

# 2016 VCE Studio Arts examination report

## General comments

The 2016 Studio Arts examination offered students the opportunity to respond to a variety of short-answer and extended-answer questions related to selected artworks from the colour insert. The final two questions required an extended response related to the cultural context and communication of ideas and meaning of two exhibition spaces students had visited during the year. The questions required knowledge of the use of materials, techniques and processes relating to the students' selected artists' styles as well as conservation and preservation methods.

On the whole students' responses were well written, contained an appropriate amount of detail and addressed the key knowledge for Units 3 and 4.

Although most students responded well to the questions, it must be stressed that to gain full marks students need to address all parts of a question. Some questions contained such statements as 'materials, techniques and processes', 'elements', 'aesthetic qualities' and 'styles'. These are all frequently used in the process or creation of an artwork. Some students did not recognise the connection all of these have in the development of an artist's studio practice. This knowledge can assist students in addressing all questions and with answering questions that include unseen images.

It was apparent that some students had prepared responses to the extended questions and they struggled to alter these responses to answer the question being asked.

Some students struggled with the questions related to galleries (Questions 2, 4, 6 and 8) as it was evident that they had not visited an exhibition during the year and were unprepared to respond to questions about a specific space or exhibition. It was obvious when students had visited exhibitions as they could apply their knowledge and use a different set of information for each of the questions based on aspects of galleries.

High-scoring students:

- responded to each part of the question
- addressed the content of the question
- used the keywords of the question in their responses
- referred to works of art, as appropriate
- wrote clearly and concisely
- used appropriate art language and terminology.

## Specific information

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

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

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

## Section A

For each of the questions in Section A, students were asked to select one artwork from 11 images in the detachable insert and use this 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	Average
%	3	7	16	22	21	19	12	3.6

In Question 1 students were asked to discuss the artist's use of materials, techniques and processes in the production of the artwork. Many students described processes that were sound but did not move beyond relisting the materials given in the artwork's details. The highest-scoring responses were from students who were able to recall specific techniques they could see evidence of in the artwork, such as dodging and burning in the silver gelatin print to bring out the tones in the right foreground tree (artwork 5), or screen-printing using stencils to achieve the multiple and layered colours in the garment (artwork 2).

Low-scoring responses included a general description of the work and did not address the specific areas of the question.

The following is an example of a possible response.

In artwork 8 the artist has used many straight parallel lines to create strong tonal areas. The technique he has used is referred to as hatching or crosshatching. Hatching has been used for lighter tonal areas and crosshatching, where lines cross over each other, has been used for darker areas such as around the cheekbones and the chin. Ah Kee used charcoal for this work, which is easy to smudge as it is very soft, and he would have placed a sheet of paper on top of the work in order not to smudge it with his hand. He would have sharpened the charcoal with a knife to keep it sharp and pointed.

### Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	8	5	11	14	16	16	14	10	6	4.2

This question asked students to explain the different considerations involved in the storage of the artwork in a public and in a commercial gallery.

Students who had visited a gallery were able to draw upon their experiences and write about the storage requirements of a particular space. However, many students repeated rote-learned information that was not always related directly to the selected unseen image or that was inaccurate; for example, oil paintings in solander boxes and drawings on metal shelves. Some students simply listed information and figures about lux ratings, temperature, humidity and UV light without giving an explanation or applying this to storage considerations of the artwork selected.

Discussions about rodents and moths featured in the answers and some discussed security as an issue. These responses are all valid in terms of preservation of artworks.

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

*For storage of Jeffery Smart's painting 'Painting of David Malouf' a Commercial Gallery would need to handle this work with care so it is not damage whilst in their possession. They would make sure it was not stacked with other works when waiting to be hung as they could dent the work if the corners of other works pushed into it. As a Commercial Gallery is not funded and is generally privately owned and operated as a business, they may only have limited technology*

*and funds in regards to the storage of this work and thus may have kept the gallery space to the general storage conventions of relative humidity levels between 40-50% and a temperature between 18-22°C. This work may be hung on a metal rack when in storage to keep it off the ground in case of any flooding. The gallery would also check to make sure rodents or insects could not damage the work by either eating or leaving droppings on the painting.*

### Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	10	5	16	21	22	17	10	3.3

This question asked students to explain how the artist has used two art elements to develop aesthetic qualities in the artwork. Many students were able to accurately identify two different elements to discuss in response to one of the unseen images. The use of descriptive language to discuss specific characteristics about the elements was limited and generally the question was not answered well. For example, saying that the colour was bright in the print by Valerie Wallace as opposed to saying it was strong, bold or flat.

Although many students described their selected element in detail, they were unable to connect the descriptive qualities with their influence on the aesthetics of the artwork. The aesthetic qualities reflect the tone, mood and atmosphere that are created within the artwork.

The highest-scoring responses used rich and evocative language to discuss in detail the significant use of elements in the work.

The following is an example of a possible response.

#### Artwork 6

Valerie Wallace has used two distinct art elements in this linocut. She has used long, straight, vertical lines to show the back wall of the room. The wall is painted blue and this is the opposite colour to orange, which is used on the floor. The lines on the floor are shown to be more erratic than the wall. They vary in length and show patches of black, giving a variation of tone. The spots on the woman's dress are a contrast to the short horizontal lines on the man's jumper; this gives texture to it. The tone on the couple's faces is shown by use of hatching in for the dark areas.

### Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	7	21	30	20	13	6	3.2

Many students did not recognise how the role of the curator and exhibition designer were different and instead made general comments on how they would both make decisions about design layout, lighting, gallery settings, etc. Students with high-scoring responses analysed the artwork very carefully and utilised what they saw in the insert, using this information to assist them to give an informed response. Some students did not directly refer to the chosen artwork when responding and simply wrote more general information with little detail. Few students were able to clearly explain the role of the curator. The highest-scoring responses understood the materials of the chosen artwork and the conservation methods required. They considered the preparation and display, and acknowledged the different roles and how these two professionals would interact as well as work independently.

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

#### Artwork 1

*The curator would have done a lot of research with regards to the history and meanings of the artwork and artist, therefore would work with the exhibition designer to place the work in a space*

so that it could create a flow or conversation with other works in the space. The curator would be more concerned with the conceptual grounding of this artwork in an exhibition, and the exhibition designer would assist in the framing and hanging of the artwork. In this case the painting is quite traditional, it would be placed in a frame of the era in which it was painted and, like most paintings, hung at eye level (usually 155cms high). They would together decide whether the work/exhibition would have didactic panels, and the exhibition designer would paint the walls in a colour that would best complement the artwork.

## Section B

### Question 5

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

This question asked students to discuss the legal obligations and ethical considerations that Anne Zahalka may have taken into account when using the work of another artist in the making of a new artwork. This question proved to be quite challenging for many students. Zahalka would have been aware, for example, of the existing *Copyright Act* of 1968. The copyright law stipulates that a work is automatically copyrighted and lasts for the lifetime of the artist plus 70 years. A licensing agreement may also be sought by the appropriating artist, which sets out the terms and conditions of using an existing work. A number of students did not mention these considerations. Furthermore, the *Copyright Amendment (Moral Rights Act) 2000* must also be taken into account, including the right of the original artist to be attributed, the right not to be falsely attributed and the right for their work not to be treated in a derogatory manner.

### Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	4	16	23	23	19	10	3.6

This question asked students to compare the roles of two different types of exhibition spaces. The highest-scoring responses gave an informative discussion of the roles of each exhibition space chosen. They used words such as 'in comparison', 'different from' and 'in contrast to' throughout their explanation to provide a balanced comparison between the exhibition spaces. These students discussed what each art space does, its purpose, funding, conservation, marketing and size. Many students tended to describe the role of the art space by listing its purpose in a general way, and at times using dot points, without adapting their knowledge to write a comparative discussion.

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

*A public gallery is a gallery funded by taxpayers, with the primary focus of educating the public and preserving artwork for future generations. A Commercial Gallery, alternatively, functions only to sell artwork for profit. Funded by the public, a public gallery holds the responsibility of educating people and hence provides education programs, guided tours and information brochures to visitors whereas, a commercial gallery only seeks to impress visitors, hopefully leading them to purchase work, and does not offer education programs or employ an education officer, as public galleries do. Private galleries also do not consider conservation and preservation of artwork as they tend not to hold artwork for very long but instead sell it, whereas public galleries have sophisticated practices in place to ensure lighting, humidity and temperature as well as the public do not affect artwork. Private galleries seek to preserve art for the future and educate people of its importance.*

**Question 7**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	5	3	5	11	13	16	15	14	11	7	5.1

This question asked students to discuss the cultural contexts and the communication of ideas and meanings in one artwork by an artist they had studied this year. Generally, students responded in detail and were able to apply their knowledge and understanding to the question. Some students talked about the ideas and meanings but did not fully investigate the cultural context of the artist they had studied during Unit 3. Low-scoring responses did not demonstrate a clear depth of knowledge in both areas of the question and did not discuss how they were evidenced in the artwork. Students are reminded that it is important to use art language and vocabulary appropriately.

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

*Through the use of a Han Dynasty urn as a strong reference to Chinese culture, Wei Wei is essentially renouncing his heritage. By letting a traditional symbol of his home fall to the ground wearing a smug expression, it is evident that he has personal connections with the vilification faced by the people of China. While the obvious grey, black and white monotone creates a disvalued aesthetic which places the piece in the context of a direct commentary on life under communist rule and how the people really feel. In addition the application of a triptych enlarges the emphasis placed on the urn smashing as it depicts the journey from Wei Wei's hands to the brutal connection with the floor. In addition the use of children's building blocks to create this artwork for display in NGV's Wei Wei Warhol exhibition places emphasis on the effect life in China and the extreme suppression felt has on the children. As they learn to grow up in a world where they are not free to voice their opinion for fear of being persecuted.*

**Section C****Question 8**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	11	2	3	5	6	8	11	11	11	10	9	8	5	6.5

Question 8 asked students to discuss the different conservation and preservation methods used in two exhibition spaces visited this year.

Students who did not visit galleries were not able to form a personal response to the question. The highest-scoring responses approached the question from a personal point of view and discussed two very different spaces. They incorporated all important details, including what the space was intended for, who was responsible for the space and the conservation/preservation of the artworks. Some students discussed storage and transportation, which were not relevant to the question. Some students referred to the thermohydrograph as the instrument that keeps the exhibition spaces at regular humidity and temperature levels as opposed to monitoring those factors. The question asked students to name the exhibition spaces but some students did not do so.

**Question 9**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	8	2	5	8	10	13	14	10	8	8	8	4	3	5.8

Students needed to discuss two artists they had studied this year and how the artists had used two artistic practices to develop styles in their artwork through the use of materials, techniques and processes. Students were required to refer to one artwork by each artist.

Generally, students understood the question and responded appropriately; the differences were in the depth of explanations, use of art language, clarity and flow of writing, and being able to answer all parts of the question. Many students were able to clearly answer with detail about one artist but struggled with their second response. Students who used the same artist and artwork as they did in Question 7 tended to repeat the same information. Some students did not clearly identify the artists' style or the use of materials, techniques and processes, and lacked the analytical evidence required.

Some students incorrectly described materials, techniques and processes associated with their identified artwork, which indicated little knowledge of the artist or artwork. Many students chose to discuss the artists Andy Warhol and Ai Wei Wei but were very general in the information provided, not addressing the detail of the question.

The following is an example of a possible response.

Andy Warhol – *Flowers*, 1964

This ten-piece series was printed with a silkscreen technique. To create this print Warhol needed a screen, a squeegee, a transparency with the print on it and the emulsion. First, he would have coated the screen with the emulsion. Then he would have attached the transparency and let it dry, exposing it and the emulsion to light. Next he would have gently sprayed and washed the screen to expose the design and set it up in the press. Then he would have chosen his paint colours and printed it onto the background. Warhol created shadows of multiple flowers using multiple prints on top of one another. Silkscreen printing lends itself to experimentation with colour and that is exactly what Warhol did. One print was with bright pinks and oranges and the other with all white. He used contrasting dark colours in the background, which allowed the flowers to pop and stand out. Warhol's style was simple and bright, and this piece really showcases that style.

Ai Wei Wei – *February 14*

Ai Wei Wei often uses very different materials compared to Andy Warhol. He likes to use found objects and treat them in very different ways from what they were intended. He created an installation work, *February 14*, using 14 000 life jackets made from nylon cloth and plastic, and wrapped them around the pillars of the Berlin's Konzerthaus concert hall. The orange jackets contrasted with the grey walls of the building. Ai has created a rough texture as the jackets, have been overlapped, almost looking like wax dripping down a candle. He collected the abandoned life vests on the beaches of the Greek island of Lesbos where refugees regularly arrive. Ai has been a regular visitor to the island since the start of the refugee crisis, as Lesbos is a gateway into Europe for hundreds of thousands of refugees making the dangerous crossing from the Mediterranean. Ai Wei Wei incorporates into his practice political messages and has been in trouble with the authorities in China. He was exiled for 81 days without any official charges being filed; officials alluded to their allegations of 'economic crimes'.