical frameworks. Greater understanding of the contemporary analytical framework and the different ways in which this can be applied to interpret an artwork will lead to much stronger and more focused discussion.

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

Name of artist: *Barbara Kruger*

Title of artwork and approximate date: *'Untitled (Your body is a battleground)'* 1989

Structural analytical framework

Juxtaposing bold text against a tonal image of a woman's face, Kruger's graphic style is illuminated in 'Untitled (Your body is a battleground)' 1989. Kruger addresses the reproductive rights of women, inverting the tone of the right side of the subject's face to create a stark contrast between the left and right. This suggestion of turmoil and conflict faced by women is made explicit through Kruger's use of text "your body is a battleground" which identifies female physicality as a domain of combat. This is accentuated through the stark tonal contrast and bold red colour surrounding the text. However, the red colour also carries sexual connotations. This along with the symmetrical image of the woman's face (symbolising the perfected beauty standards for women) conveys the societal objectification of women, expressing feminist values.

Contemporary analytical framework

Confounding traditional notions of aesthetically beautiful or extremely skillful art, Kruger juxtaposes text and image to reference the visual language of advertising and graphic design. The visual minimalism creates distinct and powerful social, cultural and political critiques such as the 1989 'Untitled (Your body is a battleground)' which condemns the oppression of women's rights. Engaging with the second wave feminist movement at the time, Kruger promotes female strength and fights for the reproductive rights of women through her art. In this way, Kruger explores contemporary art notion of art as a means of cheating social change. Her illumination of conflict through the contrast in the image is used to express these feminist values. Additionally, Kruger used this work as a poster in a march against Washington regarding the reproductive health debate, taking art beyond the 'white cube' and using it actively in society. Furthermore, Kruger's use of found imagery and graphic style confound traditional dictations that the artist must be the sole creator of the work. Her use of this image of a woman's face from a magazine is used to address the passive, sexualised depiction of women in the media at the time. Thus, Kruger explores the issues of her contemporary paradigm and modernisation as well as having an inherently contemporary practice, challenging traditional values.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Average
%	8	2	2	2	3	6	12	9	8	11	10	10	7	10	7.8

A number of interesting art ideas and related issues were nominated for discussion in response to this question. These included: public art funding, censorship in art, art today having very little to do with aesthetic qualities and the use of assistants in the creation of artworks.

Students who responded well were able to clearly outline an art idea and related issue and discuss a range of viewpoints in at least two commentaries. Commentaries that were referenced from authoritative and reliable sources often set medium-range responses apart from higher-scoring responses. Many high-scoring responses gave the issue in the form of a question, such as 'Should animals be used in the creation of artworks?', and these responses also clearly outlined a point of view. References to artworks were also used to support or refute claims made in the commentaries.

Many responses were written as persuasive pieces and were very one-sided in a point of view. Responses that did not score well were not written in the style of a discussion and often used one- or two-word commentaries to attempt to validate their viewpoints. This proved difficult to justify, especially those from unnamed or unidentified sources. Students can improve their writing by ensuring that they know a variety of commentaries, attributing these to a variety of authoritative

and reliable sources, using commentaries that contain a range of different viewpoints and linking these to artworks.

Examples of art ideas and related issues included:

- Art censorship: 'Censorship is stifling Australia's artistic freedom'.
- Ethical art practices: 'Whose art is it when a studio assistant makes the artwork on behalf of the artist?'
- Animal rights and art: 'Is it ethical to use animals to make art?'
- Disneyfication of art: 'The exhibition has become a space for art that delights and entertains the audience.'
- Male-dominated art world: 'Art galleries and museums choose to exhibit male artists more frequently than female artists'.
- Cultural appropriation: 'When artists who borrow ideas and objects from other cultures fail to acknowledge their sources, they exploit and oppress minority groups'.

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

Statement about an art idea and related issue(s): *Art plays more than one role in contemporary society.*

Name(s) of artist(s): *Yayoi Kusama*

Title(s) of artwork(s) and approximate date(s): *'Infinity Mirrored Room' 2013*

Yayoi Kusama's practice bears witness to the complex nature of art that benefits both its creator and its viewer. 'Infinity Mirrored Room' (2013) is a work that encapsulates the dual nature of art as a vehicle of ideas to be communicated to an audience, and as a personal exorcism of negative energies of the artist.

In 'Infinity Mirrored Room' (2013), Kusama provides her viewer with an optical experience of eternity. The room is bordered by mirrors, yet stretches on indefinitely. Coloured beams of light from a dizzying immense of stars, accumulating with each reflection to create a contrastingly bright space to the otherwise dark void. The room's symmetrical arrangement is perpetuated by the mirrors, so that it's angular lines lead the viewer's gaze endlessly on, past the limits of perceptibility. This composition also automatically places the viewer in a primary position. Critic Roberta Smith condemns the way Kusama's audience is made the subject of the work, arguing that she is "too in step with the narcissistic times". Yet the artist's aim is to "obliterate nature and our bodies" to become "part of the unity of our environment". Upon stepping into the 'Infinity Mirrored Room', the viewer is "obliterated" by the lights that engulf them, and thus joined with the artist in her quest for connection with a viewer.

Kusama's works holds an even deeper significance as their depiction of her personal experiences with mental illness. The artist suffers from depersonalization: a mental divorce from the self. Coline Milliard of 'ARTINFO' observes that this artwork is the product of "psychedelic visions" and more than just an aesthetically pleasing work. The installation is much more than a method of connecting the viewer with their world; it is Kusama's means of curing the "illness" of her body and her mind. In this way, art practice demonstrates that art always serves two purposes: it is for both her audience, and herself.