

ART AND DESIGN

Paper 9704/01
Controlled Test

General comments

There were a range of interpretations to many of the questions and the preparation and presentation of work was generally good. Many of the submissions, including some of the strongest ones, took a very straight forward approach to the questions. The one exception to this was **Question 10**, the quote from Oscar Wilde.

The submissions that achieved higher marks were very personal and candidates used primary source material as their starting point. Ideas were developed with thorough experimentation of materials and clear links were made between artist research and the exam pieces. These stronger submissions demonstrated a clear journey from initial studies through development and experimentation of media, to well considered and informed outcomes produced in the exam. The preparatory studies were relevant to the outcome and the candidates demonstrated skill in their choice of media.

Submissions that were less successful included separate elements within the preparatory studies which were skilfully painted or drawn, but did not always demonstrate a clear journey to the exam piece. Work seen in this middle level either had evidence of good technical skills with little evidence of exploration of ideas and a willingness to experiment with media, or candidates had gathered images from first-hand observation, developed ideas through experimentation of media but lacked refined and accomplished technical skills. More practice of their chosen media, referring to the work of other artists for inspiration, would have benefited these candidates.

Candidates achieving lower level marks did not demonstrate adequate observational skills in any media. Often candidates worked purely from secondary sources and technical skills in their chosen media were not fully developed or experimented with. In some cases, the preparatory studies consisted of a series of unrelated finished paintings and drawings.

Outcomes were produced using a variety of media including pencil, paint, pastel, collage, and ink and there was a range of design and photography outcomes in response to the questions. There were no 3D or Textile submissions seen. The printed quality of photography seen was good as was the presentation of design outcomes. Where candidates used mixed media, or an unusual deployment of traditional media, on the whole this was very successful and helped candidates to produce stronger submissions. Where candidates used traditional media (and especially painting) there was a reasonable level of proficiency and occasionally an example of highly developed sensitivity and strong levels of observation.

Photographic submissions were popular for some questions in particular. Candidates used a variety of ways to experiment and develop their work, such as lighting, composition, manipulating the photographs physically by tearing, ripping, drawing and scratching onto them. The work of other photographers was used as inspiration for experimentation and developing ideas. In some cases all submissions from particular centres followed the same pattern in their work and although this may support weaker candidates in providing a structure to their submission, it limited the innovation of others. Often these submissions were disconnected and lacked individuality.

In the stronger photographic submissions, work was annotated and candidates used relevant terminology to explain the processes and to demonstrate an understanding of the media. Preparatory studies included several photoshoots that demonstrated the candidates' ability to explore the subject matter fully, from different angles, viewpoints and scale. The progression of ideas was clear, thoughtful and well communicated, often leading to resolved outcomes produced in the exam.

Less successful submissions often relied too heavily on a single photo shoot and did not demonstrate an adequate ability to review and refine their ideas by considering the work of other photographers to inform the development of media and subject matter.

There were a number of graphic design submissions that included initial drawings, own photographs and studies from direct observation in the preparatory work and candidates were able to develop their ideas from these. Candidates researched the work of other designers to influence their own work and some made good use of digital technology, painting, collage and printmaking to explore a variety of design options such as colourways, repeat patterns and compositions combining image and text. Several candidates made a mock-up of a leaflet, container or ticket to support their exam outcome and to demonstrate their ability to consider alternative designs.

The more successful graphic design candidates showed an ability to think imaginatively around their chosen question to gather original and thoughtful images and these led to personal and creative designs. These submissions demonstrated a good ability to refine work and candidates made informed decisions as their work progressed. Outcomes produced in the exam were carefully composed and related well to the preparatory studies.

Work seen in the mid-levels was often personal with original and creative ideas, but these candidates lacked technical skill. This could have been improved with more experimentation and practice of the chosen media. These submissions relied more on digital manipulation to try out simple colour changes and arrangements of text and image. There was less evidence of genuine understanding of what made a successful design.

Those graphic design submissions gaining lower marks often copied existing designs and showed little development of their own ideas or understanding of integrating image and text. There was little evidence of incorporating elements from their visual research with text to inform the design process of the logo and starting points were often secondary or drawn from their imagination. The finished design was often simply placed onto a photograph of a building front using Photoshop.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1: Urban textures

This was one of the most popular questions and saw many submissions experimenting with mixed media. Submissions achieving mid-level marks were well researched and developed from first-hand studies of a range of sources such as building materials, rusty metal and slick glass buildings, as well as well observed figurative studies of city life. Candidates experimented with ideas exploring the rushed quality of city life, trying to find ways to express feelings of stress, speed, being contained and squeezed. Candidates were able to use their skill in colour mixing, collage techniques and layering different images to accentuate the different visual qualities of road markings, shop signs, building materials, road signs, traffic and figures to create expressive outcomes. There was good use of research into relevant artists to inform and help develop ideas as well as inspiring experimentation in a range of media.

Weaker submissions focused on what might be called 'urban decay', with a particularly strong focus on graffiti, run down tower blocks and urban waste ground. While there was some primary source material, it was often lost among images from magazines/the internet. The lack of clarity regarding primary/secondary source also impeded a sense of clear development and often submissions were muddled.

The use of media was limited to one or two materials, usually photography and paint. There were very few artist references and the ones that were there were generally commercial in nature, which immediately limited their usefulness, because they tended to simply supply a look, rather than suggesting a route for deeper investigation. The use of colour at this level was relatively basic, with lots of primary or fluorescent colours used.

Question 2: A microscopic view

The stronger submissions seen for this question had themes which were varied and included fruit, studies of skin, close ups of eyes and various household items. All the submissions at this level showed a reasonable level of development and coherence in their visual journeys.

There were a number of photographic submissions which showed good use of a macro lens. This opened up new areas of compositional variation and a broader range of textural and colour qualities. There was some experimental work with the surface of the images and also with double or multiple exposure.

The painting seen in stronger submissions was fairly confidently handled but sometimes lacked observational rigour. However, submissions were imaginative and this showed in the preparatory stage, which showed candidates' engagement with their topic.

There were some artist references in these works and candidates drew some useful material from these.

Themes in weaker submissions included fruit, rusting iron work and various indecipherable images. Many of the submissions at this level were photographic. However, there were a number which showed out of focus images and poor lighting. The best of these lower level submissions showed a certain awareness of the surface qualities of the subjects that were being looked at, but did not pursue this with any real focus or intensity. Many of these submissions focused on a random series of subjects, supposedly from a microscopic view. However, this was often a view of the objects in question from a fairly straightforward, not particularly microscopic point of view. The images seen were generally composed using a simple, centred and single positional approach. There was very little in the way of compositional experimentation/alternatives.

These works did not really explore the interest, strangeness or any of the potential of the microscopic world.

Question 3: Display

Stronger submissions showed an understanding of the concept of a display, and the best of these submissions used this to give a good sense of structure to their preparatory work. A few of these candidates used the taxonomic approach of the museum display that they were looking at to structure their work.

These stronger submissions were generally full of primary source photography, and this was generally sensitive to the aesthetic qualities of the displays themselves. The use of media, while fairly limited in breadth, was quite well managed and used with a reasonable amount of control. There were a few artist references, but these were quite limited and the routes that candidates took were generally unrelated to these sources.

In weaker submissions there was a wide range of subjects but there was some lack of understanding of what a display is. Many submissions were more a series of still lives than an interpretive understanding of the question.

The preparatory work at this level lacked coherence or explanation about the choices being made. The final pieces either showed little connection to the images that had preceded it, or were a straight copy of what had gone before, with no real sense of progress being made.

The use of media in these submissions was limited and its use was basic. Pen, pencil and paint were the principal materials and were generally handled with very little sensitivity. There were no artist references in these submissions, although there was quite a bit of primary source material, mostly drawings from life.

Question 4: Woven

Stronger submissions showed some creativity in their view of the theme: materials and subjects were woven together, sometimes giving a slightly surrealist feel to the work. However, few submissions showed evidence of artist research. The strongest of these submissions showed a sensitive handling of media and an explorative and dynamic sense of compositional strength.

Some candidates using photography in this question physically manipulated their imagery and wove two or three different photographs together. Some of these works demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of certain abstract qualities. In other cases it was less successful but did show a willingness to experiment with composition.

The life studies seen in stronger submissions showed a sense of observation, especially in terms of texture.

Weaker submissions consisted of studies of hair, textiles and other less commonly woven materials which were adapted by candidates. Candidates at this level generally took a very literal and passive view of this question, often focusing on materials which are already woven, rather than a more expansive and imaginative path, as in stronger works. There was evidence of primary source material in the form of drawings and studies from life. However, the quality of observation and recording was not very strong.

The preparatory work here was mostly life studies. This was useful as a starting point but sometimes limited the approach and did not allow candidates to use their imagination to develop new ideas. The use of various

media and materials was rather weak considering the theme which provided plenty of scope for experimentation. There were no artist references at this level despite the fact that there is much material to look at.

Question 5: Seen through foliage

There were some very strong submissions seen for this question with excellent media handling. Candidates showed an impressive range and sensitivity with their mark making, colour and tone deployment and recording of their observations. Compositional variations were explored and candidates showed a strong awareness of space/pictorial arrangements, well beyond the usual 'rule of thirds' approach. The preparatory work in these submissions gave a genuine sense of engagement, enjoyment and exploration which generally led to highly successful final pieces.

At the mid-level there was some weakness in colour choice and lack of artist reference in particular. However, there was a sense of direction in the preparatory work, some good media handling and evidence of observational work. Candidates demonstrated an ability to explore the use of media in order to recreate and develop the layers of foliage seen in the initial studies. Some interesting uses of mixed media were seen especially combining collage and printing techniques, although some required more refinement of the technical skills before completing the exam piece. More experimentation with colour, backgrounds and viewpoints would have helped the development of ideas.

In weaker submissions candidates struggled to distinguish the greens, browns and earth colours of foliage. There was often a limited range of hues and tones, which often gave a flatness or lifelessness to images. Use of media was usually limited to pastel, pencil or paint and lacked precision. There was some good preparatory work seen, but generally there was a lack of consistency and a sense of a driven, coherent developmental journey was missing. There were some limited artist references, but given the subject matter the quality of these was weak.

Question 6: Ground level

Candidates with the strongest submissions explored several alternative aspects of the question looking at different viewpoints, use of media and painting techniques. They made effective use of research into other artists' work and drew and photographed a variety of views looking up, between and through a range of objects. These candidates were able to integrate their artist research and developed outcomes in the exam that were well resolved and informed by their preparatory studies.

At the mid-level there were some strong submissions taking a fairly literal view of the topic. Pets featured quite heavily – there were several submissions looking at things from an animal's eye level. On the whole these submissions had a strong sense of engagement. The handling of media was fairly strong but some candidates struggled with perspective and anatomical detail. However, there was in general a good deal of strength in the way texture and fur was handled. There was still a lack of artist reference in these submissions despite the huge amount of source material that is available.

In weaker submissions there was a mixture of subjects, many of which seemingly had little to do with the idea of 'ground level'. Much of the work at this level lacked cohesion, especially in the preparatory work which often consisted of a series of relatively unconnected images. There was a reasonable amount of primary source material, along with secondary material which was mostly from the internet, but this lacked organisation. The handling of media (usually paint) was inconsistent. The application of paint, pencil and pastel was often very rudimentary. Where there were artist references these were limited to a small range sourced from the internet, and these were usually not commented on or used to help the candidates to develop their own work.

Section B

Question 7: Three containers on a mirror

The strongest submissions were outstanding in their media handling and observation. An impressive sense of investigation was evident in many of these works. These candidates used the mirrored surface as a powerful element in developing their observational abilities and also as a prompt for their own compositional investigations. Preparatory work was strong and there were many experiments with media and compositional alternatives. There was a great deal of subtlety both in observation and in recording and use of pencil and paint was occasionally quite masterful. Candidates typically took a small number of artist references and

developed strategies from these, alongside their own observational work and pre-existing range of approaches.

There was some strength in media handling and observation at the mid-level of submissions. These candidates were aware of the qualities and potential of a mirrored surface and used this effectively to select appropriate media, which was then used in a relatively sensitive manner. Some of the observational and media skills seen here were of a high standard, but there was often a sense of a lack of development, experimentation or engagement in exploration that held these candidates back from producing stronger works. Many submissions at this level lacked a range and exploration of alternatives. There were some artist references, taken it seems mostly from the internet. At the upper end of this mid-level group, a few of the candidates used these references fairly well and began to develop ways of working from an analysis of this material.

In weaker submissions a straight forward approach was taken to the question. The best of these submissions showed a willingness to engage with observational work, but there was also a lack of experimentation, a narrow range of media, and a lack of application and mark making. Generally observational skills were poor and forms were muddled and indistinct. The compositions seen were basic and generally did not take advantage of the idea of a mirrored surface, which should have given candidates a wonderful opportunity to explore ideas of spatial relations, repetition and sharp/subtle tonal shifts. The use of media was heavy handed, without any of the nuance that the theme suggested. The selection of media itself was often inappropriate. For example, oil pastel gave several of these submissions a muddy quality which undermined the sensitivity the candidate may have been trying to show. There were no artist references at this level. These would have possibly helped, at the very least in the selection of media.

Question 8: A pile of toys

There were some strong submissions for this question where candidates took a subtle view of the life of toys, with an emphasis on interesting arrangements of figures showing contrast of texture, scale and presence.

The preparatory work, while mostly focusing on observational studies, was varied compositionally and formed part of a logical progression to the final work. The use of colour in the submissions was bold and showed a developed sense of tonality and a delicate feel for local colour. The use of media was rather limited, but there was evidence of strong ability seen with the media which were used. There were some artist references but many submissions would have benefited from more work in this area.

In mid-level submissions, there was an active approach to composition, with candidates looking at a number of possibilities. Many candidates took a multi-positional approach to the compositions and there was a definite sense of exploration and investigation in the preparatory work. Candidates used bright, unobtrusive colour and the actual application of media, in terms of texture and mark making, was good. Again, there were few, if any, artist references or cultural references, beyond the immediate content.

In weaker submissions there were some very colourful but rather basic images. These submissions had very little in the way of preparatory work – usually just a few 'from life' studies of toys which then went on to form part of a larger composition for the final piece. The understanding of composition was basic and generally consisted of a straightforward group of teddy bears/dolls etc. either in a row or a jumble. The possibilities of contrast and compositional dynamism that this presented were missed by these candidates. The use of media here was very limited with pastel and paint dominating. Application of these media was fairly unsophisticated, especially regarding the representation of surface texture. There were no artist references and no real research was seen.

Question 9: Figure with arms folded

On the whole responses to this question at all levels tended to lack a strong interpretative element. There were very few references to the work of other artists seen in any submissions for this question.

In the strongest submissions, the preparatory work, while often limited to practices for the final piece, did look at varied viewpoints, alternative media and suggestions for different compositions. Candidates showed an impressive control of media and a good appreciation of which of these media would be most appropriate. The observational skills were often very strong, with some particularly sensitive drawing seen. There were high levels of media handling in pencil, both lead and coloured, and ball point pen.

Submissions in the mid-level included drawings which were less accurate. However, there was evidence of an engagement within the preparatory studies and candidates had explored the figure from a range of

viewpoints, often choosing to look down from above. Many candidates at this level worked from their own photographs and focused on developing their technical skill in paint for example, rather than drawing or painting directly from the figure. The outcomes produced in the exam often lacked an understanding of the proportions of the figure.

In weaker submissions the standard of life/observational drawing was often poor. Candidates tended to avoid certain aspects of drawing, such as hands and foreshortening, when it would really have benefitted them to focus on the very things they found difficult. There was a further weakness in the use of media which was often poorly chosen. The simplicity of approach that the majority of these candidates took meant that the preparatory work was very limited in its scope and was generally just a few rehearsals for the final piece. There was usually little, if any, variation in the range and use of media or in alternative compositional possibilities. Generally the figure produced was quite small compared to the size of paper being used, with little else of interest on the page. Most of the primary source material took the form of life studies, but occasionally candidates' own photographs were included. There were almost no artist references.

Question 10: The fisherman and his Soul

There were some strong submissions which really embraced the atmosphere produced in the text and these were often very engaging. The preparatory work showed passages where the media used were varied. However, there was a strong sense of coherence and organic order in these works, often coming from the structure of the writing itself. Where text was used in the final pieces it was integrated quite successfully and, generally did not undermine the imagery.

There were some photographic submissions and these were just as inventive as those focusing on paint, pastel and other media. The photographs themselves were very competently taken, with good use of varying depths of field, differing viewpoints, and a wide range of compositions. Photographs were often manipulated post production – physically, with scratching, cutting, ripping, stitching and over-writing.

At the mid-level, there was a good deal of imagination in the way that candidates interpreted this text. There was a small amount of primary source life study, but there were more examples of found photography and internet sourced images.

The preparatory work was typically energetic, explorative and fun and the final image was usually a combination of elements. Some candidates included the text with the preparatory work and the final piece and this was sometimes problematic as it distracted from the image and usually was not as aesthetically well considered as the rest of the work.

Most candidates made quite effective use of a small range of media, and the most popular was watercolour. This linked well with the theme, and the majority of these submissions made conscious use of the delicate washes that this medium can create. This had the additional advantage that the use of colour was generally subtle and sensitive.

Question 11: Colourful fruits and vegetables.

In the strongest submissions there was a strong sense of confidence in handling media and there was a great deal of control with the media being used. This did not prevent candidates from experimenting however. The observational skills seen were very well developed and this was shown in the depiction of local colour, finely worked textural surfaces and subtle gradations of tone. The preparatory work was focused on life studies but managed to show a journey, both compositionally and in the development of media experiments.

Observational skills in the mid-range of submissions showed some proportionally and subtlety in the use of colour, tone and also to a certain extent, composition. The arrangements of the various objects used were stimulating and in some cases a good use of negative space was seen. Experiments were not just limited to single studies but varying groups of fruit and veg were used, some seen from different viewpoints. The use of media was quite limited. However, the materials that were used were handled with reasonable ability.

Weaker submissions demonstrated poor observational skills although there were many submissions that used primary sources. The preparatory work almost all consisted of studies of various individual pieces of fruit or vegetable, which then were reproduced in the final piece. There was a little variation of media, but it was typically kept to pencil, paint or pastel. Colour use was often strikingly bold, but was also simple. The area of tonality was almost entirely ignored due to the dominance of hue. There were very few artist

references, despite the fact that still life has a very rich tradition and there are very many artists to choose from.

Section C

Question 12: Footwear – floor covering

There were very few responses to this question. The preparatory work was weak for these submissions and often consisted of a small number of secondary source photographs/internet images. Some of these became part of a design in the development towards a final image.

There were attempts at photographic manipulation and also at cutting and pasting parts of photographs into designs but this was often not successful. The materials and media used were generally not suitable for design projects and included soft 2– 4 b pencils, some oil pastel and thick paint.

There were few experiments with text and they were not very well controlled. The efforts with text could have been greatly improved with some strong reference material, which could have given the candidates some very positive examples to study.

Question 13: Local museum brochure

Submissions at the highest level included some very strong observational work from local museums and gave candidates the opportunity to show some impressively well controlled, sensitive and expressive media use. The preparatory work was full of design studies and there was a positive feel of development, experiment and enjoyment in the process of considering a wide range of creative possibilities. The final images seen were typically not the repeat of a conclusion already reached in the preparatory studies, but were the successful culmination of an open ended series of connected design and media experiments.

In the mid-level, there was some primary source material used, including a significant amount of candidates' own photography and some life drawings. The preparatory work showed a developmental journey, where things evolved towards a final image, rather than repeating a conclusion that had already been reached. The media seen was carefully chosen, and although the skill in handling was not always sophisticated, the images were effective in giving a sense of what the candidates were trying to communicate.

In weaker submissions, there was a general lack of primary source material and most of the preparatory work consisted of secondary sources from the internet and from magazines. The media chosen was not always well suited to the development of a design brief. There was often a lack of exploration or development. There were some limited attempts at looking first hand at museums, but generally these references did not make a real impression on the development of the candidates' work.

Question 14: Optometrist

There were some imaginative design responses exploring the use of text. The more successful works demonstrated a good understanding of how to see text as shapes and developed ideas into strong compositions, successfully combining text, image, colour and shapes. Candidates had gathered images related to the question title such as eyes, glasses, optician's equipment and owls, from their own drawings and photographs, as well as from secondary sources. These images were manipulated and developed using a range of processes such as simplifying, repeating, enlarging sections and trying out various combinations of image and text to create a successful logo and design material.

Weaker submissions demonstrated little evidence of using the design process to create a logo incorporating elements from visual research with text. The initial visual research was mainly derived from secondary-sourced images and the final designs were poorly placed on a building front showing very little awareness and understanding of aesthetic qualities.

Question 15: Fashion show

The strongest works included drawings which were manipulated into creative and exciting bold designs in the exam. More exploration with media could have enabled candidates to develop more interesting and effective ways of portraying their ideas and designs.

Weaker submissions relied on very simple ideas, placing artists' materials such as pencils onto dresses and costumes copied from secondary-sourced images. There was very little evidence of manipulating or

experimenting with different arrangements and media to develop ideas. The work in the exam was a simple reproduction of one or two of these costumes with limited consideration of composition, incorporating the figure with the background.

ART AND DESIGN

Paper 9704/02
Coursework A

General comments

The most popular area of study was Painting and Related Media, followed by Graphics and Photography. There were fewer examples of Fashion, Textiles and Printmaking.

Although approaches varied enormously, many candidates' submissions met all of the Assessment Objectives. There were some outstanding and highly original works submitted where candidates had selected individual themes or specific subjects to base their work on. These often provided a rich source of research material from which candidates could select, experiment, and develop their own visual language. This was especially so when candidates investigated from first-hand observation and experience. Unfortunately other candidates often did not meet the basic criteria. These candidates were not well prepared and had not practised their basic drawing or design skills enough to be able to visualise their ideas successfully. Their research was often confined to secondary source material which was poorly copied and showed little evidence of ability to interpret or to provide some form of personal input. The area of Critical Knowledge and Understanding was practically ignored.

There was little insightful annotation seen. Occasionally a candidate rationalised their research or ideas, but mostly their images, ideas, materials or artist referencing were little more than notes. Only a few candidates in the higher mark bands analysed reasons for choosing an option or rejecting another. Candidates' critical thinking was not strong.

The majority of candidates had researched the works of other artists or designers and used their findings to inform the development of their work. There was less evidence of candidates copying other artists' work in this session but also less evidence of visits to exhibitions or first-hand experience of others at work.

There was less digital manipulation, except at the higher level where it was appropriate and well executed. The quality of digital work at the lower level was often not strong and was used mainly to create basic effects on photographs, to produce a range of typefaces in research, or to scan images into the computer.

Comments on areas of study

Painting and related media

Submissions were varied and covered a full ability range. Candidates worked under many themes such as portraiture, still-life, figurative, imagination and abstract. Painting media was predominantly in acrylics, but some candidates worked in other media including pencil, colour pencil, pastel, collage and printmaking. Some candidates also used combined media.

Most submissions were figurative in nature, with a lot of portraiture and figure work seen. Stronger candidates used this opportunity to demonstrate their excellent drawing skills from first-hand study and to develop inspiration taken from artist referencing. Candidates often used themselves as the main focus for the topic, originating from the popularity of selfies. Other themes included personal feelings such as isolation, despair, anger, poverty, urban decay, social injustice, and family connections. Natural forms, still life, flowers, bottles, vases, skulls and the landscape were also widely explored. Other compositions included butterflies and animals and studies of cars.

Overall, fewer candidates used drawing during the initial exploration of their themes but a significant number of candidates used photography for first-hand investigation of subject matter. Stronger candidates displayed a thoughtful approach to their subjects by exploring lighting, viewpoint and focussing methods. Weaker candidates tended to produce poor quality images that suggested little critical consideration. These images contained limited usable information which restricted the candidates' subsequent work.

The strongest submissions showed excellent exploration of ideas and comprehensive experimentation with media, depth of investigation from first-hand sources with personal aesthetic choices.

In the work in the middle mark range, there was less evidence of a focused exploration of ideas and in some cases the submissions appeared to be a collection of classwork exercises loosely connected to a theme. Consequently, personal involvement and connection to the topic was less apparent. There was more evidence of the use of secondary source material and copying from photographs at this level. Some candidates demonstrated a great deal of skill and accuracy in copying and recording images, but others were less able to control and select materials, and were less experimental in their approach to the use of media. Some candidates made links with the work of other relevant artists but this was not always understood and often did not inform the development of ideas. Where annotation was seen it tended to be more descriptive than analytical.

The weakest submissions relied too heavily on second-hand sources, had little development of ideas and minimal exploration of media. Some weaker candidates collected reproductions of the work of other artists but were unable to analyse images in order to inform the development of their own ideas and techniques. This was particularly evident in examples of still life painting in which composition and techniques were repeated without development from image to image.

Graphic design

A few designs of posters and commercial advertising were seen this session. The strongest submissions reflected a competent understanding of the principals of design with candidates using contemporary IT processes. Examples of satisfactory digital work were seen but weaker candidates showed limited experience and knowledge of the programs they were using. Some digital work was very simplistic and lacking in creativity.

In the stronger submissions candidates used first-hand observations including drawing and photography. Ideas were explored effectively and candidates made appropriate, effective links to existing designs and other artists' works were also included to inform personal development.

Research and ideas were generally well developed. There was often a thorough investigation of techniques, and the work of other graphic designers, but the final designs tended to be lacking in aesthetic judgement. In some submissions more emphasis was placed on the type and design of the logos, to the detriment of the illustrations used. In other submissions candidates did not understand the necessity to explore lettering as a part of the design process, and this tended to be the unresolved element of their work.

Weaker submissions provided little evidence of starting points, development of ideas and consideration of colour and compositions. There was also little evidence of the principal processes of design.

Photography

The strongest submissions in this area had final pieces which clearly reflected aesthetic awareness and some technical proficiency. Candidates had gathered a variety of sources and used effective computer manipulation techniques and processes to enhance their themes. Competent links to other artists were included and used.

Mid to low range work demonstrated a creative journey within the coverage of the assessment objectives but appropriate aesthetic choices were not always made in final presentations.

Weaker candidates often produced a small collection of final images with little evidence of consideration of alternative locations, composition or technical awareness. Many submissions comprised of one shoot, no editing and very little knowledge of camera techniques.

Fashion and textile design

There were very few responses in this area of study. Submissions sometimes contained examples of textiles, such as screen printed, or fabric painted surface patterns. Abstract designs were popular and were often rendered on paper to create a series of designs, prior to being translated into garment design via screen prints on fabric. Drawings from direct study were the starting point for these ideas. These were then reduced and abstracted into complex designs. However, despite candidates exploring different colourways through

print, they sometimes omitted the referencing of ideas and the transition from surface pattern into garment design. This resulted in a lack of continuity in the development of the work.

Weaker submissions often consisted of a small series of fashion drawings copied from secondary sources. No references were made to the works of others and starting points and development of ideas were also missing.

3D studies and sculpture

No entries were seen for this area of study, although there was evidence of ideas being explored in 3D within painting and related media.

ART AND DESIGN

Paper 9704/03
Coursework B

General comments

The majority of submissions focused on the area of Painting and Related Media, with a few Photography and Graphic submissions, and fewer Fashion and Textiles work.

In the stronger submissions, the sketch books submitted were obviously very personal and used by the candidates in a genuine exploration and personal involvement in all areas of their topic, which supported their worksheets. Relevant, explorative drawings, plans, ideas and research demonstrated the development of their journey. Other candidates merely worked on a few pages in a repetitive way which satisfied the basic requirements of the component but did not show any creativity. Images were not always relevant to the candidates' themes. Unrelated photographs, invented pictures or cartoons and swatches of paint colours were included which showed no connection to each other.

Comments on areas of study

Painting and related media

Interesting themes were explored which demonstrated candidates' personal engagement with their topics. These tended to be observationally based and ranged from portraits and people, to animals – horses, wild cats, landscapes, traditional costumes/fashions and abstract patterns. Other work contained more conceptual ideas based on anger, depression, and the collapse of society, drink, drugs and environmental issues.

Painting media was predominantly in acrylics, but some candidates worked in other media including pencil, colour pencil, pastel, collage and printmaking. Some candidates also used combined media. The strongest submissions showed excellent exploration of ideas and comprehensive experimentation with media, depth of investigation from first-hand sources with personal aesthetic choices. Sophisticated and mature submissions were seen where candidates were fully engaged with their projects. Some strong oil paintings were submitted, as well as other examples where candidates used different media such as animation and installation, developing from their 2D work. Some candidates started to think about ways of developing their work into abstraction using photography as a starting point to crop images and zoom in to find interesting areas.

The majority of candidates in the middle mark range showed satisfactory or competent initial experimentation with media and ideas, but their investigation of composition was often limited. Consequently final outcomes were often unresolved. Some candidates referred to the work of other artists, but this was not always informative to the development of ideas. Many candidates competently copied from the works of others but were less able to transfer this application of media, technique and colour to their own work with as much success. In some work there was evidence of analysis of the work as it developed, but in other work the journey was unclear and difficult to follow. Some final compositions had no evidence of prior exploration of alternatives and critical selections being made during a development process.

Weaker submissions consisted of copies from secondary sources and demonstrated very limited development of ideas, techniques or personal qualities.

Graphic design

Designs of posters, and commercial advertising were seen. The strongest submissions reflected a competent understanding of the principals of design with many candidates using contemporary IT processes.

Candidates had used first-hand observations including drawing and photography and ideas were explored effectively. Candidates made excellent aesthetic choices. In some cases storyboards were developed to show consideration of composition and colour. Effective links to existing designs and the work of other artists were also included to inform personal development.

Work in the middle mark range also contained very good artist research, but the designs and ideas were very repetitive and lacked the creativity and individuality of the higher level work.

In less successful submissions critical skills and research into the work of other designers was limited in quantity and quality. Some work explored promising concepts but simplistic skills and layouts restricted the candidates' ability to translate intentions into resolved visual outcomes. Text and its relationships with imagery was particularly poor.

Photography

Submissions were varied and covered the full range of abilities in this area of work. Themes and studies tended toward narrative elements but additionally styles included environment, figurative and portraiture.

The strongest works had final pieces which clearly reflected aesthetic awareness and were technically proficient. Candidates had gathered a variety of sources and used effective computer manipulation techniques and processes to enhance their themes. Excellent links to other artists were included and used. Many candidates selected personal themes to work from but most failed to develop their work into successful outcomes. Sometimes there was no developed final conclusion, with the candidate merely selecting one of their existing images to enlarge and present.

Some candidates in the middle range explored written ideas in considerable depth but were unable to successfully translate these concepts into resolved outcomes due to their limited technical knowledge. Practical experimentation was repetitive and insufficient to enable candidates to translate written intentions into resolved final outcomes. Consequently, the technical quality of most final images was poor.

The lower level work sometimes contained a series of simple photographs of a subject rather than considered and developed photography. These submissions consisted of many enlarged prints, very few of which were of good quality, and were without intention of idea. Critical awareness was often not apparent, with the work lacking photographic technical ability, development of ideas or experimentation. Images of the works of others were sometimes included to support the work, but the photographed images often bore little resemblance or influence. Sketchbooks also contained repeats of the work on the supporting sheets.

Fashion and textile design

There were very few submissions seen. The strongest works demonstrated batiks, screen prints and silk painting which had subsequently been made into final pieces. Photography was used effectively to record making processes and some competent links to artists were made. However, when these designs were reduced in scale, the visual quality of the outcome was often lost. Other submissions contained the same pattern repeated many times in different colourways on many sheets. This work contained more quantity than quality, and while the work often developed into a final form, the planning and designing for the outcome was not clear.

The weaker submissions (particularly in fashion design) were often a small series of fashion drawings copied from secondary sources. No references were made to the works of others and starting points and development of ideas were also missing.

3D design and sculpture

No work specific to this area of study was seen, although there were submissions in other areas that had included some 3D work in media exploration.

ART AND DESIGN

Paper 9704/04
Personal Study

General comments

A wide range of subject areas were seen which included fine art, sculpture, graphic design, architecture, fashion and textile design. More submissions were seen for photography in this session. A few focused on architecture, street art, tattoo and jewellery.

Some topics chosen were not appropriate for an Art and Design Personal Study. For example, studies of specific creatures or local areas. The submission of a Personal Study proposal form would have helped to avoid this situation.

A number of candidates were seen to use only artists found on Instagram or the web. These were studies mostly based on photography which limited the investigation as there was limited relevant information available.

More studies were seen with a thematic approach which had been developed from a visit to a gallery or craft workshop. Most studies had been informed by research and experience gained from appropriate first-hand sources, which was clearly beneficial.

High Level

Candidates at the higher levels of assessment demonstrated a journey of discovery with sustained engagement throughout. Many had combined informed and inspired practical engagement with some thorough comparative analysis of selected examples of key and related works. Portraiture was a common theme. Other submissions at this level of attainment took a process-based approach through exploring the work of printmakers and sculptors. Valuable workshop experience helped to inform and inspire some imaginative material-based responses.

The strongest submissions were always thoroughly researched and explored and usually developed into well-informed and clearly understood personal responses. The critical judgements made indicated a good understanding and awareness of the subject being investigated.

The presentation of the study at this level demonstrated an imaginative and innovative integration of visual elements with annotations and/or text. The candidates' own studies and related practical experiments often enhanced the personal approach, revealing confident levels of skill with the use of media and techniques.

Many candidates made use of photographic methods for recording and documenting visits to galleries, studios, museums and architectural sites. These were often then annotated with some intelligent and perceptive personal observations.

At this level, candidates demonstrated genuine knowledge and critical understanding of their chosen topics. This was usually in the form of a detailed evaluation or conclusion to the study. This showed a deep understanding and awareness of the subject through revealing personal observations and critical judgements made by the candidate.

The ability to gather valuable research and gain vital first-hand experience of the subject concerned was always seen to benefit the strongest submissions.

Mid-Level

Candidates at this level showed an ability to take in information and to use this to develop personal observations. Facts were processed and some in-depth discussions followed which were often connected with the development of the candidates' own work. Submissions were usually coherent and well presented at this level.

Selected works were often viewed at first hand and an interview with a local artist or craft-person was often included. Where questions were constructed to reveal some significant personal insights into the ideas and process behind the work of an artist, this was beneficial for the study. The quality of the questions constructed for these interviews indicated the level of understanding by the candidate for the subject chosen. Studies at this level often focused more on the process and techniques involved than with the development of ideas and inspirations behind the works selected.

There was often some understanding of the theory of how images are created, but candidates did not show the ability to analyse the effect this had had on the final outcome or how the concept or meaning was explored.

Many of the studies at this level lacked a comparative exploration which would have benefitted the final outcome. Making some further comparisons with carefully selected works by other artists would have enabled the candidates to make some significant personal observations and critical judgements. This would also have helped to inform more thorough evaluations and conclusions to the studies. Those seen were too short and often without much evidence of any deep knowledge or level of understanding of the subject.

Lower Level

Many studies assessed at this level contained no evidence of any first-hand visit. Those candidates who had made a visit to a gallery did not go any further than a limited record of the visit (usually in photographic form) with a picture of themselves next to a work which was often not even mentioned.

Many candidates downloaded their main information from the internet, often Wikipedia. This was acceptable as a second-hand source but not as the only source. There was often a focus on biographical details which added little to the study and indicated a limited understanding of the subject.

A few candidates used pieces of their own coursework for discussion without relating it in any way to the work of other artists. Little evidence was found in these submissions of any connected personal response in the form of annotated observations or any critical judgements. The language used to discuss this work was limited and basic and often only descriptive.

A lot of the visual material used was copied from second-hand sources and did not explore any idea or concept which could have helped to further inform the candidates' work. The actual presentation was limited and was sometimes difficult to read because of poor handwriting. Organisational skills are limited and many of the submissions lacked coherence.

Candidates at this level could have improved significantly by demonstrating a more personal appreciation of selected and related works of art. This could have been achieved with considered and thoughtful annotations combined with some sustained recording and documentation of first-hand visits/experience of some practical engagement with the chosen topic.