



GENERAL COMMENTS

Students generally performed well on the 2005 Art examination paper. There was an obvious link between adequate classroom preparation and confident examination responses.

Areas of strengths

- Students seemed better prepared this year and approached the examination more confidently.
- The vast majority of students made legitimate attempts to answer all of the questions.
- Answers were generally directed at the question, with little evidence of pre-prepared essays that did not focus on the question asked.
- The convention of using surnames rather than first names for artists had improved this year.
- Students who used reading time well and understood the captions associated with the works generally responded soundly.

Areas of weakness

- Some students were disadvantaged because their handwriting was often illegible.
- Although students' ability to correctly spell artists' names had improved over previous years, the titles of artists' works were not generally as precise as they should have been. Some responses ignored names, titles and dates altogether.
- Some students did not read the questions carefully and their responses were generally not as strong. Assessors were astonished at the number of students who discussed Margaret Preston's work and referred to the clearly stated 'river' as a road.
- The media in Questions 1 and 2 were frequently misdiagnosed, resulting in inappropriate responses. For example, the *Laocöon* was treated as a photograph and the Benin Bronze and the Brook Andrew work as paintings.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A

The least well-handled frameworks in Section A were 'postmodernism', 'gender' and 'psychoanalysis'; however, these frameworks were better handled in Section B. Despite specific instructions to answer only part a. or part b. of Question 2, some students still responded to both parts of the question.

Question 1

Balance

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	20	45	31	2.1

Space

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	7	26	41	27	1.9

The most popular choices for this question were A/B and C/D for 'balance' and A/B for 'depiction of space'. Although most students chose appropriate artworks, some did not compare them appropriately.

Appropriate art language should have included descriptors such as 'perspective' and 'symmetry'. The language used by students who were able to differentiate between two and three point perspective implied that they had a background in visual communication and design. Art students should have known what 'aerial' and 'linear' perspectives are, as they relate to 'depiction of space' (dot point one under 'Formal interpretation' in the Study Design). A considerable number of students did not understand the difference between symmetry and asymmetry and there was frequent misinterpretation of both 'balance' and 'space'. Some students relied on a purely vertical division for balance rather than recognising a variety of possible permutations.

As students were only given nine lines of writing space, they should not have wasted time and space repeating the titles of the works or the artists' names. Some students disadvantaged themselves by spending more time on this question than was necessary, as indicated by the mark weighting of the question. They wrote lengthy responses (often using a second script book) and included unnecessary descriptions and appreciations of the works.



The following are some high-scoring student responses to Question 1.

In artwork A balance is formed asymmetrically, in contrast in artwork C it is symmetrical. In artwork A the building which is prominent in the bottom left corner is balanced by the dark purple that dominates the top right corner. In artwork C, however, the middle figure creates an axis of symmetry with the figures being balanced around him.

Ruscha's 'Mocha Standard' demonstrates an equal distribution of space between the positive and negative space through an obvious diagonal division. However, this equal distribution is not evident in Preston's 'Flying Over the Shoalhaven River' which completely disregards the landscape principle of the 'rule of thirds'.

Question 2

Question chosen	none	a.	b.
%	1	52	47

2a/bi.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	10	22	31	23	12	3.0

2a/bii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	12	22	28	21	11	2.8

By far the most popular framework applied was 'formal interpretation'; however, this all too frequently degenerated into a description of the work rather than a discussion of how the elements contributed to the structure of the work. The two most popular works chosen were by Teun Hocks and Johannes Vermeer. Students generally nominated the titles of the artworks accurately.

The use of interpretive frameworks was handled better this year; however, as a diagnostic tool, teachers and students need to familiarise themselves with the definition of each framework as cited in the *Art VCE Study Design*, pages 19–21.

Some students had nominated a particular framework but their analysis was not consistent with that framework, causing confusion for assessors. For example, the interpretive framework of 'formal interpretation' was nominated, but the response clearly indicated the use of other frameworks, such as 'symbolism'. Some students mistakenly nominated and applied more than the specified number of frameworks. Such responses could not be awarded maximum marks.

The following are some high-scoring student responses to Question 2b.

Interpretive framework: symbolism

Artwork: 7 – 'The Century Vase'

The Century vase is a symbol of the United States of America under George Washington. A bust of George Washington is shown, and above an eagle, symbolic of the American nation's closeness to George Washington. Surrounding the bust are four images of farmers and factories – the farmers symbolic of agrarian America (the South) and the factories symbolic of commercial or industrial America (the North). By placing George Washington between these images, the artist symbolically implies that Washington united these different aspects of the USA. Below the four images are reliefs of native Americans wearing the symbolic head garment, who represent indigenous or pre-colonialised America. By placing the portrait above or over these reliefs of native Americans the artist symbolically implies that George Washington conquered the natives. On either side of the vase are buffalo, unique creatures of the Americas who are symbols of the separation of America from Europe.

Interpretive framework: formal interpretation

Artwork: 4 – 'Sexy and Dangerous'

The piece is symmetrically balanced on either side of the composition. The strong contrast between the black, white and orange used creates a dynamic and intense mood to the piece. The repeated horizontal stripes from the nose to across his body balance and also contrast against his vertical stance. The main focal points of the piece is his face and the script on his chest, as the black contrasts and stands out against the orange and white. The use of detail, tone and shadow on the face and body enhances the three-dimensional realistic appearance of the figure. The negative space has been dirtied with spots of orange in order to not only balance the bottom, but to unify the entire piece.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	1	1	3	7	13	22	21	18	10	4	5.6



Nearly all students attempted this question and responded in some length. Most students had strong opinions on the issue and supported these by referencing the commentaries. However, rather than interpreting and integrating the gist of the commentaries, many students simply quoted slabs of text instead of using the arguments within them to develop or support a personal opinion. There was a distinct division between open and closed minds; that is, between the students who engaged with the commentaries and the content and came to a decision as a result of this engagement and those who made a decision about the work and stayed with that decision regardless of, or in spite of, what the commentaries had to offer in terms of explanation or exploration of ideas and ideals.

Some students presented their responses in judicial terms and pretended to be one of the judges in the case (as was instructed in the question). These students wrote in character and generally answered the question well.

There was an unexpectedly high proportion of negative responses. The value of an artwork, when weighed against the inconvenience of pedestrian traffic, was frequently played down, perhaps indicating an increasing conservatism.

The concept developed in Commentary 3, regarding the separation of the viewer and the sculpture, was frequently misunderstood. Amusing suggestions included cutting doors into the sculpture, and/or decorating it with appropriate graffiti. More serious suggestions included the possibility of relocating the sculpture.

Few students referred to the photographs, which showed the work in its specific environment. Comments on the aesthetics and intentions of the artwork itself were rare. Many students gave only personal responses without using the commentaries to back up or support their opinion.

Students would be well advised to prioritise their reading of the commentaries. During the 15 minutes of reading time they should concentrate on the commentaries in order to identify the nature of the arguments being presented

The following are some high-scoring student responses to Question 3.

Tilted Arc challenges us to think seriously about the politics of 'public space', and how they are both physically, legally and socially surrounded by the corporations and government of contemporary society. In regards to the suggested destruction of this artwork through its removal and perhaps replacement, we must realise that this nonsensical suggestion must not come to pass. As Richard Serra outlines the work is only relevant in its current context, and 'so, to remove it would be to destroy it'...

A critic in favour of the removal of the work stated that 'you can't walk...without bumping into this huge wall.' However, what this opinion lacks is the understanding of symbolism. The boldness and ability of the work to appear like a barrier alludes to the ability of other 'barrier' like-people and governments to give no opportunitys and choice. Through the symbolism of the work rusting however, it gives rise to the notion that there still may be hope.

Section B

Generally, all frameworks were better handled in Section B than they were in Section A, where students had to apply them to previously unseen artworks. It was pleasing to note that there were virtually no pre-prepared essays that had been submitted regardless of the question being asked.

Question 4

4i.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	10	7	16	26	24	17	3.0

4ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	13	8	16	25	23	15	2.8

Students responded most successfully on the 'political', 'cultural' and 'historical context' frameworks. 'Psychoanalysis' and 'symbolism' were usually combined, and 'postmodernism' and 'gender' were not well handled. The most popular artists were Booth, Kahlo, Munch, Whiteley, Goya and Dali.

Many students totally or partially ignored the requirement to give information (identification of artist, artwork, approximate date and interpretive framework being applied) about the artwork they were discussing, despite being provided with a box specifically for this purpose.



Some students nominated several frameworks rather than just one. Other students applied a variety of frameworks in their response, despite only having nominated one in the box given. These students jeopardised their chances of obtaining full marks as shallow responses did not equate with an in-depth analysis. Similarly, students who discussed more than the one artwork in each timeframe did not read or respond to the question accurately. These students, too, were disadvantaged.

Most students chose artworks that were within the appropriate timeframes; however, some students wrote their responses on the incorrect page, indicating that they had not read the paper correctly during reading time.

While students responded with a pleasing level of enthusiasm, it was evident that many did not have a solid grasp of the frameworks they were using. Teachers should ensure that the definitions of the frameworks, as presented in the *Art VCE Study Design*, pages 20–21, are understood and strictly adhered to.

Visual analysis remained problematic, as students often provided simple descriptions rather than accurate analyses of the ways in which the frameworks were made visible within the works.

The following are some high-scoring student responses to Question 4.

Framework: Historical context

Artwork: Max Ernst, 'Europe After the Rain II', 1940–42

Ernst's 'Europe After the Rain II' ...presents an apocalyptic landscape of a petrified swamp presided over by strange creatures amid the ruins of Europe. The painting is a prophetic depiction of the destruction of Europe by allied bombers during World War II, as well as a fairwell to the landscape of Ernst's youth. A German, Ernst was forced to flee Germany in the late 1930s as Hitler and the Nazis came to power. In this context, the painting can be considered Ernst's judgement on Europe in the 30s and 40s – the destroyed, destitute and deserted swamp representative of the intellectual destruction of Europe by Hitler. Considering the time in which Ernst created this painting – during the early stages of World War II when the USA was still refusing to become involved, the painting can also be considered to be Ernst's prediction of what will be left of Europe 'after the rain' of Hitler. This interpretation is reinforced by the clear blue sky of the painting which seems to imply the calm after an immense storm.

Framework: Political

Artwork: Francisco de Goya, 'The Third of May, 1808', 1814

Goya was in Madrid during the tragic events of May 2 and 3, 1808, in which the Spanish civilians rose up against the French invasion, but were savagely repressed. Goya created 'The Third of May, 1808' using expressionism, being concerned with the conveying of emotion rather than the realism of the human form. Rather than recreating the scene romantically, like many other artists of his time, Goya was much more concerned with making a political statement about the futility of war. Bodies laying on the ground and red blood spilled across the canvas conveys goya's belief that in war there are no heroes, just victims; there is no victory, just senseless suffering.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	10	2	3	4	6	5	7	7	7	9	8	8	7	7	5	5	7.9

The most popular artists were Booth, Kahlo, Henson, Piccinini, Smart and Munch.

Some students who wrote well were disadvantaged because they addressed only part of the question; that is, they addressed the commentaries **or** presented personal points of view rather than incorporating both aspects into their response. Too many responses did not refer to specific artworks or treated nominated artworks superficially.

Some students used a single word or phrase, without attribution, as a 'commentary'. While it was not expected that exact information about the source of the students' research would be provided (for example, critic X writing in the *Age* on 12 September 2005), more specific detail would have advantaged the student.

It was surprising to note the number of students who claimed that, despite wide reading and research, they did not feel that their own opinions had been influenced. They preferred to trust their initial responses to the artworks they were studying rather than allow other points of view to influence them. It is as though students feel diminished by acknowledging alternative points of view. This problem needs to be addressed.

The following student responses show a good use of quotes.

Jenny Saville seeks to reverse traditional stereotypes of women being seen as objects of desire as she distorts traditional notions of what beauty is considered as. Art critic Alison Roberts suggests that 'Propped' is a 'clear-eyed and unromantic view of the average female form, undistorted by sexual desire'...I agree with Roberts' suggestion that the image is 'undistorted' by notions of idealized femininity and by the attempt to appeal to male sexuality, however would not class the sitter as 'average'.

2005 Assessment Report



Christopher Heathcote describes the work of Rick Amor as 'visual essays...on the impending closure of our epoch, a time of increasing sadness and misery.' Certainly the stream of work Amor has produced in the last decades presents the viewer with a dialogue on the impending doom Amor feels humanity has plunged itself into. Amor acknowledges this aspect of his work saying, 'one of the main themes in my work is the passing of time, the vanity of human wishes, things pass, things decay and things fall apart.'

The following student responses show how to clearly address the question.

The ideas and universally diverse interpretations of artwork that are presented through critics, experts or public figures should be regarded and understood when attempting to self evaluate an artwork. I have personally drawn much from the critique of artworks in commentaries by the artists Rick Amor and Tracey Moffatt. It is through these artists that I have realized the validity of commentaries in developing a personal interpretation.

...I disagree with Martin Jeffrey's opinion that Amor suggests a self-disintegration of human kind due to its own development and evolutionary change. Although my critical interpretation varies completely from all individual understandings contained in the commentaries I have studied, it is clearly obvious that the influence I have gathered from them was an inseparable element in the construction of my own personal interpretation of Amor's work. It is undeniable that these commentaries have had an irreplaceable influence on my ability to interpret artworks of all movements.