

## *ART STUDIO PRACTICE (ART315214)*

### EXAMINERS REPORT 2018

Art Studio Practice provides an opportunity for students who have completed Art Production in Year 11, to continue their art practice into Year 12 at TASC Level 3. The course enhances pathways from senior secondary to tertiary studies. In 2018 the number of enrolments at state level remains consistent with the ongoing demand and uptake of the course continuing to build. This year candidates enrolled from 8 government colleges, one extension high school and 10 non-government schools.

In 2018, there were a number of exceptional individual exhibitions of work representing a diverse range of studio disciplines. These included: ceramics, photography (film and digital), digital art and media, printmaking, painting and mixed media, drawing, collage, graphic design, embroidery, sculpture, video and installation. In the exemplary folios, the standard continues to build through a noticeable consolidation of technical skills, communication of conceptual content and refinement in the quality and resolution of the final exhibitions.

At state level the majority of teachers are interpreting the course guidelines to deliver the course with a consistent and shared understanding in standards of work requirements. This is clearly demonstrated by the consistently high standard of quality in the work produced in schools and colleges, as with the substantial evidence provided against the criteria. There were many outstanding folios representative of the exceptional and exemplary EA standard indicated by the consolidation of technical skill, communication of conceptual content and the refinement and resolution of the final exhibition.

### CRITERION 1: DESIGN, MANAGE AND IMPLEMENT A STUDIO EXHIBITION

The written **Proposal** is a concise focus statement outlining the aims and intentions of the exhibition. It serves to provide the context for the studio practice and will, from the beginning of the year, necessarily involve a developmental process of refinement over time. Documented evidence of this process in the form of edits and re-edits, articulation and refinements, should be

retained as part of the reflective practice materials. The value of the Proposal as a learning tool, is to provide a focus and discussion point for teachers and students throughout the year.

In exemplary folios, the Proposal clearly outlined the scope of the exhibition and the intended use of materials, scale of the work and exhibition design – **'the what, the how and the why'** of the exhibition. The planning and key aesthetic decisions made in regard to the final exhibition must be clearly outlined in the Proposal.

As stated in previous reports, the number of lengthy, complex and confusing Proposals continue to compromise and let students down on this Criterion. Some Proposals were essays and appeared to be identical to the student's artist statement. In some cases the overtly sophisticated and complex use of language, suggested a complete lack of 'student voice'. The use of simple, concise language in developing a coherent and sequenced outline of intentions continues to present a significant challenge for many students, indicating the need for more explicit teaching. The Proposal is not an 'essay' task and should be approximately up to 500 words in length.

There were many outstanding and exemplary folios of work where the aims of the Proposal were effectively communicated in the design and resolution of the final exhibition. An exemplary standard will be evident in the visual impact and the cohesive strength of technical, stylistic and conceptual elements. This necessitates a process of refinement and attention to detail backed up in the planning and reflective practice materials to ensure the work is not formulaic or repetitive in scope.

Students and teachers need to ask; 'does the final exhibition/installation exhibit exceptional qualities that immediately and powerfully impact the viewer? The exhibition 'hang' and 'design' represents an opportunity for students to demonstrate their design skills and attention to detail. Students are discouraged from 'window dressing' their displays in post-production with the addition of extraneous materials. Unless a rationale is clearly articulated in the Proposal, the use of found objects utilised as decorative devices to enhance artwork proves detrimental to the visual cohesion of the overall display and should be avoided. In many cases students would be advised to adopt a 'less is more' approach. Students need to also ask 'does the exhibition design express the intended outcome as expressed in the Proposal?'

Although not specified, the quantity of work produced must reflect the equivalent of 150 hours engagement in studio practice. Careful consideration needs to be given in the amount of work that is 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.

It is always very helpful to find Proposals and statements easy to access in the reflective practice materials to support and facilitate the marking process. In some cases, Proposals were missing which compromised students on this Criterion. Students are advised to print off two copies of their Proposal, attaching one to the Major Research Paper and one on the wall or clearly visible on top of the support materials for easy access by examiners.

## CRITERION 2: COMMUNICATE ARTISTIC CONCEPTS

The development of depth in conceptual content and the establishment of an artistic context, is a key course requirement and represents a challenge for most students. Artist research and active investigations will support this process, but it needs to be relevant and specific with individualised evidence clearly displayed in the reflective practice materials. Students need to consider making connections between the selection of techniques, elements and principles of design to convey the conceptual intentions of their work.

The **Artist Statement** is an opportunity for students to articulate the conceptual content of their work. The best examples clearly articulated the idea, the intended meaning and explained the artistic context for the work. Students need to ask 'does the artwork communicate the intended meaning as articulated in the Artist Statement?'

The Artist Statement is not to be confused with the Proposal which outlines the exhibition plan. It is a short concise statement focusing on the conceptual meaning of the work (150 - 300 words maximum). Clarity and the use of concise language in the Artist Statement is essential if the honesty and integrity of the 'student voice' is to communicate personal meaning.

Students need to ensure their Artist Statement reflects the conceptual content communicated in the final artwork. Some folios were let down on this Criterion when there appeared to be a

complete disconnect between the Artist Statement and the actual work. Some students chose to leave the conceptual content open to 'viewer interpretation', indicating a limited level of critical analysis, reflection and conceptual development over time. A rationale for the 'viewer applying their own concept' to the work needs to be clearly articulated and contextualised in the Artist Statement, VSO and reflective practice materials.

The depth of relevant investigation and research will correlate with the final exhibition, i.e. evidence in the VSO to support the source of idea generation and a student's conceptual development over time. Conceptual depth needs to be backed up by contextual information in the reflective practice materials.

#### Conceptual Meaning and the Communication of Ideas:

There was a commonality of reoccurring themes consistent with the demographic. Some of the primary concerns and issues being explored included: the importance of friendship and family; animal rights; environmental sustainability; gender identity; coral bleaching; youth culture; body image; psychological states; historical narratives; political, social and religious issues and the impact of technology; apocalyptic scenarios; the influence of social media; fantasy and surrealism; religion and mythology. Mona, Dark Mofo, Mona Foma festivals and Art Rage exhibitions continue to engage students, and remain consistently strong influences at state level. Overall, the quality and depth of conceptual content explored by students in their work this year continues to reflect an excellent level of engagement with contemporary art guided by their teachers' professional art knowledge.

#### CRITERION 6: APPLY THE PRINCIPLES OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

The **reflective practice** Criterion for this course needs to be considered in the context of the final exhibition with the supporting evidences reflecting sustained engagement over time, relevant research and investigation appropriate to a self-directed inquiry typified by authentic and individualised learning. Reflection needs to be thorough, relevant and thoughtful and demonstrate the interconnections between research, investigation and making (course guidelines listed below).

#### REFLECTIVE PRACTICE SUPPORT MATERIAL INCLUDES:

- Proposal updates
- VSO – visual document with images and brief annotations - no scale prescribed
- A short Artist's Statement (150 – 300 words)
- Process documentation
- Preliminary plans/drawings/sketches
- Visual diary/journal/reflective statements
- Annotation images/references/artist research
- Technical experiments/photoshoots/screenshots

#### VISUAL SCHEMATIC OVERVIEW

The VSO is a visual rather than a written overview, a 'map' of artistic and relevant influences reflected in the research. 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. The VSO needs to reflect artist research and should not consist entirely of images of the student's own artwork. There is no requirement for the VSO to be of an enormous scale, or contain huge tracts of text. It does need to reflect the integrity of the student's practice over time and have relevant content.

#### REFLECTIVE PRACTICE SUPPORT MATERIALS

There continues to be some inconsistencies in the interpretation of course requirements specific to the quality and quantity of reflective practice materials. It was evident in some folios that the support material did not reflect 150 hours of sustained engagement in studio practice. Teachers are encouraged to promote and maintain the rigour of the course to ensure students successfully meet the course requirements, including supporting students to meet the word count.

For the Major Research Paper, students need to be encouraged to keep absolutely everything from the beginning of the year. This aspect is particularly important in photo and digital media folios, where evidence outlining art context, process, idea generation or technical development is often minimal. Ensuring a minimum number of photo shoots per term, including screen shots of digital processes and evidence of exploration and experimentation including discarded experiments or prints is advised.

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. Conversely, in a few schools there continues to be an unnecessary tendency for the over production and exaggeration of the work requirements for this Criterion, evident in the mass production of multiple 'scrap books' without relevant or meaningful annotations, and in the over prescriptive content of visual diaries. 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. It was also evident that an exaggerated focus on this aspect of the course meant over documentation was at the expense of the actual artwork.

### ACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS

There is a tendency for some schools to deliver the active investigations as a set 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 evidence and reflections that provide support of a student's engagement with the world of professional art practice beyond the walls of the classroom. The 'artist interview', although strongly encouraged, is not mandated. When an interview with an artist is undertaken, it does need to be specifically relevant to the student's specific area of interest if it is to inform their practice in a meaningful way.

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 representing a culmination of research undertaken throughout the year. Students should be encouraged to meet the minimum work requirements (course guidelines listed below).

#### DOCUMENTATION OF ACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS INCLUDES:

- Display folders with collections of relevant documentation
- Interview transcripts with artists/curators/industry professionals
- Analysis of artworks
- Photographic documentation
- Exhibition reviews
- Commentary on exhibition hangs
- Relevant art events/local/national/international
- Catalogues/catalogue essays
- Artist statements from exhibitions

#### CRITERION 7: USE ARTISTIC TECHNIQUES, MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGIES

This year the consolidation of technical skills was evident in the increased number of folios exhibiting an exceptional standard of technical skill and application of technologies. In the most outstanding exemplars the aesthetic and conceptual aims were clearly articulated in the application of technical skills. This was demonstrated in the extensive exploration of materials and technical processes evident in the reflective practice materials where it was apparent that skills had been consistently refined through a sustained practice over time.

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.

There has been a strong resurgence of ceramics in many schools and colleges across the state representing a renewed interest in the medium. The number of video installations and digital art folios were limited compared to previous years. Printmaking folios were also minimal. It is important for teachers and students to consider that the course does offer the opportunity for greater 'risk taking' and an experimental cross-disciplinary approach.

Painting and drawing as disciplines remain strong with some outstanding folios across a diversity of genres and mediums. There is also a resurgence of interest in traditional media with an increase in the number of folios based on observational drawing and detailed illustrative techniques. A renewed interest in craftwork, stencils, stitching and embroidery continues to be a popular trend.

The use of laser cutting techniques represents enhanced learning opportunities for students with excellent potential for improved outcomes. 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. Graphic Design is at risk of being absorbed into a photo/digital/ illustration space and losing its identity. Teachers need to promote its potential as the pure design based subject within our studios as it represents offering students a clear pathway to tertiary and vocational studies in the creative industries.

Although digital photography continues to dominate in preference to film there was also a strong element of photo-montage and experimental collage evident in photography exhibitions. In photography in general the provision of appropriate levels of process documentation and evidence of photoshoots, annotations, screen shots and documented idea generation in diaries remains inconsistent. Students are reminded to document the technical processes in detail with evidence of an appropriate number of photoshoots (indicative 150 hours course time).

There were consistent pockets of excellence with a number of exceptional exhibitions where teachers and students clearly demonstrated their understanding of the course content, Criteria and standards and the evidences required. Teachers are again reminded that the EA rating represents an exceptional standard across all Criteria - EA satisfying 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 to be strongly discouraged.

In 2019 all teachers of the course are positively 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, especially for those who have never participated in the external marking process for this course. This would be particularly advisable for teachers new to teaching the course, or working in small schools or working in isolation.

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.

A sincere thank you to our colleagues in all government and non-government schools and colleges for the hospitality you extended to the members of the Art Studio Practice assessment panel this year.

We appreciated your support and generosity and look forward to the continuing development and successful delivery of Art Studio Practice in 2019.