



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

History of Art

HART3

(Specification 2250)

Unit 3: Investigation and Interpretation (1)

Report on the Examination

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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HART3

General

There were some truly excellent responses that were a delight to read. The range of student knowledge and engagement with individual objects and buildings was sometimes breath taking and considerable scholarship, advanced understanding and independent thought was in evidence.

At the other end of the scale, the trend for students to produce entirely rehearsed essays continued. While some pre-learnt material can have a role to play in examinations, it is a dangerous tactic to gamble on a particular question appearing. In many cases, examiners noted that the essay they were marking was an answer to a somewhat different question than that posed.

In constructing their responses, a number of students simply wrote three discrete and unconnected paragraphs on their selected examples. This is to be discouraged since it offers little opportunity to engage directly with the particular demands of the question. The writing of an introduction is often the most effective method to clarify thoughts and ideas and to assist in ensuring relevant material is delivered. The order in which students discussed examples often seemed arbitrary and no sense of chronology or of any other organisational principle was present.

Some students assumed that because their examples were relevant, that they had no further need to justify or discuss how and why these examples related to the question and proceeded to give wholly descriptive responses.

Architecture questions continued to elicit widely variable responses. While the very best were accurate, detailed and wholly addressed the demands of the question, there seemed to be more students who were unfamiliar with architectural terminology and of what an architectural analysis of a building might consist of. Published mark schemes provide a basic template:

- Style;
- Plan, elevation and composition;
- Architectural elements and features, including decoration/ornament;
- Materials and structure;
- Scale;
- Location/site;
- Circumstances of the commission.

Of course, most questions have additional requirements beyond basic analysis and so issues such as the relationship between style/form and function could be profitably studied.

This year there were more instances than ever before of students using the same example in both responses. A warning against this appears on the front cover of the question paper and teachers are urged to alert their students to this requirement. Examiners also encountered increased instances of students answering three questions and also of students answering questions on one topic with examples from another topic which is not acceptable. Teachers should ensure that all students are completely familiar with the requirements of the question paper.

Instances of illegible handwriting were even more common this year and examiners had to go to great lengths to attempt to decipher it. Grammar, spelling and expression continued to

deteriorate. The possessive apostrophe was used by fewer than half of students and the American spelling of 'centre' was insidiously pervasive.

As noted in previous reports, it was often very clear when students had experienced, at first hand, the particular work being discussed. Although visits are often difficult to negotiate, they do bring undoubted educational benefits, especially for the three-dimensional and spatial qualities of sculpture and architecture.

TOPIC 1 ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

1. Discuss the renaissance characteristics of one painting **and** one sculpture **and** one building.

This was an overwhelmingly popular question and practically every student provided some discussion of the renaissance characteristics of their chosen examples. Both formal and contextual characteristics were considered and chosen examples came from Italy and Northern Europe. The most frequently cited examples were Masaccio's Trinity and Tribute Money, Donatello's David and St George, Michelangelo's Pietà, and Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy and Pazzi Chapel. Despite being provided in the question, examiners lost count of the number of times the word 'renaissance' was spelt incorrectly.

2. Analyse and discuss the representation of the Madonna (Virgin) in **three** fifteenth-century paintings **and/or** sculptures.

This was another highly popular question and some excellent responses were seen. More successful students identified a range of representations of the Madonna, often from different stages of her life. Some students merely described three images of the Virgin and did not engage with the analytical demands of the question or consider the representation. By selecting three examples of very similar images, such as the Virgin and Child, students often found themselves repeating material. Masaccio's Pisa Polyptych, Michelangelo's Pietà and Doni Tondo, and Fra Angelico's Annunciation were often cited. Narrative scenes involving the Virgin were not always accompanied by any understanding or explanation of the story. The use of vague titles such as Virgin and Child or Crucifixion without any other information, such as date or location, sometimes made it difficult for examiners to identify the examples chosen.

3. Examine how patronage influenced the appearance of **three** sculptures **and/or** buildings from this period.

Guild and Medici patronage was frequently discussed, notably statues at Orsanmichele, Donatello's David, Judith and Holofernes, and the Palazzo Medici. Other guild and family patronage included that of the Louvain Cross-bowmen's Brotherhood for Van der Wyden's Descent from the Cross and the Contarini at Ca' d'Oro. Occasionally, this question was targeted as a 'Florentine Palaces' question and students wrote essays about the Medici, Rucellai and Strozzi Palaces. While perfectly acceptable examples, such an approach sometimes resulted in limited scope to discuss the influence of patronage on appearance.

4. How were fifteenth-century architects influenced by classical antiquity? Refer to **three** examples of fifteenth-century architecture in your answer.

Examples chosen to answer this question were almost exclusively Italian. Alberti's work was often cited, notably the Rucellai Palace, Santa Maria Novella, San Francesco, Rimini (Tempio Malatestiano) and Sant' Andrea, Mantua. Brunelleschi's debts to antiquity in the Ospedale degli Innocenti and the Pazzi Chapel were also noted.

TOPIC 2 ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

5. Analyse **three** seventeenth-century paintings **and/or** sculptures that are concerned with the lives of the saints. How is religious purpose conveyed in each work?

Almost every student attempting this question had some grasp of the ways in which depictions of the saints were used to involve the pious viewer and to stimulate and consolidate faith and belief. More able students had a firm grasp of the circumstances of individual commissions and of their specific religious purpose. Caravaggio's St Matthew works in the Contarelli Chapel and St Paul and St Peter paintings in the Cerasi chapel were often discussed, as were Bernini's Ecstasy of St Teresa and St Longinus. Poussin's Martrydom of St Erasmus was often discussed, but analyses sometimes got little further than a delight in describing the removal of his entrails with a windlass and took little or no account of the Counter Reformation's glorification of martyrs. Unfortunately, some students thought that David, the Old Testament conqueror of Goliath, was a saint.

6. Analyse **and** interpret **three** seventeenth-century paintings of still-life **and/or** scenes of everyday life.

There were many excellent responses to this question in which students provided both full analyses and insightful interpretations. Students demonstrated an impressive grasp of how still-life and genre paintings could often have a religious, moral or political meaning and significance over and above their immediate visual appearance. Favoured examples included Vermeer's Milkmaid and Woman Holding a Balance, Zurbarán's Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose, Steenwyck's Allegory of the Vanities of Human Life and De Hooch's The Mother.

7. Discuss how character and identity are conveyed in **three** seventeenth-century portraits of two or more figures.

A wide range of examples from across Europe were discussed – Rembrandt (The Nightwatch and Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp), Hals (The Haarlem Militia Company of St George) Rubens (Self-Portrait with Isabella Brandt), Van Dyck (Charles I and Henrietta Maria and their Two Eldest Children - 'The Greate Peece') and Velázquez (Las Meninas). Occasionally, minute descriptions of examples meant that discussions of character and identity were neglected. A minority of students discussed examples that only included a single sitter. There were still instances where mythological, religious or biblical figures were used as examples of portraiture. At A2 a solid grasp of such a fundamental category is expected.

8. Analyse **three** palaces **and/or** country houses that were built in the seventeenth century. Discuss how each communicates status.

This was the least popular question in this Topic. The most common examples were Versailles, Vaux-Le Vicomte, the Palazzo Barberini and the Queen's House at Greenwich. Discussion of status often involved scale, grandeur, opulence and style. Occasionally, students using Vaux-Le Vicomte and Versailles in their response concentrated more on the surrounding gardens than on the architecture of the buildings.

TOPIC 3 ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

9. Analyse **three** nineteenth-century paintings of working people. What attitudes to work and labour are conveyed in each example? Select your examples from the work of **at least two** painters.

There were many excellent responses, often structured around the attitudes to work and labour found in Realist or Impressionist works. Courbet's Stone Breakers, Millet's Gleaners, Madox Brown's Work and Manet's A Bar at the Folies-Bergère were overwhelmingly popular examples. Degas' and Daumier's Laundresses were also considered. Attitudes ranged from the degradation and physical cost of hard toil, to celebrations of the worker as hero and documentary reportage. Socio-political critiques were often identified and discussed, especially in works by Courbet, Millet and Repin's Barge Haulers on the Volga.

10. Analyse and interpret **three** nineteenth-century paintings **and/or** sculptures of mythological **and/or** classical subjects.

Favoured examples included Canova's Pauline Borghese as Venus Victorious, Ingres' Jupiter and Thetis, David's Leonidas at Thermopylae, Delacroix's Death of Sardanapalus and Cabanel's Birth of Venus. A few students did not select examples of classical subjects and wrote about the neo-classical style which often meant that they used inappropriate examples. There were also some students who could not distinguish between classical/mythological subjects and biblical, literary and medieval subjects.

11. Analyse **three** nineteenth-century landscape **and/or** cityscape paintings and discuss how they are associated with Romanticism **and/or** Impressionism.

There were rather more responses on Romanticism than on Impressionism. Constable, Turner and Friedrich were the most favoured Romantic landscapists. Almost all chosen examples of Impressionism were by Monet. While pre- and post-Impressionist works by artists such as Corot and Van Gogh were potentially acceptable examples, students had to demonstrate how such works were associated with Impressionism. Unfortunately, this was not always done. Marine or fluvial scenes in which no land was visible were not accepted as valid examples.

12. Analyse **three** nineteenth-century public **and/or** institutional buildings **and** discuss the style of each.

Schinkel's Altes Museum, Smirke's British Museum, Barry and Pugin's Houses of Parliament, Paxton's Crystal Palace, Waterhouse's Natural History Museum, and Garnier's Paris Opera were the most frequently cited examples. A fairly substantial number of students identified this as a 'new methods and materials' question. While this could have resulted in a perfectly acceptable response, often such an approach left little opportunity to discuss style.

TOPIC 4 ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BETWEEN 1946 AND 2000

13. Analyse and interpret **three** works of art from this period that are concerned with social **and/or** political issues.

A great range of examples was used to answer this question and the social and political issues discussed included both historical and political phenomena - the Holocaust, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War - and also wider social issues such as Religion, Consumerism, Feminism and Racism. While this question was mostly well answered, some students wrote an essay about three seemingly random works of art and left it to the examiner to tease out the social and/or political content.

Others wrote about Abstract Expressionism or Pop Art with little regard for identifying how their examples were concerned with social and/or political issues.

14. Discuss the characteristics of **either** Minimalist Art **or** Conceptual Art through an analysis of **three** examples.

There were some very full, detailed and thoughtful responses to this question in which students not only discussed relevant examples but also wove in references to critical and theoretical sources. The most frequently cited examples of Minimalist Art were by Donald Judd, Carl Andre and Dan Flavin. However, some students considered Minimalist Art to be any art form that only used geometrical shapes and their responses were often lacking in detail, substance and understanding. Examples of Conceptual Art included performance art, installations, and the use of everyday and banal objects. Works by Joseph Kosuth, Joseph Beuys, Richard Long, Gilbert and George and the YBAs were frequently discussed.

15. Analyse and interpret **three** painted representations **or three** sculpted representations of the human figure made during this period.

This was a highly popular question and produced many excellent and thoughtful responses where students combined knowledge of the examples with interpretative material on the nude, gender, artistic identity and wider attitudes to the depiction of the human figure. More painted than sculpted examples were discussed and works by Willem de Kooning, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Jenny Saville, Alberto Giacometti and Henry Moore were considered. A few students interpreted the question as 'the human form' and used portraits where only the face was visible. Such examples could not be accepted as 'representations of the human figure.' The question also stipulated 'painted' representations and so collages, where no pigment was applied, were not accepted.

16. Analyse **three** public **and/or** institutional buildings from this period **and** discuss the relationship between the appearance and function of each.

Almost all students had a secure understanding of what constituted a public or institutional building, although there were isolated examples of private domestic housing being analysed. A number of students focused on museums and galleries. Examples included the Pompidou Centre, the Bilbao Guggenheim, the Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart and the Unité d'Habitation at Marseille. Although the Seagram Building was often discussed, many students concentrated on its prestigious location and the use of expensive materials and neglected to consider the relationship between its function as an office block and the cell-like repetition of elements.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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