

AN APPLICATION OF THE MAITLAND GRAVES DESIGN JUDGMENT TEST TO PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS

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Summary.—The Maitland Graves Design Judgment Test purports to distinguish successful students in schools of visual arts, and non-successful students and the general population. A previous study had thrown doubt on these claims, and in the present experiment 50 well qualified students at the Royal College of Art, including professors teaching at the College, were administered the test. Their mean score was slightly inferior to that of a student population, none of whom had received any art teaching. It is concluded that the test does not succeed in measuring what it purports to measure.

The Maitland Graves Design Judgment Test (Graves, 1948) claims to "measure certain components of aptitude for the appreciation or production of art structure," which it accomplishes "by evaluating the degree to which a subject perceives and responds to the basic principles of aesthetic order." Very large differences are reported in the manual between art-trained and non-art-trained Ss, with scores of the order of 76 and 48 typical for student groups of these two types. Eysenck and Castle (in press) have recently compared some 500 control and 1,000 art students on a group-test version of the test (administered by slide); they found only minimal differentiation between the two groups, with scores of 52 and 56 for the male and female controls, and 58 and 58 for the male and female artists. This study could be criticised on two grounds. It is possible that slide projection interferes with the judgment process, although it is not clear why this would be so. It is possible that not all of the art students would have succeeded in passing their final examinations, so that the average score might have been lowered by their presence. Both possible sources of error have been avoided in the present study; the test was administered individually, and only students who had successfully passed their examinations were included.

The art Ss were 50 highly qualified visual arts students at the Royal College of Art, and included several professors who taught there. The test was administered individually as suggested in the manual. Administration was followed by discussion with Ss to discover their views about the test, as it seemed likely that the climate of art teaching might have changed since the test was originally put on the market. The mean score of the artists was 50 ($SD = 9.12$), which is even lower than that of the art students who had previously been tested with the slide version of the test, and also lower, although not significantly so (by t test), than the score of the non-art students who had been tested with the slide version. It is also apparent that this score approximates closely the mean scores of the non-art student populations reported by Graves (1948) and is very markedly lower than that reported by him for his art student groups; for these a score of 50 would be between the 1st and 5th centile. It is obvious that the test does not measure what it purports to measure.

Students' comments may be of interest. There was a general tendency to find all the designs "horrible," "badly thought out," "impossible;" there was a general tendency to reject the whole test as "inartistic." From comments made by the teaching staff it appeared

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that "there has been a progressive decline in belief in 'rules' of art. The mathematically correct picture is no longer felt to be acceptable. Students are encouraged to be free in their work and to feel their own way in the field of aesthetic requirements. There is a growing belief that there are no basic principles in aesthetics. If this is so the criteria that the original test judges used, i.e., the ability to respond to these basic principles, are based on a fallacy." Students often said they knew which was the "right" answer but did not agree with it. If this is true, then it seems the test might be based on a time-locked set of rules taught in the forties, but not now; students then learned the rules and succeeded on test and examination alike. Nowadays the rules are not taught, and so students do not "succeed" on the test more than do non-students. Or it could be that teachers and students alike have forsaken some hypothetically "true" set of rules, and that consequently their productions will be of low aesthetic value; in due course, a swing back to these "true" principles will occur, with consequent improvement in the quality of art. Our data do not permit us to make any decision on this point; they do suggest a warning that the validity of this test should not be assumed to extend beyond the time of its construction. At the present time, even if the test did not manifest the fatal psychometric faults in its construction which Eysenck (1967) has pointed out, it should certainly not be used for the selection of students for courses in the visual arts.

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