Although 2012 marked the introduction of a new course for Art Production, similar issues and outcomes to previous assessment years were encountered by the assessment panel. The subject remains healthy with 708 candidates being examined compared to 712 in 2011, and in many respects, the number of candidates opting to produce folios in specific studios areas was dauntingly similar to the percentages of previous years. This suggests that Photography/Digital Art continues to be ascendant while Video and Ceramics slowly drift into oblivion. As with every year, the experience of examining offers exemplary Professional Learning and, with the introduction of regional Quality Assurance, it is bewildering that more providers of the subject don’t seize the opportunity to accompany the panel in order to witness a much broader sample of standards. It is extremely enriching and, while the Art Rage exhibition respectfully selects a sample of this assessment encounter, it can be a mere slither of the exemplary outcomes spawned by the youth of this state, and this year in particular, marked a number of extraordinary examples that were not selected. In some instances the quality of the work induced superlative adjectival meltdown. Despite this, the lack of ‘Expressions of Interest’ was disappointing and was particularly evident in the north of the state.

Generally speaking, the new course was warmly received with supportive commentary concerning the reduction of criteria; the simplifying of language and the accompanying examination guidelines. These factors appeared to contribute to possibly the tightest sampling of Quality Assurance, reducing the ‘raw anomalies’ to negligible levels in virtually every college. It was historically significant that one institution was considerably more conservative with their internal ratings than the assessment panel suggesting that internal examiners are indeed ‘erring on the side of the rational rather than the hysterical’. In this respect, 2012 marked perhaps the most enjoyable, if not surgical of tours with tremendous levels of cooperation, and extreme professionalism within teaching practice. This was particularly evident with the theory folios with absolutely no evidence of the absence of assignments that marred last year’s examinations. Candidates appeared to clearly understand their inclusion in the support material and this heralds a hearty congratulations to the Art Teaching fraternity.

Again, in line with 2011, the number of absolutely exceptional candidates that would qualify for ‘Examiner’s Choice’ was minimal. While the number of candidates awarded Exceptional Achievement was slightly higher than previous years, the ‘absolute pinnacle’ was provided by just 3 folios. It is worth commenting that candidates who seek the highest result should apply themselves equally to addressing the requirements of each criteria as a number of highly articulated and technically exemplary folios lacked the necessary virtuosity within the support material to warrant an ‘A’ rating.

While Photography is rampant, analogue folios continue to decline and although economic and practical considerations are duly noted, there is a continued respect and almost a sympathetic leaning towards those brave anachronists who emerge triumphant from the darkroom. This was particularly evident with a small cluster of folios that embraced the formal conventions of the figure or the landscape with the skill of a maestro. There was however, evidence of a decline in technical facility with some folios exhibiting a lack of the
tonal dynamics usually associated with darkroom technique. Another issue emerging within this studio area is the monetary logistics of the digital print. Scale can dictate either an inept or spectacular outcome and it comes with a price. Clearly some departments struggle with this dilemma and resolution is far too difficult to predict. Possibly the integrity of the image is the foundation of this issue because ocular seduction is prevalent with magnitude, but it doesn’t necessarily follow that ‘bigger is better’ and perhaps dimension can be addressed by means of a data projector.

The template of imagery for Photography continues to survive unhindered. Dusted off from previous years, the songs remain the same. Familiar obsessions with macro flowers, misty rivers, reflections, small children and ditto continue to dominate, with the exception of Fairy Tales which appear to have lost favour. While it is perhaps cynical to perpetually underline these subject matter tendencies, the rational alludes to the notion of ‘Art Content’ and unless the aesthetic/conceptual issues are addressed, the image descends into the realm of the mundane snapshot. A great many bodies of work within this studio area continue to be little more than evidence of some social meanderings that clearly have a secondary life-span on Facebook.

This is where metaphor/narrative/allegory may be addressed by immersion within the theoretical parameters of Contemporary Photography and a candidate’s familiarity and engagement with these artists should be evident within their support material. Too often the visual diary contained little more than thumbnails or processes. A new trend, however, was dubbed ‘Convulsive Photography’ because is represented considerable ‘camera shake’ as a technical enhancement. Those candidates who utilized this device with aplomb provided exquisite abstract narratives, while those less successful presented a bewildering blur. As with previous year’s comments, this studio area continues to misinterpret the course requirements by providing inadequate evidence of a year’s work within the assessment display and, on occasions, fabulous bodies of work are counter-balanced with the absolute opposite. Within those colleges producing large numbers of photography candidates the internal Quality Assurance mechanisms should successfully address these anomalies before the External Examination. It is hard to justify 2 bodies of work having the same internal rating and yet appear to be of a completely different standard. It should be mandatory that teaching staff examine together.

Graphic Design continues to exhibit an identity crisis. In its purest form as a corporately savvy communication device fusing text and image, its days are numbered as only a miniscule number of folios providing this language were identified across the state. These examples tended to be rudimentary or cumbersome, displaying little connection with the exemplars of the past. The new species relies almost exclusively on digital image making, displaying versatility with soft-ware manipulation within a contemporary new language of ‘picture-making’. At its best it is breath-taking in its sophistication, manoeuvring within an advanced realm of design strictures and applying artistic conventions with near professional authority. The concerns, however, remain within the parallel universe occupied by photography; the demonstration of Visual Art engagement and content within the support material. The provision of process evidence is critical to an understanding of outcomes, but occasionally this over-rides this studio’s foundation within a Visual Art course and the
technical achievements mask the absence of art or conceptual content. The Support Material should provide clear evidence of this. The final issue with this studio area concerns the ownership of imagery and, within the epoch of heightened sensitivity towards Academic Integrity, it would be wise for candidates to rationalize their source material and abandon the habitual tendencies of Graphic Designers to ‘cut and paste’ borrowed imagery directly from the internet. A few folios had dubious or questionable origins.

There appears to be a resurgence of painting and while the underground manifest of Street or Urban Art bolstered its numbers in previous years, there appears to be a much greater Renaissance of the traditions of the ‘daub and smear’ and the great beyond rather than a preoccupation with Graffiti Art or Stencil painting. Candidates are genuinely engaging in the alchemy of the material, resurrecting the metaphysics of Abstract Expressionism, Abstraction and Realism without the tokenistic naivety of the teenage splatter or adolescently angst picture making. Candidates are stylistically writhing within the diversities of both past and current practitioners. It is a thirst to understand the De Koonings, the Tapies, the Richters, the Schnabels, the Dyers, or connect Goya to the Chapman Brothers, or even explore the opposite extreme of Photo Realism. While the list of ‘Isms’ may be endless and this was a mere sample, it was within this studio that very clear connections were observed, possibly because of increasing access to an expanding Visual Art community. On the flip-side however, when a painting folio was bad, it defied description.

This was also evident within drawing, which appeared to emerge from beneath the shadow as the ‘anchorage of painting’. Incredibly successful folios were observed to be a celebration of charcoal or graphite, exploring the wildly expressive, gestural territory of pure mark making. On the contrary were deliciously retentive Graphic Novel narratives or sub-cultural scientific illustration. It appears that, as with painting, candidates are not afraid to celebrate either the material or the object and this translated to an incredibly diverse language of subject matter. Accessing the exemplars of this studio area would be very significant for future candidates because despite the descriptive ‘gush’ adorning the premier examples, there were representative folios of introspective doodles that appeared to ignore the notion of ‘resolved major work’. In these instances the folios appeared to be little more than examples of glorified support material.

The other tide of revivification was Printmaking. While not sustaining equal folio fortification as Painting or Drawing, it is the silent creeper, with small but beautifully articulated examples of this studio practice. Of particular merit were the courageous folios that addressed scale and managed to enunciate the mechanical processes with virtuosity. Clearly encounters with either Artists in Residence or the expertise of actual art staff is providing a vehicle of recovery for a studio area that had been slipping beneath the radar in recent years.

Mixed Media once again appeared to be somewhat of an unsung hero. While it tends to be the descriptor for any folio that cannot be comfortably contained within the traditional studio areas, it provides a broad spectrum of possible applications and tends to be somewhat of a conceptual mine-sweeper for those candidates who appear to be liberated beyond conventions. It’s about fusion, if you scribble on a photograph, glue stuff to a painting,
collage or 3 dimensionally assemble printmaking, you are deemed to be mixed media, but this over-simplifies the issues because within these parameters appeared some of the more engaging folios. It’s actually about a higher order of thinking and often the most difficult to be convincing in.

Exquisite National Geographic collages re-configured as stop-motion animation, Joseph Cornell musemic collaborations and extraordinary interventional associations with paint/mirror/objects were the modus operandi of this practical classification. The sample is small but extremely engaging.

As a hybrid, it exists on a threshold of slippage within the idiom of Installations, which have historically had the most dramatic outcomes because of their variance between the ‘sensational’ and the ‘tragic’. In many respects, installations have been maligned because the higher order of conceptual parenthesises required for a successful application of ideas sometimes generates a misunderstanding for those with limited ability. What transpires often articulates a candidate’s inadequacies and thankfully, 2012 marked a clarified distinction between Mixed Media, Installation and Sculpture.

While the sample of Sculpture was particularly small, the evidence was exemplary. As a tradition it struggles because of its sheer reliance on technique and materials. Many candidates avoid it because a sculptural folio is significantly more difficult than a folio of Drawing. The absolute best practical example was marred by its obvious homage to a contemporary International practitioner, which sadly, was not reflected in the support material.

The expansion of practical possibilities within the new course presented enormous potential, but 3 folios were problematic. The first was clearly an anthropological survey on world poverty, next was a project to create pyjamas and the last was a Media Production candidate who wanted another subject. Clearly these candidates did not address the requirements of Art Production and yet they were allowed to continue their projects unhindered. The provisions within the new course allow for many interpretations, but regardless, folios need to address the requirements of a Visual Art course, and if a provider has any doubt, they should seek affirmation from alternative sources. It is horrific that a candidate’s year long endeavour is thwarted by a complete misunderstanding of the course.

Beyond the minor criticisms, this year was extraordinary. I delight in the process of examination and am humbled by the exemplary provision of this subject by my passionate colleagues across this state.
ARTSC Art Production – Appendix 1: 2012 Studio Statistic Breakdown

Photography – 43.7%
Painting – 17%
Drawing – 14%
Video – 1%
Ceramics – 1.6%
Digital – 2%
Installation – 3.7%
Mixed Media – 6.2%
Graphic Design – 6.9%
Sculpture - .014%
Printmaking – 3.8%
Animation - .02%
ART315112 Art Production

ASSESSMENT PANEL REPORT

Award Distribution

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<th>EA</th>
<th>HA</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td><strong>This year</strong></td>
<td>6% (41)</td>
<td>19% (132)</td>
<td>45% (312)</td>
<td>29% (201)</td>
<td>686</td>
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<td><strong>Last year</strong></td>
<td>5% (35)</td>
<td>19% (130)</td>
<td>46% (315)</td>
<td>30% (207)</td>
<td>687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last year (all examined subjects)</strong></td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td>39 %</td>
<td>30 %</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Previous 5 years</strong></td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td>43 %</td>
<td>30 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous 5 years (all examined subjects)</strong></td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td>40 %</td>
<td>30 %</td>
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Student Distribution (SA or better)

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<th>Female</th>
<th>Year 11</th>
<th>Year 12</th>
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<tr>
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<td>73% (500)</td>
<td>50% (345)</td>
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<td><strong>Last year</strong></td>
<td>29% (198)</td>
<td>71% (489)</td>
<td>46% (317)</td>
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<td><strong>Previous 5 years</strong></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>62%</td>
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