



GENERAL COMMENTS

The performance of the 2004 students continued to represent an overall improvement on previous years.

The 2004 examination consisted of two equally weighted sections that differed from each other in their question types and the kind of responses they required. Section A asked students to provide short answers to a series of previously unseen artworks and commentaries. Section B required students to write two extended responses based on the artists and artworks they had studied during the year.

Students should read each question carefully in order to ensure that they understand what is asked of them and to make sure they are covering all aspects of the question. This means students will be less likely to lose marks that they might otherwise be able to attain. For example, Question 1 in Section A asked students to compare any two of the four artworks illustrated. Students needed, therefore, to actually compare the two chosen artworks, and not simply to interpret them as two separate and unrelated pieces.

The marking allocations for each question provide an indication of the requirements of that question. Thus, for Question 1 in Section A, those students who discussed only one of the artworks could only receive a maximum of half of the marks allocated for that question because they only discussed one of the two artworks required. Similarly, for Question 5 in Section B, those students who did not refer to commentaries could only receive a maximum of nine marks for that question because they missed out one of the two dot points required.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

Section A – Short-answer responses

Question 1 - Colour

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	24	50	25	2.0

Question 1 - Texture

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	3	27	48	22	1.9

This was generally well answered and most students responded with clarity and conciseness. They understood the requirement to discuss the artworks in terms of both colour and texture. More successful responses tended to link the interpretation of the two artworks together as a true comparison, while less successful responses tended to write two separate and unrelated passages that simply described the artworks rather than interpreting them in terms of the two formal elements.

Students who achieved high marks for this question effectively compared the chosen examples. They used telling comparative details in order to draw out key differences and similarities between the two selected artworks. They also demonstrated a capacity to analyse formal elements using relevant vocabulary and art terms where appropriate. Less successful responses presented a more generalised and/or unfocused comparison of the chosen examples. Points for comparison were not as well selected and did not draw out the key distinctions and similarities between the two selected artworks as effectively. Low-scoring responses presented more vague, generalised responses with limited comparison of obvious formal qualities and little analysis of the works chosen.

The following are excerpts from responses where students achieved a high mark.

The colours used in A are essentially warm, with the overwhelming prevalence of the sandy coloured straw of the fields. However in B, there is a dominance of cool blues and patches of green, creating a somewhat sombre wood. In A, colour is warm due to the sunlight, which seems to emanate from the bales of hay, and the sky in the distance. This is however interrupted by strong blues and pinks on the women's clothes to break up the monotony of yellows. Contrasting it is warm oranges and pink skin tones that both create the figures in B, and also provide a balance to the cool blue.



and:

Both artworks use texture to express a culture or event. The scared, rough surface of 'Warrior with shield' shows the suffering of time and wounds, imprinted on his body. The totem by Manka uses natural fibres to represent the traditions, values and symbols of an aboriginal culture. The natural texture of bark, reeds and feathers show the artwork is equal to nature, not domineering. In contrast the strong, industrial bronze sculpture has the imprint of tools and industry to communicate that man is powerful and a conqueror. The difference between the inorganic and organic surfaces of both artworks communicate the values of both societies.

Question 2

Question Chosen	0	a	b
%	1	49	50

Question 2ai and 2bi

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	13	24	32	21	8	2.8

Question 2aii and 2bii

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	15	26	29	19	7	2.7

This question was generally better answered than last year. Although there has been a clear improvement each year for this question over the past four years, there is still scope for further improvement. The trend continued to remain for formal analysis, followed by symbolism, to be used as the two most popular interpretive frameworks for this question.

Students who achieved high marks for this question presented an informed discussion of one or two interpretive frameworks (depending on whether they elected to write on either Question 2a or 2b). Their responses demonstrated an understanding of the basic principles and approaches involved in the interpretive frameworks chosen and they were then able to apply these effectively to the interpretation of previously unseen artworks. A critical and often creative and personal response to the work/s selected was another common feature of responses of this kind.

Less successful responses tended towards a more generalised and unfocused discussion of one or two interpretive frameworks. These students often experienced difficulty in applying the chosen frameworks effectively to the interpretation of previously unseen artworks. Low-scoring responses often presented a vague and uncritical response that struggled to identify interpretive frameworks and to apply these to the interpretation of one or two unseen artworks.

A useful distinction to consider when answering this question is the importance of understanding the difference between active interpretation and a passive, less effective description of an artwork. A less successful, passive description for Question 2, Number 7, for example, would simply describe the artwork by noting that it shows a man and a woman embracing. A slightly more successful interpretation would improve on this by beginning to interpret the artwork in terms of its symbolism, noting that the man is dressed in black to symbolise that he's a kind of monster, whereas the woman is dressed in white to symbolise that she's meant to be pure. An even more successful and active interpretation, on the other hand, might interpret the symbolism further by noting that the woman is hugging the man to suggest that she is nurturing him, but he can't hug her back because of his scissors. This symbolises the fact that men are not as capable of showing affection as women are. The butterfly on his scissors, on the other hand, might suggest that the woman's love for the man might make him better at showing his feelings after all.

The following are excerpts from responses where students achieved a high mark:

The student discussed the artwork *Edward Scissorhands* in terms of the symbolism interpretive framework:

The blue represents hope or joy although some clouds represent a sense of foreboding or an element of imperfection which reflects the imperfection of Edward's "scissorhands".... The black clothing of Edward is leather which insulates his evil body representing a sense of isolation from the world. The light cotton of the girl's white t-shirt represents peace and her opening her heart to this bad-looking Edward. The scars on Edward's face juxtapose with the soft, clear complexion of the girl. The general juxtaposition of the peaceful, kind, good-natured white of the girl with the black, menacing, dangerous Edward represents how there is good in everyone and a "book shouldn't be judged by its cover".

The student discussed the artwork *The Beekeepers* in terms of the symbolism interpretive framework:

In this piece, the beekeepers are portrayed as though they themselves are bees. They are depicted as alert and industrious (qualities that are most clearly expressed in the Beekeeper to the far left of the image, and the other second from the far right), yet at the same time as though they are participating in mindless activity, evident in the stooped and inexpressive posture of the Beekeeper second



from the left. These are qualities that are commonly associated with worker bees. The Beekeepers are also all masked and clothed identically, this suggests some sort of unity or a collective hive mind, which is also commonly associated with worker bees. Here they are depicted in what seems to be the process of gathering, much like bees gather pollen, the Beekeepers are gathering honey. Like bees, each Beekeeper seems to play a specific role – a production line is suggested by the Beekeeper who is empty handed and walking towards the left hand side of the image, possibly indicating that he is going to gather more honey for the worker who task appears to be opening the hives.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	1	1	3	6	12	24	22	18	10	4	5.6

Responses to this question were generally good. The question gave students the opportunity to express their own, often passionate, feelings about the meanings and purpose of art. This also helped most students to articulate a personal response and elaborate on the issues raised in the commentaries.

Students who achieved high marks for this question perceptively discussed the issues raised by the artwork and its commentaries. They identified the different points of view expressed in the commentaries and engaged with them critically in order to advance a clear and personal point of view about the artwork. It was perfectly valid, when responding to this question, to agree with one of the two dot point questions but not with the other. Some of the stronger responses agreed, for example, that the artwork should win the prize, but that it was nonetheless not appropriate to buy it for the gallery's permanent collection. Responses of this kind were effective because they went beyond a simple black and white, yes or no, response to the issues raised by the artwork. Instead, they involved a balanced and thoughtful approach that took into account the challenging and often complex meanings and messages of artworks.

Less successful responses tended towards a more generalised discussion that did not use the commentaries in as much detail or as effectively to back up a clear point of view. A common feature of these responses was to present summaries of the commentaries rather than critical discussions of the issues that they raised about the artwork. Low-scoring responses often presented an unfocused and very generalised discussion that referred to the commentaries either superficially or not at all.

A useful distinction to consider when answering this question is the importance of understanding the difference between actively engaging with the issues raised in commentaries about an artwork as opposed to a less effective response that more passively summarises the points raised. Stronger responses tended to extend on the ideas raised in the commentaries rather than to just repeat them.

The following are excerpts from responses where students achieved a high mark:

... Although some may say that "it is the ants who have done all the work", this piece is representing the artist's view. The ants are symbolic of "work...and collective activity", but they did not develop this artwork or concept. I think this piece is truly deserving if the prize, because it symbolises each individual and involves society in every grain of sand. Although it may dissolve over time, its meaning and concepts will still remain. Perhaps the gallery should provide the funds to film the artwork, and photograph the stages of its disintegration and unity. This way the essence of the artwork can carry on into the future, and be part of a permanent collection. Society and every individual should be involved in this piece, to develop their own opinions about the issue at hand.

and:

... many will argue it is unaesthetically pleasing. Indeed while the sand boxes creating flags are beautiful now, the critic makes a valid point in stating that "soon there will be nothing left except boxes filled with murky brown sand."

Yet while this is an important consideration, I find Yanagi's work visually interesting, and arresting. I see that when the boxes will have mixed sand, the idealistic society and national identity Yanagi hopes for will be created and this will be beautiful on a different level. I view this piece as as much performance art as the work of stellarc. If we accept him – surely we should accept Yanagi's ants as performers too?

Finally whether or not this work should win the prize is entirely dependent on the other works also candidates for the prize. However, I think as a piece in the gallery's collection, I believe it to be extremely valid and a worthwhile investment.

Section B – Extended responses

Students who answered only one of the two requirements in Question 4 or 5 of Section B were unable to score higher than the total mark allocation for that requirement. Students would benefit, therefore, from being reminded of the importance of attempting all requirements in the examination.



Students who made it clear what artworks were being discussed (in terms of their name, medium and date) ensured that assessors understood what artwork was being referred to. This is especially important for questions requiring a distinction between artists working pre- and post-1970. Students would benefit, therefore, from being reminded of the importance of identifying all of the artworks discussed in Section B by the artist's name, the title of the artwork and the approximate date of the artwork.

Students and teachers need to also beware of the potential difficulties created by choosing inappropriate artists for comparison when responding to a question that requires students to compare the artworks under discussion. Artists working in widely varying media, cultures, or periods may certainly be used for purposeful and successful comparison in questions of this type; however, the degree of match and natural comparability between the artists also needs to be considered. A strained and un-developed comparison between the fashion of Issey Miyake, for example, and the Renaissance paintings of Giotto will not score as highly as a more focused and thematically relevant comparison of the representation of human body types in the work of Patricia Piccinini and the representation of ideal beauty in the work of Leonardo.

Question 4

i

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	15	32	29	19	2.4

ii

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	17	32	29	16	2.3

Question 4 required students to use interpretive frameworks to visually analyse one artwork in terms of at least two formal elements such as line, shape, texture, colour, movement, surface composition and the depiction of space, modelling and tonal structure. A perceptive and well-informed detailed analysis of the artworks was assessed as a high-standard response to this question. Lower scoring responses tended to analyse the artwork in more general terms and without as much detailed understanding of interpretive frameworks.

The following is an excerpt from a response where the student achieved a high mark for Question 4. The student had identified this work as being by Howard Arkley earlier in the response.

... *'Floriated Residence, 1994'* is the cropped in view of a suburban house of the 1950's or 1960's. In visually analysing the SURFACE COMPOSITION it can be determined that the piece is a vertically composition. It is closely cropped-in so only the front door and window, porch and a section of the front yard are visible. The composition is definitely asymmetrical and features a variety of shapes, mainly geometric, defined by a straight, thick black line... The middle ground is the rest of the house, while the background is the small, snippet of sky visible. There is only a small sense of depth, with no horizon line and a closely cropped-in view... The LINE of *'Floriated Residence'* is one of the most dominant formal elements. The line is consistent, always being the same thickness and un-toned colour. The line is thick and black. This line is very geometric and extremely linear. The only organic example of line is the lone bush in the yard. All other line is either diagonal, vertical or horizontal, with the majority of line diagonal and stretching from the outer-points of the composition in towards the central focal point...

Question 5

i

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	8	5	7	8	12	17	20	15	8	4.6

ii

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	7	4	6	8	11	17	17	16	10	5	5.0

Question 5 required students to discuss at least one artwork in terms of the ideas, issues and/or arguments about the artwork(s) expressed in commentaries on art, together with the student's own personal point of view about the meanings and messages of the artwork(s). Students who were able to identify and discuss ideas, issues and/or arguments as expressed in commentaries on the chosen artwork(s) and who were then able to draw on these ideas in their discussion of their own personal points of view about the artwork(s) were best able to respond to this question.

The commentaries aspect of this question was generally better answered than last year, although there is still scope for further improvement. Students were required to identify specific commentaries and to discuss the ideas, issues and/or



arguments they raised about the chosen artworks. The importance of different opinions about art as expressed in different commentaries should continue to be emphasised in teaching VCE Art. It is also important for students to clearly identify their use of commentaries in their responses to questions of this kind. Students' ability to recall the specific publication details of commentaries is not a key consideration in the examination. Rather, it is that students can demonstrate an understanding of the different points of view about art that are expressed in varying comments on it. As was noted in the February 2000 *VCE Bulletin*, commentaries on art can include published commentaries in newspapers, periodicals, journals, Internet sites, exhibition catalogues or monographs by art critics/historians together with other transcript commentaries such as lectures, class debates, museums guides and wall text, radio, TV and film documentaries.

The following are excerpts from responses where students achieved a high mark for Question 5:

Upon studying the works of Emily Kame Kngwarreye, and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, it became overwhelmingly apparent that all forms of art are open to much interpretation and speculation. Aboriginal art in particular, which continues to be a mystery for many Europeans, is no exception...

Emily Kame Kngwarreye has often been compared to the famous French impressionist painter Claude Monet, or the contemporary expressionist artists Jackson Pollack or Mark Rothko. Jenny Green, writer for the National Gallery of Victoria confirms this, stating that "to the modern art world, both her output and seemingly 'abstract' gestural style were unlike anything previously seen from an Aboriginal painter. Simon Deep, writer for Jinta Art and curator stated that "although her works relate to the modern tradition, this resemblance is purely visual." I certainly agree that Emily Kame Kngwarreye was modern in approach to painting Aboriginal Dreamings. The almost fluorescent pinks and yellows found in Untitled 1990 challenge the tribal law of painting and demonstrate an acceptance of modern mediums such as acrylic in favour of earth pigments. However her works are inherently reflective of her connection with the land. The dots characteristic of her 'dump dump' dot style represent the body art worn by women in the 'awerye' women's ceremonies. As an elder it was her responsibility to pass on these ceremonies to the next generation – as done in her painting. Furthermore her name 'Kame' mean 'yam seed' and the yam plant is a prevalent image in works such as Big Yam Dreaming which follows the traces of yam roots. Thus I would argue that she was intensely traditional in her outlook, but modern in her style.

and:

Jean-Michel Basquiat was a New York Artist of the 1980's, born in 1960, and dying in 1987. Basquiat completed such innovative paintings as 'Zydeco, 1984' which expresses his love for the style of music titled 'Zydeco'... One critic who seemingly despised Basquiat's work was art critic Robert Hughes who suggested Basquiat's work was "all this gunk rolled into a sticky ball around Basquiat's tiny talent", and labelled Basquiat as "Nothing more than an artist who could scribble and jot". Here Hughes is referring to Basquiat's heavy use of the oil stick. In creating 'Zydeco, 1984' Basquiat would have underpainted using acrylic paint and a brush, then blocked out certain sections. Then using the oil stick he would have added details. Basquiat worked instinctively and spontaneously. He probably didn't stop having started 'Zydeco, 1984' until he had finished. Thus, Basquiat's use of the oil stick creates, raw, primitive images, highly linear and childlike... Yet Hughes chooses to see this as all Basquiat is capable of and seems to refuse to see Basquiat's paintings like 'Zydeco, 1984' as anything more than scribbles. In denying Basquiat's huge talent Hughes chooses to ignore the amazing symbolism behind Basquiat's paintings. Hughes loved Picasso's innovative work, yet denies Basquiat's, equally innovative work, is valuable. There is no reason why scribbling and jotting cannot be seen as innovative and valuable especially as this technique allowed Basquiat to be the very first person to actually cross something out in a painting. This innovation can only be applauded...