

Scholarship

2009 Assessment Report

Visual Arts: Photography

COMMENTARY

Overall, most Photography Scholarship candidates performed very well, and those awarded Scholarship engaged in systematic and innovative visual enquiry. There was a wide range of genre, concepts and processes employed and reiterated by an array of workbook practices. It was pleasing to see many candidates working to their strengths, operating with fluency and a visual aesthetic indicative of their understanding of art-making and contemporary practice. Outstanding scholars driven by their own ideas and motivation, extended beyond their research and took ownership of their project through risk taking and lateral thinking.

Most candidates controlled their mode of operation effectively; analogue, digital, Photoshop, installation, collage and cutouts. They showed heightened awareness of the conventions appropriate to individual investigations, engaged with for their conceptual merit. Understanding what they were doing was key. Successful engagement came through for those who understood *seeing* – visual literacy, including formal pictorial devices. A variety of approaches were employed; formal, documentary, narrative, dioramic, performance. It was good to see, in photographic documentary, some candidates utilising approaches such as interviews to extend the subject of the documentary.

It is important that candidates understand that formality in itself can be conceptual. A concept driven proposal is an abstracted idea, e.g. not a *window*, but perhaps the idea of *lightness* – the ability of light to affect the dimensionality and atmosphere of a space. Most of those not awarded Scholarship did not have a photographic proposition but subject matter limited to a single object. For example, subject matter such as *jars* or *fish* were used, which are not ideas and have limited potential. This showed some confusion by these candidates between subject matter and ideas, instead of expressing the ideas inherent or related to a particular subject matter.

Attention to layout provided useful opportunities for those candidates who used sequencing to successfully promote an idea. High performing candidates also integrated other options as part of the inherent development. Many were inventive, exploring ways of working, seeing, constructing, before determining final resolutions. Usually these candidates made a lot of work, and then selected for the workbook and portfolio, without necessarily following the literal order of making.

The most effective workbooks operated as a working document (commentary of thinking), which was both evaluative and reflective. Here candidates worked across pages rather than dividing into headings. They treated the workbook as a total whole, an active document and record of visual development and thinking, not to reiterate what is on the portfolio, but used to add, interpret, inform the proposition. (Standardised formats and headings for workbook pages would have limited the scope for representing the true sense of a candidate's development/ progress.)

SCHOLARSHIP WITH OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:

- included wide-ranging research that built upon and added to the proposition and conceptual framework
- framed own practice within a broad spectrum of ideas and concepts, focusing on ideas to extend their work rather than subject matter
- were purposeful with references to advertising, comics, TV, media, etc and related these references successfully to their own practice

- critically understood the genre of photography and implemented media and methods appropriate to conceptual requirements
- operated with a complete sense of ownership and purpose throughout the enquiry.

SCHOLARSHIP

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship but not Scholarship with Outstanding Performance commonly:

- had scope within their subject matter to include a wide range of possibilities for extension
- included material in the workbook that added to the proposition discussed on the portfolio
- integrated options within the broader context of the work and throughout the workbook
- understood how to manipulate photographic language and conventions to create a complex and interesting investigation
- employed a range of approaches to unpack their topic and further the investigation.

OTHER CANDIDATES

Candidates who were not awarded Scholarship or Scholarship with Outstanding Performance commonly:

- used headings on pages that restricted engagement with the workbook as a real working document
- annotated their entire panel
- invented a practice for the workbook that was disengaged from the proposition on the portfolio
- used *Google* as an artist model or assumed that a search engine represented *established practice*
- decorated the pages with borders, glitter and coloured felt pens
- explained how the work was made
- arbitrarily linked artist models (instead of realising that just because other work *looks like mine*, it does not mean the artist is aligned to the candidate's practice)
- used pencil or other materials in a way which rendered their work illegible.

Recommendations for 2010, arising from Scholarship 2009 Assessment Process:
Visual Arts: Photography

Candidates who are performing at Merit or Excellence throughout the year should be encouraged to enter for the Scholarship examination. Even with a somewhat limited workbook it is still possible to be competitive within the field given that it is a holistic picture with two sites of evidence (portfolio and workbook) that is in consideration for Scholarship.