



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Art and Design (Photography)

Controlled Test 3206/T

Report on the Examination

2008 examination – June series

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GCSE Art and Design (Photography) 3206

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The question paper was very well received and moderators reported a good response from candidates to all of the questions. They provided opportunities for the entire range of ability at this level and a diverse range of approaches and photographic procedures. The most popular were questions 1, 2 and 6.

As with the coursework, candidates used reference material relating to an increasingly broad range of photographers, artists and art movements. This showed an understanding of the traditional silver based processes and an awareness of contemporary and professional areas of photographic practice, very often involving the use of ICT.

In many instances, moderators commented on good coverage of the complete range of assessment objectives although as outlined previously, there were some concerns about the coverage of A03.

Question 1 – Portraiture.

This was a very popular question producing strong evidence of the use of silver based SLR technology and darkroom procedures in addition to digital work. The theme was addressed by candidates of all abilities, producing at the higher end, 'images of striking quality and composition'.

Yousuf Karsh featured strongly as a reference point and there were reports of candidates developing sequences of related images in order to produce a narrative. This intention was never explicit or implied within the statement of the question, but shows a positive attitude by candidates towards the question as a starting point, offering opportunity for open ended responses. There was also evidence of large scale work being used to explore portraiture.

The starting point was easily accessible, reference material easily researched and suitable material easily found and recorded with varying degrees of success. There was evidence of good technical skill in a number of submissions.

Question 2 – Impressionism.

Both options within this question, 'Daily Routines' and 'Just for Relaxation', produced some interesting responses. Most work used friends and family as subject matter, the best examples showing perceptive insight and observations of social interactions and associated behaviour.

Interestingly, some candidates used David Hockney's 'joiner' method to present views of behaviour over time. As with the previous question, this provided interesting examples of the ways in which links are being made between the method and meaning and across, sometimes unexpected, sources.

Question 3 – Web page.

This theme was attempted by a number of candidates, but it was probably the least attempted of the seven. The successful responses showed a highly developed understanding of the opportunities offered in relation to the use of the Internet as a vehicle for presenting

photography. The weaker responses showed both a lack of understanding of context and a lack of organisation in the way evidence was presented.

Question 4 – Japan.

This question produced some successful responses with moderators reporting seeing much work of a very high standard with good understanding and evidence of the candidates' thinking.

This question had the potential for responses of an abstract nature and dealt with a less familiar context than other themes. Interestingly, candidates' images displayed how well the aesthetic or 'feel' of Japanese references had been absorbed.

Many moderators saw thoughtful responses with strong evidence for A01 and strong exploration of the question. Figurative work was often in evidence even though this approach did not feature strongly in the work of Sugimoto. This again is positive testimony that candidates are not involved in producing a questionable stylistic pastiche in response to given themes, but that good teaching has developed an awareness of the potential for genuine exploration with candidates and making connections with the ideas of practising artists.

Question 5 – Combining Human and Mechanical Form.

This question generated a variety of responses which ranged in quality. Some of the most successful responses come from candidates who had used their imagination to 'draw' with the medium; to consider the use of photographic image in order to produce work of a highly imaginative and uniquely personal nature. However, some of the responses showed little in the way of imagination and much in the way of predictability and banality.

There was strong evidence of the use of ICT and in the best cases this facilitated an interesting variety of changes and developments to the candidates' work. At the lower end of the mark range candidates showed considerably less discrimination and awareness of the value of their personal response over the default settings provided by the software developer.

It is inevitable, perhaps, that the use of image manipulation software with its implicitly high production values, will attract candidates who, recognise the creative potential, but can also lead to candidates producing some predictable outcomes.

Question 6 – Detail.

This was a very popular question, and one which produced responses of the highest calibre. Candidates produced photographs of excellent technical quality, both digital and silver based, showing considerable depth of exploration and clearly made positive use of contextual reference materials to explore and develop both technique and idea.

One moderator summed up the responses of many others when saying that the theme encouraged candidates to 'go out of and think beyond the school gates'. Images were rich with texture, colour, tone and contrast. There were, however, some candidates for whom the question proved less positive. There were some concerns that for too many candidates, A03 merely consisted of making enlarged versions of a print, and that the ease of suitable contextual material and access to subject matter encouraged complacency.

All this withstanding it was very encouraging to hear such positive comments about quality of work and the range of photographic approaches employed.

Question 7 – Traditions.

This was a popular choice with all options taken and explored. Occasionally candidates choose to explore many options around the theme rather than restricting themselves to one.

Moderators commented on candidates' use of interesting references such as Martin Parr. This sort of attitude produced thought provoking responses and rich veins of subject matter. Family occasions and the decorative detail of social events were sensitively observed and recorded. Again narrative processes were used to present images in sequence or as groups.

In the weaker submissions similar contexts were given less thought and consideration. The resulting images exhibited less in the way of the formal qualities of composition and lighting, and communicated less about the traditions which were explored.

Mark ranges and award of grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.