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91482



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Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

## Level 3 Art History 2025

### 91482 Demonstrate understanding of style in art works

Credits: Four

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Demonstrate understanding of style in art works.	Demonstrate in-depth understanding of style in art works.	Demonstrate perceptive understanding of style in art works.

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

**There is ONE question to answer in this booklet.**

Make sure that you have Resource Booklet L3-ARTR.

If you need more room for your answer, use the extra space provided at the back of this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2-8 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in the margins (/////). This area will be cut off when the booklet is marked.

**YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.**

**Excellence**

**TOTAL 08**

## Page 1

Make sure you have the paper Resource Booklet L3-ARTR.

### INSTRUCTIONS

There is ONE question that covers all six Level 3 Art History areas of study. Answer BOTH parts of the question.

Use Resource Booklet L3-ARTR to answer the question. The definition below may help you.

### Definition

*Style* refers to the characteristics of an art work that, when combined, distinguish the style of an artist, art movement, period, or place. These characteristics may include ways of using line, colour, tone, light, form, composition, space, scale, shape, mass, texture, ornament, and media.

### QUESTION

Select TWO art works from Plates 1–30 in the resource booklet. These art works may be from the same area of study, or from two different areas of study.

Plate 1: 21: Hopper, New York Movie

Plate 2: 23: McCahon, Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury

Choose TWO of the following stylistic characteristics:

- Space       Form       Line
- Composition       Media       Modernist design

- (a) Using supporting evidence from your two selected art works and their contexts, explain the treatment of your chosen characteristics in each of the two art works.
- (b) Explain the reasons for the similarities and differences between the styles of the two art works, with reference to the time and place in which each artist was working.

## PLANNING

using Edward Hoppers *New York Movie* & McCahons *Six days in Nelson and canterbury*, a) using supporting evidence from your two selected art works and their contexts, explain the treatment of your chosen characteristics in each of the two art works

b) explain the reasons for similarities and differences between the styles of the two art works, with reference to the time and place in which each artist was working.

write app 800-900 words

focus on composition and form for stylistic characteristics.

3 paragraphs

1st paragraph, talk about composition and form in mccaahon's six days in nelson and canterbury

2nd paragraph, talk about composition and form in hoppers new york movie

3rd paragraph, exp reasons for similarities and differences between the styles of the two art works, referencing the time and place that each artists was working in.

## ANSWER SPACE

Type your answer in the space below. You should aim to write a concise response of no more than 800–900 words. The quality of your writing is more important than the length of your answer. (The counter will change colour when you reach the recommended word count.)

B I U ☰ ▾ ☷ ▾ ↶ ↷ ?

The stylistic qualities of an artwork are shaped by the artist's treatment of visual elements such as composition and form, and these are deeply influenced by the time and place in which the artwork was created. Edward Hopper's *New York Movie* and Colin McCahon's *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury* provide a clear contrast between American urban realism and New Zealand modernist landscape painting. By examining how each artist arranges space, constructs forms, and manipulates visual structure, we can understand not only the stylistic differences between their works, but also the cultural conditions that produced them. Through a comparison of their approaches to composition and form, this essay will demonstrate how historical and geographical contexts shaped the distinctive styles evident in both artworks.

The stylistic treatment of composition and form in Edward Hopper's *New York Movie*, (1939) demonstrates his characteristic concern with stillness, isolation, and controlled spatial design. The painting is divided into two distinct compositional zones: the darkened cinema auditorium on the left and the brightly lit usherette on the right. Hopper uses this juxtaposition to structure a balanced yet emotionally loaded composition. The theatre space is arranged in receding diagonal rows of seats that draw the viewer's eye deep into the pictorial plane, creating a strong sense of linear perspective. Hopper was highly influenced by the precisionist tendencies of the early-twentieth century American realism, and this is evident in the crisp architectural lines and clean geometry of the theatre's walls, columns, and lighting fixtures. These structural forms act as visual guides, splitting the space into ordered blocks that frame the solitary figure.

The figure of the usherette, rendered in soft but sculptural modelling, becomes the emotional focal point of the painting. Hopper shapes her form with carefully modulated chiaroscuro: light from the wall sconce falls across her face, hair, and arms, creating a delicate three-dimensionality. Her pose - leaning against the wall, looking down, arms folded - adds to the introspective mood, emphasising volume but also psychological distance. Hopper's treatment of form therefore moves between realism and expressive stylisation. Everything is depicted with observational clarity but the simplification of detail and careful placement of shapes generate a stylised loneliness characteristic of Hopper's work. The composition reinforces this mood through asymmetry; although the right side contains the illuminated figure, the left side holds the majority of the frame, engulfed in shadow and empty space. Hopper uses this imbalance as a compositional device to heighten the theme of emotional isolation within an urban environment.

In contrast, Colin McCahon's treatment of composition and form in *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury* (1950), reflects an entirely different set of artistic aims. Instead of the urban interior of Hopper, McCahon creates a sequence of landscape panels that together form a rhythmic narrative of New Zealand's South Island scenery. The composition is structured horizontally, echoing both the panoramic sweep of the land and the sequential nature of a journey. Each panel functions almost like a frame in a film strip, but rather than portraying photographic realism, McCahon uses bold, simplified shapes to reduce the landscape into essentialised forms. Hills are rendered as curving black outlines; fields and sky become large planar blocks of earthy browns, muted greens and chalky whites. This compositional flattening creates a dynamic tension between abstraction and representation.

Form in McCahon's work is deliberately rough and expressive. His brushwork is visible, gestural, and sometimes raw, emphasising the material presence of paint. Instead of carefully modelled three-dimensional forms, McCahon favours flat silhouettes and stark tonal contrasts that give the landscape a spiritual weight rather than a literal description. In *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury*, the land becomes a symbolic structure rather than a naturalistic scene.

The use of panels strengthens this effects: each segment is a compositional unit that contributes to an overarching formal rhythm, guiding the viewer through space and time. McCahon's treatment of form therefore seeks to reveal an inner truth or sacred quality within the land, aligning with his interest in religion, identity, and the metaphysical nature of place.

The similarities between Hopper's and McCahon's stylistic treatment of composition and form arise primarily from their shared desire to communicate a strong emotional or spiritual atmosphere. Both reduce details to emphasise essential shapes - Hopper through simplified architectural geometry and McCahon through bold contouring. Each artist uses composition as a psychological device: Hopper to highlight solitude within modern urban life, McCahon to express a spiritual relationship with the land. Additionally, both employ asymmetry to create visual tension and direct attention to their chosen focal areas. They also avoid ornamental complexity. Hopper's cinema interior, although realistic, is stripped back to necessary forms, while McCahon's landscape is pared down to symbolic essentials.

However the differences in their style result from their distinct time, place, and artistic contexts.

Hopper worked in 1930s New York during a period of rapid urbanisation, mass entertainment, and alienation. His realist style was shaped by American precisionism, the Ashcan school, and film noir aesthetics. These influences encouraged a careful, almost cinematic observation of the city and its psychological undercurrents. Consequently, Hopper's composition emphasises constructed geometry, controlled lighting, and realistic space. Form is shaped by naturalistic modelling because Hopper aims to capture the emotional state of individuals living within the modern metropolis. His isolation is urban, interior, and human-focused.

McCahon on the other hand, was working in mid-century New Zealand, a young country still searching for a distinct artistic identity. New Zealand's art scene in the 1940s and 50s was dominated by regionalism and the desire to develop a visual language rooted in local landscapes and cultural experiences. Influenced by modernist abstraction, religious symbolism, and the vastness of the South Island, McCahon rejected European naturalism in favour of a more spiritual, pared-down visual approach. His composition is expansive, horizontal, and sequential, reflecting the physical openness of the land and the idea of a journey. His forms are abstracted because he wants to reveal metaphysical truths rather than surface appearances. Where Hopper finds meaning in the details of a single moment, McCahon finds it in the unfolding story of the land itself.

In essence, Hopper and McCahon differ because they painted two different worlds for different purposes - one exploring interior urban loneliness, and the other expressing spiritual connections to landscape. Their treatments of composition and form reflect these contexts and produce the distinctive stylistic qualities of each artwork.

## Excellence

**Subject:** Art History

**Standard:** 91482

**Total score:** 08

Grade score	Marker commentary
E8	<p>The response works around the recommended 900 words and provides a perceptive and comprehensive analysis of the reasons for similarities and differences in style between Hopper's 'New York Movie' and McCahon's 'Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury'. The candidate's understanding of the relevant contexts is used purposefully to support the comparative analysis of style through the discussion of specific evidence from the art works. This is demonstrated through phrases like "Hopper's realist style was shaped by American precisionism, the Ashcan School, and film noir aesthetics. These influences encouraged a careful, almost cinematic observation of the city and its psychological undercurrents" in relation to Hopper's composition that "emphasises constructed geometry and realistic space." Comprehensive understanding is shown when the candidate reasons for the difference in McCahon's use of more "expansive and sequential composition" by stating how he was "influenced by modernist abstraction, religious symbolism, and the vastness of the South Island, McCahon rejected the European naturalism in favour of a more spiritual, pared-down visual approach." Overall, the response provides insightful explanations and strong use of terminology that show the candidate's comprehensive understanding of the styles specified in the two art works.</p>