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ART AND DESIGN

Paper 0400/01
Observational Study

General comments

Many more candidates are responding to the challenge of the examination syllabus and with fine understanding and well-practised knowledge are presenting the Examiners with most accomplished and quite beautiful submissions.

The usual mistakes and misunderstandings are still there but are not encountered so often. There are still some candidates who do not submit any or quite sparse developmental work and there are those who do not undertake much research or the selection of the right sort of interesting stimuli on which to base their studies.

All of the questions were popular this time and the emphasis has shifted away from the time honoured still life or detailed study. Many candidates were searching in order to find more unusual and more inspiring subject matter.

Coloured work was very much in predominance this year and ranged from sensitive watercolours to richly rewarding paintings in gouache as well as studies in colour crayon, pastel and oil based pastel. Sometimes it was sad to find that pastel work had arrived smudged, as it had not been properly fixed at the Centre.

With the weaker candidates the problems are much the same as ever. They have not acquired the ability to express form or to use perspective or make ellipses so that their work is map like and devoid of depth. They have a poor idea of how best to select colours for harmony and effect and their composition of shapes leave much to be desired.

Candidates in most instances now are using live models for their figure studies and consequently producing very personal and convincingly spacious works. Copies from second hand sources such as photographs is mostly inhibiting and generally to be avoided.

There were many quite lovely preliminary sketches for outside work. It is always a joy to see work from local scenes and when candidates have taken the opportunity to use items which hold a home-based national significance.

There must be the usual plea for less heavily mounted work. Some whole Centres seem to think that they have to spend a great deal of money on card and board for mounting purposes. This is just not necessary.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Still Life Group

- (a) *A still life group should be arranged around a box or basket from which overflow items of sewing equipment and other related bits and pieces. There should also be some items to be mended such as socks or a jumper. The background should form part of the composition.*

Here was a theme which brought forth some first rate and well researched compositions. A gift for those who enjoy manipulating shapes into unusual compositions and arranging colours and textures, and finely balancing tones. The best candidates knew all about this and coupled the understanding with a firm knowledge of perspective, the accurate making of ellipses and the intelligent use of a light source. There were some astonishingly intricate renderings of woven work baskets amid a jumble of colourful materials and accurately constructed scissors, reels and other sewing needs.

The middle standard work found candidates having difficulty with organising their objects to sit successfully on a flat surface, to construct their perspective so that it recessed into space, and to make tones to formulate themselves into convincing forms. These candidates also wrestled with the choice and balance of colours and tones.

Some of the weaker candidates were unable to think through anything other than very basic colour choices. They abandoned anything but flat shapes and hardly delved into the third dimension at all. Some of the most inept had not profited by any meaningful research and others had not done any research, experiment or developed their study at all.

- (b) *Three or four objects should be grouped together on a piece of coloured silk or velvet. The objects should be chosen to reflect one of the following themes; memorabilia, collectables or trophies.*

Here candidates were offered a wide choice within the question. Some had chosen wisely and selected interesting and manageable objects, whilst others had selected items that they could not hope to cope with. Some of the least successful work was submitted where trophy cups had been used and the candidate had not the faintest knowledge of how to form ellipses or to make the cubes of the plinths in perspective. Memorabilia was often evocative of childhood and effective compositions were sometimes achieved. The choice of small objects such as medals did not always offer a lot of scope for a still life composition. More successful were collections of decorated china or porcelain items when candidates had relished the prospect of painting or drawing surface decoration.

Much the same categorisation of standard would apply as discussed in the previous question. Once again candidates who were the most successful were those who had chosen the objects prudently according to their abilities, had showed how they had overcome their problems through research, experimented with different methods of approach and developed their work as shown by preparatory studies. It was quite obvious that some of the weakest had not looked into the work of professional still life artists.

Question 2

Natural and Man-made Forms

- (a) *A packet of biscuits or cakes. The end is broken open and one or two of the contents have tumbled onto the surface of the table.*

Many had tackled a study or studies of this option thinking that it would be an easy one. They could not have been more wrong. That is not to say that there was not some very searching and accurate work. Some candidates had excelled in their colour work, others had enjoyed the challenge of using transparent packaging and some had been wise enough to select unusual and complicated biscuit and cake shapes in order to show off their abilities.

In the weaker work the difficulties candidates had in making their packets relate successfully to the table surface, constructing the perspective of packet and biscuits and the ellipses of cakes, or making any advertising designs and lettering fit accurately around the three dimensional shapes, were revealed. Some had added to their problems by attempting to fit in a room as a background. Often these were very insensitively structured.

- (b) *From a number of different flowers and ferns which lie together on the table select shapes and forms for detailed analysis.*

Some large and well-researched studies were able to command full marks. One stood out above all others. The composition of ferns and flowers had been beautifully arranged and criss-crossed the page. Light fell in such a way that full use of shadowing lifted the blooms and stems so that a three dimensional trellis effect was enhanced. Subtle colours had been chosen and there was a sensitive quality of form and shape. There were also some quite lovely pencil drawings of group arrangements.

The middle standard work was usually well coloured but problems concerning space, tone and the modelling of forms were beginning to show. Many had coped well with the research and preparation material but had been less successful on the day.

Alas there was much weak work in evidence. Here candidates had made scant observational studies and the results were misshapen representations of natural forms, ill coloured and quite flat. Very little aesthetic knowledge was in evidence.

- (c) *An 'action man' doll or articulated puppet.*

This question proved to be an inspiration to the more adventurous and some candidates had produced large and polished paintings of a puppet. The full range of marks was in evidence. Some in the middle marks class showed a quite able and knowledgeable presentation but sometimes the models chosen were not of the most interesting and thus could not support a final display of out of the ordinary excellence.

The weaker studies were usually quite small pencil studies, mean in the preparation and sparse in the display of knowledge on how best to handle form, colour and shape in any other than an elementary way.

Question 3

The Human Form

- (a) *A person sits at a table looking into the screen of a computer. One hand is using the mouse and the other hand cups the chin with the elbow resting on the table. Your drawing or painting should include the whole figure. A completely side on view should be avoided and as much of the face as possible should be visible. The computer screen will not be seen.*
- (b) *A second person stands slightly behind the first as described in part (a) above. The two will form the basis of a composition. The features of one figure should be clearly visible.*
- (c) *A portrait of a person who is wearing a hat. The upper part of the body, including the hands, should be shown.*

This was by far the most popular of the **Question 3** options. Indeed there were not many submissions for the (a) or (b) options.

Those who attempt figure drawing or painting usually know what they are up to and make a good job of it. These will understand the value of asking a model to sit for them and will thus score heavily in the realisation of convincing contour and form. Their work will be personal, easy and fresh. There were some remarkably fine portraits from one Centre where the figure had been posed wearing a tattered hat. These heads were well constructed, robustly modelled and full of character. Indeed there were many fine studies and some were beautifully posed in native hats and carried out with professional accomplishment in pencil and in charcoal.

The middle range standard of work often relied too heavily on the copying of photographs or even of some of the work of a well known or perhaps little known artist. So often these candidates had a very undeveloped knowledge of how to structure and proportion a figure or how to position it in a spatial context. Too often there was a lot of laborious industry but the result was at the end of the day merely a rather dead copy based on hope rather than understanding.

Question 4

Landscape or Townscape

- (a) *Draw or paint a view in a town or village which includes shop fronts or market stalls. People may be included in the composition.*

There were a large number of these pictorial compositions and as they were submitted from all areas of the world they made for most interesting viewing. All manner of interesting shop fronts and market areas were depicted. The best were always from an on the spot observation, either by using preparatory sketching or by the reorganisation of personal photography. There were busy scenes with intricate spatial constructions and well proportioned figures which had been carried out in pencil. Interestingly coloured shop fronts and all the fun of street marketing were seen. Some work had acquired a tremendous local and aesthetic atmosphere. These were always well backed up by preparatory sheets showing compositional development and personal experimentation.

Of course not all were good and many were marred by the use of inaccurate perspective and quaintly immature studies of people. Thin pencil work was often seen with ill considered colours superimposed. There was indeed some poorly structured and unknowledgeable pictures presented.

- (b) *Trees, telegraph poles, electric pylons or buildings interrupt the view across the countryside and appear to diminish in size as they recede towards the horizon.*

Perhaps too many clues were given here and so often the result was construed as an exercise in perspective and was unfortunately made up 'to order' rather than the candidate having gone out and made personal exploration and produced work on evaluated observation. Thus buildings, trees or pylons marched with unnatural regimentation towards a contrived vanishing point on a distant horizon.

The above paragraph is not to say that there was not some excellent work submitted. To mind are recalled some most beautiful landscapes from Thailand with views across village houses where buildings trees and hedges receded across fields of rice, and people were seen to be working with natural ease.

Paper 0400/02

Interpretative Study

General comments

Overall a very enjoyable session. Many candidates produced outstanding work. Clearly, the standard of teaching in the majority of Centres is good, and in many of the highest calibre. Most Centres had prepared the candidates for the examination thoroughly, and in the best work the confidence and maturity was excellent.

Preparatory work is often a really accurate guide to the candidate's research and development of ideas and techniques, and in most cases is a good way of supporting the assessment of the candidate's interpretation and personal qualities. In most Centres the work leading up to the examination was wholly appropriate, but in some a significant number of scripts appeared to be simply a practice piece for the final piece, without any evidence of development or research.

In a few Centres, preparatory studies appeared far more sensitive and successful than the final piece, which suggests either examination nerves or over-preparation.

In a very few cases preparatory work was completely irrelevant, appearing to be little more than previous coursework used to pad out the presentation. Candidates had sometimes dated this, which clearly illustrated the point. Centres should remain within the spirit of the syllabus.

Pastel was the most commonly used medium, with liquid colour - water based paint - a close second. In some Centres, there was little evidence that candidates had explored a range of media to develop confidence or to see what suited them or their subject, with whole Centres being directed towards a particular medium. This may be a problem with resources available to teach this subject in some Centres. It is important that candidates have a range of media available to them during the teaching of the course.

There was some evidence of overuse of secondary source material; whole Centres presenting little more than direct copies of the work of well known artists or secondary source material such as magazine photographs.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

At the waters edge

A good question for those that felt strongest in observational studies and paintings. Some candidates, however, went beyond the most obvious interpretation and developed very individual responses related to myths and legends.

Question 2

Ancient landscape

Most commonly interpreted using second hand sources, not always with success. Some candidates did manage to break away from clichéd responses and produced magnificent pieces that examined beliefs and myths as well as historical architecture. First hand observational studies leading up to the examination usually bear fruit in the final submission.

Question 3

Behind bars

The most popular question, with interesting and imaginative interpretations, ranging from obvious animal and human captives to activities seen in Public Bars. Some candidates took opportunities to relate the question to notions about liberty and freedom. Figurative work was common in this question, but in some cases very little first hand practice had been attempted in order to cope with this comparatively difficult area of study.

Question 4

Hustle and bustle in the market

Widely attempted in various ways, sometimes with great success. The richness and colour of markets from around the world were a joy to look at.

Question 5

A composition from architectural elements

This was best attempted by candidates who took local buildings as the starting point, and used the shapes and colours in their work. The few good candidates who attempted this question were generally fairly successful, but many weaker ones responded with a lack of development or a poor understanding of the need for personal interpretation, merely copying pictures of buildings but not responding to architectural motifs or form.

Question 6

Transformation

This was very popular indeed, frequently tackled by weaker candidates who commonly took it to mean metamorphosis of caterpillars into butterflies. More personal responses ranged from mechanical to organic forms or from poor to rich figure work. A few candidates brought a mature understanding of environmental issues into their work.

Administration

This was reasonably efficient. Centres are usually very careful, and most included accurate attendance sheets and the work was labelled and securely fixed together. Errors were seen, but were very rare. However, a few candidates were either without numbers or without names - both are required to ensure accurate transcriptions.

Some work did not have preparatory work securely attached to the back of the final piece, whilst packing done before the work was dry resulted in a few candidates' work being completely stuck together. This made it a difficult task to separate them and then to assess their original qualities.

General comments

Almost a third of candidates chose **Question 1**, *Design using Lettering* with **Question 2**, *Illustration and Calligraphy*, and **Question 6**, *Fabric Design*, as the next most popular questions. While smaller numbers chose **Question 3**, *Environmental Design*, **Question 4**, *Interior Design*, and **Question 5**, *Fashion*, there were very few submissions for **Question 7**, *Photography*.

The best work resulted from ordered and sequential preparatory studies. Less successful attempts were usually limited by poor preliminary research which inhibited the development of ideas and experimentation with media. A few candidates did not submit meaningful preparatory work which led to very low marks for the personal research and development assessment objectives.

Most submissions were well presented with sensitive and selective mounting of examination work and preliminary studies. Some Centres, however, supplied unacceptably thick and heavy card for mounting and others did not ensure that each candidate's work was tied or stapled together before dispatch. A wide variety of media was used, most of it appropriate for obtaining a good quality of finish for a design study. Good use was made of computer processes to manipulate lettering and images and most computer-generated prints were of sufficient quality to equal hand crafted work.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Design using Lettering

The best logo designs for a travel company offered thoroughly considered letter forms with well researched transport imagery, placed in suitable formats with border enhancements. Most candidates understood how to solve the design problem through selection and simplification but the less successful attempts lacked further refinement of the use of line, shape, colour and tone. The weakest submissions tended to render poor letter forms with inappropriate media such as crayon or oil pastel which led to a lack of clarity of graphic communication.

Question 2

Illustration and Calligraphy

- (a) A strong research and selection of letter forms and imagery from oriental art informed and motivated the best designs for a menu cover for a restaurant called 'Saffron and Spice'. Competent work, though positively researched, was less concerned with the relationships of imagery and letter forms or the choice of colour, tone or textures to enrich the surface qualities of the design. However, very few poor attempts were seen for this question.
- (b) Most submissions for the Calligraphy option showed a competent to proficient ability to control lettering and spacing of the script. Only the most able, however, gave full consideration to the use of borders or integrated illustrations effectively with the text of the poem.

Question 3

Environmental Design

Many well-planned garden designs were received. The choice of four features encouraged imaginative use of wood, stone and brick materials to blend or contrast with foliage. The best work was particularly successful in showing an artist's impression of an area of the design. Some weaker submissions showed a poor understanding of what was meant as a ground plan as opposed to a view.

Question 4

Interior Design

Some very ambitious and confident mural designs were seen which would have enhanced the entrance of any company building. The best candidates understood how to convey a sense of scale in their designs and some made effective use of computer projections to show how the finished mural would look in its environment. Very few poor designs were seen but the lack of consideration of the use of colour to create an overall sense of unity on a large scale characterised the less successful work.

Question 5

Fashion

Of the three themes offered for the design of a decorative helmet or hat, 'Flight' was the most popular choice. Imaginative and exotic ideas followed through research from birds and wing structures, some of which were developed into abstract sculptural designs. Weaker work tended to illustrate the chosen theme literally without developing an idea which affected the form and structure of the hat or helmet.

Question 6

Fabric Design

The three themes offered for a repeat pattern for a shower curtain were equally popular, with many strong submissions seen for each. However, candidates who chose 'Starfish, Crabs and Shells' tended to engage in the most thorough research from direct observation, which usually encouraged inventive developments for the repeat pattern. On the other hand, very appropriate consideration of subtle colour changes was often seen in the designs evolved from the study of 'Ferns'. Candidates were more successful with the 'Water Sports' theme when they developed the motifs selectively rather than attempting to include several references. Weaker work on all themes tended to repeat images literally without considering figure-ground relationships, positive-negative colour or tone counter-changes or cropping and shifting to enhance the rhythm or energy of the design.

Question 7

Photography

Very few submissions were received and none of a very high quality. Techniques were used competently but initial research was lacking in exploration in response to any of the themes offered.

Paper 0400/04

Paper 4 - Critical and Historical Study

General comments

An increased number of Centres and candidates entered, which was encouraging. As ever, much of the more well researched and exciting work was undertaken in the project element of the examination.

Many candidates undertook research based on first hand experience of exhibitions, visits to galleries, visits to local artists and explored localised themes. This is all in the right spirit of the examination and is to be commended. It was also good practice to see candidates supporting their visits and chosen themes with their own photographs and drawings. The general appearance of many of the projects showed diligent and inventive display and presentation skills.

There should be a blend of text and images and some attempt to make a personal view of the research. Many candidates supported ideas with some appropriate internet research.

On the down side, weaker candidates failed to nominate a clear aim for their projects and this did not help to clarify the relevance of subsequent research. It is not sufficient to print text and images from the internet and cut them up and then stick them in a book without recourse to other sources for research. Study should be interactive and suggest an element of evaluation, comparison and setting works of art into a specified context.

Resources, web sites visited and books studied should all be listed in a page at the back of the project. Some Centres tried a purely visual, drawn response and some of these missed out any commentary or an evaluation process.

Comments on specific questions

Answers varied from well structured and presented to poorly organised. For the most part, candidates answered clearly and supported their text with some well chosen illustration. It is important to describe and analyse a smaller number of works rather than make a list, which has little meaning. Once more, a number of candidates made excellent use of the research time and had undertaken thorough and clear research. Essay type structures need to answer the question and mix text and images in a carefully organised way.

Question 1

Very few answers, although one or two good responses were centred on Guernica by Picasso which was a good idea.

Question 2

A variety of answers with some excellent personal research and illustrations in the best examples. Some answers were very short which gave little space to really address the issues sufficiently.

Question 3

One or two very good answers built on the first hand experience of a visit or interview undertaken during the course and expanded for the purpose of informing the written paper.

Question 4

The most popular question. Answers varied from very detailed responses which exactly analysed and studied the aims of the question, to some more general rambles through the life and work of the Impressionists which was really too broad given the aims of the question which was suggesting more analysis of techniques and related examples.

Question 5

One or two good answers but this question had a small take up from candidates.

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

Craft Study

General comments

Whether candidates entered for endorsed or unendorsed papers, Painting and Related Media was by far the most chosen option, with 3D studies being the next in popularity. Most coursework was well presented and labelled and usually well supported by preparatory sheets or work books, although the quality of research and development was noticeably much weaker in the less able submissions.

Centres' assessments varied widely in terms of accuracy and realism. Only one Centre was judged to have been slightly severe. Several were quite realistic in judging levels of achievement, but most were over optimistic, some throughout, but others particularly with their more able candidates whose work was often competent but not as highly proficient as internal judgement indicated.

Comments on specific areas of study

Graphics

Most of the work seen achieved competence in the graphic techniques of simplification and reduction of imagery. Only the better work showed a good consideration of letter forms and their integration with images. Although weaker work showed evidence of the research of type-faces and fonts from computer programmes, the ability to select, use and combine the most appropriate style had usually not been developed sufficiently. Consequently, in most work seen, the Assessment Objectives were only met superficially. Very little of the work seen was outstanding and was at best competent. Superficial research and the avoidance of any first hand sources or references in any form whatsoever was apparent in most submissions.

The best submissions included some most interesting ideas for prints although these were a bit lacking in the qualities of sensitive shapes and forms. There were also some quite well designed menu cards.

Photography

Work tended to be competent but not very adventurous. There was on the whole a good understanding and use of processes. Interesting subject matter had been selected but most treatment tended to be in the form of recording rather than experiment in an aesthetic sense. The photography submissions were mostly sympathetically and satisfactorily assessed.

Textiles

Most candidates produced some very proficient work in terms of technical ability when printing on cloth. However it was so often based on weak research and superficial preliminary planning. Where there had been interestingly made direct observational research it led to the scoring of higher marks.

3D Studies

In most of the work seen, work books and preliminary studies needed to show better evidence of developing and experimenting with ideas before the final solution was attempted. There was often no investigation of primary sources before the emergence of the ideas. Some of the best work seen was of most competent wood carving.

Painting and Related Media

A few notable Centres presented candidates who had submitted some high level and proficient work. There was sensitivity and imaginative ideas. These candidates well understood the demands of the Assessment Objectives as did the Internal Assessors for the work had received very accurate marking. However the work in most Centres was too generously marked. The most common limitations were similar to the other areas of study in that there was competence or some competence apparent in the use and control of media but ideas were mostly very superficially developed from poor research and information. Some were not conversant with basic skills and were not able to produce the type or standard of work expected at this level. Some candidates even copied from magazine images which inevitably limited the development of personal ideas or directions. Mostly plenty of work had been supplied.