

2020 VCE Art examination report

General comments

The 2020 VCE Art written examination was based on the *VCE Art Adjusted Study Design for 2020*. This examination report should be read in conjunction with the revised study design, the VCE Art examination specifications 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, 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 on page 12. 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 2020 VCE Art examination and all questions were compulsory.

- Section A consisted of four short-answer questions. 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 A was worth a total of 25 marks.
- 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

- Remove the colour insert from the examination during reading time and ensure that responses apply to the correct artworks.
- 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 using 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 pre-prepared responses. Prepare to apply the key knowledge and skills to a range of question types.

Specific information

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	10	47	41	2.3

Question 1 required students to identify and discuss the use of an appropriate art element of their choice in the artwork. In most cases, students demonstrated their ability to make appropriate and well-reasoned choices to illustrate their knowledge and understanding of the art element selected. They were able to discuss how the art element was used in the artwork using evidence from the artwork. They were also able to demonstrate that there is often more than one dominant art element in use in a work of art. Most students selected colour as the art element. Students who paired an art principle with the chosen art element (for example, colour and contrast) were able to explain the use of contrasting colours and score higher than responses that only described the colours. Responses that referred to colour in general, without selecting specific colour(s), often scored much lower than those that could name the colour, use metalanguage such as primary colours and reference the specific location of the colour in the artwork. Some students identified and discussed an art principle instead of an art element and received no marks. Students need to ensure that their response and the evidence they use relate specifically to the prescribed artwork. They should also avoid writing more than is necessary to answer the question as extraneous information will impact upon their time to answer other questions.

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

Art Element: Colour

Colour has been used to create a sense of depth within the work, as the warm tangerines of the cliff face in the foreground advance, while the cool oceanic blues in the foreground recede. A sense of implied texture has also been created through the variation in orange hues on the foreground hill, as well as a sense of movement as the colour flows through the hills.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	5	16	41	37	2.1

Students were required to select one art principle and discuss how it was used by the artist. Repetition and pattern were the most popular. High-scoring responses described the use of circular organic shapes in varying sizes that were repeated throughout the print. Higher-scoring responses described the tone of the irregular outlines of the circular shapes and how they contrasted against the creamy background. Students who did not score well failed to identify specific features in the artwork. Students are advised to refrain from recounting didactic information about the artwork and avoid listing too many art principles as this will dilute the quality of their response.

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

Art Principle: Pattern

Pattern is created in this work through repetition of small circular black dots in varying shapes and sizes. The contrast between the pale-yellow background and the solid black circles or outlines of circles creates a flowing rhythm as does the variation in sizes which suggests movement. The even distribution of black circles and the outlines of circles creates an undulating pattern.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	2	0.5	0.5	1	3	13	23	25	19	12	6.6

Students were required to compare the meanings and messages of two artworks using the subject matter in both artworks. At the beginning of the response, students often addressed what each artist was communicating to the viewer through their choice of subject matter. To do this successfully, students needed to identify a theme or key idea that linked the two artworks and then compared how each artwork has addressed the theme or key idea, often by addressing the artist's visual language and using appropriate aspects of the analytical frameworks. A stronger response would link specific details and evidence from each artwork to support the interpretation of the meaning of the artworks. Higher-scoring responses were able to evenly draw out a balanced comparison of the subject matter and messages that the artworks communicated, and used comparative language to describe in detail the similarities and differences between the two artworks. Lower-scoring responses typically used one or two comparative terms in the analysis of the two artworks or discussed the artworks in two separate paragraphs linked with a comparative term.

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

Both works analyse the natural beauty of rural areas, however, the works differ in their perceptions of farmland and agriculture. Louis Buvelot's 'Waterpool near Coleraine (sunset)', 1869, portrays the state of farmlands and agriculture in the 1860s, as the land is much more ragged and the terrain uneven, as the work acknowledges a world before mass industrialisation. Wayne Thiebaud's 'Reservoir and Orchard', 2001, directly contrasts artwork 1, as it comments on the impact of humans on rural areas through its use of vibrant, saturated neon colours which contrast the natural light seen within Artwork 1. Artwork 1 shows the natural imperfections within nature before human influence, whereas Artwork 2 shows the way in humans have taken away aspects of what makes nature beautiful, as demonstrated by the perfectly symmetrical and partitioned land, as well as the almost industrialised repetition of plants seen in the bottom left corner. The landscape in artwork 2 as a whole demonstrates no imperfections or flaws, which directly contrasts the pre-industry landscape of artwork 1. Overall, both works examine how the characteristics of nature have been taken away by humans.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	1	1	2	6	9	15	23	18	12	9	6.7

Students were asked to discuss how the artist Sun Xun developed ideas and visual language in his artworks, and to refer to specific details in the artworks on the opposite page. Most students demonstrated an ability to discuss the art process and a familiarity with its stages. However, students would have benefited from a better understanding of the terms 'ideas' and 'visual language' in discussing how artworks are made. Lower-scoring responses discussed the linear process the artist used to make the work but not how the artist developed ideas and visual language. They also did not provide evidence from the artworks. High-scoring responses referenced each image and used specific details to make connections between the images and to support their discussion. They addressed ideas such as time, myths and culture, and linked them to the artist's use of visual language through different media, materials and artforms, such as drawing and animation.

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

Sun Xun's approach to the art process is demonstrated through Image 1, as it depicts him in the exploration phase, in which he begins exploring the landscape for his final work. As shown in image 1, Xun is painting on what appears to be canvas, which suggests by image 2 his medium has greatly shifted, as image 2 shows refinement through a single-channel woodcut animation video. In the space between Image 1 and Image 2 (which is the same year), Xun has demonstrated the development of his ideas and concepts within the art process. Both the medium and the materials used have shifted, which demonstrates the progression in his ideas. Image 2 also shows the introduction of colour to his work, which he abandons by image 3. Image 3 shows the product of Xun's development of ideas and visual language, as the content within the work has shifted from mountain ranges to writing and a depiction of primates, to his final work 2 years later. His final work demonstrates that he incorporated the landscape format depicted in image 1, as well as the black colour scheme, however, most of the ideas within Images 1 and 2 are gone. Overall, as time progressed Xun demonstrates through the 3 images a distinct and profound shift and development of ideas and visual language.

Section B

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average
%	1	0.5	0.5	1	2	5	6	12	14	12	11	11	10	9	7	9.3

Most students demonstrated a confident application of the structural analytical framework to discuss the different way the two artists had interpreted the car as subject matter for their artworks. They were also able to refer to the images to identify the components of the structural and cultural framework, and used the commentaries to support their responses. The highest-scoring answers noted and expanded upon a range of social, economic and historical factors about cars and machines or technology that may have influenced the development and presentation of the artworks. They also included specific evidence from the artworks to elaborate upon the artworks' meanings and messages. Lower-scoring responses described the appearance of each artwork and quoted directly from the commentaries, without attempting to elaborate on the ideas embedded within them to develop their own interpretation of the meanings and messages conveyed in the artworks.

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

Structural Analytical Framework

Both Russolo and Ortega's works explore the subject matter of the car, however Ortega's installation expresses a scientific dissection of cars, while Russolo's oil painting evokes the emotional and 'dynamic' (c2) power and feelings of the automobile. The repetition of red triangular lines across the middle of the work creates a sense of 'speed' (c2) and forward motion which reflects the idea of a car representing 'modern technology' (c1). The harsh contrast between the orange and red colours surrounding the car and the colour and darker black and purple of the car, emphasis the car, while the red becomes a symbol of power and energy. In contrast, Ortega's 'sculpture' (c2) represents the 'disassembled and reassembled' (c2) parts of a car.

Cultural Analytical Framework

Russolo's work in its powerful expression of the motion of a car reflects his 'dynamic vision of the future' (c2), as part of the Futurists Italian art movement beginning in the 1900s. The work's harsh depiction of the car reflects an 'aggressive celebration of modern technology' (c1), yet also displays a sense of appreciation and excitement about future possibilities of technology and the car. On the other hand, Ortega views 'art as a scientific' (c2), he used the 'everyday' (c2) object of a car and created a sculpture using the 'diagram in a repair manual' (c2). He chose the Volkswagen Beetle in particular, as it is a 'symbol of Germany's economic boom after World War II.' Thus, he views the car in terms of its economic progression and advancement while Russolo's work depicts a celebratory account of the work.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Average
%	4	0.5	1	2	3	7	9	15	17	20	13	11	7.7

In this question, students were required to discuss the ideas, issues and varying interpretations about the social role of art expressed in the artwork and in commentaries from different sources. In general, students provided perceptive and insightful answers that demonstrated deep thinking and authentic engagement with the question, the artwork and the commentaries. Higher-scoring responses made specific references to the artwork, such as its scale, and to the issues associated with the materials used by the artist to make the installation, such as the environment and sustainability. They also often included a personal viewpoint and elaborated upon the ideas in the two commentaries, such as bringing awareness to human actions that will change the environment, rather than simply restating or copying them. The highest-scoring responses used the commentaries as starting points to advance individual ideas about the artwork.

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

Tara Donovan expresses through her work 'Untitled (plastic cups)' an admiration for the natural world and it's organic, natural growth, yet at the same time discusses the devastating effects and pollution, waste and rubbish upon the planet. Tara Donovan's employment of the plastic cups is emblematic of the extensive amounts of consumed foods thrown away and left to remain in water systems, the 'fluffy' texture created with the small object is indicative of cloud formations as water, highlighting Donovan's desire to 'mimic' the 'use of nature' within the work. Donovan's work seeks to spread awareness for the detrimental effects of low waste management, her installed work acting as 'an effective tool for communication'. The structure of the installation itself is lighted in a sinister and ominous way, the gloomy darkness indicative of the planet's weakness and inability to properly process the vast amounts of plastic pumped upon its surface. The soft white and light purple shade of the piece reflect the serenity of the world and indicative of the innocence and purity. The material contrasts the innocence and asks the audience to question the use of plastic and to appreciate the scientific 'advocacy' of contemporary art practices.

Section C

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Average
%	3	0.5	0.5	1	2	3	10	16	12	12	9	12	10	10	8.7

Using contemporary and personal analytical frameworks, students were required to analyse and interpret the meanings and messages of one artwork they had studied. High-scoring responses developed clear links between the ideas and visual evidence in the artworks and connected these to an aspect of the two analytical frameworks. Lower-scoring responses tended to rely upon one analytical framework to answer the question. In general, students seemed more adept at applying the contemporary analytical framework than the personal one. Many provided a strong discussion of the contemporary interpretation of old works, especially how our contemporary time informs how we see the artwork or how the artwork was contemporary for its time. However, fewer students referred to other aspects within the contemporary framework, such as how the artist challenged traditional art ideas, materials or processes in the creation of their artwork. Some students used the word 'contemporary' without further interpretation, suggesting further revision of the contemporary analytical framework may be needed. With regard to the personal analytical framework, many students listed biographical details about the artist without explaining how the information was relevant to the meanings in the artwork. In addition, not many addressed the viewer's personal interpretation and feelings about the artwork.

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

Name of artist: Kara Walker

Title of artwork and approximate date: 'The Katastwóf Karavan' (2018)

Kara Walker utilises contemporary art practice to reflect upon and explore the ongoing repercussions of the Transatlantic Slave Trade on the social and political climate of America. Responding to her personal experience as an African American woman and her dismay at the lack of communication for slavery in New Orleans, Louisiana, a critical point in the transportation of slaves, Walker aims to educate contemporary audience. The 'Katastwóf Karavan' is a site-specific public art piece that moves across the city. Walker uses the sounds of steam powered calliope to pervade the consciousness of her audience even as the caravan moves out of sight, commenting on the ever-present nature of racism in daily life. She purposefully adopts the instruments used to entertain wealthy white people to confront the prosperity emerging from exploitation. The music has been created in collaboration with Jason Moran to whistle songs of Black empowerment, and the tableaux of exploitation on the sides of the caravan have been created by outsourced materials, technical industry experts and the process of laser-jet cutting steel. This is reflective of the spirit of collaboration that emerges in contemporary art, as well as a way through which what was once an oppressive industry can be used to raise the voices of the oppressed. By having the work accessible to a wide public audience rather than a gallery, Walker nullifies divisive restrictions placed upon art viewing and education, making it a more effective mode for expression and teaching. The lesson remains pertinent, as Louisiana remains a state wherein Black Americans are disproportionately incarcerated and improvised, connecting to her audience's empathy for the subject and imploring them to analyse the long lasting impacts of slavery on the society they inhabit.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	11	1	1	1	5	5	8	10	10	13	14	11	11	7.6

In this question, students were required to refer to an art idea and related issues to discuss the connections between an artwork(s) and attributed commentaries. High-scoring responses to this question began by clearly articulating the art idea and the issues related to it. They used at least two authoritative, credible and attributed commentaries throughout the response, weaving in numerous specific examples from at least one artwork. More fluent responses embedded quotes within the sentence to create a more coherent and well-organised response that explained the art idea and related issues. References to artworks often clarified the subject matter, visual language or use of materials and techniques the artist worked with to help contextualise and consolidate the arguments students were making. Lower-scoring responses used one- or two-word unattributed commentaries, failed to use evidence from the artwork and labelled the issue in one word, such as 'censorship', without identifying what the underlying ideas about censorship were.

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

Art Idea: Is it appropriate for outsiders to tell the stories of First Nations people?

Title of artwork: Rorschach Myall Creek 2010 by Ben Quilty

Source of commentary 1: Ben Quilty

Source of commentary 2: Hayley Millar-Baker

Ben Quilty's 'Rorschach Myall Creek' painting has prompted controversy about the ethics of his practice. As a white artist, Quilty's range in understanding the gravity of his subject matter and interrelated cultural trauma is questionable.

In an attempt to 'shed light on history through art', Quilty portrays the traumas of colonisation and mass genocide on the First Nations People of the Myall Creek country. For him, he believes it is his 'responsibility' as a white artist in Australia. However, he contradicts his artistic intentions through the romanticisation of such an event. Deploying a warm colour palette of reds and oranges in harmony with the soft blended brush strokes, Quilty's work eases audiences into a state of comfort stating he is showcasing the 'beauty of the land', he undermines the violence and generational trauma suffered by First Nations people on this land. This is accentuated by his Rorschach blotting technique, which distorts and misconstrued the visuals, as well as functions highly psychologically confrontational. In this way, he misconstrues the real events in exchange for visual aesthetics of romanticisation, casting doubt in his claims of altruism.

To further degrade Quilty's claims, First Nations artist Hayley Millar-Baker labels Quilty as a 'grief tourist'. She compares the practice of Quilty to a Colonizer, in the way that he steals and culturally appropriates stories that do not belong to him. Despite his good intentions, Millar-Baker claims that his success within Australia is only 'at the expense of First Nations people'. From her perspective, Quilty is not politically aware of his 'white saviour' complex, which not only pushes the idea of Western paternalism and ideology, but the detrimental idea the First Nations people (and artists) are inferior to white people. I would agree with her statements, as Rorschach Myall Creek further accentuates the class gap.