



## Student Performance

### 2009 AP® Studio Art

The following comments on the 2009 portfolios for AP® Studio Art were written by the Chief Reader, Raúl Acero of the University of Redlands in Redlands, California. They are intended to help teachers better prepare their students to submit an AP portfolio in 2-D Design, 3-D Design, or Drawing. Professor Acero describes how the portfolios are scored, discusses the 2009 submissions, and offers suggestions for how teachers can help students improve their portfolios. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

#### Exam Overview

In the AP Studio Art Exam, students attempt to earn college credit and possibly advanced placement in college classes by completing a portfolio of high-quality artwork. The student selects which portfolio to submit: 2-D Design, 3-D Design, or Drawing. These correspond to foundation courses commonly found in a college curriculum. In June 2009, 110 experienced college and high school teachers gathered to determine how well the students addressed this task.

This entire Studio Art Exam is a free-response question, but it is divided into parts that allow the Exam Readers to focus on a particular aspect of art making and assess the student's relative ability in each area.

#### Composition of the Portfolios

Section 1: Quality. Students submitted 5 actual works that demonstrated mastery of design or drawing for 2-D Design or Drawing, or 10 digital images of 5 works (two views of each) for 3-D Design.

Section II: Concentration. Students submitted 12 digital images of works describing an in-depth exploration of a particular artistic concern.

Section III: Breadth. This is a variety of works demonstrating an understanding of the principles of drawing or the relevant aspects of design. Students submitted 12 digital images of 12 different works for 2-D Design or Drawing, or 16 digital images of 8 different works (two views of each) for 3-D Design.

## Scoring Standards and Criteria

Two to three different Readers using a 6-point scale score each section of the portfolio. The scores are recalculated by statisticians so that scores assigned for each section (Quality, Concentration, and Breadth) are equally weighted. Each section counts for one-third of a student's final score, which is then translated into the AP 5-point score scale. This system gives a balanced look at the student's work and provides an accurate assessment of his or her overall performance in art.

The "cut-points" that divide each score point are set by the Chief Reader to correspond with grades the work would be likely to receive in a college foundation class (AP 5 = A and so on). Colleges use the AP score to help decide if a new student is ready to "pass out" of some foundation requirements or if the student has done well enough to earn college credit in art. It is advisable for students who wish to earn credit or pass out of a requirement to bring their portfolios with them when they come to college. Often college faculty will withhold judgment about a student's readiness until they view the actual work in the portfolio.

The scoring guidelines are criteria that the Readers use as guides in assigning scores to the work. The guidelines evolve from year to year, based on the experience of the Chief Reader and Table Leaders, but they are not changed during the actual Reading. Current scoring guidelines can be downloaded from the Studio Art section of AP Central®.

## Portfolio Assessment—2009

### The 2-D Design Portfolio

- **2-D Design Quality**  
Submissions for the 2-D Design Portfolio included some very inventive work, perhaps because there is such a range of media allowed. The Quality section remained very strong this year. There were excellent examples of design-based photography and digital work.
- **2-D Design Concentration**  
Readers felt that the Concentration section remained problematic. Helping students define what a concentration is, as opposed to selecting work that seems to "go together," is key.
- **2-D Design Breadth**  
Like last year, students often did not engage with a sufficient range of design issues. Readers noted that the quality of the Breadth section was good, but often students did not really display breadth in design issues. Instead they sometimes showed many different works, or works in a variety of media. Active engagement with a broad range of design issues is one of the main requirements of this section of the portfolio.

### The 3-D Design Portfolio

- **3-D Design Quality**  
3-D Quality dropped again this year. In fact, the 3-D Design Portfolio overall seems to have declined in quality in recent years. Nonetheless, there were examples of very good ceramics, and the jewelry also improved over last year's submissions. The photos of the pieces were also better than they were last year.

- **3-D Design Concentration**

This section suffers from the same problems that the other Concentration sections do. Students need to better understand what constitutes a concentration rather than simply selecting works that seem to go together. Nonetheless, the 3-D Concentrations as a whole scored slightly higher than they did last year.

- **3-D Design Breadth**

Readers saw a great many ceramics portfolios that did not address design issues. In recent years, we have seen entire portfolios of thrown, glazed pottery that demonstrate little thought was given to relationships between form and glaze. Teachers should concentrate on explaining the interaction of surface and form to express design issues.

## **The Drawing Portfolio**

- **Drawing Quality**

Submissions for this year's Drawing Portfolio were once again strong, with many high-scoring portfolios. As in 2008, Readers noted that it was hard to find portfolios deserving a score of 1 (the lowest score) or 6 (the highest). Drawing Quality continues to be a strong and cohesive section of the portfolio. Teachers are doing a good job in teaching this portfolio to their students. Since the portfolio is clear-cut, it seems to maintain consistency from year to year.

- **Drawing Concentration**

The Concentration section encourages students to learn to put together a cohesive body of work. However, like last year, students and teachers are still struggling with the goals and definitions of a "concentration."

- **Drawing Breadth**

Students again struggled with the Breadth section. Teachers can help their students by re-examining what the exam calls for in terms of breadth.

## **Final Thoughts**

- **Concentrations**

As in years past, for all three portfolios, some students did not provide a strong enough visual idea, one able to sustain them over the course of the creation of a concentration. The concentration is a challenging proposition. Readers struggled to evaluate work that was not a concentration.

There are many ways to help students think about their concentration. The goal is to have them create work that holds together visually and conceptually. The idea does not have to be grandiose; it can be a simple idea explored well.

- **Digital Submissions**

This year the AP Studio Art Exam went completely digital (except for the Quality sections of the Drawing and 2-D Design Portfolios, which continue to require submission of five actual works). Slides were no longer accepted. The software application used for the

submission and scoring of digital images was extraordinary, allowing Readers to view the work closely and see it much better. The application was designed very well, and Readers enjoyed using it very much. It will add speed and accuracy to the Reading. Teachers did a great job of preparing and uploading the student work. The developers will continue to work on the application to iron out wrinkles and improve the process. All in all, the digital conversion was a great success.

- **Resources for Teachers**

The new publication *Evaluating the AP<sup>®</sup> Portfolio in Studio Art* includes substantive comments by a former Chief Reader on student work that received a variety of scores. All sections of all portfolios are included in this full-color resource, which is available at the College Board Store ([store.collegeboard.com](http://store.collegeboard.com)). In addition, there are many excellent articles by Studio Art teachers and links to other resources on the Studio Art Course Home Pages for 2-D Design, 3-D Design, and Drawing on AP Central.

As always, it is my great pleasure to serve the AP Program and its teachers and students.