

GENERAL COMMENTS

The performance of the 2001 students represented an overall improvement on the cohort of 2000.

The 2001 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.

The marking allocations for each question provide an indication of the requirements of each question. For the same question, e.g. 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.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A – Short-answer responses

Question 1

This was generally well answered with most students responding with clarity and conciseness. They also understood the requirement to discuss the artworks in terms of both colour 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 of generally descriptive interpretation.

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 qualities 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.

Question 2

This was generally better handled than last year, although there is scope for further improvement. The trend remained for visual analysis to be used as the most popular interpretive framework for this question. Students are encouraged to write in depth in their responses to these previously unseen artworks.

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 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 which struggled to identify interpretive frameworks and then to apply these to the interpretation of one or two unseen art works.

Question 3

Responses to this question were generally very 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. They also supplemented these with effective reference to the artwork itself.

Less successful responses tended towards a more generalised discussion which 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 raised. The reasons for whether the

sculpture should or should not be acquired were not clearly articulated. Responses of this type often had difficulty developing a clear and consistent point of view or did not acknowledge differences of response over the artworks significance and whether or not it should have been acquired. Low-scoring responses often presented an unfocused and only very generalised discussion which referred to the commentaries either superficially or not at all.

Section B – Extended responses

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 1 or Question 2 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 1 required students to analyse the formal qualities and the meanings and messages of at least two artworks. 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 their formal qualities and meanings and messages.

The question asked students to discuss the chosen artworks in terms of their similarities and differences. Those students who were able to create a link in their discussions by relating their chosen artworks together (such as by structuring their response so that the artworks were linked in the discussion or a shared theme, or issue) tended to perform better than those students who simply wrote two disconnected sections on the work of two artists.

Students were also required to write on at least one artwork produced pre-1970 and at least one artwork produced post-1970. Students who made it clear what artworks were being referred to and when the artworks were produced, 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.

Question 2 required students to discuss at least two artworks in terms of commentaries and on the basis of the student's own points of view about the artworks meanings and messages. Students who were able to discuss relevant commentaries on the chosen artworks were best able to respond to this question. Answers of this type were also able to express personal points of view about their chosen artworks.

In general, the commentaries aspect of this question was the least successfully tackled component of the examination. Students were required to identify specific commentaries and to discuss the issues and 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. However, 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 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.