

Writing and the Visual Arts

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## Project Overview

### Survey Form and Dispersal

During Winter and Spring Quarters 1990 three surveys were dispersed to students in a variety of intermediate and advanced undergraduate classes in the Department of Studio Arts. In the broadest sense, the purpose of the surveys was to attempt to collect information on the students' understanding of the relationship between an ability to write and the development of ideas in a visual discipline. It was not assumed that all students began with a belief in the necessity of this relationship. So the surveys also sought to examine the students' beliefs in the relative importance of this topic. A fourth survey (largely adapted from the Sarles and Brady questionnaire) was dispersed to the faculty in the department late in the quarter. This survey sought to collect information on the faculty members' attitudes toward the relationship between critical studies and the visual arts, as well as, how important a role critical studies should play in the department's own curriculum.

Since neither of the researchers had any previous experience in survey preparation, the surveys also became an experiment in the framing of questions and the appropriate form of the surveys themselves. Mistakes were made in both the formulation and dispersal of the surveys, adjustments were made (with limited success), and a statistical analysis of the received information has been conducted.

The surveys were dispersed to six undergraduate courses during each quarter in various instructional areas in the department. These included intermediate and advanced courses in photography and painting; mixed intermediate and advanced courses in lithography and electronic media; and beginning, intermediate, and advanced courses in ceramics.

From the beginning the research was hampered by a relatively low rate of return of completed surveys. Initially, surveys were returned on a volunteer basis. While the surveys returned during this period were certainly not unanimous in their beliefs, the researchers assume that a proportionately higher number of returns came from those students who believed in the importance of the topic and the research itself. The return process was complicated by the fact that, while the researchers were willing to let students complete the forms at their own discretion, some of the faculty members whose classes were participating chose to make time during class for the completion of surveys. Since these in-class completions represented by far the majority of the total of completed returns during Winter Quarter, certain instructional areas are over-represented in the totals. A more equitable system of dispersal and completion was attempted during Spring Quarter. This consisted of placing greater responsibility for survey dispersal in the hands of a smaller number of faculty. These were all faculty who had

expressed interest in the project from its initiation or who were known by the researchers to have a particular interest in the research topic. Unfortunately, in several cases, this initial interest was not enough to sustain an active involvement in the project throughout Spring Quarter. This contributed to lower numbers of survey returns during the second half of Spring Quarter than was the case during Winter Quarter.

The rate of return also seemed to be affected by the form of the surveys themselves. As they were dispersed during Winter Quarter, the first survey called for rather lengthy responses to the individual questions. Even though the second and third surveys were progressively easier to complete (the second required either yes/no or short written answers and the third used a numerical ranking form) this initial difficulty seemed to get the project off on the wrong foot with a number of students. It also seemed to exacerbate feelings of resistance among those students who were already not particularly interested in the project or the topic. Therefore, the researchers decided to disperse the same surveys in reverse order during Spring Quarter to see whether this would affect the rate of return and/or the results. It did affect the rate of return, but not as expected. Rather than increasing the overall rate, the new dispersal schedule increased the rate of return at the beginning of the quarter, but lessened it dramatically during the second half.

Rates of return for the three student surveys are as follows:

#### Winter

- Survey 1 22 returned out of 72 dispersed, 30.5%
- Survey 2 33 returned out of 61 dispersed, 55%
- Survey 3 21 returned out of 53 dispersed, 39.2%

#### Spring

- Survey 3 71 returned out of 71 dispersed, 100%
- Survey 2 32 returned out of 74 dispersed, 43%
- Survey 1 3 returned out of 57 dispersed, 5%

#### Combined

- Survey 1 25 returned out of dispersed, 19%
- Survey 2 65 returned out of 135 dispersed, 48%
- Survey 3 92 returned out of 124 dispersed, 74%

One returned Survey 3 was not included in analysis since it was mistakenly completed by a graduate level student.

As for the faculty surveys, too few were ever returned to provide adequate information for analysis (3 returned out of 19 dispersed). This fact, in itself, suggests a general belief among the faculty as to the relative lack importance of the research topic.

### Survey Content and General Analysis

All of the surveys asked questions that were concerned with writing and critical analysis, but they all approached this topic from different positions. Survey 1 asked a variety of general questions as to what distinguishes the visual arts as a discipline, the students' beliefs as to the relative importance of writing in relation to the visual arts as a discipline, and what sources the students use now in attempting to conceptually delineate their visual work. The questions were quite broad and tended to concern themselves with "the visual arts" in an abstract sense.

Survey 2 was much more concerned with the students' own activities and beliefs in their ability to function within specific theoretical realms. The word "criticism" was used often as a way of focusing writing into a category with which it was believed most students were familiar.

Survey 3 again opened up the discipline of writing, but made it more personal by asking a number of questions about the students' own belief in their writing ability, their educational background in writing, and how they feel about the type of writing that they are required to do as a university student and as a studio arts student.

A general analysis of the returned surveys suggests four main categories of student response. These categories are largely dependent upon the importance (or lack of importance) that the students place in writing as it relates to the visual arts. On the one hand there is a small, but vocal, group of students who strongly believe in the necessity of writing, and in a broader sense criticism, in allowing for the on-going development of their current work and the contextual positioning of their existing work. One could call this the "writing involved" group.

Allowing for the possibly biased nature of the returns that was mentioned above, it is clear that a sizable majority of the remaining students believe that writing is important in terms of clarifying already existing visual ideas. This group can be broken down into two smaller groups depending upon the relative importance they place in this activity. One could call these the "moderately" and "somewhat writing involved" groups. There is wide variation in response within these groups, ranging all the way from those students who do self-directed writing in relation to their own work to many

students who seem to have a vague belief that writing (and reading) is important in an academic sense, but seem to lack most of the skills or habits to actually make this part of their art-making activity.

The fourth group represents the smallest group of respondents, but it is strong in its belief that writing and even oral expression have little or nothing to do with any type of visual arts activity. In the most extreme cases, these respondents believe that writing is harmful, in the sense of being limiting, to visual art-making. One could call this the "writing resistant" group.

It is interesting that of those students who believe in the importance of writing to the visual arts, a sizeable minority feel that the department should be asking students to write more and that more of an emphasis should be placed on critical analysis. However, as was mentioned above, there seems to be a rather wide spectrum of beliefs as to just what constitutes "critical analysis" (and, therefore, what type of writing is appropriate to the arts.) A minority of students felt that writing was important in the theoretical/cultural positioning of their work while the majority saw writing as a way to clarify the formal criticism of their work. This latter stance is much closer to the typical type of oral discourse that occurs in class critiques.

Specific informational breakdowns of Surveys 2 and 3 follow. Frequency responses to the individual questions are given as well as selected response correlations.

### Survey 3

#### Summary of Participants/ Winter & Spring Quarters

Since all three surveys were dispersed to the same course sections, this summary is representative of the total participants in the research project.

#### Age

NumNumeric = 89  
 NumNonNumeric (No Response) = 2  
 NumCases = 91  
 Mean = 24.831  
 Median = 23  
 Midrange = 34  
 Standard Deviation = 5.9414  
 Interquartile range = 5  
 Range = 32  
 Variance = 35.301

#### Breakdown of Participants by Course

<u>Course</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>%</u>
1811 Ceramics	15	16.5
3/5520 Litho	6	6.59
3/5810 Ceramics	5	5.49
3105 Intro Painting	7	7.69
3110 Drawing	27	29.7
3710 Photo	17	18.7
5120 Painting	2	2.20
5420 SArts Workshop	5	5.49
5710 Photo	6	6.59
No Response	1	1.10
Total	91	

#### Frequency breakdown of Participants by Year in Program

<u>Year</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>%</u>
Freshman	2	2.20
Sophomore	16	17.6
Junior	27	29.7
Senior	44	48.4
No Response	2	2.20
Total	91	

### Survey 3: Frequency Responses for Individual Questions

This section provides the raw frequency of response for variables in Survey 3. The numbers in bold type represent the number of respondents at each corresponding level. The abbreviation "N/R" indicates no response.

1. **How important is writing in the visual arts?**

Very much			Some			Not much			Not at all	
7	6		5	4		3	2		1	N/R
<b>9</b>	<b>26</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
  
2. **How important is oral expression in the visual arts?**

Very much			Some			Not much			Not at all	
7	6		5	4		3	2		1	N/R
<b>25</b>	<b>36</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
  
3. **How skilled do you consider yourself to be as a reader?**

Very much			Some			Not much			Not at all	
7	6		5	4		3	2		1	N/R
<b>14</b>	<b>40</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
  
4. **How skilled do you consider yourself to be as a writer?**

Very much			Some			Not much			Not at all	
7	6		5	4		3	2		1	N/R
<b>6</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
  
5. **How adequate was your high school education in writing?**

Very much			Some			Not much			Not at all	
7	6		5	4		3	2		1	N/R
<b>11</b>	<b>23</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
  
6. **Have you taken any writing/composition courses at the U of M?**

No	Yes
<b>22</b>	<b>69</b>
  
7. **If yes, how adequate was the education you received in this course(s)?**

Very much			Some			Not much			Not at all	
7	6		5	4		3	2		1	N/R
<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>
  
8. **How important is research to your visual work?**

Very much			Some			Not much			Not at all	
7	6		5	4		3	2		1	N/R
<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

9. Does your creative work progress incrementally or in discrete projects?

Very much	Some	Some	Some	Some	Very much		
Discr. 7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Incr. N/R
7	14	17	17	13	9	8	6

10. Do your individual works appear more discrete to others than to you?

Very much	Some	Some	Some	Not much	Not at all		
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	N/R
2	4	28	21	16	7	2	11

11. How many art related books would you say you read in a year?

None	1-5	5-10	Over 10	N/R
3	48	25	8	7

12. How many other books (fiction, biography, etc.) do you read per year?

None	1-5	5-10	10-20	Over 20	N/R
3	20	23	25	9	11

13. Have you ever been required to write a research paper?

No	Yes	N/R
1	83	7

14. If yes, what did you consider most difficult, the research or the writing?

Very much	Some	Some	Some	Very much			
Writing 7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Research N/R
9	12	15	13	14	12	5	11

15. How satisfied are you with the amount of writing you are required to do in courses taken in the Department of Studio Arts?

Very much	Some	Some	Some	Not much	Not at all		
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	N/R
13	17	16	15	8	7	6	9

16. If not satisfied, do you wish there were more writing or less?

More	Less	N/R
30	9	52

17. How satisfied are you with the amount of writing you are required to do in courses taken outside the Department of Studio Arts?

Very much	Some	Some	Some	Not much	Not at all		
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	N/R
8	23	18	17	6	2	2	15

18. If not satisfied, do you wish there were more writing or less?

More	Less	N/R
12	12	67



### Survey 3: Additional Comments

This section contains comments included in Survey 3 from Winter and Spring Quarters. Each paragraph represents an individual response.

...I think it is important for the artists to have the ability to express themselves orally and writtenly (sic), besides visually. And I think it is important for the audience to understand what is important to the artist as well.

Although good writing skills are essential in most successful careers- the written word has very little effect on many art careers.

Doing the writing, etc...really doesn't bother me. It's the time it takes to do it all. It's really a pain when you have exams in one week along with a paper due too. Profs at the "U", I feel, expect too much of us. Hell, their class isn't the only class I have and the way they assign stuff you'd think they thought so.

Exams should all be essay in format for courses dealing with the Arts and Humanities. When students are required to write about their own work (in the Studio Arts Department), it forces them to question what their issues and concerns are- the what, hows, and whys of their work.

I assume you're wondering how to structure writing requirements for Studio Arts majors. I would say it is a good and necessary thing to write about one's own art. The best way to encourage this is to let the students write about what interests them most. Give freedom in this way, above all else, in instituting these requirements.

I don't really enjoy writing, but I probably should do more- to become more skilled and so it would, hopefully, become easier. I feel that writing is important because sometimes it is necessary to promote yourself as an artist. When one is just starting out, one doesn't have the resources of a gallery, museum, etc. Therefore, an artist must be able to write about their work or promote it in some manner.

I keep several journals and I benefit in my personal growth through keeping journals, but I learn and retain visually in the majority of my living.

I know that these are art classes we are taking here, but I don't think the papers we write should be taken so lightly. We are here to learn to express ourselves in the area of art. Shouldn't we also be required to express ourselves verbally and in written terms?

I think reading and writing are very important to do in the arts. But the art classes that I have taken at the university are very rigorous and demand much of my time and energy. Instead of adding more reading and writing to the current curriculum w/in these classes- I really wish the University offered separate classes in these fields- especially photography. I appreciate any reading or papers we do because I am not able to acquire this knowledge or these discussions anywhere else at the University! There is one history of photo class offered and it was not offered this year! Also, there aren't any thinking/theory classes. I urge more of a commitment to these classes!

I think the amount [of writing] is appropriate, or could be increased a bit, but focus would be helpful. Writing is treated as a perfunctory obligation in many of my studio classes.

I think the dialogue is the important aspect with writing. Also, in [the] Studio Arts [Department] writing as craft is not dealt with. We are forging new visions of writing and the responses I get haven't dealt with it [writing] much.

I was very disappointed with my writing for the arts class. We didn't do practical papers that I will need to know how to write (i.e. grant applications). Instead we did such things as memoirs.

Make questions clearer.

More oral expression is in order.

The art department needs more writing in its program. I'm a graduating senior and have had very little writing experience in any studio class. I feel it's important for students to be able to write grant proposals, etc. after they receive a degree. Also, being a good writer makes for a good reader.

Writing is a good tool, but for classes to have more writing would require teachers to re-evaluate the importance of class-work because it would have to be lessened.

Writing is important, but I would rather do art work involved with the class projects. I feel tests and writing can take too much time, energy, and effort away from the class. ...You can grow from viewing and discussion. Why waste time writing. You can do that in an associated Art History class.

I wish there were] writing of a different kind! Have a paper due in critical courses and have it of considerable length- 5-10 pages. And stop the 1 page, half-hearted papers that degrade the students' intelligence and placate the people who created this stupid requirement. Hot or cold is better is better. Lukewarmness drains your energy!

### Survey 3: Selected Response Correlations

The first question that appears on Survey 3 is "How important is writing in the visual arts?" The individual responses to this base question were compared with responses to a number of following questions in order to see how a belief in the relative importance of writing in the visual arts may influence (or be influenced by) other types of writing or studio involvement. The results of these correlations are summarized in the following tables. In all cases, the numbers in the vertical columns represent the levels of no/yes response for Question 1. The numbers in the horizontal rows represent the levels of response for the various other questions.

#### Cross Tabulation Counts for Questions 1 & 2

Rows are levels of Question 2:

How important is oral expression in the visual arts?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	total
1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
3	1	0	5	1	0	0	0	7
4	0	0	1	3	1	2	0	7
5	0	0	3	1	8	3	0	15
6	0	0	3	2	16	14	1	36
7	0	1	1	1	7	7	8	25
total	2	1	13	8	32	26	9	91

Correlation Analysis: The possible responses to both questions range from Very Much to Not at All with 7 being the highest indicator. A large majority (approximately 84%) of the respondents rated the importance of oral expression in the visual arts at 5 or higher. This is somewhat higher than the 74% who rated the importance of writing at the same levels. There is a strong correlation between these two groups with an 84% overlap in respondents.

#### Cross Tabulation Counts for Questions 1 & 4

Rows are levels of Question 4:

How skilled do you consider yourself to be as a writer?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	total
2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
3	0	0	0	2	3	1	1	7
4	0	1	3	2	1	4	2	13
5	1	0	5	3	18	12	4	43
6	0	0	2	0	9	7	2	20
7	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	6
total	2	1	13	8	32	26	9	91

**Correlation Analysis:** Again, the possible responses to both questions range from Very Much to Not at All with 7 being the highest indicator. There seems to be a reasonably strong correlation between the importance that individual students place in writing and the visual arts and how these same students rate their own skill in writing. As was mentioned above, 74% of the respondents rate the importance of writing at 5 or higher. 76% rate their writing skill at 5 or higher. There is a 77% correlation between these two groups with the largest single group (18) rating both questions at level 5.

#### Cross Tabulation Counts for Questions 1 & 8

Rows are levels of Question 8:

**How important is research to your visual work?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	total
	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
3	1	1	5	0	4	1	0	12
4	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	5
5	1	0	2	3	12	11	1	30
6	0	0	2	3	11	7	2	25
7	0	0	3	1	1	6	6	17
<b>total</b>	2	1	13	8	32	26	9	91

**Correlation Analysis:** Possibilities for response are the same as above. 79% rate the importance of research to their visual work at level 5 or higher. Once again, there is a strong correlation (79% overlap) between this group and the group which rates writing importance at the same levels.

#### Cross Tabulation Counts for Questions 1 & 15

Rows are levels of Question 15:

**How satisfied are you with the amount of writing you are required to do in courses taken in the Department of Studio Arts?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	total
no response	0	0	2	1	3	2	1	9
1	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	6
2	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	7
3	0	0	1	0	3	4	0	8
4	0	0	1	1	6	6	1	15
5	1	0	1	3	6	4	1	16
6	0	0	3	0	8	3	3	17
7	1	0	3	1	4	4	0	13
<b>total</b>	2	1	13	8	32	26	9	91

**Correlation Analysis:** The response possibilities are as above. There is a fairly high rate of no response, largely due to incomplete surveys. Of those students that responded, approximately 56% did so at level 5 or higher, indicating that they are basically satisfied with the amount of writing they are currently required to do for studio arts courses. This group is comprised of the entire range of responses to a belief in the importance of writing, however, 71% do overlap with those who rate writing importance at 5 or higher. This question also generated by far the largest number of responses at level 3 or lower (26%) of any question on the survey, indicating that there is a sizeable minority who are not satisfied.

**Cross Tabulation Counts for Questions 1 & 16**

Rows are levels of Question 16:

**If not satisfied, do you wish there were more writing or less?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	total
no response	1	0	10	4	23	11	3	52
less	0	1	3	1	4	0	0	9
more	1	0	0	3	5	15	6	30
total	2	1	13	8	32	26	9	91

**Correlation Analysis:** Since this question is an extension of Question 15, there is a particularly high incidence of no response. After adjusting for incomplete surveys, there remains a 52% no response rate, which approximates the percentage of students who appear to be satisfied with the amount of writing required. It is interesting, however, that of those students who did respond 77% feel that the department should require more writing of its students. And It is not surprising that 87% of this group are students who rate the importance of writing at 5 or higher.

## Survey 2: Frequency Responses to Individual Questions

This section provides the raw frequency of response for variables in Survey 2. Once again, the numbers in bold type represent the number of respondents for each variable. The abbreviation "N/R" indicates no response.

### 1. Do you ever write about your own work?

No	Yes	N/R
<b>28</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>

### 2. Do you ever write about other topics or keep a journal?

No	Yes	N/R
<b>17</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>0</b>

### 3. Do you have trouble describing your work?

No	Yes	N/R
<b>21</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>4</b>

### 4. Do you have trouble describing to others what your work is about?

No	Yes	N/R
<b>33</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>

### 5. Do you think you are aware of the context of your work?

No	Yes	N/R
<b>10</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>2</b>

### 6. Do you strive to give your work a strong content orientation?

No	Yes	N/R
<b>11</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>6</b>

### 7. Is the content of your work determined by the work itself or the context it is in?

Work	Context	Both	Don't Know	N/R
<b>26</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>

### 8. Do you read art magazines, journals, or newspaper reviews?

No	Yes	N/R
<b>21</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>0</b>

### 9. Do you read movie reviews?

No	Yes	N/R
<b>31</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>0</b>

10. Would you agree that most fine arts journals are basically the same in terms of their writing?

No	Yes	Don't Know	N/R
26	15	14	10

11. Would you agree that most art journals exist simply to sustain the art market?

No	Yes	Don't Know	N/R
29	20	4	12

12. Do you feel that critics exist to stand in place of the average viewer?

No	Yes	Don't Know	N/R
47	10	1	7

13. Would you agree that criticism's primary responsibility is to support the work of artists?

No	Yes	N/R
44	10	11

14. Is there a reviewer/critic who you often read even though you often disagree with they write?

No	Yes	N/R
39	8	18

15. Do you feel you can distinguish between different forms of writing in the arts, i.e., descriptive, analytical, etc.?

No	Yes	N/R
7	47	11

16. Would you be able to define or recognize a Marxist critique?

No	Yes	N/R
20	36	9

17. Would you be able to define or recognize a Feminist critique?

No	Yes	N/R
6	50	9

18. Do you believe that good criticism can be written from bad art?

No	Yes	N/R
4	53	8

19. Do you believe criticism has a cultural or gender bias?

No	Yes	Don't Know	N/R
4	49	1	11

**20. Do you think of criticism as information or as doctrine?**

Info.	Doctrine	Both	Either	Neither	Don't Know	N/R
26	13	3	3	1	1	18

**21. Is criticism important to the development of your ideas?**

No	Yes	N/R
10	43	12

**22. Is there a theory of criticism?**

No	Yes	Don't Know	N/R
11	23	8	23

**23. Can you identify a theory of criticism?**

No	Yes	N/R
26	12	27

**Survey 2: Additional Comments**

This section contains comments included in Survey 2 from Winter and Spring Quarters. Each paragraph represents an individual response.

I believe that Scholastic criticism is a productive tool of knowledge. But I think that most "professional" criticisms are poor excuses for the production of language in writing.

Questions need to be specific to a scenario in order for you to test the questions in a practical manner. Generalities don't measure as well.

Fine art is a language. Why is it so important to define it in another. The artist seems always held responsible for an explanation about what they are doing, but the outside world never needs to tell the artist what they are not doing. Sort of [similar to] the attitude that a lot of Americans have about [the] English [language] when they travel. "Why do the French get so upset when we try to talk to them." Sometimes the only definition for the art is the art and everything else is superfluous.

I am, as you see, very scared of the art world intelligentsia. I will mean nothing to art history. I will not be a great artist. I have nothing uniquely original to express. The art world intelligentsia will not value me- so I say the fuck with trying to keep up with the intellectual elite.

Any survey contains information which can be interpreted in any given manner. Interpretation of data and criteria are derived by one's cultural and social background. I would like to know where you are coming from.



## Survey 2: Selected Response Correlations

The first question that appears on Survey 2 is "Do you ever write about your own work?" As in Survey 3, the individual responses to this base question were compared with responses to a number of following questions in order to see how an involvement, or lack of involvement, in this activity may influence other types of aesthetic involvement. The results of these correlations are summarized in the following tables. In all cases, the numbers in the vertical columns represent the levels of no/yes response for Question 1. The numbers in the horizontal rows represent the levels of response for the various other questions.

### Cross Tabulation Counts for Questions 1 & 5

Rows are levels of response for Question 5:

"Do you think you are aware of the context of your work?"

	No	Yes	Total
No Response	1	1	2
No	3	7	10
Yes	24	29	53
Total	28	37	65

Correlation Analysis: There seems to be little significance attached to a practice of writing and the students' beliefs in their own awareness of the context of their work. While 82% of the respondents believe that they are aware of the context of their work, this figure is almost equally divided between students who do (55%) and do not (45%) write about their work.

### Cross Tabulation Counts for Questions 1 & 7

Rows are levels of response for Question 7:

"Is the context of your work determined by the work itself or the context it is in?"

	No	Yes	Total
No Response	6	5	11
Both	4	12	16
Context	4	6	10
Don't Know	1	1	2
Work	13	13	26
Total	28	37	65

**Correlation Analysis:** Again, the responses to this question are closely divided between those students who do and do not write about their work. One exception, however, is the students who indicate that the context for their work is determined by both the work itself and its situational context. In this response, 75% are students who do write about their work.

**Cross Tabulation Counts for Questions 1 & 8**

Rows are levels of response for Question 8:

**"Do you read art magazines, journals, or newspaper reviews?"**

	No	Yes	Total
No	11	10	21
Yes	17	27	44
Total	28	37	65

**Correlation Analysis:** There seems to be somewhat of a correlation between writing and reading within the discipline. 68% of the respondents indicate that they, at least occasionally, do arts related reading. Of this group, 61% do writing about their work and 39% do not. The 32% who do not read within the discipline are evenly divided between writers and non-writers.

**Cross Tabulation Counts for Questions 1 & 15**

Rows are levels of response for Question 15:

**"Do you feel that you can distinguish between different forms of writing in the arts, i.e., descriptive, analytical, etc.?"**

	No	Yes	Total
No Response	6	5	11
No	3	4	7
Yes	19	28	47
Total	28	37	65

**Correlation Analysis:** This question has a high no response rate (17%) which is evenly split between writers and non-writers. Of those who did respond, a large majority (87%) believe that they can distinguish between different forms of writing in the arts. Within this group, the correlation with writing practices is fairly weak. However, a majority (60%) are writers.

**Cross Tabulation Counts for Questions 1 & 21**

Rows are levels of response for Question 21:

**"Is criticism important to the development of your ideas?"**

	No	Yes	Total
No Response	6	6	12
No	5	5	10
Yes	17	26	43
Total	28	37	65

**Correlation Analysis:** This question also has a high no response rate (18%). Of those who did respond, 81% indicate that criticism is important to the development of their ideas (often qualified in that many students also state that it is only sometimes important.) Again, 60% of this group are writers.

**Survey 1: Selected Responses**

This section contains various responses to the individual questions to Survey 1. Selection was done primarily on the basis of an attempt to provide the widest possible spectrum of responses. Similar responses were, for the most part, withheld, although an effort was made to include responses which were perhaps similar in their general nature but different in their emphasis or emotional shading. Occasionally, if a question generated a large percentage of responses which were quite similar a larger number of these responses were included in order to call attention to this situation.

In the case of partial responses, this was usually done in situations where only one portion of a response was considered to be unique. In all cases, an effort was made to delineate, as much as possible, the original spelling and grammatical nature of the responses in order to most clearly illustrate the various levels of writing skill of the participants.

**1. Do you feel that you are, very, moderately, slightly, not at all, familiar with critical writing in the visual arts today? (circle one)**

Responses:

Very		2
Moderately	12	
Slightly		7
Not at All		<u>4</u>
Total Surveys		25

**2. What characteristics does the field of studio arts have which distinguishes it from other academic disciplines?**

It'd so much more subjective than other academic disciplines. You get a vague sense of there being certain rules and "absolutes" to this field - especially when it comes to critically analyzing your work and other's work - but you're not really told outright, like other fields. It's more that you absorb it through experience.

Knowledge in our own field is often gained as much by our own soul-searching and our experimentation in process as by studying what else is going on in our field.

Has much more outside influences than just the academia of a learned field...

There are no right or wrong answers - just many questions. And it seems like you can never do enough work, but I think that holds true for anyone who cares about getting good at something.

It's a very "hands on" field that requires the actual application of techniques learned...

The study of art is an ambiguous pursuit. Unlike other disciplines, art is not anchored in facts and principles that can be looked up in text books. Without such standards, art seems based on general agreements about the visual experience.

A recognition that there is no right answer (part of the legacy of a century of Avant- Garde) And a special possibility for interdisciplinary activity...As a department, Studio Arts is maybe more successful at tolerating the above than encouraging it.

**3. Do you believe that writing is important in terms of improving your critical understanding? Why or why not?**

Absolutely. Writing is the key, the final step to truly knowing what you understand - or rather - to understand what you've taken in by reading and discussing. When you can organize your thoughts and write it all down so that you're really saying something - well, that's the hardest part.

Yes. If you are writing about something you must explain yourself in a clear and concise manner. This would mean examining and finding the correct vocabulary to express yourself. I believe this, in itself, would improve your critical understanding.

Yes - it clarifies your intentions - helps a person define their goals - as much as drawing is a plan for painting...

I believe that writing is very important in terms of improving critical understanding, because many times I feel as if I have opinions or ideas, but until I verbalize them in an organized statement they aren't very stable or well developed.

Yes, if not for its expressive value alone [then] for the relationship writing has with reading. And the importance reading has to education.

Yes - not only communicating with art but comprehending it [art] in its broadest applicable contexts.

Yes, because art is done to give a message or evoke something from a viewer. Critical writing is a way to provide interpretation to someone who may see things differently.

Yes. Although words cannot completely accommodate the equivocal and emotional nature of art, they are still our best means of exchanging and understanding ideas.

I have a personal and political imperative to write and to be involved in the critical discourse. I cannot live with myself if my work is a part of the sexist and racist propaganda that is "Art History". Postmodern and feminist critiques of art help to identify what doesn't work - writing helps me to synthesize what might.

discussion (sic) is better in [than] writing. Things get over look[ed] in the act of writing. But in [the] case of just writing or nothing, writing does cause [one] to think.

Writing is one way to sharpen one's critical understanding, But I think reading relevant articles, reflection, and discussion also works. Sometime writing narrows an idea beyond what is true. Not everything fits neatly. On the [other] hand, writing does clarify fuzziness.

No. Often people cannot write what they feel. for example, I can't describe sunlight. If I try to describe it, it seems to become fake.

Not really. To me the importance of my work lies completely in its visual impact. Of course, in order to improve my work, I read about what's happening in the art world.

**4. Do you think visual arts writing is more or less important than in the past? Why?**

I think it's important for students to learn well visual arts writing and reading, more now than in the past. Because there is so much [more] of it out there now than in the past and one needs the tools to "wade" through it all to separate the truth from the fiction.

Yes. It's more important because of the diversity of the visual arts and the social connection it has, which in the past few decades has increased. Also, the access of the visual arts to to a broader part of our society has made a need for writing about it.

Yes, [writing is] far more important now because there is so much more information to assimilate, each artist is doing a lot of research to use in his/her work - our job of understanding it is much more difficult than when most artists simply made nice jugs that sold well. Or lovely paintings.

More important. People are being asked to define their work. The work has changed, as it is not always evident what the artist was intending.

I think there are fewer boundaries than ever before, I think art is often misunderstood and mis-represented, and [art] has become separated from everyday life. One has to go see art, it isn't really all around us.

Same, the two are so closely related that one changes with the other.

Certainly more important. Art continues to stretch into new areas, becoming more and more difficult for the layperson to comprehend what's at work, and at stake. Writing helps to define parameters, direct the viewer, and explain what is, and what is not, vital and important.

It has always been important and will always be important.

...the critics think it's more important, but I don't think it's any more or less important to the artist now than a hundred or a thousand years ago.

More - after modernism's ultimate reduction of art to purity, it is more important now than ever before to see art as communication of ideas rather than attractive (or appropriate) form.

I don't know.

Much more - it's the information age - visual language still communicates, but information as text informs a work or viewer and open other possibilities of discourse. Just as feminist writing (that is) far removed from painting has

affected how I see painting, visual arts writing (like the work of Lucy Lippard, Craig Owens, etc.) has changed how I see the world.

Not less important, but who cares what one writes about art? The journalist maybe feels his opinion of art can be of value, but it is the visual impact that makes art a success or failure. I feel I am very little concerned/affected by writers in art. I am more visual - I learn by looking and experiencing new art ideas.

**5. Name a book or film or other source of information that has had an important influence on your artmaking and describe this influence.**

Rilke - Requiem for a Woman, Dunio Elegies and the Sonnets to Orpheus, Unknown Rilke. All of Steinbeck's novels.... Many films, too many to list.

There is no specific book or film that has a direct influence on my art. I would say all do. Music has a great influence on my art coupled with all other things in life.

Pioneer Pottery by M. Cardew. [This book] stressed the qualities of good craftsmanship- freshness, honesty, integrity in [the] work.

Historical references to architecture. Everyday household surroundings. [Asking] why changes in style occur- [because of] social [reasons], technical [reasons], etc.

I will say books or films that present different realities...

Frank Lloyd Wright's Autobiography [which presented] his ideology and influences.

Ran by Akira Kurosawa and My Little Laundrette (sic). Both films [are] about irony and contrast, deception and misconception.

The research I did for my senior thesis. One important resource was [Hal] Foster's The Anti-Aesthetic.

History books. Apart from the historical facts they give, they [also] describe people's ways of thinking about issues that are still present. I try to make art that accommodates the circular nature of time.

Book- [John] Berger's Ways of Seeing, Film- The Mystery of Picasso. Both deal with perception.

None

Art After Modernism [edited by Brian Wallis]. Last quarter we dealt with this book and I had to face my question of [whether] to paint or not. [Because of] having to write a paper I was able to formulate a critical framework to work in that meets my needs in a way I've NEVER had before- I know why now.

It has been artist/teachers who have influenced me, rather than books or films.

**6. List any courses outside studio arts which have helped you to focus or expand your critical thinking and why.**

"Survey of Art Activities". [I] learned the fundamentals of art. [The class] involved looking and [the study of] technical terms.

"Arts of Africa, Oceania, and North America", "American Indian Arts", "Women in the Arts".

"Architecture Design". Architecture is directly related to art. Architecture is an art of technology.

"19th and 20th Century Art History" was very important in [my] finding out some of the directions art can take....

Linguistics (sic), Women's Studies.

Working with a studio potter.

Many Women's Studies [classes]....which included feminist pedagogical discussions which helped me develop a critique of art teaching and criticism...

"Writing about Art Other than Literature".

"Writing fro the Arts". It forced me to go in depth [through] writing about my own art.

"Chicano Studies" because so much of the Mexican/Chicano history is written so one sided that it cannot simply be taken as truth. She [the instructor] has us read various interpretations of the same subject so we could understand the importance of questioning other people and realize that we are getting one opinion- take it or leave it.

"Systematic Philosophy". [The class] critiques who we are and why we hold important the things we do.



"Architectural History". [The class] expanded my preconceived notions of form, shape, and proportions.

"Ceramics of the Far East". I learned a lot and I think it was mainly because our teacher loved ceramics, not as an artist himself, but as an appreciator. He was concerned with issues I think the artists were concerned with when making the pots.

German cultural classes because it involved reading and writing. More than that it involved questioning perceptions and analyzing.

The humanities and cultural history courses. Why? Hard to articulate.

All my writing classes I've struggled through and been better for. I did well, but it was work.

I had a (very good) course...which involved writing critiques on various performing arts (dance, theater, music). I also had a course that looked at the social and cultural aspects of "great literature". Both [of the courses] involved huge amounts of writing.

**7. List any sources or influences that help to "drive" your artmaking activity. These could be either internal (spiritual beliefs, autobiographical considerations, etc.) or external (formal course assignments, informal interactions with faculty or students, etc.).**

I love to draw with dark pencil- drawing is very relaxing and therapeutic for me- [drawing] takes away anxiety and stress.

Intuition "drives" my artmaking activities. Internal- journal of sketches, thoughts about things I see- spiritual. Comments and opinions I think about!

Japanese architecture and Japanese culture.

I have felt most driven when I have been able to explore... my own interests, with a freedom to use mixed media, with the same sex (female) teacher who both encourages me and shares how art has meaning in her life.

Using elements (sic) [of] interest (sic) [to me] as in seeing thing[s] different (sic), [as in the] relation [of] one kind of mark to another (sic), and experimental (sic) thinking.

I would have to say that the biggest source that drives my work is internal- my beliefs, the things that move me or that I care deeply about. But certainly

I've been influenced by external things- especially by what is going on around me- and yes, interactions with other artists.

Besides my own drive which was instilled by my family, I would have to say seeing art up close and personal (i.e. in museums) excites me the most. This, coupled with exciting class studies, has been a driving force.

Informal and formal discussions with faculty... Other studio potters who earn a living from their work.

[A] Political imperative to deconstruct sexism, heterosexism, [and] racism....

Listening to music. Looking at books on artists whose styles I respect. Simply looking and concentrating.

My strongest drives come when I envision specific images which come to me seemingly spontaneously, often as I fall asleep. These images are both visually exciting and meaningful (although I don't always understand the meaning). I have a need to see these images materialized.

Museums, etc. where I see [the] creativity of others. The energy they've put into work excites me. The constant personal challenge to create a feeling or idea and the satisfaction of finally doing it.

Living- success, problems, discovery. Philosophy. Some socio-politics in response to theory.

Spiritual struggles, social issues. History. Particularly religious [history].

[My] grandfathers farm buildings and structures. Frank Lloyd Wright's Willey House and many other works.

I feel I need to do this. I have to communicate visually or I will die. I just have to use my mind in a visual way. To explain more would take too much time. This question could use a paper.

### **8. Who do you feel is the best critical audience for your work? Why?**

My instructors at the U[niversity] and persons who use my [ceramics] work in their homes.

Advanced students and graduates. People who "feel" by seeing [and who are] touched or moved by shapes that are non-traditional [and] non-factory made. Poets, writers, perhaps women. People who like elegant things.

[My] peers, faculty, or others working in the same medium [ceramics]. I feel often that those outside of this realm may not have an understanding and appreciation for some work or some qualities about it.

My colleagues because they have an understanding of the visual language plus an understanding of what I am trying to do.

Myself, I hate most everyone else's work.

I think I am, in a way, because if I don't like it, why should I do it? But I think the best critics are the people you don't know. The best feedback comes from observing their reaction with out the knowledge that you are [observing].

I have to say my peers and professors because they zero in on the aspects that I'm studying. My answer is a little biased though because this has always been my primary audience.

Teachers and fellow students. They are already familiar with the critical dialogue I have become familiar with.

I would say women artists because my work touches on issues more central to women.

[Considering] My work as it is, [I would say] artists and people [who are] dealing with similar issues [and] concerns. I am struggling with this. I want to change the whole world with my art right now... so I'm working on how. Or what else I could do instead.

**9. If you were to write a short essay about contemporary art making, would you choose a topic that you are familiar with or one that you would like to know more about?**

Responses:

Familiar With	11
Know More About	10
Other	<u>4</u>
Total	25

**10. List any other areas of culture that you feel have an important influence on your work.**

Television. Music. Religion.

As our society becomes increasingly multi-cultural I [am] realiz[ing] there are many ways to do art. This frees me to find what is meaningful to me. There are so many restrictive prejudices in art, a pecking order of what mediums and subject matter are more important. Unfortunately, many teachers perpetuate this [prejudice].

Definitely social issues and some political issues.

Potters in other Third World countries.

I feel all areas of culture have a great influence on my work. I do feel I am pulled toward the less fortunate in our culture and their plight.

People who have sacrificed better lifestyles to commit to a type of work...People whose culture is empowered by the making of art.

Film, theater, history, music.

Peoples behavior. All the quirks that make us human.

Spanish cultures. "National Geographic" places.

Dealing with the sick and dying. Counseling people with serious struggles in life.

The question sounds pretty general and I'm not sure how to respond.

Religion because elements of my personal religion often materialize in my work.

Youth culture, anarchism, pop music....

#### 11. Briefly, how would you characterize writing in the visual arts today?

Hard to find.

Low.

I'm not sure I've read enough to answer this question, but I would say it is written in vague terms without enough explanations to make it clear.

Boring. I get really tired of reading reviews of artist's work that are filled with Bla, Bla, Bla. But for the most part I would have to say that I don't read enough of it to be able to characterize it.

I'm not sure.

[I'm] not experienced enough with it to comment on it.

[The] question is too vague. [It] need[s] to be more specific.

It is a strange thing using one form of communication to describe another form of communication. I think it is sad that in our society we are so dependent on being told what everything is or should be.

I don't understand this question.

Bad- not useful in most senses.

We should all be doing much more of it as students (reading and writing both). Some is very accessible in its presentation and style; other is written by the intellectual elite, apparently for others of their ilk. We need more of the former!

Some is pretentious crap designed to preserve the mystique and exclusiveness associated with art. Some is an honest search for understanding of problems in art.

The best post-modern writing attempts to deal with issues raised by radical feminist critique of society. The good writing recognizes the problems with modernism and its canon. These writer identify the new (post-modern) condition we find our world in and attempt to deal with its implications. The rest of art writing ranges from bad to stupid to evil with all the shades in between.

I rarely read it because it is very abstract, complex, and overblown. I know it can be very rich, but it takes much time and energy. It's hard for me to want to do it on my own outside of a class structure.