

ART PRODUCTION (ART315117)

Strong evidence was provided by students across the examinable criteria. We witnessed a very literal interpretation of the number of works required for each of the units to the extent that some schools exhibited only 8 works. We were also quite intrigued as to how the unpacking of individual units would ultimately impact on the final folio. Evidently, some followed verbatim, actually addressing the content. Others preferred a more generalised, interpretive outcome which eluded more towards the student's own sensibilities. This initial control of project based activities was clearly demonstrated by the studios bound by technology, which in past, has been addressed by exercises designed to equip students with the necessary skills. Further discussions concerning the variant ways in which all schools provide this course would generate some engaging professional learning. With Art Production continuing to grow, together with the increased number of schools delivering it, there have been moments during the examination period of great reflection.

We continue to experience a high degree of technical diversification and an intriguing interpretation of the units. In most instances, the actual displays of the folios were well choreographed and showed strong evidence of aesthetic development. We were very excited to experience 836 folios which represented a 9% increase on the previous year. Of these figures, 66.6% were government schools with the remaining 33.4% representing the non-government schools.

There remains some concerns, and perhaps confusion, as to what constitutes a complete body of work. Statistics suggest that some schools are still opting to withdraw students from the external display. It was felt that if a student was undertaking the course, then they should submit a display even if an inadequacy against the standards would result in a PA. The most consistent question asked by the Examiners was: "Does this represent a year's work?" In contrast to this, the healthy folios of work were clearly articulated, skillful and showed an ongoing quest for creative expression. They had visual power, communicated ideas and intention with cohesion rather than repetition of similar themes, design and skills. Cohesion has always been mired in speculation and often is symbiotically fused with recurrence. Cohesion is the candidate's individual fingerprint; the stylistic qualifier that recognises the inter-connectivity of all the images or objects within the folio.

While most schools certainly complied with the assessment requirements folios were occasionally constituted by only one or two major pieces of work. The theory folios were set out clearly but the impact of the minimum requirement on criteria 7 was in some instances completely disregarded. It is to be remembered that the journal and support material needs to be both a thorough articulation of artists, art and art references as well as a personal diary for idea development. Many of the visual diaries were extremely lavish in content but remained either introspective sketch books or stacked larders of contact sheets pilfered from social media. The selfie has become a surrogate portraiture.

Most folios clearly defined the non-essay based theory requirement but in some instances the examiners needed to burrow to unearth more conclusive evidence. It was a consensus, however, that the overall standard of the support material was much higher than we have previously experienced. Some schools appeared to have reversed previous trends of inadequacy by providing multiple visual diaries per candidate. While support material fluctuated in both quality and quantity, the more committed students showed an ongoing engagement with art genres and styles. Their reflective practice and curiosity about their ideas combined with sound technique was evident. Support included experimentation and annotation that marked the students learning. This indicated that the work and actions of the students was not just repetitive but based on decision-making, shaped as a consequence of their studies and artistic engagement. There remains a tendency to cite the URL, rather than the artist and the title.

Photography continues to dominate the assessment, increasing slightly to 45.8%. One school delivering over 67% of its candidates within this studio area. Digital dialogues also improved slightly to 7.4%. Of the photography folios, there appeared to be a greater emphasis on subject matter and themes rather than the teasing out of art concepts

and ideas. This tended to imply a detachment from theoretic, stylistic and historic machinations, resulting in a somewhat random, snap shot sensibility.

Further to this there was an overriding sense of a limited engagement, as many of the folios appeared to be culled from one photographic session. This was often an unsystematic narrative which could easily be described as either 'a day at the beach'; 'out on the town'; or 'hanging with my friends'. While there have been concerns about Photography being singled out for marking, the sheer weight of numbers, (370) absolutely highlights the gulf between overwhelmingly exceptional examples and the rudimentary antithesis. The vast majority of samples tend to hover around the latter standard. It was also within this studio area that the panel experienced some of the smallest submissions. In many instances adherence to the units resulted in a loss of cohesion because the folios appeared to be project based. The consequence of formula driven work is that while they might be complemented by strong skills they may be thwarted by a lack of idea development or overall sophistication.

It appears that with recent adherence to greater technological clarity Graphic Design is much more clearly defined, even though only 23 folios were represented across the state. While there appeared to be almost an anachronistic retrieval of the notion of Text and Image, the examples provided tended to be stylistically naïve, lacking in art content and based predominantly on sporting figures or utopia. Only a moderate few recognised the critical significance of the term 'design' in Graphic Design. The better performers tended more clearly evolve their concepts beneath the mantra of Digital Art. Printmaking appeared to decline with only 12 bodies of work being examined. Painting experienced a slight retraction with 17.2% and Drawing surged to 15.5% of submitted works. Installation continues to be a popular alternative to sculpture being represented by 38 bodies and sculpture a 6. Ceramics experienced a positive growth with 15 bodies as did mixed media with 39 examples. Video remained consistent with 15 folios.

Regardless of the studio area most bodies of work provided evidence of a dynamic articulation of the course. A minor number of examples that appeared to operate outside the parameters of the Visual Arts. Even the most fundamental interpretation of the criteria should prevent this from occurring. Deliverers of the course should be aware of a candidate's complete lack of art content at a fairly significant date prior to the examination. One body of work was obviously created just prior to the period of examination rather than being built up over the year. There is a technical reliance on new technologies which is critical and this is most pertinent to the production of video. In this regard, it was felt that some of the video presentations and some of the graphic design folios were rather elementary, lacking artful notation and conviction.

In contrast to this the Examiners saw a richer experience of heart-felt painting and in particular some brave and gutsy abstraction work which was elucidated by eloquent support material and artful documentation. Of the painters, these Abstractionists often soared with erudition, suggesting a technical assertion well beyond their years. The figurative work was governed mostly by innocuous portraiture, often lacking compositional dynamics.

In the field of drawing there were only a handful of truly exemplarily folios. While the Evidences provide the language to qualify the A rating, there were candidates who produced work at an exceptionally high level.

Although Printmaking is represented by a relatively small number of candidates, it tends to elicit the opposite outcomes to Photography in terms of standards. Although subjugated by mechanics, when operated by a functioning maestro, the machine disgorges magnificence.

Mixed Media is somewhat uncharted, supporting some of the most eclectic folios. From collage to tapestry, it represents the richness of art practice and as such offers wayward statistics because of its variant studios. In many respects there is a temptation to link Installations to Mixed Media, because that's often all they provide. Mixed Media is often the stamping ground for maverick activity as candidates stray from the conventions of the larger more traditional studios. It often attracts greater scrutiny because the ideas are often quite novel, if not controversial.

Between Sculpture and Installation, only 44 bodies were represented, but it was acknowledged that it is often quite brave to take on such rigorous and concept based practices. Fortunately almost all schools had representative examples, but with few have multiple candidates.

Alternatively, if sculpture was made from a particular material, the studio becomes Ceramics, and, although the number increased to only 15 folios, there is a general consensus that, with the offering of timetabled class in this studio at some schools, 2018 could see an increase in folios in this field. Although the outcomes are almost always object based, those schools that offer it traditionally always maintain a high level of ingenuity, skill and diversification. Both playful and challenging, the participants can excel because they are trained in the nuances, something that is becoming increasingly rare in some other studio areas.

Examining Art Production has been long lauded as the most rigorous and engaging professional learning an Art Educator can experience. Whereas I believe the examination period it is the best 10 days of the school year (or on this occasion 11), there appears that there is a continued reluctance to participate in this opportunity. While familiarity builds consistency, with only 22 applications across the State we continue to encourage all teachers of the subject to express interest and engage in this valuable and worthy professional engagement. We were, however, impressed by the quality of the marking team and their professional background in the subject. This enabled all students to be marked with consistency and we experienced very few anomalies at the point of examination.

2017 Studio Statistic Breakdown:

Photography – 45.8%

Painting – 17.2%

Drawing – 15.5%

Digital – 7.4%

Sculpture - 0.7 %

Installation – 0.46%

Ceramics – 1.8%

Graphic Design – 2.7 %

Printmaking – 1.45 %

Video – 1.8 %

Mixed Media – 4.7 %