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ART AND DESIGN

Paper 0400/01
Observational Study

General comments

Most of the questions received quality responses by a considerable number of candidates. The usual still life observational study type questions inevitably attracted the most responses. Judging by the excellence of some submissions in all areas of study it can only be assumed that the questions set were suitable and were able to bring out the best a candidate had to offer. Examiners are always mindful of the different cultural nuances and always accept varied regional approaches. Different questions often have different demands, such as individual questions which facilitate broad painterly aspects of still life compositions seen alongside the very detailed and often quite small investigations seen in the observational questions.

As predicted, the work of most candidates fell in the middle ranges of achievement but there were many who were awarded with full or nearly full marks. Their work was thorough, and demonstrated high levels of achievement and awareness. At the other end of the spectrum fell those candidates whose work offered very little. This was often not always through lack of talent, the work was limited by a lack of preparation, experiment and development which would have enabled them to focus on a finished product. Mid range submissions reflected very positive, often painstaking and engaging responses.

Sometimes solutions were found through theory rather than through direct observational study. This was often found in the construction of street scenes in the over use of exaggerated perspective which mostly robbed the picture of any personality or particular sensitivity.

In larger Centres it is not so much the case that candidates are working in a house style now but that the tendency is for them to all work in a *home* approach. That is when all are found to use the same range of media, perhaps gouache paint or soft lead pencil. In some instances candidates have not been permitted to arrange their own still life studies and have all worked from a single central one that has been arranged for them by the Centre.

In some cases where exploratory preparation had been encouraged it had been taken to the lengths of a fully fledged production. Unfortunately some candidates found that they could not produce the same standard twice and ultimately the examination piece ended being tired and lifeless and not nearly so good as the preparation work. In some cases photographs had been used to provide the stimulus. When the photographs were the candidate's own and based on personal experience this could be a quite successful approach.

On the whole, a wide variety of media had been offered in often excitingly different ways. Centres must ensure that the work is properly fixed before it is despatched as there were some instances where work was ruined in transit because it has not been properly spray fixed.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Still life group

- (a) *Assemble on a table a group of objects which could be used for either cake or jam making. A background must be included.*

This was one of the most popular questions. The responses being mostly in the traditional composition style. The treatment of form was variable or in some cases not noticed at all. Light and shade tended to be formalised, although there were some subtle applications of colour through transparent and opaque painting media. There were some problems with the organisation of space in the mid and lower range work. On the whole objects were placed successfully in relationship to one another although some had adopted such a high viewpoint that they had failed to integrate the foreground with the background. Backgrounds were often small and out of scale and sometimes even imaginary. Reflections on surfaces were usually handled effectively but many had the perennial trouble when trying to create the ellipses of cylindrical objects.

- (b) *Create a still life composition using shoes and shoe cleaning equipment. These objects seen against a background of newspaper.*

This proved to be another popular question and was often translated into a study close to candidate's own interests with the use of trainers or football boots. The stronger candidates provided work which explored surface qualities and the effects of lighting. A wide range of media and techniques had been used with confidence. Many used exciting multi-media explorations with sometimes quite stunning results. Sometimes the subject was treated as more of a detailed observational study rather than a still life.

Whilst boots or shoes were mostly treated well, the newspaper presented a real challenge. The manipulation of perspective and its emphasis towards the subject as a whole caused many candidates real problems. Some profile views of shoes were seen against near plan vistas of newspaper where there was a failure to cope with perspective altogether. Others, while getting the overall perspective in good order failed to understand how to get blocks of newsprint and photographs to fit in. Some more knowledgeable candidates had done preparatory exercises in order to solve these matters and others had turned to the old masters such as Van Gogh's boots for inspiration.

Question 2

Natural and man-made forms

- (a) *An electric iron with flex and plug or a similar household gadget.*

Most candidates had studied the electric iron but a few had opted for other gadgets, such as a hairdryer. On the whole, tone was handled well in the exploration of surface quality with reflections being an interesting consideration. Whilst the iron was often well represented in terms of perspective and form, the flex was often quite flat in appearance despite valiant efforts in terms of texture. Shadowing was effectively used to enhance spatial quality. There was often the clever use of the flex as a compositional device which enabled stronger candidates to make use of negative space in a rewarding manner.

- (b) *A large vegetable such as a cabbage, cauliflower or lettuce which has been cut in half. One half should show the outer and the other the inner structure.*

At best this quite ordinary subject had been turned into substantial works of art. This was particularly true of multi-media examples of study. There had been enjoyment shown in the utilizing of the complex patterns and structures in the formation of the cabbage. There was exceptionally strong evidence of preparatory study in some where paint had been used to explore hues and tones most sensitively.

In many cases, the bulk and forms of the plant was most convincingly realised. However there were many images where the image tended to remain flat despite the rewarding examination of the patterns to be found in the internal structures of a cabbage.

- (c) *An ornate necklace, a wristwatch, a brooch. Make a study or studies of two of these items seen together.*

This was not quite such a popular question as those discussed so far. The results were not often outstanding but in the main did show real application. Some chose wisely to make their task more interesting by tangling watches and necklaces together, or by making enlarged studies of the objects. However despite making images clearer, new problems arose. Scaling up and researching minute detail at the same time became a real issue for many candidates. Those relying on actual size studies often produced the most carefully seen and accurately detailed studies. Some times shadowing could produce quite amazing three dimensional effects.

In weaker work greater emphasis on preparatory study would have proved helpful.

Question 3*The human form*

This area of study continues to be mostly the option of the select few. There were many examples of outstandingly good paintings and drawings in each of the three questions.

- (a) *A model is seated with crossed legs in a low chair holding a notepad in one hand and a pencil in the other as though writing a letter on the lap. The whole figure should be drawn or painted.*

The majority of work submitted was either on an exceptional standard or at least very good. Where direct observation of the human figure had been used as the starting point the results were bolder and more vigorous. There were some candidates who were awarded full and nearly full marks. Work was submitted in soft lead pencil, full gouache paint and coloured pencils.

Where the work was not quite so good was mainly attributable to the lack of reconciliation of proportion and mass with detail. In the less able work the former two elements could be rather lacking whilst the detail of individual characteristics might come over rather well. Preparatory work often concentrated on details such as the hands but weaknesses were found in the treatment of the whole figure. The most able candidates had made quite sure that they had experimented with a number of poses before selecting the one for their final production.

- (b) *Two figures should be drawn or painted seated together engaged in a pencil and pad game.*

Few candidates tackled this question but there were two examples where the submissions were quite strong. Excellent use had been made of foreshortening of limbs in order to create the illusion of depth. Where photography had been used as the sole source of inspiration the results tended to be limited and cramped.

- (c) The portrait of a figure posed as for **Question 3 (a)**. The head, upper body and hands should be the subject of your drawing or painting.

There were a few excellent portraits which were not only well painted in full gouache colour but were exceedingly well proportioned and detailed coupled with a sensitive portrayal of the very character of the person posing.

Question 4*Landscape or townscape*

- (a) *A garden or backyard*

This question enabled candidates to represent their own immediate surroundings. Many were able to do this with distinction and had obviously looked at the work of Monet.

- (b) *A petrol filling station*

Examples of this subject was often over burdened by the use of theoretical perspective. Quite insensitive to actualities.

- (c) *An outside cafe*

Here some candidates had obviously looked at the work of Van Gogh and they had re-enacted night scenes outside of cafes with great skill and dramatic atmosphere.

In each of these three options it was noted that the strongest work was that of candidates who had gone outside to do a lot of preliminary work and sketching which had been backed up with their own photographs. These had a keen knowledge of perspective without it being over conscious.

Weaker candidates tended to work from a single photograph and exhibited a poor knowledge of the use of tone, form or perspective. The very weakest work showed no understanding of how best to use foreground, middle distance and distance in their studies.

Paper 0400/02
Interpretative Study

General comments

It was good to see a whole range of work submitted, the best were as good as ever. Some candidates producing absolutely stunning work that was hard to move on from: certainly beyond the expectations for this examination. Other candidates who performed reasonably well had good research and development and had used the preparatory time to advantage, exploring ideas and media as well as trying out different compositions. Many went beyond literal interpretations of the questions and made personal responses.

Those candidates and Centres where work fell short of the requirements of the examination can be characterised by lack of preparation time. Given the nature of the questions, this is often a frequent mistake for which there is little excuse as the question papers can be handed out to candidates upon their receipt in August. A lack of energy in exploring the questions and researching ideas thoroughly was quite common in the weaker candidates and Centres. Too many candidates seem to spend little more than an hour or two thinking about, researching and sketching ideas in the time leading up to the examination and produce fairly mundane, obvious responses. All too often media has been used without sufficient practise.

The vast majority of candidates attempting this examination are serious, hard working and dedicated. Their work, at whatever level they have achieved, is a pleasure to study and to mark.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Industrial structures

A very popular question from Centres where such structures are easily seen, but not so popular from more rural Centres. Where attempted, the usual interpretation was a literal one, with views of factories and manufacturing plants. Many used the idea of the energy of such places with complex shapes and patterns based on pipes and buildings. A few attempted personal responses that blended man and machine.

Question 2

Head-dress, hats, masks and helmets viewed in a crowded place

Most who attempted this omitted the last aspect, 'viewed in a crowded place' and a few, for some reason, ignored the question completely and did studies or paintings based on footwear.

Some still life work was produced more appropriate for Paper 1 than this paper, being studies of groups of hats without the interpretive element.

The best candidates produced imaginative and interesting work of people in 'party' situations or in the Theatre or Cinema.

Question 3

Labyrinthine

A very popular question that seemed to appeal to the full range of candidates. There were some very original interpretations. The better candidates grounded their work in well-researched studies, sometimes based on artists such as Bosch and Escher. A few exceptional entries used the title to refer to symbolic or political choices in life. More common, and often less successful, was work based on ladders, stairs, intestines, sometimes quite surrealistically.

Question 4

More than a self portrait

Probably the most popular question, and one that seemed to stimulate the most personal responses. Individual's life circumstances, their interests and hobbies, and cultural references all abounded.

Question 5

Observed from many angles

Fairly popular, with many using the title to develop observational studies from many angles. Imaginative candidates responded with different cultural, political or life choices as a starting point for their work.

There were many attempts at using cubism in the work, with mixed success depending on the candidate's understanding of the style.

Question 6

A perfect catch

Another very popular question. Most often seen were birds of prey and beasts catching their prey. Far too many candidates found it too tempting to copy photographs from nature magazines or books, which can be done well but is often an excuse for lazy thinking and lack of preparation, and not developing any personal ideas or interpretation. It can be quite tedious to mark dozens of paintings copied from the same photograph of an osprey catching a fish.

Sport featured quite often, baseball and football being the most popular. Again, the better candidates who used photographs used them judiciously and as a resource to develop their own response.

Administration

It was good to see work well packaged and all preparatory work attached securely together with the examination work. Attendance sheets were almost all present but in one or two cases not filled in or filled in incorrectly.

Some candidate's labels were filled in an almost illegible manner. If at least the numbers of the Centre, candidate and the question are clear the Examiners work is made easier. Generally, labelling was excellent.

Teachers are clearly working very hard, sometimes in difficult or poorly resourced circumstances. Lack of materials may not be a problem: some candidates working just with pencil did astoundingly good work. But most candidates need a range of material's to stimulate them and develop their techniques. They also need time to do well in the preparation time after being given the examination paper. This time is crucial to develop and research their ideas, techniques and composition.

Paper 0400/03

Paper 3 - Design Study

General comments

The most popular questions were **Question 1** *Design using Lettering*, **Question 2** *Illustration and Calligraphy* and **Question 6** *Fabric Design*; a small number of responses were seen for all other questions. Over half of the work was of competent to high levels of achievement. Most submissions were well supported with preparatory research and developments towards the final pieces. Computer manipulation of designs and lettering contributed positively to developing ideas, except when downloaded images were used instead of personal research and direct observation.

The majority of Centres were concerned to advise their candidates to present their work sensibly. There were few examples of unnecessarily excessive mounting or the use of heavy card, although some Centres continue to allow this, contrary to the published regulations. Labelling of work was generally clear, but Centres must always be aware of the confusion caused when it is not. A few Centres still dispatch work before attaching the examination piece firmly to the preparatory studies. It is also better for the sheets to be fastened together the same way round, which ever way up the images on them are. For example, A2 sheets presented both horizontally and vertically cover a very large area indeed.

A wide variety of media was used, most of it, including good quality computer prints, appropriate to the high level of finished artwork expected for a design study. Collage was also used inventively, consisting of three-dimensional elements, seldom remained attached. Similarly, mosaic collages from Centres fell to the bottom of the package, leaving the examination work in a patchy state, because of the use of inadequate adhesive.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Design using lettering

- (a) The logo design for a car sticker for a thermal springs health spa was one of the most popular choices. The best work was highly inventive, making use of pool, steam and water images integrated well with specifically designed letterforms for the 'Hot H²O' title. Many candidates made good use of reflected images and lettering. The selection and control of colour and linear emphasis in border also showed thoughtful consideration. A common solution at mid-levels of achievement was to present the logo inside the format of a water drop. Less successful designs showed basic ideas, but final solutions were unresolved in terms of developing a specific format for the car sticker. In the weakest submissions many examples of crude melting letterforms were seen, unrelated to any surrounding border shapes.
- (b) The design for a luggage label for a travel company named, 'Been There' led to few high level submissions. Candidates who included some additional illustration of tourist landmarks were usually able to develop the most competent designs. Otherwise, the design brief was perhaps too demanding for less able candidates, whose knowledge and understanding of letterforms and typography inspired little interest beyond the most basic idea of a luggage label.

Question 2

Illustration and calligraphy

- (a) The cover design of a brochure for a travel company named, 'Sun Spots' produced far more positive results than **Question 1 (b)**. Many candidates made reference to local tourist attractions. Those who developed their ideas selectively, giving full consideration to tone, colour and decorative borders, produced the most lively and attractive final solutions. At mid-levels of achievement, research was often thorough, but designs became jumbled by attempts to include all the images that had been gathered. Weaker work relied heavily on secondary sources or copied existing illustrations with scant concern given to the forms or placing of lettering.
- (b) Although a less popular option in this section, the text of Tennyson's poem, *The Eagle*, inspired some very good submissions for Calligraphy. The best of these included beautifully refined illustrations to accompany accomplished and well-spaced scripts. Less strong examples showed unevenness in the writing, despite evidence of thorough practice in the preparatory work. Inadequate consideration was given to placing on the page, in relation to borders and illustrations. However, no really poor examples were seen for this question.

Question 3

Environmental design

- (a) There were very few submissions for either the sculptural form for a fountain based on a Cornucopia, or the canvas dwelling based on the theme of 'Sails in the Wind'. The most interesting work had been developed through three-dimensional imaging on a computer.

Question 4*Interior design*

- (a) The design of a frieze for the entrance lobby of a sports centre attracted slightly more submissions than **Question 3**. Of the four themes offered, cycling and swimming were the most often attempted. The figurative nature of the themes required thorough research, which candidates usually developed seriously to produce competent to proficient levels of solutions.
- (b) The mosaic pattern for the bottom of a round bird bath left the choice of theme open to the candidates. Most candidates chose fish or birdlife, with pleasing results. Research into historical examples, such as Roman mosaics, generally informed the development of ideas, the choice of colours and the rhythm of designs. Unfortunately, some candidate's use of adhesives for the mosaic tiles was not strong enough to survive dispatch from the Centre to the Examiners.

Question 5*Fashion design*

Of the three themes offered, The Seasons was the most popular, with most candidates choosing to focus on 'Winter'. A high level of achievement inevitably depended on good figure drawing skills. The refinement of particular poses was just as important as the inventive ideas for costumes which, in the best designs, achieved very sculptural and theatrical qualities. Each theme of The Seasons was developed selectively in terms of appropriate colours, textures, materials and accessories. In the fewer less able designs seen, the main limitations were poorly drawn figures or the excessive use of tracing from existing fashion magazine.

Question 6*Fabric design*

Few submissions were received for the furnishing fabric design for a petrochemical company's offices. However, very many candidates chose the repeat pattern based on climbing plant forms for the roller blinds of a flower shop, making this option the third most popular for the paper. The work covered the full mark range with many high level designs resulting from thorough, directly observed studies of plant forms. This led to an inventive refinement of leaf and petal shapes, as well as twisted stems or coiled tendrils to link the design together. Such candidates were fully aware of repeat pattern techniques of positive-negative reversals, cropping, shifting and over-laying. At the mid-levels of achievement, design motifs lacked refinement and, although colour and tone were well-organised, shapes and rhythms were usually monotonous and generalised. Weaker work relied on a literal repetition of elementary shapes which lacked the benefit of directly observed research. There was also little awareness of figure-ground relationships.

Question 7*Printmaking*

Very few submissions were received, except from one Centre, where candidates chose the theme 'Skyscrapers' to interpret as flight, often very well, using stencil techniques for printing.

Question 8*Photography*

A very small number of submissions were received. These were of a competent level in terms of the use of techniques and processes. The theme chosen was 'Reflections', which had been interpreted in a psychological sense in relation to social issues and conditions.

Paper 0400/04**Paper 4 – Critical and Historical Study****General comments**

The overall standard was very sound with all Centres following the syllabus rubric fully. There was a good relationship in this cohort between the *Personal Study* element and the *Written Paper*. There was evidence of good teaching with candidates making good use of research facilities and being able to make good use of appropriate language for the subject. Presentation was generally very sound with some well organised layout and mounting.

Comments on specific questions***Personal study***

Presentations involved a commendable element of first hand research where buildings and galleries had been visited during the duration of the course. There was considerable use of first hand images drawn directly on the spot or by way of photographic recording and many candidates made good use of documentary evidence. As ever, there were some good projects based on local artists and styles and the use of cross cultural and multi cultural themes was adopted by a number of Centres. The detail and analysis of research has reached a new level of achievement and it is now rare to find work which is poorly mounted or lacking any real sense of personal involvement. Part of the purpose of this paper is to help candidates build self confidence in analysing and understanding works of art and the submission of this year's cohort was a pleasing reflection of these aims. On the other hand there has been an increasing use of internet research which is accepted as research without recourse to sifting and redefining by the candidate. This is often the result of rushed or uncommitted study and should be monitored by Teachers where possible.

Written paper

The paper this year seemed to give candidates good choice and breadth of subject matter. All questions were answered.

Question 1

Many good responses based on personal preference and the choices were often well made giving candidates the opportunity to describe and compare works of art in detail. This was a popular question and artists discussed covered a wide range of time scales and styles.

Question 2

There were some good answers often based on personal visits and experience. Good use was made of comparisons between the ancient world and more modern building. Some candidates were able to use local examples to good effect.

Question 3

Many of these responses compared two prominent artists such as Picasso and Matisse and many references were made to Cezanne. Some candidates used a local artist or works they had seen in galleries. There was a tendency for weaker answers to list works of art rather than describe and analyse in detail.

Question 4

This was the least popular option but the responses that were made were both well informed and carefully structured.

Question 5

The best answers in this option made full use of local styles and use of materials. Other candidates selected more of their contemporary favourites but on the whole there was a lively and well informed analysis and use of examples.

Papers 0400/05, 0400/06, 0400/07, 0400/08 and 0400/09

Craft Study

General comments

As is usual, the largest entry was for **Question 9** (Painting and Related Media) with **Question 8** (3D studies) being the next most popular. On the whole the internal assessments were quite realistic, it was often found that one or two Centres had been cautious when awarding marks and that the candidate's achievements deserved a higher level of recognition.

Most Centres had offered suitable courses with a focus on specific themes and selective research. Fewer Centres allowed their candidates to make do with copying images from secondary sources with one such study chosen for the final piece. Such Centres seemed to concentrate on the teaching of techniques and somewhat neglect some of the other aspects of the Assessment Objectives. Nevertheless it was unusual to find any Centre where supporting work was not bolstered by scrapbook mountings of magazine photographs. The better courses encouraged positive references to the work of relevant practitioners and in the best work, the beneficial influence of such study was clearly evident.

Comments on specific areas of study

Graphics

Most work was not based on sound design practice and the candidates were limited by lack of drawing ability. On the whole, the work was weak and often the preparatory work was messy and the final outcomes incoherent.

Photography

An unusually small number of Photography candidates. It was good to see that there was very little weak work submitted. Subjects had been selected carefully and organised into good compositions. Candidates had managed to bring to their work atmosphere and artistry. It would seem that Centres had organised well constructed courses that produced work which was assessed at a higher rating than that recorded in the Centre's moderation.

Textiles

It was good to see that there were some obviously well structured and very thorough textiles courses being run. There was good research, mostly from animal and game park sources, which led to distinctive personal ideas. Candidates were producing good experiments with dyes and colours and well designed final pieces in the form of wall hanging batiks of considerable size. In the case of one particular Centre, they had underestimated the richness and diversity of some of the candidates' achievements. Rarely do Examiners see, these days, such strong batik work from such a well taught course.

In the middle ranges of achievement there was some fashion design with made up pieces. These were simple but workable designs with suitable but not very deep preparatory research. Other candidates had produced tie dye work which had been made up into items such as slippers and curtains. On the whole this work was superficial and lacked depth. One painting of a horse on fabric showed no development of idea or research of the subject and ended up little more than painting by numbers.

3D studies

Assessments in this area were generally accurate and in some instances the marks were raised. Final pieces were usually well supported with thorough workbooks. Centres are mindful of the restraints of posting work and no actual final pieces had been sent to Cambridge, but with good photographic records of development and different viewpoints of the finished pieces, Moderators were able to moderate the work accurately. Most work used clay construction and for pottery there were imaginative and well shaped traditional forms. Modeling used well composed figure work, but interesting constructions and assemblages using wire and plaster were also seen. Some candidates were obviously being stimulated to a more contemporary and experimental interpretation of themes and concepts. Indeed some of the more individual explorations were estimated to be well on the way to AS Level achievement.

One Centre did cause problems where candidates had produced computer generated images that looked like they were copied from reality but no actual three dimensional work itself. Maybe it would have been better if candidates had been encouraged to enter in the Graphics section? Where there were weaknesses, it was mainly due to little research and poor development that had preceded the production of the computer images. However the actual printing of the images was quite good.

Painting and related media

There was a larger variety of approaches for this option and this included copying from secondary sources. The better work inevitably followed from those who engaged in direct observational research. This stimulated the development of personal ideas and clear evaluations about the direction of the final pieces. There were some fine examples of the drawings of heads which had been developed into fairly rich paintings.

Most of the work fell into the middle grade ranges. There were many quite lifeless paintings of manufactured items, some intricate but rather unpleasant abstractions of figure studies and many still life studies which were lacking in compositional and spatial values. Most of these would have benefited from more preparation and development of ideas.

The very weakest work was evidence of a lack of all or nearly all of the basic skills. Here there was much directional floundering. Some candidates seemed to have difficulty in formulating individual ways in selecting suitable themes or being able to research them if the ideas were there. In some Centres where entries were small in number, approaches could be very limited but in these cases, on the whole, the assessments tended to be quite realistic.