

NEW ZEALAND SCHOLARSHIP 2004

ART HISTORY

SECTION A

3. The creation of a work of art must be based on the interrelationship of form and colour.
Discuss this statement with reference to art from TWO or more chronological periods or geographical regions.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Outstanding Performance - Performance Descriptor 1

The creation of a work of art must be based on the interrelationship of form and colour.

The idea that art depends on both form and colour and their successful interrelationship to attain high art status is one that has been tested by a number of the foremost artists of the 20th century and effectively dispelled. The notion that artwork must rely on an interrelationship of form and colour would seem to be markedly at odds with the works of the celebrated colour field artist Mark Rothko and also much of the body of work completed by Picasso and Braque including such seminal work as Guernica. Instead art relies on the ingenuity of the artist in elevating their artwork so that the focus of the piece takes precedence over the need to establish such an interrelationship. This idea was at the core of the philosophy of Mark Rothko's later work for which he is perhaps the most celebrated. It is also evident in the analytical cubist works of Braque and Picasso where the subjugation of colour to form allowed them to achieve painterly goals that otherwise may not have been possible.

The work of Rothko consisted in his signature style of a number of blocks of rectangular colour placed inside the canvas, this giving rise to the term colour-field. Rothko's early work in this area shows many rectangles arranged in a seemingly random fashion quite unlike the very design orientated style of Russian Suprematists such as Malevich. Yet even at this early stage where it could be said that his works still do rely on an interaction and relationship between colour and form there is already signs of the brilliant luminosity of colour for which there had been no precedent. This stage of Rothko's work is typified by creations such as 'No. 9 [Multiform]', the rectangles each with their own colour, have a depth and breadth which is incredible and expounds Rothko's ability to utilise the egg and oil based paints with which he worked.

However the progression of Rothko's work took a turn for towards the utilisation of his abilities in a design style favoured by many artists such as Mondrian or Malevich where indeed colour and form play a vital role in their interrelationship. Rather Rothko strove for a simplification of form in order to allow him to focus solely on colour. This determination to eliminate the effect of form on his work gave rise to the repetition of style which is characterised by a work such as 'Orange and Tan'. Eliminating extraneous shape has the effect of focusing the viewer on the

breathhtaking colour Rothko displayed in his work. Indeed he would often display the larger pictures at ground level to have the effect of drawing the viewer inside his works. As Kandinsky said “you must not look at an painting from the outside, but to enter it, move around in it and mingle with it’s very life”, an ideal particularly applicable to Rothko’s work.

This focus on colour and enveloping the viewer came primarily from the basic goal of Rothko’s later work. He aimed to represent in a single colour both the simplicity and complexity of human emotion and experience. Simplicity in the elimination of unneeded form and complexity in the sheer breadth and depth of colour in his works. Thus Rothko was concerned with an introspective view of the human condition rather than any representation of pictorial elegance, beauty or complexity.

The work of Rothko thus is both limited to and diametrically opposed to the work of the Cubists in the stage of their work known as analytical Cubism. In Analytical Cubism by contrast Picasso and Braque were concerned with the rendering of multiple perspective and the ‘whole’ of an object which necessitated a subjugation of colour to form. This was due to the difficulties of rendering both these aims while trying to incorporate colour into the work. As a result in this analytical cubist stage while colour is not eliminated it is reduced to the point that it plays no central or even crucial role in the artworks. This has the effect, much as Rothko’s elimination of form did, of focusing the viewer into looking at the intended central concerns of the work and in this it is certainly effective. Whereas in the earlier work of Picasso such as ‘Demoiselles d’Avignon’ the bright and vivid colour serve to obscure and mask some of the multiple perspectives and even go some way to deepening the picture plane this is largely eliminated in the analytical stage.

Indeed in a work such as ‘Violin and Candlestick’ the effective elimination of anything other than monochromatic colour tones shows how far the Cubist style has progressed. This serves to dispel the idea that colour is as central to a work of art as form is or vice versa. The subjugation of one to the other can indeed increase the effectiveness and impact of a work of art incredibly.

In effect however it is neither colour nor form nor certainly any interrelationship between them that is the creation or validation of a work of art. Instead it is the visualisation and execution by the artist of their work that serves as the basis for creation of an artwork and also gives it more than simple pictorial form. As Rothko said “there is no such thing as a good painting about nothing” and as such we cannot conversely make a judgement about a painting simply on the elements which have been used to construct it visually. Effectively rather than art being based on an interrelationship of form and colour it is based on a rationalisation of the necessary means with which to substantiate an artist’s vision, whether or not this necessitates the use of either or both of these elements.

General Comments

The candidate addresses the question immediately and establishes the shape of their argument from the opening statements. They write with a confidence that springs from a depth of knowledge and of both the themes and the examples discussed. Deep and perceptive analysis, and well-chosen quotes are effectively synthesised into the broader argument. The discussion is sustained but presented in an economical and coherent fashion. The candidate is an independent and original thinker.

SECTION B

3. Art of any period derives not only from the art that precedes it but also from the attitudes and concerns of its own time.

Compare TWO or more periods in the history of art to justify or refute this statement.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Outstanding Performance - Performance Descriptor 1

Art of any period derives not only from the art that precedes it but also from the attitudes and concerns of the time.

It has been said that art is a manifestation of many things, from Van Gogh's inner demons to Mondrian's love of jazz music. Yet in all artwork whether staid or revolutionary there is evidence of the artists ultimate interaction with and influence by the society where the artwork has been created and their artistic forebears. While some critics are quick to point to art with no precedent in history such as late Cubism (hermetic) or Jackson Pollock's dripped and splashed canvasses as evidence that art is not necessarily beholden to that which preceded it in their protestations they ironically confirm it must be. Cubism was a response to the grandiose and confined Salon styles that dominated art of the period thereby proving itself linked to that art.

Equally it can be shown that art and society can only be so far removed and in effect most art, and almost all renowned art are intrinsically linked with the prevailing attitudes and concerns of the society in which they were produced. Works of such scale and beauty as Michelangelo's 'The Last Judgement' form a reflection on society, in this case the papacy and validate the idea that art to be a valid object must have relevance.

Relevance is often found in art through assessing its value as a sign of change and reaction and this is what inherently links artistic periods. While pictorially it is difficult to imagine greater difference than that which exists between the High Renaissance period of artistic endeavour and the Cubist works of Picasso, Braque and Gris they are by nature linked. It is in showing two such diverse periods to be linked that it is possible to justify that the statement presented is justifiable, if Cubism and Raphael share common ground then surely most if not all artworks must owe some debt to the work that preceded it.

The High Renaissance was a period of great artistic change (the development of artistic form from the Quattrocento to the Cinquecento was incredible) where a focus on the perfect human body and beauty in shape became all-pervading and central to artistic concerns. It was said about the High Renaissance by Wolfen "the human spirit was universally and perceptibly elevated and a feeling for the significant, for the solemn and noble began to crystallise". This in essence was the crux of High Renaissance thought and it's focus on idealisation, beauty before truth, divinity in the perfection of the human form. With the uncovering of the Belvedere torso, the Apollo Belvedere and Laocoon statues the Grecian ideals of neo-platonism that were set to pervade art (particularly sculpture and painting) until the advent of Cubism were set in motion.

These ideals manifested themselves well in the High Renaissance. They did not seem out of place, overblown, grotesque or staid. Rather they epitomised the central theme of the work of such luminaries as Raphael and Michelangelo and formed an undeniably impressive Italian artistic heritage. However by the 18th and 19th century the ideals that had sustained Renaissance painting and sculpture had formed the bourgeoisie ideal which transmuted into overly-romantic and staid Salon works. The structures of the Salon style of painting, that artists had to conform to be exhibited and bought and therefore survive led to a binding down of artistic innovation unparalleled in any other cultural pursuit. The lack of private or alternative art galleries severely reduced the options of young artists with fresh ideas and works by innovation we now recognise as key such as Cezanne were ridiculed and often left unbought.

It was this situation that led to the rise of two artistic movements, Cubism and Futurism, at the (or almost) same time which aimed to 'revolt' against this Academy (painting academy's trained those artists that went on to paint to hang in the Salon) style. The aforementioned aims of Cubism were to revolt against these structures but on a more painterly basis Picasso and Braque were concerned with a representation of the whole or 'truth' of an object or person. Rather than painting in the High Renaissance style that rendered an appearance of reality Picasso and Braque aimed to show reality as they perceived it through their use of multiple perspectives and a fragmented and shallow picture plane. It can be said that the Cubist treatment of form was directly linked to the Renaissance idealisation of form. Where the Renaissance provided a perception of appearance of reality (albeit one much easier to conceive) Picasso and Braque analysed this and found it wanting. Their rendering of the 'whole' of an object or subject was a reaction against and progression from these Renaissance ideals and techniques.

Futurism's link to the High Renaissance was of a different nature and centred around the doctrine of founding Futurist Marinetti (a poet). The Futurists, as Italians, were infuriated by the focus of young Italians on the past glories of Italy's national heritage. Artistically the Futurists tried to represent movement, speed and industry to contrast with the stately and fixed nature of the Renaissance works that formed the pride and joy of Italy's art galleries. Futurism reacted not against the artistic content of Renaissance work so much as the "decreasing relevance" it had in the mechanised age of industry and automobiles.

As can be seen the link of art with the art that has preceded it is highly significant yet art is also ultimately linked with the society to which it must relate. Again the High Renaissance and Cubism/Futurism illustrate this point.

As stated idealisation and neo-platonism formed the core of High Renaissance artistic thought but the reasons for this are complex. The Renaissance was a time of discovery and perhaps most importantly re-discovery where the proliferation of new technology and ideas was

matched only be the uncovering of old civilizations knowledge and art. This was particularly true of Grecian knowledge and thought with the rediscovery of the writings and teachings of Plato and Socrates. Those in power at the time of the Renaissance embraced these values of antiquity and it is no co-incidence that these values pervaded Renaissance artwork as the great patrons of the time (for example the Medici family and Popes Leo X and Julius II) were those in power. As such Renaissance artwork forms a commentary on the Renaissance as a period, great advances in knowledge mirrored by great progressions in art. Perhaps then it is fitting that one of the best known of Raphaels portraiture works which epitomises Renaissance grace and focus on deeper meaning is of the quintessential Renaissance man, 'Baldassare Castiglione'.

Just as the High Renaissance formed a commentary on the society of it's time this idea is also exposed by particularly Futurist works and ideals. The early 20th century was charecterised by innovations in technology unrivalled since the Renaissance and as a result showed the same revolutionary shift in artistic endeavour. In the same vein as Renaissance works Futurism shows the changing time in which it was produced. With it's focus on movement, speed and industry it mirrors the society in which it was produced. In Boccioni's work 'The City Rises' we see the grandiose nature of this 'new age' of machines and industry conveyed in a work as beautiful and moving as any of that from the Renaissance.

Thereby the statement given can be seen to be justified. Art is certainly always (or almost always) a reflection of that which has come before it and even the periods as pictorially diverse as Cubism and the High Renaissance are linked by common strands despite the large time difference also involved. Again art is generally a reflection on the concerns and attitudes of the time in which it is produced though sometimes this is not as obvious due to the unique human input that pervades every artwork.

General Comments

In this response the candidate engages intellectually with the question, sustaining focus throughout the argument. The response is confident and mature, and demonstrates flexibility and originality in drawing together the threads of a diverse range of knowledge. Evidence is astutely selected and effectively synthesised into the discussion. The candidate moves between art historical periods and examples, fluently and confidently. The response is well structured with an effective introduction which moves directly to the point of the question, followed by a sustained argument. The response is comprehensive but economically stated. Whilst the candidate clearly has exceptional understanding of the conceptual and historical implications of the topic, further in-depth response to artworks used as examples might have further enhanced the arguments.

SECTION B

3. Art of any period derives not only from the art that precedes it but also from the attitudes and concerns of its own time.

Compare TWO or more periods in the history of art to justify or refute this statement.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Performance Descriptor 2

When the Dadaists went on their great 'anti' crusade – anti-logic, anti-establishment, anti-art – in World War One the notion of rejection was an entirely new one. No-one rejected established ideas with the grace and style of Dada. One might say that the Dadaists coined the action of 'rejection' as a movement. This rejection was not only a reaction against what already was and the art preceding Dada (Duchamp's "L.Q.O.C.H" Mona Lisa for example) it also showed an attitude or concern of its own time – WWI, capitalist logic. If Dada as a movement rejected everything then Dada depends on having something to reject. This eventuated as Dada rejecting the very notion of itself. My point is, Dada derived itself from preceding art movements by basing itself on rejecting them. If Dada, notorious as being anti-art, can be interpreted this way, then any movement can be interpreted this way, from any period.

What draws the line between a new art movement and simply an extension of the one preceding it, is change. What was once working to express art no longer works because society has evolved, through science, technology, politics, moral values, and what once did apply, does not anymore.

The History of Art is like watching a series of mini-revolutions occur. Each movement draws, but eventually rejects, from the movement before, as it works to express more relevant concerns to its time.

Take the realists. Works like "The Gleaners" and "Burial at Orleans", show peasant life in France, as part of a growing communistic-orientated concern about the plight of the lower classes. This follows such movements as Romanticism and Baroque, which indulge in the sentiment of nature and the decadence of the wealthy. Realism drew from these, and then promptly rejected them, in order to express what it felt to be more primary political concerns. "The Burial at Orleans", it is said, is "the burial of Romanticism". Movements have no option but to derive from the status quo of the time, even if that derivation is to reject it.

The philosopher Thomas Hobbes proves that true originality does not exist. If someone were to have a purely original thought, for example, in order to communicate that thought, it would have to be translated into pre-established language and conventions in order for it to be understood. Once this is done and re-organised into a set of pre-ordained words and concepts, the thought is no longer truly original.

In the same way, a piece of art cannot be produced out of time with the chronology of the history of art. Occasionally there are artists who come close, such as the obscure and delightful works of Hieronymous Bosh, but even he drew on the religious subject matter of his time, no matter how bizarre and unprecedented his treatment of it was.

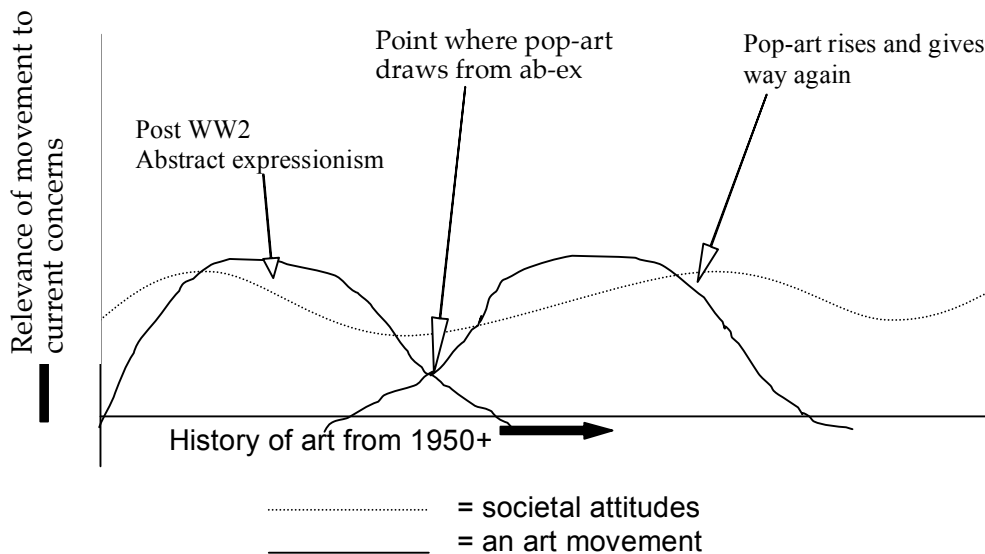
The twentieth century falls like a line of dominoes: one art movement knocking the next down; influencing it, creating the momentum that forms evolution, the cause and effect, the chain reaction that is history.

A society evolves, it takes art with it, as art is a reaction to events and attitudes in society. But in order for new ideas to be effectively communicated (see Hobbes) they must be translated into understandable conventions, thus deriving from the old. This is how art both expresses new concerns and attitudes of its time, while deriving from the movement before.

Look, for example at Litchenstein, parodying Pollock in order to react against him, thus changing what art now is, by shunning what art used to be.

I am in no way saying that art movements are like flavours of the week here, to be savoured one minute and forgotten the next, merely that art, in order to keep being created in the same form, needs to be relevant, And the relevance depends on socitiys attitudes (or even on ostracised members of society's attitudes).

The pattern of old and new movements can almost be graphed in relation to their relevance to society:



As abstract expressionism lost relevance, pop-art gained it, as society changed. The point where abstract expressionism overlaps with Pop-art (seen here marked with an 'X') is Lichtenstein's "Green and yellow brushstrokes".

Art borrows from what precedes it, until what it expresses becomes such a common thought that it no longer needs to. There will always be influences in art, but they are there to express something new: attitudes and concerns of its own time ("Time" being an ever-presence, an eternal 'now', as the past exists as an idea, as does the future, in a single moment, simultaneously).

This is true of any period. We go from the religious art of the medieval era to the enlightenment of the renaissance. In this **episteme** shift, conventions, by necessity overlap, until they can be discarded. Renaissance paints the religious subjects of the medieval era, but with a re-newed naturalism. This develops until we get the humanism and science of the high renaissance. Mannerism and baroque take this and start painting non religious subjects. This is how art evolves dragged with the changing science of its day, its new attitudes and concerns, but by using, the conventions, the style, for a time, of yesterday.

General Comments

The question has been addressed and the candidate demonstrates exceptional understanding of the nature of art historical debate. The response, written confidently and fluently, demonstrates independent thinking and debates various sides of the issue. Specific information has been used to support some key points in this strongly argued response.

However, the response lacked critical response to specific artworks and therefore, should not achieve at a higher level.

SECTION B

4. Art should fascinate, enlighten, inspire and delight.

Use a range of art works to demonstrate your views on this statement.

Sample of assessed candidate work – Performance Descriptor 3

Art should create a multiplicity of experiences for the viewer. It should be an experience in itself, inciting emotion and creating thought. It must fascinate, interesting and captivating audiences with pioneering techniques and themes. It must enlighten the viewer, bringing them new information, new techniques, a new method of thinking – the viewer must leave the piece with more than it came with. The piece must inspire; it must create excitement and enthusiasm for a genre or technique. It must create the love of and need for art in today's society. Above all and most importantly, it must cause delight, more than being confrontational, it must incite joy in the viewer – encourage their love of viewing art by creating a unique experience. To enjoy art is an individual experience; increasing a piece an artist must be prepared to make that experience like no other.

To fascinate a viewer an artist must pioneer new techniques or create interest within a viewer. To fascinate a person is to stimulate interest; in creating interest one ensures their piece will hold the attention of the viewer. Holding their attention is essential because in gaining that, the artist ensures the viewer will observe and analyse their piece, thus ensuring the messages the artist hopes to convey are communicated. In fascinating the audience, artist are ensuring that their aims are displayed.

A piece which clearly shows this will to fascinate is Marcel Duchamp's 'Fountain'. A piece from the Dada movement of the early 20th century, it was created to communicate the aims of that movement to a wider audience. A movement arising out of the wreckage of the first world war, it aimed to reject art, art galleries, and society's perception of art. Inspired by general disillusionment created by the unprecedented level of horror observed in the war, it became a revolution of sorts, an art movement against art movements which attempted to alter society's standards. Marcel Duchamp created his piece 'Fountain' with this mind. The piece consisted of a urinal, turned on its back and inscribed with the signature 'R. Mutt'. This piece was shockingly confrontational to society at the time, and Duchamp intended to incite a general re-assessment of what art consisted of. To exalt the banal and ordinary to the level of 'art' seemed ridiculous; on one level, it was the satirising of the standards of his society. In taking a conventional object and decontextualising it he was redefining public perception of it: in creating interest he was holding his audience's attention. Thus he was better able to communicate his aims and the themes of his movement, showing the necessity of the need to fascinate.

In enlightening the viewer, the artist is showing them different and new

aspects of the world. Through pioneering new techniques and experimental styles they are not only bringing them to the world, they are educating their audience. This not only captivates the viewer, but lets them understand the themes of the piece, allowing them to understand a new aspect of the world, or a new view of events.

Mondrian sought to enlighten his viewer in several ways. His work evolved over his career to almost full abstracting, moving from representational styles in his early works – like 'The Grey Tree' – to the later employment of what he termed 'pure' elements: simple lines, primary colours and space. The use of such 'pure' elements brought him to a deeper realization of his work: through the strategic use of blocks of primary colour, horizontal and vertical lines and large areas of white space, he could create an essential 'harmony' in his work. The balance of horizontal and vertical, colour and space, mimicked the opposites he saw in nature, such as male and female and light and day. The blocks of colour he used were balanced by areas of equal chromatic intensity; he was so convinced of the power of the horizontal/vertical that he left the De Stijl group in protest after a member began using diagonals. Such a theory of harmony was called Neo Plasticism, the style Mondrian pioneered. In employing this new technique to create this effect of balance he gave his works a sense of tranquility, which is evident in pieces such as 'Composition in Red, Blue and Yellow'. Through unveiling such techniques and theories to his audience he was educating them; these theories have influenced such diverse schools as architecture and interior design.

To inspire is one of the great aims of any artist. To create such love of and enthusiasm for art as to inspire it is an honour for any artist, though few achieve it. One of the most inspirational artists of the 20th century is Pablo Picasso; the movement he founded with Georges Braque, Cubism, is the basis for every major movement last century. The basic theory of Cubism was based around breaking down traditional concepts of form. Through breaking form up into facets and planes, Picasso attempted to alter our view of the subject. He attempted to merge background with foreground, working to capture the essence of his subject rather than just depicting it.

The inception of such a style can be seen in Picasso's seminal 'Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)' rather than a fully developed Cubist piece it is proto-cubist, preceding and predicting the movement. It depicts five women, ostensibly prostitutes, standing confrontationally in front of a curtain. Before them lies a bowl of fruit. What was revolutionary was not so much the subject, but the way the subject was depicted; the lines of the women are broken up into angular shapes, making them look harsh and chunky. The foreground seems to merge with the background, signaling Picasso's aim. It was the first piece of its type; the first attempt anyone had made at going against traditional styles of depiction. It was met with shock and disgust; people could not understand the lack of beauty. They did not realize Picasso's aim; to revolutionise the way people observe things, not just to depict beauty for beauty's sake. This new theorem slowly took hold, inspiring first Georges Braque, who painted 'The Grande Nu' as a response, then an entire movement. From

these it went on to inspire generations of artists who tried to view the world in different ways and depict it using different techniques. In this way we see both the importance of inspiration and the artist's attempts to be inspirational: The movements spawned even today work to perceive the world differently, to gain the influence and acclaim of the greatest originator of them all, Picasso.

The most important and essential aim in creating art is to delight the viewer. It is the very purpose of art, to create an object which pleases the eye or interests the mind. To incite joy is one of the purest experiences an artist can achieve, and it is in creating a transcendental feeling for the viewer that their art finds true success. Such an aim is paramount in the work of Mark Rothko. A Colour-Field painter who worked to create an 'almost religious' experience, the viewer's delight was his greatest aim. He worked to 'screen' the viewer from the world around them, creating works of such scale and intensity that they were an environment in themselves. He wished to communicate purely through colour: the strength and vivacity of that colour gave the piece emotive connotations. He pared back his technique, working in an abstract-expressionist style, so that nothing would detract from the colour and the emotions it incited.

His colour-field style took the form of floating blocks of colour. The majority of his works contained such fields, painted with little or no evidence of the artist, against a less vivacious background. The overall balance of the piece depended on the relationship between the two areas of colour: He balanced the chromatic intensity by equaling the strength of one colour with the breadth of the other. An example of this can clearly be seen in 'Untitled 23', where a powerful rectangle of fuschia lies against a background of dark blue. The hand of the artist is only evident in the slight scumbling and feathering of the edges of the rectangle; this gives it the appearance of lying on top of the other colour.

In the sheer scale of the piece and the intensity of its colour, we see the techniques Rothko uses to incite joy in the viewer. He wishes his viewers to be enveloped in the colours, to create a religious experience akin to glimpsing God. In this way we see that creating delight in his viewers was paramount in both his style and aims: his work was geared towards inspiring a truly transcendental experience. The success of his art was dependant on its ability to create this; thus we see Rothko's core aims in hoping to inspire delight in his audience.

To create truly successful art one must fascinate, enlighten, inspire and delight. Art works to hold its viewer's attention; to communicate its aims and inspire an emotional response. It is in fulfilling these aims that art can be considered truly great. Art must break boundaries, create interest, convey a message but above all, it must gratify its audience. In focusing on the former; often artists forget the latter; However to truly enjoy a piece the audience must be confronted, educated and interested. All these things contribute to a truly wonderful experience when viewing art and that is the aim of any artist.

General Comments

The candidate has addressed the question and the introduction defines terms from the question eg fascinate, enlighten. The response makes the candidate's views clear through the effective development of arguments through successive paragraphs, leading to a conclusion that reinforces the argument. Comprehensive knowledge is demonstrated. Communication is effective and there is a clear structure to the response. The response demonstrates confident use of art historical language. The candidate's ideas and arguments are expressed broadly and often in sweeping generalisations insisting on the essential presence of every characteristic listed in the topic.

The response did not achieve at a higher level for the following reasons:

- the analysis of artworks is limited and is not consistently used to support the argument
- relevant information and examples have been included but the candidate fails to fully explain the nature of the relevance.