

Visual Art 2019 v1.1

Unit 2 high-level annotated sample response

September 2022

Examination — extended response 2

This sample has been compiled by the QCAA to assist and support teachers to match evidence in student responses to the characteristics described in the assessment objectives.

Assessment objectives

This assessment instrument is used to determine student achievement in the following objectives:

1. implement decoding skills to read visual language and communicate understanding of ideas and representations in artworks
2. apply literacy skills using relevant visual art terminology, reference to artworks and language conventions to recognise and distinguish features of selected artworks and practices
3. analyse and interpret visual language, expression and meaning in artworks through a specified context
4. evaluate art forms to appraise the significance of relevant similarities, differences and ideas
5. justify a viewpoint supported by evidence of artistic processes, intentions and expression
8. realise a written response to demonstrate knowledge about how artists employ artistic qualities to create meaning.

Note: Objectives 6 and 7 are not assessed in this instrument.

Task

Answer one of the following questions.

- **Question 1**

Evaluate how artists manipulate media and techniques to communicate contemporary issues. Justify your viewpoint by comparing two chosen artworks from the stimulus.

- **Question 2**

Evaluate how artists use symbols and metaphors to communicate their personal values. Justify your viewpoint by comparing two chosen artworks from the stimulus.

- **Question 3**

Evaluate how artists re-purpose found objects in response to cultural influences. Justify your viewpoint by comparing two chosen artworks from the stimulus book.

Sample response

This is a high-level response because the student:

Applies literacy skills within the response through articulated ideas and controlled structure that enhances critical meaning for the reader

Justifies an informed and independent viewpoint supported by evidence and critical understanding of divergent perspectives

Analyses and interprets specific features and meanings of visual language that emphasise artists' intentions, and the literal and non-literal meaning of cultural symbols

Implements decoding skills to construct valid relationships between the artists' repurposing of found objects and the communication of identified cultural influences

Question 3

Evaluate how artists re-purpose found objects in response to cultural influences through selected artworks.

Artists often incorporate and re-purpose found objects in artworks as a tool to symbolically reflect society and communicate cultural knowledge within their artworks. Although certain objects are attached to different societies and traditions, each culture usually incorporates their own visual codes to interpret them. Robyn Stacey references the traditions and culture of Dutch still-life painters of the sixteenth century, while Mark Kimber adopts a more personal meaning in his artwork, influenced by western cultural representations of masculinity. Robyn Stacey created a staged composition depicting books and objects that explore social and cultural icons and influences. Mark Kimber also assembled objects to take on symbolic façades for aspects of life and drama. Both artists communicate through photography and still-life using objects found and assembled by the artists in response to cultural influences.

Robyn Stacey is a contemporary Australian photographer who utilises objects as a way of exploring historical and cultural traditions. Like the Dutch still-life painters, the objects take on symbolic cultural meaning when they are arranged together. One of the most prominent objects that appears within her artwork, *Table of Industry* is the arrangement of ornate books. Stacey 'found' these objects in a historical collection of artefacts and assembled them to communicate her own meaning. The books are reflective of historical knowledge, symbolised in the artwork by open and closed books and carefully placed objects, such as the latches, doorknobs and maps to represent unlocking the knowledge of the past. The choice of the ornate spines on the books is a visual reference to western culture and unfolds personal layers of meaning where Stacey makes herself the preserver of knowledge. Fixed in the centre of the composition appears to be an unlit lamp, which strangely still casts light over the stack of books. The illusion of light creates a focal point that draws the viewer to a latch resting on a closed book, another symbol to depict the containing of

cultural knowledge. Stacey's artwork also uses 'rich colour and light' to visually guide the viewer to look more closely at the titles of the books, maps and illustration in the foreground.

Stacey's artwork photographically represents social themes of status and the traces of colonisation embedded in many western histories and cultures. This collection is in collaboration with the Historic Houses Trust of NSW that preserves the essence of past lavish lifestyles of wealthy Australians. To portray this, Stacey has developed a still-life scene that is 'a moment in time'. The stacked books, section of ornate cornice and a map set on a lush royal blue draped table in *Table of Industry* look like they are currently in use by an industrious figure of Australian history. The artist positioned her still-life in the foreground of a black setting to highlight the vibrantly coloured objects. Stacey's use of decorative book covers and an ornate framed illustration reinforces wealthy culture. In this way, Stacey has communicated the idea of a period of colonial history in Australia, full of discovery, wealth and power. The objects found and selected from the trust collection have been arranged to create an artistically photographed glimpse into our cultural past.

Like Stacey's symbolic arrangement of objects, contemporary artist Mark Kimber also assembles found objects using his own symbolic codes to communicate his social and cultural influences. In his artwork *All That Glisters #2*, he alludes to both real and imagined cultural values and historical interpretations. On a literal level, this photograph communicates a cultural message that enables the audience to observe the objects as specimens. The mass-produced plastic astronaut preserved in a glass dome suggests it is a precious object, perhaps preserved in a time capsule for a future audience. But Kimber's juxtaposition of an astronaut holding a doll's-house candelabra, entombed in a glass dome also suggests a more theatrical scene. The pure white astronaut becomes a symbol of past, perhaps unguided, cultural values of masculinity, where men were expected to 'boldly go where no man has gone before'. The candelabra is interpreted as a lavish, but outdated light source, a symbol of mediocre attempts to lead the way.

As this is a photograph, not a sculpture, Kimber is able to carefully manipulate the way light shines on the glass dome. Coincidentally, light appears to beam from an unlit light source in this work, similar to Robyn Stacey's photograph. The bright light creates a focal point and adds drama to the scene, but it also appears overly dramatic, as if Kimber is making fun of the cultural representations symbolised by the tiny astronaut and candelabra. By repurposing and photographing this unusual arrangement of found objects they take on new meaning and the audience interprets them as symbols of cultural influence.

Evaluates multiple components of artworks to highlight complex and subtle comparative relationships between selected artworks and artists' practices

Stacey and Kimber both expertly, yet subtly, repurpose objects to symbolically communicate influences of society, culture and history. Both artists begin with found object still-lives, photographed so that the objects are the high powered focal point of each composition. The photographs capture a single image of a momentous time, an idea emphasised by the use of light and focal point. Stacey and Kimber's photographs are carefully composed, using black backgrounds to contrast rich colour and lighting effects that allow the viewer to engage with the subject matter with a more complex understanding. Thus, each of the artworks successfully

Realises the response to communicate an insightful synthesis of artwork observation, comprehension of information, individual interpretation and comparison that explains how artists re-purpose found objects in response to cultural influences through the selected artworks.

communicates more complex and conceptual meaning through visual features that emphasise the symbolic references.

Notably, each artist communicates a social comment about the impact of past cultural influences. Through careful selection, arrangement and manipulation of found objects, the artists comment on both positive and negative aspects of cultural values. Robyn Stacey re-purposes found objects in *Table of Industry* to symbolise wealth and the cultural quest for knowledge. Using similar photographic techniques and processes, Mark Kimber assembles and photographs objects in *All That Glisters #2* to comment on the theatrics of masculine culture and the desire to lead.

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