



**2003**

**Art GA 3: Written examination**

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

Teachers should note that the comments made in this report are based on the *Art Study Design, 2000–2003*. A reaccredited study design has been implemented in 2004.

The performance of students represented an overall improvement on the responses of 2002. The examination consisted of two equally weighted sections that differed from each other in their question types and the kinds of responses they required. Section A asked students to provide short answers to a series of previously unseen art works and commentaries. Section B required students to write one extended response selected from a choice of questions.

Students should read each question carefully in order to ensure that they understand what it is asking of them and to make sure they are covering all aspects of the question. This means students will be less likely to miss out on marks that they might otherwise be able to attain. For example, Section A Question 1 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. Similarly, for Question 4, students should make it clear what artworks were being referred to in terms of their name, together with their medium and date in order to ensure a distinction was being maintained between pre- and post-1970.

The mark allocation for each question provides an indication of the requirements. Thus, for Section A Question 1, 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 Section B Question 4, those students who did not refer to formal qualities could only receive a maximum of 13 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**

**Question 1**

**Line**

<b>Marks</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>%</b>	2	22	48	28	<b>2.03</b>

**Balance**

<b>Marks</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>%</b>	4	22	46	28	<b>1.98</b>

This was generally well answered with most students responding with clarity and conciseness. They understood the requirement to discuss the artworks in terms of both line and balance. 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 achieving 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 as effectively key distinctions and similarities between the two selected artworks. Low-scoring responses presented more vague, generalised responses with limited comparison of obvious formal qualities and little analysis of the works chosen.

The following is an excerpt from a response where the student received a high mark:

The student compared artworks (B) *Bäru, Creator of Fire* (Watjinbuy Marawili) and (C) *St Luke Painting the Virgin* (Rogier van der Weyden) in terms of **balance**:

The Van der Weyden is balanced, like the Marawili on a rule of thirds, each divided three times horizontally, the Marawili very obviously with lines in the background and the Van der Weyden in the indoors, background and sky. The tail of the crocodile in the Marawili creates asymmetrical balance. In the Van der Weyden the

work is balanced vertically however by the window panes, the two figures and by the red (the man, the figures in background and the cloth draped above the woman).

## Question 2

a

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	9	21	33	27	9	2.99

b

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	11	22	32	22	9	2.84

This was generally better handled than last year, thus indicating a clear improvement each year for this question over the past three years. There is nevertheless still scope for further improvement. The trend continued for visual analysis, followed by symbolism, to be used as the two most popular interpretive frameworks for this question. Style and technique were the least well-handled frameworks for this question.

Students achieving high marks for this question presented an informed discussion of one or two interpretive frameworks (depending on whether they elected to write on either Questions 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 art works. 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 responses often experienced difficulties 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 then to apply these to the interpretation of one or two unseen art works.

A useful distinction to consider when answering this question is the importance of understanding the difference between active interpretation as opposed to a less effective and more passive description of an artwork. A less successful passive description of Question 2, no. 2, for example, would simply describe the artwork by noting that it shows some objects covered with crochet wool on a red base. A more successful and active interpretation, by contrast, might note that the title of the artwork is *Taking a Chance on Love* and that red is commonly thought of as also the colour of love. The objects might, therefore, symbolise our love of nature: a love that is nonetheless made unnatural and artificial by our contemporary urban lifestyle. We want to get close to nature, yet we go on living cut off from it in sterile cities. So the only place we have left to go to find nature is, ironically enough, the artificial environments of a zoo or a natural history museum.

The following is an excerpt from a response where the student achieved a high mark:

The student discussed the artwork *The Seagull Salesman, his stock and visitors, or figures of identification* (Kevin Mortensen) in terms of the symbolism interpretive framework:

The Seagulls in the cage represents their lack of freedom, they are contained in a cage with nowhere to fly. The man in the chair, who wears a sea gull mask over his head symbolises that he too does not feel free, he feels restricted in some way, unable to 'fly'. However the man could also symbolise the power over the birds to be ripping them from their freedom. It is ironic that being a 'sea gull' himself he is keeping his 'fellow animals' contained in a cage. This idea symbolising the hypocrisy of the image and thus suggesting that the man is torturing his own species, possibly symbolising that man is destroying man himself. The darkness of the mans feathers in contrast to the white and crisp nature of the seagulls feathers also suggest that he is dark.

## Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	1	2	5	6	12	20	21	19	10	4	5.49

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 achieving 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.

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 and whether or not it

is a valid form of art that should be exhibited. Less successful responses presented an unfocused and only very generalised discussion that referred to the commentaries either superficially or not at all.

Students need to realise that it is necessary to consider, when answering this question, 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 in commentaries. Stronger responses tended to extend on the ideas raised in the commentaries rather than just to repeat them. Commentary 2, for example, noted that ‘it only takes [the artists] a couple of hours’ to make the works and that this is therefore one reason why the work should not be seen as a valid form of art. A stronger response might have pointed out, on the other hand, that when we go to galleries to look at art we do not tend to judge them in terms of how long they took to make. It might also have pointed out that although crop circles might not take long to actually produce, they still must take a long time to work out and plan in advance and that planning is thus all part of their meaning (as is pointed out by commentary 3).

The following are excerpts from two students who achieved a high mark for this question:

Excerpt 1:

Crop circles should not be included in the exhibition, nor any exhibition. Crop circles are not art. They are simply an old, worn out practical joke that only destroy perfectly good crops. These seemingly bored, anonymous rascalians that simply flatten wheat try to barge their way into the art world, with a so called “art piece” that has been “done to death”. There are literally thousands of crop circles made each year, so why should these Englishmen be any exception? If it is now considered an art form, then why not include all the crop circles made each year.

Excerpt 2:

Environmental art is a fantastic exploration of art and the scale that can be used. By creating works of this scale art takes on new form and creates space, space that can be seen as a “temporary sacred landscape” as described by the artists themselves. Emphasis on the word “temporary”. This is not vandalism that causes damage to the environment as stated by commentary 2, this is an exploration of space and scale that has in turn created a piece that is extremely aesthetically pleasing. The organic shape and flowing movement of this Ying-Yang like design fits its content perfectly. It is only right that this piece should be displayed on a huge, provocation scale.

As stated in commentary 3, “art should take risks” and the work of these English environmental artists has. It has breached the boundaries of everyday installation or sculpture, resulting in a valid and pleasing form of art that explores the different and exciting aspects of scale and proportion.

## **Section B – Extended responses**

**(Average mark 13.85/Available marks 25)**

Each of the two extended-response questions in Section B was worth a total of 25 marks. This score was arrived at from a total of 12 and 13 marks allocated for each of the two bullet point requirements in each question. Students answering only one of the two bullet points in Section B Question 4 or Question 5 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.

### **Question 4**

This question required students to use interpretive frameworks to discuss similarities and differences of at least one artwork produced before 1970 and at least one artwork produced after 1970. 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 artworks in more general terms and without as much detailed understanding of interpretive frameworks. Students who made it clear what artworks were being referred to in terms of their name, together with their medium and date, ensured that a distinction was being maintained between pre- and post-1970. Such an approach was especially necessary for artists working across the 1970 time divide. Students and teachers need to be aware of the potential difficulties created by choosing inappropriate artists and artworks for comparison. Artists working in widely varying media/cultures/periods may certainly be used for purposeful and successful comparison in questions of this type.

Nonetheless, the degree of match and natural comparability between the artists needs to be considered. A strained and undeveloped comparison between the fashion of Issey Miyake, for example, and the Renaissance paintings of Giotto will find it difficult to score as highly as a more focused and thematically relevant comparison of the representation of human body types in the work of Patricia Piccinini, for example, and the representation of ideal beauty in the work of Leonardo.

The following is an excerpt from a response where the student achieved a high mark:

Paintings and perhaps self portraits in particular have revealed the inner work of the artist. whether deliberate or unconsciously, artists include their past experiences, emotions and memories on the canvas. Their use of colour space and subject matter enables a psychoanalytical interpretation of their work. To be considered is

“Judith beheading Holofermes” (1612) by baroque artist Artemisia Gentileschi, and the contemporary work “The outsider” by Gordon Bennett. Each show a deeper look into the inner reality of each painter’s mind.

Colour may be used for description or decoration but a psychoanalysis calls on the use of colour to express emotion. Gentileschi, a follower of Caravaggio, “David with the Head of Goliath” (1605) is similar to “Judith beheading Holofermes” both with the light source at the top left. The harsh lighting created natural, fleshy tones on the figures and complete darkness surrounding. Gentileschi employed a realist palette, as did Caravaggio. Their soft, lyrical nature contrast the subject matter – the morbid decapitation.

Decapitation is also a feature of Bennett’s work, however “the Outsider” incorporates more saturated colour. The use of primary and emerald lines, likens his atmosphere.

### Question 5

Students are required to discuss at least two artworks in terms of their formal qualities and the ideas, issues and/or arguments about the artworks expressed in commentaries on art. Students who were able to identify and discuss ideas, issues and/or arguments as expressed in commentaries on the chosen artworks and who were then able to draw on these ideas in their application of interpretive frameworks to interpret the formal qualities of the artworks responded best to this question.

The commentaries aspect was generally better handled than last year, although there is still scope for improvement. Students were required to use 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 important for students to clearly identify their use of commentaries in their responses to questions of this kind. Students’ ability to recall 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 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 is an excerpt from a response where the student achieved a high mark for Question 5:

I have chosen to analyse 2 artworks from two Australian post modern artists; Christopher Langton (1954) and Louise Weaver (1966)

Langton’s wall flowers (1999) is an electric motor installation consisting of 24 stemless flower heads of intense and glossy saturated colours. The glare of primrose yellow, sky blue and rose illuminates from the white walls of the gallery. They move rapidly, jerkily and awkwardly as electric motors spin each flower head in a varying direction with speed. This, combined with the constant ‘hum’ of electric motors gives me the feeling I am in a busy shopping mall. As the VCE web site says ‘they are unlike anything we might see in the natural world’. This is indeed true, they are very much like the cheap consumer products found in stores, their material of P.V.C plastic enhances this idea.

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