



## GENERAL COMMENTS

Teachers should note that this report is based on the current *VCE Studio Arts Study Design* that is accredited for the period 2004–2009. A new study design will be published in 2009, to be implemented in schools in 2010. This report is designed to provide valuable information to students and teachers on the performance of students in the 2008 examination. The information is given in such a way that students and teachers should understand the importance of the key knowledge and skills of the study design.

The 2008 examination drew upon the knowledge and skills required for Outcome 3 of Unit 3 and Outcome 3 of Unit 4. As indicated in the study design, all questions on the examination were compulsory. The paper allowed for both short and extended responses to questions. Visual material was used for Questions 1 and 5 and included a range of art forms. A total of 50 marks was available and students had 90 minutes to complete the examination.

The structure and format of the Studio Arts examination have been reasonably consistent in recent years. It appears that students seem to be taking heed of examination advice and learning material in such a way that they can adequately demonstrate their knowledge. It is pleasing to note that this year students were able to provide a better standard of responses than in previous years. However, there was still a significant number of students who had difficulty displaying their understanding in relation to the key areas of knowledge.

The 2008 written examination tested students' ability to **apply** the knowledge learnt in Outcome 3 of Units 3 and 4. Some students assumed that they could supply rote-learned information without thinking about the question. Too often, key terms used in the question, such as 'analyse' or 'demonstrate', were overlooked, and a more general and pre-prepared answer was given, making it difficult for the student to achieve high marks. It is strongly recommended that students practise on past exams to improve their skills in responding to unseen artworks.

As in previous years, Question 1 focused on students' ability to analyse the ways in which an artist **demonstrates** a distinctive style and aesthetic qualities in the artwork. The response required analytical skills specific to the selected artwork and it was important that students were able to show how the artist demonstrates distinctive style and aesthetic qualities in the work. Students must be more aware of the nature of the question rather than thinking that a list of art elements and principles will be close enough. Students must be prepared to think deeply at the start of the examination as to what the question is asking in order to determine the required response. The instructional words in Question 1 were 'analyse' and 'demonstrate', however many students simply described what they could see rather than showing how the artist employed elements and principles to demonstrate distinctive style and create aesthetic qualities in the artwork.

One of the key requirements of Outcome 3 of Unit 4 is to study and research an art industry issue that has arisen in the current and/or previous year. This year the controversy about the exhibition of photographs by Bill Henson dominated the media, and also the majority of responses in the examination. For some students this became a discussion about public morality or teenage sexuality and they were unable to relate the issue to the question of art.

Students must ensure that the knowledge they have acquired throughout the year is applied to the specific requirements of each question. An example of this was Question 3, which specifically asked the student to 'describe' and 'compare' the role of two art spaces. Some students described or defined each art space but failed to offer a comparison. In 2008, students were asked to select an art form from the examples illustrated in the detachable insert and as this represented a broad range of art forms. Students had no difficulty with this requirement. Students are reminded again of the need to **apply** learnt material in such a way that demonstrates that they have considered the full implications of the question.

Question 4 asked students to explain the importance of one factor when using another artist's work in the making of new art. This question presented little difficulty, although it is worth noting that the best responses provided an example of how the particular factor had been applied by specific artists in the past.

Many students seemed to have taken the advice in previous Assessment Reports and completed the extended response question first. Time management is critical in this examination, and it is vital that students preparing for the 2009 examination practice writing past examinations to test their ability to write against the clock. It is also important that students practise responses to a wide range of question types.



**Areas of strengths and weakness**

Students who were awarded high marks consistently:

- had the ability to use appropriate art language and terminology applicable to the question
- demonstrated a sound understanding of the knowledge required for each question
- responded to the key words of the question and applied their knowledge accordingly
- discussed examples of works of art when appropriate
- showed a sound knowledge of the area under discussion
- provided in-depth and comprehensive responses that revealed a thorough understanding of the course content.

Students who were awarded low marks consistently:

- did not apply appropriate language and terminology in their responses
- did not demonstrate a depth of knowledge to adequately answer the question
- did not respond adequately to the key words of the question
- did not discuss examples of artworks or provided a discussion that was shallow and descriptive, demonstrating little knowledge of the work
- had difficulty demonstrating an understanding of the key knowledge and skills of Outcome 3 of Units 3 and 4.

**SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

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

**Question 1**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	2	5	15	23	20	17	12	6	3.9

Students were required to analyse the ways in which an artist demonstrates distinctive style and aesthetic qualities in the selected artwork. Students therefore needed to:

- use language and terminology that was relevant to the artwork
- analyse the ways in which an artist demonstrates a distinctive style and aesthetic qualities in the work
- demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the art form.

The task word in this question, ‘analyse’, signalled that a considered and detailed response to the selected artwork was required. The question also required students to apply their analysis to the ways in which the artist ‘demonstrates’ distinctive style and aesthetic qualities in the selected art form. The range of art forms represented in the detachable insert allowed students to base their response on a work in a form with which they were familiar and thus demonstrate the depth of knowledge they had acquired throughout the year. There was an expectation that students should be able to reveal some understanding of how an artist demonstrates distinctive style and aesthetic qualities in a work of art.

In order to achieve a high mark, students needed to clearly analyse ways in which the artist has demonstrated distinctive style and how the artist has demonstrated aesthetic qualities in the artwork. Language and terminology were important and should have shown that the student had a competent knowledge of the art form. All examples in the detachable insert could have been analysed, which would allow the student to demonstrate their understanding of the ways an artist achieves distinctive style and aesthetic qualities in an artwork. It was pleasing to see students respond to all images, with the Stanley Spenser and Donald Friend works the most popular, and the Jemina Wyman digital video still the least popular.

Question 1 was the least well done on the 2008 examination and a number of reasons were identified for this. Firstly, students had to respond to an unfamiliar image, which led weaker students to merely describe the work. Many students were inclined to simply list formal elements and their use without analysing how they contributed to the overall aesthetic qualities of the artwork. Secondly, the concept of ‘distinctive style’ is difficult for many students to communicate. In this examination, distinctive style means ‘the personal and distinguishing characteristics of an artwork’. Teachers should make this very clear when talking to students about their own art and the work of other artists, so that when students attend the examination they have a clear understanding of the meaning of such terms. ‘Aesthetic qualities’ is harder to define but is generally seen to relate to the wider artistic qualities of the artwork (including the elements and principles of art). In its contemporary and most widely accepted form, the word ‘aesthetic’ is generally understood to be a **critical reflection on specific qualities of art and culture**.



The following are excerpts from high-scoring responses to Question 1. In these responses students have cleverly used the language of the question to frame their response, and thus it becomes apparent that they are addressing the fundamental requirements of the question.

*Artwork 9: Thea Proctor, Summer*

*Thea Proctor achieves a distinctive style in this woodblock print through a manipulation of the formal elements. Summer is an aesthetically pleasing use of line, balance and hue. Strong lines are created which create a silhouette of the figures in the piece, defining contour and shape distinctively. As a woodcut, no tone or shading is included to indicate shape or form yet carefully defined lines in the foreground and background suggest depth. Relatively cool hues which have been drawn into the print contrast with warm but soft colours creating a visually diverse image. The strong and defiant lines of a woman's form create the focal point with less harsh lines radiating around her drawing the eye to other aspects of the piece. The image is balanced with emphasis weighted equally throughout the piece creating a sense of harmony and calm. A successful blending of the formal elements creates strong aesthetic qualities that define the artist's distinctive style.*

*Artwork 2: Donald Friend, Self Portrait in a Carved Mirror*

*Donald Friend demonstrates a clear distinctive style with the combination of pen, ink, watercolour and gouache. Together these materials create a 'washy' feeling however the pen is used to create a strong lyrical feeling with line. The focal point is created with the absence of colour and the addition of plain and soft pen work. An abstract feeling is established through the messy lines and smudged colours of the gouache and heavily water saturated watercolour. A strong aesthetic is created by combining these elements and the overall style is soft and subtle. The combination of materials, techniques and the artist's distinctive style create an overall aesthetically pleasing artwork.*

## Question 2

### Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	7	19	28	24	19	3.2

### Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	7	20	30	23	17	3.2

Question 2 required students to demonstrate:

- an understanding of and ability to provide evidence of sound research and knowledge of a contemporary art industry issue
- knowledge of the context that gave rise to the issue
- appropriate use of terminology and vocabulary that is specific and correctly used
- clear reference to points of view relating to the chosen issue
- an understanding of the issue from an arts industry perspective.

The last point was particularly important as too many students nominated 'pornography' as the issue and discussed it as a social and moral issue, rather than as an art industry issue. The focus of the response must be on an arts industry issue and students must be very specific about how they respond to the question. It requires an appreciation of the issue that can only come from valid investigation into the background of the issue and the ensuing implications. Assessors were looking for evidence from students that demonstrated a depth of knowledge on the issue under discussion, and reference to media and other sources was necessary to score a high mark.

Question 2a. required students to identify and discuss an art industry-related issue. The issue of censorship of Bill Henson's photographs was overwhelmingly the most often cited in the responses. Many students gave responses that lacked any understanding of the work of Bill Henson. However, students who could see beyond the popular media's presentation of the issue and looked at the issue of Henson's work in the context of freedom of expression and censorship, wrote well.

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

*Issue: The funding protocols for the depiction of children in Art.*

*Example: The Henson case.*

*The view held by some members of the community is that the depiction of children in Bill Henson's work is immoral. This view has been sustained by Andrew Bolt of the Herald Sun since May 2008. Bolt implied that Henson is a child pornographer*

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responsible for' child exploitation'. This view has been reinforced by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd who called the work 'revolting' and has instructed Screen Australia and the Australia Council to introduce a set of protocols to control artists receiving government funding unless they abide by the guidelines for the depiction of children in art. This view maintains that children need to be protected from artist's exploration and predation. They argue that the government should not be funding such practices that they consider to be immoral.

The following excellent response to Question 2b. is from the same student quoted above in Question 2a.

*My view of this issue is that the introduction of funding protocols is a form of censorship. They take away an artist's right to artistic expression and freedom. I also do not see Henson's work to be sexually explicit or suggestive in any way. I think this is a dangerous movement for Australia's art industry that could damage Australia's cultural reputation. Frank Moorhouse also denounced the funding protocols in the Age in October 2008 fearing that they could become the 'de-facto' standard for the entire industry. I believe the protocols are the product of moral panic, and that funding of the arts should be based on merit rather than political, moral or religious affiliations with an artist.*

### Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	11	22	31	34	2.8

Question 3 required students to:

- describe the role of two different art spaces
- compare the role of the two selected art spaces.

This question was generally well done. Students seemed well prepared for this question and most students had a good understanding of the role of different types of art spaces. Some students, however, could describe each space but did not compare them. Students should be aware that some questions on the paper may have more than one requirement.

The following is an example of an excellent response to Question 3.

*A Public Gallery is funded by the Government and sponsorship and thus acts as the custodian of art for the general public. Public galleries endeavour to offer a diverse selection of art that would appeal to the tastes of the community. The National Gallery of Victoria is a public gallery which has hosted exhibitions such as The Impressionists 2004, Guggenheim 2007, Art Deco 2008. They also run educational services to offer a cultural service. For example the NGV's Simone Debuvoir lecture series. A commercial gallery such as Sutton Gallery in Brunswick Street is run as a business which caters to an elite circle of art buyers to yield a profit. Commercial Galleries foster relationships with marketable artists and art buyers to maintain its business. Commercial galleries earn a commission on the sale of art and the hiring costs of the space by the artist.*

### Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	18	34	45	2.2

Question 4 required students to explain the importance of one nominated factor when an artist uses another artist's work in the making of new art.

Students could choose to explain the importance of copyright law, appropriation or moral rights when an artist uses another artist's work in the making of new artworks. This question was generally well done. The students who scored highly in this question defined the term they were addressing and several students were able to cite the Copyright Act and the Moral Rights Act. The use of the word 'importance' in this question may have been difficult for those students who had an understanding of the three factors but did not understand the definition or context of the word 'importance.' Some students wrote a good definition but without a sense of the meaning of the word 'importance'. The best responses included an example of the factor under discussion.

The following is a high-scoring response to Question 4.

*Appropriation refers to the use of borrowed elements (from an existing artwork) in the making of a new work. It can be for the purpose of parody, review, criticism or to pay homage to the original artist. Example: Anne Zahalka used appropriation in the piece 'Sunbather #2 (1989) which contextualized the idea of the average Australian from the 'Sunbather (1939) by Max Dupain. It is not considered (generally) an infringement of copyright.*

### Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	8	16	19	19	18	15	3.6



This question required students to select one artwork from the detachable insert and discuss the considerations and methods involved in the conservation of this work as if they were a curator in a public gallery. This question was, on the whole, well done, and it was obvious that most students were well prepared for this question. Clearly, teachers are addressing this area of key knowledge and students generally had a good understanding of the knowledge required to respond successfully.

The following are examples of student responses that clearly answered the question in a comprehensive way. These responses show that the students are highly knowledgeable in understanding the considerations and methods involved in the conservation of a particular art form in a public gallery.

*Artwork number 7: Harold Cazenaux, gelatin silver photograph.*

*In the conservation of Harold Cazenaux's 'Untitled' gelatin silver photograph the curator must be aware of the structure and chemistry of the materials involved in order to ensure its long lasting existence. This would include storage in a solander box, which provides a stable temperature and humidity, protection from dust and light and restricts oxygen, all in an acid free environment. Lighting must be limited to 50 Lux on show (Lux is the measurement of light energy) to prevent adverse discolouring and the development of brown spots. Likewise, storage would be on a rotational basis (1 month on 3 months off) while handling completed with cotton gloves. The curator must also ensure temperature remains at a constant 20-22 degrees and a relative humidity of 40-55%, measured by a hydrothermograph, as photographs grow mould when RH reaches 67%.*

*Artwork number 3: Woman's or child's coat, ikat silk velvet, calico, silk embroidery.*

*This ikat silk velvet, calico silk embroidery coat would require very careful handling from a curator and gallery staff. White gloves must be worn when handling this material as harmful acids could pose a threat to the posterity of this piece. As light can cause thinning, bleaching and aging of fine textiles, this piece would require low lighting controlled by a Lux meter at 50 Lux and yellow lighting known as Tungsten. For presentation this piece would best be placed in a space with no natural light. The gallery temperature must be maintained between 20-22 degrees and at a humidity no greater than 67%. High temperature and humidity could cause mould growth and distorting of the fibres, it could also encourage insects and rodents which could damage the textile. This piece may be displayed at a 1:3 ratio to limit light damage. The piece would need to be stored in the dark in an airtight bag in a clean area with no silverfish or rodents.*

**Question 6**

**Question 6i.**

<b>Marks</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>%</b>	5	2	3	3	5	5	5	4	6	6	55	<b>7.8</b>

**Question 6ii.**

<b>Marks</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>%</b>	52	5	7	6	8	6	6	3	4	1	2	<b>2.3</b>

Question 6 in 2008 was worth a total of 20 marks. It required students to respond to the question in ways that demonstrated:

- an ability to analyse artworks in terms of the use of materials, techniques and processes and/or
- an ability to analyse artworks in relation to their cultural contexts and/or
- an ability to analyse artworks in relation to the communication of ideas and meaning and/or
- an ability to analyse artworks in relation to the use made of the work of other artists in the making of new artwork and/or
- an ability to analyse artworks in relation to artistic influences
- a clear capacity to use language and terminology applicable to the type of work under analysis
- an ability to refer to specific examples of two artists' work using correct and factual information in order to demonstrate the student's knowledge.

Question 6 had five options for analysis of which students had to choose three. This structure had the advantage of giving students the option of choice, but with the requirement that each of the two artworks were to be analysed using the three chosen factors. This proved too much for some weaker students but the well prepared and articulate students relished the opportunity to display their often considerable learning. However, many students wrote two quite separate responses, choosing a different artist for each and analysing them according to the requirements of the question. While



the wording of the question allowed for this particular approach, most high-scoring responses successfully integrated the analysis of the two artists into one well-structured response and demonstrated a coherent development of ideas. Students would be well advised to identify a point of similarity or connection between artists, either in materials, techniques, interpretations of subject matter, cultural contexts etc., in order to more easily integrate the information in their responses. Some students obviously understood the words ‘analyse artworks’ to refer to an artist’s total output, body of work or ‘oeuvre’, rather than to specific nominated works of art. Students would do well to write the title of the work, and date if known, so that the work under analysis can be more clearly identified.

Most students who responded well to this question had a clear understanding of the factors they chose for the analysis of artworks. It is important, and expected, that students come to the examination adequately prepared with a body of knowledge that they can apply to the examination questions. Therefore, it is not sufficient in the extended response question to only make reference to images from the detachable insert and write only about those images. Students are expected to have undertaken a considerable amount of research and investigation.

Assessors were looking for responses in which specific artworks were analysed using three of the nominated factors. Assessors define the term ‘analyse’ to mean ‘to examine in detail in order to discover meaning’ and students were expected to use the three chosen factors as a way to discover meaning in each artwork. Unfortunately, some students’ analysis of artworks was too superficial and did not ‘examine in detail’.

The following is the first and last paragraph of a high-scoring response to Question 6.

*Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1840) and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) are two artists from distinctive cultural contexts who worked with relatively similar materials, techniques and processes to achieve a distinctive style. Hokusai was influenced by the traditions of his time but also by the subject matter of the Dutch while Lautrec was influenced by the Post-Impressionist movement he was part of as well as Japanese art.*

*Hokusai and Lautrec share numerous similarities in their artistic style, achieved through their use of materials, techniques and processes. Although both were influenced greatly by their cultural contexts and other artists, they managed to create distinctive qualities making them great artists. Hokusai and Lautrec successfully and beautifully captured their environments at the dawn of new eras.*

Overall, student achievement in the 2008 Studio Arts examination was better than in previous years. This increased understanding of the course content reflects well on students and their teachers.