

## Art - Production

Course Code: ART315112

With dusk encroaching on the conclusive year of this current syllabus, it is perhaps fitting to reflect on how much the Art Production footprint continues to assert a high degree of both tradition and diversification. No matter how positive we were in our hearts, like any tracking mechanism, evidence of a successful journey varied considerably. Whereas analogies of locomotive and surgical precision have been utilised to describe previous years, 2016's External Assessment evolved to be more akin to a hunt, or in some instances, a rummage. While the actual pursuit of the beast is always a splendid quest, there were isolated moments that suggested that the aesthetic creature we searched for may have either been in hibernation or perhaps extinct. Quality Assurance provides us with the weaponry of standards and despite a significantly low number of raw anomalies, a couple of schools either didn't read the Examination Guidelines or perhaps even the Syllabus. The absolute pinnacle of extraordinary was a candidate's folio which consisted of a single photograph and absolutely no support material or assignments. The total number of candidates receded slightly this year to 774, with a mere 3.7% representing either PAs or NN.

Photography continues its marauding statistical domination by representing 46% of all folios, with Digital submissions increasing to 6.6%. In one college alone 37 of the 47 candidates were photographers. By providing greater technological clarity, the context of the imagery redefines this studio area as a form of 'picture making' and this denudes the customary milieu of Graphic Design. This is clearly evidenced by this atelier's decline to 1.5%. While there was evidence of a slight recoil within Painting and Drawing, their popularity remains hovering around the 17.5% and 12.2% respectively. The Mechanical and The Ethereal were ascendant this year with Printmaking rising in numbers to 3.6% and installations represented 5.2%. Sculpture sustained collateral damage from this trend by declining to 1.4%. Only a meagre number of candidates were scattered across the alternative studios; Ceramics had 12; Video had 16; Mixed Media 22 and Textiles bravely held its territory with one solitary submission. Regardless of a minor retreat in total numbers, the majority of bigger colleges experienced between 62 -93 candidates, together with a healthy brace of Art Studio Practice submissions. The remainder experienced variant fluctuations in numbers from 3 – 29. The numbers were divided as 493 for Government schools and 281 for Non-Government schools.

As each studio area acknowledges the fundamentals of the syllabus and disseminates the requirements by articulating its specific relevance, there was an occasion when the examinable material appeared to be more pertinent within a syllabus outside the Visual Arts. Although there was some evidence of design being applied to the installation, there was little evidence of engagement within an Art context and no supporting connections to either artists or artwork which engaged technology in a similar manner. The integrity of the examination was also compromised by the need to have two individuals attending to the actual functioning of the submission. Surely any body of work, regardless of its medium, should operate independently for the purpose of examination. This was far from a draconian dismissal of new technology, rather it was a recognition that, like Media Production, the technical parameters of Computer Graphics are not necessarily a logical fit within Art Production criteria. Should the technical competencies these subjects provide form the basis of the presentation, it should be incumbent on the candidate to fully address the art context within idea generation and the support material.

The machinations of marking are abetted by the dynamics of the team and this is further enhanced by the inclusion of both sessional examiners and observers. This is the most rigorous and engaging Professional Learning an art teacher can have and, while it is always encouraging to witness familiar participants returning to the fold, it provides enormous insight into assessment processes for fledgling staff. Participation needs to be encouraged as only 22 registered an 'Expression of Interest' across the state and, of theses, only 18 actually participated due to other commitments. It was also encouraging to witness a UTAS pre-service teacher observing and a non-art teacher participating, who made the remark, "This was the best day of teaching I've ever had."

It transpires that this becomes the best 10 days of teaching for the panel because we are exposed to a formidable torrent of talent each year. It is also crucial to acknowledge the full pendulum as, for every roaring tide of

exemplary virtuosity, there is always a backwash of adversity. The candidate who has struggled can often be the most rewarding to examine because their learning curve may have been steeper than those effortless maestros who induce the ocular gush with every resolved result. There were extreme variations of quantity with some super-humanly enormous folios casting giant shadows over miniscule dis-engaged ones, sometimes within confines of the same department. Much has been made of the tightening of the Assessment Guidelines in recent years and there was a belief last year that previous concerns had all been eliminated. This was clarified by the clear setting out of the theory papers within the support material. Whether it was an influx of misunderstanding or simply reluctance, a heightened number of folios either lacked evidence of all the assignments or, as a worse-case scenario, any assignments. Although the theory content balances the relationship between criticism and research, a great many students are still encouraged to write personal statements or descriptors of their practical intentions. Fortunately this has already been addressed by the succeeding syllabus. Although the flexibility of the written work has enabled alternate interpretations, one extreme example revealed a complete misreading of the syllabus requirements by the deliverer of the subject.

Art Production is a leviathan that continues to both engage and devour the youth of Tasmania in the best possible way. The most acknowledged truth observed this year was the obvious pollination of the adolescent psyche by Social Media. While mirthful anecdotes concerning the 'magic envelope' occur every year within particular schools, there was abundant evidence of electronically disseminated pathogens being unleashed across diverse geographical regions. Although there are those who believe that there is a finite number of motif possibilities for art practice, it was uncanny how similar some bodies of work were to others in what amounted to either a heathy distribution of ideas or perhaps the first physical evidence of cloning. While there is no suggestion of anything sinister, it does suggest a fertile flow of ideas is occurring.

Photography is clearly the foremost means by which to express ideas. At 353 bodies of work the engagement was a gamete of diversity, rattling both extremes of astonishment. From excruciatingly poignant faux crime scenes to coma inducing sunsets, all the food groups were covered. Scale was also addressed with formidable confrontations which emphasised demolition, debris and detritus. While the rustic has resurged, together with juveniles, animals, underwear, pensioners and the panoramic natural world, the most dwarfing of issues was the obsessive selfie. The most disarming images trawled the psychology of melancholia, angst, phobia and passion, but the bulk of imagery read much like a projected mock-up of a Facebook account. The total concept was therefore within the jurisdiction of 'just hanging'. This act took place at home, in the city, in the park or on the beach and, in some extreme cases, possibly happened the weekend before examination. Internal ratings have continued to reflect a more rationalised application of the evidences and support journals have further teased out the correlations between documenting process and citing artistic influences.

The traditional industry friendly core fundamentals of Graphic Design have long paled into a virtual twilight. With only 12 submitted displays represented, some denoted nostalgic hallucinations of the Marvel Comic heyday, others shepherded either abstract geodesic manifestations, elementary tables or phantom make-overs based on music industry drive-by hypotheticals or revolutionary propaganda fodder. In most instances compositional boundaries remained tightly patrolled with little evidence of precarious trajectories being sought. Text and image may be safe from the hazards of an exemplary design conniption, but Digital Painting and Digital Imaging appeared to offer a wider expanse and delineation of the imagination. The digital world is a carnival of fabrication, irony and narrative, all filtered through cyber-gauze mannerisms. Digital decoupage aestheticises topographically generated stratoms of colour and textures. We glance through the compression of layers, marvelling at the process that generates such complexities and are often seduced by the sophisticated gloss of technology. This sometimes masks the thinnest fabric of ideas. The consequence tends to suggest an even greater need to convince examiners of the necessities of the process as the outcomes are often anchored by the miracles of the software. The content has heralded a much greater appetite for fantasy, mythology and The Graphic Novel. It appears that a great many want to be the 'Mother of all Dragons' quite badly!

Painting perpetually loiters in stasis as it continuously engages and disarms around a fifth of the population. There is, however, a frighteningly distinct chasm within the population. Aside from those who are born to daub and syphon their actualisations from the monster within their soul, there appears to be imperfections in many individual's empirical knowledge of paint. This tends to generate a rather naïve, if not hesitant approach to the spreading of pigment. Those familiar with the substance heroically render and trowel it across occasionally unforgiving surfaces, but when figuration or representation was the prime motivator, there appeared to be a

shyness in terms of rudimentary skill. Perhaps this was their first year with paste. To some, it appeared that it was their Perhaps the best medicine for the figure will be the return to actual 'Life' in Life Drawing. Pockets of landscapes bravely triumphed the veneration of the great outdoors and patterns still pleases, but the most overshadowing topic was portraiture. While a few examples infused the face with the raptures of expression, the majority adopted a fairly static, direct, deadpan approach. Presently, enigma, angst and the stencil appear to have followed in the footsteps of the Pokémon Hunt.

Drawing is the backbone of the universe and it lingers in servitude to all studio areas. With such enormous community investment in 'colouring in,' drawing sometimes needs to assert itself as a definitive medium in a way that all other studios have no need to. It's either a noun or a verb. It can be a doodle or it can be a highly eloquent resolved masterwork. As it forms the regular pulse of expression and communication, it provides a language of symbols, glyphs and diagrams which permeate both support material and resolved works. At its strongest, it marked the tracing of the observed world into memory through the ancient substance of charcoal. Any maestro of the cinder is to be reckoned with and this proved to be quite daunting for any arachnophobe. Those macro spiders were pretty damned impressive! It was within the consuming passion for mark-making that the Examiner's was conceived. These magnificent tributes to ethnic diversity were as good as colouring in would ever get.

Printmaking nearly doubled its representation this year with 31 displays. Although somewhat under-represented in the wake of Photography, it is emerging as a rather popular alternative to Painting or Drawing. Rather intriguing folios utilising collagraph or drypoint were encountered, some were quite significant illustratively adventurous chronicles. The only hindrance to quality results remains the physical act of replication and regardless of the effort or detail within the plate, if the press isn't utilised correctly, the consequences will be blurred. The process allows for the opportunity to build a mighty arsenal, so displays can appear to be formidable. This was actually the case with a couple of samples which soared with the condors in terms of skill and design quality. The alternative redefined the concept of rudimentary.

Mixed Media can be the Dead Letter Office of the Visual Arts by either reconditioning one surface with another or by montaging alternative ideas into a collective whole. It's possibly the broadest classification because it hybridises and fuses disciplines. Collage was represented in both analogue and digital formats. Textiles made a single flutter and some bodies invested in an amalgam of natural materials and objects. As the profile shifts dimensional parameters, it begins to grow the bulk and sensibility of Sculpture. As Sculpture defuses into tableaux, the sculpture becomes an installation. With a studio without fixed parentheses the elements that define it suggest that Mixed Media could easily be one of the biggest areas to examine. How thin does it have to be to be called Mixed Media and how thick does it have to be to be called sculpture? Ground-breaking concerns perhaps, but it tended to lack the visceral vision of other areas, with little evidence of exceptional achievement.

Between Sculpture and Installation, 52 bodies were represented. One college completely bucked the camera contagion trend by displaying nearly 40% of its candidates as 3 dimensional folios. Each candidate was not only baptised with the rigour of contemporary practice, the skill factor and design blue-print revealed significant engagements beyond the mortal confines of an interesting object. It's always a pleasure to examine in this school, because the work is always so radically different and challenging. Some schools still believe in some rune-stone theory, that a collection of objects will empower a space to elicit some mystical or intellectual experience. The call it an installation.

Included in the previous statistic was that school's contribution to Ceramics. Historically a stronghold for this fading studio, the work was intelligent, wistful and ironic, suggesting a sophistication beyond the material. There is also an unhinged madness about contemporary ceramics and some schools tapped into this with aplomb. These objects are worldly and uncivilised, beating refinement to the asylum. At 1.5% of the population, it still has a pulse and whispers suggest that we may be on the brink of a great thaw that solicits the idea of a generation of teenagers all preparing to get their hands dirty once again.

Video demands attention. As a time-based art form, there is an incumbent requirement to 'see it through to the end'. While this obviously means much greater scrutiny within the assessment process, the implication is that the experience is directed and controlled by the candidate, from beginning to end. Most practitioners require the weight of technical competence embedded in other subject areas, so delineating Video Production and Visual Art relevance requires significant higher order thinking. This is not movie making, documentary or theatre. The

presentations were a combination of Tarantino parody, lamented teen romantic angst with an ill-chosen narrator, oscillating CGI spheres or issues of tobacco evil. It was within this idiom that the notion of the applicability of Computer Games became an issue.

This subject always offers the best 10 days I experience every year. It is pure bliss to reconnect with those brilliant beings across Tasmania who offer such awesome opportunities to tomorrow's geniuses. Art Production teachers, I congratulate you and to the Art Production syllabus that retires this year: God bless you and all who have sailed in you. Let's all embrace the possibility of an even more fabulous future with the new syllabus.

#### 2016 Studio Statistic Breakdown

Photography – 45.6%

Painting – 17.4%

Drawing – 12.2%

Digital – 6.6%

Printmaking – 3.6%

Ceramics – 1.5%

Graphic Design – 1.5%

Video – 2%

Mixed Media – 2.8%

Sculpture / Installatiopn – 6.6%