

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATION COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

MAY/JUNE 2008

VISUAL ARTS

**VISUAL ARTS
GENERAL PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION
MAY/JUNE 2008**

GENERAL COMMENTS

Five thousand five hundred and seven candidates registered for the examination compared with 5334 in 2007.

Generally the pieces submitted for examination were not of a high standard. It was really difficult to identify outstanding samples of work in all options. There was, in most instances no evidence of preparatory work or research being done. General and specific instructions related to techniques, materials and dimensions were often ignored. It is quite difficult to believe that many candidates who registered for the examination were actually being taught.

DETAILED COMMENTS

Production Papers

OPTION A – DRAWING

Question two was the most popular and question one was the least popular. Generally the drawings were average. There were however a few outstanding pieces which demonstrated good use of space, composition, tonal value and media.

Question 1

Bust of a figure

This was the least popular question. It demanded a basic understanding of proportion of the human, face neck and shoulder. The question demanded some emphasis on tonal values to create the illusion of form. There was a wide range of responses to the question varying from outstanding to the very weak. Outstanding pieces, which were very rare, demonstrated a good grasp of tonal values and proportion in the face, but a basic grasp of the human anatomy. However, candidates were able to develop how light plays on the face, capture facial expression as well as the textural qualities of hair and clothing. Moderate to weak pieces demonstrated lack of knowledge of basic proportions, anatomy and tonal values. Candidates' drawings were flat and distorted. Some candidates should not have attempted this question because they lacked the required knowledge and skills. The dominant drawing media was pencil and oil pastels. Some candidates produced work in mixed media such as: pencil, pen and ink and watercolor wash techniques.

Question 2

Composition with lamp and book

This was the most popular question. This question required an understanding of line, geometric structure such as cuboids, cylinders and cones, along with a sound knowledge of perspective. It also required a sound knowledge of how to create light and dark on the surfaces of objects. There were many outstanding pieces which demonstrated accurate observational skills and knowledge of line and structure. The elliptical shapes of cylindrical forms were well constructed and the cuboid form of the book was placed in correct perspective. The study of light and dark were accurately rendered. The candidates who did poorly experienced problems with observation, composition and tonal values. This question encouraged the exploration of a wide range of drawing media.

Question 3

View through a window

This was the third most popular question which required an understanding of linear as well as colour perspective. Using a combination of both, outstanding candidates created the illusion of form and depth, and utilized space effectively. The weaker candidates displayed a deficiency in being able to create depth on a flat surface. Many candidates demonstrated a lack of knowledge of perspective and a insensitive application of colour or tonal values.

This question required that the candidates work from direct observation and to explore and record aspects of their environment; which many found challenging and exciting. Candidates explored a wide range of materials and processes in the creation of their work.

Question 4

Basket, fabric and produce

This was the second most popular question. The question required candidates to explore organic and man-made forms, colour and texture. A variety of drawing media were explored. Colour was used in many instances. Many candidates' responses revealed that candidates tried to use colour to disguise their weaknesses in drawing skills. The main problem encountered was with use of space, composition and non use of the full values scale.

OPTION B – IMAGINATIVE COMPOSITION

The most popular question was Question two and the least popular question was Question three. Generally candidates misinterpreted the question and demonstrated a lack of preparation. Little attention was paid to the elements and principles of good design. The pieces showed very little knowledge of how to create depth and perspective on a flat surface. Some pieces clearly showed that candidates had copied from existing materials.

Question 1

Below the Surface

Most questions dealt with views below the earth and the ocean. There were others where candidates did anatomical drawings of the human body, without any consideration to creating an interesting composition. There was little evidence of research.

Question 2

Butterfly Fantasy

This was the most popular question. But generally compositions were poor and lacking in creativity. Compositions, perspective and use of colour were poor. It was apparent that very little thought went into the compositions. The butterflies in most cases were abstract, flat and lacked details.

Question 3

Our past our future

This was the least popular question, but with some outstanding pieces, especially using mixed-media techniques and collage. Other pieces lacked cohesiveness, originality and good craftsmanship. Many

candidates' responses revealed a lack of depth of understanding of the subject matter and it was obvious that very little or no research and preparatory work was done.

Question 4

Metamorphosis

This was another popular question with few outstanding responses. The majority of candidates' responses showed a caterpillar morphing into a butterfly without much regard to creating an exciting composition.

OPTION C – GRAPHIC DESIGN

The most popular question was Question one and the least popular was Question three. The general standard for this option was low, however there were some pieces which were fairly good to good. However candidates need to pay keen attention to the requirements of the questions, including size. The lettering or written elements in many cases was very poorly done. Candidates must be made aware that the questions require good knowledge of lettering, illustration and lay out techniques, to produce effective graphic communication pieces.

Question 1

Alien War

This question attracted the most responses. A variety of media were used ranging from colour crayons, acrylics, watercolour paints through to pastels and markers. There were a number of interesting pieces which showed good use of the imagination. Many responses concentrated only on the illustrations and little attention was paid to the lettering. There were others which lacked clarity and impact. Overall responses were well researched with preparatory studies to support the final piece. It was evident that many candidates lacked an understanding of what a poster was. It was expected that more information than just the name of the movie was required.

Question 2

Pages of a child's book

This was the second most popular question. Responses were generally fairly good, with some outstanding pieces. In many responses originality was lacking as candidates copied directly from existing books. Again with this question the candidates concentrated on the illustration and paid little attention to the lettering or text. Those pieces that were consistent in both the illustration and text proved to be highly successful.

Question 3

How did I get here?-poster

This was the least popular question. This question required the candidates to utilize the computer to manipulate images. Responses were interesting with varied interpretation. Some excellent pieces were produced. Preparatory studies and copies of the photographs used helped to support the final pieces. In some cases however there was very little preliminary evidence submitted.

Question 4

Cartoon or Sequential art

There were many attempts of this question. Most candidates developed their story line well and showed a high level of originality. Again, in many cases all the attention was focused on the illustration to the detriment of the text. There were some unique skills in the layout of the panels. The most successful pieces were well resolved and showed good concepts, illustrations and lettering.

OPTION D – PRINTMAKING

The most popular question was Question one, and the least popular was Question four. Generally the pieces were below the required standard for this examination. There were few genuine printmaking techniques utilized. There were some relief prints and screen prints. Among the submissions were a few noteworthy adventures into experimental relief media. Regrettably the prints were dominated by free-hand open stencils which do not relate to the discipline of printmaking particularly for the production of an edition. The proofs of an edition are expected to be near perfect in all respects from paper stocks to inks to colours. There are established approaches to multiple colour use in relief printmaking, all dependant on block and plate registration.

Candidates did not demonstrate mastery in the use of lino or woodcut tools. This resulted in poor line quality and ineffective use of shapes and texture. A few collagraphs or collage plates were used but these did not reflect the control required for expression in this medium. Experimentation with media should be encouraged and this year some candidates used materials which were rigid enough for cutting. These media worked well for linear expression but was less successful in multiple colour applications. Candidates should not that apart from techniques and processes, design and composition plays an essential part in the production of good prints.

Question 1

Birds on a branch

Most pieces ranged between poor and moderate. A large percentage of prints were done with stencils and sponging which is not a recommended printmaking process. Not much exploration was done. Compositions, tonal contrast and texture were weak in most pieces.

Question 2

Dancing girl

The prints were generally weak Most responses did not demonstrate any understanding of figure drawing or composition. Most prints were done using stencils and sponging. This technique lends itself to poor registration and uniformity of colour. Exposure to a variety of printmaking techniques is evident.

Question 3

Veiled

This question yielded the best result. There were various interpretations, which showed a reasonable amount of experimentation. Most pieces demonstrated organized compositions and sound knowledge of the elements and principles of design.

Question 4

Archaic

The few responses were poorly interpreted and rendered. It was obvious that candidates were ill prepared for this option.

OPTION E – DIMENSIONAL DESIGN

Question one was the most popular and Question three the least popular. Few candidates entered for this option. Work was generally weak and demonstrated a lack of understanding of composition and 3-dimensional form in space. Much more attention needed to be paid to the selection of appropriate materials to interpret the questions. There was lack of supporting evidence and preparatory work in most instances. Creativity and originality were in short supply. There were very few excellent examples.

Question 1

A sleeping figure

Some responses were very basic and lacked an understanding of form and design. Good pieces demonstrated good choice of materials and techniques and a strong sense of form. Candidates must be encouraged to think outside of the box and to come up with unique and original interpretations of the subject matter.

Question 2

Shell fish

Responses were few and extremely weak in both design and construction. No creativity was evident. Most demonstrated poor choice of media.

Question 3

Liberation

There were many responses to this question and most responses were basic to fair in interpretation, design and construction. Not much imagination was employed and the pieces lacked originality and creativity. Many responses showed one or two hands with chains. Selection of media was inappropriate in many instances.

Question 4

Derelict

There were a few responses to this question and there were some excellent responses which demonstrated good choice of media and a sound understanding of composition and the elements and principles of good design.

OPTION F – FIBRE ARTS

Very few candidates selected this option. The most popular question was Question four and the least popular was Question three. Generally the pieces were of a low standard. It was difficult to relate the pieces to the themes selected, as there was little evidence of good design, interpretation, creativity and

choice of materials. There was little evidence of preparatory work and research. Construction skills were extremely poor.

Question 1

Wall-hanging entitled, 'Vines'

Pieces were generally fair, however a lot more could have been done in the areas of interpretation of the question, and the selection of a variety of fibres and techniques to produce more interesting textural variety. Macramé techniques dominated the responses. There was very little use of natural fibres. The movement of vines intertwining was not felt. Candidates need to be exposed to the various fibre arts techniques and to practice combining them in a single piece. They should also develop some experience with thematic approached to producing items.

Question 2

Front panel of floor cushion

Although not very popular, the question produces the most satisfying results. Plain weave dominated the designs. Some candidates introduced basket weave. One major problem overall was the difficulty the candidates had with maintaining the selvages.

Question 3

3-dimensional pieces entitled, 'Ocean'

The few responses to this question were unimpressive. Designs were poor and in most instances there was inappropriate use of materials.

Question 4

Belt

This was a most popular question, but in most cases the responses were poorly rendered. Almost all of the belts were produced with one technique namely macramé. Recognition of the cultural influence in the piece was generally ignored. Candidates need to learn how to interpret and answer questions. Candidates also need to be well grounded in the elements and principles of design. In instances where the candidates attempted to use two techniques the results were untidy, unattractive and lacked cohesiveness. In this option originality was almost was not visible as all candidates from the some school submitted the same design. Many candidates are not clear as to what are fibre art techniques.

OPTION G – SURFACE DECORATION

The most popular question was Question two and the least popular was Question one. Generally responses were weak but there were a few outstanding responses. Registration was poor in many instances. Candidates took shortcuts and dip-dyed the fabric and hand painted instead of printing the designs. The designs demonstrated a complete lack of layout and repeat printing. Some candidates used puff paints to outline the printed designs, and this should be discouraged. Many candidates disregarded the size requirements and produced more or less than one meter of fabric. Some candidates submitted their work stretched on large wooden frames, this is not required and should be discouraged. The term embellished was misunderstood by many. Work from many centres was folded and the labels were then stapled through all the folds, this practise should be stopped. In instances when threads were used for embellishment the candidates glued them instead of stitching them to the fabric.

Question 1

Wall hanging entitled, 'Endangered species'

Some responses demonstrated good tie and dye skills, printing skills, use of colour and layout techniques. A few candidates' used inappropriate fabrics. There was some evidence that in some schools all candidates used the same blocks and stencils, therefore no marks could be assigned for originality. It must be noted that stencils and screens should not be submitted with the finished pieces. Many candidates misinterpreted the question. Therefore the compositions were weak. Many responses did not include all of the required techniques. Research and preparatory studies were lacking and accounted for most of the weak responses.

Question 2

Design fabric based on, 'palm trees'

There were many responses to this question but with a few being good to excellent. The tie-dyed elements in many responses were very strong but the printing was weak. There was evidence that candidates from the same centre used the same blocks and screens. Many of the design for this question were treated as large painting instead of yardage. It was difficult to understand this interpretation of the question as it never asked for a painting but for fabric suitable for use as bed linen.

Question 3

A floor cushion

There were very few good responses to this question. Many designs were printed and the embellishment was omitted. There were many instances where the threads were stuck on instead of being stitched on. Some outstanding responses understood the term abstraction and demonstrated good design skills and craftsmanship.

Question 4

Picture with banana theme

The responses to this question were weak. Most candidates fell down in design and craftsmanship. In many pieces all the required techniques were not done. Many candidates glued pieces of fabric to the background instead of stitching or appliquéing. There was little evidence of research or preparatory studies to come up with cohesive designs.

OPTION H – CERAMICS

Question three was the most popular and Question two the least popular. The standard this year was generally weak. Schools are still submitting green ware pieces, several of which were broken, without supporting photographs of the pieces. It is quite difficult to try and put pieces together when you have no idea what the piece should look like. Many responses were very basic, but there were a few outstanding responses.

Question 1

Souvenir item based on a house

Generally responses to this question were good. Pieces were done both in 3D and low relief. Craftsmanship and design were fairly good.

Question 2

Figure riding on a donkey

Very few candidates responded to this question. But the pieces were of a high quality. There was good craftsmanship with attention to proportion and details.

Question 3

Candle holder with cover

There were varying responses to this question, with a few outstanding pieces. Some pieces demonstrated a lack of design and preparation. Craftsmanship was generally weak. Candidates misunderstood the concept completely, and many designs did not allow for light to come through the covers.

Question 4

Object based on ancestral heritage

There were some outstanding responses to this question, with varying interpretations. Most responses showed good research, preparation and a high level of skill.

OPTION I – LEATHERCRAFT

Question four was the most popular and Question two the least popular. Generally the pieces ranged from weak to good. It is obvious that candidates were not well grounded in the use of leathercraft tools and techniques. Evidence of the knowledge of the elements and principles of design was lacking. Experimentation and preparation was also not evident. The standard therefore was generally low. In many instances candidates simply painted their surfaces. Interesting surface textures can be created by using a variety of tools before applying paints or dyes.

Question 1

A belt

Many responses were poorly planned and executed, but there were however some outstanding pieces. The use of stamping and lacing techniques to create patterns was limited. Size requirements were ignored in some instances.

Question 2

Wall plaque

Responses to this question were generally weak. Most pieces did not comply with the given theme. There was not much experimentation with shapes which would appeal to children. Very little

interesting surface texture was employed. In many pieces the rudiments of leathercraft were not used and designs were simply painted onto the leather.

Question 3

Cellular phone pouch

In most instances the craftsmanship of the pouches was good, however the tooled design based on lizards was poorly executed and not followed through. Those candidates who attempted lacing were not consistent in their efforts.

Question 4

Picture frame

There were some excellent pieces with interesting shapes. Weak pieces had designs which were lacking in creativity. The tooling techniques were poorly executed and limited to less than three.

OPTION J – DECORATIVE CRAFT

Question two was the most popular and Question four the least popular. Responses ranged from poor to excellent. Many candidates simply decorated boxes using collage and shells. Overall the responses indicated that the candidates did little or no preliminary work or research. Most candidates explored collage instead of decoupage techniques.

Question 1

Shopping bag

Responses to this question were generally good with some excellent examples. The question asked for a woven shopping bag, but some candidates simply using weaving and decoration. There were some fine examples demonstrating creativity, experimentation, good design and good craftsmanship.

Question 2

Decoupage jewelry box

Many candidates did not understand the requirements of this question and seemed not to be familiar with the decoupage technique. The quality of work was very low. There was evidence that candidates could not have taken advantage of the six hours available to them.

Question 3

Lampshade

There was gross misuse and misinterpretation of the words, 'rework' and 'discotheque'. No attention was paid to design and composition and the result was some very garish and dysfunctional shades. Many candidates attempted to rework glass shades and this was a disaster. It was obvious that designing for a particular purpose was ignored or misunderstood.

Question 4

Wreath

Construction of the wreaths was the major issue. Most fell apart before marking. Choice of materials needed to be carefully considered. Some pieces used thorns and other sharp materials which made handling difficult. There were however some fine examples which demonstrated a high level of craftsmanship and creativity.

ILLUSTRATED PAPERS

The papers were fairly good, with some below the required standard. The topics chosen were good, however some were very vague or too general and the students therefore encountered difficulty in researching these topics. In approximately 70 per cent of the papers little attention was given to the title page. This page is a vital part of the paper should be visually appealing and should clearly state the topic.

Use of language was generally good, but candidates must be cautioned against plagiarism and regurgitation of information. Too many candidates resorted to description instead of analysis. In cases where candidates opted to write their paper little attention was given to penmanship. Where possible, candidates should be encouraged to type their papers. There were many papers which were padded with lots of irrelevant information, and illustrations and information was repeated.

Visual presentation was the greatest area of weakness in the 2008 presentations. Too little attention was paid to visual appeal. In cases where candidates tried to decorate their papers they were untidy, distracting and irrelevant to the topic selected. In others the decoration obscured the text. Greater effort and more thought needs to be put into the presentation of the paper. Some good examples included watermarks and border designs.

Investigation of topics in many instances was fairly superficial. Although an attempt was made in some instances to produce creative studies, this was only evident in select territories and schools.

It is suggested that candidates opting to do the illustrated paper have some knowledge of what is expected in pursuing this option, to ensure that their work reflects the expectations and standards of Caribbean Examinations Council.