



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



Cambridge Assessment
International Education

**Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education
Advanced Level Higher 1 (2025)**

**Art
(Syllabus 8879)**

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION	3
AIMS	3
FRAMEWORK	4
LEARNING OUTCOMES	4
SYLLABUS CONTENT	5
SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT	9
WEIGHTING AND ASSESSMENT OF PAPERS	9
DESCRIPTION OF PAPER	10

INTRODUCTION

The Higher 1 (H1) Level Art syllabus is designed to provide opportunities for students at the pre-university level to broaden their engagement in the visual arts. The syllabus aims to cultivate in students greater understanding of and sensitivity towards artworks and so develop a citizenry that is more able to enjoy, appreciate and foster a life long interest in the Visual Arts.

Students offering the H1 Level Art syllabus will investigate artistic conventions and concepts through the study of artists and artworks. Visual literacy skills, such as perception of and response to visual images, as well as critical analysis of visual information, are also developed.

This document presents the aims, framework, learning outcomes, content and examination requirements of the H1 Level Art syllabus.

AIMS

The aims of the syllabus are to:

- cultivate deeper understanding and appreciation of the visual arts within social and cultural contexts
- develop visual literacy through the critical analysis and appraisal of artists and artworks
- increase proficiency in the use of visual arts vocabulary
- foster self-confidence and a sense of achievement through critical appraisal of the visual arts
- nurture a life long interest in the visual arts.

FRAMEWORK

The framework for the H1 Level Art syllabus is structured under the three behavioural domains of **Perceiving**, **Communicating** and **Appreciating**. These behavioural domains take into consideration the cognitive and affective dimensions that students are involved in when they are engaged in the study of visual arts. The three domains are interconnected and operate dynamically.

Under the domain of **Perceiving**, students respond to and interpret visual images sensitively and informatively. They learn to discriminate and make connections between different visual qualities and phenomena. Through observing and analysing visual stimuli in works of art, students develop visual awareness and sensitivities that encourage imagination and the generation of ideas.

Under the domain of **Communicating**, students articulate their thoughts and opinions through writing and discussion. The processes involved include evaluating information, synthesising ideas and expressing personal interpretations. Through the analysis of artists and artworks and the practice of informed aesthetic judgement, students learn to communicate creatively and effectively.

Under the domain of **Appreciating**, students value the visual arts as a powerful means of expression. They recognise the connections between the visual arts and their lives, and appreciate its significance in the wider context of culture and society. Students develop aesthetic and cultural awareness from which personal and cultural identities could be examined and built upon. Through this, students will continue their interest and participation in the visual arts beyond school.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning outcomes for the H1 Level Art syllabus are organised under the domains of **PERCEIVING**, **COMMUNICATING** and **APPRECIATING**.

By the end of pre-university education, students will be able to:

PERCEIVING	COMMUNICATING	APPRECIATING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse and define visual expressions in light of social and cultural contexts make connections between visual expressions of differing genres, traditions and contexts make inferences and draw relationships between issues/problems encountered by artists and one's own culture and experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generate, conceptualise and articulate independent interpretations of artworks critically appraise artists/artworks and their ideas/concepts communicate with precise working vocabulary the processes of art making and responses to artworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> value imaginative and innovative ideas in visual arts achieve a sense of confidence through informed critique of the visual arts value local artworks as part of a country's history and cultural heritage develop an inquiring attitude and life long interest in the visual arts

SYLLABUS CONTENT

The H1 Level Art syllabus emphasises the development of visual literacy through critical and creative thinking by encouraging personal responses to art appreciation. The development of abilities to respond to and interpret artworks critically occurs through the **Study of Visual Arts**.

The critical appraisal of artists/artworks allows students to experience and engage with the visual arts with greater depth. The Study of Visual Arts emphasises the development of critical thinking skills such as description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation¹. It provides students with opportunities to respond to and discover insights from artists/artworks. These learning experiences inculcate in students greater appreciation for the visual arts and its role in society.

The syllabus content is organised along two broad themes: *Visual Arts and Representations* and *Visual Arts and Society*. The theme of *Visual Arts and Representations* provides a broad framework for the investigation of form and content and touches on ideas and concepts underpinning visual representation. The theme of *Visual Arts and Society* draws on the diverse realms of human experience to examine Art as a system for the communication of social values, beliefs and opinions.

The topics and the list of artists/artworks under the themes are:

Visual Arts and Representations

- Realistic Representations
- Abstract Representations
- New Media Representations

Visual Arts and Society

- About People
- About Society
- About Culture

The topics are interconnected as artists draw ideas and address issues from different topics. Where relevant, artists are repeated across different topics to reflect the interconnectedness.

¹ Feldman, Edmund Burke, *“Practical Art Criticism”*, p.23–44, Prentice Hall, 1994.

VISUAL ARTS AND REPRESENTATIONS

THEME: VISUAL ARTS AND REPRESENTATIONS		
TOPIC: Realistic Representations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The naturalistic treatment of space and forms in artworks 		
<p>FOCUS: Some artists choose to depict the world using naturalistic representations of space and form. With the rise of modern art, many extended the idea of realistic representation to include super/photographic realism and surrealism. These artists employ realistic representation in their artworks to express their ideas and concepts. Through study of these artworks, students discover why naturalism was selected as a means of expression. Students will appreciate the mechanism of realistic representation, and realise its purpose and function.</p>		
<p>René Magritte (Belgium)</p> <p>Apart from representing the real, realistic representation is also used to present the imaginative and the surreal. Teachers may use the realistic works by Chua Mia Tee and surrealist works by Dede Eri Supria for comparison.</p>	<p>Ron Mueck (Australia)</p> <p>Concepts and ideas behind superrealistic sculptures of Ron Mueck have stretched the idea of realism and created a new dimension of 3-D artworks. Teachers may use works by Duane Hanson and Chuck Close for comparison.</p>	<p>Andreas Gursky (Germany)</p> <p>The photographic medium and its relationship with what is considered as realistic representation are explored and challenged in the interpretation of contemporary experiences. Teachers may use works by Thomas Struth and Cindy Sherman for comparison.</p>
TOPIC: Abstract Representations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geometric and Expressionistic Abstractions 		
<p>FOCUS: Since the development of modern art, artists have widely explored abstraction as an expressive device. The explorations ranged from geometric to expressionistic abstraction. This innovative approach to representation brought about new energies and dimensions in artistic creation, stretching the definition of art. Understanding the concepts underlying abstract representation provides students with the accessibility to many modern and contemporary artworks. Students gain an appreciation of abstract representation and are able to critically evaluate such artworks in an informed manner.</p>		
<p>Wassily Kandinsky (Russia)</p> <p>Wassily Kandinsky stretched the exploration of geometric abstraction through the simplification of lines, forms, compositions and colours. He sought to use the fundamental elements of art to visualise the essence of music. Teachers may highlight the works of Piet Mondrian and Anthony Poon for comparison.</p>	<p>Jackson Pollock (United States of America)</p> <p>Jackson Pollock heralds a fresh approach towards expressionistic abstract painting that delves beyond the canvas surface with his action paintings. Teachers may discuss works by other artists such as Chua Ek Kay and Fiona Rae for comparison.</p>	<p>Constantin Brancusi (Romania)</p> <p>Brancusi's exploration of pure form in his abstract sculptures created new paradigms with which sculpture could be engaged. Teachers may use sculptures by Donald Judd and Han Sai Por for comparison.</p>

THEME: VISUAL ARTS AND REPRESENTATIONS**TOPIC:** New Media Representations

- The Use of Ready-Mades and Other Media

FOCUS: Some artists use ready-made objects in their works to express their ideas. The use of ready-mades has expanded the definition of art and created new approaches to art. In addition, artists began to explore new media made available by technological advances. Art took on new forms with the introduction of time-based media such as film and live performance. These works challenge the idea of art and open the ground for new media installations, performances and video art. Students explore the concept of the ready-made and discover the fresh approaches it introduced to artistic representation. They will critically engage with the issues and concerns surrounding the new media and its representational mechanisms.

**Marcel Duchamp
(France/United States of America)**

The use of ready-mades or real objects as artworks ushered in an entirely new paradigm in art. Artists begin to question the art object and art itself as an entity. Teachers may discuss how Montien Boonma and Haim Steinbach used ready-mades in their installations for comparison.

**Damien Hirst
(United Kingdom)**

Damien Hirst's installations of dead livestock prove shocking; yet these works extend the use of the ready-made beyond that of man-made objects. Teachers may discuss the works of Marc Quinn and Cai Guo Qiang for comparison.

**Joseph Beuys
(Germany)**

Joseph Beuys' performances facilitate a radically new approach to art. This new art form opens up a new dimension of the artist being the medium and the possibility of art outside the context of a museum, bounded by a particular time and space. Teachers may discuss the works of Tang Da Wu and Tehching Hsieh for comparison.

**Nam June Paik
(Korea/United States of America)**

The new medium of video as explored by Nam June Paik offers a new approach towards artistic creation. Made possible by technological development, it allows artists to stretch the idea of time and space within the context of an artistic creation. Teachers may discuss the works of Bill Viola and Mona Hatoum for comparison.

THEME: VISUAL ARTS AND SOCIETY**TOPIC:** About People

- Identity and Relationships

FOCUS: Artists portray themselves and the people they encounter in a variety of ways. Portraits may range from a literal record of a person's features to a representation of the character possessed by a group or individual. Many artists also seek to represent human relationships, conveying through their artworks the emotional nuances that underlie the complexity of these bonds. By studying different artworks that encapsulate the themes of identity and relationships, students appreciate the insights provided by the artist to the sitter's persona and social orientation. Students would be able to interpret such artworks and make informed comments about them.

**Lucian Freud
(United Kingdom)**

Lucian Freud explores the multi-layered dimensions of human identity and relationships through his artworks, paying particular attention to the psychological dimension. Teachers may discuss Jenny Saville's and Francis Bacon's works for comparison.

**Ng Eng Teng
(Singapore)**

Ng Eng Teng explores the themes of identity and relationships in his sculpture. Through his work, he portrays different aspects of the human condition, its emotions and states of mind. Teachers may discuss Antony Gormley's and Marc Quinn's sculptures for comparison.

**Amanda Heng
(Singapore)**

Some artists create works that focus on the social status of women. Through her works, Amanda Heng sheds light on issues related to the social status of women in an Asian society. Teachers may discuss the works of Mona Hatoum and Cindy Sherman for comparison.

THEME: VISUAL ARTS AND SOCIETY

TOPIC: About Society

- Social Commentary

FOCUS: Some artists use their art to depict various socio-political, socio-economic and socio-ecological conditions. Issues such as war, social unrest, urbanisation and the destruction of nature have always been of concern to artists. Their artworks serve as visual records of these events, and as expressions of their opinions about the society they live in. Through the study of these artworks, students learn about the different ways artists represent their social experiences of the urbanised world. They learn to interpret and analyse these social commentaries, and make informed comments about them.

**Dede Eri Supria
(Indonesia)**

Dede Eri Supria's art deals mainly with his socio-political and economic concerns. He juxtaposes images of urbanisation and mass culture with images of the poor to articulate the alienation faced by modern man. Teachers may discuss the works of Edward Hopper and Duane Hanson for comparison.

**Tang Da Wu
(Singapore)**

Tang Da Wu explores the relationship between man and his environment as a recurring theme in his art. He explores how man has tampered with nature and consequently destroyed the harmonious balance he enjoyed with his environment. Teachers may discuss the works of Andy Goldsworthy and Olafur Eliasson for comparison.

**Yue Minjun
(China)**

The wide self-mocking grin in the human clones, trademark in Yue Minjun's works, connotes a sense of cynicism and dissatisfaction with the human relationships in increasingly urbanised societies. Teachers may discuss the works by Banksy and Hendra Gunawan for comparison.

TOPIC: About Culture

- Cultural Commentary

FOCUS: The cultural heritage of a society, nation or country plays a key role in the development of the visual arts. Many artists create artworks to express their thoughts and concerns about culture. The artworks may be produced either as a celebration or as a critique of the prevailing cultural practice. Studying these artists and artworks, students will appreciate the influence that culture and heritage can have in shaping the visual arts. They would be able to critically engage with the content of the artworks that both contribute to and reflect the cultural development of a society.

**Andy Warhol
(United States of America)**

Andy Warhol's art is representative of how popular culture, the mass media and the age of mechanical reproduction have first challenged, and later become integrated, into the artworks of many artists. The impact of popular culture on art continues to be significant today. Teachers may discuss the works of Wang Guangyi and Takashi Murakami for comparison.

**Liu Kang, Chen Wen Hsi and Georgette Chen
(Singapore)**

The Singapore **pioneer artists** travelled to Bali, Indonesia in search of a regional cultural identity later termed the "Nanyang style". Through their search for the Nanyang style, they pushed cultural development in Singapore to new heights while simultaneously preserving the more traditional practices.

Tang Da Wu, Anthony Poon, Han Sai Por and Chua Ek Kay (Singapore)

Modern artists in Singapore play a crucial role in shaping new artistic trends. They influence the culture and development of art in our society by introducing new practices at various platforms.

SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

Candidates taking the GCE H1 Level Art Examination will be required to offer Paper 1: Study of Visual Arts.

Paper	Description	Examination Duration	Weighting	Requirement
Paper 1	Study of Visual Arts	3 hours	100%	Compulsory

WEIGHTING AND ASSESSMENT OF PAPER

Level	Requirement	Assessment	Weighting
'A' (H1)	Paper 1: Study of Visual Arts		
	Compulsory	3 hours Section A: Two structured questions will be set, each accompanied by a visual stimulus. Section B: Two structured comparison questions will be set, each accompanied by a pair of visual stimuli. Section C: Two essay questions will be set. Candidates must answer one question in Section A, one in Section B and one question in Section C.	100%
Total marks			90

DESCRIPTION OF PAPER

Paper 1: Study of Visual Arts

The Study of Visual Arts allows candidates to apply their understanding of social and cultural contexts in the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of artists/artworks. Candidates are expected to have good knowledge and understanding of the artists/artworks listed in the syllabus content under the two broad themes, *Visual Arts and Representations* and *Visual Arts and Society*. Through responses to visual stimuli and essay questions, candidates demonstrate their abilities to critically analyse issues, themes or problems significant to Art practices. Candidates will also be able to draw links with their direct experience or environment in order to form personal opinions about the artists/artworks. Candidates should note that the visual stimuli referred to in the question paper *may not* all come from the content list of artists/artworks and should be prepared to apply their skills of visual literacy to *unseen, related* works.

The Study of Visual Arts paper consists of **Section A**, **Section B** and **Section C**.

Section A

Two structured questions, **each** accompanied by a visual stimulus.

Section B

Two structured comparison questions, **each** accompanied by **two** visual stimuli.

Section C

Two essay questions.

Candidates are to attempt **one** question from Section A, **one** question from Section B and **one** question from Section C.

Assessment Objectives

Paper 1: Study of Visual Arts

The three assessment domains applied to the Study of Visual Arts paper are:

- 1 Artistic Perception and Interpretation**
- 2 Cultural and Aesthetic Appreciation**
- 3 Personal Response**

The following assessment objectives stated in the three domains define a range of assessable qualities and skills which can be demonstrated by candidates at this level.

The domains as assessment criteria are as follows:

Candidates should be able to:

1 Artistic Perception and Interpretation

- critically analyse and interpret artworks in light of their social and cultural contexts
- make informed judgments about the artists' use of visual elements in their works in relation to their intentions.

2 Cultural and Aesthetic Appreciation

- exhibit an insightful knowledge of the artists/artworks in terms of the styles and techniques employed
- demonstrate perceptive skill in drawing relationships between issues, themes and problems encountered by artists and their own culture.

3 Personal Response

- demonstrate critical thinking and consistent inquiry into issues, themes and problems
- exhibit personal opinions and creative responses towards issues, themes and problems discussed.