

# 2019 VCE Art examination report

## General comments

The 2019 VCE Art examination was based on content from the VCE Art Study Design 2017–2021. This examination report should be read in conjunction with the study design, the 2019 VCE Art examination and the examination assessment criteria.

The following criteria were used in context to assess the Art examination paper:

- understanding and appropriate use of art vocabulary and terminology in the analysis, interpretation and comparison of artworks
- understanding of visual language to discuss and evaluate ideas and concepts in artworks
- understanding of artistic practice to conceptualise, create, present and view artworks
- knowledge of artists, their artistic practice and artworks
- knowledge of a range of relevant resources used to support the research and interpretation of artworks
- ability to substantiate interpretations of artworks with evidence taken from artworks and a range of referenced resources
- comparison of the contexts, characteristics, meanings and messages of artworks produced before 1990 with artworks produced since 1990
- understanding and application of all analytical frameworks (structural, personal, cultural and contemporary) to analyse and interpret the meanings and messages of artworks
- analysis of a range of viewpoints in relation to art ideas and related issues regarding the role of art in society
- ability to use commentaries and viewpoints from a range of resources to examine and evaluate interpretations about art ideas and related issues regarding the role of art in society
- ability to develop a personal point of view about art ideas and related issues regarding the role of art in society
- ability to use artworks and a range of attributed commentaries to support viewpoints about art ideas and related issues regarding the role of art in society.

The examination required students to have a highly developed understanding of the analytical frameworks and how these can be applied to interpret the meanings and messages of artworks. For detailed information about the analytical frameworks, please refer to the cross-study specifications in the VCE Art Study Design.

It is essential that students understand how the analytical frameworks function to interpret the structural, personal, cultural and contemporary meanings and messages. Practice with both studied and unstudied artworks will help students to test their knowledge and skills in using the various frameworks to construct and justify their interpretation.

Another aspect of the examination that students must demonstrate an understanding of is the art process. The art process is defined in the cross-study specifications in the VCE Art Study Design. In this study, the art process is integral to the conceptualisation, development and making of artworks. The art process is an iterative component of the practice of artists and includes the

application of analytical frameworks when interpreting and making artworks. The various components of the art process include:

- exploration of ideas through a conceptual and practical investigation
- experimentation with art elements and art principles, materials, techniques, processes and art forms
- development of ideas, concepts, style and visual language
- refinement of materials, techniques and technical processes to provide visual strength to artworks
- resolution of ideas, directions and concepts.

There were three sections in the 2019 VCE Art examination and all questions were compulsory.

- Section A consisted of four short-answer questions, worth a total of 25 marks. Questions assessed theoretical understanding and application of key knowledge and skills in Units 3 and 4. Questions referred to a range of unseen visual stimulus material.
- Section B consisted of two extended-answer questions that required students to examine, evaluate, analyse and interpret a range of unseen visual and written stimulus material from a broad range of sources. Section B was worth a total of 25 marks.
- Section C consisted of two extended-answer questions that required responses in the form of an extended piece of writing that developed ideas in depth. The questions required students to explore all outcomes in Units 3 and 4 through discussion of the meanings and messages of artworks studied throughout the year, and the ideas and related issues about the role of art in society. Responses discussed artists and artworks studied throughout the year and informed opinions with reference to artists and artworks, selected viewpoints and relevant aspects of specific analytical frameworks. Section C was worth a total of 25 marks.

### **Advice for students**

- Read the requirements of each question carefully and underline the key instructions to ensure all parts of the question are addressed in the answer.
- Use specific descriptive art language and vocabulary.
- Practise applying the vocabulary associated with specific art elements and art principles to unstudied artworks.
- Practise responding to questions within time limits and use the mark allocation as a guide to the amount of time required to respond to the question.
- Use specific evidence from the artwork to justify and consolidate the answer.
- Do not rely on previously prepared responses. Prepare to apply the key knowledge and skills to a range of question types.
- Remove the colour insert from the examination during reading time and ensure that responses apply to the correct artworks.

## **Specific information**

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

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

## Section A

### Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	15	46	37	2.2

High-scoring responses to question one used specific examples from the artworks and employed correct art terminology and vocabulary. To discuss the concept of shape, responses often made reference to the geometric or organic nature of the objects, their two dimensionality or representation of flattened forms. Higher-scoring responses went further, referencing specific shapes and where they were located in the artwork; the highest-scoring responses used adjectives to describe what the shapes looked like, how they were created and where they were located. For example, 'layered geometric shapes float across the picture plane to create an asymmetrical composition'. Sometimes, higher-scoring responses also noted how the use of shape was linked to an art principle such as repetition, focal point or movement.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*The geometric shapes the artwork are highlighted through the contrasting colours of blue, black and white, as well as the use of white lines to define the shapes. The chaotic shapes in the artwork are separated, giving a sense of balance to the piece. The cool blue is used in the shapes as well as the background to create unity throughout the work, and although the shapes are ambiguous those in the far upper right corner may remind the reader of chairs, connecting the space to one at home, which draw attention due to the contrasting black and white shapes.*

### Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	10	46	43	2.3

High-scoring responses to question two identified the location of the focal point in the artwork and explained why it was considered to be the focal point. High-scoring responses made direct reference to the subject matter in the artwork. Common terms used in high-scoring responses included central focus, blurred, radial and contrast. Lower-scoring responses simply restated the question, such as 'focal point is used in this artwork'.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*The dog in the centre of the picture frame is the focal point. The leading lines from the flower petals create a rhythm that moves the viewer's eye towards the dogs face. Light appears to be shining onto the top of the dogs face, creating a shadowed tone underneath to put emphasis on the focal point. The lighter colour scheme of the flower creates contrast with the darker background, which puts emphasis on the dogs face.*

### Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	3	1	1	3	6	15	21	22	16	12	6.3

The key instruction for question three was to compare; therefore, the use of comparative language such as 'however', 'although' and 'whereas' was essential. Higher-scoring responses were able to evenly draw out a balanced comparison of the meanings and messages that the artworks communicated and used comparative language to describe in detail what was both similar and different about the two artworks. Common approaches in high-scoring responses included making

a specific comparative statement at the start of the answer, such as 'both these artworks deal with the idea of entrapment', offering precise references to the subject matter of each artwork and linking these to their interpretation of the meanings and messages, then concluding with a summarising statement. Fundamental to these comparisons was the subject matter's relationship to technology, play and control. Students need to take care to really identify a point of comparison between the two artworks and focus their analysis around the interpretation of that linkage. High-scoring responses used specific evidence from each artwork to interpret the structural, personal, cultural or contemporary meanings and messages.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Both of these artworks relate to contemporary materials and practices and their impact on modern society as well as the role and impact of children in the modern world. Wonder Toy: Robert the Robot is an achromatic, nearly chiaroscuro painting depicting a young boy playing with a robot, his head immersed in a mechanical helmet and attached goggles. Net Hasselt is an installation featuring a black net, which seems to invite people to climb and wander inside. While these artwork initially appear to have a bleak or threatening message due to their lack of colour, it can be surmised that childlike wonder is at the core of their concepts. Net Hasselt is reminiscent of a large-scale replica of nets found in children's play areas, which invite young people to tumble and climb around the artificial environment, wondering what is over the next ridge. HOwever, Numen/For Use invites even adults to participate in this experience, creating a utopian environment where children and adults alike are solely focussed on enjoyment and innocence. Paolozzi also reflects on the impact of children, in the growing industry of mechanical toys in 1971. The picture seems immersive and near-futuristic; the obscured eyes of the boy imply he has taken on the perspective of a robot, perhaps leading to the monochromatic colour scheme. The whole hearted embrace of the future, and innocent fascination shown in his open-mouthed gawk, is reflected in Numen/For Use's artwork, and both show that much can be learnt from the eager participation of children in activities that are both familiar and foreign.*

#### Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	1	1	2	5	8	12	25	20	15	7	6.8

Imagination was crucial to writing a response to this question. The students who tried to stand in the shoes of the artist delivered the highest-scoring responses. This approach enabled them to see the significance of each image and how it contributed to the development of the work. Essentially, this question examined the art process that British artist Francis Bacon may have used to conceptualise, develop and make the painting *Pope I – study after Pope Innocent X by Velázquez*. Students needed to refer to all images that were presented in the paper and discuss, with confidence, the three areas of the art process identified in the question using appropriate art language. High-scoring responses used the language of the question in their answer and referred to the development of ideas, concept, style and visual language. High-scoring responses supported a systematic and logically sequenced discussion of the art process and made connections to what they thought Francis Bacon may have been aiming to achieve during each stage of the art process. High-scoring responses also utilised information provided in the image annotations to support their analysis, for example, that Diego Velázquez's painting *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* inspired over 40 Francis Bacon artworks. Higher-scoring answers discussed Bacon's development of a personal style, use of appropriation and visual language through direct comparisons to Velázquez's painting and Bacon's artwork. Specific and direct reference to the artworks was essential to achieve a high score.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*A holistic approach to the art process would have been required for Francis Bacon to produce Pope I - study after Pope Innocent X by Velázquez. Exploration of ideas through a conceptual and practical investigation is shown thoroughly in image 1 - the books and materials littered chaotically show a conceptual gathering of ideas and concepts, while holders of paintbrushes demonstrate a more practical approach that would have carried over into exploration with the medium of oil on canvas. The ideas and concepts garnered in this exploration are seen carrying over into the development of ideas, concepts, style and visual language in the subsequent images. While the painting itself of Diego Velázquez is the focus of the study, Bacon appears to have been more strongly inspired by image 3, the replication tainted and distorted by age and wear, and framed with emphasis. This tainted and dramatic visual language is mirrored in Bacon's final work, which has the same darkness, and the removal of elements to create a surreal, empty composition focussing on the Pope. The style used to convey this is minimalist, with only shred of background recognisable in the finished artwork. The soft, pastel glow which Bacon has managed to develop with the oils heightens focus on the Pope, and led to the mastery of his craft in the refinement and the eventual resolution demonstrated in his finished piece.*

## Section B

### Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average
%	3	0	0	0	1	3	8	11	15	14	13	9	10	7	5	9.1

Most students answered this question well, seeming to imagine what it would be like being in the space of the artworks, and relating the structural characteristics in the images to our habits of viewing artworks in the gallery context. Some students, even though not required to, then drew comparisons from this and made reference to the fact that times have changed with respect to the viewing of art in gallery spaces and that sometimes people are less engaged in the artworks and overly reliant on seeing the exhibitions through technology. It was an essential requirement to address the viewing of art in a gallery as represented in the two artworks, in the response. High-scoring responses quoted the commentaries and used these to propel their discussion. Students who could accurately apply both analytical frameworks were recognised for their knowledge and understanding. Occasionally, in lower-scoring responses, students referred to the first artwork far more extensively than the second, which led to an unbalanced analysis, tended to demonstrate a lack of knowledge and understanding of the analytical frameworks, and didn't discuss viewing art in a gallery context..

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

#### *Structural Analytical Framework*

*The composition of the two artworks is heavily linked to the messages - O'Neill's painting depicts a crowd closely examining a gallery piece, "people of all ages and classes" intent of its viewing. Thomas Struth's photographic print, shows a much more scattered scene, with a group of young people towards the front seemingly completing an assignment, recognisable as students by their uniforms. To the fringes a crowd of adults raise cameras and view the art through these rather than their own eyes. The oil painting medium allows O'Neill to create a more vibrant, alluring feel, showing his belief in art's "[instant] appeal" and the joy it brings. The stiff photographic medium Struth employs contrastingly mirrors the cameras and phones of the crowd, and implies a work-like approach to art fed by "institutions" and culminated through schools and media.*

#### *Personal Analytical Framework*

*O'Neill's membership to a group of artists is evident in his understanding of gallery life, and his portrayal of a bustling crowd of art-appreciating people. The "appeal" of art, and his love of it is clearly on display, as well as the way in which he desires others to respond to his work. I can relate to this honest appreciation, and therefore empathises with O'Neill's intentions in creating the artwork, making me part of his intended audience. Thomas Struth's "museum photographs" are a rather contrary notion. Struth's focus on "habits of looking at artworks" rather than the emotional content of art, is a cold psychoanalytical approach. The scene is all too familiar in modern galleries and I can relate to having been a student in this position, when I would much rather have simply taken time to enjoy the works. The contemporary fascination with photos and digital verification of experience rather than honest, earnest enjoyment of the ephemeral view is an issue brought to light, and seemingly condemned by Struth's photographs.*

### Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Average
%	5	0	1	2	4	9	15	19	16	14	10	6	7.1

High-scoring responses to question six presented a personal view in response to the prompt 'The role of art in society is to challenge social norms', specifically referenced details about the placement of the artwork in Times Square and made reference to the subject matter on the screen, then connected these ideas with reference to both commentaries. Lower-scoring responses tended to ignore the instruction to develop a personal viewpoint and often lacked reference to the artwork and commentaries.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Pipilotti Rist's art piece is certainly a conceptually grand artwork which challenges how we think about technology, art and modern life. The "flattened" face and hands seem to create a cry for help from one imprisoned by technology. Placing this in a public space is intended to cause people to stop and think about their own habits, which is especially important with regards to technology, due to the health and social ramifications of its omnipresence in modern culture. This attempt to make people "pay attention" is certainly a huge part of the purpose of art in modern society - challenging social norms such as reliance on technology and causing people to break free from cycles and patterns of behaviour. Hans Ulrich Obrist accurately summarises this in his commentary by saying art "teaches us to think creatively". Especially if in the modern art world this is a potent and necessary purpose of art, and it pervade our conversations, culture and politics. However, this has not always been the purpose of art. While artists of the 20th and 21st centuries have excelled at challenging expectations, such as Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol, in the Renaissance and ancient periods, art was created for different purposes - religious enshrinement, contemplation of nature and person, and the pursuit of beauty. Even in later periods such as Realism and Impressionism, the focus was taken away from grand social statements, and placed on appreciation of everyday experience and nature. In a world so dominated by technology, this is still just as important as giving through to how we live within social norms. Therefore, I believe that the purpose of art is not only to send political and social messages, though this is an important part of its current existence, but also to provide an appreciation for the world we live in and to elicit a profound personal emotional response that is rare in consumerist, conformist society and culture, "transgressing" screens, as Rist puts it.*

## Section C

### Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	5	0	1	1	3	7	11	11	13	17	12	10	8	7.9

Using a comparative written structure, this question required students to apply their knowledge and understanding of the cultural analytical framework to artworks they had studied before and after 1990. Often, at the start of high-scoring answers, students made a comparative statement about each artwork in relation to the cultural framework in order to write a balanced comparison and consolidated these observations with evidence from each artwork. Furthermore, higher-scoring responses linked the two selected artworks to a cultural theme, for example, motherhood, representation of women or war, and consistently compared the two from the start of the answer with reference to this theme. Lower-scoring responses tended to rely upon prepared material that was not adjusted to meet the demands of the question.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Artwork produced before 1990*

*Name of artist: Michelangelo di Buonarroti*

*Title of artwork and approximate date: The Last Judgement, 1541*

*Artwork produced after 1990*

*Name of artist: Patricia Piccinini*

*Title of artwork and approximate date: Graham, 2016*

*Michelangelo's and Piccinini's artworks, while they both depict humanoid forms and the theme of death, come from vastly different cultures and thus present their subjects in clearly different ways. Michelangelo's The Last Judgement was created during the Renaissance period (roughly 1300 - 1600 C.E.). During this time new ideas of humanism, individual achievement and incorporating science into art were coming into popularity. In contrast, to humanism, however, Michelangelo's painting is an eschatological piece commissioned by the Catholic Church, which was a common practice at the time. It reflects the pervasive influence of religious institutions at the time, particularly on art, and the message is that of the judgement in which the dead are separated into good and evil, which is shown in the fresco. Piccinini's mostly bare Graham is in some ways similar to the bare figures in Michelangelo's piece, but reception to nudity in the modern world is much more welcoming than in Michelangelo's time which censored the work heavily. Both portray a focus on anatomy, with Piccinini's hyperrealistic sculpture of fiberglass, resin and silicone taking on even more in-depth approach than Michelangelo's, also incorporating consultation with experts in traffic and medicine, which are modern concepts incredibly different to in the Renaissance. The meaning of Piccinini's artwork is that the human body is not developed to withstand crashes at high velocity, while Graham is. The stark, shocking contrast between the human form and this altered portrayal is intended to convince her audience of care-reliant Westerners to practice safe habits on the road. In the drinking culture of Australia, where the piece is targeted, and the contemporary knowledge of science, medicine, physical and widespread belief in evolution, this stance on the inadequacy of the human body is a poignant and convincing one, whereas in the time of Michelangelo, appealing to a common religious background would have been an extremely effective way of conveying his similar warning message about the end of time.*

### Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Average
%	7	0	0	1	3	5	6	8	9	16	13	12	10	9	8.5

This question required students to discuss two or more viewpoints regarding an art idea and related issue(s) with reference to one artwork and two or more attributed commentaries. Importantly, students needed to use a different artist and artwork to the ones they had employed to

answer question seven. Higher-scoring responses demonstrated a depth of individual investigation into the art idea and related issue that allowed students to confidently reframe it in line with the expectations of the question. These students were proficient in attributing viewpoints to commentaries from a range of reliable, recognised and relevant sources. Students who employed quotation marks and attributed commentaries to a specific author helped to clearly distinguish between the ideas of the student and those belonging to another person. Direct and specific reference to evidence from the artwork and how it related to the art idea and related issue was one of the essential requirements for higher-scoring responses. Lower-scoring responses often used one- or two-word commentaries, and relied upon anecdotal evidence, for example 'some people think that ...', and unattributed sources.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Statement about one art idea and related issue(s): Performance art raises moral concerns.*

*Name of artist: Marina Abramović*

*Title of artwork and approximate date: 'Rhythm 0' performance, 1974*

*In the pursuit of power performance artists create controversy which may ignore moral considerations. American critic Arthur Danto states, "you can murder someone and call it art, but you are still a murderer. Morality trumps aesthetics, that's my view." Ultimately, the critic condemns performance artist who push the envelope into a new and often transgressive territory. In an extremely troubling work, Serbian artist Marina Abramović shocked and exposed the darker side of her audience in her 'Rhythm 0' performance. Standing straight for 6 hours, she invited strangers to do what they wanted with the 72 objects layed on a long white table, stating "I am the object. I take full responsibility," There were no separate stages in the large white walled room; Abramović stood in the same space as the public, clearly showing the latter was part of the work. I would imagine feeling frozen at the confrontation of heinous acts committed by the public, which included ripping almost all of her clothes off and threatening to kill her with a gun. Those who chose not to remain passive and instead dehumanized the artist due to favourable circumstances could not face her in the end as they escaped the room, highlighting the evil in humanity. She comments "if we provide a stage, the majority of 'normal' people can apparently become truly violent." The performance exposed more about the audience rather than the artist herself, as they pushed the moral boundaries despite Abramović instigating their actions. The artist definitely raised ethical concerns through her confronting performance, and critics like Arthur Danto reject the notion that this is art. The harm caused in this performance either physically or mentally was only surfaced through the freedom of the public being able to do as they pleased. It showed how far they would go, a powerful message which would not have been highlighted without the inhumane actions. Abramović says, "I realise the power of art when it is not on a wall in a gallery", suggesting that non-conventional art forms are the most compelling art to communicate. In my view, the moral concerns raised by performance artist can either be detrimental to their work, or imbue a powerful message that deeply impacts their audience through inviting them into their spaces, allowing them to transform with them.*