AQA

AS
Art and Design
7241/C & 7241/X – Art, Craft and Design
Report on the Examination

7240
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Portfolio (7241/C)

The second year of the new specification provided evidence that schools and colleges have consolidated their courses. The most usual practice concentrated on two areas, with Fine Art the most popular along with Photography. Other courses varied depending upon the expertise of staff involved in the delivery.

Successful examples of the portfolio provided students with broad and well-balanced courses which demonstrated purposeful exploration of media, processes and techniques. Many students had studied art at GCSE. However, not all students had this experience, so schools provided relevant courses and differentiated work accordingly. This normally took account of the ability range based on an audit of skills.

Many introductory courses commenced with a clear focus on observational drawing to improve recording skills which were continually re-enforced throughout the year. Different approaches to drawing were seen, ranging from experimental mark-making to more traditional life drawing classes. However, for some students, life studies highlighted limited recording skills, therefore care is required when including this work for assessment. Some courses included organised workshops covering processes and techniques, often introducing new and unusual materials. Many courses included digital photography. No matter what format introductory courses took, they engaged students and provided a firm grounding for later work.

Work for the extended personal project included starting points such as 'Landscape' or 'The Human Figure'. More personal work resulted from themes such as 'Dissolve and Diffuse', 'My Generation' and 'Cruelty'. Such topics encouraged diverse research invariably leading to more individual work. Political situations, racial issues and crises around the globe featured strongly in work seen.

Many courses encouraged the use of a wide range of materials. Various printing techniques resulted in successful lino prints and collagraphs, some mono printing was often simplistic and insensitive. Interesting textile work frequently involved unusual materials rather than traditional fabrics. Sculptural work and ceramics varied from small ceramic pots to larger work using both soft and resilient materials. Digital technology enabled some students to produce accomplished animations.

The ability to record observations and ideas successfully is fundamental in all areas of study. Often this entailed drawing which ranged in purpose and complexity, from quick spontaneous studies recording movement to accomplished final pieces displaying a high level of technical skills. Scale varied from small thumbnail sketches to very large examples of experimental mark-making. Recording using digital photography was often seen alongside good quality drawing.

Some schools and colleges promoted the use of annotation to record ideas. When it was used successfully, it supported the practical work, provided additional evidence of the Assessment Objectives and explained clearly the students' intentions. In some examples, copious annotation was used in place of practical work.

Most outcomes successfully concluded the project and displayed relevant skills and understanding. However, some outcomes failed to capitalise on promising research.

Visits made to local and national exhibitions, and artists visiting schools and colleges, provided inspiration for ideas and insight into the use of materials and techniques.

The effective use of contextual material for research varies. In more accomplished work, carefully selected examples were used productively and meaningfully to strengthen investigations. However, less informed students often chose sources which were irrelevant or they did not understand and missed opportunities to improve their work. Less successful students were rarely discriminating when choosing images and simply printed off themed pages.

Sketchbooks were used to gather information and to record and develop ideas with varying degrees of success. The best were a delight, meticulously documenting the investigation with excellent material from wide ranging sources. Less successful sketchbooks were often dominated by cut and paste secondary material downloaded from the internet.

Invariably, the most successful portfolios showed good organisation, systematic development with a clear focus, and assessment objectives addressed evenly. Less successful portfolios were disparate and lacked direction.

Externally Set Assignment (7241/X)

The range of starting points provided in the question paper was well received and enabled students of all abilities to select appropriate starting points and relevant contextual material. Work produced in the ten hours of supervised time was often thoughtful and well considered, bringing the investigation to a successful conclusion in finished work.

Outbuildings

Visits to undertake first-hand research were the starting point for many students' investigations. Old buildings provided good photographic opportunities for further development, often influenced by Andrew Wyeth. However, more unexpected work explored elements of decay, the unknown, and the fear of isolated outbuildings. Some large-scale outcomes incorporated found materials collected during site visits to create adventurous mixed media outcomes and installations.

Dragons

Many students did not refer to references in the question, preferring instead to look at fantasy artists and tattoos which may have limited the scope of their work. Enterprising students visited zoos and pet shops to draw lizards which led to successful and worthwhile work. Some students produced imaginative responses to secondary sources which they used effectively and with discrimination. Other examples included colourful textile work based on the pattern of scales and constructed life size wings fitted to the human figure influenced by Leonardo da Vinci's flying machine studies.

Elevated viewpoints

A wide range of responses were seen. Digital photography was used alongside traditional approaches to drawing and painting which often resulted in very literal and illustrative work. Aerial views and maps inspired many investigations which explored contours and land forms. Some involved unusual images produced using drones. Other work explored exaggerated perspective to create abstract outcomes, often in relief, influenced by Cubism. Intriguing results were based on Anthony Green's paintings. Other mature and personal responses examined elevated viewpoints within the context of religion and class structure.

Flotsam and jetsam

Studies of crab and lobster pots, ropes and driftwood resulted in interesting textile and mixed media work influenced by Debbie Lyddon. Relief-work and other outcomes which included found materials were not always sensitively handled. Studies of pebbles and shells led to accomplished and often large-scale work with a strong use of colour and texture. Visits to the seashore made productive and effective use of photography influenced by Peter Tonningsen.

People and animals

Interesting anthropomorphic work combined animal heads onto human figures inspired by Charlotte Caron's photographs. Exciting headwear and masks were created with varying levels of craft skills, based on illustrations by Caitlin Hackett. Intricate ceramic work was produced in response to Kate MacDowell's work. Thought provoking work involving photography and graphic communication concerned the ethics of women wearing fur and cruelty in the fashion industry. Students or family members photographed with their pets provided source material for some personal work.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.