

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/01

Analytical Studies in Western and non-Western Art

General Comments

Given the breadth of examples, materials, concepts and contexts covered in this paper, most candidates did very well, showing an impressive degree of knowledge and familiarity with the works. As ever, the best responses showed a clear understanding of the questions; were able to distinguish between the material relevant to the **(a)** or **(b)** sections; and were able to use appropriate terminology – or failing that, at least be precise in the language they used. **Section 4** was much less popular: most Centres only teach the first three sections. Understandable, but a pity. A compromise would be to include works from **Section 4** that connect with topics in Paper 2 and 3.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Constable, *The Hay Wain*, 1821

- (a)** Almost all candidates knew that there was a stepped approach to prepare for a 'six-footer' such as *The Hay Wain*. Small scale pencil drawings, oil sketches and cloud studies preceded the full-size oil sketch. Some noted the relative freedom with which Constable applied oil paint using impasto and glazes. Work on the painting continued even while on exhibition, and after. The pentimento of the barrel at the near edge of the river showed how he made major alterations at a late stage.
- (b)** Very few candidates were able to quote from Constable himself – despite this source being definitively illuminating about his aims. The backdrop of the Industrial Revolution was frequently mentioned in relation to the love the artist had for the landscape of his boyhood. The naturalism that he sought was correctly identified as both the reason that the painting was generally received in England with hostility or indifference, and taken up enthusiastically by certain contemporaries in France such as Delacroix and Géricault.

Question 2 Michelangelo, *David*, 1501-4

- (a)** David's nudity and colossal size were mentioned by most candidates, although because this work is so well known, such obvious and important features were missed by some. The similarities and differences with sculpture from antiquity were discussed in a relevant way in the stronger responses, as were the psychological and material qualities of the work.
- (b)** There was some permissible overlap on the proportions and history of the block of marble Michelangelo was left to work with between the **(a)** and **(b)** parts of the question. Very few candidates noted the committee that deliberated where the sculpture would be put, on which were Perugino, Botticelli and Leonardo amongst others. The political context of the recently expelled Medici and the *David* as a symbol of Florentine fortitude was discussed in the more developed responses.

Question 3 Emperor Shah Jahan, *The Taj Mahal*, 1632-48

- (a)** This was generally a more challenging question because of the less familiar forms of Mughal architecture. However, there were many excellent answers, characterised by a methodical analysis and clear description. From the photograph alone, an observant candidate could make a number of relevant points about the mausoleum. Further knowledge was required of its place within the complex.
- (b)** Almost everyone knew that the Taj Mahal was created as a mausoleum for Shah Jahan's favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal. The more developed responses related the complex to the Four Rivers of

Paradise in the Koran and to the incorporation of Hindu references such as the symbol on the finial above the central dome which is both crescent moon and a trident, symbol of the Hindu god, Shiva.

Question 4 Kara Walker, *African/American*, 1998

- (a) The stark simplicity of the image made this a difficult question for some candidates. On purely formal terms, the broad white border, rhythmic negative spaces and diagonal line of the figure were noted (and connected by one or two to the slash in the title). The ambiguous position and viewpoint of the figure were analysed.
- (b) This was generally discussed with an awareness of the unsettling approach the artist has to issues of race, gender, identity and sexuality. The pretty necklace suggests a noose, the prone state one of submission. There was an awareness in the better responses of the origins of the image in silhouettes from the Civil War period and minstrel shows.

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/02
Historical Topics

General comments

The general standard of answers this year was very good. Many 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 responses used relevant quotations from secondary sources and demonstrated a 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 responses tended to include fewer examples and/or discussed them in less detail. In addition, in some cases the discussion was not directly related to the question. This was evident, for example, in some of the answers to **Question 27** where a few candidates gave quite detailed and unselective descriptions of paintings by Claude and Poussin without explaining how this information was linked to the literary sources. Occasionally, instead of tailoring their response to the question, candidates appeared to be regurgitating material which they had learnt and attempted to shoe-horn the information into their answer, irrespective of whether or not it was relevant.

As in previous years, quite a large number of candidates found it difficult to spell artists' names (particular in the Renaissance topic, but occasionally elsewhere) and were uncertain about the dates of works of art or of historical events. Questions which asked candidates to compare and contrast the work of different artists met with a varied response. In the better cases, they carried out an effective point by point comparison; in the weaker ones, they tended to describe the two examples in isolation without making direct comparisons of the sort that was needed to achieve a high mark. 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. It may be helpful to candidates if they underlined the names of works of art. This is not only generally accepted practice but it also helps the Examiners to see at a glance if the candidate has referred to an appropriate number of examples. Care should also be taken to make sure that examples of works of art are from the appropriate chronological period. Although credit was given wherever possible for points of a general nature, very few marks could be awarded when examples did not refer to the appropriate chronological period. Given that the chronological limits to each topic are clearly laid down in the syllabus, the dangers of this should be pointed out to candidates.

A number of questions were attempted by too few candidates for comment to be appropriate.

Comments on specific questions

Historical Topic 1: The Art and Architecture of Classical Antiquity

Question 1

Discuss the treatment of the free-standing male figure by Greek sculptors of the 6th century BC.

This was a popular question which elicited some very good answers. All candidates identified the gradual increase in naturalism during the period and the move away from static forms. On the other hand, there was very little mention of technical developments such as the use of paint and of inlaid materials such as metal and glass. Almost all candidates selected an adequate range of suitable examples and the better ones also gave approximate dates. However, although the question clearly specified free-standing figures, a few candidates discussed the relief sculpture found on gravestones.

Question 2

A large number of statues in this period were cast in bronze. With reference to named examples, discuss how sculptors exploited the properties of this material in their works.

This was another popular question and on the whole it was well answered. Candidates generally selected an adequate range of relevant examples which they discussed in considerable depth (Roman marble statues which are commonly accepted as having been copied from original Greek bronzes were allowed). There were many excellent responses which identified the properties of bronze and related this to the design of their chosen examples. Other answers showed a tendency to describe the material and the examples in isolation without making a strong connection between the two. On occasion, candidates also spent too long explaining the bronze casting technique and as a result left insufficient time in which to analyse their chosen examples.

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

Question 6

Compare and contrast any two Romanesque churches.

This was another popular question which gave rise to some very high quality answers. All candidates chose good examples of Romanesque churches and prefaced their answers with useful historical context. Most of them made effective point by point comparisons in which they referred not only to styles but also to materials and techniques. In addition, the accurate use of architectural terminology was very evident.

Historical Topic 3: A New Heaven and a New Earth: Gothic Art and Architecture c.1140-1540

Question 11

During this period, the great churches were meant to represent the Heavenly Jerusalem come down to Earth. How did their design and decoration contribute to this effect?

This question was answered by a large number of candidates almost all of whom produced answers in the very good or excellent category. In many cases there was an impressive range of examples, most of which were accurately dated, and some candidates also quoted the internal heights of major buildings in support of their argument. In addition to the soaring height of the buildings, most answers referred to the effects of the stained glass and the symbolic aspects of the designs but only a few candidates mentioned the rich decoration of the interior with wall paintings, painted sculpture and metalwork. Many candidates mentioned the importance of Suger's writings and were able to give relevant quotations.

Question 14

Discuss the design and construction of Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster Abbey.

This question was answered by only a few candidates. In some cases, the answers were very detailed and included an explanation of how the design of the chapel was related to the historical context, including the presence of the shrine of St Edward the Confessor. Weaker answers treated the design and construction in less detail and demonstrated a less secure handling of architectural terminology. Most candidates gave a good account of the interior, including the vault, but very few mentioned the design of the exterior and there was little reference to possible prototypes for either this or for the vault.

Historical Topic 4: Man the measure of all things: the Early Italian Renaissance 1400-1500

Question 16

Compare and contrast one painting in tempera with one fresco painting, taking into account the advantages and limitations of each technique.

This question was chosen by a small number of candidates most of whom selected good examples and produced high quality answers involving a wide range of aspects including colour, extent of detail, speed of working and scale. On the other hand, there was little reference to preparatory work such as sinopie and underdrawings.

Question 17

Compare and contrast the work of Donatello and Verrocchio.

This question was answered by a considerable number of candidates with varied success. Although all candidates discussed a suitably wide range of examples, some needed to be more careful with their choices in order to make their comparisons more effective. For example, whereas some candidates realised the desirability of like-for-like comparisons such as two equestrian monuments or two portrait busts, others attempted to compare dissimilar works such as Donatello's Gattamelata and Verrocchio's Doubting Thomas. There were, nevertheless, several excellent responses to the question in which candidates analysed their chosen examples in sensitive detail and made effective point by point comparisons. Weaker responses discussed the examples in less detail and in more or less separate accounts, making effective comparison difficult. Only a few candidates pointed out the dynamic qualities in Verrocchio's work.

Question 18

With reference to one Italian city in the period, discuss how the design, construction and location of palaces reflected the wealth and status of their owners.

This was a popular question which gave rise to some very good answers. Most candidates chose to discuss Florentine palaces and a few took the ducal palace at Urbino as their example. Where Florence was concerned, most candidates made the connection between the appearance of the buildings on the one hand (huge size, monumental appearance and stone construction) and related this to factors such as power and status, in many cases also giving useful historical context. The more accomplished answers contrasted these aspects of the building with the elegant design of the windows, the varied rustication and different heights of the three storeys. Several candidates also briefly described the chapel in the Palazzo Medici but mention of the central courtyard was very limited and there was no reference to the rest of the interior (a small number of massive rooms for use by only one family).

Answers which dealt with the ducal palace at Urbino were more varied in quality. In the better cases, there was an excellent account of the palace (including its location in relation to the city and to the surrounding countryside, its external appearance, the design of the courtyard and some of the rooms) and this was convincingly related to the wealth, status and erudition of Duke Federigo. Weaker responses discussed the palace in much less detail, leaving out some of the above aspects, and failed to make a connection with the patron.

Topic 6: Faith Triumphant: seventeenth century art and architecture.

Question 26

What were the main characteristics of Caravaggio's paintings?

This question was answered by a considerable number of candidates many of whom produced an excellent response in which they analysed a wide range of examples in extensive detail and provided relevant contextual evidence. In comparison, other answers dealt with fewer examples which were discussed in less detail, leaving out one or more aspects of the artist's work and failing to provide any historical context.

Question 27

What literary sources did Poussin and Claude refer to in their paintings? Discuss a range of scenes and explain how they express the narrative.

This question was answered by only a few candidates. Most answers contained a suitable range of relevant examples by both artists and the better candidates discussed them in considerable detail. On the other hand, several accounts were too brief and lacking in detail and in a large number of cases candidates tended to discuss the paintings in isolation without convincingly relating them to the corresponding literary sources.

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

Question 41

In the first decade of the twentieth century artists sought to express their feelings through their use of paint and colour. Discuss.

This question was answered by a large number of candidates, most of whom produced excellent answers in which they analysed a wide variety of works of art in great detail. The strongest answers looked at examples not only from France but also from Germany and (in a few cases) from Italy and discussed the use of line and brushwork as well as colour. Most responses began by discussing late 19th century precursors such as van Gogh but there was a tendency among the weaker responses to devote too much time to this at the expense of a detailed analysis of works from the first decade of the 20th century.

Question 43

Dada artists responded to war in a number of ways. Discuss.

This was a very popular question which gave rise to answers within the very good to excellent category. Almost all candidates began by giving useful historical context followed by a detailed analysis of a wide-ranging selection of appropriate works of art from different countries. The most accomplished answers referred to work in a variety of media and also made judicious use of quotations from primary sources in order to support their argument.

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/03 Thematic Topics
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All candidates this year answered on either Topic 1 (Art and Architecture in the City) or Topic 4 (The Nude). The general standard was high, and Centres are clearly getting used to the terrain of this paper. Some candidates lost marks for paying too little attention to the wording of the question; the most serious rubric error was using pre-20th century examples to answer a question that explicitly required discussion of 20th century works (or later).

Comments will be provided only on questions which sufficient numbers of candidates attempted.

Topic 1

Question 3

How are ideas of cultural heritage visible in your chosen city?

This was very well done by some candidates, who used excellent examples and engaged well with ideas of heritage. Weaker responses ran through a set of examples but did not explain why they were chosen. Some discussion of 'cultural heritage' needed to be at the centre of the answer. Perhaps prompted by current events, several candidates referred to a late nineteenth-century desire for national liberation from Spain. The historical reality is more complex; a distinction needs to be drawn between cultural and political nationalism. There were several claims that the earliest tribes to inhabit the area inhabited Montjuïc. Historians seem fairly clear that the Laietani (to give the tribe its name) lived on the plain.

Question 4

If you were writing an introduction to your city's churches, which ones would you choose and why? Discuss with reference to **at least two** examples.

This prompted the same range of answers as **Question 3**. There was a great deal of descriptive detail, usually of Santa Maria del Mar and the Sagrada Família. The better answers made something of the invitation to give a reason for the choice – usually on the grounds of stylistic variety.

Question 5

How do paintings give us an idea of the social life of the city? Discuss with reference to works by **at least two** artists.

Several candidates answered this. Examples were almost exclusively drawn from the same few works by Picasso and Ramon Casas. Picasso's oil sketches of rooftops were difficult to accept as a depiction of social life. His portraits and beach scenes came closer to engaging with the terms of the question. Much was made of Picasso's supposed loneliness and estrangement in the city, making him sympathetic with outcasts. There was some close reading of Casas's large-scale paintings *La Carga*, *Garrote Vil* and the *Corpus Christi* procession, and these were correctly linked to social and historical events of the time. The best answers showed some knowledge of Casas's society portraits, which were ideal for this question. Some candidates discussed Miró, but it is hard to see how a painting of a farm in the countryside or an abstract evocation of nostalgia can really be seen as a depiction of the 'social life of the city'.

Question 6

If you had to order a plaque to commemorate a patron (individual or corporate) of the city of your choice, who would you select? Give reasons and refer to the major works of interest.

Several candidates answered this. In most cases, the patron chosen was Eusebi Güell. His patronage was discussed with reference to relevant works by Gaudí. Weaker answers provided a detailed description of the works themselves, occasionally mentioning Güell. Stronger candidates knew something about Güell, his ideas and sources of income. No one referred to the Finca Güell in Pedralbes, Gaudí's first work for this patron, and a rich source of symbols and design ideas.

Question 7

The experiences of visiting galleries can differ greatly. Discuss with reference to **at least one** gallery in the city of your choice.

The idea that an experience may "differ" suggested two examples, but the question allowed candidates to focus on one case study. Popular choices were MNAC and the Picasso Museum. A few wrote about MACBA. Many scripts, while efficiently done in themselves, were very similar in their points and examples. For example, the idea of the museum as a shrine, with attendant notions of pilgrimage and reliquary, appeared as the central argument of many papers, illustrated by the same examples. While knowledge of museology theory is admirable, independent thought and observation are always rewarded, particularly in a question based on 'experience'. The Picasso museum was discussed in terms of its layout and the feeling of paying homage to a single artist. Some candidates believe this museum is underground, even though it is entered via an outdoor staircase. Some candidates wrote about MACBA, a space that elicited a little more personal response to its arrangement and contents.

Question 8

Monuments found in public places help us to understand important figures in the city. Discuss with reference to specific examples.

This was a popular question. The same examples were cited in most cases: Dr Robert, Columbus, Tàpies' homage to Picasso, and Blay's depiction of Catalan song on the Palau de la Música Catalana. All do depict figures that were important to Barcelona, if one accepts St George as a 'figure in the city' in terms of his place in the region's mythology. Answers varied chiefly in the number of details candidates had managed to learn. It was interesting to note that no reference was made to Dr Robert's medical work, which is clearly commemorated on the monument. A few candidates discussed the bust of Pau Gil at the Hospital de Sant Pau.

Topic 4 The Nude

Question 25

Why were nude sculptures made in the classical world?

Not all candidates were comfortable with the term 'classical' as a time-specific style, or as a more generic art historical term. Definitions were not given in weaker answers. Answers taken from the Baroque or Renaissance were rewarded, but not as highly as answers which defined the term 'classical' from the outset.

Question 26

'Only in countries touching on the Mediterranean has the nude been at home' (Kenneth Clark). Respond to this statement with reference to the art of any Western or non-Western culture.

Not many answers really pushed the connection with the Mediterranean. Answers were acceptable which used examples from Western or non-Western cultures, or both.

Question 27

How has Christian teaching on sin been reflected in artistic depiction of nudity?

It was good to see that there was much more discussion of the context of works than has previously been the case, and the focus on the question was very good. Discussion of materials and techniques tended to be muddled, however.

Question 28

Prostitution is a frequent theme in depictions of the nude. Discuss.

Many answers centred on Manet, which was appropriate. Knowledge of 'Déjeuner' was used to good effect. Debates about high-class courtesans from the Venetian High Renaissance were the subject of some interesting, and subtle, discussion. Later paintings, such as Walter Sickert's, and Picasso's 'Demoiselles', would have been suitable examples here.

Question 29

The Wikipedia entry says that 'Nude Photography' should be distinguished from glamour photography, erotic photography and pornographic photography. Are such distinctions meaningful, in your view? Illustrate your answer with references to specific works.

The best answers defined the candidates' understanding of glamour / erotic / pornographic photography and debated any areas of overlap. Weaker answers tried to define what the categories were *not*, a less convincing approach.

Question 30

How have twentieth-century artists engaged with the tradition of the nude? Base your answer on a few selected examples.

There were some strong answers to this question, which paid attention both to the time period specified and the concept of tradition. However, not all examples used were from the twentieth century, and some candidates lost marks as a result.

Question 31

Discuss the genre of the nude self-portrait, with close reference to **at least two** specific works.

The question elicited a range of responses, the best of which paid detailed attention to examples and discussed notions of expressiveness and identity. The best answers paid attention to the notion of 'genre', going beyond a sequential account of chosen works.

Question 32

Compare and contrast **three** nudes in different media.

Most answers correctly chose examples in three different media. Weaker answers merely described them in turn, while stronger essays made something of the 'compare and contrast' instruction to bring out the specific qualities of the selected case studies.

Candidates in both topics were rewarded for a good level of factual and conceptual knowledge, and the ability to shape and articulate an essay and stick to the question. Study for this paper is leading to an awareness of the detail and complexity of works of art, and how tradition and socio-historical contexts generate further levels of meaning. Candidates should feel encouraged to offer their own responses to works, in addition to the material learned through diligent preparation.

ART HISTORY

Paper 9799/04 Proposal Investigation

Candidates are asked to send an outline of their approach to their work by 31st October the year before the examination. This is helpful in terms of getting the candidate thinking through their ideas and it is particularly useful to attempt to approach a specific question at this early stage. This is submitted and the Examiners are asked to comment if needed or give helpful suggestions. Occasionally candidates are warned if their brief seems too wide and help may be given to focus the work. It is understood that between this early stage and the later stages, modifications may be made to the original questions and there is no problem with this. Although the proposal will be placed in the final piece of work it is intended as a guideline rather than a definitive marked paper. It should be no more than 500 words and may contain books to be read. These were well done this year and the range of topics was, as ever, very wide.

The essay

Essays were well written and usually well edited although it is difficult to get rid of all typos. A clear Rationale at the start of the essay enables candidates to formulate the question and the reasons behind the research. This is the area where candidates can comment on their own use of drawings or translation or music, scientific research etc. Many essays are inter-disciplinary. It must be stressed that the more focused the essay the better. It can be helpful to use date outlines to focus the work. Candidates are asked to put in their other topics on their final forms and although work may cross into their area of study, they may not answer an examination question purely on their Personal Investigation so it is helpful to keep the focus tighter than other papers. Candidates wrote essays on architecture, painting and sculpture as well as festivals, dance, music, calligraphy, installations, exhibitions and many other topics. Illustrations were usually clear although occasionally a candidate bunched up too many together on one page. It is important to label them. Footnotes should reference reading rather than make extra points. Bibliographies were frequently extensive but also seemed well digested.

The viva

Vivas were particularly impressive this year. Candidates produced 10 minute presentations on power point and then discussed their work. One or two candidates' presentations were a little too long which made it difficult to have a good discussion. There are 10 marks available for each of these sections so it is as well to divide them equally. Some candidates brought books, catalogues, post cards or drawings or even a little music if helpful to illustrate their points. On the whole candidates seemed at ease and well prepared although it is very important not to pre-learn the presentation by heart. Most candidates were keen to talk about their work and responded well to questions which attempt to look at research methods, changes of tack, use of books, difficulties etc. Many candidates had continued to think about the work after submitting it and this produced useful and fruitful discussions.