

Fostering Metacognitive Skills in Students Through Art Curatorial Experiences

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Abstract

Students are encouraged to foster their metacognitive skills through curatorial practices in Arts. Art education includes not only the acquisition of technical abilities, but also the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative capacities. This essay suggests that curatorial learning, which is typically connected to museum workers, provides a powerful foundation for developing metacognition in secondary art students, which is the knowledge and control of ideas acquisition. Curation, as described by Flavell (1976), is a process that requires metacognitive participation. It involves the careful selection, organization, and interpretation of artworks to create a unified visual narrative. Thus, students entrusted with curating exhibitions have a rare chance to cultivate reflective and critical thinking skills. This method is consistent with Zimmerman's (1989) model of self-regulated learning, as curators must carefully examine artworks, taking into account their aesthetic, historical, and audience-related consequences. Self-reflection and self-awareness is another essential component of metacognition. Students have many opportunities to assess their work and the success of their curatorial choices through curating practices. Students can find areas for growth and hone their curatorial abilities by getting input from teachers and peers. To conclude, including curatorial education within secondary art education provides a variety of ways to foster metacognition. Teachers may create a rich learning environment that strengthens communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-awareness by involving students in the processes of selection, organizing, interpretation, and reflection. These abilities will go beyond the art classroom, giving students the skills they need to thrive in a complicated and dynamic environment.

Keywords: metacognition, curatorial, students

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Introduction

Metacognitive skills are increasingly recognized as essential components of effective learning across various educational contexts. Defined as the awareness and regulation of one's cognitive processes, metacognition enables students to monitor their understanding, evaluate their learning strategies, and adjust their approaches as needed (Flavell, 1976). In the realm of education, particularly in art education, fostering these skills is crucial not only for artistic development but also for cultivating critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. Art education traditionally emphasizes technical skills; however, it also provides a unique platform for students to engage deeply with their creative processes and reflect on their learning experiences (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2013).

Art education traditionally emphasizes the acquisition of technical skills; however, it also provides a unique platform for students to engage deeply with their creative processes. Through artistic expression, students learn to reflect on their choices, explore different perspectives, and articulate their ideas. This reflective practice is crucial for developing metacognitive awareness, as it encourages students to think critically about their work and the decisions they make throughout the creative process (Fayena-Tawil et al., 2011). By cultivating a reflective mindset, educators can empower students to take ownership of their learning experiences and develop a deeper understanding of both themselves as artists and the broader context of their work.

Curatorial practices offer a powerful framework for enhancing metacognitive skills among secondary art students. Traditionally associated with museum professionals, curatorial work involves selecting, organizing, and interpreting artworks to create cohesive narratives that resonate with audiences. Engaging students in curatorial activities allows them to take an active role in their learning by making decisions about which artworks to include in exhibitions and how to present them meaningfully (Delibaltova, 2016). This active engagement fosters critical thinking as students analyze aesthetic qualities, historical contexts, and thematic connections between artworks.

Moreover, curatorial practices provide opportunities for collaboration among peers. As students work together to curate exhibitions, they engage in discussions that encourage them to reflect on their artistic choices and consider alternative perspectives. Research has shown that feedback mechanisms play a crucial role in enhancing metacognitive development during curatorial activities (Beaty & Silvia, 2013). Constructive feedback from peers and teachers prompts students to evaluate their decisions critically and refine their understanding of the artistic process.

Despite the potential benefits of integrating curatorial practices into art education, there is a notable gap in existing research regarding how these practices can effectively enhance metacognitive development. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between curatorial practices and metacognitive skills within the context of secondary art education. Specifically, it aims to explore how engaging in curation enhances metacognitive awareness among students and assess how feedback from peers and teachers influences their reflective practices during curation.

By investigating the intersection of curatorial practices and metacognition in art education, this research aims to contribute valuable insights that can inform teaching strategies and enhance student learning outcomes. Ultimately, fostering metacognitive skills through

innovative pedagogical approaches like curatorial practices can empower students not only as artists but also as critical thinkers prepared to navigate the complexities of an increasingly dynamic world.

Literature Review

The Concept of Metacognition

The literature review begins by examining the concept of metacognition, which encompasses two primary components: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation. Metacognitive knowledge refers to an individual's awareness of their cognitive processes and understanding of how they learn best. This includes knowledge about oneself as a learner, knowledge about strategies for learning, and knowledge about the task at hand (Flavell, 1976). In contrast, metacognitive regulation involves planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning strategies (Zimmerman, 1989). Research indicates that students who possess strong metacognitive skills tend to perform better academically because they can adapt their learning strategies based on self-assessment (McCollum, 2020).

Fostering metacognitive skills is particularly important in the context of art education, as it encourages students to engage critically with their artistic choices. Art education often involves subjective interpretation and personal expression; therefore, developing metacognitive awareness can empower students to reflect on their creative processes more deeply (Fayena-Tawil et al., 2011). By encouraging students to think critically about their work and the work of others, educators can facilitate a richer learning experience that extends beyond technical mastery.

Integrating Curatorial Practice Into the Arts Curricula

Curatorial practices provide a structured framework for enhancing metacognitive skills among secondary art students. Traditionally associated with museum professionals, curatorial work involves selecting, organizing, and interpreting artworks to create cohesive narratives that resonate with audiences. Engaging students in curatorial activities allows them to take ownership of their learning experiences. By participating in the curation process, students are encouraged to make decisions about which artworks to include in exhibitions and how to present them meaningfully (Delibaltova, 2016). This active engagement fosters critical thinking as students must analyze aesthetic qualities, historical contexts, and thematic connections between artworks.

Research has shown that integrating curatorial activities into art curricula can lead to improved student outcomes. For instance, Delibaltova (2016) found that engaging students in curatorial projects significantly enhanced their metacognitive awareness and critical thinking skills. Similarly, Marino et al. (2018) emphasize that curatorial practices encourage self-reflection by prompting students to evaluate their artistic choices critically.

Relationship Between Metacognition and Curatorial

To understand the relationship between metacognition and curatorial practices in art education, it is essential to consider relevant theoretical frameworks. Zimmerman's model of self-regulated learning provides a valuable lens through which to examine this relationship. According to Zimmerman (1989), self-regulated learning involves three key phases:

forethought (planning), performance (monitoring), and self-reflection (evaluation). Each phase is integral to developing metacognitive skills. In the context of curatorial practices, students engage in forethought by planning their exhibitions—selecting artworks based on specific themes or messages they wish to convey. During performance, they monitor their decisions regarding organization and presentation while considering audience engagement. Finally, self-reflection occurs when students evaluate their curatorial choices based on feedback from peers and teachers or through personal assessment of their exhibitions' effectiveness.

A growing body of literature supports the integration of curatorial practices into art education as a means of fostering metacognitive skills. For instance, McCollum (2020) emphasizes that explicit instruction in metacognition can significantly enhance students' ability to reflect on their artistic choices during curation. Additionally, Liu et al. (2023) found that participation in curatorial projects led to increased self-awareness among students regarding their cognitive processes.

Moreover, studies have shown that feedback mechanisms play a crucial role in enhancing metacognitive development during curatorial activities. Beaty and Silvia (2013) argue that constructive feedback encourages students to reflect critically on their work and consider alternative perspectives when making artistic decisions.

In Summary

Overall, the literature suggests that integrating curatorial practices into secondary art education not only enhances artistic understanding but also equips students with essential metacognitive skills necessary for success in various contexts. By actively engaging in curation, students develop critical thinking abilities while fostering a deeper awareness of their cognitive processes.

Methodology

Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore how curatorial practices foster metacognitive skills among Year 12 IB Diploma Programme Visual Arts students. The study involves 18 students from the 2025 cohort, all of whom are taught by the researcher.

Data Sources

Student Exhibition Works

Each student's final set of exhibited artworks was collected and analyzed. These works provide insight into students' planning, creative decision-making, and thematic development throughout the exhibition process.

Curatorial Rationales

Students' written curatorial rationales—composed as part of their exhibition requirements—were gathered. These documents offer direct evidence of students' reflective thinking,

articulation of intentions, and evaluation of both individual artworks and the overall exhibition theme.

Student Questionnaires

After the exhibition, all 18 students completed a structured, open-ended questionnaire. The questions were designed to elicit reflection on their curatorial and creative processes, critical thinking development, and the transfer of skills to other educational or life contexts.

Literature Observation

A literature observation was conducted to contextualize classroom findings within the broader field of art education. Peer-reviewed articles from databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar were reviewed using keywords like “metacognition in art education,” “curatorial practices,” and “self-regulated learning.” This review informed both the thematic coding and interpretation of classroom data.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

All data sources—artworks, curatorial rationales, questionnaire responses, and literature—were analyzed using thematic analysis. The process included familiarization with the data, initial coding, identification and review of themes, and defining and naming themes. Codes focused on metacognitive indicators such as planning, self-reflection, evaluation, adaptation, and audience awareness. Patterns and themes were triangulated across sources to strengthen validity.

Ethical Considerations

All participants and their guardians were informed of the research aims and procedures, and written consent was obtained. Student identities were anonymized in all reporting. Participation was voluntary and had no impact on academic evaluation.

Limitations

As the researcher is also the students’ teacher, there is a possibility of response bias or social desirability in student reflections. The study is context-specific, focusing on a single cohort within an IB Visual Arts program, which may limit generalizability. Nevertheless, the use of multiple data sources and rigorous thematic analysis provides valuable insights into the role of curatorial practice in fostering metacognitive skills in art education.

Discussion

Overview of Key Findings

This section presents a synthesis of the main findings from the analysis of student exhibition works, curatorial rationales, and reflective questionnaire responses. The evidence demonstrates how the IB DP Visual Arts Exhibition and curatorial writing processes fostered metacognitive engagement, critical thinking, and personal growth among Year 12 students.

Reflective and Intentional Curation

Students consistently engaged in deep reflection throughout the exhibition process. The arrangement of artworks in the exhibition space was not arbitrary; rather, it was the result of careful consideration of thematic coherence, narrative flow, and audience engagement. For example, students reported revising the sequence and placement of their works to guide viewers through a story or concept, as seen in the thoughtful grouping and display of paintings, mixed media, and three-dimensional pieces in the exhibition photographs.

Metacognitive Engagement and Artistic Decision-Making

The process of curatorial writing served as a powerful tool for metacognitive reflection. Students described how writing about their intentions and processes helped them evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their artworks, reconsider their original ideas, and make purposeful changes. For instance, one student noted that reflection during curatorial writing led to multiple revisions of an artwork's background and inspired new creative directions. Others highlighted how the act of explaining their work to an audience prompted them to clarify and refine their artistic messages.

Development of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

The exhibition and curatorial process required students to think critically about both visual and conceptual aspects of their work. Many students reported that they had to analyse how each piece contributed to the overall theme and narrative and make decisions about which works best supported their intended message. This critical engagement extended to technical choices, such as experimenting with new media or altering compositions to achieve greater impact.

Enhanced Understanding of Art as Communication

A significant shift was observed in students' understanding of art—from viewing it primarily as a visual or technical pursuit to recognizing it as a means of communication. Students came to appreciate the importance of conveying stories, emotions, and personal or cultural messages through their art. The exhibition experience highlighted the necessity of considering audience perspective, as students adjusted their works and rationales to ensure clarity and resonance with viewers.

Personal Growth and Transferable Skills

Beyond artistic development, students identified growth in transferable skills such as time management, organization, and problem-solving. Many expressed that the skills gained through the exhibition and curatorial writing would benefit them in future academic and professional settings. These included the ability to plan and execute complex projects, communicate ideas effectively, and reflect critically on their own work and progress.

Enjoyment and Emotional Reward

Despite the challenges and demands of the exhibition process, students reported a strong sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. The opportunity to see their artworks displayed publicly and to articulate their creative journeys was described as rewarding and affirming.

In Summary

The IB DP Visual Arts Exhibition and curatorial writing process provided a rich environment for students to engage in metacognitive reflection, develop critical thinking, and experience personal and artistic growth. The combination of visual evidence from the exhibition and student reflections in the questionnaires demonstrates that curatorial practice is a powerful pedagogical tool for fostering deeper learning and self-awareness in art education.

Reflection and Metacognitive Engagement

Evidence of Student Works of Exhibition and Curatorial Writing

This research draws upon student work samples obtained from the Exhibition and Curatorial activities of the IB Diploma Programme Visual Arts Exhibition. This event forms a component of the Internal Assessment, conducted in accordance with the IB Diploma Guidebooks. The samples were selected from 3 students that represented Personal & Cultural Theme, Social Issue Theme, and Environmental Theme.

Figure 1

Student 1 - Works of Exhibition “Rooted of Heritage”



Personal & Cultural Theme

The student behind “Rooted in Heritage” (Figure 1) exhibits strong metacognitive skills. They are clearly aware of their personal motivations, the conceptual underpinnings of their work, their artistic choices, and the intended impact on the audience. The improvements suggested are mainly about further refining the *communication* of these already well-developed metacognitive insights, particularly in explicitly linking visual elements to conceptual interpretations for the reader. This would elevate the curatorial writing from good to excellent, making the connection between the viewer and the artwork even more immediate and profound.

Evidence of Metacognition Skills From Student 1

Based on Student 1 Curatorial Writing (Appendix A, Figure 1), The student clearly understands and articulates the personal significance of her heritage to their artistic practice. This level of self-awareness is a strong indicator of metacognition. The rationale goes beyond

simply describing the art; it explains why certain artistic decisions were made (e.g., use of saturated colours, choice of acrylic medium). This shows conscious thought about her process. The student doesn't present a monolithic view of heritage but explores its complexities, including appreciation, challenges, and concerns about disconnection. This demonstrates an ability to think deeply about her theme. The student discusses how certain pieces “invite audience to appreciate cultural intersections” or “portrays the hope to rebuild.” This suggests an awareness of the message she want to convey to viewers. The statement “display my technical abilities in different forms of art” shows self-assessment of her skills. The rationale is well-organized, moving from the overarching theme to specific artworks, and explaining how each fit into the larger narrative. This indicates a deliberate planning process.

Figure 2

Student 2 - Works of Exhibition “Paradox of Female Beauty”



Social Issue Theme

The student behind “The Paradox of Female Beauty” (Figure 2) demonstrates a high level of metacognitive skill. They have a clear vision for their exhibition, strategically plan its presentation, and articulate their conceptual and artistic intentions effectively. The areas for improvement are primarily in refining the depth of visual analysis within the written interpretations and achieving even greater conciseness in the prose. These refinements would further enhance their metacognitive ability to translate their sophisticated visual ideas into equally compelling written narratives for their audience. Their strong planning and awareness of audience impact are particularly commendable.

Evidence of Metacognition Skills of Student 2

Based on Student 2 Curatorial Writing (Appendix B, Figure 2) The rationale is clearly structured, moving from a broad theme to specific examples and then to exhibition layout. This demonstrates a conscious plan for presenting their ideas. The student explicitly states her “artistic intention of empowering natural beauty and challenging societal expectations,” indicating an awareness of her own goals for the exhibition. The student articulates how each artwork *contributes* to the overall theme, showing an understanding of how her individual creative choices serve a larger conceptual framework. The concluding section reflects on the “technical competence and exploration of unconventional mediums” and the “amalgamation of art forms.” This shows a meta-level awareness of their own artistic process and choices. Phrases like “urges viewers to reject imposed beauty standards,” “builds the audience's

perception,” and “forms a profound impact for which viewers are encouraged to acknowledge” indicate that the student is thinking about how their work will be received and what message they want to convey to the audience.

Figure 3

Student 3 - Works of Exhibition “Unraveling Nature: The Cost of Our Footprint”



Environmental Theme

The student behind “Unraveling Nature: The Cost of Our Footprint” exhibits excellent metacognitive skills. They have clearly planned, executed, and articulated their exhibition with a high degree of self-awareness regarding their conceptual goals, artistic choices, and desired audience impact. Their ability to structure a powerful narrative and connect diverse artworks to a compelling central message demonstrates sophisticated metacognition. The minor areas for improvement are primarily refinements that would further hone an already strong and effective piece of curatorial writing. This student clearly understands not just *what* they are creating, but *why* they are creating it and *how* they want it to affect their audience.

Evidence of Metacognition Skills of Student 3

Based on Student 3 Curatorial Writing (Appendix C, Figure 3), the student chose a complex and globally significant theme and effectively broke it down into various sub-themes (disappearing landscapes, ocean pollution, animal suffering, climate change impact). This shows a deep understanding of her chosen subject matter. The detailed explanation of the exhibition's viewing flow (“From right to left, my exhibition is designed to be seen as if mirroring the slow unravelling of our natural world”) is strong evidence of metacognition. The student has clearly thought about the audience's journey and how to maximize the impact of the narrative. The explicit statement of aiming to “urge reflection, accountability, and action” reveals a deliberate and purposeful approach to her art beyond mere aesthetic creation. The rationale demonstrates a critical awareness of the environmental crisis, acknowledging the “stark reality” despite ongoing discussions. This is a mature critical perspective. The student consciously employs metaphors, symbolism, and narrative structures (like the “time capsule” or the “slow unravelling”) to convey her message, showing an understanding of how to make her art resonate conceptually. The student consistently considers how their exhibition will affect the viewer, aiming for “reflection,” “nostalgia,” and a direct “question.” This shows a strong focus on the communicative aspect of her work. The

student views their “technical competence and exploration of unconventional mediums” not just as a skill display but to create a “statement, a warning, and a plea for change.” This integrated thinking is a hallmark of strong metacognition.

Analysis Related With Artwork Selection and Organization for the Ib Dp Visual Arts Exhibition

The visual documentation of the exhibition reveals a sophisticated, intentional arrangement of diverse artworks—paintings, mixed media, three-dimensional pieces—demonstrating careful planning, thematic coherence, and a strong awareness of audience engagement. Each work is accompanied by a curatorial rationale, further evidencing the students’ reflective processes and their ability to articulate the meaning, context, and intention behind their creations. The strategic placement of works, attention to lighting, and narrative flow across the display panels all point to advanced curatorial thinking and self-regulation.

These observations are powerfully reinforced by the students’ written reflections. Many students described the selection and organization of their artworks as both challenging and rewarding, with initial confidence often giving way to a deeper recognition of the complexities involved. They recounted how the process required them to critically evaluate their ideas, adapt their plans, and make purposeful decisions to achieve thematic unity and communicative clarity. For example, students spoke of altering the sequence of their works to guide viewers through a story, revising artworks to better fit the overall message, and experimenting with new media or presentation techniques to enhance visual impact.

Significantly, students consistently reported that the experience fostered substantial metacognitive growth. They engaged in ongoing self-reflection, monitored their progress, and assessed the effectiveness of their curatorial choices. This reflective practice extended beyond the exhibition, with students noting improvements in critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to communicate complex ideas—skills they recognized as transferable to other academic and life contexts.

Evidence of Students Questionnaire

The Analysis Regards to the Student’s Questionnaire Based on the Aspects of Metacognition Skills and Artistic Intention

This questionnaire follows by 12 Participants which is choose randomly selected. This questionnaire done independently. This table below present some samples of the responses from seven guiding questions provided.

Table 1

Sample Responses From Topic Related to Selecting and Organizing Artwork for the Ib Dp Visual Arts Exhibition (Guiding Question 1) and Topic Related to Preparation Process Regards to the Ib Dp Visual Arts Exhibition (Guiding Question 2)

Sample Participant Response	Guiding Question 1: How did you feel about selecting and organizing artworks for the IB DP Visual Arts Exhibition?
Student A	It felt challenging to figure out how these artworks could blend in together based on my chosen theme and the style of the artworks. Displaying on the exhibition gives out a sense of decision choice whether I should have finished the artwork with this result I wanted or something different. But in the end, I still manage to send out the message regarding about memories in time and identity.
Student B	I feel it could have been better than what I actually have done. If I have known the direction of the viewers during the exhibition day. I could have communicated a much more concise story during the whole exhibition. Instead of guiding the viewers one-by-one from the first to the last artwork.
Student C	I feel it could have been better than what I actually have done. If I have known the direction of the viewers during the exhibition day. I could have communicated a much more concise story during the whole exhibition. Instead of guiding the viewers one-by-one from the first to the last artwork.
Sample Participant Response	Guiding Question 2: Can you share an example of a decision you made during the preparation process on regards to your IB DP Visual Arts Exhibition? What factors influenced your choice & decision?
Student D	During the exhibition preparation, I took the effort to position all my artwork in a way that it blends in together and positioned lighting above my exhibition board to enhance the overall aesthetics of my artwork by controlling the highlights and shadows of my 3D art using light. By doing this, I can attract lots of visitors to take a closer look at my artwork and have them ask questions out of curiosity and interest towards my art.
Student E	A decision I made during the preparation process was figuring out how to arrange the exhibition pieces in a way where the whole exhibition made sense. I started the exhibition with my most bright and striking artwork to capture the audience's attention. How I decided to arrange my artworks wasn't just random. I placed them based on how I wanted the viewers to go through and learn about the message behind the whole exhibition.
Student F	One of the major decisions I made was initially planning to create a digital artwork but later changing it to an animation. This decision was influenced by my desire to explore and present more variety in the types and styles of art in my exhibition. I felt that including an animation would add a dynamic element and reflect my willingness to try new mediums, especially since I want to pursue a design-related major in the future.

Table 2

Sample Responses From Topic Related to Reflection Towards the Process in Working on the Exhibition and Curatorial Writing (Guiding Question 3) and Topic Related to Development of Critical Thinking That Influences by the Curatorial Writing Experiences (Guiding Question 4)

Sample Participant Response	Guiding Question 3: Did you find yourself reflecting on your thought processes while working on the exhibition & curatorial writing? If so, how did that influence your decisions?
Student G	I did reflect in my thought processes while working on the exhibition and curatorial writing as all the ideas used for my artwork were inspired by my real-life experiences. This has influenced my decisions especially when choosing the right words for my artwork explanations and making sure that both my concept and ideas are explained and communicated well to the audience.
Student H	Yes, I found myself reflecting on my thought processes while working on the exhibition and curatorial writing. It made me more aware of the intentions behind each artwork and why I created it, and how it connected to the overall theme of women's issues. This reflection helped me refine my exhibition by choosing works that not only showed technical skill but also had strong conceptual meaning.
Student I	Yes, I reflected on my overall artworks individually, my thoughts and concept developments regarding the meanings. Certainly, influencing my decisions to depict and exhibit interrelated messages associated with my topic.
Sample Participants Response	Guiding Question 4: In what ways do you think this exhibition and curatorial writing has helped you develop critical thinking skills?
Student K	It pushed me to evaluate my own work from multiple perspectives—not just as the artist, but also as the audience and as a critic. I had to think critically about what each piece communicated to different groups of audiences, how they interacted with each other, and how to articulate that in words. It also helped me consider the cultural and contextual relevance of my work more consciously, which sharpened my analytical and interpretive skills.
Student L	It helped me explore more about the impact and consequences of culture on a deeper level.
Student M	Thinking about what could have been improved or fixed.

Table 3

Sample Responses From Topic Related to Enjoyment Towards the Process in Working on the Exhibition and Curatorial Writing (Guiding Question 5) and Topic Related to the Changing of Perspective in Understanding Art (Guiding Question 6)

Sample Participant Response	Guiding Question 5: What aspects of the exhibition and curatorial writing did you enjoy the most? Why?
Student A	What I enjoyed the most was making the final artwork. After finishing the artwork, it satisfied me from the result that I've made and that it would be displayed in the exhibition. The curatorial writing also helped me be able to express my creativity and ideas to be shared.
Student B	During the exhibition because it felt rewarding as people visit and ask questions about the process and overall personal experience.
Student C	What I enjoyed the most is explaining my theme that I have chosen. By explaining and writing it down both during the exhibition and curatorial writing it helped me in explaining my hard work to the viewers.
Sample Participants Response	Guiding Question 6: Do you feel that your understanding of art has changed as a result of this experience? If so, how?
Student D	Yes, my understanding of art has changed because of this experience. I used to see art mainly to create something visually appealing, but through the exhibition process, I've come to appreciate how deeply art can communicate ideas, emotions, and personal perspectives. I learned that the process behind the artwork is just as important as the final piece.
Student E	Yes, very much. The whole experience, including the process portfolio and comparative study, required me to research and analyse various artworks and styles. This made my understanding of art grow a lot, and I started to see art from different, more interesting perspectives. I now appreciate not just the visual aspects of art, but also the context, message, and creative process behind it.
Student F	Yes, I learned that stepping out of my comfort zone to express the theme that I want is significant to my understanding of art.

Table 4

*Sample Responses From Topic Related to Development of Skills Beyond Art
(Guiding Question 7)*

Sample Participant Response	Guiding Question 7: How do you think the skills you've developed during these experiences (Exhibition and Curatorial Writing) will help you in other areas of your education or life?
Student G	The skills I have developed during the experiences will help me in other areas such as the critical thinking skills which would help me in making a right decision when facing a tough situation and understanding fully the situation before making a choice. This would apply when I'll be studying in university, finding a job, or even a simply daily routine that would require me to utilize this skill. Not only critical thinking skills but time management is also essential in my life as it also helps me in organizing my daily routine and plays a part with my decision-making skills, allowing myself to be effective in both managing my time and making decisions that can lead to efficiency.
Student H	The skills I developed will help with critical thinking, communication, and organizing ideas clearly. They'll be useful in future projects, presentations, and any tasks that require creativity.
Student I	Time management and creativity skills as I had to ensure and plan out my timeline for my works to finish on time alongside showcase my creativity abilities to evoke emotions of others from my artworks.

In summary from the participants responses demonstrated that Exhibition and Curatorial Writing activities serve as a transformative force for holistic student development. The experience moves beyond artistic creation to profoundly cultivate metacognitive abilities, sharpen critical thinking, transform the understanding of art as a communicative medium, and equip students with a robust suite of transferable skills highly valuable for their ongoing education and future life endeavours.

These are some of the aspects that develop as an impact from the Exhibition and Curatorial Writing Activities.

Deep Reflection and Metacognitive Engagement

All students reported engaging in significant self-reflection throughout the exhibition and curatorial writing process. They described how reflecting on their thought processes influenced their decisions, from selecting and arranging artworks to revising themes and messages. This metacognitive engagement was evident in their willingness to reconsider initial ideas, adapt to challenges, and make purposeful changes to better communicate their intentions.

Intentional Artistic and Curatorial Decisions

Students made intentional decisions about the selection, sequence, and presentation of their works. Many described changing the order of artworks, modifying visual elements, or even switching mediums to enhance thematic coherence and audience engagement. These choices

were often driven by a desire to create a logical narrative flow and to ensure that each piece contributed meaningfully to the overall exhibition.

Development of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

The process fostered critical thinking, as students evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of their works, analysed how each piece fit within the broader theme, and sought ways to improve both content and presentation. They reported that curatorial writing required them to justify their choices and articulate their reasoning, further strengthening their analytical skills.

Enhanced Understanding of Art as Communication

Students' understanding of art evolved from focusing solely on technical execution to recognizing art as a powerful tool for storytelling and communication. They became more aware of the importance of conveying clear messages, considering audience perspectives, and using visual and written elements to express complex ideas and emotions.

Personal Growth and Transferable Skills

Beyond artistic development, students identified growth in transferable skills such as time management, organization, collaboration, and problem-solving. Many expressed confidence that the skills gained through this experience would benefit them in future academic, professional, and personal contexts.

Emotional Reward and Enjoyment

Despite challenges, students found the process rewarding and fulfilling. They enjoyed seeing their creative efforts culminate in a public exhibition and valued the opportunity to share their stories and ideas with an audience. The sense of accomplishment and pride was a recurring theme in their responses.

In Summary

The synergy between the visual evidence of the exhibition and the depth of student reflection captured in the questionnaires underscores the IB DP Visual Arts Exhibition as a powerful pedagogical tool. It not only cultivates artistic and curatorial expertise but also advances students' metacognitive abilities, preparing them for future creative, academic, and professional challenges.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that integrating curatorial practices into the IB Diploma Programme Visual Arts curriculum is a highly effective approach for fostering metacognitive skills among secondary students. Through the analysis of student exhibition works, curatorial rationales, reflective questionnaires, and relevant literature, it is clear that the curatorial process compels students to engage deeply in planning, self-monitoring, and critical evaluation of their artistic decisions.

Students' experiences in selecting and organizing artworks for public display required them to balance individual creativity with thematic coherence and audience engagement. The

curatorial rationale served as a structured tool for reflection, prompting students to articulate intentions, assess outcomes, and make iterative improvements. This aligns with established models of metacognition and self-regulated learning, highlighting the value of explicit reflection and adaptation in educational practice.

Furthermore, the challenges inherent in exhibition curation catalysed the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and transferable skills such as organization and communication. Students reported that these experiences not only enhanced their artistic growth but also prepared them for broader academic and life challenges.

In summary, the findings affirm that curatorial experiences in secondary art education are instrumental in nurturing metacognitive awareness, critical inquiry, and personal growth. Embedding such practices within the curriculum equips students with essential skills for success in an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, me as a researcher used Perplexity AI, Grammarly and Gemini AI to support the organization of content, enhance clarity, and refine academic language. The AI tools were employed to assist in structuring sections, suggesting academic phrasing, and summarizing relevant literature. All outputs generated by these tools were carefully reviewed, edited, and supplemented by me as a researcher to ensure accuracy, originality, and scholarly integrity. I take full responsibility for the content of this publication.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Curatorial Writing of Student 1

Curatorial Rationale

Rooted in Heritage

Majority of my work embodies culture and its significance in both society and my identity. The theme “Rooted in Heritage” was inspired by my cultural experience since childhood, being of a Chinese ethnicity and Indonesian nationality. Growing up, I have tried to balance the two between each other and the modern culture society seems to thrive in. The parts of culture I typically depict are traditions, legends, beliefs, and even traditional patterns - from Ming Dynasty porcelains to Mega Mendung motifs in batik - all which contribute to illustrating society’s liveliness as whole. What drives my interest in cultural themes is the role it plays in my identity and the responsibility I have to preserve my roots. My art originates from the constant reminder of how disconnected today’s generation is from their heritage and ethnicity. My works explore issues in that respect, while some appreciate the detail civilization places in the way they live. My art process involves utilizing oversaturated colours and hues to imitate how traditions, superstitions, and myths of my ethnicity and nationality make society alive. Colours are used as metaphors in varying cultures; red signifies sun, blood, and fire, all of which denote prosperity in Chinese culture, whereas it epitomizes courage in Indonesian beliefs. I do not use hues for its visual properties, but to emphasize why China, Indonesia, and other cultures use this and what it means to them. Because of my need for saturated hues and detail, I typically use acrylic as my medium, whether in canvas, clay, or even playing cards, as its consistency allows me to layer, enrich detail, and is versatile in its nature. Four of my works consist of acrylic on canvas. Both “Prambanan in Full Hue” (representing carvings along Indonesia’s Candi Prambanan temple) and “210 BCE Dilemmas” (featuring Qin Shi Huang’s terracotta soldiers) have a common subject: centuries-old artifacts from my respective heritages. However, each is able to depict two different meanings: the former invites audience to appreciate cultural intersections as Hinduism entered Indonesia while the latter embodies the appreciation of emperors’ superstitions and their achievements to move today’s society. Similarly, “In Loving Memory of Modernity” conveys a positive outlook on the situation as society manages to remember their own culture, represented through traditional Indonesian batik attire despite eating at fast food chains. The fourth artwork in this group, “Porcelain Binds the Roots,” is a more personal artwork as it’s a self-portrait that signifies the disconnection between me and my Chinese roots as I live in Indonesia. Unlike the previous works, it contains negative connotations as it sheds light towards how future generations could easily forget traditions. Like the previous works, “Playing Along the Lines of Segregation” also uses acrylic, however, consists of a different medium: 51 playing cards. Rather than placing the focal point on the reason for this tragedy between Chinese and Indonesians, I emphasize the long-term negative implications towards the eradication of Chinese traditions as fear is instilled. This portrays the hope to rebuild and reestablish customs to preserve our roots. Playing cards were utilized to highlight a separated art piece, representing the segregation between two contrasting cultures during 1998. A different medium (3D sculpture) that also uses acrylic is “Garuda’s Downpour,” composed of clay and wires to sculpt Indonesia's cultural beliefs behind the source of their staple food, as well as farmer’s relationship with our national emblem. “Yellowface” also uses different media as it consists of pencils, pastel oils, and water colour to depict how society overlooks cultural differences by skin color (through

magnolias and cranes). A completely different medium in the form of digital art “Cranes’ Batik,” appreciates the cultural intersection between both my ethnicity and nationality. By utilizing a wide range of media and mediums, I can display my technical abilities in different forms of art to convey different aspects of culture – it has been a constant factor in inspiring my work. However, my theme isn’t just about understanding culture, but its power in both society and individuals’ identity, shaping the way we live and who we are.

Appendix B

Curatorial Writing of Student 2

Curatorial Rationale

The Paradox of Female Beauty

In this 21st century, as social media and technology continue to evolve, beauty standards for women have become more conflicting and contradictory than ever, deeply instilled in today’s female culture and the ways they present themselves to society and the public. The perception that beauty must equate to perfection raises the acknowledgement to embrace identity rather than conforming to these unrealistic standards. Holding an artistic intention of empowering natural beauty and challenging societal expectations, my exhibition theme: *The Paradox of Female Beauty*. My theme explores the complexities of modern beauty standards, delving into the pressures of beauty perfection and self-image imposed by society’s exceptional standards, challenging the contradictions that define beauty—both empowering and restrictive, natural and artificial, yet admired and criticized. Appealing to both personal and societal perspectives, my body of work urges viewers to reject imposed beauty standards and foster a deeper appreciation for true self-acceptance and authenticity by challenging female beauty paradoxes. My exhibition begins with a perspective on this concept – my acrylic piece: *Traces of Tears*. This vivid, pink-toned painting inspired by Elena Kraft represents the cost of beauty and the pressure placed upon females to conform to ideals shaped from pain depicted through the melting face cascading into roses. This issue synchronizes with my following artwork: *Bloom*, another acrylic piece which displays a similar issue of how females overshadow their true beauty to attain the perfect appearance. This subject guides me to my following painting *Worn Perfection* which reflects females portraying a false image of perfection by disguising their real authentic beauty. Additionally, the struggle and pain of female beauty are depicted in my acrylic piece *Laced in Pain* inspired by Olga Belgisheva, further highlighting the sacrifices made to pursue exceptional beauty standards – where strength and suffering link. My next piece, *Bite of Guilt*, inspired by my personal experiences shifts from the paradox of expectations and authenticity. This acrylic series raises the shame tied to eating to maintain a desirable appearance and beauty through the vibrant colours and illustrations of tempting sweets. Moreover, my following mixed media and watercolour piece, *Fragments of Time*, exhibits the duality of aging that is viewed as loss of beauty to society. This encourages the concept that beauty is not bound by time and is endless. *The Unfiltered Soul*, my charcoal and acrylic on book piece, usage of mediums inspired by Yasmin Morris and urges that beauty should be free from overwhelming constraints and judgements presented by the monochromatic tones. The exhibition concluded with my gypsum and clay sculpture, *Breaking Free*, which empowers females to break free from confinement to societal norms. By using a female’s hand and glass, this piece ultimately displays how societal expectations must be reclaimed to embrace freedom of beauty, unshaped by external judgements. This exhibition is arranged to be viewed from the centrepiece, *Traces of Tears*. This piece establishes my central theme, inviting viewers to evaluate the paradox of female

beauty within struggles and perfection. On the left side of the room, viewers may explore the three acrylics paintings with vibrant and pink hues, all with interrelated concepts of the pressure to attain beauty perfection while overshadowing true beauty and enduring pain. Meanwhile, as viewers gaze to the right side, they encounter diverse paradoxes on female beauty through *Bite of Guilt*, *Fragments of Time*, *The Unfiltered Soul*, and *Breaking Free*. The symbolism illustrated from the usage of colours and object emphasis in each piece builds the audience's perception, allowing correlation with their experiences in the present times. Thus, the established relationship between the artworks forms a profound impact for which viewers are encouraged to acknowledge the conflicting nature of beauty and reject imposed standards in Favor of embracing authenticity. Through this collective body of work, utilizing mediums including painting, sculpture, charcoal, ready-made objects, this exhibition demonstrates my technical competence and exploration of unconventional mediums. Nonetheless, with the diverse use of techniques including expressive brushstrokes and harmonizing colours, I hope to achieve an amalgamation of art forms that makes a strong impact on my audience. By addressing contemporary beauty standards and raising awareness to tackle such standards, I aim to effectively express my selected theme: *The Paradox of Female Beauty*.

Appendix C

Curatorial Writing of Student 3

Curatorial Rationale

Unravelling Nature: The Cost of Our Footprint

In an era where environmental issues have reached a breaking point, nature's voice grows fainter under the weight of human impact. While discussions around sustainability and climate action have gained momentum, the reality remains stark forests continue to vanish, oceans suffocate in plastic, and entire ecosystems are on the brink of collapse. My exhibition not only depicts environmental decay; it urges reflection, accountability, and action to viewers. My exhibition begins with *Fading Horizons*, a series of acrylic paintings that act as a time capsule for disappearing landscapes. Once vibrant and full of life, these sceneries are now rare, soon to be lost to climate change, industrialization, and environmental neglect. As the world warms and natural beauty fades, the question moves deeper into the crisis, which is portrayed by *Abandoned Depths*. It presents a submerged nursery, where a manta ray glides through the remnants of a world lost to rising sea levels. A once-safe space for children is now an eerie underwater relic, emphasizing how future generations may inherit a world where clear skies and stable lands no longer exist. This prominent loss continues in *Caught in the Cycle*; a mixed media assemblage of plastic waste trapped in a net. Soap bottles, which once symbolizes cleanliness, have now polluted the very oceans they were meant to protect. The net represents both an attempt to collect the damage and the inescapable trap of our consumption habits. The consequences of human negligence extend beyond the oceans. *Frozen Warning* shifts focus to the Arctic, where a polar bear and a penguin (representing arctic animals) are depicted inside a refrigerator, struggling to survive as melting ice destroys its home. Global temperatures are rising at an alarming rate, and species that have adapted over millennia are now left on the brink of extinction. This represents the contrast of two possible futures, which unfolds in *The Two Worlds*, an acrylic painting split between a cold, industrialized cityscape inspired by Gotham City and a vibrant, untouched paradise. The torn effect in the middle represents the growing divide between urban expansion and nature's slow disappearance. One path leads to continued destruction, while the other offers a chance at restoration to what was

once utopia. My next piece focuses on the issue of plastic pollution once more in Trapped in Plastic, where a turtle struggles within the confines of a plastic bottle. This piece is inspired by the concept of Aude Bourguine's "Lungs of Ocean" series. With millions of marine animals dying from plastic waste each year, this piece encapsulates the suffocating reality of human negligence, turning oceans into death traps for the creatures that call them home. From suffocation to devastation in nature, Silent Guardian depicts a young girl in green standing in the heart of a burning forest, surrounded by grieving animals. As nature personified, she does not flee; she mourns. As deforestation and wildfires intensify, entire ecosystems are being erased, leaving behind only ashes and loss. The silent guardian ultimately watches over what remains, embodying the sorrow of the wilderness losing their place on Earth. The exhibition concludes with Would You Drink This? a 3D assemblage confronting viewers with a clear water dispenser filled with polluted, murky water. A cup sits beside it, subtly posing an unsettling reality: while some take clean water for granted, billions face scarcity and contamination. The simplest necessity is becoming a privilege; this acts as a reminder to the viewers that the consequences of environmental damage affect us all. From right to left, my exhibition is designed to be seen as if mirroring the slow unravelling of our natural world. It guides viewers through landscapes on the brink in Fading Horizons and The Two Worlds, oceans in distress in Abandoned Depths, caught in the Cycle, and Trapped in Plastic, and the silent cries of the creatures left behind through Frozen Warning and Silent Guardian. The tragic cost of our footprint was concluded with my centrepiece Would you drink this? which was designed to question the paradox of responsibilities and human life. By weaving together acrylic paintings, digital art, mixed media, and installations, my exhibition becomes more than an artistic expression—it is a statement, a warning, and a plea for change before it is too late.