

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship Art History 2025

Performance standard 93301

General commentary

The questions in the 2025 Art History Scholarship examination offered a wide range of choices and enabled a variety of approaches. All questions were answered, with candidates having no difficulty in understanding them. The most popular were Questions 2 and 6, but all questions attracted responses. The text by Kate Boucher selected for Section C was straightforward and the ideas clear, eliciting detailed responses from most candidates. In this section, candidates are required to explain in their own words the ideas raised by the author and discuss them in terms of works they have studied. To achieve Scholarship, candidates needed to do more than simply quote one or two ideas and describe one or two art works in isolation. Candidates should demonstrate familiarity with the entire text and refer to a range of art works in support of their response.

In general, candidates wrote well, with strong communication skills.

It is visual analysis that requires ongoing attention, and it was not always clear that candidates knew what visual analysis was, instead settling for description and context. There is a distinct difference between description and analysis of an art work. It is critical in Sections A and B that candidates are able to deconstruct what the artist has done, explaining what elements the artist has used in the making of the work, and how and where they have been used to achieve particular effects and meanings. At this level, candidates should also be confident with the use of appropriate art language to help clarify meaning and knowledge. One problem evident in several works was the selection of art works that were unsuitable for the question, or which did not provide them with the opportunity for a rich, detailed visual analysis. Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* was one of these, so too was Rothko's work and some sculptures and performance works.

It is critical that candidates understand fully what visual analysis means and that they are familiar with the requirements of the Assessment Schedule.

Reading the question carefully is important. As examples, Questions 3 and 6 required a clear position to be taken – in Question 3, is composition the most important aspect of style in an art work? In Question 6, is art's purpose more educational than decorative? To achieve Scholarship in these questions, candidates needed to take a stance rather than simply discuss the statement.

Report on performance standard

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with **Outstanding Performance** commonly:

- provided highly-developed visual analysis of appropriate art works
- wrote convincing, mature, focused and confident responses
- demonstrated comprehensive depth and breadth of knowledge
- integrated their evidence in a sophisticated manner
- stayed in touch with the text in Section C in a well-supported critical response to the author's ideas.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- wrote clear, cohesive responses to the question asked
- presented high-level visual analysis of the art works discussed
- demonstrated extensive knowledge and understanding relevant to the question
- selected relevant works which gave them plenty to talk about in terms of visual analysis
- engaged with the text in Section C, naming the author, discussing the ideas, and touching back to the text in their discussion.

Candidates who were **not awarded Scholarship** commonly:

- described works rather than analysing the elements of the works and how and why they had been used
- chose unsuitable works that did not allow them a rich discussion in response to the question
- wrote generalised answers
- offered little relevant evidence
- showed minimal understanding
- did not discuss the author's ideas in Section C.