

**Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements**  
**Department of Art – School of Arts and Sciences**  
**B.A. Program in Art – Studio**  
**B.A. Program in Art – Art History**  
**AY 2009-10**

In the Department of Art, there are three different means for measuring our majors comprehensive knowledge of art history, theory, and praxis in their senior year. The type of Senior comprehensive examination applied depends upon whether the student is an Art History major; in rare instances, an exceptionally high-achieving Art History major who has qualified to write an Art History Honor’s Thesis; or a major in Studio Art (or Studio Art for Education).

In Spring 2010, we had no senior studio art majors, no Studio Art for Education majors, and only one senior art history major (who, though eligible, did not elect to complete an Art History Honor’s Thesis). Thus we had no candidates for a B.A. in studio art; and only one candidate for the B.A. in art history. This student completed his/her comprehensive examination with a passing grade (see Table I below). The distinct assessment requirements, rubrics applied, and key findings for 2009-10 in this sub-concentration are discussed below.

Table I *Undergraduate Comprehensive Assessment Results for Art Majors in 2008-9*

	Fail		Pass		High Pass		Pass w/ Honors (Art History)		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Art History		0.00%	1	100.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1
Studio Art	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0

**I. ART HISTORY - Evaluation, Rubric, and Findings**

Most Art History Seniors (unless they qualify for, and elect to complete a “Senior Honors thesis,” described below) take a three-part comprehensive essay examination that is given over two days. While the basic format of the examination has remained relatively stable over the past decade, the number and substance of the questions in each part has varied over time. In the past five years, each candidate has been asked to write three essays from a selection of five or more essay questions for each of the three parts of their comprehensive exam.

Part I of the Art History Comprehensive Examination tests the candidate’s knowledge of Ancient, Early Christian, Byzantine, and Medieval Art and Architecture; part II covers Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture; and part III assesses the candidate’s knowledge of Critical Theory and the Art and Architecture of the Modern and Contemporary world. The three parts of each candidate’s examination are graded art historians and/or artists affiliated with CUA. Whenever possible, at least one of the faculty graders for each part of the examination is an expert in the art historical subject area at hand. The final grade for each candidate’s Senior Art History Comprehensive consists of an average of the individual grades assigned to their essays in each of the three parts of the examination as scored by the year’s panel of instructors and/or professors. In 2008-9, the candidate’s comprehensive examination was graded by two visiting instructors and one associate professor according to the following criteria: clarity and organization of ideas, accurate use of suitable specific examples, and quality of argumentation in answering each essay question. In

2009-10, our art history candidate passed his/her comprehensive senior art history examination. There were no failing Art History Seniors; and no one earned a high pass.

### Art History Assessment Improvements

New rubrics for grading the Senior Art History Comprehensive Examination were developed in the fall of 2009 that were applied in the spring of 2010 (Table II).

**Table II Rubric for the Senior Comprehensive Examination in the History of Art**

Trait	Level		
	Exceeding Expectations (100-80%) [A to B-]	Meeting Expectations (79-60%) [C+ to D]	Below Expectations (59-0%) [F]
1) <i>knowledge and understanding of major art works and movements, historical and social circumstances, critical theories and methodologies</i>	thorough and precise knowledge and understanding	adequate knowledge and understanding	insufficient knowledge and understanding
2) <i>level of detail, range of evidence, quality of documentation</i>	Excellent selection of specific supporting examples; wide range of good quality, relevant references; answers display an accurate, specific, fully detailed grasp of material	adequately detailed and supported by relevant references of adequate quality	insufficiently detailed; not fully supported by relevant references; sources are poor in quality
3) <i>presentation and organization</i>	logical structure; clearly focused, well-developed, and persuasive presentation	adequate structure; generally focused, clear, coherent, and convincing	little or no evidence of a structured response; generally incoherent and unfocused
4) <i>proper and effective use of English</i>	accurate, clear, varied, precise, concise, and appropriate use of language; no significant lapses in grammar and expression; correct spelling and punctuation	generally accurate, clear, and coherent use of language; only a few lapses in grammar and expression; few errors in spelling and punctuation	not fully comprehensible; many lapses in grammar and expression; often inappropriate and limited use of vocabulary; many errors in spelling and punctuation

While the candidate's performance according to the new rubric (Table III) was too limited to extrapolate, the rubrics were beneficial in standardizing and streamlining the evaluation of the candidate's capstone achievement in Spring 2010. We look forward to using these rubrics again in Spring 2011 when we will be evaluating the capstone achievement of three candidates for a degree in Art History.

**Table III Table of Results for Senior Comprehensive Examination, BA in Art History 2009-10**

Trait	Level						Mean	SD	Total N
	Exceeding Expectations [100-80%]		Meeting Expectations [79-60%]		Below Expectations [59-0%]				
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
<b>1) knowledge and understanding of major art works and movements, historical and social circumstances, critical theories and methodologies</b>	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	#####	#####	1
<b>2) level of detail, range of evidence, quality of documentation</b>	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	2.00	#####	1
<b>3) presentation and organization</b>	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	2.00	#####	1
<b>4) proper and effective use of English</b>	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	3.00	#####	1

Note:

- 1) The "N" represents the number of students at each level of performance for each trait.
- 2) The "%" represents the percentage of the number of students falling at the level performance for each trait against the total number of students.
- 3) The mean is the average of all scores across the levels within the trait.
- 4) The standard deviation (SD) is the measure of the variability of the data set, indicating how "spread out" these data are from the mean value.

### **Art History Curricular Improvements as Indicated by Professional and Graduate Placement**

Our one candidate in art history in May 2010 applied unsuccessfully to graduate school in a subject only tangentially related to his/her academic training at CUA. That student is now working in an academic arts setting. Data in the form of follow-up interviews with other recent graduates indicates that many of our alumni desire further graduate study in the field of art history, art conservation, museum studies, and/or arts administration. At least seven of our almost 30 graduates from the past ten years are known to have entered MA or PhD programs in this field. Four of these graduates are either currently enrolled or have just graduated from leading universities in the area (Johns Hopkins, Georgetown, George Mason, and University of Maryland at College Park). Interviews with four CU Art History alumni who have entered graduate programs in art history or related areas of study over the past decade indicate that two significant areas of improvement could

be made to enhance our student's acceptance to and success in competitive Master's and Doctoral Programs in the field: That is, our art history majors need to take more art history courses, and they need to complete more advanced research papers during the course of their undergraduate studies. Currently all but one art history course is open to non-majors; and all but one has no prerequisite. While this policy addresses the university's financial imperative that undergraduate courses fill to their maximum capacity, it makes assignments for the completion of intermediate and advanced art historical research difficult, if not impossible, in most departmental course offerings. This problem is further exacerbated by the small size of the Art Department faculty -- there is currently only one full-time art historian teaching at CUA, which limits the number of upper-level art history courses that can be offered to our majors. Two important changes that we hope will help to address these problems are the addition of one more required art history elective and the addition of a Junior Seminar open only to art history majors. The Junior Art History seminar, ART 361, will be offered for the first time in the spring of 2011; it will focus on the completion of an intermediate research paper. This is intended to prepare rising Juniors for the completion of an advanced research paper during the candidate's senior year in our required capstone course -- ART 451A, Senior Seminar. The introduction of ART 362, Junior Art History Seminar, required an increase in the department's instructional funds from the university. The expansion of total required courses in the major from 12 to 14 may also require additional funding for more adjunct instructors or the addition of a second art history professor in the future.

Our alumni interviews indicate as well that our students who completed summer and/or term-time professional internships during their undergraduate career significantly enhanced their likelihood of finding work in the field after graduation. The Art Department has a profound commitment to assisting interested majors in identifying and attaining museum and gallery internships. Department faculty seek to advance student opportunities for attaining internship positions by extensive advisement, and by seeking to hire experienced part-time instructors who hold concomitant professional positions as curators and/or educators at area museums. (This important goal has genuine benefits for our students for it has directly paid off in our candidates obtaining valuable internships at leading area arts institutions; these experiences in turn have helped our students to find work at a variety of art museums, galleries, and other related arts institutions after graduation). Meeting the goal of hiring highly trained museum professionals to teach in the department has not been without financial cost to our department's limited budget (for experienced professionals require higher remuneration than recent PhDs or ABD instructors); it has also caused occasional administrative strain for it has meant having to negotiate teaching schedules that accommodate the exigencies of the instructor's primary employment while conflicting as little as possible with our university's standard scheduling pattern. The Art Department nevertheless remains committed to fostering internship opportunities for its students through careful advisement, professional networking, and the hiring of well-placed experienced professionals as part-time instructors whenever possible.

## **II. ART HISTORY HONORS - Evaluation, Rubric, and Findings**

On rare occasions, exceptionally high-achieving art history majors are granted special permission to write an Art History Honor's Thesis in addition to taking the two-day senior art history comprehensive examination that is required of all art history majors (detailed above). The Senior Art History Honor's Thesis consists of a 15-20 page research paper that is begun at the end of the junior year and completed in the senior year. This paper is assessed by a minimum of two graders -- the major thesis advisor and one or more additional reader. No student enrolled in this demanding

course in 2009-10. If a student had qualified and elected to do so, new rubrics for this capstone requirement developed in fall 2009 [Table IV] would have been applied.

**Table IV Rubric for SENIOR COMPREHENSIVE HONORS THESIS in The History of Art**

Trait	Level		
	Exceeding Expectations (100-80%) [A-B-]	Meeting Expectations (79-60%) [C+-D]	Below Expectations (59-0%) [F]
1) <i>Quality and clarity of thesis topic</i>	Thesis topic is clearly and articulately stated; based on sound logic and good research	Thesis topic is adequately stated; and essentially sound in its approach	Thesis topic is unclear, and/or unfounded in its premise.
2) <i>knowledge and understanding of subject</i>	thorough and precise knowledge and understanding	adequate knowledge and understanding	insufficient knowledge and understanding
2) <i>quality of research, range of evidence and documentation</i>	thorough and wide range of evidence, richly detailed documentation	adequately detailed and supported by relevant references	insufficiently detailed, inadequately supported by relevant references
3) <i>presentation and organization</i>	clear, effective, and logical structure; clearly focused, well-developed and persuasive presentation	adequately clear and coherent structure; generally focused, coherent, and convincing organization of ideas	little or no evidence of a structured narrative; unfocused; generally incoherent in presentation of ideas
4) <i>argumentation, critical acumen</i>	sophisticated analysis; convincingly interpreted; fully supported by precise references to well-chosen original and secondary sources	generally valid and adequate interpretation; argument is adequately supported by precise references to adequate original and secondary sources	meager or simplistic interpretation; inadequately supported by references to original and secondary sources; illogical in argument and/or does not distinguish between fact, conjecture, and opinion
5) <i>originality</i>	arguments are original to the student or effectively develop published interpretations	not necessarily original but competent, perceptive, and insightful	entirely unoriginal and derivative
6) <i>proper and effective use of language (English and foreign, when employed), appropriate use of academic conventions specific to the discipline</i>	accurate, clear, varied, precise, concise, and appropriate use of language; no significant lapses in grammar and expression; correct spelling and punctuation ; proper use of academic conventions specific to the discipline	generally accurate, clear, and coherent use of language; only a few lapses in grammar and expression; few errors in spelling and punctuation; adequate use of academic conventions specific to the discipline	not readily comprehensible; many lapses in grammar and expression; often inappropriate and limited use of vocabulary; many errors in spelling and punctuation; incorrect or inconsistent use of academic conventions specific to the discipline

### III. STUDIO ART - Evaluation, Rubric, and Findings

The Studio Art Senior Project measures the sum of each studio student's academic experience in mastering the technical skills needed for the production of art in each student's chosen media -- painting, sculpture, or digital design. It also demonstrates each studio student's essential

understanding of critical thinking and art history. Since the creative process consists of the application of all these learned elements, the senior project assesses the student's technical proficiency, his or her ability to function as a productive visual artist, and his or her basic comprehension of his or her major undergraduate curriculum. In 2009-10, there were no senior studio art candidates for graduation. The assessment process that was applied in 2008-9 is described below.

The evaluation of each studio major's progress in completing his or her Senior Project is an elaborate multi-step process that begins at the end of the student's junior year with the student's submission of a studio art project plan that is subject to approval by the student's Academic Advisor, the Department of Art's Senior Project Assistant Coordinator (who assists the department chair by coordinating the evaluation and completion of all studio art projects), and two Senior Project Advisors (selected by each student from the department's faculty; these advisors may be the same as the candidate's Academic Advisor and/or the Project Coordinator). The evaluation process continues throughout the student's senior year with monthly (or when necessary bi-weekly or weekly) meetings between the senior and his or her two Senior Project Advisors. During these meetings, the student's progress in completing his or her project is graded by both advisors. The official process also includes evaluations held approximately every other month from the start of the fall semester of senior year through the end of the spring semester in which all studio candidates formally present their Senior Projects before an assembled panel of faculty members. During these Senior Critiques, each student's progress in completing his or her project is graded by the assembled art history and studio art faculty according to a detailed set of rubrics that measures each Senior Project's conceptual development, formal analysis, overall presentation, general progress, and quality of research. The assessment of each studio major's Senior Project at these Senior Critiques includes an evaluation of each project's formal quality, the quality and clarity of each senior's oral presentation, and the quality and clarity of each student's written statements describing the scope and meaning of their Senior Projects.

Between 2004 and 2009, studio art Senior Projects were graded by a panel of art faculty according to a four point scale as follows: Exceeding Expectations, Meeting Expectations, Below Expectations, and Unsatisfactory. The grade assigned to each student's senior project at bi-monthly Senior Critiques was formed by an arithmetic compilation of points assigned to each student's project according to the following four trait assessment: Project Concept and Research, Formal Analysis, Overall Presentation, and General Progress. In this process, each trait was rated on a scale ranging from "Satisfactory/Meets Expectations" [one point], "Below Expectations" [1/2 point], or "Failing/Unsatisfactory" [no points]. At each critique, a student's senior project could earn up to an average of four points by being judged "Satisfactory" in all four traits by all (or the majority) of faculty assessors. The aggregate score of all monthly advisor evaluations and all bi-monthly Senior Critique grades determined whether or not each student's Senior Project would be granted a High Pass, Pass, or Failing grade. Rubrics of the detailed descriptions of the traits will be applied in future academic years.