

# 9 Reasons to Study Art in High School

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Teachers are often asked why students should study Art in high school. The common responses relate to creative thinking, broadening the mind and feeding the soul: all of which do little to address fears about 'soft' subjects, university entrance, careers and long-term financial well-being. Employment and salary statistics for graduates of Art and Design degrees are typically dismal: the worst of all degrees. Contrary to popular belief, however, creative subjects are no longer a well-trodden route to poverty; they are an excellent choice for a growing number of students.

Here are nine reasons why:

### **1. The Internet has created an explosion of opportunity for digital designers and multimedia artists**

The world is filled with computers, smartphones, tablets and other portable electronic devices. Almost all businesses have an online presence, with online advertising increasing by the day. We are connected to the internet for long periods, seeking information, socializing, playing, shopping, watching videos and engaging in other forms of online entertainment. The demand for web designers, app designers, software designers, graphic designers, digital illustrators, multimedia artists, video producers, online publishers, animation artists, game designers and many other digital careers is undergoing unprecedented growth.

The [National Endowment for the Arts](#) notes that:

A surge in demand for multimedia artists, animators, and illustrators—especially those who are computer – and technology-savvy—is projected for 2018, due to companies' demand for advertising in online and digital formats.

An [Australian study](#) analyzing national census data, found that *the number of people working in art-related roles that are embedded within other professions (i.e. visual designers working in other industries) has almost doubled in size between 1996 and 2006.*

The [Entertainment Software Association](#) notes that between 2005 and 2009:

The entertainment software industry's annual growth rate exceeded 10 percent. Over the same period, the entire U.S. economy grew at a rate of less than two percent.

While Art continues to be a desirable option for students wishing to pursue 'traditional' creative careers, such as Architecture, Interior Design or Painting / Fine Art related professions, the internet has seen an explosion of exciting, new roles emerge.

## 2. Fine Artists can reach a worldwide market at the click of a button

For the first time ever, those who make fine art, sculptures, photographs, fashion garments and other hand-crafted products are able to market and sell these directly to the public – on a large scale – without going through a third-party such as a gallery. Marketing and selling products using methods such as print-on-demand facilities enables artists to ship printed images and products to an audience that would have never before have known they existed. Instead of institutions or established galleries deciding which artworks ‘make it’, the public votes work into the spotlight through viral sharing on social media.

This doesn’t mean that making a living in these fields is easy. Competition remains tough, with an oversupply of those wishing to work in a creative field. Success will always require skill, commitment, dedication and good business sense. Nonetheless, the playing field has been leveled. A multitude of individuals are able to make their living in creative ways that were previously rarely possible. Creators of original content now have the upper hand.

## 3. High school students can achieve RECOGNITION while studying

Part of the joy of a high school Art course is that you don’t just study Art: you *make* it. Those who are skilful, driven and passionate - and produce high quality, gut-wrenching work - are in a position to achieve recognition even while studying. With broadband streaming into your living room, youth is no longer a barrier to success.

For example, [Alex Stoddard](#) became an internet sensation at age 18, when his photographs on Flickr gained over five million page views.



Stunning, creative photographs by Alex Stoddard

Fourteen year old [Zev](#) (using the name Fiddleoak) achieved similar attention for his superb digitally manipulated photographs.

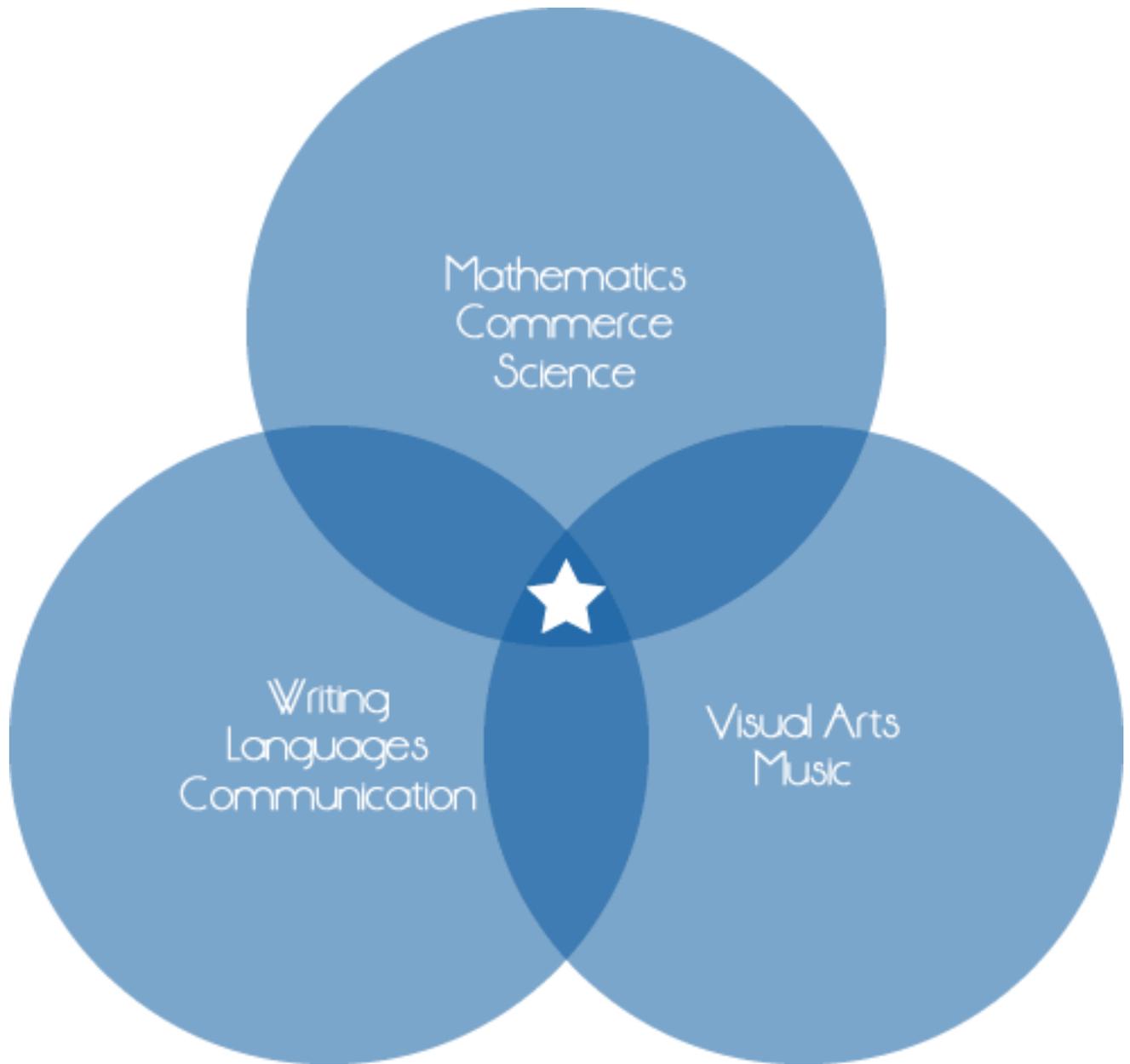


Photographs by the exceptionally talented fourteen year old Fiddleoak!

(Note: if you are contemplating a creative career, having your own website is essential...more on this in an upcoming article).

#### **4. Those with a wide skill set have an advantage, in any career**

Some people have a mathematical brain. Others have strengths in written language. Others excel in creative areas such as Art and Design. If you are lucky enough to excel in two or three of these areas, you are part of a much smaller subset of the population. Those who are multi-skilled are astronomically more useful, well-rounded, hireable and capable of excelling in a much wider range of professions. Unless you are aiming for a degree that requires particular specialism (university websites clearly outline recommended and required subjects), it can be beneficial to select a wide range of subjects.



Note: Art enhances fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, problem solving skills, lateral thinking, complex analysis and critical thinking skills. No matter what career you choose, those who can arrange, present and display material in a way that is aesthetically pleasing have an advantage.

### **5. Studying Art improves performance in other subjects**

James Catterall, leading professor and Chair of the Faculty at the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, has studied 12,000 students over twelve years. His research demonstrates that involvement in the arts (both Visual Art and Performing Art) – especially for students from a low-income background – is associated with higher levels of attainment in both high school and university. Catterall also notes that studying the arts can have other positive benefits such as greater involvement in community service. (More information can be found in his book [Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art](#) – affiliate link).

### **6. Good marks impress, no matter what**

Outstanding marks, in any subject, indicate skill; intellectual rigor; strong work ethic and a commitment to fulfilling one's potential. All of these things are desirable traits in an employee or university applicant. Bad marks, however, no matter how 'helpful' the subject, communicate the opposite. 51% in Accounting, for example, does not reassure a future employer that you have grasped the basics and are halfway there: it suggests that you are not the sharpest tool in the shed when it comes to Accounting...or are lazy: neither of which are comforting scenarios.

Most medical schools prefer that you study Chemistry and Biology over Art – but this does not mean that Art is any less valuable: it means that it is less valuable for medical students. For the vast majority of university degrees, taking an art-related subject alongside other subjects will not disadvantage you (this is a popular topic of debate in the UK's [Student Room](#), however the official representatives from twenty six UK universities who spoke to [The Guardian](#) confirm that, aside from the stated required or recommended subjects for each degree, no subjects are looked upon favorably when considering an applicant).

If you excel in Art, don't be convinced to take a more 'useful' subject – unless you want to or are good at it. If you have ability in a creative area: grasp it. Let it shine.

## **7. Art marks are not solely dependent on an exam**

Some students panic in exams. Some are sick on exam day or suffer tragedies in the weeks leading up to assessment. There are any number of reasons why examination performance – achievement in a two or three hour block – might not reflect the true ability of a candidate.

Most Art and Design subjects are not assessed in this way. While some have an examination component, a large quantity of the work that is assessed is completed during class or homework time over the duration of the year. Art students often arrive at exam season with a significant portion (if not all) of their Art marks accumulated and accounted for. For many students – especially those with a heavy exam load in other subjects or those who struggle with exam anxiety – this advantage is significant.

## **8. Coursework teaches you self-discipline**

Art and Design qualifications have a large workload. Students who take the subject must adapt as a matter of survival. While the heavy workload can be an initial shock (this article may help if you are [struggling to get your art homework done](#)); those who survive emerge with focus, organizational and time management skills that many other students dream of.

## **9. Art makes you happy**

High school Art programs begin with observation of the real world: recording, analysis and creation of a visual response to the surroundings. Art makes students look at things anew – even mundane ordinary aspects of the world. The fluffy, 'feel good' reasons that are usually given for selecting Art as a subject are given because they are right. Art *does* fill the soul. There is something magical about smearing pencil and paint across a piece of paper and sculpting form with your hands. Communicating with color and shape and form awakens the imagination; it opens a door to 'now'. If you love creating art, you'll miss it when it's gone. And if you *do* choose to study Art, chances are, it will be your favorite class of the day.

Whatever your career will be; I hope that it is something you enjoy. Choose the subjects you love. Study something that makes you feel alive.

*This article was written by Amiria Robinson. Amiria has been a teacher of Art & Design and a Curriculum Coordinator for seven years, responsible for the course design and assessment of Art and Design work in two high-achieving Auckland schools. Amiria has a Bachelor of Architectural Studies, Bachelor of Architecture (First Class Honors) and a Graduate Diploma of Teaching. She is a CIE Accredited Art & Design Coursework Assessor.*

- See more at: <http://www.studentartguide.com/articles/reasons-to-study-art#sthash.lkJFXmST.dpuf>