ART AND DESIGN

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General comments

Almost half of the candidates chose questions from **Section A**, the open-ended starting points, for which **Question 2**, *Arrivals and departures*, **Question 3**, *At ease*, and **Question 4**, *Veiled*, were the most popular themes. Over a third of candidates chose questions from **Section B**, the specific starting points, with the majority of submissions for **Question 7**, the still life arrangement of fruits. **Section C**, the specific design briefs, attracted less than 20% of candidates, with most responses for **Question 12**, the cover for *The Lost Civilisation* DVD documentary. However, many Graphic Design specialists also chose one of the open-ended starting points of **Section A**. Most work was for Painting and Related Media, but although a substantial numbers of Photography and Graphic Design interpretations were seen, very few Sculpture, Ceramics or Textile submissions were received.

Preparatory work varied from exemplary investigations to the barely discernible. The best examples always grew from sustained direct observation which informed experimentation with media and a sequential exploration of ideas. In the less successful approaches the research was patchy, often relying on secondary sources which limited evaluations and a personal sense of direction. The weakest responses showed little evidence of observation, recording, analysis or development; such candidates had not benefited from coursework experiences and their examination work was usually based on copies of existing imagery. The rubric of the Question Paper clearly states that 'The entire submission will be assessed as a whole'. This means that the preparatory work is crucial, especially in terms of the judgements made in developing a personal response. Some very poor attempts did not even relate to any of the starting points on the question paper.

The mounting, presentation and labelling of work was sometimes very good, but mostly only just satisfactory. While many Centres clearly gave helpful advice on the size and weight of mounting papers, others allowed some very impractical presentations for the purposes of assessment. Candidates need to be advised that an ordered, sequential presentation on similar sized sheets, with all work fastened together in the top left hand corner and the examination piece uppermost, is essential if the Examiners are to apply the Assessment Objectives fairly and consistently. This is also stated in the rubric of the Question Paper.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Open-ended starting points

Question 1

Stadium

Although the least popular question in this section, an interesting range of responses were seen. Many of these showed a genuine fascination with the high-tech structures of contemporary examples from which first hand research was integrated with references to historical examples from Greece or Rome. Quite a few Graphic Design submissions, based on good observational recording, developed into tickets, posters and other publicity material for specific events, often using computer processes with expertise. Less strong outcomes, however, used downloaded images and showed a superficial interest in typography and layout. A few three-dimensional interpretations were seen for which the research was very thorough, but the techniques and processes used to realise the final pieces lacked refinement or the use of appropriate materials for architectural models.

Question 2

Arrivals and departures

This was one of the most popular themes, interpreted either in terms of the life cycles of a variety of species or activity observed at airports, stations and quaysides. While Paintings frequently used birth, death and renewal very effectively for enigmatic compositions, in which the over layering of surfaces suggested the passage of time, some excellent mass observation was undertaken at transport terminals for photography submissions. Also seen were installations of life sized wire sculptures of waiting figures which had been well documented through photographic records to send to Cambridge for assessment. Most responses developed interesting compositional ideas, following competent to high levels of research. Less able work tended to be reliant on wild life and nature secondary sources which tended to inhibit development beyond literal illustrations. However, only a few very poor attempts were received.

Question 3

At ease

This theme was the most popular in this section and the second most undertaken question of the whole examination. Some very able interpretations of people and/or animals relaxing in various surroundings were received, the most outstanding of which were clearly developed from direct studies. Most interesting of all were candidates who sought to express a sense of unity with their own culture or nature by integrating symbolism with colour, mark-making and surface qualities to evolve more abstract outcomes. Many competent responses also grew from personal photographic recordings, but weaker attempts were inevitably derived from printed media images found in life-style magazines. Photography specialists exploited the theme by investigating specific locations, such as beaches, cafes or areas of entertainment. Graphic Designers also developed effective publicity material relating to such sources, making good use of digitally recorded research for computer manipulations of text and image.

Question 4

Veiled

This theme was not only very popular but also inspired the most interesting variety of responses, ranging from religious and social contexts to atmospheric effects, often relating to pollution in the natural or built environment. Some excellent city and landscape renditions were seen as well as political satire. In one notable example specific newspaper cuttings had been used to 'veil' a particular group of people to expose their lies and deceptions! Many very successful outcomes simply focused on domestic interiors, offering carefully planned compositions which included a figure or a group of objects or furniture exploiting partly obscured and overlaid viewpoints. Portrait studies of heads veiled in cloth for religious observance or protection from climate extremes were frequently seen, with many of them achieving an impressive characterisation. Cloth was the most common feature in all figurative interpretations and such envelopments usually developed from sustained direct observation. The fewer less successful outcomes suffered from poor research, a reliance on existing images and very little personal interest in responding to the potential of the theme.

Question 5

Missing link

Although this was a very challenging theme for interpretation, many candidates were attracted with ideas relating to evolution or the fragmented nature of international events, with most attempts showing sincerity and well considered personal evaluations. However, candidates who sought to pillory familiar images of world leaders often struggled to copy their likenesses from poor quality media images. Intentions were interesting but the manipulation of information needed to be more sophisticated to communicate personal views or insights. The theme was intended to offer an opportunity for a more abstract path of development, but the only interpretations seen in this direction made use of imagery transposed to jigsaws with one piece displaced. Sometimes this idea was achieved with considerable expertise in spatial manipulation. Other developments were based on personal experiences, such as loss in the family, missing persons or deprivation. Some more political ideas contrasted the power, wealth and dominance of particular nations with the sense of isolation, absence and despair resulting from famine, global warming, natural disasters and viral infections.

Question 6

Trading places

Many of the better submissions for this theme focused on straightforward research from local markets which proved to be a rich source of human activity and colourful displays. The most able responses were developed from thorough first hand observation in combination with personal photographic recording. Mid level achievements also showed a lively enjoyment in the use of media and an enthusiasm for evoking the characteristics of a particular place, familiar from personal experience. Other interesting interpretations used the theme as a social, political or spiritual metaphor by transferring images of renowned world figures from their positions of high status to environments of upheaval or deprivation. However, the attempts to copy such iconic images rarely achieved the high levels of directly observed portrayals.

Section B

Specific starting points

Question 7

The still life group of a large fruit, sliced on a plate, near woven baskets or decorative bowls containing other fruits placed on a patterned cloth, was by far the most popular choice of the whole question paper. Consequently, the work received covered the full ability range. In the best submissions the rendering of forms, structures and spatial relationships was fully integrated with an accomplished use of media, colour and tone to convey directional and reflected light sources. Such candidates were also aware of historical practice, and references to the paintings of Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse and Picasso were frequently seen in their preparatory developments. Some interesting experiments with collage and mixed media were also seen, but final pieces, though showing a variety of technical expertise, often became too fragmented at the expense of spatial unity.

At the mid levels of achievement, either vitality was evident in the handling of surface qualities and media, or a careful control and modulation of colour and tone, but the rendering of forms and structures of fruits and bowls or baskets tended to be more generalised. Less able responses usually faltered in terms of the relationships of the objects to the surrounding space. Many quite poor submissions were also received, for which drawing and colour mixing had not progressed beyond an elementary level. Teachers are advised that, although it is not prohibited for them to arrange a single group of objects for several candidates to study, personal evaluations and critical judgements are much more likely to develop if they are encouraged to develop their own arrangements.

Question 8

In contrast to **Question 7**, the arrangement of items and tools connected with changing the wheel, or repairing a tyre, of a car, bicycle or motorcycle attracted far fewer responses. However, many lively paintings were seen in which the various surface qualities of metal, rust patina or rubber tyre treads were rendered with subtle and sensitive tone and colour gradations. The strongest examples had also been thoroughly organised to develop dynamic spatial relationships, and often included a figure, or a selected view of a person engaged in the activity. What usually hindered the success of the weaker submissions was a lack of interest in the composition or arrangement, as the various shapes of wheels, tyres and tools were poorly organised within the rectangular format of the paintings, both in terms of their aesthetic and spatial relationships. Apart from paintings, some very well researched repeat patterns, often developed towards printed textiles for the examination pieces, were also received.

Question 9

Less than 10% of the work received for **Section C** focused on this pose set for the study of the human figure. Several of the responses seen for the foreshortened view of the model were, nevertheless, outstanding, and some of these were awarded full marks. There was evidence in the work from some Centres that candidates had made studies from a model adopting this pose, but had then developed their ideas further to interpret the theme of **Question 3**, *At ease*. Nearly all work showed a strong understanding of underlying anatomy and bone structures and candidates were well practised, from their coursework experiences, in analysing the foreshortened forms of the figure in relationship to the surrounding space. Consequently, very few less successful attempts were submitted.

Question 10

The view of a narrow path or alley between buildings, or between buildings and foliage, was the second most frequently undertaken question in this section. Generally, the research of alternative locations and viewpoints was impressive. This led to an adventurous exploration of compositional ideas and a lively experimentation with media for the surface qualities of buildings, shrubbery and pathways. Many excellent outcomes, clearly motivated by the visual aspects of particular place, were seen. Personal photographic recording contributed to the quality and variety of research and photography specialists also explored interesting locations with a selective eye. The fewer less successful responses received usually showed limitations in establishing spatial recessions. Some candidates, regrettably, avoided the focus of the question by submitting purely landscape interpretations, for which no attempt had been made to observe buildings.

Question 11

Although only a few candidates were attracted by the literary extract, which described shanty settlements set against a backdrop of the high rise buildings of a city, some of the paintings seen achieved an exceptional level of evocation of the visual cues of the quotation. This had invariably developed from direct observation of specific places as well as the human activity within them. The use of media, colour and mark-making to create unified painting compositions was often highly accomplished or, at the very least, full of vitality. Several mid level attempts also benefited from a focus on the theme of the quotation by offering depictions of people with animals or poultry in the setting.

Section C

Specific design briefs

Question 12

The design brief for the front cover for a DVD of a documentary, entitled '*The Lost Civilisation'*, was by far the most popular in this section. A very wide range of sources from ancient cultures was referred to, but those from Egypt, Greece, the Middle East or South East Asia were the most often researched. The more successful outcomes gathered a variety of information from architecture, costume, murals, sculpture and decorative motifs which was then refined and evaluated selectively in relation to well chosen letterforms. Many candidates used computer processes with skill and sensitivity to combine digital imagery with hand drawn studies to develop their layouts, but others using pen and colour ink washes also created very cultured and aesthetic ideas.

At mid levels of achievement there was a tendency to produce a painting, sometimes a copy of an existing work, then attempt to superimpose the text which did not often result in clear graphic communication. The weakest responses were too content with simplistic patterns and crude typefaces and the integration of text and image showed very little serious consideration or development, even when computer programmes had been used.

Question 13

The design brief for a repeat pattern for a furnishing fabric for the reception area of a college specialising in *Lens Media* courses did not attract many submissions. The better outcomes were well developed from thorough studies of cameras and photographic equipment and some of these were extended into printmaking for the examination pieces. Most designs, however, lacked effective investigation of appropriate sources and no candidates actually thought to base their ideas on film or photographic imagery. Generally, the response to the question was disappointing as few candidates seemed to be aware of how cutting-edge technology might be a stimulating source, as well as a process, for the research and development of interesting ideas.

Question 14

The costume design brief for two cybernetic or robotic characters for a science fiction production was also a less popular choice in this section. However, some very able submissions were seen, for which directly observed figure poses, natural and machine forms and surface patterns and textures were inventively combined to create interesting costumes. Less able responses were limited by attempting to dress robots in costumes, rather than engaging with the problem, which was to design costumes for human performers. Very few candidates showed any interest in the grafting of electronic hardware onto organic forms to explore cybernetic structures. Some weaker attempts were little more than copies from comic book illustrations.

Question 15

The packaging design brief for a company, using the trade name *ZABRA*, marketing model boats, was an even less popular choice. Most of the work seen was of a mid to low level of achievement, with only a few better submissions which addressed the three-dimensional aspects of the packaging. Research was usually adequate enough to provide information for combining the image of a boat with the trade name, but this was nearly always presented as just one side of the packaging. Few candidates went beyond this to consider the figure-ground relationships or positive-negative emphasis or interplay of tone and colour. Some very poor attempts simply offered a copy of an existing painting with the trade name added underneath as an afterthought.

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General comments

As always, some of the work was of the highest calibre, fulfilling all criteria for this paper and meeting all of the Assessment Objectives with near-maximum marks. Most of this outstanding work had been correctly identified by the Centres' marking, although there were a few cases where Centres had undervalued the level of achievement of their best candidates. In such cases marks were raised by CIE Examiners.

Unfortunately, there appeared to be less really good work this year. Most submissions fell within mid levels of achievement, displaying competent or satisfactory skills in meeting the Assessment Objectives. Whilst some Centre assessments were accurate, there were significantly more cases of overestimating levels of achievement and some degree of moderation had to be applied.

There appeared to be more Centres submitting work which failed to meet the basic criteria for this level of examination. Candidates from these Centres were ill-prepared for this paper. They had not practised enough of the basic drawing skills to be able to visualise their ideas. Their research was too often confined to a total reliance on secondary source material which was poorly copied and showed no evidence of the ability to interpret or to provide some form of personal input. The domain of Critical Knowledge and Understanding was practically ignored with no evidence of looking at the work of other artists or of making use of cultural sources within the candidates' locality. Of concern is the high level of marks given by Centres to such weak work. Centres must realise that study at advanced level should be demanding and stretch candidates' abilities way beyond those expected for IGCSE. For advice and reference, Centres should obtain a copy of CIE's CD Rom *Standards in AS/A Level Art and Design*.

Comments on specific areas of study

Painting and Related Media

This was the most popular area of study. Submissions covered the full ability range, as well as a full range of subject matter which was expressed in an equally varied range of techniques and processes.

The most successful entries came from candidates who had chosen themes or subject matter which could be researched from first hand sources. There was evidence of collecting visual information through drawing, sketching, colour studies, plus additional visual information using the candidates' own photography. Through close analysis of natural forms such as shells or plant structures, or details of local buildings of interest candidates were able to collect a wealth of visual information from which to experiment in a number of different ways and in a variety of techniques. They discovered new forms, textures, and colour combinations and this gave them confidence when developing and interpreting ideas through to more conclusive pieces.

There were some equally impressive submissions based on research of the human figure. Centres encouraged candidates to reference the work of other artists who specialise in this subject matter. Aspects of their work, including composition, lighting, and technical processes, were analysed and informed the candidates' own learning and development.

The majority of submissions fell within mid-levels of achievement. Whilst there was much evidence of sound abilities to gather information from visual stimuli, images created in one medium tended to be repeated using several different techniques. without showing any further development. When photography was used there was often too much copying from the photograph as an end in itself.

Good levels of competence were attained in the domains of Manipulative Skills and Aesthetic Qualities, but most candidates at this level lacked the ability to apply critical judgement to their work or the imagination to develop ideas further. Consequently, the evidence of meeting objectives in Personal Qualities and Critical Knowledge and Understanding was much weaker.

Many of the very weak submissions suffered from inadequate or superficial research. Candidates had very little to develop ideas from. The subject matter of most of these submissions was rather derivative. The influence of Fantasy illustration was very prevalent, but much of this imagery was simply poorly copied. At this level of achievement, there were also examples of whole groups entering the same class exercises based on fairly low-level tasks, offering little opportunity for individual response.

Printmaking

There were fewer entries than last year and the general level of ability was quite a bit weaker.

There was a small number of excellent stencil prints of repeat patterns. The imagery was well researched and developed into highly original and personal forms, showing a high level of design development and understanding of repeat formats. Other stencil prints were considerably weaker, both in technical skill and evidence of research and design development.

There were other examples where candidates covered a range of processes including etching. These demonstrated competent levels of understanding but were weaker in Aesthetic Qualities.

There were a few very weak black and white lino prints which just recreated drawings and lacked evidence of exploration of the possibilities offered by this medium. Results showed little understanding of the balance of light and dark or of the printing process.

3D Design and Sculpture

Entries covered a range of processes; clay modelling, wire metal, cardboard and plaster constructions. Subject matter was based on shells, insects, the human figure and abstract geometric shapes without any reference to observed forms.

The very best produced some clay modelled forms derived from shell structures. The subject had been well researched through drawings, and there was extensive design development, which enabled the candidates to produce some technically complicated sculptural forms displaying high levels of originality and manipulative skills.

A significant number of other submissions displayed a lack of exploration of both ideas and materials, with a poor understanding of 3D form or structure.

Submissions were also let down by the poor quality of photographs submitted instead of the real article. 3D work needs to be photographed from several angles, either in a strong directional light or outside in daylight against a plain background so that contours, recessions and textures can be seen. Some idea of size can be indicated by including another object, such as a ruler.

Graphic Design

Some highly accomplished and skilful work was submitted for this area of study. Teaching was clearly with an awareness of cutting-edge technology, but always with the understanding that drawing is a central activity. Whilst IT and computer assisted work figured in most submissions, so did hand drawn work. Often, the candidate's own artwork was subsequently manipulated electronically. The best of these submissions integrated image and text well. A few candidates chose illustration. Their work showed good references to the work of other illustrators such as Arthur Rackham and Beardsley. Nevertheless, candidates developed their own visual language through a process of experimentation with styles and media.

Weaker submissions still demonstrated skills in visual thinking and design development, but in many cases ideas were overcomplicated and designs became cluttered. Lettering needed to be more considered; it either needs to be more skilfully hand drawn, or more experiments need to be done with different computer fonts. The balance of image and text was not fully appreciated.