

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/01

Analytical Studies in Western and non-Western Art

General Comments

The responses from candidates showed an impressive grasp of materials, techniques, approaches, terminology and context from a broad range of art and architecture

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) There were many comprehensive answers to this question which methodically addressed the four formal properties of composition, tone, colour and brushwork. The out of scale women in the middle ground were pointed out by many candidates, just one of the oddities of this seminal painting. Traditional landscape qualities such as aerial perspective were identified in the pale tonalities in the distance. Particularly in relation to Salon painting of the time, the brushwork is loose. This point was also relevant for the (b) section.
- (b) The provocative nature of this work was subtly explored in the best responses. As just mentioned, it was partly formal. The perceived 'unfinished' quality and faulty perspective was criticised. The partly ironic quotations from Old Master sources were identified along with the challenge to History painting by using contemporary models. The biggest provocation was the nudity – or nakedness – of the women, brazen in the company of two young men, thus offending public morals.

Question 2

- (a) There was a distinction between candidates who had knowledge of the Cornaro Chapel as a whole and those who were only familiar with the *Ecstasy of St Teresa* sculpture on its own. The latter were inevitably more limited in their responses to both sections of this question. The chapel was designed by Bernini as an entity, but used a variety of materials and techniques. The naturalistic carving in white marble was contrasted with the polychrome marbles used elsewhere, set within an environment that also included bronze relief, inlaid metal, stucco, gilded rays and painting.
- (b) Fuller answers knew of the influence on Bernini of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and his Spiritual Exercises where a complete imaginative engagement with the Gospels was encouraged. Many candidates pointed out that Bernini has chosen the point of climax in the story. This is assisted by 'special effects'. The aedicule appears to open; miraculous light pours down the golden rays; skeletons rise from roundels in the floor. The spectator is joined by members of the Cornaro family either side in oratories who meditate on or discuss the vision.

Question 3

- (a) The basic structure of the building was analysed well by most candidates; rectangular plan, four massive piers supporting a dome via pendentives. More expansive answers identified the nave, aisles, great northern and southern arches and the buttressing of the dome externally by eastern and western semi-domes. If the later minaret towers were mentioned, this was also given credit.
- (b) The distance in time and more esoteric character of the Byzantine Empire left some candidates struggling. To point out its sheer size was to make a point about Justinian's ambition – 'O Solomon, I have outdone thee!' The centralised dome, covered in gold mosaics was a symbol of heaven. The richness of materials used, drawn from around the empire, spoke of its power. The more historically informed knew about the liturgical rituals where patriarch and emperor would meet.

Question 4

- (a) Some candidates clearly had a thorough and perhaps even a working knowledge of the etching process and the subtle differences of mark between an etched line and a drypoint line. The weaker responses did not understand the intaglio technique. Very few candidates made a really close analysis of the variety of marks that Goya used for flesh, hair, bark, foliage, ground, shadow and distant hill.
- (b) Some answers were sketchy about the historical context. The more advanced answers made the point about Goya's initial support for Napoleon and his perceived libertarian aims. The fact that Goya is unlikely to have actually witnessed the scenes portrayed was also mentioned by many candidates, and additionally the difficulty of identifying who the French are and who the Spanish are, as savage acts were committed by both sides.

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/02
Historical Topics

General comments

The general standard of answers was very good and many candidates demonstrated a close familiarity with the subject matter, a depth of understanding and the ability to argue a particular point of view. Many candidates also 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. The most accomplished responses used quotations from secondary sources (and occasionally primary sources) where appropriate.

Besides demonstrating insufficient knowledge, some candidates performed less well for a range of reasons. Firstly, several candidates misinterpreted questions. This was evident for example in **Question 18**, topic 4, on courtly patronage in which a significant number of candidates discussed other examples such as patronage by the guilds, by confraternities (such as the Venetian Scuole) and by individuals. Similarly, in **Question 43**, topic 9, several candidates ignored the work of women surrealists and concentrated almost exclusively on examples by male artists.

Secondly, questions which invited the candidates to discuss the *development* of art or architecture in a particular period met with a varied response. **Question 6**, topic 2, which dealt with developments in Romanesque architecture, gave rise to many excellent answers: in particular, candidates selected three or four examples from across the period and so were able to give a convincing account of the changes that took place. In comparison, the candidates who answered **Question 12**, topic 3, did less well because their examples were not as carefully chosen and because they discussed each one on its own merits without attempting to describe the changes that took place during the period.

Thirdly, candidates varied a great deal in their proficiency at handling compare and contrast questions. In some cases, for example **Question 44**, topic 9, candidates made point by point comparisons between the works of two artists and so produced an effective answer. On the other hand, many candidates who answered **Question 2**, topic 1 wrote extensive and more or less independent accounts of male and female figure sculpture without any attempt at making direct comparisons. Although some credit was given for relevant information, this approach makes it very difficult to make effective comparisons of the sort that are needed to achieve well.

Comments on specific questions

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

Topic 1: The art and architecture of classical antiquity

Question 1

The answers to this question were highly polarised with a wide range of marks awarded. The most accomplished responses included a selection of at least three suitable examples from across the period and explained the changes that took place in terms of style, plans, materials and the use of refinements. On the other hand a significant number of candidates did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge about temple architecture and filled a great deal of space with a detailed and largely irrelevant account of the sculptures found on these buildings.

Question 2

Most candidates began with a brief introduction containing some contextual background including the attitude to male nudity and the place of men and women in contemporary society. Candidates were able to identify a range of valid examples of works of art and in most cases linked these to named sculptors. In many cases there were detailed discussions of individual works but these often occurred in isolation and only a few candidates made direct point by point comparisons.

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

Question 6

Most of the candidates who answered this question achieved well. They selected three or more examples of buildings which, taken together, spanned the whole of the period, enabling them to demonstrate the changes which took place. These examples were analysed in detail and with accurate use of architectural terminology. Weaker responses discussed their examples in less detail and with a less assured use of architectural terminology.

Question 7

Most candidates identified appropriate examples which they discussed in depth. However, whereas the stronger responses remained firmly focused on the question and concentrated on the expressive qualities of the work, the weaker responses included lengthy, almost stand-alone descriptions of the content and material that was not directly relevant. Although all of the chosen examples were valid, surprisingly few candidates chose to discuss the highly expressive sculptures at sites such as Moissac and Souillac.

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

Question 11

The candidates who chose to answer this question selected an appropriate example of a cathedral in the High Gothic style but said very little about its architecture. There was very little use of architectural terminology, rib vaults were confused with fan vaults and mention was made of the west front of the Abbey of Saint Denis which dates from well before the period in the question.

Question 12

This was answered by many candidates, most of whom selected appropriate examples and demonstrated a good knowledge of the relevant sculpture. Almost all candidates gave detailed descriptions of the sculpture but only a few explained the changes that took place during the period. Weaker responses ignored the premise of the question and instead their examples discussed the purposes of portal sculpture in the period.

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

Question 16

This was a popular question which elicited some excellent responses. All candidates selected appropriate examples and gave detailed accounts of the techniques involved in both fresco and tempera painting (some of the better responses also referred briefly to the oil technique which appeared in Italy in the last third of the 15th century). Many candidates rightly discussed the preparatory stages in both techniques and also used terminology in an accurate and assured way.

Question 17

This question also gave rise to some very good answers. Most candidates drew attention to the dynamic quality of Verrocchio's work, to his interest in anatomy and to the way in which he responded to the demands of his commissions (in the Christ and Saint Thomas in particular). Several candidates also discussed the relationship between materials and compositions but a few of them were side-tracked into giving unnecessary details about the lost wax method of bronze casting.

Question 18

This was a popular question which gave rise to a wide range of responses from excellent to the lower end of good. The best responses included several relevant courtly Centres (including Mantua, Ferrara and Urbino) and in some cases also provided a brief introduction in which they outlined the purposes of courtly patronage, making reference to wealth, erudition, lineage etc. In the main body of the essay, these aspects of courtly patronage were discussed in detail with reference to carefully chosen works of art in a variety of media including paintings (frescos, panel paintings and manuscripts), buildings and sculptures (including medals). A few candidates concentrated instead on Medicean patronage and also produced high quality answers which included detailed accounts of works of art commissioned by the family.

Some candidates discussed their examples in less detail and included information that was not relevant to the question. The weakest responses misinterpreted the term 'courtly' in the question and spent most of their time discussing patronage by either corporate bodies such as guilds or confraternities (such as the Venetian *scuole*) or by individuals (such as the patron of Masaccio's Trinity in Santa Maria Novella).

Question 19

This question was chosen by a considerable number of candidates, most of whom produced very proficient answers. Candidates who achieved excellent marks selected a wide range of examples (including some from outside Florence such as the church of Sant'Andrea, Mantua) and briefly discussed the work of Michelozzo as well as that of Brunelleschi and Alberti. Examples were analysed in considerable detail with accurate use of architectural terminology and references were made to proportional systems, classical architectural vocabulary and structural features such as barrel vaults and piers. Several candidates drew attention to particular antique prototypes such as the Pantheon and the Colosseum and a few also mentioned the possible influence of the writings of Vitruvius, on Alberti in particular. Weaker responses included less detail (in particular about the use of classical architectural motifs) and discussed fewer examples, in some cases wholly within Florence.

Question 20

There were several very good answers to this question. Some candidates concentrated exclusively on Botticelli's mythologies such as the Birth of Venus, Primavera (and less frequently) the Calumny of Appelles. In addition to giving a detailed account of these works they briefly (and very appropriately) explained how their content was determined by their patronage, referring in particular to the humanist culture within the Medici Court. There were also several very good answers which looked in detail at the Hercules theme as found in the paintings and sculpture of Antonio Pollaiuolo. A third group of candidates chose on the contrary to look at a wider range of works not only from Florence but from Centres such as Mantua (Mantegna's work in particular) and also produced convincing answers in which they related the content of the mythologies to the courtly circles in which they were produced. Candidates who did less well generally gave stand-alone descriptions of their examples (sometimes going into great detail) but made no attempt to explain how their content was related to the circumstances surrounding their commission.

Topic 6: Faith Triumphant

Question 26

Most candidates prefaced their answer with useful contextual information about the recommendations of the Council of Trent though only a few of them gave a convincing definition of the term *chiaroscuro*. Most candidates selected appropriate examples and discussed dramatic gestures, heightened emotions, dynamism etc. A few candidates also pointed out the relationship between the real and fictive light sources in the Calling of Saint Matthew in the Contarelli Chapel in San Luigi dei Francesi. In general, weaker responses included fewer examples, discussed in less detail.

Question 29

There were several very good answers to this question. In several cases, well-chosen examples were analysed in sensitive detail, relating the content of the paintings to contemporary middle class society and its moral beliefs. Attention was drawn to dress as a signifier of social standing, to the presence of symbolic elements such as lutes and paintings of cupid and to the way in which the viewer is drawn into the painting by the gaze of one of the figures. The best responses also indicated the range of subject matter from seduction scenes at one extreme to depictions of marital devotion at the other extreme.

Question 30

Most candidates who answered this question chose a range of suitable examples including in particular Las Meninas, but only a few selected the obvious examples of the Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X or the same artist's The Spinners, both of which serve the purposes of the essay very well. Most candidates discussed their examples in adequate detail but the weaker responses did so in a formulaic way without attempting to explain in depth how the content of each work was concerned with matters of status. (Although most candidates referred to Velázquez's self portrait in Las Meninas, hardly any of them mentioned that he was depicted wearing the Cross of Santiago, conferred on him by Philip IV.)

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

Question 40

Answers to this popular question ranged from excellent to good. The best responses investigated the work of at least three artists (most commonly Seurat, Gauguin and van Gogh) and convincingly outlined the principal features of their paintings. For Seurat, for instance, reference was made to the Pointiliste technique, to the optical and colour theories of Ogden Rood and Chevreuil and to the way in which his work could be interpreted as a critique of contemporary society. Weaker responses considered their examples in less detail and in some cases spent much too long discussing the transition from Impressionism to Post-Impressionism which left them with insufficient time to investigate examples that were directly relevant to the question. A few candidates did less well because they chose inappropriate examples including paintings by Matisse and in another case works by Renoir from the 1870s.

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

Question 41

This was another popular question which met with very varied success. The best responses included a selection of two of Cézanne's landscapes from the first decade of the 20th century which were analysed in detail, discussing the influence of geometrical shapes, the way in which brushstrokes and the use of colour negate traditional pictorial space, the integration of figures into the landscape and the way in which the artist questioned traditional modes of perception. Although landscapes were the obvious examples to choose, still lifes were allowed providing that they could be considered as representations of nature. Weaker responses included less discussion of examples and considered fewer aspects of the artist's style.

Question 43

Several candidates selected an adequate number of examples by women surrealist artists which they discussed in considerable detail, remaining sharply focused on the question. On the other hand, some wrongly interpreted the question and discussed the way in which male surrealists objectified women in their work. Occasionally this kind of discussion had peripheral relevance and was therefore given some credit.

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/03
Thematic Topics

General Comments

Many candidates produced a high standard of answer. A range of questions from four of the five topics were answered, with only 'Landscape' being omitted.

Comments on Specific Questions

Comments below are offered on questions which elicited sufficient responses.

Topic 1: Art and Architecture in the City

Question 1

This question yielded some well-considered responses differentiated by the depth of analysis or the extent to which candidates interacted with historical context and theory. The best answers both scrutinised particular works of architecture in an informed manner, but also gave thought to broader questions of social, political, and even economic history.

Question 2

Quite a popular question yielding some very good - and at times excellent - answers. The best answers showed candidates balancing personal experience with facts, analysis and a critical view of museology. Most of the candidates who tackled this question were able to frame their responses around a consideration of the particular ways in which gallery and museum architecture both embodies the specific curatorial agenda of the institution in question, as well as expressing aspects of civic and national history and prestige. Details of the character of the museum or gallery's setting along with named works on display and the different hangs and effects evoked inside the building were outlined in very good answers.

Question 3

Monuments could include iconic buildings in this instance. This question produced responses of variable quality. The best responses included a selection of appropriate public monuments, and related these - usually in direct symbolic terms - to the particular historical episodes or events which the monuments commemorated. Weaker responses demonstrated a more descriptive rather than analytical approach.

Question 4

This was not a question chosen by many candidates. A discussion of the aesthetic qualities of the selected sculptures needed to be discussed as part of the argument, which some candidates seemed a little reluctant to do. Answers also offered other aspects which public sculpture might also possess.

Question 5

This question was quite popular. It allowed for a range of material to be used from different periods or styles; of different subjects (male and female experience of the city, or, depictions of different social classes, for example) and in different media. Weaker answers were rather more descriptive or narrative than analytical and could be rather repetitive. Some very good answers incorporated the artists' background to analyse their perspective on the city and contained artists' quotes as proof of their aims.

Question 6

It was important that candidates were able to define their understanding of the key term 'cultural'. Cultural 'events' (such as concerts, exhibitions and so forth) which are mainly contemporary; or a broader definition of 'culture' to include the overall historical, social, or aesthetic/ideological life of the city in question were both acceptable. Many candidates found the more historical definition of culture more comfortable to discuss.

Question 7

Few candidates tackled this question. Nevertheless it yielded some thoughtful and comprehensive responses. This question seemed to appeal to those candidates whose interests perhaps lay more in the fields of social history, than of architectural history per se - with some perceptive and historically informed analyses of the social dimensions of urban housing policy being produced. The material selected to answer the question could be historic, contemporary or a mixture of both.

Question 8

The best answers explained clearly the choice of sites for the tour. Very few answers looked at transport or the transfer between areas, this did not matter as long as the rationale for the selection of visits and its relevance to the city was clear. The best responses gave nuanced, critical answers and meaningful connections/relationships between the examples chosen.

Topic 3: Portraiture

Question 19

This was a reasonably popular question choice among candidates. There were lots of descriptions of different ranges of examples and there was a tendency for weaker responses to rely too heavily on this descriptive approach to the question. The best answers focused on interpreting what aspect of character these examples revealed.

Question 22

This was a reasonably popular question. Some candidates were confused about when the First World War was in relation to German Expressionism. The very best answers directly linked historical context with the visual evidence in the examples selected in a secure way.

Question 23

This was a popular question choice for candidates. It was a very broad question which most candidates tackled thematically in a very effective manner.

Question 24

This was a popular question. The best responses to this question were able to demonstrate a secure knowledge of historical background – some answers were a little tentative in making the links between history and art history.

Topic 4: The Nude

Question 25

This was a very popular question, answered very well by the majority. There were a few candidates who misunderstood the question as asking for an analysis of the classical nude, rather than its influence. Good answers analysed the features of classical nudes and then related these features to subsequent works/periods/styles.

Question 27

This was a very popular question. Some candidates found it difficult to make the comparison asked for. The examples selected were most frequently from the Renaissance – very few candidates chose to include any later images, which might have made the comparison starker.

Question 31

This was another very popular question. Candidates produced some of the best answers in this topic. There were many well balanced discussions which were able to cite a good amount of examples to support their conclusions.

Question 32

This question was attempted by a small number of candidates. Answers generally resulted in a discussion of 3 controversial images rather than their comparison. A small number of candidates discussed the notion that the naked/nude debate was where controversy lies and that the nude genre is a space to explore taboos in society.

Topic 5: Still Life

Question 33

This was a very popular question choice. It produced a high number of strong responses with the best responses able to balance the historical dimensions of the question against the need to retain a focus on the analysis of specific paintings. There were many specific references to art markets; trade; religion and aspects of national identity.

Question 35

This was another very popular question, which produced many strong responses including some excellent answers. Candidates seized the opportunity to apply the theme to a set of paintings which contain symbolic imagery to cover a good variety of themes.

Question 37

This was not a particularly popular choice of question but it yielded some high quality responses. Most candidates opted to concentrate on works by Cézanne. Gauguin, and to a lesser extent van Gogh, also featured in a range of responses. There were some sharply observed and convincing visual analyses produced by candidates.

Question 39

This was a popular question choice among candidates. Weaker responses were dominated by a chronological narrative of the development of the Dada movement. The best responses were able to present some well-considered and grounded analyses, almost exclusively of works by Duchamp.

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/04

Personal Investigation

There were many excellent Personal Investigations which showed evidence of thorough research and complemented what candidates had been studying in other papers.

The topics were as diverse as usual. They extended from Auerbach to Zoffany, Pugin to Heatherwick, Greco Scythian art to Chinese wine cups, and Abbot Suger at Saint-Denis to Signac and Fénéon. It was good to observe that most candidates had first-hand contact with at least some of the art they were researching. As a general rule, this should be one of the first considerations when choosing a topic. Will I be able to see the art or architecture? Does it connect fruitfully with any of the other subjects I am studying? Again, with several candidates this was clearly the case. Art History is an inherently inter-disciplinary subject; when connections can be made, it adds to the richness of the research.

With the viva, the presentation and discussion should each be of approximately ten minutes duration. There were a few instances where the presentation was considerably less. It is important for candidates to practise this element of the exam, perhaps in front of peers, who may also ask questions at the end. The point of this is to develop confidence in candidates to articulate their thoughts orally and enjoy discussing a subject they have acquired some expertise in.

Individual sheets should be fixed together so that they do not get out of order or mixed-up with other scripts. Care should be taken with reproductions; they should not be unintentionally cropped or distorted in their proportions. Footnoting references is essential. Some candidates managed to put the author and title but not the relevant page number. On the word count, candidates should keep to the stated 3000 word limit. The total applies only to the main body of the text and does not include headings, footnotes, appendices and the bibliography. Teachers do not need to make any value judgement in the box on the covering form for the completed Personal Investigations.

To conclude, many candidates made the most of what the Personal Investigation can be. It took them places, physically and intellectually. It is perhaps the most obvious bridge to university work.