

2022 VCE Art external assessment report

General comments

The 2022 Art examination provided opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills that referenced many aspects of the *VCE Art Study Design 2017–2022*. In section A, students were required to analyse the use of art elements and principles, interpret the meaning and messages in artworks, and discuss the art process. In section B, students needed to apply the personal and cultural interpretive frameworks to unseen and unstudied artworks and analyse art ideas and related issues drawn from one artist's practice. Finally, in section C, students were required to apply the structural and cultural interpretive frameworks to one artwork produced before 1990 and explain how attributed commentaries supported or challenged their ideas regarding an art idea or issue.

Students are strongly advised to remove the colour insert from the question and answer booklet during reading time. This minimises the risk of inadvertently missing a question or selecting artworks to answer questions not allocated to the question they are responding to. Students also need to read the instructions in the question more carefully, as some students failed to answer all parts of the question. Question 4 identified, at least twice, that Brett Whiteley's gender is male, yet a number of students identified him as female. However, no marks were deducted for this error. Another concern was the number of students who did not correctly identify the art principles in Question 2. These terms are clearly stated in the study design, and students must ensure they can correctly identify and describe them when analysing unseen and unstudied artworks.

Where practical, students should also use the white space below the line space in the exam booklet to continue writing their answers rather than resorting to the extra space at the back of the booklet. Doing so minimises the risk of assessors missing significant parts of the student's answer if it is continued in the additional writing space without a note from the student.

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 been 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 of more or less than 100 per cent.

Question 1

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
|-------|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 10 | 29 | 40 | 22 | 1.75 |

The two main art elements students wrote about were form and texture. Some students identified shapes as their answer but then reverted to discussing form, which led to an unfocused answer that needed more detail to achieve full marks. Numerous students were confused by the sculpture, interpreted it as a photograph, and discussed the 'black background'.

Before writing their answer, students must check the information below the image to confirm the exact art form to which they are responding. This will ensure their selection of the art element is accurate and aligns with the art form depicted in the artwork. For example, if the artwork is a sculpture, then texture and form will be art elements that might be selected by students to respond to.

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

Texture

The inherent and objective texture of the marble is smooth and cold to the touch, a coldness that is reinforced by the pallid ash-grey colour. However, through the fluid lines creating various folds and drapes, there is an implied texture of soft and flowing cloth. This contrasts against the form of the face and arms, where the smoothness and realistic dips mimic the textural quality of soft, warm skin, thus creating an implied skin-like texture.

Question 2

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
|-------|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 12 | 19 | 45 | 24 | 1.8 |

For the most part, students correctly identified one art principle. Contrast (referring to colour), balance, repetition (referring to line) and unity were most frequently selected. Generally, students responded to Question 2 more confidently than to Question 1. Students who scored highly connected their analysis to the artwork's physical attributes, made direct reference to the artwork's subject matter, and related this to the use of the art principle.

Where possible, students should use precise adjectives that apply the vocabulary associated with the art principle to receive a higher mark allocation. They should avoid using generic phrases like 'eye-catching', which is an imprecise analysis of the art principle. Occasionally, students did not accurately identify one art principle or chose to write about an art element, which compromised their answers' accuracy. It was concerning that some students wrote about the wrong image from the insert, or chose to write about an image or multiple images allocated to Question 4, reinforcing the importance of removing the insert from the question booklet during reading time.

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

Contrast

The smooth, empty space in the flower contrasts against the comb-like greyish brown lines fluctuating in size on the hair of the figure on the left, thus highlighting and pushing the flower to the foreground. The hair of the figure on the right is established through contrasting curving black undulating lines with a coral colour to create an implied texture of straight bustling hair. The uniformed black lines of similar lengths on the neck of the figure on the right contrast against the smooth block colour beige on the rest of her neck; here, contrast is used to establish tone and, thus, form.

Question 3

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Average |
|-------|---|-----|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|---|---------|
| % | 1 | 0.5 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 18 | 25 | 24 | 15 | 8 | 6.3 |

Question 3 required students to compare the meanings and messages of two artworks. Both artworks show human nature within the context of socialisation and togetherness, illustrating a bond over a shared musical interest. Most students described the two artworks accurately, and most could link the two artworks to the subject matter of music represented in each artwork through the use of musical instruments. Many students compared each artwork's meaning and messages through the use of colours, the subjects' expressions, and the difference between the formalness of Fontana's artwork by referring to the sombre and serious-looking nature of the subject matter. The highest-scoring responses wrote about the meaning and messages by comparing the different styles of the artworks, the techniques each artist used to depict the subject matter and what was happening in society at the time the artwork was made. Sometimes class was also mentioned in relation to the meaning and messages. Some students talked about the difference in relationships between the different characters in the artworks.

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

Both Fontana and Wood explore the role of music; however, whereas Fontana portrays music as nurturing, Wood expands on its ability to invigorate and revitalise. Both the artworks reflect their respective eras, as Fontana's almost chiaroscuro style and desaturated colours of pallid yellow and muted red mirror a classical upholding of restraint and dignity, whereas Wood's block colours, primarily carmine red, gold and green, convey the boldness and invigoration of pop art in the 2000s. These differences in style also convey the respective roles of music. Fontana's use of realistic form and tone conveys a sense of sensibility in the subject's piano playing, thereby connoting music as a source of learning and self-betterment. Conversely, the lack of line-art tracing the figures in Wood's artwork literally blends them in with the background, thus suggesting an immersive experience in the band. Indeed, this contrast is further emphasised by how Fontana's subject breaks the fourth wall, staring into the viewer's eyes as if imploring them to join her in her musical studies, whereas Wood's three musicians primarily look at their own instruments, thereby creating a self-contained composition which viewers are invited to see, but not join. Ultimately, both artworks portray the varying roles of music in their respective eras, as Fontana demonstrates the ability of music to be nurturing and sensible, while conversely, Wood upholds the immersive and invigorating experience of contemporary pop.

Question 4

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|---|-----|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 3 | 0.5 | 2 | 3 | 10 | 15 | 16 | 18 | 14 | 12 | 8 | 6.45 |

Question 4 asked students to discuss the art process that Australian artist Brett Whiteley used to resolve ideas, directions and concepts for the artwork *Self portrait in the studio*, and use the illustrated images to support their discussion. Four images were provided: one ink drawing, a self-portrait using his hair (*Self portrait after a haircut at 36*, 1976), a photograph of Brett Whiteley working in the studio (by Robert Walker), and his Archibald prize-winning self-portrait (*Self portrait in the studio*, 1976).

Most students could list visual information from the images, such as Whiteley's use of lines, the mirror, the figure and the room's interior. Higher-scoring responses needed to connect this description with specific vocabulary associated with the art process documented in the study design. Students who scored highly

presented a more direct and specific discussion about the resolution of ideas, directions and concepts that referenced the visual material presented in the paper. Several insightful answers made reference to details in the images that included comments on place (the Sydney harbour seen in the view through the window evident in images one and three), discussion of Whiteley's use of his hair in his portrait as a mixed media artwork, his self-portrait shown as a reflection in the mirror, and the inclusion of his own hands in the act of painting within the artwork itself.

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

Whiteley would have went through all the stages of the art process before resolving his final artwork 'Self portrait in the studio'. Image 1 appears to be of the early experimental or exploration stage, as the monochromatism and simple undulating lines contrast against the bold blue and detailed forms in the resolution to suggest this is a preliminary sketch for Whiteley's practical and conceptual investigation. However, when comparing Whiteley's resolution in image 4 to the primary stage of exploration in image 1, it appears that his final artwork is somewhat dependent on this initial sketch, as they share a similar composition yet different in the details such as the scale of his objects and positioning of various things such as the nude statue. This would suggest that Whiteley went through more extensive development after image 1 and before his resolution in image 4. Image 2 appears to be in development as Whiteley practises his self-portrait abilities and develops visual language. This self-portrait is present in image 4 but seems to not exist in image 1, thereby suggesting a change or development in his artistic ideas. Image 3 shows Whiteley's resolution stage and indicates previous trials at a self-portrait, such as the one in image 2, which made him so familiar with depicting himself that references were not needed. In the self-portrait in image 4, a clear connection can be seen between the orange and yellow warm colour scheme and the brunette tones in image 2, suggesting his resolution did not change much after image 2. However, it is interesting to note the bold and confident saturated colours of primarily cobalt blue used in the final, suggesting more trials before his resolution that we did not see; ultimately, his final was a good resolution of art styles, concepts and ideas previously explored.

Question 5

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 2 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 21 | 31 | 22 | 13 | 4.9 |

This question required students to discuss how the artwork reflected the artist's personal philosophy and ideas using the personal analytical framework by including references to the blue 'colonial' landscape compared to the more natural palette of the Indigenous wildlife, illustrated in the foreground. However, although many responses were well written, they often struggled to link specific subject matter back to the artist and sufficiently use them as evidence to support their discussion of the personal framework. They relied too much on the commentaries to provide the foundations for their answer.

Students who scored highly were able to successfully identify the key concepts from the commentaries and use these briefly as a catalyst to prompt and expand upon in their discussion, often synthesising their general knowledge with a more comprehensive analysis of the artwork. Responses that did not score well tended to repeat the commentaries verbatim without any link to the artwork or artist.

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

Through Mellor's depiction of the two kangaroos fighting, this symbolism of an Australian native animal in conflict with itself could be extrapolated to represent the deeply entrenched personal turmoil in Mellor's 'own mixed heritage', as he is a descendant of both First Peoples of Australia and their European colonisers'. This 'tension' is further heightened by the contrast of vividly coloured animals, such as the saturated red and green of the parrot against the pallid grey-ish blue fine delicate lines which delineate the Australian landscape and its new colonial infrastructures. There is also a bleakness and mundanity

elicited by the monochromatic background, contrasting against the reinvigorating vivid colours of the native Australian animals, which creates three-dimensional forms to elevate them above the flat backdrop; thus, Mellor appears to uphold his First Peoples identity over that of his coloniser heritage, ultimately depicting their incongruity and conflict created in his identity. I personally could not relate to the specifics of being an Indigenous and white mixed person. However, as a first-generation Asian immigrant, I understand his struggles of conflicting identities, as many times I have had to compromise values instead of being Asian or Australian to be a mix of both.

Question 6

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 6 | 2 | 3 | 13 | 21 | 30 | 16 | 10 | 4.4 |

This question required students to discuss the art ideas and related issues represented in the artwork using the cultural analytical framework. Students mainly were able to discuss and interpret the multicultural nature of the artwork illustrated; Students who used the commentaries as a foundation for their answer but developed it further by introducing new ideas tended to score higher than those who restated the commentaries or described the artwork's subject matter.

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

Zahalka explores the way immigration affects those who yearn for brighter futures and develop of the societies which they join. Seen in image 1, the woman appears to be enjoying this landscape and its beauties, seen in her reclined state and outward-looking gaze. This sparks an optimism and hope for the future, which contrasts to image 2. Assuming a death has occurred within this family, their white flowers could be a means of commemorating death in their own culture. The placing of the pot on the ground could reflect a unity of these two cultures; where their customs meet the literal foundation of the Australian society. As they stare directly into the camera, a moment of reflection and introspection is implied as they collectively stand together in solidarity. Zahalka implies despite being separated from 'the countries they came from', they inevitably find community and family (both biological and chosen) within their racial groups. As Australia becomes more urbanised, a bridge is seen in the background of Image 3, assumedly assisted and built by immigrant workers. The bridge could be symbolic for the eventual unity of society itself, bridging the way for a hopeful, multicultural future.

Question 7

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 16 | 12 | 12 | 8 | 6 | 6.7 |

This question required students to use commentaries to discuss the ideas and related issues in a photograph by David Waderton. Students seemed very comfortable answering this question, using their experience and understanding of the disappearance of older authentic, family-run businesses and the introduction and gentrification of chain businesses that replaced them to expand upon in their discussion. Many students used the commentaries effectively to discuss the issues raised in the artwork. Some students could directly reference the photograph regarding the old-fashioned look and modernist aesthetic of the cafe's interior, the black and white vinyl floor, empty chairs and old photographs on the wall. Sometimes there was a lack of direct reference to the image and subject matter seen in the photograph, which prevented students from achieving a high score.

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

Ordinarily simple yet touching is David Wadelton's photograph 'Sila Espresso, Brunswick Street Fitzroy'. Wishing to 'capture as many [small cafés] as [he] can', the artist wishes to capture the fleeting intimacy and joy of these local monuments before they disappear to our society of brand recognition and marketability. The vibrant reds and organically rusty tables are emblematic of nostalgic days past, being a comforting area of vibrancy and community. The newspapers on the wall paired with the collage of photographs imply the café's community historical value and the amazing memories and accomplishments of the cafe. However, this glee and comfort are overruled by an overwhelming sense of distance and isolation to stress what is 'left behind' in our fast-moving society. Employing the 'descriptive limits of photography', the scene is forever frozen. While the filled display shelves imply it is bustling with business, there isn't a single person captured in the shot, both inside and outside. Viewers are positioned to wonder why such a warm atmosphere is empty and cold, creating a yearning to return to these joyous memories. The vibrant reds of the seats contrasted against the green checkered floors create a visual vibrancy and excitement, being emblematic of the childish joys and gleeful innocence. This is juxtaposed against the minimal and sanitised nature of the street outside, and its harshly geometric grey structures, to its emptiness and modernity. Wadelton aims to capture a scene both limited in scope and panoramic. While the capturing of their moment in time is forever still, a similar deadpan and lifeless atmosphere will plague the city if these small and original monuments continue to lose to society's inclinations towards 'multi-national look-alike chains.'

Question 8

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 7 | 8 | 9.0 |

Students were required to apply the structural and cultural analytical frameworks to interpret an artwork produced before 1990 that they had studied this year. High-scoring responses provided balanced answers to each framework, directly referenced the artwork in their answer, provided clear interpretations and supported their analysis using evidence from the artwork. Mid-range responses tended to focus on one framework, usually the structural combined with a discussion that relied upon the description of the artwork rather than an analysis of it. Students should remember that an application of the framework is designed as a lens through which they analyse the artwork.

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

Name of artist: Jackson Pollock

Title of artwork and approximate date: One: Number 31 (1950)

Structural analytical framework

Muted industrial colours traverse the entire canvas, consisting of interwoven static lines and an equilibrium of movement and energy. Using hardened paintbrushes to drip enamel paint onto the floor's canvas, the erratically placed lines are equally a product of gravity and nature's primal rhythms, as well as Pollock's forceful gestures. Harnessing the power of the unconscious mind, there is no subject matter but rather an outpouring of personality and his internal state. As the many layers pool and interweave with one another, a sense of depth is created as the white splatters advance to the foreground, and the grey, blue and brown recede. The interwoven and layered nature of the piece can be symbolically likened to neurological pathways of the brain, further bolstering the idea that the piece is his mind and psychological state translated into visual form. The enormity of scale creates a tapestry-like viewing as viewers' eyesights are completely surrounded and engulfed by this 'web' of lines. The immersive experience upon viewing can act as a reminder of the vastness and never-ending nature of the mind and by result the cosmos. The smaller white splatters and dots are akin to glowing stars, looping in neverending milky

ways and galaxies of the universe – equally as vast and equally as uncontainable in humanity’s comprehension.

Cultural analytical framework

Being part of Abstract Expressionism, Pollock saw art as containing a responsibility to ‘confront the ills of society.’ Following the second world war, American society was recovering from one of history’s largest atrocities. Pollock and his fellow Abstract Expressionists saw this as an opportunity to change art into a more abstract and radical form of expression to reflect the upheaval of the time period. The art world required more violent and expressive ways to portray this new era. Pollock introduced frenzy and energy unseen to the art world. The explosive and anarchic energies which imbue the piece can be compared to the visual representation of a bomb’s detonation or the explosion and splattering of human remains. While he did create from within, he was also equally inspired by the art world around him. Having a fascination with Native American sand paintings, Pollock similarly utilised a harnessing of gravity to aid his drip technique. Their use of upside-down symbols also prompted an intrigue in abstraction; however, Pollock abandoned any hint of iconography. Rather, he also worked by placing the canvas on the ground and filling the canvas with untrammelled irregularity. Seen in One: Number 31, there is no focal point or ‘proper’ orientation – it is a consistently chaotic spread of looping chords, which stretch right until the edges of the canvas. Inspired by the world around him, Pollock used other artistic inspirations as a means of influencing his artwork, whether intentional or not.

Question 9

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | Average |
|-------|----|---|---|---|---|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
| % | 10 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 15 | 17 | 12 | 9 | 6.85 |

Question 9 required students to explain how attributed commentaries have supported or challenged their ideas regarding an art idea or its related issues. Responses that best fulfilled the requirements of this question appeared to be written by students who had a genuine interest and investment in their selected art idea and its related issues. These students wrote passionately and attributed their commentaries to reliable and relevant sources. They were also the responses that presented the most precise point of view. Students should be encouraged to investigate an art idea of interest rather than one from a prescriptive list.

While high-scoring responses used commentaries well, they also referenced the artwork numerous times and specific parts of the artwork in their answer to further develop their explanation. Responses that did not score well tended to address the question superficially. They didn’t clearly state an art issue, or didn’t use commentaries to discuss an artwork in context or with relevance to an art issue. Students should refrain from relying on pre-prepared responses as these often fail to fully address the question’s requirements.

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

Title of artwork and approximate date: Comedian, 2019, Maurizio Cattelan

Source of commentary 1: J. Tanlinson, 2012, The Artist’s Fine Art Gallery

Source of commentary 2: Chris Dercron, 2015, The Art Newspaper

The value of art is increasingly difficult to determine, especially when involving celebrity status. Many criticise the modern art scene’s inclinations to only grant value to artworks by artists of reputable prestige. One artist who draws such criticism is Maurizio Cattelan and his piece ‘Comedian’, consists of a fresh banana duct-taped to a wall. Many criticise the genuineness of the work and its absurd price, while others revel in the community debate and provocative questions it proposes. Within today’s contemporary art scene, where ideas are more important than their physical manifestation, the value of art is said to ‘go beyond the cost of materials,’ but is a means of ‘influencing the perception of value.’ (C1) Cattelan is a cult figure in the art scene and is guided by strong gallery representation. He understands that no matter

what he produces, there will always be a market for his work. This is what enables him to inflate a banana and duct tape estimated at 30 cents in market value to its absurd \$120,000 - 150,000 price tag. The price was reached after several discussions, landing on a number that trivialises the work. The initial selling of the piece at \$120,000 then prompted a spark in price, creating the impression of the piece being an exclusive opportunity to claim ownership as the high-demand catalogue of Cattelan's work. The artist uses his name as the selling point, acknowledging that \$120,000/150,000 is the price he attributes to ownership of his name rather than the contents and skill (or lack thereof) that he possesses. On the other hand, I believe that the piece is valuable because of 'the conversations it can stimulate, which makes it a cultural good.' (C2) *Upon the art fairs opening, the piece was met with huge online debate and innumerable memes and derision. The fame of the piece had exceeded Cattelan's name but rather taken on a life of its own. The spectacle was just as valuable as its physical manifestation. Receiving a degree in sociology, Cattelan places human interaction at the forefront of his piece and understands that public debate and controversy are more valuable than a celebrity's name will ever be. Every purchaser of the piece said that they did so to forever 'provoke thought.'* *The piece shined in its ability to unite and divide society, creating a spectacle where value is granted to all interaction with it, both positive and negative. Painfully obvious, a banana and duct tape is undoubtedly cheap; however, its value proves to be adjustable upon the attachments of a celebrity's name. 'Comedian', in all of its absurdity, exemplifies our society's hype and celebrity-driven culture while simultaneously placing the responsibility of granting value to art into the hands of society and deciding what constitutes a cultural good.*