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OUTSTANDING SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship 2024 Art History

Time allowed: Three hours
Total score: 24

ANSWER BOOKLET

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

Answer THREE questions from Question Booklet 93301Q: ONE from Section A, ONE from Section B, AND the compulsory question from Section C.

Write your answers in this booklet. Start your answer to each question on a new page. Carefully number each question.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–27 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in the margins (XXXX). 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.

Section A- Form is a key factor in every artwork.

Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* is one of the most iconic artistic images in the western world. However, it is not just in such quintessential explorations of form, of the human form, that form is integral- form is a vital component of every art work- from the simplest Enzō painting, to iconic works of Pop Art and Surrealist sculpture.

Enzo painting is the art of circle making, a practice in the Zen Buddhist art form of Zazen, that dates back to at least the 15th century c.e. Toreji Kenso, who painted between 1721 and 1792 c.e. is widely considered the 'king' of the artform. He produced hundreds of Enso paintings, so simplistic that form becomes the essential component. In his works, ideas of form are explored through the use of a single brush stroke. *I Alone am the Honoured One* is one of Toreji's highest viscosity works- the ink is much thicker than in most of his other pieces of calligraphy. This creates a very dynamic sense of movement in the composition, as a technique called 'flying white' is used- white gaps of negative space appear on the page between brush strokes. This gives the painting a sense of vitality and direction- the circle seems almost to be nudging the 'san' inscription on the left hand side off the edge of the page. This inscription reads in kanji "in the Heavens above and the Earth below, I alone am the Honoured One"- the first words of Buddha in the Zen Buddhist tradition. In Enso painting form becomes form through the process of meaning attachment- the thick brushstroke is not simply a line separating negative space- it is a spiritual form that embodies the void, the totality of existence, the spherical arc of the heavens above us and the horizons which we are embedded within. The circular form can encompass both every possible meaning, and hold no meaning at all. It is through this signification process, that the line of an Enso painting becomes the key form in the painting- because it is not just a line paying service to or enabling other elements of a composition, it itself is the key form giving shape and direction to what we observe on the page. Similarly very traditional usages of line as form can be seen in many other non-Western traditions- including Latin American terraforming- like the Nazca lines, and Māori and Pacific Island tattoo practices, as well as those indigenous to parts of Melanesia and South East Asia.

George Seurat explored form through technical innovation. Seurat pioneered the pointillist technique, which involves making thousands of tiny dots of unmixed paint on a canvas, which are then interpreted by the human eyes as a greater image through the process of optical mixing. Seurat's 1884 painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* typifies his investigation of form. The painting is composed solely using the primary colours of light- red, green and blue- a 'triangular colour palette' which is said to create a sense of visual rigidity. This rigidity is reflected in the forms that Seurat explores in his image. The painting depicts Parisian bourgeoisie society at the water front on a day that we can surmise to be late spring or early summer from the vibrant green of the vegetation. The figures in the painting are very rigid, just like the colour palette it employs. The foreground depicts on the right a couple dressed in black and grey, and on the left three sitting individuals, one of whom

is dressed down and reclining more casually- indicating that he is likely in the couples service. The centre of the painting depicts two mother daughter pairs- a pair sitting and a pair standing, but the children have no sense of movement quality about them, oriented straight up and down within the paintings composition. Other figures throughout the painting have a similar static, stiff sense, and even the trees that compose the background are usually clean forms, parallel to one another- lacking the organic quality we might express. Seurat's exploration of form is achieved through contrast- the rigid, stiff, almost unnatural figures in *A Sunday Afternoon*, are juxtaposed against the relaxed, reclining figures in its sister painting *Bathers at Asniers* which was painted at the same time, and is said to depict the working class side of the same waterfront. The figures in this painting, alongside the recline worker in *A Sunday Afternoon* are crafted differently, reclining casually, splashing in the water, interacting with one another. The dynamic nature of their forms is evident in their posing, particularly through Seurat's use of angle- the centre lines many of the figures are on diagonals, as they lie on the grass or splash around in the water, whereas *A Sunday Afternoon* almost every figure is oriented rigidly straight up and down (aside from the worker who is reclining in a nod to *Bathers*). Seurat uses form to convey meaning, albeit in a very different way to Enzo painting, in which form *is* meaning. The contrast between form in the sister paintings is a commentary on the rigid social rules and austerity of the upper class- how they seem to have it all, but in fact they are miserable. This contrast is also what highlights form in the paintings, and makes its significance obvious to the viewer. In Seurat's work, juxtaposition is therefore the primary mode of exploration.

The basis for Andy Warhol's work was photography- he did not create the form himself. This makes for a particularly interesting exploration of form, as Warhol achieves his artistic ends by the manipulation of form, rather than by its creation. This is evident in his 1964 work *The Twelve Jackies*. This photo emulsion silk screen print was created using a real photo of Jackie Kennedy, taken at her assassinated husband, president JFK's funeral in 1963. Warhol explores form in this piece in two key ways, cropping and replication. The original photograph shows a veiled Jackie Kennedy, full body, standing in a crowd, however Warhol has chosen to crop the image to an extreme close up, depicting just her face. This cropping allows Warhol to examine what makes form distinct- the original image was black and white, and quite low resolution, so the effect of his extreme cropping and black and white print is that Kennedy's essential features are reduced to simple indications of shape- the dark of her eyes, hollows of her nose, her lips and her hair and hat. This method of reduction distils the form of her face to its most essential elements, exploring what makes Kennedy distinct- and how light and shadow can indicate the expression of grief. Warhol's other key method for the exploration of form is replication; he reproduces the same image to tessellate 12 times. Reproduction is an important exploration of form here because it further interrogates the question of at what point a form becomes recognisable. One Jackie, viewed on its own is indistinct, almost hard to distinguish from the form of any other female face, but once replicated 12 times, she becomes more recognisable as we better familiarise ourselves with the contours of her form, allowing the viewer to link the art to the reference image. This replicative exploration of form

is present in many other examples of Warhol's work- but in those pieces it is primarily a technique for meaning, while in *12 Jackies* it serves to impart both the deeply claustrophobic nature of grief, and to increase clarity of interpretation for the audience.

Form is a key factor of every artwork, because it is through form we are able to interpret and view a piece. Form is often, though not necessarily tied to meaning- whether the form is in and of itself conveying meaning, or it serves to create an effect which guides the viewer towards interpreting the art works meaning or purpose. Artists explore form through contrast and technical skill- particularly when applied in innovative ways, but they also reverse the relationship between form and meaning (or lack thereof) to explore form *through* meaning. Both directions of this relationship are equally valuable, and essential to artistic expression.

Section B- Art that has real impact is controversial or groundbreaking.

Wassily Kandinsky believed that art was more than a mere imitation or representation of the world around us. He posited instead that the most essential essence of art is how it engenders 'vibrations of the soul'- experiences that profoundly move the viewer. Although Kandinsky was primarily concerned with abstract art, this sentiment holds true outside of just that groundbreaking genre. Art is impactful when it catches us off guard, its most moving effects are akin to the swoop in the stomach when one's foot finds the next stair not where they expected it. This effect is induced by defiance of the viewers expectations- be that controversy surrounding the arts provenance, message, or technique, or groundbreaking, genre defying acts of artistic innovation.

For close to a century, Wassily Kandinsky was considered the pioneer of the Abstract movement, however, the artist who first broke soil on that genre of technical and semiotic innovation was a woman- Hilma af Klint. The Swedish painter produced the first piece of truly abstract art in 1906, 5 years before Kandinsky. Klint believed in an extrasensory reality that could not be perceived through normal experience, inspiring her to experiment with automatic mark making, suppressing the conscious mind to reveal subconscious interpretations of reality. Her spiritual views and engagement with the Occult were, by her own understanding, both groundbreaking, and incredibly controversial in a Christian majority society. Even more groundbreaking, was her style. Klint's paintings were truly divorced from any representational quality. Her 1915 piece *The Swan #17* is a square canvas, background painted a reddish orange, with a large, flat circle depicted in the center, all color applied flat and even. The left-hand side of the circle has a thick band of white forming the outer edge, with a black core, whilst the right-hand side of the circle has a pink core, followed by a yellow band, and then a blue band which forms the circles outer edge. The proportional mismatch between the two sides of the circle and the slightly discordant use of color (the colors are not complementary to each other, nor are they harmonious), produce a profoundly uncomfortable effect for the viewer. This already intense impact would have been amplified

for any viewer at the time, who would not have had any frame of reference for such a groundbreaking work of artistic expression. Klint's groundbreaking work also had an important impact on the artistic world- although she was isolated from the developing Abstract movement, her technique of painting with the canvas flat on the ground would later be adopted by Jackson Pollock, and *The Swan #17*, and other circles depicted by Klint laid the groundwork for the target paintings of the 1950's. Work that is entirely original- groundbreaking for its pioneering new artistic techniques, as well as new visions of meaning is impactful to the viewer, because it surprises us, and makes us consider new boundaries for art, but its impact ripples out further, influencing many future works of art which are in dialogue with the original.

Similarly innovative in technique, the work of Georgia O'Keefe derives much of its impact from the controversy of critical interpretations of her meaning. O'Keefe's 1923 painting *Grey Lines with Black Blue and Yellow* is one of many extremely cropped, biomorphic paintings of flowers produced during her career. *Grey Lines* depicts several nested undulating folds, contoured with deep blues, greys, yellows and light pinks. The folds pinch together in the top third of the painting, diverging again as they curve upwards, suggesting the outline of a circular shape. O'Keefe maintained during her lifetime that *Grey Lines* and similar paintings were depictions of flowers, simply cropped beyond obvious recognition. However, some critical, and most popular interpretation of her work has contended that it is instead abstracted depictions of female genitalia. This controversy over interpretation is what precipitated the great cultural significance of O'Keefe's work, which was adopted as a symbol of 2nd wave feminism, become an iconic symbol of women taking ownership over their own sexuality. The interpretational dispute was made possible by O'Keefe's technical innovation- *Grey Lines* is not only an exploration of abstraction, but also of the ways in which photographic depictions can distort the way we view an object. O'Keefe's husband, Stieglitz, was a highly successful photographer, and she drew much inspiration from the developments of that genre. *Grey Lines*' unusual use of color- the very saturated deep blues, contrasting against the more pale, watery pinks yellows and greys emulates photographic chiascuro, an effect created by the overexposure of a developing photograph. This unusual use of color, alongside the extreme cropping of the flower she depicts, obscure it at first glance- allowing for the interpretation of female genitalia to be read into the painting, because the depiction is no longer immediately recognizable as a flower. Once again, we see that a combination of controversy over a painting's meaning, is often related to the use of groundbreaking artistic technique- these two factors braiding together to produce an artwork which is truly impactful.

Artists do not always stumble upon controversy and subsequent impact- some artists create works which they know will be controversial, with a political objective in mind. John Heartfield, illustrator for the German public- the Workers Illustrated Magazine (German acronym AIZ), was a vocal opponent of the rise of Hitler's National Socialist Party, and he used his art as a vehicle for this opposition. In 1933, the AIZ fled to Prague after having drawn the Nazi's ire, a distance which emboldened Heartfield to produce his first rousing call

against the regime, even more controversial than his previous acerbic criticism, because it lacked cynicism, and showed genuine hope that the Nazi's would not maintain a stranglehold on power forever. In 1934, he produced the magazine cover *All Fists Clenched as One*. This monochromatic work was produced solely in shades of red, depicting a forearm with a clenched fist, inside of which are the forearms of many other individuals, also with clenched fists, become smaller and smaller, allowing for even greater density as they move up the piece. This artwork was a clear message of solidarity, conveyed by the unification of the fists within a large fist- but also of power- the fist is a symbol associated with physical force. The red hues of the painting speak to the AIZ's socialist roots, but they also heighten the sense of controversy by implicitly challenging the Nazi's claim over the color. Heartfield's work was impactful precisely because it invited controversy by directly challenging those in power. The strength of his impact is evident in the increase in subscribers to the magazine directly following the publication of this issue- his art enabled the message to land home with people. Heartfield's work also validates the 'or' in the statement- he shows us that controversy is sufficient on its own- the artist does not necessarily have to break new ground to achieve maximum impact. Heartfield's work was directly inspired by the work of his longtime friend and colleague Gustav Klustis, a Soviet photomontage artist with whom Heartfield maintained correspondence. In 1932, Kulsits had produced an election poster by replicating the image of his palm and forearm many times, to emulate a crowd. We can see how this technique, slightly modified, became the basis for Heartfield's impactful *All Fists Clenched as One*; it is therefore not a groundbreaking work in its style, nor is it groundbreaking in being the first artwork- not even the first of AIZ's to critique the Nazi's. Thus, unlike *Grey Lines* and *The Swan #17*, the impact of Heartfield's work is derived solely from controversy, rather than a combination of dispute and innovation. Thus, we see it is possible to use one tool for achieving real impact without the other.

Art can be impactful in a myriad of ways- inducing a response from the viewer, breaking new technical ground on which later artists are able to build their own masterpieces, or effecting real political change. Often, but not always, the impact is a combination of these elements, as they weave together to form a complex tapestry of interactions. The ways art changes art, the viewer, and the world it exists in are as real as the art itself- but in order for art to achieve such impact it must surprise us- be that by forging new artistic styles or philosophies or challenging the status quo in some way. Art is the fuel to the fires both within ourselves, and the broader social movements that have carved out our places in the world.

Section C

Maugan's view is that art has remained an enduringly important experience for humanity- indeed that art is itself an *aspect* of humanity, and therefore what it means to be human. In his view, art provides those who engage with it positive consumption experiences- of joy or entertainment, as well as fostering important skills that facilitate positive engagement with the world around us. He also argues that the experience of engaging with art is not wholly

transferrable to online spaces- there is some aspect of arts nature that cannot be experienced in digital spheres- which we must be mindful of lest we lose the essence of art, the soul of mankind, behind in our quest for 21st century progress.

While the internet has given rise to new artistic experiences- like the consumption of NFT's, virtual reality viewings of art, and, as Maugan mentions, online access to collections most individuals would never get to see in their lifetime; at the same time Maugan reminds us that "there is an aspect of experiencing art and exhibition spaces that cannot be replicated on the web". There is always some information, some qualia, an intangible sensory experience, which is lost in translation. This loss is typified by 3 dimensional and performance art, such as Michael Tuffrey's 2000 *Pisupo Lua Afe* or *Corned Beef 2000*. This is a series of life-sized sculpture renderings of cows, formed from hundreds of flattened corned beef tins which have been riveted together. The durability and harshness of the medium contrasts with the soft visual experience of viewing a real cow- a contrast which is diminished when both textures are flattened by the 2d pixels of a viewing screen. This therefore fails to replicate the full meaning we are intended to interpret from the work- a commentary on the harsh, destructive nature of colonialism- not only on the environment through industrialization and waste (invoked by the 100's of cans) but also on pacific culture through the loss of food sovereignty. Corned Beef has become an important part of the Pacific Island ceremonial gift giving economy, and daily diets, but it has also edged out traditional foods and caused health issues. The durability of metal as a medium further intensifies how we understand that message, but this is once again diluted by our inability to interact with and touch the work (Tuffrey allows visitors to engage in a tactile experience). An equally important part of Tuffrey's artistic vision is the performative nature of this artwork- he has regularly put fireworks in the mouths of a pair of sculptures and had them enact bullfights in the street, complete with drummers and dancers. This performance is meant to make the work more accessible and enticing to those who would not normally engage with the work in person- particularly reaching out to Pacific communities, but online recordings lose the sense of atmosphere that the performance are imbued with, and thus the heightened impetus for engagement it lost. Viewing *Pisupo Lua Afe* digitally, we lose our sense of its imposing size, the importance of the materials of its construction, and the community experience that arises from engaging with it as performance at, because, just as Maughan argues- some aspects of experiencing art in person 'cannot be replicated on the web'.

Maughan's argument about the positive skills we derive from engaging with art, and how it is a source of 'creativity, joy and humanity' that we must be careful not to lose touch within the digital age, paints the process of engaging with art as more of a blanket social good, than is the case. As long as art has existed, it has been utilized as propaganda, a tool that undercuts the 'critical thinking' Maughan posits that engaging with art promotes. An example of this that stretches back over 2000 years ago is the *Tetradrachm of Alexander the Great* housed by the Chicago Art institute which was minted as Ephesus (in modern day Turkey) between 306 and 281 BCE. This coin was a piece of propaganda, minted at the behest of Alexander the

Great's former bodyguard, Lysimachus, to legitimate his claim to Thrace during the 40 years of wars over the division of Empire that followed Alexander's death in 323 BCE. Every aspect of the coins design shows how this piece of art was really a tool for manipulating people's perceptions. The obverse of the coin depicts a young, clean-shaven Alexander the Great, eyes cast upwards to evoke connotations of divinity through creating a visual connection with the heavens. The Horns of Ammon, symbols of Alexander the Great's claim that he was the son of the god Ammon, curl around his ears. This piece of imagery is significant because it bears connotations of verified lineage- Alexander's claim as the son of Ammon was verified during his lifetime by the oracle of Zeus-Ammon at Siwa in Egypt. By invoking this symbol, Lysimachus therefore creates a halo of veracity which increases the viewers willingness to believe that his own lineage claims is legitimate. The reverse of the coin is even more overt. It depicts a seated Athena, holding the goddess Nike (victory) in her palm. Nike crowns the raised words 'King Lysimachus' with a laurel wreath- the gods themselves are endorsing Lysimachus' claim to his kingdom, as well as tying him to symbols of honor and victory. The shield at Athena's feet bears a lion's head- evoking Lysimachus' own personal legend of having slain a lion with his bare hands, and thus reinforcing his sense of *mana* in the eyes of the viewer. This propaganda aimed to influence and distort the beliefs of the viewer- which shows that art used as propaganda does not necessarily serve the positive purposes Maughan lays out- particularly not the enhancement of critical thinking. Additionally, the coin is one of many examples of the propaganda that fueled forty years of war and thousands of deaths, a pattern that can be seen in propaganda across many disparate contexts, including the rise of Nazi Germany, and the normalization of forced disappearance in Argentina. This hints at an underlying truth that Maughan neglects- art can contribute to the tragedy of living in the world- rather than assuage it.

Art's role in society is not always so grim. There are many examples of art serving the purposes that Maughan outlines 'foster[ing] innovation, critical thinking, communication, self-confidence, emotional literacy, and creativity'. *Nighthawks* (1942) Edward Hopper, although a melancholy painting, pushes the viewer to exercise their critical thinking and emotional literacy skills, as well as fostering our self-confidence, and connection with our own humanity, by validating one of the most fundamental human experiences- loneliness. Hopper's painting depicts a dinner at night, three patrons inside, and a server behind the counter. None of the figures cross sight lines, or are angled towards each other in anyway, nor do they look out at the viewer. This creates a sense of isolation and disconnect between each figure. The expressive quality of lighting furthers this emotional experience. An eerie glow streams out of the diner and onto the dim street corner. This is the key source of lighting in the painting, and it is abundant, drawing the viewer in like a moth to a flame. However, we find ourselves completely cutoff from the source of this fluorescence- Hopper has omitted a door in his rendering of the diner. This reinforces the sense of isolation we feel when looking at the painting, as does the flat use of color, which evokes the unreal, disconnect feeling of liminal spaces. Hopper said that, although unconsciously, he believes he was painting the loneliness of big cities. This loneliness resonates with the viewer, in a way that makes us feel

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a curious sense of joy- this painting understands us, it knows how we feel, and that sense of synergy, creates genuine happiness. At the same time, we are pushed to use our critical thinking skills in the interpretation of the painting- as with in any artwork, but particularly those that are not what they seem. Tracing the linear rays of light back to the dinner, we are struck by the absence of the door, and left to puzzle out why such a thing could be absent- it seems hard to forget! This process of inquiry is what makes art so important to our lives. It also feeds our emotional literacy as we reflect on both our own emotional state while engaging with the painting, but also the lives of the people depicted within- why do they not interact with each other, when their isolation seems so crushing and sad. We wonder about their lives, about their loneliness and how it may diverge from our own- skills that make us more compassionate when we engage with others.

Art is indeed an integral part of the human existence- it has the capacity to make us better, happier, more creative people just as Maughan argues, which is indeed important as ever in 21st century life. However, the nuance he neglects in this idea, is that art is not unambiguously a force for good- it is a potent tool that can be utilized to harm just as it can to heal- explored in this essay through an example of early propaganda- the *Tetradrachm of Alexander the Great*. Whatever the use of its power, Maughan thesis that art is most salient when viewed in person certainly holds true- there are aspects of meaning, interpretation and experience to physical art forms that can only be fully experienced by seeing that work as the artist did- up close and personal. The artist imbues their art with meaning and power from an arm's length, and that is where we are best equipped to receive it.

Outstanding Scholarship

Subject: Art History

Standard: 93301

Total score: 19

Q	Score	Marker commentary
1	05	Throughout this script, responses demonstrate communication that is mature, cohesive, and confident. Works selected as support were well-chosen and varied. What held this response back from a higher grade was the need for more highly developed visual analysis. In Seurat's work, more detail around the actual construction of form was needed and further exploration of form in Warhol would also have been useful.
5	07	The candidate demonstrates highly developed knowledge and understanding in the discussion of form, with a sophisticated integration of evidence throughout the script. There is comprehensive depth and breadth of knowledge of the context for the works and their impact. The choice of works by Klint and Heartfield was original. Further development of visual analysis would have further strengthened this response.
7	07	The candidate keeps close engagement with the text and each idea identified is evaluated with in-depth evidence from a supporting work. Maughan's comment on art providing joy is challenged and explored in a sophisticated discussion. Developing interpretation of the text to a greater degree, perhaps around his ideas on the impact of the internet, for example, would have carried this score higher.