

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship Visual Arts 2025

Performance standard(s): 93306, 93307, 93308, 93309, 93310

Performance standard 93306: Painting

General commentary

Scholarship Painting submissions in 2025 demonstrated full engagement, technical fluency, and deeply personal topics. Candidates represented a broad scope of possible avenues of investigation with Scholarships awarded across diverse practices within both traditional and contemporary approaches. Personal industry, innovation, and expertise were apparent in digital painting, lyrical and gestural abstraction, formal explorations of landscape, oil-based methodologies, and conceptually driven propositions. Candidates frequently combined iterative strategies with critical and analytical thinking to develop distinctive personal stylistic approaches and aesthetic.

Successful submissions demonstrated clear ownership and clarity of intent. Candidates selected areas of study that held personal significance and were grounded in thorough material and conceptual inquiry. Initial portfolio works demonstrated purposeful momentum and were supported in the workbook by exploratory drawing and painting practices prior to presentation or refined as mastery of their technique developed. Candidates who drew, sketched, experimented, and tested approaches to establish preferred modes of working commonly developed mature and informed bodies of work.

Workbook evidence was presented in a variety of ways appropriate to individual modes of practice. Submissions included parallel investigations taken directly from sketchbooks and visual diaries, collated highlights from class-based work, and examples of work produced for exhibition beyond school. Immersion and thoughtful investment into producing original painting was seen. Candidates also presented curated and highly organised submissions that were discursive in nature, supported by clear links to reference material and theoretical frameworks underpinning their own work. Workbook documentation was reflective in nature, positioning the candidate at the centre of the inquiry through questions and analysis that advanced their response in relation to their conceptual direction or technical discoveries.

Use of artist models was most effective when candidates made direct and relevant connections in terms of techniques, processes, and materials. Successful candidates synthesised or combined specific elements to produce a distinct personal style. Candidates who were less successful often relied on unrelated models or produced work to the point of pastiche. Technical fluency was evident when candidates understood why and how particular elements were employed to create desired effects and communicate ideas. Sophisticated and considered colour palettes, purposeful manipulation of tone and light, and strong formal relationships between passage of thinking across multiple works contributed to convincing submissions. Confident handling across a range of mediums, attention to detail, fluency of mark and gesture, and assured shifts in scale and context offered viable strategies for showcasing strengths in relation to the Scholarship criteria.

The marking panel noted some instances where generative AI had been used to summarise ideas or offer potential interpretations and directions for further development. Use of new and emergent technologies has always been swiftly adopted and incorporated by artists, into their artistic practice. Candidates needed to ensure that tools were not used in place of their own thinking or presented in

ways that compromised authenticity. Clearly labelling, captioning, and acknowledging sources remained important in communicating intent.

Overall, Scholarship Painting candidates worked at an exceptionally high level and demonstrated considerable depth of understanding through Practice-as-Research. Submissions showed innovative approaches to forming new thinking through consideration of complex ideas situated within personal, social, and cultural contexts. Candidates demonstrated intellectual and creative rigour as they engaged with, and contributed to, visual culture within Aotearoa New Zealand.

Report on performance standard

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

- presented a high level of research, critical analysis, and fluency
- positioned their artwork clearly within a wider conceptual framework
- understood their strengths and embedded these through processes and techniques aligned with communication and intent
- documented processes and ideas, trialling options prior to committing to the portfolio
- engaged in a sustained body of practice across the year
- demonstrated consistent mastery and a high level of finish within their chosen approach
- related personal thinking to established social, political, cultural, or artistic concerns.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- demonstrated personal ownership and investment in producing original iconography
- integrated established artist-driven processes and techniques with thoughtfulness
- communicated intent clearly through workbook pages connected to broader concepts and contexts
- focused on developing fluency in media handling
- presented a well-understood proposition that was expanded through experimentation
- maintained consistency in planning of work passages, colour schemes, formats, and layouts.

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

- demonstrated inconsistencies between portfolio and workbook practice
- used workbook space for extended description of portfolio works rather than analysis
- included extended artist biographies rather than relevant examination of influence
- lacked thoughtful analysis connecting existing practice and their own work
- relied heavily on secondary sources without developing a distinct visual language.

Performance standard 93307: Design

General commentary

Scholarship Design submissions in 2025 demonstrated confidence and adaptability across a wide range of topics. Candidates showed depth in conceptual thinking and applied design principles effectively across multiple formats, including predominantly print-based portfolios, digital moving image (DMI), and integrated workbooks. The strongest submissions reflected independence and ownership of inquiry, with clear evidence of intentional decision-making from the outset and a sustained commitment to producing cohesive, audience-focused outcomes.

Media skills were a defining strength of higher-performing submissions. Candidates demonstrated advanced and purposeful use of tools and techniques, applying them appropriately to specific design

contexts. This included fluent control of traditional and digital processes, mastery of typography, sequencing, layout, and the ability to integrate technical and conceptual elements seamlessly. Outcomes were highly resolved, showing clarity, refinement, and professional-level execution.

Workbooks played a critical role in evidencing coherent inquiry and reflective thinking. Strong submissions documented a clear and logical design process, supported by robust research strategies and critical commentary. Candidates made explicit links between intent, process, and outcome, using annotation and reflective writing to justify decisions. Iterative development was clearly evidenced, with purposeful refinement and systematic progression across all phases of practice. A notable feature was the inclusion of a personal statement outlining the significance of the chosen topic and its relevance to the intended audience, establishing context and purpose for the design inquiry.

Integration of research and creative practice was consistently observed in Scholarship-level work. Candidates demonstrated deep engagement with subject matter, translating contextual understanding into conceptually rigorous design solutions. Research informed visual language, narrative strategies, and audience-focused communication, resulting in cohesive and innovative outcomes across both physical and digital formats.

Submissions awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance extended this further by locating a personal connection to the topic and demonstrating originality and depth of thinking. These candidates established distinctive visual languages through deliberate use of design strategies and conventions, reinforced by fluent control of media and technical processes. Their work elevated authentic narrative voices and demonstrated sophisticated design thinking and production through clarity, refinement, and professional-level execution.

Across Scholarship submissions, strong annotation, systematic development of ideas, and high production values were key indicators of success. Candidates who demonstrated independence, critical engagement, and the ability to synthesise concept, format, and execution consistently met the performance criteria for Scholarship.

Report on performance standard

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

- located a personal connection to the topic, demonstrating originality and depth of thinking
- took ownership of inquiry through insightful and well-informed knowledge of topics
- integrated robust research strategies to inform decision-making
- deliberately applied design strategies and conventions to establish a distinctive visual language
- demonstrated fluent control of media and technical processes across all outcomes
- integrated technical and conceptual elements with confidence and precision
- elevated an authentic narrative voice through considered design decisions and visual cohesion
- designed for an intended audience, producing highly resolved and accessible outcomes
- synthesised concept, format, and execution with independence and critical insight
- evaluated and refined ideas fluently across all phases of practice
- documented well-edited workbooks featuring critical reflection and contextual rationale
- maintained consistent tone of voice, graphic treatments and application to media
- maintained conceptual and visual cohesion across all outcomes
- demonstrated sustained independence and critical engagement
- communicated ideas with clarity and emotional resonance
- evidenced highly skilled workflow organisation, and communication.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- demonstrated strong analysis and critical thinking in the development of ideas
- consolidated and extended concepts with increasing confidence
- integrated skills and knowledge to clarify and strengthen outcomes
- maintained coherent and well-annotated workbooks
- established clear links between process, decision-making, and the evolution of ideas
- resolved production values across outcomes
- engaged meaningfully with subject matter, showing genuine interest and contextual understanding
- began with thorough and original investigation that informed subsequent development
- applied visual strategies with clarity and communicative intent
- demonstrated fluency in workflows, materials, media, and conventions
- refined visual language with control and consistency, and communicative intent
- integrated research across multiple stages that supported contextual understanding
- adapted methods to suit selected formats while maintaining cohesive design thinking
- applied technical understanding of print or digital conventions to resolve outcomes
- maintained audience-focused communication strategies throughout
- delivered resolved final works with conceptual and technical resolution
- used the workbook effectively to evaluate decisions and inform next stages
- sustained development through systematic refinement and critical engagement.

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

- presented briefs that lacked conceptual depth and sustained investigation
- presented briefs that did not allow for independence and critical engagement
- demonstrated limited originality or personal engagement with subject matter
- showed weaker connections between design phrases of concept, format, and execution
- applied design conventions inconsistently, limiting visual clarity
- provided minimal critical analysis or reflective commentary of design decisions in workbooks
- integrated research superficially or inconsistently across the inquiry
- demonstrated limited control of media, processes, or production values
- communicated ideas without clear audience focus or contextual alignment
- relied on construction steps or software screenshots rather than conceptual progression
- demonstrated limited visual fluency and resolution
- showed minimal lateral thinking or extension of ideas beyond initial concepts.

Performance standard 93308: Sculpture

General commentary

Scholarship Sculpture submissions in 2025 demonstrated a broad range of approaches to sculptural practice. Candidates planned their projects with sophistication and showed strategic thinking that supported ambitious developments in scale and labour. They drew from personally meaningful subject matter, establishing strong conceptual foundations that informed their sculptural propositions. This enabled many candidates to adopt exploratory, playful approaches to materials and objects.

Successful submissions linked their innovative practices to established sculptural traditions and thoughtfully integrated contemporary references from a variety of cultural contexts.

A notable strength in successful scholarship submissions, was the way ambitious sculptural projects were realised through a community approach to making. Candidates accessed diverse forms of technical knowledge, drawing from different communities whose skills contributed to the same sculptural outcomes. Successful submissions synthesised multiple sources of expertise. For example, a candidate may start by making objects or components with the assistance of the schools Technology workshop and the expertise of the staff that allows for sophisticated manufacturing to occur. Specialist equipment like vacuum forming, welding and laser cutting tools were utilised while drawing on elderly whānau members who have the mātauranga of traditional crafting. This expanded the candidate's technical confidence and supported the development of their own mātauranga. Many ambitious works were possible only through well-coordinated community support, which included whānau, peers, teachers, and school volunteers. Some candidates demonstrated advanced craft knowledge—such as taxidermy—that they had developed since they were a small child. Others worked within their local environments, allowing for projects that reflected real-world scales and authentic connections to site and community.

Successful workbook submissions presented research that was appropriately referenced across cultural, scientific, or social scientific contexts. Candidates reflected on these sources in relation to their sculptural intentions and propositions. Many workbooks documented material experimentation, unexpected outcomes within making processes, and critical reflection on technical challenges. All candidates used drawing, applying it for a range of purposes such as speculating on ideas unconstrained by site, scale, or budget, which enabled highly ambitious conceptual future possibilities. Some candidates revisited abandoned directions or early experiments, demonstrating how these contributed to later aesthetic shifts. Successful workbook submissions worked in tandem with the portfolio, extending ideas and adding greater contextual depth to the photo folio documentation.

The marking panel noted a small number of candidates used generative AI in drawings to illustrate potential large-scale works or site-specific proposals. While permissible within the assessment specifications, not all candidates referenced this correctly on the authenticity form. It remains important that candidates recognise AI as a limited drawing tool—like how an artist such as Christo used photocollage—to propose potential rather than substitute for sculptural practice. Submissions with only one or two clearly referenced AI-assisted images on both the portfolio and authenticity form represented appropriate use.

Report on performance standard

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

- channelled personal narratives into the work, resulting in a sculptural practice marked by authenticity and confidence
- operated in an aligned range of sculptural modes of practice relevant to the central proposition
- recognised which threads of sculptural activity had the potential to extend the complexity of their proposition
- exploited access to high-level equipment and tools across school and broader community
- used documentation systems that gave an exact representation of both time-based and static sculptural work
- demonstrated sophisticated analyses of established sculptural practice that enabled them to articulate intelligent and distinctive sculptural ideas.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- engaged with a community of makers in ways that acknowledged reciprocal exchange of skills and collaborative problem solving
- demonstrated confidence in testing ideas in sculptural form, taking risks without concern for whether results succeeded
- used the workbook to expand and clarify the conceptual context underpinning the folio work
- presented personal, often idiosyncratic observations about the real world through a range of sculptural approaches
- used analyses of established sculptural practice to advance the sculptural proposition across modes of practice.

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

- wrote workbook statements that undermined the authenticity or clarity of the sculptural work presented on the portfolio
- employed a narrow attitude toward technical, conceptual, or established sculptural practice and research, limiting the potential of sculptural outcomes
- failed to recognise the potential of ideas or to experiment with a range of materials or manageable techniques
- presented unrelated or superficial analyses of established sculptural practice that did not inform the folio work.

Performance standard 93309: Printmaking

General commentary

Scholarship Printmaking submissions in 2025 demonstrated strong engagement within the printmaking medium showing curiosity and confidence, applying sophisticated and innovative ways within technical and pictorial strategies. Personal propositions showed strong entry points with inventive conclusions. The journey between these points demonstrated rich, sustained, and purposeful development. Sequences of exploratory work revealed clear evidence of thinking, investigation, and decision making through well-considered editing and refinement.

Developing strong drawing skills was a key factor in refining successful ideas. This was evident in both workbooks and portfolios, where candidates commonly used thumbnail studies to test compositional options and inform decision-making. Many candidates engaged with cultural, political, social, or global concerns and interpreted these through personal perspectives. This sense of ownership supported authenticity and ensured that the candidate's individual voice was evident throughout the workbook and portfolio. Personalised learning contributed to original outcomes, which is a criteria essential at Scholarship level. Each submission demonstrated a distinct mode of printmaking practice.

Conceptual and formal explorations were most effective when candidates were willing to take risks, expand their ideas in new directions, and build strong technical fluency. Successful submissions demonstrated highly experimental ideas exploring variations in layering, composition, colour, and surface, including approaches that extended beyond traditional paper-based practice. Some submissions followed a deep exploration of a single process, while others integrated a wide range of printmaking techniques to broaden pictorial possibilities.

Candidates who gained Scholarship engaged in testing both conceptual and pictorial possibilities. Techniques, materials, and processes were used with expertise, sensitivity, and flair to refine and advance ideas. In some cases, panels included numerous complex prints involving multiple colour

layers and sophisticated registrations. This level of complexity indicated sustained commitment to developing and extending technical skills.

Successful candidates consistently presented a large body of work that enabled depth, breadth, sequencing, synthesis, and extension. Printmaking practices were used in installations or applied to alternative surfaces or objects when these approaches were relevant and supported the inquiry. Captions that provided media and size information for photographs of large-scale works were helpful. This additional work often acted as a catalyst for new directions. Many candidates ended their workbooks with statements outlining next steps; it is recommended that candidates attempt small-scale versions of these ideas rather than relying solely on artist exemplars. At Scholarship level, the end of Panel 3 should continue to introduce new possibilities rather than signal a conclusion.

Workbooks that met the standard presented new insights, investigations, and diverse thinking, a depth of ideas that supported the proposition. Bullet-point notes were more effective than descriptive paragraphs. It was not necessary to use workbook space to describe production processes already visible in the portfolio; more helpful were notes explaining reasons for decisions and reflections that analysed previous strengths. In many cases workbooks showed evidence of a parallel body work, sometimes less successful or simply extra works that did not fit on the portfolio. Understanding how research informed printmaking practice was evident in workbooks that included self-generated source material such as photographs and collages, demonstrating depth and sustained momentum. Integrating inspiration from a wide range of sources—rather than mimicking a style or another artist's work—allowed candidates to create original work. Reflection, analysis, risk-taking, exploring possibilities, and refining outcomes were strong characteristics of those awarded Scholarship.

Report on performance standard

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

- engage deeply and intelligently in a complex investigation
- show ownership and momentum in an authentic inquiry
- utilise strong drawing skills aligned with personal stylistic strengths and interests
- think independently and explore conceptual concerns with depth
- embrace risk-taking, critical analysis, and self-reflection as part of continual questioning
- use iterative art-making processes to advance ideas
- refine technical and pictorial aspects through analysis and clarification across workbook and portfolio
- present a large number of works and experimental investigations across workbook and portfolio
- demonstrate an exceptionally high level of technical fluency in printmaking.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- establish a clear and personally significant proposition broad enough to sustain inquiry
- show thorough research in both workbook and portfolio, including relevant links to other fields
- include related prints and written notes demonstrating depth of ideas
- develop a broad range of explorative and inventive ideas
- demonstrate confident use of pictorial devices to explore composition and extend ideas
- undertake critical analysis and reflection on successful and less successful outcomes
- produce own photographs to explore composition and synthesise ideas
- create prints that show a high level of technical skill
- integrate processes intuitively and seamlessly to reform and extend ideas.

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

- present propositions too limited in scope to sustain an extended investigation
- record narrative descriptions of 'what' they did rather than analysing 'why' decisions were made
- include information about artists' works with limited reference to how these informed thinking
- repeat similar pictorial ideas, particularly on Panel 3, without developing new directions.

Performance standard 93310: Photography

General commentary

Scholarship Photography submissions in 2025 demonstrated strong engagement with ambitious, conceptually rich, and process-driven enquiries. Candidates work was characterised by sustained personal investment, with propositions developed through rigorous research and purposeful exploration. Ideas evolved through iterative making rather than predetermined outcomes, and portfolios commonly reflected substantial bodies of work informed by the purposeful research.

Successful submissions demonstrated mastery of genre conventions while extending ideas through techniques such as Polaroid, emulsions, scenography, film, and cyanotype. Their explorations of camera functionality, lighting, and exposure manipulation expanded the expressive possibilities of photographic processes, with the combination of workbook and portfolio supporting coherent development.

Workbook evidence demonstrated conceptual depth, experimental practice, and reflective thinking. Propositions were supported by well-chosen references to the art world and enriched by interdisciplinary influences including literature, film, politics, ethics, science, and ecology. These connections were synthesised into original photographic outcomes.

Workbook evidence demonstrated critical and reflective thinking in varied formats, including diary entries, research notes, and analytical responses. Candidates articulated conceptual propositions and explained technical decisions without relying on lengthy descriptions, reinforcing the dialogue between workbook and portfolio. Contextual information was often well researched and contributed meaningfully to the enquiry.

The workbook gives insights and understanding on how candidates drew from artists' practices. Candidates who engaged with a broader range of artists practices provided clearer conceptual grounding than those who relied on only a small selection. Artistic reference was most successful when it was integrated into the candidate's thinking and directly informed the conception and development of artworks. This avoided arbitrary connections between practice and making.

Successful candidates balanced conceptual rigour with technical innovation, producing work that was both visually and intellectually compelling. Many demonstrated a holistic connection between workbook and portfolio, where unseen photoshoots and reflective commentary enriched the enquiry. Captions on the portfolio were used effectively when they provided contextual details not evident, or easily recognisable factors in the images, such as media, process, scale, time, duration, place or site.

Report on performance standard

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

- presented a proposition of exceptional strength that enabled expansive and sophisticated exploration of ideas
- provided a diverse and ambitious parallel body of work in the workbook that complemented the portfolio

- revealed higher levels of critical thinking and reflection in the workbook, with outcomes driven conceptually rather than by predetermined results
- presented high levels of technical proficiency combined with inventive and purposeful application of processes, including but not limited to, drone photography, salt printing, cyanotype, installation, durational practices, film, analogue methods, collage, and projection
- demonstrated sophisticated manipulation of lenses and mastery of both manual and automatic camera functionality
- showed deep familiarity with subject matter, reflecting sustained immersive engagement over time
- provided effective contextualisation of work within broader artistic, social, or conceptual frameworks
- presented a technically fluent and well-researched portfolio, with the workbook enriching and illuminating the creative journey.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- exhibited a strong sense of ownership and personal investment in their proposition, resulting in work of meaningful and authentic intent
- presented thorough research and critical thinking to form a project of notable depth and breadth
- displayed comprehensive documentation of the creative process supported by clear articulation of reasoning
- demonstrated fluency with photographic conventions to produce a substantial quantity of work
- expanded their knowledge of processes and media through annotated experimentation
- presented critical analysis across workbook and portfolio, demonstrating a cohesive and reflective approach.

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

- displayed reliance on artist models without explaining their relevance, resulting in superficial engagement
- repeated portfolio content in the workbook rather than providing deeper analytical insights
- presented a disconnection between previous work and the current proposition, leading to conceptual inconsistency
- provided limited experimentation within the creative process, restricting exploration of technical or conceptual possibilities beyond conventional approaches
- gave lengthy descriptions of what appeared on each panel rather than analysing decisions or intentions and production.
- presented evidence of few photoshoots, limiting connections between research and practice and reducing clarity of communication.