

ART AND DESIGN

Paper 0400/01

Observational/Interpretative Assignment

General comments

Submissions were received for all questions that covered the full ability range, and a wide variety of approaches were seen.

Question 3 was the most popular closely followed by **Question 6 and 7**. **Questions 2 and 10** were not so popular.

There were a number of candidates producing accomplished work of a mature level where they were able to demonstrate outstanding abilities in all the Assessment Objectives. These candidates were well prepared for their examination and had been offered excellent guidance by teachers.

The strongest work was *always* supported by excellent supporting studies with an emphasis on thorough investigation from primary sources. Topics had been researched using the candidates' own drawings and photographs, as well as research into the work of other artists or cultures relevant to the chosen theme. Ideas had been explored with experiments of compositions and different viewpoints. A willingness to experiment with media and take risks was also apparent. Much of the supporting studies were well annotated, and ideas were evaluated, explaining the candidates' thinking and clarifying the journey made.

Submissions at the 'Proficient' and 'Competent' level also demonstrated many of the qualities outlined above although the supporting studies tended to lack a range of exploration and experimentation and many candidates' understanding of composition needed further development. There were a number of examples of very good supporting studies which were not fully realised in the final examination work. Some candidates chose to use a media for the examination that they had little experience with instead of using the media that they had created their strongest work with whilst producing their supporting studies.

At the 'Satisfactory' achievement level there was more reliance on copying from secondary sources such as the Internet or magazine photographs. All questions are carefully selected to enable candidates to research from direct observation, but those who do not show any evidence limit their access to the higher marks ranges particularly in Assessment Objective 1 (AO1) and AO5.

Lower level submissions were characterised by thin supporting studies indicating a lack of involvement, poor drawing skills, traced images and little understanding of how to research and develop ideas. Many candidates at this level had difficulty in manipulating media and rendering form and texture.

Some candidates spend considerable time writing about their intentions. There were instances where these descriptions of intent were more extensive than any actual visual research. Clearly, these candidates would benefit from spending less time writing about what they are going to do and more time on actually carrying out the visual research and developing their ideas in a visual form. Brief bullet points would suffice with the main thrust of the supporting studies being a visual and not literary form of communication. Such an approach would enable candidates to achieve higher marks for all of the Assessment Objectives.

Some mature and expressive handling of media was seen, as well as some very precise analytical studies. Submissions covered a wide range of media with work in acrylic, oil, crayon, chalk, oil pastels and inks. There were many mixed media approaches, but when each object in a group is rendered in a different media, aesthetic and spatial qualities are lost. The use of different media should be integrated throughout the whole composition.

The ease and immediacy of digital photography meant that some candidates used it as a quick and easy way to produce their examination work, without sufficient evidence of a conceptual developmental process. There was often little or no evidence of reference to other photographers work, sketches for ideas or compositions, the artistic use of lighting, explanation of process and techniques or the use of variable

viewpoints. If work has been digitally enhanced and developed this should be documented and included. There were cases where too much repetition of a single image with little or no actual practical development occurred. Similarly, there were also cases where candidates had taken reams and reams of photographs many of which were presented as contact sheets, it was clear that this was simply regarded as a process of collecting with little development of ideas.

It was encouraging to see that compositional aspects were being considered by many of the candidates thus showing a progression in the appreciation of the requirements of this examination. However, some photographic submissions lacked research and development with little evidence of exploration of viewpoint or lighting.

Others set up effective scenarios but were unable to develop these further. Conversely, some had interesting and adequate development with some potential but could only produce a 'disconnected' final image.

There were a few CD-ROMs submitted, some of which included repetition material that was sent as hard copies. On the whole they included mostly relevant research and development. Of the one or two DVDs which were presented they were generally serious in approach, if somewhat limited in scope.

The presentation and labelling of work was generally of a high standard. Some Centres are not adhering to the size requirements. Candidates may produce work smaller than A2 but if they want to produce work on a larger scale then the work must be photographed and sent with the supporting studies. Stretched canvases should be discouraged and the use of heavy foam board used as mounts. If work of different sizes is being submitted then it is preferable that the work is attached to sheets of A2 rather than sending in copious works of different sizes. Presenting the supporting studies in the best way possible that enables the work to be seen as a journey is part of the process and is awarded in AO5. Candidates who simply pile the work up without any consideration for presentation are doing themselves a disservice.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1: Items of clothing are nagging on the back of a chair and some are placed on the seat. A pair of boots are on the floor underneath.

An ability to contrast the rigid structure of the chair in perspective with the softer and textural qualities of the clothes is what was being looked for in response to this question.

Candidates worked from first hand sources; setting up arrangements with various items of clothing, shoes, boots, jewellery and cloth which were often photographically recorded. Focus varied, from the observation of distorted surfaces and patterns within the clothes and the undulating forms of the hanging fabrics, along with detailing of buttons and so on. Paint, pastels and pencil were all used to varying degrees of success to express tonal qualities with the structure of the chair and the surrounding background also considered. Photography was often used to aid the exploration of composition. The very best candidates explored all areas with informative, detailed and technical recording and development. The mid-range candidates had less of an understanding of angles, forms and structure but through research they explored the subject in various media. The weakest candidates demonstrated poor skills in terms of perspective and proportion, demonstrating evidence of inconsistencies in technical skills in recording and in manipulation of materials.

Question 2: Two different open packets of biscuits

This proved to be one of the least popular questions with few responses seen in the highest levels of achievement. The work seen in the 'Competent' level of achievement revealed good first hand research and an ability to explore and experiment with different media and processes. Some beautiful renditions were seen especially with the use of oil pastels. Many candidates responded well to describing the 'crunchy' texture of the biscuits and were able to explore how this contrasted to the 'shiny' graphics of the packaging.

However, the majority of candidates achieved a level that was 'Adequate' or 'Satisfactory' which was due to a lack of experimentation in the selection of media and development of ideas, as well as little consideration to any background or surface or cast shadows to create any sense of depth to the composition.

Question 3: Two large fruits, one sliced open, together with a bunch of grapes or some berries.

This was the most popular question and submissions were seen at all achievement levels. Attempts to

consider composition were evident to varying degrees by the majority of candidates and Cezanne was often seen as reference but unfortunately without any real exploration of his qualities, apart from having 'found' an image of fruit by him. Several candidates had experimented with printmaking in response to this question.

Candidates achieving the highest marks showed an understanding of form and tone and textural contrasts. The balance between the background space and the fruit was appreciated by those candidates who also researched the work of other artists. For instance, where the candidate had used a black or dark background to illuminate the lighter tones found in the fruit or where the use of shadows created within the shapes by careful lighting added depth to the form. In some instances the colours reflected from the fruit surfaces within the shadows were visually exciting, especially when the choice of selected colours excluded the use of brown. The very best candidates were skillful at indicating the use of texture, for instance, the white texture on top of the skin of the green melon. The pineapple leaves were often painted in a range of tones which heightened the edges and directions of the pointed leaves.

Most submissions for this question achieved a level that was either 'Competent' or 'Satisfactory'; these candidates tended to show a lack of experimentation of media or poor development of ideas. There was a tendency to explore only one compositional idea or a very limited selection of images. In the lower bands candidates were weak with recording and observation lacking in awareness and rendition of form and structure, and a tendency to rely on secondary images as a source.

Question 4: A seated person leaning forward with their hands on a walking stick or umbrella.

On the whole, responses to this question were mostly of a very high standard with the majority of candidates using first-hand/direct observation as a starting point to produce some very strong observational drawings. Here, candidates had also used research from other artists to inform their own work, and this had allowed them to show their own strong aesthetic judgments in their final outcome. Most of the candidates worked in pencil or paint with some good use of photography to explore different viewpoints and compositions.

Work in the mid-range submissions indicated weaknesses in recording from observation and a lack of experimentation with media and materials. There was more reliance on imagery from second hand sources with direct copying from Internet images used to supplement their own observational work.

Work seen at the lowest levels of achievement often presented a series of fragmented images, demonstrating less technical skills and observation, and with limited development.

Question 5: Overhanging

Responses to this question were varied and often very creative. Ideas had developed from more obvious sources such as plants, trees and foliage to the more unusual and interesting sources such as hair overhanging and limbs and various other parts of the body through to architectural overhanging forms or things that overhang.

The most successful submissions included sensitive studies from direct observation, supported by photography and individual/creative development. Work seen in the mid-range demonstrated recording from various sources with evidence of varied development but there were weaknesses in technical skills, and some rather pedestrian outcomes. The weakest work seen had been created from a random collection of images with the final piece being a collage with paint added. The pieces often showed no understanding of composition, showed poor use of media and the drawing was always from secondary sources. These candidates often included an artist who did not inform their work but acted as a 'bolt on' addition in an attempt to satisfy the Assessment Objectives. All too often there was too much arbitrary written notation in an attempt to explain ideas but a distinct lack of visual research and analysis.

Question 6: Before daybreak

This question probably provided the most imaginative responses as well as the most clichéd. The obvious, in this instance sunrise, was frequently the subject of very weak submissions. However, the very best candidates attempted more interesting interpretations including morning rituals such as Morning Prayer, brushing teeth, waking to alarm clocks and some interesting abstractions using media such as batik. Film was also submitted; a short narrative about the night life of newspaper production and delivery in India, filmed on location and very well done.

Several other candidates sought inspiration in an urban setting; street scenes for instance. By far the best submissions were those who had actually photographed the event themselves and then made paintings

entirely from their own images. The quality of photography was high, generally well-lit and thoughtfully composed.

Work seen in the mid-range usually had some first-hand material but also relied heavily on second-hand and Internet images; this limited the candidates' ability to achieve personal outcomes. Other candidates had too much written work and not enough visual connections to the title. Many candidates produced sunrises and silhouetted figures/buildings, with sources being mostly secondary and from one viewpoint with little if any development.

The work seen in the lowest achievement levels comprised weak drawings from secondary sources or from their imagination. One idea was often repeated and the many sunrises were often reproduced in watercolour which resulted in murky blending of colours. One candidate only submitted a final piece and no supporting studies.

Question 7: Passageways

This was a very popular question, with work seen across all achievement levels. The question allowed candidates to research and use their own images, there was also a wide range of different approaches and media used, and it was very popular with photography candidates and included some excellent use of photomontage. The best submissions seen for photography included a strong element of development of ideas and manipulation of images. In one case the process was clearly shown in a power-point presentation.

Local scenes were evidenced through photos and colour studies of courtyards, alleyways and lanes throughout the world. The local architecture of the area known to the candidate and proximity of the buildings or the ideas of daily activities within the passageway were popular.

At the higher level, there were some very innovative responses including a sculpture of a box packed with different sized dowel rods and painted ends. The making skills were strong as were the ideas development supported by influences from Pasmore and Kelly. Another candidate had built a model of a ship's corridor, photographed it and then photo-shopped the images, finally making a painting from the results.

Work seen in the mid-range demonstrated very good observational skills. Here the candidates responded in an imaginative way and made good use of their own photography, often using their local environment as a starting point. They developed good ideas and some strong compositions. However, media experiments were limited and often relied on watercolour. Many candidates really struggled with the control aspect and it often resulted in limited final pieces. The works of Escher were a popular source of inspiration with candidates at this level.

Candidates seen in the lower levels of achievement worked mainly from their imagination and secondary sources. Where they had worked from a primary source, they often produced very sketchy studies that could only suggest the shape and form of the subject. Their drawings lacked an understanding of form and particularly the ability to use perspective.

Question 8: Stretching

Sources of inspiration came mostly from the body, in the form of dancing, gymnastic positions and facial expressions. Sometimes interpretations were abstract, personal and inventive. There were also some excellent links with cultural traditions using neck banding.

Work seen in the mid-range had some good ideas but the observational drawings were generally unrefined, with weak technical control of materials, especially watercolour.

The weakest work seen was often copied from the Internet, or even traced images of people stretching such as ballerinas or sports people. Poor choice of media often resulted in poor outcomes with the final image being a straight copy from the secondary source image and no attempt to develop the idea. Composition was poor and, at times, backgrounds were not even considered.

Question 9: Corners

The question was sometimes interpreted as an emotional trap.

This question did rather monopolise the more morose, depressive and angst driven inclinations. The quality of outcomes was generally not of the highest order and quite often had a somewhat bleak feel.

Candidates who wished to respond to the stimulus in a sculptural form were also attracted to this question. Complex sculptures in card and wood linked by three-dimensional curves were seen from one candidate in the upper mark range.

Relief print making involving angular shapes combined with block rotation to overlay transparent colours was another successful approach adopted in the upper mark range.

References to Cubism were frequently seen with candidates in the mid to upper mark ranges understanding and applying the concept of multiple viewpoints. Candidates in the lower ranges, however, simply copied an angular impression of shapes often simply copied from pre-existing Cubist imagery.

The concept of feeling emotionally or physically trapped was popular mostly in the mid mark range. Candidates showed figures curled into compact forms in corners of rooms or boxes.

Weaker submissions were seen which took street corners as a starting point. Whilst the basics of mathematical one or two point perspective had been understood, direct observation was frequently neglected. Such scenes were often totally based on imagination with the formal qualities of light, colour and tone being totally neglected resulting in imagery which did not rise above diagrammatic representation.

Question 10: Market Stall

This was not a popular question and submissions generally fell mostly within the mid to lower achievement levels.

The work produced here was mostly based on direct observation with candidates using their own photographic images. Some viewed the market stall close-up and concentrated on the products; fish, fruit and clothes. Others took a wider view to include figures, the street and a number of stalls. Some of the responses seen had combined research of market stalls with more detailed exploration of fruit, also producing observational still-life studies, so that the responses often seemed to crossover with **Question 3**.

Although most candidates used traditional materials, there were some very good photographic submissions as well as collage, mixed media and some 3D constructions.

The research was very detailed and thorough at all levels, although candidates often found combining still-life elements with figures, challenging at the lower and middle levels.

ART AND DESIGN

Paper 0400/02
Design Assignment

General comments

Candidates from Centres around the world responded favourably to the demands of the syllabus and produced some impressive work, showing creativity, technical skill and original thinking. The best responses reacted to the assessment structure and the question paper with powerful and appropriate research, a developmental and experimental attitude to the formation of a final idea, and skills in the handling of media and materials in order to execute the initial idea.

The importance of understanding the significance of the Assessment Objectives cannot be overstated. Teachers and candidates must realise that 40% of the final mark is allocated to the process of research and development. This involves gathering, recording and investigating visual and non-visual information, and exploring and developing personal ideas that flow from that research. The investigation process should involve some aspect of direct observation and personal experience.

Each question offered the opportunity for personal responses at all ability levels. All the questions had a range of responses from high to low, although some questions were more popular with candidates showing particular types of ability. The format and wording of the question paper clearly explained the requirements for each topic. It was pleasing, therefore, to see so many examples which demonstrated a clear understanding of these. The strongest submissions provided evidence of thorough research from well-chosen primary and secondary sources which informed the development of ideas and led to the final outcome. Ideas and media were explored in some depth and were reviewed and refined imaginatively. Links to other appropriate artists and designers were made. In the middle range, candidates often relied on secondary sources, limited investigation of ideas, and little experimentation with media, to find the most suitable expression of ideas. In the weaker submissions, little or no research was evident and there was virtually no evidence of serious development of ideas. The lack of supporting studies invariably led to very disappointing outcomes.

The majority of the submissions received were well-labelled, securely tied together in the correct order, and with the number and size of paper matching the instructions on the examination paper.

Question 1: Guidebook

There were relatively few submissions submitted in response to this question. The stronger submissions investigated local sites and had been creative and inventive, with a range of layouts explored along with combinations of text and image. A very few mid-range examples were seen, but there were some very weak submissions which showed little understanding of basic layout and presentation.

Question 2: Soft drink labels

This was by far the most popular question and comprised more than one-third of all submissions and outcomes covered the entire mark range. The best work seen showed thorough visual investigation from first-hand observations of fruit, through drawing, painting and some photography. Alternative viewpoints - cutting, slicing and close-ups of fruit were some of the strategies used to generate ideas. Research into typography and existing fruit juice labels was used in the development of the final designs. Some very good computer generated designs were also seen. In the middle range, candidates relied more heavily on secondary source material as a basis for development, and there was less involvement in the exploration of ideas. The weaker candidates often showed little research, often copying existing labels and showing no engagement with typography. Compositional experimentation was minimal, with outcomes suffering as a result. Despite fruit being easily obtained in most countries, many candidates chose to use Internet images such as strawberries and apples rather than locally available fruits.

Question 3: Food festival

This question was a fairly popular choice and, again, submissions covered the entire mark range. There was evidence of photographic research and images of local food and, in some cases, other aspects of local culture. Some candidates used this to good effect in the development of ideas, but the weakest submissions were poorly researched and lettering had not explored in any depth. Some examples of computer generated work were seen, of variable quality.

Question 4: Repeat pattern using traditional toys

This was the second most popular question, attracting a quarter of the candidates, most of which were within the 'poor' to 'competent' mark range. Once again many candidates produced final pieces showing far too many repeats, laboriously painted, which lacked quality. In these cases less quantity and higher quality would have been more beneficial. The best work was well researched from a variety of toys using a range of media, and ideas were then developed to show dynamic design possibilities. Different colour combinations were explored and, in some cases, examples of the final design had been printed and used to wrap a parcel, documented photographically. In the middle range, research was usually not so thorough, and the design possibilities had not been explored in-depth, with many candidates using very obvious checkerboard type repeats. The weakest examples had relied on secondary sources of imagery, and design possibilities were not explored; in some cases no repeat at all was shown.

Question 5: Children's footwear

This was not a popular question and attracted very few submissions. The strongest had explored materials and had undertaken some thorough research, and in many cases presented actual examples or photographs of them. The weaker submissions had relied on drawings and had not fully explored the three-dimensional potential of the topic and, in many cases, had ignored the recycling aspect completely

Question 6: Time travel

This was the third most popular question, attracting around 20% of the entries and the submissions were generally of a higher standard. Some excellent examples were seen, showing thorough research into fashion and styles of the past and appropriate references to other artists. Experimental work in a range of media and good understanding of figures and movement were features of many of the responses. Of these, the strongest focused their studies on a particular period, enabling them to develop a breadth of understanding which informed the exploration and development of their own designs. In the middle range, candidates had often looked at fashions, but failed to bring the idea of time travel into the outcome. Understanding of bodies and figures was not evident, and garment ideas had not been fully explored. Some candidates spent too much effort on showing backdrops, which were not required. The weakest submissions did not address the question and merely produced some dress designs, with little or no serious evidence of research.

Question 7: Telecommunications wall hanging

Relatively few submissions were seen for this question. The strongest work had looked at examples of murals by other artists, and researched suitable imagery. The weaker candidates had not used relevant images in the development of ideas nor researched local arts and crafts.

Question 8: Vegetarian café

Most of the candidates choosing this question had started their research from first-hand experience. In many cases, alternative compositions and combinations of vegetables were explored but most candidates struggled to generate unexpected imagery and the potential of pattern, texture and colour were not thoroughly explored. Surprisingly, several candidates decided not to use the stated format for the outcome. The best work showed ideas based on first-hand research into vegetables and food dishes and incorporating typography, with some purpose. Weaker examples lacked the research and developmental work to inform a purposeful outcome. Some had shown the setting for the design but this in many cases highlighted the candidates' lack of understanding of perspective and so on.

Question 9: Hospital roof garden

This was a reasonably popular question, the best examples of which had showed research from a variety of sources, had based their designs on an actual hospital, and had considered factors such as privacy of patients, occupational therapy, planting and so on. Weaker examples had not explored the design elements fully and lacked the ability to visualise in three dimensions.

Question 10: Waterfront sculpture

Very few candidates chose this question. Some candidates made a maquette with varying degrees of success; others had insufficient research to produce a design which fully answered the question.

ART AND DESIGN

Paper 0400/03

Critical and Historical Assignment

General comments

Entries for this component continue to increase with many teachers reporting that the Critical and Historical Assignment can be taught to provide a very useful introduction to the 9704 A/AS Level Art and Design: Personal Study.

Fewer inappropriate submissions which were not concerned with Art and Design at all were seen this session. These included aspects of tourism, green issues and political themes. Concerns about the suitability of a topic can be overcome if teachers submit Outline Proposal Forms (OPFs) in advance of study. Many teachers do not submit any forms to CIE to seek advice from Senior Moderators. Candidates are missing out on valuable advice, and often jeopardising their chances of receiving a much better mark as they continue to pursue an inappropriate topic. Outline Proposal Forms are available on the Teachers' Support Site http://teachers.cie.org.uk/login/login_form and can be submitted electronically for comments and advice.

The Internet makes information instantly available to candidates and is a positive feature of modern technology. However, downloading pages of text with little or no personal comment does not indicate a high level of research skills on the candidate's part. Straightforward biographical information should be presented as part of the Introduction, or separately in an Appendix. Similarly, interviews with artists and designers have much more value when the candidate subsequently analyses the responses; whilst there may be an attraction to recording an interview verbatim and in its entirety, in terms of adding value and gaining marks there should be more analysis of the outcome from the candidate.

There continues to be a problem with some candidates writing on acetate or tracing paper, or using pale inks on dark paper. This makes reading the text and assessing the work very difficult. Where a novel presentation makes the text difficult to read, it would be appreciated if candidates could also produce a typed or printed transcription.

In most cases, presentation was considered and effective. Illustrations were appropriate and pertinent and these were often hand-crafted by the candidates themselves or involved their own photographs of artists and their work. Graphical presentations in particular were often strong and coherent. Some candidates made full use of digital techniques to illustrate and present their work; clever and careful use of such processes can be very rewarding. The best candidates did make serious attempts to conclude and make judgements. The stronger submissions did more than just state that "*I enjoyed this*" or "*I liked that*" and, where candidates demonstrated insight, understanding and evaluation of the work studied, then this invariably made for a good submission.

Comments on various levels of achievement

Personal qualities were clearly apparent in the best submissions. In these cases it was apparent that the study had been carried out with enthusiasm and sustained interest in the chosen topic. It is important to choose a topic that has enough resources to maintain investigations with interest – too much and the study may lack focus and clear intentions, too little and the study ends up thin and lacking in in-depth analysis.

The best work was highlighted by an independent and innovative approach in recording visits to sites, galleries, studios and exhibitions, leading to the communication of distinctly personal views. The selection and relevance of visual and written material contributed strongly to the focus and structure of the submissions. Chosen works were subjected to practical visual analysis as well as written comment. Relevant comparisons were often made with the candidates' own coursework experiences as well as other works only available in reproductions. Very lively visual presentation was apparent in thoroughly planned layout, integration of text and image, inventive formats and a variety of illustrations. There was no doubt that such investigations had contributed to the candidates' understanding of Art and Design issues. The cultural

contexts of the works referred to were seen to inform analyses and the evaluations of the research in relation to intentions.

At the mid-levels of achievement, submissions were well sustained and focused but analyses of works were often 'patchy'. Descriptions of what was depicted or constructed were thorough, but analysis of their compositions in terms of the relationships of visual elements was seldom undertaken. As a result, practical submissions tended to be just copies of works, rather than a selective or critical examination of their constituent parts. For example, analysis of artworks might involve separately considered extractions of the qualities of light, space, form, rhythm, mass, colour or shape as well as the use of materials, which could then be compared with other works. Although the presentation of visual and written material was usually coherently organised, many candidates could have achieved a higher level of marks if they were reminded that they were engaged in an Art and Design investigation and therefore needed to make it as visually interesting and exciting as possible. There was also a tendency at this level to include cultural contexts and historical information as a chronological list, rather than employ it to inform personal evaluations.

At the lower levels of achievement, confused intentions led to a poorly sustained interest, a lack of structure and an unselective inclusion of secondary sources to bolster the presentation. Works were seldom commented on for more than a few descriptive sentences and, sometimes, they were left entirely without identification. There were few illustrations, and reproductions were often of a very poor quality, suggesting a lack of commitment to planning and organisation when attempting to collect such information. Some submissions amounted to little more than a catalogue of works downloaded from the Internet or a regurgitation of technical processes of a particular craft. Others presented broadly ranging histories with little focus on specific works or scant evidence of any first-hand experience.

ART AND DESIGN

Paper 0400/04
Coursework Assignment

General comments

The most popular area of study continues to be Painting and Related Media. There were some Textile and Fashion Design submissions received, but there were limited numbers for the other areas of study.

Submissions covered the full range of achievement levels, from outstanding to the very limited, although most submissions fell within the 'Satisfactory' and 'Competent' achievement levels. Teachers are reminded to refer to the Assessment Criteria (pages 24-25) in the syllabus for the different levels and the marks that relate to them.

The very best work came from candidates who had pursued a serious course of study which included evidence of well-planned courses offering a variety of approaches and a range of media. The best had encouraged the research and development of individual ideas, the resolution of which varied according to the level of direct observation from initial sources. When candidates chose subjects which they could research from first hand observation, through their own sketches, photography, colour studies and written notes they could justly be rewarded in all of the Assessment Objectives. This usually involved working from natural and man-made forms; the local landscape or architecture; or using themselves, friends or family to work from the figure.

Some had chosen more ambitious themes relating to environmental issues or issues of a social nature such as drug abuse or poverty. Others had chosen mythological or fantasy subject matter and some had attempted to explore more abstract emotive themes like love or the stresses of being young. Unfortunately very few were able to carry this through to some creditable outcome; most found it difficult to find suitable sources of first hand study and resorted to downloaded material from secondary sources. They also found the complexity of translating abstract concepts into visual compositions was beyond their skills level.

Mid-level submissions had many of the qualities of the above, although the depth and range of research and exploration of ideas was not as strong. It was also common to see that the Aesthetic Qualities of final outcomes was limited by poor technical skills and there were many cases where strengths seen within some of the supporting studies had not been carried through into the final work.

The work seen at the lower achievement levels was far more disorganised and heavily reliant on secondary sourced images, mostly poor quality downloaded material from the Internet. Many candidates seemed to have a preconceived idea of what they wanted the finished work to be before they had even begun to research their chosen topic! In these cases, the candidates were also unable or un-willing to respond to any additional stimulus or ideas gathered during the limited research. Others appeared to be working in a cultural vacuum, with no apparent evidence of looking at the work of other artists or of other cultures. The value of such influences cannot be over-estimated.

Centre assessments were mostly generous although many had established an acceptable order of merit. The most common pattern was assuming that their best candidates were in the top mark range (90+), regardless of assessing their levels of achievement against the Syllabus Assessment Criteria (see syllabus 24 – 25). Other Centres had rewarded the candidate's level of effort and commitment rather than applying an objective evaluation of their outcomes measured against the attainment criteria.

Comments on areas of study

Painting and Related Media

The best candidates had always included first hand observational studies as an integral part of the development process of their projects. This was a fundamental investigative and problem solving method that was undertaken repeatedly as projects progress. Crucially, these studies were evaluated and consequently informed further experimentation and research. The best ideas were always informed by researching the work of a number of carefully selected artists which enabled a depth and richness to develop in the candidate's personal thinking. A wide range of media and processes were seen but common to all of the best submissions was evidence of the candidate's increasing sensitivity to the qualities of their selected media due to informed experimentation and a thoughtful exploration of alternative methods to solve problems. Final outcomes were resolved and a reflection of the learning that had taken place between the start and conclusion of the project.

Submissions in the middle range demonstrated success in meeting some of the Assessment Objectives but had neglected others. For example; candidates had not developed their practical skills to match their lively ideas; candidates had developed good skills, perhaps through a heavily directed course, but presented limited evidence of personal choices and ideas being explored; candidates had written extensively about other artists' work but presented little evidence of this informing their own ideas and methods. By far the most common practice that restricted achievement was the reliance on secondary sources. In some Centres this appeared to be the only method of working, sometimes resulting in skilful but mechanical work that simply mimics the copied sources and restricts the development of the individual.

Candidates in the lower range presented final outcomes that were accompanied by very limited evidence of research, development or experimentation. In some cases it was clear that Centres placed little emphasis on the vital process of development when designing their courses. Examples were seen of very low skill levels which were due to the use of very poor quality secondary source materials or a complete absence of sources. Conversely, but equally poor, some submissions consisted of no more than a portfolio of unconnected copies of other artists' work. It is not possible for candidates to achieve the required standard and produce personal work in any of these circumstances.

Textile Design

This was the second most popular area of study.

The few fashion submissions within this area were generally of a high standard. Some had developed their designs using digital manipulation while others demonstrated real design development, from closely observed studies where elements had been extracted and developed into original garments. Another submission contained a dynamic series of photographs of their own creations taken at a fashion show.

Weaker submissions tended to be transcriptions of the work of other established designers rather than the candidates' own original designs.

The best textile outcomes were also based on first hand research including elements of local architecture. There was very good evidence of research and exploration of ideas using textile processes, although many were lacking in development with poorer qualities seen in the final outcomes.

Three-Dimensional Studies

Some of the most original submissions were seen in this area, as well as some of the very weakest. Examples ranged from theatre set design, architectural model making, carving and ceramic work.

There were some very interesting submissions which combined both sculpture and textiles. The best of these showed strong drawings with a good range of exploration of a number of ideas culminating into soft sculptures of hats and bags. These were very imaginative with informed references to other artists.

Ceramic submissions had used workbooks to explore ideas developed from beach and sea themes. Technical processes had been employed appropriate for the ideas investigated. One candidate had developed a series of coiled and pinched maquettes based on lobster forms. Each response had been individually developed and had met the Assessment Objectives from the 'Proficient' range right up to the very 'Outstanding' levels of attainment. Sustained research and development which clearly informed some very confident and mature planning had led to some outstanding outcomes.

Work seen at the lowest achievement levels was not supported with sufficient evidence of research or development. Others showed only very limited craft skills with a very poor understanding of aesthetic values relating to their craft.

Graphic Communication

Very few Centres now submit work covering discrete courses in this area of study. Those that do are well structured with all candidates following a similar approach developing ideas into logos, letterheads and advertising material. They demonstrated proficient research skills with control of processes, but were lacking in individuality and differences in achievement levels were difficult to measure.

A few submissions were of an individual nature and had met the Assessment Objectives to a very high standard. Exploratory worksheets had been used to develop ideas and experiment with letter forms and logos showing several alternative outcomes. Candidates had used photographic and digital media but had also worked from first hand sources and to a very perceptive and mature level in the case of one figurative/dance sequence of images.

Photography, Digital and Lens Media

There was evidence of some excellent work which was distinguished by a concern for detail and texture, executed with a high degree of technical competence. Other examples had used imaginative techniques to extend their creative process such as combining drawn and painted images with photography, or scratching, cutting and over-painting on their photographs.

Most other submissions contained good individual photographs, but there was limited evidence of candidates critically reviewing their methods and revisiting subjects for 2nd or 3rd shoots in order to refine their work. Often this was accompanied by an absence of any reference to other photographers or artists.