



GENERAL COMMENTS

Students generally performed well on the 2007 Art examination paper.

Areas of strength

- Most students seemed well prepared and approached the examination confidently. In particular, the essay question revealed a mature, perceptive and passionate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.
- There was much more evidence of students carefully preparing their essays.
- Most students used the information provided in the boxes to their advantage when nominating artists, titles and dates.

Areas of weakness

- Many students' responses continue to demonstrate only basic art language skills. These students are seriously disadvantaged. This problem could be overcome if students made a strong effort to learn the elements and principles with reference to the resource pages, 54–64, in the *Art VCE Study Design* early in the year.
- Some students were disadvantaged because their handwriting was illegible – small handwriting may look neat but it is often difficult to decipher. Although assessors try to award as many marks as possible, if they cannot read the writing, they cannot award marks for the content.
- Students should be encouraged to write in blue or black pen to support legibility.
- It was evident that not all students understood the importance of reading the captions before discussing the artworks in their responses. These responses missed the opportunity to use information contained in the descriptions of the works, such as the medium, size and dates, all of which can be important when discussing technique, scale and cultural or historical context.
- Students should have used all available space in the exam booklet before requesting an extra script book.
- Many students did not complete their responses. This could have been because of poor use of reading time (which should be used to make selections and mentally prepare answers), excessive responses to short answer questions or time wasted repeating the question and the information already available below the illustrations.
- Many of the responses to Question 5 appeared to have a common source, and there seemed to be a very high proportion of formulaic essays. These essays, although confident and well written, were not always appropriate to the question being asked. Many were also factually inaccurate. When accessing sample essays from a variety of sources students need to be aware of their origins and accuracy.
- Many answers displayed a similarity of structure, phrase, description, use of clichéd statements and a general sameness. These responses did not score as well as answers which were personal, enthusiastic, informed and fresh. Many of the responses appeared to have been learned by rote.
- Students need to remember the rules and conventions for using the artist's name. After the first time a full name is used, the **surname only** is written. It is **not** appropriate to refer to the artist by their first name only.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

Section A

Students who scored well in this section applied adequate knowledge of the formal elements to the selected artworks and made strong use of appropriate comparisons.

Some students struggled to identify, understand and apply appropriate frameworks when making their selections from the images offered. Students 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.

Question 1

Texture

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	29	44	23	1.9

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Movement

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	24	46	26	2.0

- Illustration A: *In the Car* – Roy Lichtenstein
- Illustration B: *The Swing* – Jean Honoré Fragonard
- Illustration C: *Herakles Archer* – Emile-Antoine Bourdelle
- Illustration D: *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* – Umberto Boccione

The most popular choices for this question were to compare works C and D for 'texture' and works A and B for 'movement'. Students who gained full marks made actual comparisons, while many students did not gain full marks because they made no comparisons at all. In such responses, mere descriptions of the works tended to replace comparisons.

Some students only wrote on one artwork for each of the two formal elements and consequently gained no marks at all because the question was not answered. Few students actually stated what the texture or movement contributed to the work.

Students who wrote about elements other than the two required elements were not rewarded.

As students were only given nine lines of writing space, they should not have wasted time and space repeating the titles, size, medium, dates and 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 and included unnecessary descriptions and appreciations of the works.

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

Texture

This example, comparing A and B, discusses the internal textures of the works rather than the physical surface textures of the artworks.

Artwork A creates little texture due to the lack of tonal variation. The artwork uses flat blocks of colour in the Pop Art style and thus there is little sense of implied texture. The pattern on the woman's jacket however suggests a leopard fur coat, this is achieved through the use of shape against the yellow and black however overall texture is lacking. In contrast Artwork B creates a distinct implied texture through the use of tonal variation. The woman's gown portrays the extravagance of 18th C fashion through the use of the various frills and decorations of the dress implying a rich satin texture. The environment around the lady also contains a strong sense of texture. The trees and the bushy scrub are highlighted through the use of various green tones and shades of brown highlighting the natural texture of the environment.

This example, comparing C and D, shows a logical approach through the use of dot points, providing a point by point comparison. It recognises the element and what it contributes to the work.

- *The texture of C is rough and gritty while the texture of D is smooth and polished.*
- *In both C and D the texture is consistent throughout the pieces which creates a sense of unity and connects each work as a whole.*
- *The rough texture in C creates a sense of the natural, organic earthiness, which relates to the primitive representation of the human form. The smooth fluidity of the texture in D appears structured as it relates to the surfaces of manmade objects.*

Movement

This example, comparing A and B, uses a variety of similes and evocative language to describe the differences between the types of movement seen in the artworks.

Lichtenstein has achieved movement through comic-book style horizontal lines alluding to the speed in the car. While Fragonard creates movement with the woman on the swing curving towards the sky, the ruffles and folds of her dress suspended in mid-air, volumously swaying like an underwater plant. The surrounding trees also contribute to the strong sense of movement, the blooming leaves giving a gentle, swaying pulse as opposed to the sharp speeding feeling achieved in artwork A as the female tilts her head back giving a slight jolt to the image.

This example, comparing A and D, demonstrates a genuine personal response to the question while meeting the guidelines.

A's primary depiction of movement is achieved through the use of horizontal lines. The use of flat colour adds to the 'raw' feeling of speed, while red has been used as it traditionally denotes speed also. The tension drawn out by the facial expressions adds to the sensation of intrigue associated with a speeding car. D, however, uses a 'continuity in space' to communicate movement. The



lower legs are especially weighty, suggesting running. This is in contrast with the obviously heavy and cumbersome choice of medium, bronze. The differing facets suggest quick movement.

Question 2

Interpretive framework 1: Formal interpretation

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	8	12	20	25	21	14	2.8

Interpretive framework 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	10	21	28	20	15	2.9

More than twice as many students chose to write about ‘symbolism’ than the next two most popular frameworks, ‘psychoanalysis’ and ‘gender’. However, despite its popularity, ‘symbolism’ was not well handled. Many students did not seem to know what the frameworks actually meant. Students are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the *Art VCE Study Design*, pages 20–21, where the various frameworks are defined. These definitions should be discussed in class so that students have a common understanding of the meaning, and understand what is required and what is acceptable. All too often the frameworks were confused and lost specific reference. Muddled statements could not achieve full marks.

Students had difficulty in limiting the extent of the application of specific frameworks. 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. Many students chose an inappropriate framework to apply to the illustrations provided in Question 2; applying the frameworks to known artworks in Question 4 produced better results. A ‘framework’ is a tool used for analysis. The process of applying a framework needs to be regularly practised on a variety of seen and unseen artworks.

Following are some extracts of high-scoring student responses to Question 2, which adequately demonstrate an understanding of how the frameworks could be applied.

Formal interpretation – Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother*

The black and white photography allows for stark contrasts between the gritty – dirty setting (baron, dry and empty) and the human element of portrait. The central figures as the victims of poverty are grim and the artist has achieved a sense of pictorial space through the out of focus bench in the foreground, the middle ground of the three grim figures and slack fabric as the background of distant dirty landscape is hinted at. The upright stick is the near centre of the image begins to draw the viewer’s attention to vertical line repeated through the upright position of the woman, the portrait framing of the shot and the strong line. There is a rigidity in this image with the presence of this dominating pole, also with the rigid shape of the box in the foreground, yet the fabric behind, hanging limply and the out-of-focus landscape attempt to subvert the rigid quality.

Cultural – Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother*

Traditionally immigrants have been scorned, and the artist is trying to reverse this. Lange presents the mother as being naturally beautiful but concerned about the future. They clearly live in poverty, and her caring and unassuming beauty draws sympathy from the viewer. Mothers and children are traditional symbols of love and honesty (for example Mary and Jesus). In this image the traditional boundaries between cultures are left out (language, clothing ...) so that Americans might feel an affinity with this sympathetic family, seeing their own mother or children rather than an intimidating foreigner. The absence of a father further adds to her sense of ‘honesty’, that she has the dedication to raise the two children on her own.

Gender – Edvard Munch, *Jealousy II*

Munch’s ‘Jealousy’ portrays strong messages about both the male and female on a psychological level. Jealousy predominately explores the notion of the male’s own feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. The front male figure is exposed, with a fragile and vulnerable expression, he is completely out of control with the occurrences between the couple in the back of his mind. He is completely controlled by a feeling of jealousy which cannot be shaken. In contrast, the other male figure, romancing the female is portrayed as strong, charming and confident, he is in control of the situation and it is this character which the male figure in the foreground must compete with. The female figure of Munch is completely exposed by the ‘male gaze’ of two men. To both the males she is merely an object of desire, the fact that she is nude perpetuates the notion of the perfect female form and the male desire to have contact with such a feminine beauty.

Historical context – Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother*

Lange’s ‘Migrant Mother’ work was commissioned by the Farm Security Administration (FSA) under Roosevelt following the crisis of the Great Depression in the US in the late 1920s and continued into the 1930s. The FSA photographers captured scenes of destitution with the intention of creating awareness amongst the general population of the depth of suffering endured by many across the US during the Depression. The ‘Migrant Mother’ images capture the hardship and sorrow encountered by many in a single iconic image which itself mirrors and is reminiscent of the ‘Madonna and Child’ composition. The image, designed to



arouse empathy for those experiencing poverty of the time, exudes undertones of resilience and strength in dire circumstances; thus inviting identification with the subject.

Psychoanalysis – Dennis Passalick, *Myself Portrait/Hostile Landscape*

This self-portrait is a personal representation of the artists state of mind. The chaotic nature of the painting shows a feeling of confusion and anxiety, despite the determined look on the artist face. The image of the cyclist attempting to escape the train which screams behind him shows some sort of feeling of pressure on the artist, a need to struggle to keep up and survive. The juxtaposed, surrealist images of industry and monstrosities add to this combination of dream and reality. The deterioration of the only other human figures emphasizes the sense of isolation, but the artist determined pose and expression indicate a drive to succeed and escape this hostile landscape.

Symbolism – Dennis Passalick, *Myself Portrait/Hostile Landscape*

In 'Myself Portrait/Hostile Landscape' symbolism can be inferred from Passalick's use of colour. Firey oranges, reds and warm yellows seem to symbolise a warning, danger. The viscious beast in the left hand corner seems to be emerging from the background, approaching the central figure. The individual's struggle is suggested in his angry expression, furthered by a flaming red face. The train which he must fight to escape can be seen to symbolise a struggle with time, an inability to escape from fate as well as the dangers and burdens which have been placed upon him. The figures positioning in front of the train symbolises his control and determination, despite the apparent vulnerability of the situation.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	1	1	4	7	14	29	16	12	8	7	5.5

Compared to the last few years, students responded reasonably well to this question in 2007. Most students identified two commentaries and it was pleasing to see more students used the accompanying illustrations to support their views.

To score well, students needed to be aware that there were **three** components to the question:

- the student's **point of view**, with reasons
- reference to the ideas raised in at least **two** commentaries
- reference to the **illustrations**.

Most students moved beyond just quoting the commentaries and engaged in some personal interaction. Some students ignored the requirements of the question and simply put forward a passionate statement about art and artmaking, defining art as anything produced by someone who classifies him or herself as an artist. This was an unsatisfactory response. Often the artwork itself was not discussed very much, but there was a lot of hearty discussion about what art is. Few students actually defined and discussed the aesthetic qualities of *Test Site as seen* in the illustrations.

Many students appeared to enjoy answering this question and clearly communicated their point of view, often with passion. Students appreciated the sense of fun displayed by this work, and were generally very supportive of it as a permanent installation.

Writing in character was neither rewarded nor penalised but rather served as a focus for addressing the issues.

Following is an example of an answer which addressed all assessment criteria.

I definitely believe that 'Test Site' should be included in the temporary display at Tate Modern. 'Test Site' incorporates ordinary onlookers into participation and the joy of art while also providing a statement about the importance of being environmentally friendly in modern day society. The sheer scale of 'Test Site' spiraling up to 26.57 metres high encourages the onlookers to abandon themselves to the artwork, as it is so much bigger than any one being or concept. The serpentine, spiral form of 'Test Site' serves to create a natural, organic form out of the inherent man made artificiality of steel and plastic, that emphasises the role of the environment and nature in our everyday lives. 'Test Site' actively encourages audience participation in the artwork as an integral part of the concept of the slides is audience activity. As Commentary 1 states, 'Test Site' 'challenges us to take part actively, rather than passively view, the world of art.' Too often in society is there a barrier between artworks and the onlookers themselves. Going to a gallery is seen somewhat as an 'inner sanctum' which in many respects is overawing and intimidating. 'Test Site' actively breaks down the artificial barriers between audience and art, thus inevitably serving to not only produce positive results regarding the audiences emotions and perceptions of 'Test Site', however also resulting in the other works of art in the Tate Modern to seem less daunting. As Commentary 3 also raises, 'Test Site' invites us to 'rethink the ways that we live in cities in the future.' It is a serious statement about the environmentally friendly option for transportation in the future. Transport without fossil fuels and greenhouse emitting gases, rather transport which is actively 'green', not polluting our environment and encouraging the active participation of all, not an exclusive minority. 'Test Site' is an important work of art which breaks down barriers between artwork and audience while also providing a serious statement about the environment, thus it should most definitely be displayed in the 'Tate Modern'.



The following excerpts highlight specific references to the illustrations, providing an example of how students used descriptions in their responses.

Aesthetically, this artwork is interesting, five united silver slides, light glimmering and bouncing from each one in random directions while two of the slides curl around one another like a warped double helix.

The work itself is highly appealing visually and promotes a sense of organic movement and interacts with the space it inhabits.

'Test Site' is dynamically pleasing in an aesthetic manner and is suitable in size for our gallery.

In the images, the snake-like structure of the artwork is aesthetically pleasing yet surreal, given the environment – large twirling tubes amongst sterile corridors and masses of people.

Section B

Generally, interpretative frameworks were handled differently in Section B than they were in Section A. In Section A students tended to define the frameworks themselves and apply them in an inappropriate manner. In Section B students tended to be more aware of the requirements of the study design and applied the frameworks more accurately. 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. To respond appropriately, students should make certain that they know exactly what a specific framework means and how it may be used as a tool in the analysis and interpretation 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 and which were inappropriate to the artworks selected for discussion. It was evident that many students anticipated the form that Question 4 might take and had prepared responses which they adapted to suit the specific requirements of the question.

There was an obvious disparity in the number of students who 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 varied interest in art media across the board. Two-dimensional art appeared to be much more popular than three-dimensional works, which were rarely discussed. Although computer-generated art, performance art and installation art were still evident, they appeared to be less popular than in the past. Some students who appeared to be poorly prepared resorted to using the images from the insert. Others appeared to use sample responses from previous assessment reports, which was not acceptable.

Question 4

Interpretive framework 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	9	10	17	26	21	18	3.0

Interpretive framework 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	13	10	17	23	20	18	2.8

Most students accurately used the boxes to provide the required information and correctly spelled the names of the nominated artists. Sometimes the titles and/or dates of the artworks were unclear or incorrect. VCE students are expected to recall an artist's name, an artwork's title and the approximate date an artwork was made.

Some of the most popular artists chosen for discussion were Peter Booth, Howard Arkley, Andy Warhol, Patricia Piccinini, Brett Whiteley, Gordon Bennett and George Gittoes.

Some students accurately nominated suitable frameworks that permitted appropriate discussion. However, a few students used a different artist for each framework, which resulted in no marks for the second part of the question.

Following are definitions from the study design (pages 20–21) and some high-scoring 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, modelling 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

Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Gravestone*, (1987)

The artwork uses Basquiat's typically 'merry' style, which is also controlled, meaningfully composing the work true to Basquiat's technique. The paint used is applied to blatantly form a unified work. The flower, cross, using yellow paint, are clear on the left hand side, and the skull and heart are almost cartoon-like, in memory of Warhol and typically Basquiat. It is however Basquiat's use of letterform, which appears throughout his work, along with seemingly liberal brush strokes which are used on the central door. The paint colors are complementary and 'brilliant', brightly drawing focus over the subtle colors of the doors. Such use of shape and line is used in conjunction with the doors, which are recognizable forms. The placement of the doors suggest symmetrical balance, giving an overall unity to the work which combines thoughtful use of the elements and principles in not just a two-dimensional but also three-dimensional form.

Gordon Bennett, *The Outsider*, (1988)

'The outsider', as a quotation of van Gough's work, is painted with a similar technique. The quick, gestural, energetic lines of varying colour build the impression of movement, particularly in the eddying stars of the sky. Bold, vibrant colours are used, the vibrant dark blue of the sky contrasting to the brown, dotted with patches of red and green, in the bedroom. Similarly the dark figure leaning over the bed contrasts to the white marble heads that sit on the covers. The depth is implied through the perspective in the wooden floorboards, and a certain harmony of composition is achieved through the use of the rule of thirds – the sky taking up approximately one third of the picture. Form is created by the varying colours which are dashed through the space to build the shapes, particularly that of van Gough's chair.

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

Anne Zahalka, *Imax Cinema*, (1998–2003) (from the Leisureland Series)

Anne Zahalka (1957) created 'Imax Cinema' 1998–2003 as one piece in a series called Leisureland. She explores through 'Imax cinema' the cultural context of the modern age. The title of the series indicates that she is documenting what people in this culture do for fun. Closed up indoors with glasses on staring at a big screen showing a natural desert landscape, Zahalka explores the irony in what we consider our culture to be leisure. The un-natural nature of the image contrasts with the nature on the screen and asks us to question what a protective, modern race we have become. What modern equipment has done to make us lose sight in real leisure. It also comments on the laziness of our culture, we would rather watch than do.

Julie Dowling, *The Boat People*, (2002)

Dowling's sense of her own, and her people's dispossession from traditional Aboriginal culture is evident in her painting 'The Boat People'. The work, which shows a young, white skinned Dowling and twin sister, having a bath in a white tub in the small, cramped kitchen which is their home. The clash of cultures is suggested both through the objects which surround the girls and the style the artist has used. The white skinned girls emphasis the consequences of the early 20th century 'stolen generation', the half-caste girls contrast against their dark skinned Aboriginal grandmother. In portraying herself and family laughing and content, perhaps the artist was intending to show the deeper impact and seriousness of two conflicting cultures. The dominance of white in the image represents the authority and dominating impact white culture has had on indigenous Aboriginals. Whilst Dowling surrounds herself with typically western objects such as Christian cross and a fridge, down the bottom of the work Dowling has appropriated traditional Aboriginal ochres and yellow and white dots which perhaps represent the Australian outback. Dowling shows that all is not lost, whilst white culture has had an impact on her, so to has her grandmother and the traditional Aboriginal culture.

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, 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

Jenny Saville, *Branded*, (1992)

Jenny Saville challenges unrealistic ideals of women. Her subject, an obese woman grasping rolls of fat, overfills the frame and instinctively repulses the viewer. Saville challenges this repulsion, particularly as this is a self-portrait of the short and thin artist. She believes that women are taught this self-loathing: 'it is in all of us; we are taught to judge ourselves from a very young



age.' She thus rejects these unrealistic ideals through the subject's wretchedness in her almost deformed pose and angling. The flesh tones, muddied and bruised in creams, browns and reds, reject another female ideal. Not only is perpetual emphasis on thin women damaging, but so is general perfection unrealistic for mortal women composed of real flesh. The words etched into the paint and onto the skin are like scars: 'delicate', 'supportive' – what women are supposed to be. The subject has truly failed to fulfil these gender ideals; Saville utterly rejects them as constrictive and unrealistic.

Historical context

- the social, political and/or religious contexts of an artwork; for example, the influence of the rise of Nazism on the work of German Expressionists, the significance of religious and historical factors in European Renaissance artworks, the rise of new media and the challenges to traditional art practices in late twentieth century – early twenty-first century Australian and international art, or the Silk Road and the transmission of cultural influence across Asia
- how social, political and/or religious factors contribute to the meanings and messages of artworks

George Gittoes, *Superpower*, (2001)

Gittoes was outraged by the idea of a new Gulf War in 2001, and decided to use this painting 'as a conscious tool for social change'. The title refers to America's position as a global superpower, while the image predicts that its own aggressiveness and power lust will be its downfall. The 'carnivorous elephants' were inspired by The Lord of the Rings, bringing an element of the battle of good and evil into the meaning, as an ironic contrast against what Gittoes sees as greed. The lower area of the image shows us the strong, tall towers of New York City, which contrast with the desert of rubble in the background, an image of modern Baghdad, which has been bombed into the ground by the Americans.

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 eighteenth century English art, post-colonial interpretations of Gauguin and other nineteenth and twentieth 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, 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

Kate Durham, *Siev X*, (2004)

The Siev X works are a result of Durham's extreme reaction to the 'children overboard' issue a number of years ago. Durham was intensely disappointed and outraged by what she believed was a cover-up and a scandal by the Howard Government. In order to express these feelings and to make a political statement as she also believed that 'fine art has been removed from the wider world' she painted each one of the refugees faces in the water as they were drowned or drowning. This is an incredibly powerful piece because of the large eyes and round shapes she depicted in each figure to show the innocence lost to what she was to be an unaustralian travesty of justice with a total lack of humanitarianism.

Postmodernism

- the ways in which artworks can be interpreted in terms of Postmodernism
- the ways in which artists use parody, irony, satire, quotation, appropriation and/or non-traditional art practices and art forms in order to question and challenge traditional understandings of art and its significance; for example, the ways in which artistic collaboration in performance, installation and conceptual art can be seen as challenging traditional ideals of artistic 'genius' and individuality, the ways in which recent digital and online art can be seen as challenging traditional ideals of the importance of viewing and experiencing object-based art in museums and galleries, or globalisation and the issue of cultural integrity in Asian art practice and theory
- how Postmodernist perspectives contribute to the meanings and messages of artworks

Julie Rrap, *Virago 1984*, (1984) (Persona and Shadow Series)

'Virago 1984' acts as a subversion to the tradition of the male privilege of representing the females as present throughout history. Rrap posthumously calls Edvard Munch to question over his representation of the female through the use of parody and appropriation. Rrap questions freely the gender stereotypes inherent in Munch's (and indeed many other's) portrayal of women in 'Virago 1084'. By recreating Munch's 'Self portrait 1896', Rrap places the image of herself in the shadow of Munch's outline and mirrors Munch's neo-expressionist brushwork. Rrap effectively sends up Munch's portrayal of himself as the omnipotent artist through appropriation of his techniques, thus subverting the control of Munch's work over the female persona. Rrap utilizes a mixed media approach in her inclusion of crayons, paint and photography to reach her final image. Rrap's works embodies a post – Modern ethic however in the open endedness of Rrap's intentions, in providing just as many questions as there are answers to the viewer.



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

Peter Booth, *Painting 1977*, (1980)

‘Painting 1977’ reflects Booths’s disillusionment with the threat of the cold-war climate of the 1970’s and his subsequent fear and bleak view of humanity. This is suggested by the central lone male figure who appears sickened and exhausted by what he has seen, through the grayish colour of his skin and his red eyes. The explosive, expressive techniques he has used painting in thick impasto application of the paint in bright, fiery oranges and reds suggests the intensity of his distress and disapproval with the folly of man in the warring destructive climate. This bleak view of humanity is also attributed to Booth’s condition of epilepsy which triggered his nightmarish views of humanity such as suggested by the carnage of ‘Painting 1977’.

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

Christo and Jeanne Claude, *Wrapped Reichstag*, (1971/72–1995)

Symbolism in ‘Wrapped Reichstag’ can be linked to both visual aesthetics and the Christo’s technique. In this work the process of wrapping the Reichstag can be considered just as symbolic as the unwrapping. The base white material can be considered to represent (symbolise) peace, freedom, liberty and rebirth. The unveiling of the Reichstag however after being wrapped for a full period of two weeks can be considered to symbolise the re-unification of East and West Germany after many years of being separated by the Berlin Wall. The unwrapped building is symbolic of the emergence and re-birth of the new Germany. The soft white material can also be seen to suggest links to drapery; this highlight the essence of the Reichstag and suggesting vitality and inner life.

Peter Booth, *Painting 1977*, (1980)

The road is seen to symbolise journey and travel as the man must leave a hell like world. The white dog is said to symbolise companionship for the man. According to Booth, the dog represents a guide for man, in ancient American Mayan culture. The arrows in the right corner of the work appear to be showing the man the direction to head in, symbolizing the direction he is heading in his life. The dark colours of the man’s coat are symbolic of the somber, depressing mood, while the strong reds symbolise the chaos and destruction of the world around him. The man’s blood red eyes symbolise an almost possessed devil like nature, while at the same time, could also indicate his grief for what man has done to the world.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	10	3	3	5	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	7	7	6	5	9	8.0

It was good to see some very strong responses to this question that were mature, passionate, considered and well developed. Many students had a strong body of information at their disposal and used it selectively to answer the question.

The most popular artists for discussion were Frida Kahlo, Peter Booth, Patricia Piccinini, Howard Arkley, Jeffrey Smart and Bill Henson. It was pleasing to see that a wide range of artists was discussed. This year there was very little evidence of personal gallery experience. Personal commitment to the exploration of the chosen artists was evident in the level of enthusiasm with which many students wrote.

Students had obviously practised the process of integrating the commentaries into their arguments about the meanings and messages in a work of art. Most students used the commentaries well, but some students accepted them without discrimination or challenge. However, a surprising number of students commented that they neither used nor needed commentaries to develop or support a personal opinion; they believed that their opinion of an artwork was legitimate, definitive and needed no justification. This is of concern as it shows a degree of ignorance and a lack of recognition of the value of opinions developed after years of experience and close study.

This year there was more attribution of the cited commentaries, indicating an intelligent choice of commentaries 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, some specific detail would have supported responses.

Following is a series of excerpts from a variety of responses. They show a good use of commentaries and address the question. Some show how commentaries can be challenged but also show how contrary opinions are **justified**. Teachers and students are recommended to examine the following excerpts closely in their search for appropriate responses to study design requirements.

Albert Tucker, *Images of Modern Evil #24*, (1945)

In studying and researching Albert Tucker, my initial view was that his artwork, particularly the 'Images of Modern Evil' series showed a strong streak of misogyny and little else. Many other comments, both critical and conversational backed up this idea, but further research and reading several commentaries, especially an interview with the artist himself, helped me to understand that there was far more than a simple hate of women in Tucker's work, that in fact, in other works, he showed sympathy and admiration for women. The 'Images of Modern Evil' are intended to show a disillusion on the part of the artist with the Melbourne he returned to after his time in the military and the changes of World War 2.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *The Gates*, (2005)

...Both Christo and Jeanne-Claude denied that 'The Gates' had any underlying purpose, meaning or message. They stated 'It's not a symbol. It's not a message. It's only a work of art' which serves to 'make the world a more beautiful place'. Through the artists commentaries it is evident to me that Christo and Jeanne-Claude were interested in expanding the definition of art and it's place in our society. Art by nature should be enjoyed and celebrated, simply because of its beauty, it need not have an underlying message or moral in order to be enjoyed. This inherent postmodern attitude to the relative nature of art encourages onlookers to derive their own meaning and opinion of 'The Gates' albeit negative.

Frida Kahlo, *A Few Small Nips*, (1930–35)

This piece by Frida Kahlo is an oil on metal painting and was created at a time of separation between Frida Kahlo and her husband Diego Rivera. Hayden Herrera, Kahlo's biographer referred to this work as 'Kahlo's goriest work', and Kahlo herself referred to the paintings symbolism of her own feelings of being 'murdered by life'. I feel that this indeed may be Frida's goriest painting and Kahlo's comment on the painting has helped me come to the conclusion that perhaps this painting is an external projection of the anguish and pain which her husband Diego's infidelity may have caused her. Suzanne Green spoke of this painting in the Age newspaper and commented on her surprise at the 'smallness and delicacy' however she also made reference to the interesting use of juxtaposition which Kahlo employs. 'Kahlo juxtaposes pretty detail – a small dove, a pillow banner, with shocking violence.' This 'shocking violence' which Greene is referring to and 'gore' that Herrera speaks of is illustrated through excessive use of deep-red coloured paint, spattered in application across the piece, and more confrontingly across an image of a naked woman.

Bill Henson, *Untitled 2000/2003 – Twilight*, images

...In his 2005 article in the Age, 'Gloom in the Gloaming', Robert Nelson, while recognizing the artistic merit of Henson's photography, expresses disquiet over Henson's choice of subject matter. Nelson initially notes in his commentary that there is evidently 'no doubt' that Henson's work evidences his status as a 'serious photographer'. Nelson also gives credence to Henson's technical ability in referencing his inclusion at the Venice Bicentennial. However, upon deconstructing the meanings and messages in Henson's 'Untitled 2000/2003 series Nelson expresses disquiet at what he describes as 'juvenile erotica'. Nelson's opinion is easily understandable, as Henson himself describes his work as engendering annoyance in many due to the fact that viewers 'want answers' and conclusive messages in the artwork. Especially as Henson's work is photographic, Henson alludes to viewers' need to find 'evidence' of something in his work. Nelson's opinion however, is strongly divergent to how I experienced Henson's work, yet helped me further reinforce my own stance. As Henson's work portrays transient youths on the brink of change and challenge, I can readily identify with his exploration of what Ashley Canford describes as 'the twilight of adolescence'.