ASSESSMENT REPORT

ART315117 ART PRODUCTION

Art Production has continued to grow in 2019 with the number of examined candidates rising to 879. Recent trends continued with some large and exceptional folios being presented across the state. In contrast to this, the Examination Panel did also observe a noteworthy number of folios that demonstrated activity below the minimum requirement for major works. In many respects, the literal adherence to ‘a minimum of 8 works’, suggested in accordance with the syllabus, was the norm. This observance of 8 works was a concern in 2018 and needs to be addressed by teachers in readiness for 2020. While the panel recognised the desire for the strongest work to be exhibited for examination, it should be remembered that the students need to present a display of work for examination that shows the full extent of the student’s engagement within the subject and studio area throughout the year.

Equally, there was a sense that the four units governed by the course outline had been interpreted in the broadest possible sense, with only a few bodies of work demonstrating an absolute faithfulness to the unitised requirements of the subject. It was interesting to observe that some schools experienced the highest number of candidates recorded, whereas other schools had significantly diminished numbers. This begs the question as to why this polarizing issue within this subject is emerging so starkly? This might suggest that possibly some schools are trending away from the visual arts as academic study options. Future promotion of this subject has significant potential for professional learning discussions.

Criterion 1: Elements and Principles of Design
Choreography is everything! Articulating the student’s design decisions within the context of the actual display is fundamental to the examination of this criterion. Where candidates actually planned and designed the visuality of their display, there was evidence shown by diagrams in their support material. This type of evidence helped to bolster critical decisions about the rating during examination.

Nowhere within the syllabus does it suggest that the student needs to execute the hanging of the work entirely on their own and so it is prudent that they seek and/or are given advice about ways to best exhibit the work for examination. Students need to think beyond the notion of merely ‘sticking it on the wall’, but rather, actively demonstrate their level of design understanding and how this is applied to the appliances or objects’ relationship to each other. This also needs to be echoed within journals and other support material. Isolated proof sheets, contact sheets and screen shots of process provide little evidence of the student’s whole design thinking process. What is required is evidence about the student’s design decisions through notes and workings. These are essential for convincing the examination panel of extensive manipulation of the design principles to create art works. One design element is not superior to the other. In each instance it is the selection of compositional elements and the maneuvering of dynamics that provide the clues to a demonstration of this criterion’s requirements at any level.

This is particularly relevant to the studio areas where design is the absolute foundation of the area. In order to achieve a higher award in this subject, the design elements need to soar well above the rudimentary. Engagement with art works and artists’ decision-making processes need to sit parallel to an individual’s ability to reflect on their own art-making in order to secure a firm design understanding.
Criterion 3: Technologies and techniques
While there was considerable evidence of virtuosity within many displays, there were few that commanded a straight ‘A’ assessment. Technical competence can often be determined by the individual candidate’s experience or engagement with the practical material throughout the progression of the year. There were a few bodies of work which clearly displayed enormous development with the selected materials, while others tended to rely on reiteration and repetition of dexterity. In some instances, ‘narrative and expression’ seemed to be more vital, and at times, this seemed to overtake the need for technical proficiency and skill development. On occasion, it appeared that there was more reliance on completing a major work, rather than fashioning and crafting an art work.

Criterion 4: Communicate ideas, emotions and information
This criterion seems to still require further scrutiny in order to make the leap from B to A ratings. The examiners where aware of the relationship between the ideas being explored and expressed and how this translated into the student’s support material. Once again, some journals lacked annotation and the provision of images. Students seeking ‘A’ ratings are advised to move past broad ideas and to explore some different avenues for conceptual development. Journals still continue to be overloaded with contact sheets and only scant art references. At times, these references had virtually no descriptive language, indicating that the students had made little effort to connect with art works. Subsequently, this revealed that the students had little understanding of how artists make work based on evolving ideas. In many cases the journals maintained a scrapbook sensibility. All candidates need to be absolutely aware of what the evidence of this criterion requires.

Criterion 6: Create and display a cohesive body of work
The level of cohesion must be given the greatest priority as this indicated to the examination panel the level to which the student has engaged with their art learning. It is noteworthy to recognise that cohesion does not equate to repetition of a theme but rather the student’s finger-print or their signature as the practitioner. Exemplary folios were instantly engaging, suggesting that the candidate had more than a firm understanding of the course requirements, and in turn, could manipulate these to manifest a convincing folio of work.

As a panel, we observed that, on occasion, there may have been tremendous technical competence, but there was clearly insufficient quantity of work, as required by the syllabus. This impacted on the level of the rating. This suggested that there may be a greater emphasis on pure virtuosity than meeting the overall requirements of the course. While quality and exceptional skills need to be celebrated, students need to be equipped with an understanding of all the expectations of the course. The candidates need to be reminded that the course stipulates that there is a focus and commitment to one studio area rather than experimenting between many areas, even if the subject matter is the same.

The increased number of candidates has enabled some studio areas to grow and some to decline. Photography still dominated but is down to 366 students this year from 455 in 2018. This led to the rise of painting to nearly 191. Drawing remains constant at 104, printmaking, digital, video and sculpture maintained the status quo. The marked increase was in ceramics with 41 candidates.

Criterion 7: Responds to cultural influences and art works
This criterion is a cross-road between significant success or the absolute opposite. The exemplary folios were buoyed by outstanding support material, but the heartbreak were the bodies of work that had largely ignored the requirements of this criterion. As this criterion also has the expectation of complete theoretic engagement embedded in it, the absence of such evidence sadly initiated further adverse consequences.
Some folios relied entirely on visual diaries with little evidence beyond that format. While the diary is critical, it needs to be emphasised that it is not just a scrapbook, sketchbook, a book of screen shots or the storage facility for proof sheets. It is a fusion of all these things with critical student commentary concerning artists, art-work and processes. This also includes annotation, observation, interpretation and musings about the student’s own work and their applied knowledge.

This criterion also requires visual evidence of all completed assignments. Each theory piece should be clearly presented alongside the support work. Examiners should not have to fossick for this evidence, but rather, be able to witness as to whether the required tasks have been completed. As there is a finite number of required assignments, each candidate should be discouraged attempting to apply ‘creative’ ways of combining papers. This is part of the content of the units. Equally, they need to adhere to the minimum word count even for the non-essay-based possibility.

Despite highlighting some future considerations for the following year, examining Art Production continued to be the highlight of the school calendar. It is important to consider that if you are teaching the subject you should strive to examine the subject. At Moderation we only experience a ‘snap-shot’ of the folios on offer and so seeing a larger range of resolved work is a tremendous experience. Witnessing such a diverse range of skills, ideas and passions is professionally energising and the constant growth of the subject, in terms of numbers, suggests that creativity is potentially an immeasurable commodity within this State. The deliverers of this subject do a splendid job and, through the process of Moderation, makes the actuality of examining consistently such a pleasure. What a marvelous and positive team!

2019 Studio Statistic Breakdown:

Photography – 41.6%
Painting – 21.7%
Drawing – 11.8%
Ceramics – 4.6%
Printmaking – 2.4%
Digital – 4.7%
Mixed Media – 4.5%
Sculpture – 1.5%
Installation – 2.1%
Graphic Design – 2.1%
Video – 1%
Textiles – 0.6%