INSTALLATION art is a form of exams for students who go through their core module in Creative Thinking annually.

At Singapore Management University, some 1,600 first-year students are exposed to this module regardless of their field of study this year as part of a broad-based education.

They discuss topics on current affairs and social issues which are then expressed through installation art.

"Installation art is the result of higher order thinking through conceptualising ideas. The abstract is realised in "products" that the students make themselves. Thus, they are directly involved in making meaning and in this way they learn beyond the classroom and pen and paper," said Practice Assistant Professor of Theatre / Performance Studies, Dr Margaret Chan, who has been using this medium of instruction for her classes since 2005.

But creativity is not just about wacky ideas that are not grounded in the real or do not have value.

It is about creating an idea, putting the idea before an audience and persuading them to accept that view.

Students used shadow play and Barbie dolls to spotlight the notion of physical beauty that is oblivious to society in their artwork titled The Dissected Woman.

Said Miss Goh Siying, 19, a first-year business student: "When we talked, we were shocked to find out that the Barbie doll is ubiquitous and we realised that by giving Barbie dolls we were perpetuating an impossible "ruler" of female perfection."

While an intriguing display titled Kids ‘R’ Us showed how child prostitution responds to a change in the penal code another used a roulette wheel to explain the parallels between annuities and gambling.

Stalemate, on the other hand, played out autocracy versus democracy in a "live" chess game.

Dr Chan hopes this allows students to see things in an all-rounded but different way and to increase their awareness of the impact such issues have on society.

Together as a business team - with a CEO, General Manager and Creative Director - teams work hand-in-hand to realise their work and convince their external examiner.

"I learnt a lot from being the CEO in charge of my team – from management to teamwork. From the art, I learnt how things which are sub-conscious are so powerful," said 19-year-old Ephraim Lin, a first-year social science student.

The module also includes a written paper on creativity and the individual as well as other experiential aspects such as trips to the art museum and a temple.