

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/01
Analytical Studies in Western and
non-Western Art

General Comments

Candidates tended to find the **(a)** questions more straightforward than the **(b)** questions, with their contextual emphasis. Few chose to answer **Section 4** as this tends to be the section that is not taught by some centres. There were many excellent answers that showed an impressive grasp of appropriate terminology used in the service of analysis. It was pleasing to see the range of research, acuity of vision and discussion behind many of the candidate's responses.

Question Specific Comments

Question 1

Pablo Picasso *Guernica* 1937

- (a) The wide format of the painting was an obvious point, but perhaps being so obvious, was absent from some answers. Composition strictly interpreted as the abstract arrangement of forms led candidates to observe the dominant pyramid shape at the centre of the painting, although this is disrupted by other dynamic diagonal lines. As an analysis of the arrangement of subject matter, points such as the outstretched arm of the fallen soldier at the extreme left being balanced by the trailing leg of the figure on the extreme right were well-made.
- (b) Some candidates took the question to be about stylistic developments in Picasso's life. With a sufficient argument and examples, this was an acceptable approach. Others interpreted the question more broadly to imply echoes of antique art – friezes, for example – through to Uccello, the Virgin and Child and crucifixion, Goya's *Disasters of War* series of etchings, nineteenth century history paintings and on to the pictorial language of cubism and the distortions seen in contemporary surrealist painting and sculpture. The immediacy of Picasso's response to George Steer's article and the paintings subsequently being used as a propaganda vehicle for the Republican cause at the Exposition Universelle and elsewhere was also noted in the fuller answers, along with the stark electric light. The question required thought; many candidates were resourceful in responding to it.

Question 2

Rachel Whiteread *Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial* 2001

- (a) On the whole, this was well answered. The casting process, central to Whiteread's method, was identified by almost all candidates. The more sophisticated responses were able to nuance this by stating that the books on the outside of the monument are identical units, which departs from the usual technique of casting from unique objects, as with the doors. Many answers located the monument at one end of a Baroque square and noted the domestic, room-sized dimensions of the sculpture echoing the spaces in the houses that surround it. There was some confusion about where the archaeological remains of the synagogue were and the current access to them from the Mirachi-Haus.
- (b) Few candidates managed to include all of the following elements but quite a number managed to discuss most of them: the existing monument by Hrdlicka being deemed undignified; political debate on the one hand wishing to acknowledge Austria's part in the Holocaust and opposition by far right parties against the project; Whiteread's success in winning the international competition following her being awarded the Turner Prize with *House*; her implacable resistance to any

decision to move the planned sculpture to a less volatile site; objections by the locals about parking spaces; the unveiling by Simon Wiesenthal – ‘This monument should not be beautiful, it must hurt’.

Question 3

The Pantheon c. 130AD

- (a) The systematic way in which the structure and materials of the Pantheon were described in the strongest answers was impressive. Most candidates were able to identify the main structure – pedimented portico attached to a drum surmounted by a dome with an oculus. The excellent answers made more detailed points such as the columns being monolithic Egyptian granite with Corinthian capitals. The progressively lighter layers of concrete depending on the composition of the aggregate and cast coffering in the dome were also described in the stronger responses.
- (b) Weaker answers did not get much beyond identifying the building as a being a place of worship to all the gods. More advanced responses were able to set the building in historical context: the building being commissioned by Marcus Agrippa and erected under Hadrian as a celebration of the imperial family and the empire; the awe-inspiring structure promoted the skill of Roman builders and artists; the plausible suggestions that it was used as a law court and a giant clock. If its later use as a church and mausoleum for eminent persons such as Raphael were mentioned, credit was given.

Question 4

Albrecht Dürer *Melencolia I* 1514

- (a) Fewer candidates answered this question mainly because this section is often not taught. Those that did generally produced good answers and some were exceptional. There was confusion shown by some candidates between the techniques of etching and engraving. Both use the intaglio process of printing, but the latter carves a furrow in the metal plate with a burin and requires no acid. The question paper itself provided a reasonably high quality reproduction which candidates clearly analysed in detail to observe the different and contrasting marks and textures that Dürer used in the print.
- (b) Of all images, this is one where there is no obvious right ‘answer’ or interpretation. Meanings can be multiple and contradictory. Some of the more ambitious answers were able to discuss the complex links between melancholy and creativity linking this idea to Aristotle and Ficino. By careful observation of the various objects and the two figures other concerns emerge such as alchemy, geometry, mathematics and astronomy. The most impressive responses conveyed the unsettling mixture of vast human potentiality checked by inertia.

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/02
Historical Topics

The general standard of answers was very good. A considerable number of scripts were of the highest possible quality and demonstrated a close familiarity with the subject matter, a great depth of understanding and the ability to argue a particular point of view. Many candidates referred to a wide variety of relevant examples of works of art in their answers and analysed them in detail, remaining firmly focused on the question. In addition, the more accomplished candidates used quotations from secondary sources where this was felt to be appropriate. In those questions which primarily concerned architecture, many candidates demonstrated a very sound grasp of terminology which they used in an accurate and convincing manner. Candidates who were clearly absorbed by the topics which they answered produced essays which were not only accurate and convincing but also lively and interesting. Weaker candidates tended to include fewer examples and/or discussed them in less detail. Although it is not a requirement, candidates would be well advised to begin each answer by writing out the question in order to focus their minds on what is required immediately before they begin their answer. Secondly, it would be useful if candidates were to underline named examples of works of art. This is not only generally accepted practice but also helps the Examiners to see at a glance if the candidate has referred to an appropriate number of examples. Thirdly, care should be taken to make sure that examples of works of art are from the appropriate chronological period. For example, answers to question 1 were expected to include examples from between c.600 BC and c.480 BC. Unfortunately, several candidates discussed the sculptures on the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, a building which was constructed after the cut off date. Although some credit was given for this part of their answer, these candidates were at a disadvantage to others, whose examples fell within the designated period.

Comments on specific questions

Topic 1: The art and architecture of classical antiquity

1 Sculpture in the archaic period

Discuss the sculpture on buildings in the period between c.600 BC and c. 480 BC.

This question was answered by a considerable number of candidates all of whom compared the sculpture on the two pediments on the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina. All candidates correctly identified the increase in naturalism, the greater dynamism and the more realistic treatment of the human figure in the later of the two pediments. Stronger candidates made a detailed comparison and also pointed out the way in which the use of marble permitted a high degree of detail; weaker candidates produced a less detailed answer and made no reference to materials. Although most candidates attempted to broaden their answers by referring to other examples, several of them chose the Temple of Zeus at Olympia which was begun after 480 BC, the cut off point for the question. In spite of this, some credit was given for relevant comment but less than was awarded to those candidates who selected appropriate examples such as the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi which clearly falls within the specified period. Whereas stronger candidates looked at the sculpture of the period from a wide viewpoint, identifying and discussing general characteristics, weaker ones tended to concentrate on subject matter to the exclusion of other aspects of the work.

2 Greek architecture and sculpture in the classical period. The 5th and 4th centuries BC

In what ways did the design, construction and location of temples in the period reflect their functions?

Most candidates chose to answer this question with reference to the Parthenon, *Erechtheum* and Temple of Athena Nike (one candidate misguidedly also discussed the Propylaea in the belief that this was also a temple). Several candidates produced answers of a very good standard in which they identified the different parts of the buildings and related them clearly to their functions. In addition, they also referred to the use of marble, to the peripteral design and, in a few cases, to the presence of refinements such as columnar entasis. Several candidates also included useful historical context and made the connection between the

design of the Parthenon and the way in which it expressed the wealth and status of contemporary Athens. Weaker candidates on the other hand became side-tracked into extensive and mostly irrelevant accounts of the sculptural decoration on some of these buildings rather than looking at them from an architectural point of view.

Topic 2: Art, religion and society in Romanesque Europe c. 1000–1200

6 Building the ‘militant’ Church

How was Romanesque Architecture shaped by its historical context?

With a few exceptions, candidates produced some very good answers to this question. Most of them identified the importance of pilgrimage as a factor in the design of churches of the period and linked this effectively to their plans. In comparison, much less time was spent discussing the importance of monastic reforms and the design and influence of the great abbey churches such as Cluny and Fountains Abbey. Most candidates identified a wide range of appropriate examples (churches on the pilgrimage routes in particular) and discussed them in considerable detail. Less assured answers involved fewer examples and less detail and some of the weaker candidates became side-tracked into a discussion of the sculptural decoration of the buildings instead of concentrating on the architecture.

7 Heaven and hell: sculpture in the service of the Church

How did Romanesque sculptors bring stories to life?

There were also many good answers to this question. Several candidates demonstrated a close knowledge of one particular example which they discussed in detail, effectively relating the subject matter of the sculpture to its aesthetic and didactic effect. Weaker candidates tended to concentrate on the subject matter without attempting to tie this to wider aspects of the work.

Topic 3: A new heaven and a new earth: Gothic art and architecture c.1140–1540

11 Gothic architecture: the setting for prayer

Compare and contrast French and English Gothic cathedrals.

Almost all of the candidates who attempted this question produced answers of an extremely high standard. All of them demonstrated an excellent understanding of the topic, organised their material well and used often quite complex terminology in a concise and accurate manner. Although the great majority of candidates selected appropriate examples from both France and England, a small minority of candidates chose Canterbury Cathedral and Westminster Abbey as examples (since these were heavily influenced by French cathedrals it made it difficult for the candidate to make contrasts with the latter). Also, a few candidates spent a too long at the start of their answer in discussing the significance of the abbey church of Saint Denis as the starting point of Gothic architecture rather than getting on with the comparisons as soon as possible.

13 Death

With reference to named examples, discuss the representation of death and dying in the period.

This was a relatively popular question which gave rise to a mixture of very good and excellent answers. Several candidates referred to a wide variety of examples in different media (tombs, wall paintings, manuscript illumination and prints) which they analysed in considerable detail. In addition, they included useful historical and religious context about the effects of the Black Death and the importance of the Doctrine of Purgatory etc. Less accomplished answers involved fewer examples discussed in less detail (also in some cases, examples were named but not located).

Topic 4: Man, the measure of all things: the early Italian Renaissance 1400–1500

16 The making of art

Discuss the working methods used by sculptors in the period.

All of the candidates who answered this question were able to give a detailed and accurate description of the lost wax method of bronze casting but very few went on to discuss the chasing and polishing of the rough cast. Most candidates also gave a good account of the general techniques involved in marble carving but only a few gave any details about the use of different kinds of chisels, drills and polishing in order to achieve different textures. All candidates chose a suitable range of both bronze and marble sculpture but there was very limited mention of the use of preparatory drawings and clay models as part of the design process. Also, very few candidates mentioned either wood carving or terracotta sculpture in their answers.

17 The human form

In what ways did portraiture develop during the period?

This question was moderately popular and gave rise to answers which ranged from very good to satisfactory. In the better answers, most candidates discussed a wide range of examples and used these to outline features such as the increasing naturalism, the use of the three-quarter view in place of the profile portrait and the employment of more varied backgrounds. Several candidates adopted a different but perfectly valid approach in which they compared several sculpted portrait busts of different dates, all of which were executed by Florentine sculptors. In a few cases, these candidates analysed their chosen examples in considerable detail and produced answers of a very high standard; other candidates discussed their examples in much less detail and failed to bring out convincingly the changes which took place in portraiture. A small minority of candidates selected examples such as Donatello's David and the same artist's Habakkuk rather than portraits in the accepted sense of the term. Credit was given where possible but given the wording of the question, the candidates were unable to access marks above the satisfactory level.

18 Patronage

How was art in this period used in the service of powerful families?

This was a popular question which gave rise to many excellent and very good answers. Several candidates began their answer by giving useful context (in particular about the position of the Medici Family in Florence) and identified a variety of motives for patronage including religious factors, the display of wealth, power and erudition and the desire to reinforce legitimate rule. The more accomplished answers referred to a wide range of examples from both art and architecture which they discussed in considerable detail. Some of the weaker candidates chose only portraits as their examples (two of them depicting the Duke of Urbino) which made it difficult to do justice to the question. A few candidates based everything on a discussion of Florentine palaces and although credit was given wherever possible there was a great deal of overlap and repetition which restricted the marks awarded.

20 The influence of Humanism, literature and artistic theory

To what extent were Alberti's theories in *della Pittura* (On Painting) reflected in art of the period?

Several candidates answered this question with very differing results. The stronger candidates correctly identified the most important sections of the book (in particular on perspective and on the *istoria*) and discussed this in detail with reference to several well chosen examples. Furthermore, it was clear that they had actually read (or at least glanced) at the book and could therefore use terms such as *Inventio* and *Disposito* in an accurate and convincing manner. Weaker candidates concentrated solely on Alberti's advice on perspective which they discussed in a rather superficial way. In addition, their examples were mostly drawn from the work of Brunelleschi and Masaccio which pre-dated the publication of 'della Pittura.' Although credit was given for this, from the point of view of the question ('reflected in art of the period') it would have been better to select examples of later date.

Topic 6: faith Triumphant

26 Baroque Rome

What were the main functions of the visual arts in Baroque Rome? Discuss with reference to a range of works.

This question gave rise to a wide range of marks. Many candidates began by giving useful historical context (in particular on the importance of the Council of Trent) and then discussed an adequate number of examples in satisfactory detail. Stronger candidates identified a wide range of factors such as the promotion of the Papacy, the creation of illusory space, the appeal to the viewers' emotions and linked this effectively to their chosen examples. Weaker candidates identified fewer factors and based their argument on a smaller number of examples, in some cases limiting themselves to Caravaggio's work in particular.

30 The Spanish court and Church

Compare and contrast the work of Velázquez and Zurbáran.

This question was answered by a small number of candidates, most of whose work fell into the 'good' category. Several candidates carried out a point by point comparison but the number of examples tended to be limited and the discussion was not sufficiently detailed to obtain a higher mark.

Topic 8: Art, society and politics in Europe c. 1790–1900

36 Neo-classicism

With reference to at least two examples, identify the main characteristics of Neo-classical painting.

On the whole, this question was answered well with many candidates obtaining marks in the good and very good categories. Several of the better candidates prefaced their answer with reference to Winckelmann's theories and showed close familiarity with a wide range of examples which they discussed in detail. Weaker candidates based their answer on a few examples only (in particular on the 'Oath of the Horatii') and spent too much time discussing the subject matter at the expense of more general features of Neo-classical painting such as the static quality, limited tonal range etc.

37 Romantic heroes

William Vaughan has described Romantic painting as an exploration of "...the extremes of human nature, from heroism to insanity and despair." Consider at least three examples from this perspective.

This question also elicited several answers in the good and very good categories. Almost all candidates identified a variety of suitable examples which they discussed in considerable detail.

Topic 9: The Shock of the new: art and architecture in Europe and the United States in the 20th and 21st centuries

41 Brave new world

Consider changes in the depiction of landscape during the first decade of the twentieth century.

There was a wide range of responses to this question. Most candidates produced very good or excellent answers in which they carried out a detailed and sensitive analysis of a wide range of well-chosen examples. Answers included an extensive discussion of colour, paint application and pictorial space. Several candidates also made brief but pertinent comparisons with landscapes from the previous period in order to demonstrate the new developments in the first decade of the twentieth century. Weaker candidates referred to fewer examples and in particular analysed them in much less depth. In a few cases, weaker candidates also selected paintings in which landscape played little part and which did not serve the purpose of the question.

43 Rebellion and the unconscious

How did Russian Constructivist artists use art for social purposes? Give examples from a wide variety of Russian art after 1917.

This was a popular question which gave rise to some very good and excellent responses. Almost all candidates began with some useful historical context and followed this with a detailed discussion of examples in a wide range of media including designs for industry, posters, architecture, textiles and film. Candidates demonstrated an excellent knowledge of the period and answers were sharply focused on the question with very little or no irrelevant comment.

44 The figure and the object

With reference to at least two artists of the period, discuss their approaches to portraiture.

This question was answered by a few candidates, all of whom chose to compare the work of Francis Bacon and Lucien Freud. Stronger candidates analysed a wide range of their work in considerable detail comparing not only the way in which they portrayed their subjects but also wider matters including for example the application of paint. Weaker candidates discussed fewer examples in less depth and tended to write separate accounts of the two artists rather than making a more effective point by point comparison.

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/03
Thematic Topics

General Comments

The general impression was of solid learning of selected works in Centres, with prepared comments designed to meet the likely range of questions. On the whole, this strategy succeeds in meeting the demands of the paper, although it does lead to repetition and very similar answers across a cohort. There is always the risk that prepared answers will not meet the precise wording of the question; and intelligent, independent choices of example and observations are at a premium. Given a base of knowledge, quality of writing emerges as a decisive factor in assigning marks and grades: it is not practically possible to separate style and content, since candidates with a greater facility of style will thereby offer a higher quality of content through their phrasing and sequencing of points. At the higher end were some exciting individual and engaged commentaries on works of art in various contexts. Most answers were on Topic 1 (Art and Architecture in the City) and Topic 4 (The Nude).

Specific Questions

The following comments are offered on questions which elicited several answers.

Topic 1

Successful handling of this topic requires a sure sense of the history of the chosen city – or at any rate, of particular periods. It is noticeable that confidence with historical material tends to diminish as one goes back in time: acquaintance with the world of, say, medieval Barcelona or Renaissance Venice was less profound than with modern New York.

Topic 2

This was not a popular question, but it did yield some very high quality responses. Clearly the arcane world of museology is not to everyone's taste; however some responses to this question seemed to make it very clear that well conducted site visits to the museum/gallery in question made all the difference. Some sense needed to be made of the word 'entertain', and the best answers made reference to ways in which museums seek to communicate their holdings in an exciting, user-friendly way. Marks were limited in answers which gave a general account of what a museum was like without considering the wording of the question.

Topic 3

A very popular question, which produced a good range of responses. The better answers were those which interpreted the term 'society' to mean the *politics* of the society in question: as such the architecture of imperial Rome was grist to the mill! There were also strong answers placing the 'modernista' works of Barcelona in the context of a resurgent bourgeoisie, and *palazzi* in the socio-political world of Venice. In short, success was closely related again to careful thought about the key term of the question.

Topic 4

Again, a popular question which elicited an even range of responses. The best responses were those which, in effect, avoided the issue of what monuments can 'teach us' today (i.e. in Art Historical terms), and opted instead to focus on the issue of how the monuments in question (which were almost invariably works of urban-located public sculpture) embodied the broader historical and cultural values of their own day – i.e. the ways in which these monuments 'taught' the publics for which they were originally intended.

Topic 5

This question seemed invariably to elicit responses which (plausibly enough), in the case of New York, focused on the works of the US 'Ashcan School' painters. As such, it produced some extremely high quality responses. These paintings are, of course, suffused with gritty social observation, and they vividly express the truths of early 20th century New York life by means of highly evocative palette and technique. As such they provided students with a wealth of material for analysis. There were also some weaker answers, such as a general account of some images of Venice with no more than a few passing references to social classes. This was a case where prepared answers could fall down: a vivid account of some paintings capturing the mood of serenissima did not yield enough in terms of the social content of works chosen (Vittore Carpaccio and Gentile Bellini provide useful panoramas, but their content requires informed description).

Topic 6

This was not a particularly popular question. However, it did yield a fair range of responses (although none at the very top end of the mark range). The majority of the analyses of particular artworks were workmanlike rather than spectacular, although virtually all of the students who attempted this question did remember to address the vitally important issue of the relationship of the statue(s) in question to their local urban environment.

Topic 7

This was a popular question, which perhaps yielded the widest range of responses in terms of marks. Several responses focused on (either Imperial or Renaissance) Rome, and as such showed a good awareness of the aesthetic politics of such urban spaces as the Forum or the Renaissance piazza. Some responses also looked at New York: here the best of these were undoubtedly those which focused on the construction and layout of Central Park.

Topic 8

There were a few answers to this, mainly on the staging of world fairs in Barcelona. Perhaps uncertainty with what was meant by a 'major cultural event' put some candidates off, though familiarity with some history would have suggested several possible examples from other chosen centres.

Topic 4: The Nude

25 There were several answers to this question, usually involving the same chosen examples, which were described accurately and in detail. The best answers made something of the idea of 'development', usually suggesting that the representation of movement was a development over the static and frontal figure. Some use was made of Renaissance works, and answers which did this were treated sympathetically though they really fall outside 'classical' as it is defined in this topic (and Michelangelo's David is certainly not Greek in any conventional sense). Weaker answers would have been helped by a stronger feel for the standard narrative of Greek sculpture, and by some closer familiarity with the very earliest *kouroi* and the Hellenist period, to allow for a wider timespan.

27 This was a popular question, with informed discussion of 'nuditas criminalis' and so forth. Examples were relevant, and the best answers found the language to describe the often complex emotional range of the works discussed. Consideration of the Christ child, and some mention of post-renaissance work (the question is not period-specific) would have introduced new avenues of enquiry.

28 Another popular question, with a suggestive and diverse range of examples chosen and some strong argumentation concerning objectification and the male gaze. The question also allows for *female* attitudes to women, a topic touched on in some discussions of Jenny Saville.

ART HISTORY

<p>Paper 9799/04 Personal Investigation</p>

The standard of Personal Investigations was generally good this year and topics continue to be more focused. Candidates benefit from narrowing down topics either through theme or time frame. Topics ranged from a study of Purbeck marble in English Cathedrals to the performance work of Abramovic. Some candidates work well with non-Western art making up for the fact that apart from certain Analytical Studies, they are unable to study this within the syllabus. Given the extraordinary collections at museums such as the British Museum it is possible to study one object in depth. A recommendation which might help with the planning of non-western art would be to take a look at *A History of the World in 100 Objects* which is also on line at Radio 4.

As help can be given to candidates when choosing their topics it is important to stress that they should be attempting to answer a specific question. As this is research based, they may not find one clear answer to their question and still produce an excellent piece of research. They should attempt to answer a question without knowing initially which direction they may go in. It is important to start reading as soon as possible and perhaps contextualise the work first. This year candidates chose wisely for the most part and attempted to go beyond the syllabus whenever possible.

As to the format of the work there is no set rubric but it is useful to have a clear page with a title and question, a list of contents, a rationale which is similar to the Online Proposal sent earlier in the year, an introduction contextualising the work and then an essay which is well illustrated and clearly footnoted. Candidates should also have a clear list of illustrations and a well written bibliography giving the full titles of books, articles, journals, web sites, archives, interviews, visits etc. The bibliography tells a very clear story of research. Better candidates had been instructed in the art of appropriate web sites and were clearly able to discuss their choice of reading in the viva. Work should be clearly illustrated and the quality of the illustration should be good.

It is not necessary to have chapters within the work unless helpful but also not a good idea to divide the work into arbitrary sections labelled **Section 1, 2** etc. The conclusion should be set out clearly and reference the aims set out in the Rationale.

When teachers fill in the form stating the work is by the candidate, they are **not** required to comment in a judgemental way on the work to be examined. The box exists for special circumstances and certainly no reference to the candidates applications or personal life should be made.

Vivas were well prepared on the whole. Nearly all candidates had prepared excellent Power Point presentations to give to the Examiner lasting about 8 to 10 minutes as a whole although they can be shorter. As the examination is 20 minutes long it is probably worth advising candidates to assume half the time will be spent on the candidate's presentation and half on discussion although this varies from candidate to candidate. It should be noted that both parts are worth 10 marks.

Candidates seemed confident and had clearly practised their vivas in class although they should be discouraged from giving a speech which is pre-learned. Some candidates brought in books they had read or leaflets which were appropriate. Discussions were interesting and enlightening. The aim of the viva is to keep the candidate chatting calmly and confidently on their work which they may have in front of them. They may also have a few notes should they wish. They are not being tested on the memory but on their understanding of the work they have undertaken. Many candidates spoke passionately about their work and had clearly enjoyed the process.