

Assessment Report

Scholarship, 2008

Art History

COMMENTARY

This paper offered candidates the opportunity to showcase their skills and knowledge. The wording of questions was clear and they were varied. The questions were broad enough to allow a variety of approaches.

The best candidates demonstrated originality of thought in their answers. They showed extensive knowledge of context and awareness of the value of nuance. Intellectually, they were acute as well as subtle in their responses.

The need for analysis of specific works to support ideas, cannot be over-emphasised. A survey account will not suffice.

Section A

In Question 1, some candidates failed to discuss “the role of space in art” – instead simply described composition. Similarly, in Questions 3 and 4, some candidates simply wrote descriptive accounts of the presentation of the human form in artworks or of the use of colour, respectively. There was greater subtlety to the question than this. Many answers to Question 2 showed considerable thought in addressing the idea presented for discussion.

Section B

No question seemed to be more popular than any other. Questions chosen were fairly evenly spread – although overall some candidates did not maintain the same quality of answer in their second answer that they achieved in their first answer. In response to Question 5, weaker candidates missed the key words “how effective”, and instead discussed simply how and what art communicates. Similarly, in Question 7 addressing the idea of “the role of the artist” was sometimes missed, and answers instead just gave examples of how artists had documented history. Some candidates had difficulty understanding “imagination” in Question 6.

There were often unsuccessful attempts to fit a rote-learnt answer into an answer to Question 8. The ability to adapt material to the question asked is a key skill in Scholarship.

The best performing candidates most commonly demonstrated the following skills and/or knowledge:

- ability to showcase their knowledge and skill through careful selection of questions
- ability to plan their answers carefully
- ability to write well structured essays that remained focused on the question
- recognition of subtleties in the questions
- ability to respond confidently and perceptively
- ability to take a clear stance in relation to the question and remain focused throughout the response
- ability to engage in independence of thought, and to show evidence of lateral thinking

- ability to demonstrate originality of approach in their response
- ability to present a depth and breadth of knowledge which reflected understanding and highly developed critical response
- ability to select works carefully, thus enabling the development of different facets of the argument
- ability to reinforce key ideas through reference to specific works of art
- ability to analyse works of art in detail
- ability to give information that was accurate
- ability to give information and examples from one question to the next without repetition, and to employ a range of works across the paper to demonstrate their ideas about the history of art
- ability to sustain the quality of responses across the paper.

Candidates who did NOT achieve scholarship lacked some or all of the skills and knowledge above and in addition they:

- answered in the form of a sweeping survey of sections of art history which lacked depth or specifics
- presented a generalised response with little discussion or analysis of specific artworks or contexts
- failed to support their discussion by giving examples
- did not fully address the question asked so that responses were sometimes irrelevant
- lost focus on the question asked - eg they wrote on music or dance instead of the visual arts
- demonstrated little evidence of having planned their answers
- had not clarified their stance on the question before beginning, or lost track of it and went off on tangents
- did not have the depth of knowledge and understanding necessary for this level of discussion
- described rather than analysed
- were ill-prepared for the examination, ie they showed little understanding of requirements of performance criteria
- presented a rote-learnt response to the question
- lacked specific, detailed analysis to support points
- provided inaccurate information in their answers
- made simplistic, sweeping statements (candidates must exercise discretion when sourcing information through the internet)
- could not sustain the quality of response across both answers
- did not have a sound understanding of terminology or use it accurately
- demonstrated poor skills of critical response which suggested that they did not have real understanding of the material they were using.