



GENERAL COMMENTS

The VCE Art examination is based on key knowledge and key skills from the *VCE Art Study Design 2010–2016*. This report should be read in conjunction with the study design, the 2013 VCE Art examination and the examination assessment criteria.

The following criteria are used in context to assess student responses to the Art examination paper.

- understanding and appropriate use of art language and vocabulary
- knowledge of one artist and interpretation of an artwork made after 1970
- knowledge of a range of relevant resources used to support the interpretation of artwork
- ability to present different interpretations of an artwork
- understanding and applying all analytical frameworks to the analysis of artworks
- analysis of artworks to comment on their messages and meanings
- ability to develop a personal point of view on ideas and issues about art
- ability to discuss and debate issues with the use of supporting evidence, reference to the different points of view and opinions expressed in commentaries on art and relevant aspects of the analytical framework

Students need to have a comprehensive understanding of all analytical frameworks. Students should practise applying the analytical frameworks to a range of historical and contemporary artworks.

It is essential that students are able to demonstrate their knowledge of the artists and artworks studied during the year without relying on prepared essays to answer any of the questions. Students must be ready to demonstrate their knowledge of every artist and artwork studied, drawing upon the research they completed during the year. Many responses used a range of artists and artworks, demonstrating that students were well prepared for the examination.

Reading time in any examination is very important. Students need to read and re-read the paper carefully, including the insert, noting relevant instructions. Some students did not read every question carefully and missed important instructions. For example, in Question 7 some students relied on a pre-prepared response and discussed pre-1970 artwork, overlooking the instruction to discuss post-1970 artwork. Some students highlighted key terms or instructions in the questions before they commenced answering them; this can be a good way to identify the important aspects of each question. For example, do you need a viewpoint or commentaries? Is it a discussion or a comparison?

Occasionally, students' handwriting was difficult to read; students should try to write legibly to ensure that the assessors can read their answers.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

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

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

Section A

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

Teachers should note that not all art forms are represented in these types of questions, so it is advisable that students prepare themselves by accessing artworks produced using a range of different art forms. This section consists of short-answer questions and assesses the theoretical understanding of key knowledge and skills in Units 3 and 4. These questions do not require responses with great breadth and depth of analysis, but rather a focused application of the student's understanding of key concepts such as the elements and principles of art, style or subject matter and how these convey meanings and messages.

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Questions 1 and 2

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	23	40	33	2.1

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	7	26	40	27	1.9

Artwork presented

Question 1: Henri Matisse, *The Clown*, colour stencil print, 42.2 × 32.8 cm, 1943

Question 2: Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, tempera on wood, 150 × 180 cm, 1433–1434

In Questions 1 and 2 students were asked to discuss how shape and space were used as formal elements in the artworks. Overall, students responded confidently and demonstrated an ability to interpret the use of these formal elements. Some students merely described the formal elements, rather than discussing how the artist had used them. High-scoring responses to both questions demonstrated a well-developed understanding of the formal elements and an ability to apply these to unseen artworks.

Many students scored well by discussing the manipulation of geometric and organic shape in order to create movement, along with the repetition of shape within the artwork, using terminology such as ‘harmony’, ‘rhythm’ or ‘stylised’ in reference to the composition. When discussing the formal element of space, students need to identify the ‘illusion of depth’, the use of ‘perspective’ or ‘receding and advancing colour’ to reinforce a sense of space. Students who answered these questions effectively focused on the artist’s use of the formal element and introduced an art principle to consolidate their response, as demonstrated in the example below, which used the principle of contrast in answering Question 1.

Matisse has used organic shapes to create an abstract and asymmetrical composition. The contrast between the organic wavy line and the geometric shape of the rectangles creates a sense of harmony as the small rectangles frame the image the wavy shape also creates a sense of movement as it directs the viewers eye from the bottom of the image upwards. The shapes are two-dimensional which also creates a flat and smooth implied texture.

Low-scoring responses tended to superficially address the artist’s use of the formal element. Students were given marks for using language relating to shape in their response, but they needed to make specific references to the artwork. It is not necessary for students to restate the artist’s name and title of the artwork in their answer. Students should be wary of writing too much. The lined space provided is more than sufficient.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response to Question 2.

Implied space is used to create perspective and to imbue the painting with greater sense of realism. The diminishing scale of the pillars and the figures in the background establishes depth, whilst the use of cooler colours in the background recedes into the space. The division of the space into the foreground and background is also achieved through the larger scale and placing of the figures in the painting’s frontal plane who placed in the corner to draw the viewers eyes to the other figures who recede into the distance.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	4	1	6	16	23	20	18	8	4	4.5

Artworks presented

Sir Edwin Landseer, *Queen Victoria and Prince Albert at the Bal Costumé of 12 May 1842*, oil on canvas, 142.6 × 111.8 cm, 1842–1846

Diane Arbus, *The King and Queen of a Senior Citizens’ Dance* [full title: Their numbers were picked out of a hat. They were chosen King and Queen of a Senior Citizens’ dance in New York City, Yetta Granaf is 72 and Charles Fahrer is 79. They have never met.], gelatin silver print, 37.3 × 37.2 cm, 1970

In this question students were asked to compare the meanings and messages of the artworks. ‘Meanings and Messages’ is one of the aspects of the formal framework that analyses ‘how the formal elements and principles of an artwork contribute to the meanings and messages of an artwork’, and is outlined on page 12 of the VCE Art Study Design.

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Students should consider the following: What are the stylistic qualities of the artwork and how do they contribute to meaning? What physical aspects or presentation of the artwork contain symbolic meaning and use of a metaphor? This may include the use of formal art elements, the compositional arrangement of figures or objects, the medium or the technique used by the artist or the style in which the work is created.

Students were assessed on how well they compared the meanings and messages of the two artworks. High-scoring students sustained an insightful comparison throughout their answer and filled their response with comparative words. Sound responses explained meanings and messages by citing symbolism and technique. For example, 'Landseer suggests regal authority through using rich colours'. Students needed to be sure that they compared the two artworks, rather than simply listing their interpretations, writing about each one separately. Many students relied heavily on the information provided on the examination to identify meanings and messages without advancing their own reading of the artworks.

The following are excerpts from high-scoring responses to Question 3.

Example 1

Whilst both images present us with a portrait of a King and Queen, the intrinsic details of Landseer illustrates the regality of its subjects whilst Arbus's work ignites humour as it ridicules his subjects. The use of gold in Landseer postulates the power that accompanies their stations whilst its title demonstrates the traditional art that represents.

Their position in society is further reinforced through the liberal use of intense red as well as the presence of the official royal crest within the background.

Whilst Landseer was formal and regal, the superficiality and humour in Arbus is articulated primarily through the poses and expressions of the 'King' and 'Queen'. Whilst their garments are similar to that of the line of expensive ones in Landseer, it is only in appearance. Instead the cheapness of the material highlights their status which is further accentuated through the use of a black and white colour palette.

Example 2

The fact that the couple in Arbus's work have never met is symbolized by their physical distance as they are not close together. Comparatively Queen Victoria and Prince Albert are holding hands, suggesting their relationship is more intimate. The rich colours Landseer uses and opulent drapes and furniture he depicts suggests that the couple are affluent. However the black and white photography used in Arbus's suggests lack of fruitfulness and frivolity, emphasized by their emotionless expressions. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert are standing, emphasizing their superiority. However as the couple are seated in Arbus's they appear passive and submissive. The glasses both the couple in Arbus's adorn create a physical barrier between themselves and the viewer, emphasizing their distance. As Queen Victoria and Prince Albert are portrayed stepped forward they seem more confident.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Average
%	3	1	1	3	8	15	22	18	13	8	5	5	6.5

Artwork presented

James Ensor, *My Portrait with Masks*, oil on panel, 29.5 × 26.5 cm, c. 1936

This question required students to apply the personal framework to interpret James Ensor's painting. Students responded well to the image and were able to confidently discuss the portrait with reference to the personal framework. Most students demonstrated a good understanding of the context of the self-portrait and the artist's personal feelings. Many students engaged insightfully with both the image and the commentary. High-scoring responses cited evidence within the painting to support the student's interpretation of Ensor's self-portrait. However, some students did not make reference to the viewer, thus missing a significant element of the question that required the student to present their response as a viewer to Ensor's painting.

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

The masks 'similar to the masks that Ensor's parents sold in their souvenir shop when he was a boy', act as a personal metaphor for the passage of time and the cyclical nature of the artists life. Visibly aged, the artist's depiction of the masks suggest that in his old age, he has returned to the comforts and memories of his childhood which, contrary to his aging body, remain just as vibrant and profound. The background colours of red and green create harmony as complementary colours and perhaps allude to the sense of contentment and balance felt by the artist when he is in his studio painting. Although his wry smile is 'as if [he is] sharing a private joke with his viewer' the viewer's lack of knowledge draws his personal life creates a barrier between



themselves and the artist. His intricacy with his painting, reflected in the replication of the colours of his clothes, (blue) and brush (orange) in the painting, cause the viewer to feel as if they have intruded on a private moment. The repetition of these colours also alludes to the artists' profound personal engagement with the figure and objects of his painting. Which form a close attachment to his personal identity. Here the masks reminiscent of the artist's youth, signal a return into his past from which the viewer is ultimately excluded. The glaring, demonic nature of the masks also suggest that his past has come back to haunt him.

Section B

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

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	3	1	2	4	9	13	11	11	9	9	7	5	4	5	2	4	7.5

Artworks presented

Artwork 1: Frederick McCubbin, *Lost*, oil on canvas, 115.8 × 73.9 cm, 1886

Artwork 2: r e a, *PolesApart 2(a)*, C-type photograph, 100 × 92 cm, 2009

This question required students to apply the formal analytical framework and the cultural analytical framework to discuss the different ways in which the two artists had responded to the depiction of nature in art. They were required to reference both the illustrations and commentaries. There were several elements to be addressed in this question, and many students were unable to cover all requirements. It was important that students gave an evenly weighted response to both frameworks and both artworks.

Many students responded well to the formal framework but struggled to apply the cultural framework to draw connections to nature. Weaker responses relied heavily on the commentaries and grappled with interpreting the work beyond merely describing it. Sophisticated responses expanded on the information given, with more high-level answers based on students' additional knowledge about European settlement and its effect on Indigenous Australians.

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

Formal Framework

McCubbin uses a painterly technique to express the harsh landscape he perceives. However in PolesApart the woman is seen clearly in the space, denoting she doesn't feel so 'lost'. Lighter greens are used by McCubbin to emphasis the thickness of the bush. However a sense of emptiness is portrayed in PolesApart as there is much more space in between the trees. Furthermore less tress in PolesApart suggests human intervention, supporting the notion of 'colonisation'. In the background of McCubbin's the lack of light suggests an ominous feel to depict the dangerousness of the Australian bush. As there is a 'broken twig' in the foreground of McCubbin's suggests a clue for an adult search party, he instills and emphasizes the notion that white-Australians were not 'in touch' with the landscape and feared it.

Cultural Framework

As the woman in PolesApart is adorned in a funeral dress, she may portray the lamenting of colonization in Australia. The attire of the girl in McCubbin's is of a contrasting colour to her environment, symbolizing the settler's inconsequence to Australia nature. The woman in the funeral dress matches her surroundings of the blackened trees suggesting her culture is more in touch with Australian nature. The blackened trees may also suggest the land in mourning of the result of colonisation that the white Australians caused. In McCubbins however the trees are portrayed as thriving as time and his culture saw Australia as 'new land'. In PolesApart the woman is directly facing the bush, demonstrates her cultures intimate relationship with the Australian bush. The dress the woman wears in PolesApart appears to constrict her movement as is engulfs her body, denoting her culture may have metaphorically suffocated as a result of colonisation.

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Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	1	3	12	21	12	15	13	12	4	4	5.4

Artwork presented

Takashi Murakami for Louis Vuitton, rigid box panda jewellery case, silk-screen print on canvas with Louis Vuitton monogram, brass, leather, internal mirror, limited edition, 18.5 × 16.3 × 7 cm, 2003

Students were required to present their opinion on whether the artwork should be purchased for the gallery. In their response, they were required to refer to

- the work illustrated
- both commentaries.

This question gave students the opportunity to present an opinion as to whether or not the work should be purchased for the gallery. High-scoring answers referred to both commentaries and the artwork and engaged with them well to present a clear and compelling justification for their opinion. However, low-scoring responses simply reworded the commentaries, rather than analysing the content and engaging with it. Many students simply agreed with one of the commentaries without exploring the other. Higher-scoring students related the work to the contemporary framework, drawing connections to new materials and challenging traditional values in art. They commented on the work as a material object and on the commercialisation of contemporary art. There were insightful parallels to Marcel Duchamp's 'ready-mades' and Andy Warhol's mass-production prints. Some students made little reference to the artwork itself and failed to present a clear opinion regarding the purchase of the work. There were many components to this question and students needed to address all of them in order to score highly.

The following are excerpts from high-scoring responses.

Example 1

As a recent graduate of an arts degree, my main purpose within this panel is to assess and debate the way this contemporary piece of art will be received by all demographics. It is from this point of view that I agree with commentary one and advocate the purchase of the artwork, as I believe it eradicates previous traditional barriers that separate the viewer from art whilst also commenting on our current consumerist society. Whilst I agree with Panel member 2's comment that 'great art should challenge us', I believe she's wrong when she states that is not 'a serious work of art'. Instead I believe that the piece challenges traditional understandings of what sculpture is. The use of this found object allows Murakami to demonstrate how art can be composed of everyday objects that we take for granted. Its small scale allows an intimate connection to be made between the viewer and the piece. The piece also challenges traditional notions of ownership through the way it is 'made in collaboration' as Panel member 1 comments. The juxtaposition of the popular label with this simple cartoonish figure also juxtaposes the different aspects of our contemporary culture – fashion and comics /TV which allows it to be more accessible for the larger demographic as should be the main aim of the public art gallery

Example 2

As easy as the artwork is to appreciate, I believe that it should not be purchased for the Art gallery. I agree with Commentary 2 that it would be more suitable to be sold to the public as an aesthetic accessory, rather than something to be looked at in a gallery. Indeed, the fun lively cartoon of the panda appeals to a greater audience, I believe the audience that it would appeal to, such as a younger viewers, would also prefer to be able to buy it as a possession, not something to be viewed with the division of a glass cabinet. I believe Commentary 2 may have a rigid opinion of what Art should and shouldn't be as they state, 'it is not a serious work of Art'. The possibilities of Art is endless and in conjunction with commentary 1, we should 'challenge our assumptions of what Art is', but I still maintain that as innovative as the work is, it does not belong in a gallery and should not be purchased.

Section C

This section gave students the opportunity to provide extended responses to two questions. Students had to discuss and debate an art issue and interpret the meanings and messages of artworks they had studied in Units 3 and 4.

Students were also required to present their informed opinion with reference to the artworks and with the support of selected viewpoints and relevant aspects of the analytical frameworks.

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Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	13	2	2	4	6	8	14	13	12	8	9	5	4	6.2

Students were required to select an artwork made after 1970 that they had studied during the year and apply two analytical frameworks of their choice to discuss how the work could be interpreted in more than one way.

This question gave students the opportunity to apply their knowledge of their selected artist and artwork from Unit 3. It was critical that the student nominate a post-1970 artwork and two frameworks. However, some students wrote on artists and artwork from the wrong period. Students need to be careful not to nominate a framework and then proceed to write under a different framework. The most successful students were able to present different interpretations of their studied artwork. These students demonstrated an ability to apply the frameworks, citing evidence within the artwork to support their interpretations, thus responding directly to the question. The formal framework was used most frequently, and it was pleasing to see a relatively equal distribution of students using the cultural and personal analytical frameworks. Weaker responses relied on prepared answers and were unable to connect these to the question. Specific examples from the artwork must be referred to when applying the frameworks for analysis and interpretation. Some students simply described the artwork, rather than applying their selected frameworks. Some weaker responses relied on one framework more than the other, and others failed to nominate two frameworks.

A good selection of artists were researched. Some of the popular artists studied were Ben Quilty, Marc Quinn, George Gittoes, Brett Whiteley, Guan Wei, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jenny Saville, Barbara Kruger, Gordon Bennett, Andrew Ferguson, Damien Hirst and Del Kathryn Barton.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response to Question 7.

Artist's name: Brett Whiteley

Specific Artwork: Alchemy 1972–73

Analytical framework 1: Formal Framework

Analytical framework 2: Personal Framework

Brett Whiteley's Alchemy is unquestionably his greatest work, spanning eighteen panels, each over two meters high and covering an installation like 16 meters, it can be interpreted in many ways. When viewed from right to left, it tells the story of Whiteley's life. From birth in the carnal, flesh filled panels filled with dark, night-like tones of blue and the curved line of the feminine form that Whitely obsessed over. Through to the trans mutative ascension of death in space filled panels of gold and white- tendrils of sun. However, the painting can also be separated by the earthly and the divine, a panel of white painted with a bold, black 'IT' serves as a fulcrum between the godly and the world of man. Within 'Alchemy' Whiteley also reflects on the heroes that have inspired his 'inner paddock', the reoccurring severed ear a reference to the mental instability of Van Gogh and the far right side panel of gold symbolizing the ritual of death of a Japanese poet. Through the lens of these symbols Alchemy also can be interpreted as an exploration of the mind fuel by Whiteley's experimentation with 'more serious' mind-altering chemicals. Alchemy is a work that offers an insight into the mind of the artist.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Average
%	8	2	4	7	11	10	14	6	8	6	9	7	5	5	6.5

Most students responded well to the statement posed in this question: 'Art creates discussion and debate.' Weaker responses ignored this statement, instead relying on a pre-scripted answer. There were many components to this question and all of them had to be addressed to score highly. Students who clearly articulated the art issue for discussion were able to fully address the question.

High-scoring responses discussed the statement with perceptive reference to an art issue, utilising informed and opposing points of view expressed in commentaries and responding to them. They effectively evaluated the artwork in relation to the art issue and presented an articulate response. By far the most favoured artists were Bill Henson and Banksy. However, it was refreshing to see new artists being studied this year in Unit 4, such as Paul Yore, Julie Dowling, Wim Delvoe and Ai Weiwei.

Some students grappled with discussing an art issue and instead just referred to a topic, for example, 'appropriation' or 'censorship'. Students are reminded that a context for the issue needed to be identified. Some students were unable to



discuss artworks or link the artworks to the issue. A number of students used commentaries that were anonymous or from dubious sources that carried little weight. Some students struggled to apply what they had studied in Unit 4, and were unable to make a stance or present a viewpoint on the issue.

It is clear that there is some confusion regarding what an art issue entails. An art issue must have at least two clearly different points of view and be supported by commentaries and artworks. Question 8 required students to discuss, debate and compare two or more viewpoints regarding an issue about art. Students should be able to apply the relevant aspects of the analytical frameworks to enhance their debate and discussion, and clearly present their own viewpoint and compare it with the opinion of others. Additionally, the study requires students to analyse their own viewpoint as well as those of others and link their thinking to a broader conceptual understanding, including the role of art in society. Teachers and students should carefully read and understand each part of the task as presented on page 25 and 26 of the study design to seek clarification of the requirements of this aspect of the course.

The following is a high-scoring response that shows the student working to draw the connections between ‘discussion and debate’ of an art issue, an artwork and commentaries.

Art exists to create discussion and debate but when suppressed by political censorship, such as in Contemporary China, can art still thrive? This is the underlying debate that lives within contemporary Chinese art scene, a debate that no artist explores better than fifty six year old dissident, Ai Weiwei. Ai suggests that without freedom within art, there can be no creativity, however his own work stands testament against this. With his 2011 photograph, ‘Grass mud horse covering the middle’, Ai Weiwei distribute an online work that held its potency in word play. As a Chinese linguist explained ‘the power of Ai’s art is that he is able to create this thought’ a vulgar slur against the Communist Party, ‘in the viewers mind without uttering a word: essentially Ai’s photograph, a self portrait of the artists jumping naked within a stuffed lama, (grass mud horse) as his only modesty, served as a humerous vehicle to illustrate the title. Spread across the Internet “Grass mud horse covering the middle’ sparked debate as not only a criticism of the Chinese government, but of the censorship of art that exists within the country. As Journalists Jonathon Watt noted ‘censors know what they don’t like’, with curator and professor Si Han suggesting work like Ai’s ‘crosses a clear red line’, that is, it breaks the first rule of art censorship in China ‘works can not criticize the Party or the four cardinal principles’ (government document of 1978). Ai Weiwei continues to raise censorship debate through installation work, such as the Xie, a 2011 installation of 3600 porcelain river crabs. The work commented on the forced closure of Ai WeiWei’s studio and mocked the Party Chairman’s call for a ‘harmonious society’ (the Chinese word for river crab, He Xie, is homonym for harmony). Despite arguments against it without censorship works such as these would never have come to fruition, as Ai Weiwei states ‘I think without censorship it [Chinese Art] would be a lot less interesting’ it would certainly raise a lot less discussion and debate.