



GENERAL COMMENTS

Students generally performed well on the 2006 Art examination paper. There was an obvious link between adequate classroom preparation, personal gallery and exhibition experience and confident examination responses.

Areas of strength

- Most students seemed well prepared and approached the examination confidently.
- Many students seemed to select the order in which they wrote their responses rather than working through the paper in order from Question 1.
- There was less evidence of the use of prepared essays that were inappropriate to the question asked.
- Students used artists' surnames appropriately.
- Students used information boxes to their advantage when nominating artists, titles and dates.

Areas of weakness

- Some students lacked basic art language skills. They were seriously disadvantaged because they had difficulty understanding and using the formal elements and principles as cited in the study design.
- Some students were disadvantaged because their handwriting was illegible – small handwriting may look neat but is usually difficult to decipher. Students should be encouraged to write with a blue or black pen.
- Not all students perceived the importance of reading the captions when discussing the artworks in their responses. There is valuable information contained in the descriptions of the works; for example, medium, size and date.

It is pleasing to see the diligent manner in which this subject is being taught for the most part. Art students are earnestly encouraged to heed the study design and the advice of their teachers.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

Section A

A significant number of students had problems distinguishing between the 'historical', 'political' and 'cultural' interpretive frameworks, often melding them. 'Psychoanalysis' and 'symbolism' were similarly confused. Many students also appeared to have a poor understanding of the meanings, and limits, of these frameworks and tended to apply to them a definition of their own construction. Generally, 'Colour' was handled better than 'Shape', the language for the latter not being available to many students.

Question 1

Colour

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	19	52	26	2.0

Shape

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	6	29	44	21	1.8

- Illustration A: *The Cholmondeley Ladies* – Unknown artist from Britain
- Illustration B: *The Dinner Table (Harmony in Red)* – Henri Matisse
- Illustration C: *Dance Crest* – Unknown artist from Africa
- Illustration D: *Hybrid Passion* – Ausgustine dall' Ava

The most popular choices for this question were artworks A and B for 'Colour' and artworks C and D for 'Shape'. Descriptions of the works tended to replace comparisons in many responses, and those that had little or no comparison were unable to gain full marks.



Appropriate art language should have included descriptors such as primary, secondary, analogous, complementary, contrasting, warm and cool – that is, a variety of appropriate adjectives. There was also a lack of response as to the emotional and symbolic qualities associated with colour.

As students were only given nine lines of writing space, they should not have wasted time and space repeating the titles of the works or the artists' names. Some students disadvantaged themselves by spending more time on this question than was necessary, as indicated by the mark weighting of the question. They wrote lengthy responses (often using an additional script book) and included unnecessary descriptions and appreciations of the works.

The following are some high-scoring student responses to Question 1.

Colour

This example, comparing B and C, shows a good series of comparisons and what colour contributes to an artwork.

B utilises an extended palette of subdued colours. The subtle colours are generally warm with cooler tones to suggest distance. The use of flat colour and little tone, however, limits the suggestion of depth and proportion. The colour is occasionally subjective in comparison to the organic and objective use of colour in C. The organic, natural palette of C heightens the use of natural media. Repetition of colour creates pattern in both C and B. Colour unifies both works through harmonious repetition.

This example, comparing A and B, shows a logical approach through the use of dot points providing a point-by-point comparison. It recognises both the formal and emotional contributions of colour.

- *In A colour is used in stark contrast (red and white) and in intense hues, whereas B shows not as intense hues, which blend together to create unity.*
- *In A colour is used in a repeated format to create a regular pattern, whilst B uses colour to create an irregular pattern.*
- *In A colour balances the work symmetrically, whilst B uses colour repeatedly to balance it asymmetrically.*
- *The use of stark contrast in A gives a clinical feeling to the work, whereas B uses colour to create a traditional relaxed feeling.*

Shape

This example, comparing A and B, shows a logical approach through the use of dot points providing a point-by-point comparison. It is also a good example of how shapes are used to contribute to the formal structure of the work. The example shows a competent use of art language with which the writer feels comfortable.

- *In A the shapes are of the exact same value on either side of the vertical axis and create symmetrical balance whilst the shapes in B balance asymmetrically (the large simple shape of the chair and the painting balance the irregular shape of the woman).*
- *In A shapes are used to create a pattern and regular rhythm, as they repeat, whereas B uses shape to create an irregular pattern (where shapes are not always repeated exactly).*
- *In both works geometric and organic shapes are used to contrast the work and create balance.*
- *In A the shapes are very detailed and intricate whereas B employs simpler shapes.*

This example, comparing B and D, demonstrates the contribution of the use of shape to the overall composition.

Work D, Hybrid Passion, is one which consists of very basic shapes, a lot of which are geometric and simple. Again this brings out the playful childish feeling of this work. The different positions and sizes of the shapes helps to balance out the composition so that it looks comfortable and stable in an upright position. Work B, The Dinner Table, has used a combination of both static and organic shapes, focusing primarily on the organic. These free-flowing shapes stand out against the background, lead the eye through the image and also create movement.

This example, comparing A and C, demonstrates an excellent use of language. There are strong, consistent comparisons. This further demonstrates a careful analysis of the contribution of shape to the overall structure of the works.

The shapes in A are mainly sharp, hard-edged shapes formed by the repetition of fine lines. In contrast, the shapes in C, although some are hard-edged, are also quite flowing and organic. The somewhat geometric shapes of the clothes repeats throughout A, creating a sense of rhythm and unity throughout the piece, whereas in C patterns have been created by repeating triangles, squares and circles, perhaps symbolic of the 'circle of life' repeating itself. The structure of C creates a shape itself, whereas the shapes in A are all within the piece. Whereas the shapes in A create rhythm and unity, the sharp shapes of the teeth and the repetition of triangles in C create both rhythm and a sense of danger.



Question 2

Question chosen	0	a	b
%	1	55	44

2a/bi.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	10	25	32	20	10	2.9

2a/bii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	13	25	29	17	9	2.7

By far the most popular interpretive framework applied to this question was 'symbolism'; however, these responses too frequently degenerated into a blanket concept in which students included any other framework that they fancied. Students felt sufficiently confident to apply a personal interpretation to any given framework believing that they would not be penalised for wild assertions and that any interpretation could be presented without consequence.

It appeared that many students did not seem to know what the interpretive frameworks actually meant. Students had difficulty in limiting the extent of the application. For example, 'cultural', 'political' and 'historical' contexts appeared to be amalgamated into a single 'super framework', perhaps with a touch of 'psychoanalysis' and 'symbolism' for good measure. Students need to be aware that 'represent' and 'symbolise' may have very different meanings. The problem seemed to be the application of a framework that was inappropriate to the previously unseen work. Students' practiced responses in Question 4 were at odds with their poor choice of pairing framework and artwork in this question.

Some students still answered both parts of Question 2, thus penalising themselves in their use of time.

The following are some high-scoring student responses to Question 2 which demonstrate an understanding of how the interpretive frameworks could be applied.

Cultural – Neal Adams poster for the film *Westworld*

The poster, promoting the film, could possibly be making a statement about the evolution of modern, western culture. With computers and electrical equipment becoming more prevalent, the creator of the work, and many more of this time, would not be doubting the creation of robots in the not-too-distant future. In the style of Metropolis, the creator of the poster, through the use of the gun, and the man on the control panel, could be suggesting that computers and science could some day take over the current culture, and that 'big brother' will be watching. They could be portraying the industrial evolution at its worst, and possibly how we could be in the future, suggesting that it is not a good thing.

Gender – Gustave Moreau, *Galatea*

Moreau's 'Galatea' is an obvious consequence of the false female convention which Titian and Giorgione alike both created with their highly idealised images of the reclining nude, 'Venus'. This stereotype which presented women as passive, submissive beings which were readily available for the vast voyeuristic pleasures, can be held responsible for the direct objectification of the woman in this image. As a male stares intently down towards her from the upper left hand corner of the composition, the female nude becomes little more than a commodity, an object of consumption and quick gratification for the dominant male race. With her head tilted submissively downwards, the nude, although positioned less reclined than either of the Venuses mentioned previously becomes a passive, submissive and ultimately available object rather than the individual she actually is.

Historical Context – Phillip Noyce, still from *Rabbit Proof Fence*

This image deals with the tragedy and drama of the 'Stolen Generation'. The dress of the figure of the man and the old fashioned car are used to place the image in the recreated setting of the early 20th Century. The drama of the image and the distress of the characters attest to the trauma created when white settlers and missionaries attempted to remove Aboriginal children from their families at this time in the country's history. The brutality of the officers action positions the viewer to sympathise with the women in the image and suggests a revision of the history surrounding the event. The film, made in 2002, was created in the context of massive protests which occurred in 2000 calling for reconciliation between the Australian public and the indigenous settlers. The cruelty of the officers expression and his brutal handling of the child suggests that Noyce's image supports this modern desire to resolve the misconstrued truths of Australia's indigenous history.

Postmodernism – Lizzy Gardner, *The American Express® Gold Card Dress*

This work shows postmodernist qualities in it's commenting on consumerism, Western culture, technology and inequality. A parody is used as the effect of creating an entire dress out of credit cards creates an exaggerated approach and question consumerist values and when will the race for perfection end. The idea that the dress does not hold form or create an aesthetically pleasing shape suggests that the meaning is more important than the aesthetics. The use of non-traditional mediums questions what art can be made from and questions what is regarded as beautiful or precious. This work represents inequality as



the dress seems over-embellished and shows the absurdity of the wealth of some people as others are forced to starve. This work uses banal everyday objects and changes their circumstance to create a message about consumerism.

Symbolism – Shilpa Gupta, *Untitled*

This installation symbolises humanities control over society, in particular, the females' acceptance and conforming attitude to a male dominated society. The mouse is not only a symbol of the reliance on technology, ie computers, but also a distinct representation of control. The mouse being the entity that is associated with mans control over technology and thus the society we live in. The female figures on the screen are being guided by the mouses actions symbolising the state of civilisation where the woman is being controlled by the stereotypical values of society. The text 'NO LEFT ... BEND ... NO, ...NO' symbolise demands and the way in which reality has fused with technology whereby society has succumbed to psychological propoganda such as reality TV ('Big Brother'). The stance of the females on the screen is rigid and manequin/doll like representing the conventional views of the female as beautiful and malleable.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	2	1	6	8	19	35	14	7	5	2	4.9

Nearly all students attempted this question and responded in some length; however, few students recognised that there were three requirements in the question and many responded only to two. Few referred to the image of the sculpture, therefore denying themselves the opportunity to gain full marks. This was probably due to students not using the reading time to appropriately break up the question into its required components. In previous examinations this question similarly asked for a response to the illustrations presented.

Students need to be cautious about including comments in their responses that are based on their recall of historical information; for example, claiming Trafalgar Square and its heroes as 'ours' (that is, Australian). Responses to this question highlighted some blatant prejudices amongst students regarding both art and disability.

The question asked students to write about their point of view with reference to the ideas raised in the explanations **and** at least two commentaries **and** the illustrations.

Writing in character as a city official was neither rewarded nor penalised, but rather served as a focus for addressing the issues. The following examples demonstrate good use of the commentaries but also highlight the references made to the illustrations.

Example 1

As a city official, my decision over the installation of Marc Quinn's 'Allison Lapper Pregnant' has been both long and deliberating. The statue, which sits at 3.55 metres is challenging to the viewer, both aesthetically and mentally. The aesthetic contrast of the statue, it's pure white colour and marble surface and the contrast created by the old, traditional stone building reflects Trafalgar Square's step into the modern society in which we live today. As asserted in commentary 1, Quinn's sculpture reflects the greater impact women have in today's world, and I believe the sculpture effectively reflects this. Women are indeed valued more and are being recognised for their triumphs and great fears; women are respected high in today's society and the location of Quinn's artwork affirms that. I disagree with the author of commentary three who contends that Lapper has 'not done anything'. The fact that this is indeed a public space is problematic; not everyone will understand and define the message the work conveys, however as addressed in commentary 3, the location represents the diversity of the fast growing population. I believe the sculpture highlights the growing need to be open minded and the aesthetics of the artwork do this effectively. Placing Lapper next to our past millitary heros contrasts the past with the present and if the work was to be relocated elsewhere I believe the meaning and statement of the work would be lost. The location of the work requires people to accept a modern move of the interpretation of both traditional sculpture and modern sculpture. The contrast between old and new, man and woman, what is viewed as 'normal' and disabeled. As stated in commentary 1, I believe that Quinn's work is the ultimate statement about disability and I disagree with commentary two who asserts the work is 'aesthetically ugly'. As a city official, I believe Quinn's 'Allison Lapper Pregnant' is an essential part of our public space as it reflects our diversity and pushes people to think and debate the work. The work reflects an aspect of female heroism in a male dominated, old fashioned, environment.

Example 2

Marc Quinn's Alison Lapper Pregnant commemorates not only the heroic lives of British military forces but it goes further to celebrate the 'courage, beauty and defiance' of less notorious heroes in todays society. In a time when wars and battles are tearing apart the lives of thousands of individuals it is imperative that people open their minds to the real 'bravery and sacrifices' of everyday beings. The comment made in commentary 2 that the work is 'aesthetically' 'ugly' demonstrates an ignorant understanding of what makes the work beautiful. The perfect, smooth sculpting of the figure compliments the brilliant study of proportion. The luminous white marble, undeniably beautiful in itself, reflects the elegant stone and marble architecture surrounding the work. Thus, the aesthetically rich work meets its conceptual basis to heighten the heroic message behind it. The work depicts the daily 'battle' of disabled and mutated members of our society demonstrating the unquestionable strength and 'hope'.

2006 Assessment Report



The sculpture itself reflects that of ancient Greek and Roman sculpture – often seen armless and limbless due to time. In this way the work calls for a double look as the viewer understands the true disability of the subject and appreciate the constant difficulties of Alison Lapper’s life.

The work is essentially a ‘tribute to femininity, disability and motherhood’, suggesting the almost incomparable ‘sacrifice’ and ‘courage’ of childbirth in such circumstances as tragic disability.

The work should undoubtedly be installed as it challenges people’s preconceptions of art and provokes them to think beyond their own lives.

The following excerpts highlight specific references to the illustrations.

The classical white, smooth physical depiction of the work replicates the generally accepted form of aesthetic beauty from the Classical world.

I believe the piece is beautiful. The use of white marble links the sculpture to the beauty of Renaissance sculptures such as Michelangelo’s Pieta and David.

Although it is a contrast to the surrounding statues, it reflects a different type of courage in the contemporary world.

The people who are against should note that it is not a extremely large sculpture, and is dwarfed by the surrounding buildings and the plinth.

Section B

Generally, interpretive frameworks were handled differently in Section B than in Section A. In Section A students tended to define the frameworks themselves and apply them in an idiosyncratic manner. In Section B students tended to be more aware of the requirements of the study design and applied the frameworks more rigorously. Many students anticipated the form these questions might take and had prepared responses which could be adapted to a specific requirement.

There was an obvious distinction between the level of excellence of those who had followed the study design and were familiar with the frameworks and those who did not understand what the frameworks meant and how they could be applied. Students are recommended to make certain that they know exactly what a specific framework encompasses and how it may be used as a tool in the analysis of an artwork. Some of the poor responses were simply descriptive rather than analytical. Many students disadvantaged themselves by choosing to apply frameworks with which they were clearly unfamiliar.

Far fewer students chose to study and comment on female artists as opposed to male artists. Although the study of painters remained strong, it was interesting to note that responses showed a very varied interest in art media across the board. Two-dimensional art appeared to be more popular than three-dimensional works. Whilst computer-generated art, performance art and installation art were still evident, they appeared to be a little less popular than in the past.

Question 4

4i.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	10	9	18	29	22	12	2.8

4ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	14	10	18	25	20	13	2.7

Most students accurately nominated an artist from the correct timeframe and correctly spelt the names of the nominated artists. Sometimes the title of the artwork was dubious, and many dates were questionable. VCE students should be able to recall an artist’s name, an artwork’s name and a reasonably approximate date.

Some of the most popular artists represented were Kahlo, Tucker, Booth and McCubbin, whilst the popularity of the Picasso and Munch exhibitions was obviously influential. Most students benefited by using the boxes provided to specify the artist, title of artwork and approximate date. This practice also helped focus their writing.

Some students nominated several frameworks rather than just one. Other students applied a variety of frameworks in their response, despite only having nominated one in each box.

Following are definitions from study design (pages 20–21) and some examples of student responses to Question 4.



Formal interpretation

- visual analysis: the formal elements of an artwork, such as line, shape, texture, colour, movement, surface composition and the depiction of space, modeling and tonal structure in an artwork
- style: the stylistic qualities of an artwork and the ways in which these qualities relate to other artworks
- technique: the technical skills and approaches used by artists working in a particular medium to achieve a specific effect; for example, techniques of printmaking
- how formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the meanings and messages of an artwork

Francisco Goya, *Saturn devouring one of his children*, (1821), Oil on canvas

Goya employs a restricted colour scheme to depict this act of cannibalism. The dark negative space surrounding the large figure (Saturn) places emphasis of the figure, creating the focal point as well as giving the illusion of deep space, a void. Short sweeping brushstrokes coupled with thick application of paint create a leathery texture on Saturn's body. Saturn's hair looks rough and the quick brush strokes add a sense of manic movement. Saturn's bulging white eyes create tension between the exaggerated warm skin tones. Goya creates extremes of light and dark giving Saturn's figure a distorted appearance as well as emphasising the form of his body. The blood red that trickles from the devoured body compliments the orange-red of Saturn yet contrasts with the dark black of the background. These intense colours create a sense of rage and an angry atmosphere. Asymmetrically balanced this piece aims to emphasise this horrific scene.

Cultural

- the ways in which artworks can be interpreted in terms of cultural issues; for example, their influence on the work of Frida Kahlo and other Mexican Modernist artists, or the influence of Buddhism on the Arts of Asia
- how artworks from different cultures interpret ideas, beliefs and/or themes in ways that reflect different cultural perspectives and/or understandings of cultural identity
- how cultural ideas, beliefs and/or themes contribute to the meanings and messages of artworks

James Rosenquist, *Study Of Marilyn*, (1961)

'Study of Marilyn' is one of the many pieces created in the era of pop-art, and like many of the paintings from that time, it was influenced by cultural changes. Marilyn Monroe is the focus point of the piece, as an icon of her time, she inspired many artists. The painting refers to consumerism, which was becoming increasingly common at the time. The use of advertising was also becoming more and more common, the ideas expressed in 'Study of Marilyn' reflect this. The bright, bold colours used reflect the use of packaging and advertising that had not been as common previously.

Gender

- the ways in which artworks can be interpreted in terms of issues of gender and/or sexuality; for example, the issue of the influence of gender and/or sexuality on the work of Baroque or Postmodern artists (such as Caravaggio, Artemisia Gentileschi, Judith Leyster and Keith Haring), feminist art and criticism, or male representations of female beauty in the Japanese 'Floating World' print
- how gender issues contribute to the meanings and messages of artworks

Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, (1538)

Titian's 'Venus of Urbino', is responsible for creating a convention of female nudity which has plagued and tormented women for centuries. Despite appearing as a celebration of female beauty, this painting shows an undercurrent of severe negative feelings towards women which has seen inequality between the genders even to this day. By presenting Venus, an idealised, mythological beauty, with her head tilted submissively downwards, Titian portrays a stereotype of passive natured women who are available for the many voyeuristic pleasures of the dominant male sex. Venus' provocatively disarrayed hair as well as the presence of both earrings and a bracelet are designed to tantalise the viewer. These aspects and the fact that Venus appears to be directly staring into the viewer's eyes, suggest that the female stereotypes is not only submissive to, but also invites thoughts and in turn acts of carnality. This is a stereotype which must be ended.

Political

- the ways in which artworks can be interpreted in terms of political issues, such as class, power, colonialism, race, environmental issues (for example, land-rights, social equity and other political issues in urban and traditional Aboriginal art), the representation of non-aristocratic social groupings in 18th century English art, post-colonial interpretations of Gauguin and other 19th and 20th century representations of the 'noble savage', documentary photography and politics (for example, Sebastião Salgado, Walker Evans, Mario Merz, Giulio Paolini and the Arte Povera group), environmental art (for example Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Robert Smithson, Walter De Maria and Richard Long), the work of dissident Chinese artists since the Cultural Revolution, or art and the Russian Revolution
- how political issues contribute to the meanings and messages of artworks



Joy Hester, *Victim by Fence*, (1945)

Hester's 'Victim by Fence' depicts the political turmoil, apparent at the time – World War Two, and the dictatorship of Hitler. Hester had viewed the aftermath of the Nazi concentration camps through newsreels in Melbourne. Shocked by the images she saw, she decided to recreate the scene. In the artwork, one single body is emphasised – a victim of the holocaust. Although there were thousands, Hester bluntly zeroes in on one body, depicting the real aftermath of war, suggesting that there were no heroes in war, only lost lives and dead bodies. At the time, many people glorified war. Hester holds a different perspective, suggesting that it should not be glorified, depicting the aftermath, which many had not seen at the time. She saw it as 'mankind turning to its worst' and depicted the outcome of war.

Psychoanalysis

- the ways in which artworks can be interpreted in terms of an artist's personal experiences and preoccupations; for example, the influence of early family relationships on the work of an artist or the influence of dreams, traumas and/or the inner worlds of the subconscious in the work of an artist
- how psychoanalysis contributes to the meanings and messages of artworks

W. J. M. Turner, *Rains, Steam and Speed*, (1844)

Turners inspiration for 'Rains, Steam and Speed' was explained by a woman who observed him gazing out of a train carriage at the heavy rain. Turner was born into an age of industrial revolution. The painting is just one of his reactions to the cold, dark new industrial world overpowering the peace of the traditional and beautiful world he stood for. Turner used thick paint and white impasto to build layer upon layer. He used both ends of his brushes as well as cloths and his fingers, often scraping away whole areas. The result is a sense of confusion. The many blended tones of grey blue and off white colours create a cold windy and wet mood while Turners rapid brushstrokes compliment the idea of speed. The cold and wet was not unwelcome to Turner. The viewer is placed outside where they can see the 'abomination' that is the black steam train. The old, beautiful bridge on the left is overpowered by the confusion of this abomination. Turner felt trapped in the train, longing to be out in the open, perhaps sailing on the river like the tiny people who almost go unnoticed.

Symbolism

- general and/or abstract ideas and principles referred to by the use of symbols in artworks; for example, the skull as a symbol of death, the trident in Hindu art symbolic of past, present and future and the God Siva's threefold character as creator, preserver and destroyer, rarrk (cross-hatching), Islamic art and/or the place of the Mosque, motifs used in Australian indigenous art to evoke music and aspects of sacred ritual, or any personal symbol created by an artist
- how symbols contribute to the meanings and messages of artworks

Picasso, *Guernica*, (1937)

The composition employs significant iconography and personal symbolical language to reflect and symbolise Picasso's abhorrence of the violence and beastliness of war. The metaphor of the ruin is utilised to convey a sense of disruption and destruction, as the mix of cultural motifs that create a sense of chaos are exemplified by the artists use of analytical cubism. The horse is a symbol of the People of Spain, their suffering in the Civil War is represented by the horse's shrieking manner as the horse's pain is made visible. The bull's a symbol of suffering, as well as an image associated with the Spanish Culture, however also acts as a reference to the Minotaur of Greek myth, a personage of pain and violence. The mother clutching her dead child symbolises the loss of innocence in the midst of human tragedy, as well as the death of the innocents. The lamp bearer sheds light over the scene of chaos and light is a universally accepted symbol of hope, that contributes to the symbol of the lone flower as a symbol of regeneration.

Examples have not been provided in this report for the frameworks of Postmodernism and Historical context. Summaries of what these involve can be found on page 21 of the *Art VCE Study Design*.

Question 5

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

This question was much better handled than in the past. Students had obviously practised integrating the commentaries into their arguments about the meanings and messages in a work of art. This question very much separated those who worked according to the study design from those who did not. Many students had a solid body of information at their disposal and used it selectively to answer the question. Unfortunately, emphasis on specific commentaries sometimes superseded actually addressing the question asked. Students need to ensure that they also discuss their personal opinion.

The most popular artists were Booth, Piccinini, Henson, Moffatt, Kahlo and Gittoes. The majority of students noted the directions on the paper and presented different artists/artworks in Questions 4 and 5. The range of artists used was additional evidence of an increasing application of the requirements of the study design. Personal commitment to the exploration of the chosen artists was evident in the level of enthusiasm with which many students wrote.



Despite the even split of gender in the top half dozen artists studied, there was still a very evident lack of writing about female artists.

This year there was more attribution of the cited commentaries, indicating an intelligent choice of commentaries which were relevant to the artworks and artists studied. Some students still used a single word or phrase, without attribution, as a 'commentary'. While it was not expected that exact information about the source of the students' research would be provided (for example, critic X writing in the *Age* on 12 September 2006), more specific detail would have advantaged the student.

The first example below is a high-scoring response to Question 5 and has been included in its entirety. This is followed by a series of short quotes from a variety of responses which show good use of the required information. Teachers and students are recommended to examine the following closely in their search for appropriate responses to study design requirements.

Imants Tillers, *Mt Analogue*, (1985); *Diaspora*, (1992)

In Imants Tillers early work such as Mt Analogue (1985) he explores ideas of authorship and originality through his use of appropriation. This image is a replication of colonist painter Eugene von Guerard's 'North East View From the Northern Peak of Mt Kosciusko' (1863); by replicating such a significant image in Australian art history Tillers challenges the traditional notion of what art is. However, I think the technical skill involved in the creation of this work supports critic Peter Hill's statement that 'first he [Tillers] was a painter, second he was an appropriationist.' Tillers completes his work on a huge number of small canvases which are then reassembled to display the whole artwork. This attention to technique and skill, I would argue, allows Tiller to breach the gap between the artistic individualism of Modernism and the intellectual detachment of Postmodernism which he engages with through the use of appropriation.

In this work Tillers also addresses the issue of art's loss of its 'aura' or elevated status as a result of mechanical reproduction techniques. Tillers himself has stated that 'Mechanical reproduction is a kind of death (crucifixion)'. In this statement Tillers addresses the issue of art's simultaneous ubiquity and worthlessness as a result of the development of technology such as photograph. In Australia, removed from the traditional art centers of the world we experience art in what Tillers suggest is a reduced form without its surface, texture or scale.

In 'Mt Analogue' Tillers engages with this concept and through his use of the unusual canvas board system and the complexity of the oil painting and masking in his reproduction he replace the 'aura' which is usually missing from a reproduction of an artistic image.

In Tillers later works such as 'Diaspora' (1992) he continues to use appropriation but from a much wider variety of source materials. In this image Tillers draws upon painting, performance art, political activism, everyday images from the artist's life and literature. This has led some critics such as Sebastian Smee in 'The Australian' to accuse Tillers of 'turning painting into an over elaborate game of spot the allusion' and others such as Robert Nelson to argue in 'The Age' that 'the communicative force of this ambitious arsenal of emblems is negated by its very cleverness.'

These critics see the colossal intellectual vision of the work as damaging the ability of the artist to convey meaning. However, I would argue that in a Postmodern artistic environment it is not necessary for the viewer to understand or recognise the exact source of every piece of imagery used. Rather the viewer's own meaning and personal connection with the work is just as legitimate an interpretation as the one intended by the author.

Tillers intended his work to act as a comment on the necessity of respecting cultural diversity and the phenomena of the needing and intermingling of cultures in modern society. However, the meaning that I gather from the work is concern with the way all artistic creations are influenced by the social, cultural, political and personal contexts of the time shown through the artist's extensive and complex use of appropriation. This, I would argue, is just as legitimate a reading of the work which suggests that Sebastian Smee's criticism that the work is merely an inaccessible intellectual game of 'diasporic chess' is highly inaccurate.

Francisco de Goya, *The Third of May, 1808*, (1814); George Gittoes, *Discarded*, (1990s)

I believe both these works create a prophetic message about war and effects it has on the victims. These works both represent outcomes of war and align with Goya's words 'the sleep of reason produces monsters' ... Paul Haim (?) quotes that 'it creates a statement applicable to any time in history.' I believe that one reason for this work's prophetic feel is because it can easily be related to any time in history, or when a larger oppressor has used force brutally upon an innocent victim.

Frida Kahlo, *Love Embrace of the Universe, The Earth (Mexico), Diego, Me, Senor Xolotl*, (1949); Joy Hester, *Lovers II*, (1950s)

Kahlo's 'Love Embrace of the Universe ...' reflects Kahlo's feelings towards her marriage to Diego.

As Herrera contends, Kahlo has depicted her relationship with Diego and the separation between men and women. This can be related to the work in the aspect of light and dark, day and night depicted in the artwork.

Zampora however believes that the meaning of the work is deeper than just the balance between men and women. Zampora believes that Kahlo has reflected on the 'sexual exploits inflicted on her by Diego and the cultural acceptance', that the woman is the child bearer and carer.



I believe that both viewpoints are valid and they have enhanced my view about the work. Kahlo has depicted Diego as a child, Kahlo holding the infant figure in her arms. Diego, however, has been drawn with three eyes, suggesting that he has more knowledge and a higher importance than Kahlo.

This is something which I think Kahlo did not agree with depicting herself with long, feminine hair, in traditional Mexican dress. I believe Kahlo has drawn herself as her culture would view her; as a mother to a child and dedicated, loving wife. The fact that Kahlo is standing behind a 'mother earth' figure, who has milk coming from her breast, highlights Kahlo's inability to have children and the repercussions that has had on her. I believe Kahlo has depicted herself as the world wishes her to be seen, however the expression on her face is full of hurt which could be a reflection on the enduring separations of Diego and Kahlo.

Lida Abdul, *Three Monitors*, (recent); Susan Norrie, *Twilight*, (recent)

... As Julie Roberts describes in Art Monthly, the images all show different aspects of 'displacement, homelessness and exile' ... Julie Roberts describes that the artwork conveys a sense of the 'unlivable burden (Abdul) is doomed to always carry.' ... Julie Roberts views the installation as being about Abdul's personal thoughts and feelings. I believe it is also about the general needs of human beings ... Susan Norrie's 'Twilight' is an exploration of the Australian Tent Embassy as dusk falls. Jessica Dawson of 'The Washington Post' refers to the 'architecture of power' and how it relates to the images in Norrie's 'Twilight'. She discusses how the poetry of the tents contrasts the 'impassive, modernist Parliament and its eerily illuminated features.' She believes that by comparing the two types of structures, Norrie has compared the living conditions of white Australians to aboriginal Australians ... Julie Roberts also discusses 'Twilight', but she views it as being more about the 'sad demise of activism' than a comparison of living standards. She admires the poetic quality of Norrie's work and describes it as demonstrating 'loss of aspirations (and) abandoned hope.' ... I believe 'Twilight' expresses the conditions of aboriginal Australians. By using the image of an exploding atomic bomb Norrie makes reference to the use of power by many governments.

Gordon Bennett, *Self Portrait (But I Always Wanted to be one of the Good Guys)*, (1990); Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Famous Moon Kingi*, (1984–85)

... Gordon Bennett was directly inspired by Jean-Michel Basquiat. Basquiat deals with similar subject matter, including 20th C culture and his own feeling. I do not agree with Robert Hughes view that he only 'appealed to a cluster of vulgarities' and the audience's 'appetite for self-destructive talent.'

I am of the opinion, along with critic John Seed that Basquiat was 'one of the most important and subversive artists of the 20th C' ...

Arthur Streeton, *Golden Summer, Eaglemont*, (1889); *A Road to the Ranges*, (1889)

... In creating these works, I believe Streeton wanted to portray his view of the bush landscape, reflected in a letter he wrote to fellow artist Tom Roberts in 1892 saying 'I'm not a bit tired of Australia ... I intend to go straight inland ... and created something entirely new, and try and translate some of the great hidden poetry that I know is here but have not seen or felt.'

I believe this was achieved through his art, however it was not until relatively recently that his works were viewed thus by art critics and society. James Smith critic of the 9 x 5 Impressionist exhibition in August 1889, in which many of Streeton's works were exhibited, criticised the works of artists such as Streeton, claiming the exhibition 'fails to justify itself. It has no adequate raison d'être'.

His scathing critique continued criticising the works on the basis of artistic conventions, as Streeton's broad brushstrokes represented, to Smith, a lowering of standards. 'None of these is to be regarded a work of art. Neither is a painter's 'impression'.'

In contrast to what I believe was a highly narrow-minded and myopic view was the review written for 'The Daily Telegraph' by 'Viva' (Miss Edith Castilla), who hailed the works of these artists, whom I believe were trying to be progressive and different as 'an attractive display of clever little sketches ... to lovers of the beautiful ... the exhibition must strongly appeal.'

She describes their 'motto' as 'nature versus artificiality' as 'the main idea of the impressionist movement is a revolt against conventionality'.

I believe this is the essence of what Streeton and his colleagues were aiming for.