

# ART AND DESIGN

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Paper 0400/01

Observational/Interpretative Assignment

## General comments

Responses to the questions were fairly evenly spread between **Section A** and **B**.

**Q2** and **Q6** were the most popular; followed by **Q1** and **Q8**. **Q4** was the least popular.

All questions offered a broad range of opportunities for observation, personal interpretation and experimentation. Genres included landscape, portrait, fantasy, abstraction, pattern making/design, natural and man-made forms. Many candidates had used the preparatory period well to gather information and explore ideas although many would have benefitted from spending time planning alternative compositions whether answering questions from **section A** or **B**.

The majority of the work was figuratively based either drawn or painted, although some experimented with pattern and printing processes which were then used to good effect in collages and mixed media pieces. There were some submissions resolved through photography or three-dimensional approaches, both of which are entirely appropriate.

Work seen at the higher levels was characterised by; maturity of concept, personal, imaginative and innovative interpretations, research into relevant established artists, a very strong understanding of a journey throughout the preparatory studies, excellent control of media and use of processes, a willingness to take risks and a considered approach to presentation, particularly with photographic and three-dimensional submissions.

Work seen at the mid level also had some good concepts but at times lacked coherence and focus in the supporting studies. Confidence with media handling was not so evident and in some cases the final outcomes did not 'live up' to the promises seen in the supporting studies. A number of candidates did not understand the importance of ideas development choosing instead to present their supporting studies as a series of unrelated finished pieces which lacked a cohesive journey.

At the lower levels, it was evident that many candidates appeared to follow a formula when producing their supporting studies, inevitably resulting in a lack of personal qualities. Although there was some degree of experimentation with media, clearly most candidates required a lot more practice in this area and a greater understanding of formal elements in general. Some candidates were unsure of what their final outcomes should be as some of their compositions remained unresolved. Much of the research carried out into other artists was largely irrelevant, it did little to inform ideas or the work of the candidate.

In some cases it was a real pleasure to see sheets of research where one study had been linked to another across the whole sheet, clearly showing the progress of an idea or technique.

The majority of candidates produced final pieces which filled an A2 sheet; consideration could be given as to whether this format was appropriate as many of the supporting studies were more successful in either a different format or scale. A2 is the maximum size, smaller paper is perfectly acceptable.

Some candidates chose to use different media in their final piece which sadly lacked the confidence of that displayed in their supporting studies.

## Comments on specific questions

**Question 1: A stack of books beside a table lamp Another book is open with a note pad and pen.**

On the whole, interpretations of this question were very literal and direct. More often than not the elements

were arranged in one way and then photographed. Drawings and paintings were made directly from the photographs.

However, the best work showed thorough preparation and development work from first hand observation as well as extensive experimentation with materials, lighting, colour and composition. A mature understanding of linear perspective in the stack of books, note pad and the ellipses seen in the table lamp was apparent. These candidates explored the effect that changing the direction of light from the table lamp had on the composition and they experimented with a variety of media to achieve a dramatic effect, including oil pastel, paint and collage.

At the lower end, the basic shapes were present but large empty spaces of white paper dominated the page. Candidates often left out the lamp altogether giving them added problems with composition. Many did not handle the use of perspective with the books, and media control and drawing was generally poor.

### **Question 2: A selection of peeled and segmented or sliced fruit. Include the peel.**

This was the most popular question and again a question to which responses were almost entirely observational. Some of the best work submitted for this paper, however, was in response to this question.

Higher levels included studies of a range of fruit in a variety of states of being peeled, segmented or sliced, all clearly drawn from direct observation and in a wide range of materials including pencil, paint and pastel. Other responses saw additional objects such as cloths, bowls, or lighting to enhance the colours of the fruit. Some fruit was tempting enough to eat! Supporting studies indicated a confidence with experimenting with media and clearly candidates had explored different techniques to achieve successful outcomes that demonstrated an understanding of colour, form and composition. The use of different coloured, and sometimes textured papers was an effective tool here.

Work seen in the mid-level relied on copying the same images in different media, and although accurate, the work often lacked enough evidence of a real understanding of the form or texture of the fruit. The supporting studies did not develop the initial drawings other than to change the media used. Candidates could have explored more fully elements such as scale, background, composition and viewpoints.

Submissions achieving the lowest levels often simplified the form and structure of the fruit into very basic shapes. Candidates were not able to create a range of tones within the chosen media and there was very little experimentation or understanding of composition.

### **Question 3: Belts and buckles**

Candidates seemed more prepared to 'play' with the arrangement of the elements for this question. There were some quite interesting developments involving two or three belts intertwined and rearranged in search of more ambitious solutions to the question.

The variety of belts available gave considerable scope for candidates to explore more personal avenues of enquiry and to develop more original proposals.

Works seen in the higher level were detailed observational drawings of real belts showing the textures of the materials they were made with. Some black and white buckles were enlarged and arranged on top of each other to overlap. The leather texture was achieved through minute marks in spirals and removed by a resist method to show white lines.

Many mid level candidates worked in a range of media and achieved high marks for exploration and development of an idea, but few were able to select and control the media to levels above 'satisfactory'.

Lower level submissions failed to understand the overlapping and twisting form of the belts, some had clearly drawn or traced from photographs and were unable to vary the scale or experiment with the composition.

### **Question 4: A person kneeling down to fasten their shoe**

This question, although the least popular, attracted some strong submissions. Responses were notable for the use of primary investigation through observational drawing based on the candidates' own photographs of friends or family fastening shoes. It was a challenging question incorporating understanding of the figure as a whole and particularly the complexity of hands involved in the task. Some candidates clearly responded well to the challenge of rendering cloth, sometimes very convincingly in coloured pencil.

Mid and lower level work showed some promise but many candidates struggled with proportion, foreshortening, rendering of form and details such as the structure and form of hands. Photographic candidates did not pay enough attention to lighting, the position and context of the subject and composition. Some submissions were little more than snapshots with very repetitive supporting studies.

#### **Question 5: Mending it**

This question also attracted a fairly low number of responses with marks being spread evenly across the submissions. It was interpreted widely with the best candidates conveying some imaginative ideas ranging from mending oneself through self-improvement or prayer, the need for mending caused by social/political issues, surgery and actually mending fabrics by stitching into the paper or using tromp l'oeil effects. A wide range of media were used including threads and string for mixed media pieces.

Those gaining lower marks tended to opt for more obvious imagery such as broken hearts.

#### **Question 6: On the edge**

This was one of the most popular questions and submissions mainly achieved marks in the middle levels.

Candidates interpreted this question in a variety of ways but the most common was to explore the stresses and strains of modern life on society. The most effective outcomes were achieved when the candidate had responded personally to the question and their research dealt with pressures that were relevant to them, such as social pressure, academic success and body image. Many of the submissions made use of photography and the more able candidates used these to develop ideas by experimenting with manipulating the images and explored a range of media. Less able candidates used second source imagery and often copied an image without developing it or changing it very much.

A small number of candidates successfully used exaggerated architectural viewpoints from below to create tension. A few candidates at the high and mid-level responded to the question solely through photography, successfully using 'joiners' to create a scene within which a drama occurred. Darker subject matter was popular in the mid and lower levels with mental illness/ depression/ suicide/ anorexia being the most frequent themes for candidates to explore. At these levels secondary source material was generally used as inspiration. Others at this level interpreted the question more literally by placing figures near the edge of a high building, or painting a scene of mountaineers. Most of these submissions were copied from secondary sources and lacked personal qualities.

#### **Question 7: Distorted reflections**

This was a popular question and candidates at the higher level in photography and painting and drawing had used mirrors, glass containers full of water, reflective flat and curved surfaces and kitchen implements with chrome surfaces to distort images which ranged from faces, figures, jewellery, hands and feet and typefaces. Other candidates looked at the reflections in office buildings of trees or other buildings. Some very strong, and at times abstracted compositions, were seen with a mature use of media and mixed media. Supporting studies were innovative; exploring a range of ideas often mixing hand rendered studies and personal photography, and showed a clear and coherent journey to the final work. Bacon and Saville were the artists chosen by many to explore their ideas.

Mid and lower level candidates also had some innovative ideas but were hampered by poorer rendering and weaker compositions. Supporting studies at these levels indicated an inability to explore in depth and develop ideas.

#### **Question 8: Sacred place**

This produced mainly calm and reflective sanctuaries such as churches or buildings with an air of mystery or greyness. Some Buddhist temples were seen as well as books as a sacred space.

Most responses to this question were in the middle and lower ability range with popular imagery such as 'Stonehenge' taken from Internet photographs being frequently used within paintings and drawings. The outcomes were often dull and literal or had simply regurgitated very well used religious iconography. There were lots of pictures of religious buildings and religious figures such as Jesus Christ and a variety of Eastern deities.



















