ART STUDIO PRACTICE (ART315214)

Art Studio Practice provides an opportunity for students who have completed Art Production to continue their studio practice at TASC Level 3. It is differentiated by students extending the breadth and depth of their studio practice in the context of creating and refining an exhibition proposal and completing it to resolution through a self-directed inquiry and studio based investigation.

In 2017 the consistent number of enrolments indicates a positive uptake and a continued demand for the course as a viable year 12 visual arts pathway. This year candidates enrolled from the 8 government colleges and 12 non-government schools state wide with the addition of candidates from the Year 11 and 12 extension high schools and an independent school delivering the course for the first time.

It was encouraging to see an increased level of consistency in the interpretation of the course content and work requirements with the majority of teachers demonstrating a clear understanding of criteria, and standards typified by the quality of evidences provided.

At state level there were many outstanding and exceptional folios representing the exemplary EA standard in the consolidation of technical skills, communication of conceptual content and refinement in the quality and resolution of the final exhibitions. Conversely there appeared to be a broader spread in the levels of attainment this year, with an increase in the number of borderline students where the folio and support material did not reflect 150 hours evidence of studio practice. Teachers are encouraged to promote and maintain the rigour of the course to ensure students successfully meet the course requirements.

The diversity of individual exhibitions represented a broad range of studio disciplines. This year there was a tendency towards a more inter-disciplinary approach with the incorporation of different mediums within individual displays and the increased focus on interactive art forms and new technologies.

The studio disciplines represented included: ceramics, sculpture, performance art, photography (film and digital) digital art, printmaking, painting and mixed- media, drawing, collage, graphic design, video, interactive art forms and installation.

As stated in previous reports, the written Proposal is a focus statement or rationale outlining the student’s artistic intentions. It should establish the artistic context for their exhibition. The value of the proposal as a learning tool is to provide a focus and discussion point for teacher and student during the course of the year. It will necessarily involve re-edits and refinement over time with evidence being retained as part of the reflective practice materials.

This year the number of lengthy, overly complex and confusing proposals was particularly noticeable. The use of simple, concise language in the development of a structured outline or exhibition plan continues to present a fundamental challenge for many students and as such may need to be more explicitly taught. The proposal is not an essay task and should be approximately 500 words in length.

Providing ease of access to the final proposals amongst the reflective practice materials is appreciated by the external assessment panel as it does help to expedite the marking process. Candidates are advised to print off two copies of their proposal attaching one to the Major Research Paper and one either on the wall or clearly visible on top of the support materials for easy access by examiners.

The effective design implementation and resolution of the final exhibition will communicate the aims of the studio proposal. An exemplary standard will be evident in the visual impact and the cohesive strength of technical, stylistic and conceptual elements. The final exhibition and design challenges students to present their work to maximum effect.
There were many exceptional exhibitions of outstanding quality where consideration in the use of design elements was clearly evident in the final presentation of work. There were also examples of exhibitions where too much clutter and unrelated substances, additional props or competing video screens detracted from the actual work. In the absence of a clear rationale the use of found objects utilised as decorative devices proved detrimental to the visual cohesion of the overall display. In some cases the simplest displays and least stage managed and over installed were often the best.

The quantity of work produced must reflect the equivalent of 150 hours engagement in studio practice. Although it is often a fine line, careful consideration needs to be given in the amount of work selected for display. In some folios there appeared to be too much work on the wall which weakened the overall impact. In other folios some of the best work was on the floor included in the support material, limiting the potential scope of the display. The external assessment period spans over two weeks which necessitates the ongoing maintenance of displays to ensure they remain intact. Responsibility for the presentation of the display where technology is involved needs to be managed by teachers and students to ensure the final assessment of work isn’t compromised by technical issues.

The communication of conceptual content is reliant on a student’s capacity to develop a meaningful artistic context for their own work through relevant research and investigation.

The depth of conceptual content is evident in the scope of the reflective practice materials, the specific relevance of conceptual development outlined on the Visual Schematic Overview (VSO) and individualised nature of the student’s investigations and their artist statement. The artist statement is an opportunity for students to articulate the conceptual content of their work. Again, clarity and the use of concise language in the artist statement is essential if the honesty and integrity of the student voice is to be communicated. This should be in preference to the use of over complex and sophisticated art speak which in many examples served only to confuse. The artist statement should not be an essay. Students also need to ensure their artist statement does actually reflect the conceptual content communicated in the final artwork. Some students chose to leave the conceptual content open to viewer interpretation indicating a limited level of critical analysis, reflection and idea development over time.

Conceptual meaning and the communication of ideas. This year there were many common reoccurring themes across the state reflecting the personal, cultural social and political influences that form the primary concerns and interests of the candidates. These included body image, environmental sustainability, animal rights, fantasy and surrealism, domestic violence, self-harm, LGBTI identity, friendship, feminism, family, the impact of technology, outer space, video games, fantasy, surrealism, tattoos, censorship, political issues, the void, asylum seekers mental health issues, religion and mythology, Mona and Art Rage exhibitions continue to engage students and remain consistently strong influences at state level.

The reflective practice criterion for this course requires the production of a range of supporting evidence that demonstrates a rigorous engagement with the development of conceptual content, technical exploration, artist research and relevant investigations appropriate to the nature of the individual student’s self-directed studio based enquiry.

The exemplary standard was clearly demonstrated in the depth and breadth of the VSO content, the amount of relevant artist research in visual diaries and the extensive production of process experimentation and technical exploration – the work that didn’t make the wall. The exemplary standard is defined by evidence of a sustained practice and exploration over time.

Folios fell down on this criterion where there appeared to be minimal evidence of exploration and development indicative of 150 hours studio practice course work. Students need to be encouraged to keep absolutely everything from the beginning of the year. This aspect was particularly disappointing in digital media folios where there was limited evidence outlining art context, process, idea generation or technical development. Screen shots of digital processes need to be printed and documented in visual diaries. Some displays of work were undermined by a lack of evident process documentation or discarded experiments or prints.
The VSO is a visual rather than a written overview and a map of relevant artistic influences with brief annotated notes. The VSO represents a summarised overview of the key points and trajectories for change and development in a student’s studio practice whether conceptual or technical. There is no requirement for the VSO to be of an enormous scale or contain huge tracts of text but it does need to reflect the integrity of the student’s practice over time and relevant content.

This year some schools continue to deliver the active investigations as a series of 3 generic essays or set theory tasks that are not specifically relevant to the scope of the student’s individual folio. Authentic investigations represent the compilation of a range of evidences and reflections that provide evidence of a student’s actual engagement with the world of professional art practice beyond the walls of the classroom. The artist interview however needs to be relevant to the student’s area of interest if it is to be meaningful. Through actively investigating the context for their work students are able to demonstrate their initiative which forms part of their self-directed inquiry. The local, national, international art world and the historical and contemporary contexts should provide ample scope for students to research their specific area of interest and produce a variety of documented evidence. Students are advised to build their investigations as support material in preparation for constructing their Major Research Paper. The word count for the Major Paper is 3500 words. The Major Paper represents the culmination of research undertaken throughout the year and students should be encouraged to meet the minimum work requirements.

In a few schools there was a noticeable tendency for the over production and exaggeration of the work requirements for the reflective practice criterion. This was evident in the mass production of multiple scrap books without relevant or meaningful annotations and in the over prescriptive content of visual diaries where it was obvious that dedicated class time was used to produce extensive amounts of similar if not identical content. Students need to be encouraged to develop individualised journal entries and personalised content through engaging with relevant artist research and reflective analysis in documenting the evolving nature of their art practice. The focus on the quantity rather than the quality and mass production of evidences often conflicts with the provision of authentic, relevant and genuine evidence against this criterion.

By contrast in some folios there appeared to be an extensive amount of work on the wall with little or no evidence of process and the development of the technique through experimentation or practice equivalent to a 150 hour course. In the presentation of installation and video exhibitions the provision of appropriate levels of process documentation and reflective practice materials is critical to the success of folios presented in this medium. Installation, as a discipline requires course long exploration, and consolidation in the same way as any other discipline.

Digital photography remains a dominant medium with a limited number of film based folios but increased examples of photo-montage and collage. In general the evidence of technical experimentation and exploration was in some cases very thin and remains an inconsistent area. Students are reminded to document the technical processes in detail with evidence of an appropriate number of photoshoots (indicative of 150 hours course time) screen shots of tutorials and evidence of discarded printing experiments. It is however also acknowledged that for some schools outsourcing printing is often an unavoidable and expensive necessity which limits the amount of experimentation and exploration possible.

This year it was exciting to see several exemplary folios of ceramics and sculptural installations challenging in both the scale and scope of the exhibitions. The diversity of mediums this year included an increase in the use of textiles and tactile materials and craft based techniques. The use of laser cutting techniques was also popular and 3D printing is starting to emerge as a sculptural medium with excellent potential. Painting and drawing as disciplines remain strong with some outstanding folios across a diversity of genres and mediums. There were a small number of printmaking folios which were of an outstanding quality. Digital Art painting and illustration appears to be taking over Graphic Design as a preferred style in the digital illustration space.

Across the state there were consistent pockets of excellence and a number of exceptional exhibitions with teachers and students clearly demonstrating their understanding of the course content, criteria and standards and the evidences required. The EA rating represents an exceptional standard across all criteria. A true EA satisfies all criteria to an A standard in the curriculum document. Awarding students straight A ratings internally where the
folio is clearly not exceptional against all criteria is a tendency to be strongly discouraged. All teachers of the course are strongly encouraged to actively participate in the external marking process in some capacity. It represents an excellent professional learning opportunity and should be an essential requirement for all teachers of the course, particularly for those who have never participated in the external marking process. This would be advisable for teachers new to teaching the course or working in small schools or in isolation.

A special thank you to our colleagues in all government and non-government schools and colleges for the hospitality extended to the members of the Art Studio Practice assessment panel this year. We appreciated your support and generosity ensuring the assessment process ran as smoothly as possible within designated timeframes. Congratulations to Art Studio Practice students who successfully completed the course and exhibited their work. The diversity and quality of exhibitions indicative of the commitment and dedication of both teachers and students in promoting exemplary levels of attainment across the state. We look forward to the continuing development and successful delivery of Art Studio Practice in 2018.