Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship
Visual Arts 2016

Standards 93306 93307 93308 93309 93310

93307: Design

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance commonly:

- operated at a high pictorial and typographic skill level, with each phase of regeneration and synthesis fluently and confidently executed
- demonstrated a high level of engagement with their topic through in-depth research and drawing phases, enabling them to generate new ideas at every turn through inventive sub-briefs that sought out inventive, diverse, quirky, and unusual communication strategies
- maintained a clear focus towards an overarching aim, such as a call to action campaign or a graphic novel
- presented insightful workbooks that evidenced their level of research, deep knowledge of subject and situational contexts, reflection and analyses, often revealing parallel subjects of inquiry and the invention and thinking behind each idea/outcome.

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship commonly:

- started with knowledge and understanding of all design phases required to communicate compelling outcomes
- deeply invested in their subject, confidently examining context and content and taking risks to pick up on new ideas to inspire new directions and resolve an array of conceptual opportunities
- selected and edited ideas/artwork on the folio with high levels of production, allowing for supporting work to be presented in the workbook, leaving the folio work to promote a fluent journey of highly resolved, complex ideas and visual communication
- played to their own visual and media strengths with an in-depth understanding of their artist/designer/contextual reference.
Other candidates commonly:

- juggled too many elements with a ‘snatch and grab’ attitude towards research, which revealed lower levels of analysis, inability to make good design decisions or develop fluency around conventions and pictorial language
- chose a brief or topic that was self-limiting or superficial whereby they couldn’t engage or deepen their knowledge of the topic, purpose, or associated contexts
- suffered from a lack of critical decision making, often made apparent in the editing of the folio/workbook and the handling of media and conventions
- travelled too slowly to operate with confidence and independence from research and initial ideas, restricting opportunities to regenerate and reform new lines of inquiry beyond initial content banks, ideas, pictorial tactics, and collateral intentions.

Further comments

The Scholarship Design field of candidates actively engaged in briefs that were lateral and multi-layered. These candidates made broad connections, drew on metaphor, created links to popular culture and intermeshed contexts that were pertinent. This was achieved through well-chosen identification of their topic – and then within that they determined their own intentionality, who they were communicating to, and what kind of audience mattered to their brief. Many sought out non-conventional, diverse solutions that were unusual and inventive; they were not afraid to extend their methodologies.

When the conventions, processes, and procedures being employed were crafted with immaculate attention to detail, it enhanced the viewer’s ability to discover the level of intelligence and criticality in message and meaning. Clarity of communication was enabled through a high level of crafting to deal with complex communication.

Good briefs often played to the candidate’s visual strengths, leading to an in-depth investigation. These performances critiqued research findings for strategies and devices appropriate to their topic and ideas, operating without reliance on others’ practice and with a desire to move towards original outcomes. Established practice was mined for tactics and ideas that could help build candidates’ own practice, with many demonstrating the ability to reflect on what was working and to make astute shifts.

Successful candidates understood the design phases required to truly engage at Scholarship level. They adopted an iterative mode of working, returning, and refuelling within each phase to deepen their knowledge of topic, conventions, and concepts, such as understanding of target audience, creation of an original and rich image bank, content generation (character synopsis, narrative structures, slogans, body copy, essays, interviews, etc.), research into context (sectors, genre e.g. gaming, and interactivity), use of design conventions to open up new avenues of inquiry and synthesis and refinement phases.

They also had starting points that positioned a point of view, with those achieving Outstanding really having ‘something to say’. Strong ownership of visual imagery was exhibited throughout, through either careful selection of found imagery or taking their own photographs. With the conceptual and pictorial, they operated these hand-in-hand and one fed the other, embedding a more lateral investigatory approach.
Humour played a key role in generating engaging ideas and narratives, designing original formats (collateral types), clever language and professional management of conventions within final artefacts presented on the folio. New avenues were documented in workbooks, many of which were realised but didn’t make the folio, and any new body of work and extension existed in actuality rather than a description of a new idea.

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93306: Painting

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance commonly:

- maintained a high level of fluency in their chosen painting medium, such as oil, acrylic, watercolour
- were willing to experiment and think laterally with a highly critical viewpoint and to unpick what is going well; their ideas drove the selection of established practice
- used research as a key component of the workbook and ongoing alternative practice with strong critical evaluation, effectively incorporating this back into the folio work
- showed a continual high level of inventiveness and sophistication in their working processes.

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship commonly:

- further developed ideas through articulate employment of painting techniques and concepts
- integrated secondary source material with their own photo shoots and made use of Photoshop as a developmental tool, demonstrating their understanding of all aspects of the art making process
- had no predetermined ending, arriving at it through sustained exploration and investigation
- provided plenty of evidence of reflection and questioning strategies in relation to the production of their work.

Other candidates commonly:

- were unclear about what their proposition was to begin with and the relevant formal concerns changed to different media approaches rather than spending time developing skill in a chosen medium such as watercolour, oil, etc.
- if involved in a genre-like ‘narrative’, spent so much time on the storytelling that they forgot to focus on the use of paint, and how to extend their own knowledge of paint
- described their making process across the folio boards, rather than analytically reflecting on progress in order to further develop ideas and concepts
- tended to list artists by describing biographical information and leaped around established practice examples.
Further comments

The 2016 Scholarship Painting field was extremely competitive. Many high performing candidates entered for Scholarship, which was exciting to witness. As an indication of the breadth of performance and depth of intellectual enquiry, these candidates all engaged in strong analytical and reflective painting propositions with clarity of purpose and editorial restraint.

Typically, folios had very high-level entry points with earlier works edited off the folio and relocated to the workbook. Outstanding candidates behaved as artists, rather than just working to criteria. They were original and innovative in their combination of ideas and clearly understood their proposition. These candidates took a position, which was further expounded through the dialogue in their workbooks, clearly stating ‘this is what it is, this is what it is about’; providing a good understanding of pictorial conventions appropriate to their own painting and the genre.

Overall, candidates demonstrated an exceptionally high standard of painting skills. Identifying painting mediums and styles appropriate to their skill level and topic was key for those that were able to achieve Scholarship. These propositions were often operating from a conceptual base in their painting work but still explored the topic through the conventions; ie, the underpinning idea was explored through paint, as opposed to having a strong idea and illustrating that idea. A number of workbooks were astoundingly good this year, with a higher level of critical analysis used to transport the enquiry forward and advance the practice.

Many engaged in play or invention to propel their propositions forward, which were applied with a critical viewpoint without falling into device-focused additives. Their ideas drove the selection of artist reference/contexts. The distinction here is that external practice did not dictate their next move, i.e. synthesis of the artist reference was integrated into their own image making as a developmental tool. Candidates were aware of what they derived from artists, whether that was ways of making, imagery, techniques, concepts, ideas. They knew what they were relating to and demonstrated strong contextual knowledge that underpinned the work. They understood their own contexts and how these could relate to the broader field of research. Candidates who excelled extended their work through the practice of painting. They didn't 'jump about', instead refining through constant pushing and testing new options.

Scholarship candidates actively make, edit and critically reflect. It was good to see more enquiries based in abstraction. Candidates are encouraged to work with abstraction as a topic, modality or to utilise a more formalist approach. Also, to enter the enquiry with abstracted forms, they don’t need to show where it came from. A more expressionistic approach encourages an in-depth understanding of the language of painting, ie in this mode they are often 'living with the paint'.

93310: Photography

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance commonly:
- established a comprehensive relationship between the folio and workbook, authentically embracing extended practice
- produced a large volume of work, both supporting and parallel, which was indicative of the level of commitment they had for their project
- provided contextual information and new possibilities in their workbooks that allowed for reflective engagement and exploration of processes
- utilised various ‘types’ within a submission such as the constructed, physical, arrangement of materials and items including using performative processes to make work.

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship commonly:

- explored a range of photographic processes and image making conventions in both the workbook and folio
- engaged in research pertinent to their critical decision making and created links between various types of established practice and their own work, in order to provide answers and options for further expansion of ideas
- were very reflective in the critique process of their work, whether it was completing a series of experimentations before deciding on a particular process to use or investigating an idea from more than one viewpoint
- proposed research questions in the workbook that informed further making and addressed the proposition rationale; the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ to test and experiment using specific processes and conventions.

Other candidates commonly:

- did not invest time into researching their proposition, hence the relationship between the workbook and folio could be distant with many passages of work being completely disconnected
- lacked critical analysis skills, particularly when having to make decisions, whether these were around the production of their work or specific techniques to use
- presented a workbook that was made ‘post’ production to the folio, thus the workbook behaved as a report rather than evidence that could activate thinking, research, and enhancement to the overall proposition
- offered no explanation to the ‘why’ and ‘how’ regarding the many and varied processes they were using and provided large amounts of text that in some cases undermined the folio work.

Further comments

The 2016 Scholarship Photography field at the high end provoked academically rich enquiries that positioned intelligent social, political, cultural, and ecological propositions. Successful candidates used the medium inventively and remained interested in using the medium for its advantages. They were concerned with making ‘good’ photographs and worked with the potentialities of what the medium can do to a high level.

Successful Scholarship candidates valued the relationship between the workbook and the folio, using the workbook to create backstory, notate process and methodology, and record conceptual and critical decision making. They ‘lived’ the folio – there was a personal connection often in
evidence by way of family or individual experience as evidenced in their topic selections. Finding these kinds of connections allowed candidates to use ‘real life’ knowledge to create a breadth of work and gave them the ability to return to the environment or situation (topic), research further and speak with people, as and if necessary. It is important to select a topic that can be revisited. Having access to the topic in an appropriate form is key, so that when ideas are developed or renegotiated, this process can happen authentically.

A range of different ways of seeing/framing/viewing within an image was well utilised across the board. These included film, digital, phone camera, studios, sets, sites, seeing through glass – all of which were thematically founded, generating purposeful enquiries. Colour was used to create control via visual coding of objects, studio shooting, flattened and shortened space. This was considered critically from the outset as a conceptual aspect of the enquiry, drawing in appropriately. The symbolic potential of colour was intelligently discussed in workbooks and the palette subsequently shaped for the investigation.

Candidates directed what they wanted to happen within the frame, including excellent staging and subtlety in their direction of models/subject matter, such as using different modes of lighting from artificial to diffuse to natural (as a durational presence or time-related). This was matched with strategic variety of lighting: spotlight, blinding, fading, etc.

There was evidence of the ability to shift technical and methodological strategies as required: straight doco to manipulated, conceptual to formal; the depth that candidates are able to fathom from their initial ideas is growing each year, creating rigorous investigations and enquiries. A few more submissions than previous years dealt with analogue processes, demonstrating their understanding that the techniques and processes used were valuable to their idea and conceptual rationale. Contextual understanding was well supported by workbooks, providing a thorough outlining of key moves and strategies and their relations to established practice.

93309: Printmaking

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance commonly:

- showed an exceptionally high level of personal ownership and depth of thinking through the thorough investigation of a complex proposition
- explored technical, pictorial, and conceptual concerns intelligently through analysis and clarification in an interconnected relationship between the portfolio and workbook
- demonstrated a high level of technical fluency through strong drawing skills, based on the candidate’s individual stylistic strengths and interests
- used humour/irony in a sophisticated yet subtle manner to build and expand ideas.

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship commonly:
• set up a personalised proposition, broad enough to sustain an ongoing investigation and enable the development of a depth and range of ideas
• revealed thorough, sustained, and engaged research in workbooks, including related ideas from other fields, critical analysis of own work, own photographs, reflection on unsuccessful works, synthesis of ideas from established/contemporary practice, technical explorations, collages, thumbnail studies, new works, and future possibilities
• produced work that consistently demonstrated a high level of technical skill and fluency, often intuitively integrating a number of processes
• confidently employed a range of pictorial devices to explore composition and extend ideas.

Other candidates commonly:

• took too much time to establish and clearly communicate their ideas/concepts
• under-researched or had a proposition that was too limiting and didn’t give them enough ‘running room’ or scope
• used description in the workbook to narrate ‘what’ they did rather than recording their thinking to explain ‘why’ they made those decisions
• included images and descriptions of artists’ works but did not always make note of relationships or connections about how and why these were being used to inform their own thinking and artmaking.

Further comments

The 2016 Scholarship Printmaking field was exemplary for the range of print processes employed and the drawing skills involved in the generation of rich imagery and conceptually led investigations. Typically, submissions operated in two ways: as emotive personal diaries, conceptualised through reasoning and process-driven enquiries; while others chose idiosyncratic topics, where they found their ideas through their own experiences, but always contextualised these through fitting artist reference and appropriate links to external reference. It is important that candidates find a topic that they can be committed to and remain interested in for the duration.

Many Scholarship submissions produced authentic enquiries with a strong commitment to ideas. This was often revealed through analysis and reflective dialogue found in the workbook: candidates candidly described why they did it, and then gave the reasons for why they were doing it. They knew when to make comment and made pertinent and genuine clarifications. Workbooks that enhanced the folio through exploration, experimentation, analysis, reflection, and clarification of ideas, rather than step-by-step description, were characteristic of the higher end of Scholarship.

A deep concern with the production quality of the image and its intended communication is an attribute that characterised many of the successful Scholarship submissions. The selected propositions were purposeful, with fluid and seamless integration of relief and intaglio and related media. An extensive range of processes was used; no submission was reliant on one type. This included traditional processes such as monoprint, relief, and intaglio combined with other processes like digital, transfer, collagraphs and pronto prints. There was also intelligent exploration of printing onto other surfaces – transparencies, fabrics, objects, etc. nuanced with technique and media.
Colour was used confidently and with purpose, symbolically or to add to ideas/concepts. It was also treated with sensitivity: full tonal palettes, minimal and/or selective colour palettes were employed to create atmosphere, meaning and signification. Subtle tonal shifts (limited palette) and transparent veils (layering) were often used to convey concepts and to engage formal properties, such as spatial depth and opacity. Collage was also purposefully employed to explore and reform new ideas and extend compositional and spatial concerns; for example, collagraphs were used to construct image or used to transfer the surface. To this end, candidates engaged in widely explorative, inventive, and imaginative approaches. demonstrating a high level of expertise in the use of media, material, and process.

A very strong sense of ownership over a topic and investigation was a noteworthy feature. In many submissions (folio and workbook), a clear and articulate student voice was revealed through irony, tragedy, and humour, in conjunction with specifically selected print modalities such as illustration and storytelling. Overall, candidates used a broad range of printmaking processes with total expertise and confidence to purposefully explore and innovatively investigate options.

93308: Sculpture

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance commonly:

- demonstrated a highly sophisticated understanding of selected materials and processes that allowed them to articulate ideas fluently
- employed methodologies that enabled complementary methods and processes to expand the ideas within the central proposition
- considered every step critically in order to advance the central proposition and open up new possibilities
- utilised conceptual elements that were integrated into the sculptural work through well resolved, formal decision making.

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship commonly:

- embarked on the submission with a high level of technical and conceptual ambition
- understood scale, materiality, and site as critical elements for articulating ideas within sculptural practice
- consumed and digested established practice within a range of research and sculptural work that expanded the central proposition within appropriate contexts of contemporary and historical sculptural practice
- engaged in a physicality of making that promoted a clear statement of sculptural intent.

Other candidates commonly:
• made arbitrary comments about the intention of the work presented on the folio or suggested the meaning of the work in written form, when this was clearly not evident in the sculptural work
• demonstrated technical difficulty that impaired their ability to address sculptural concerns or extend ideas into a feasible sculptural proposition
• presented images of established practice that were either unrelated to the submission or undermined the work presented on the folio
• were too descriptive of process in written form or presented narrated video documentation discussing how the work was made (within a digital moving image submission).

Further comments

The 2016 Scholarship Sculpture field was strong for the range of making and variety of approaches employed by candidates and the facility and management of selected materials and sculptural process. The level of ambition in Sculpture was compelling. High performing candidates kept pushing for new possibilities and were relentless in meeting their own expectations. They set up open-ended enquiries, giving themselves an ambitious series of questions to investigate through various iterative processes. Each work added another layer to the enquiry; there was no repetition.

Investigations undertaken were often authentic, student-driven, and well-focused because the candidates themselves were interested in their topic. Candidates grappled with the brief ‘on-the-spot’ with each work made, i.e. they made a conscious choice about what they wanted to think about, explore and make work about. For many, the folio started on high note indicating they had produced a fair amount of work leading up to this point and, therefore, understood their sculptural proposition well. This was evidenced on the first panel by sophisticated material investigations and the production of well resolved experimental works, such as object-oriented sculptural drawings and material explorations. These submissions did not have any filler on the folio; every work counted or made a step forward. This can be achieved only through constant analysis and critical decision making.

Sophistication and fluency with sculptural techniques and material processes were noteworthy features. Facility across a diverse range of mediums was employed to a high level: the technical matched the conceptual and was strategically used to advance the enquiry and engage in inventive risk-taking strategies to extend ideas well beyond the initial proposition. Many candidates engaged in research, drawing on other fields of practice, such as psychology, science, and politics; in these instances, they found synchronicity and then did the research to create relevance, establishing authentic links and strong ownership of collected references.

Overall, the workbooks were relevant and substantial documents, revealing a genuine workbook practice that was well edited to ensure only critical research and supporting studies that added to the folio submission were included. Candidates also presented research in the workbook that drew on a range of personal cultural interests to inform the selected aesthetic position within the sculptural practice.

Many candidates engaged humour as a conceptual tool to question everyday life concerns through sculptural strategies. Alongside this, they identified and exploited a clear aesthetic, look, and style that was important to the enquiry and an integral component of the making. In this way, they could expand upon technical successes by ambitiously testing out logical yet surprising technical outcomes. There was a clarity in the photographic documentation of work on the folio and in the
workbook, clearly evidencing context and sculpturally centric concerns, such as scale, form, surface related to object, site, and installation.

Subject page

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