



Student Performance

2010 AP® Studio Art

The following comments on the 2010 portfolios for AP® Studio Art were written by the Chief Reader, Herb Weaver of Bethany College in West Va. These observations are intended to help teachers better prepare their students to submit an AP portfolio in 2-D Design, 3-D Design or Drawing. Professor Weaver describes how the portfolios are scored, discusses the 2010 submissions, and offers suggestions for how teachers can help students improve their portfolios. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn a variety of 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 2010, 135 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 I: Quality. For the 2-D Design and Drawing Portfolios, students submitted five actual works that demonstrated mastery of design or drawing. For the 3-D Design Portfolio, 10 digital images of five works (two views of each) were submitted.

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

Section III: Breadth. In this portion of the portfolios, students submitted a variety of works demonstrating an understanding of the principles of drawing or the relevant aspects of design. In particular, 12 digital images of 12 different works for 2-D Design or Drawing, or 16 digital images of eight different works (two views of each) for 3-D Design, were required.

Scoring Standards and Criteria

Two to three different Readers using a 6-point scale scored each section of the portfolios. 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 "test 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 test 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—2010

The 2-D Design Portfolio

- **2-D Design Quality**
Submissions for the 2-D Design Portfolio included some of the most inventive work, perhaps because there is such a range of media allowed. The Quality section remained very strong this year and featured excellent examples of design-based photography and digital work.
- **2-D Design Concentration**
Although this part of the portfolio was somewhat problematic in the past, Readers suggested that the Concentration section is improving because high school teachers and workshop presenters are providing a better explanation and definition of what a concentration involves.
- **2-D Design Breadth**
Similar to previous years, some students did not fully engage with a sufficient range of design issues. Readers noted that the quality of the Breadth section was good, but often students did not 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**

Over the past few years, the quality of the 3-D Design Portfolio has been in decline, but this trend may have leveled off this year. Ceramics and jewelry remained the strongest areas; many other sculptural issues lacked development. Photographs of the pieces continued to show improvement.

- **3-D Design Concentration**

The 3-D Concentrations as a whole were comparable to last year. This section reflects the same concerns as the 2-D and Drawing Concentration sections. Students need to develop a better understanding of what constitutes a concentration instead of simply selecting works that seem to go together.

- **3-D Design Breadth**

Although addressing “design issues” should be a major tenet of all the AP Studio Art Portfolios, Readers continued to cite this particular portion of the 3-D Portfolio as particularly challenging to students. Once again, there were many ceramics portfolios that did not address design issues. For all 3-D media, teachers and workshop presenters should focus more on defining relationships between 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. For the past several years Readers noted that it was difficult to find portfolios deserving a score of 1 (the lowest score) or 6 (the highest). Interestingly, this year Readers observed that the highest scores in the Drawing Quality section were more conservative than the highest scores in the 2-D Design Quality section. Nonetheless, Quality continued to be a strong and cohesive section of the Drawing 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 in a theme-based rationale. Although progress is apparent, students and teachers continue to struggle with the goals and definitions of a “concentration.”

- **Drawing Breadth**

Students find the Breadth section to be most troublesome. Teachers can help their students by re-examining what the exam calls for in terms of breadth.

Final Thoughts

- **Concentrations**

Keep in mind that Readers are able to evaluate work more effectively when students provide evidence of a strong visual idea that weaves throughout the entire body of work. When a concentration is not a sustained investigation of a clearly defined theme, scoring can be a challenging proposition.

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**

The 2010 Reading marked the second year that the AP Studio Art Exam was scored digitally (except for the Quality sections of the Drawing and 2-D Design Portfolios, which continue to require submission of five actual works). The software application used for the submission and scoring of digital images provides extraordinary results, allowing Readers to view works closely and see them in a variety of formats. The digital conversion has been instrumental in improving scoring efficiency and accuracy.

- **Resources for Teachers**

Consider using the publication *Evaluating the AP® Portfolio in Studio Art*, a valuable resource that 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). 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.

The AP Program continues to be a high priority in my professional life because I believe so deeply in the process and subsequent benefits to all involved. As a college professor, I find that the AP students are easy to pick out in the classroom because of their refined work ethic and superior art skills. My thanks to all who make the program a success.