

GCSE

Expressive Arts

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J367**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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A691 Working in Response to Artworks by Practitioners

A692 Working in Response to a Stimulus

Generally samples were received on time and well packaged. Centres seem to have taken on board the importance of securely packaging each individual's evidence in one portfolio per candidate, although individual DVDs for candidates were still not consistently available. The relevant paperwork was successfully submitted by all centres and in most cases it was completed to a high standard. Centres are reminded that all the information boxes need to be completed and accurate transfer of marks is the centres responsibility. SOW that were submitted show clearly how centres have developed their skills and widened their range in the initial materials that candidates access as part of their controlled assessment. Marking was accurate (or well within tolerance) in virtually all cases. This shows a significant improvement on last year.

A better combination of candidate portfolio and teacher commentary enabled moderators to more clearly identify where marks had been awarded. Additionally where centres had completed the teacher commentary forms in depth, this facilitated a much easier moderation process.

Teacher evidence was most helpful when it referred directly to the work or achievement of the candidate. It was less helpful when it simply duplicated the bullet points issued by OCR on the TCF.

DVDs were mostly of excellent quality and in most cases, individual for each candidate. Where this was not the case chaptering has significantly improved and aided the moderation process. Candidates were clearly identified in most cases. Some DVDs were very professional. Where DVD evidence was not available for performance work it did create difficulties in the moderation process. Centres are reminded that the moderator does not mark work, rather they moderate the centres' marks; therefore wherever possible it is important that adequate evidence is provided to support the marks awarded for each of the four assessment objectives.

In some centres the work of both units was presented within one portfolio per candidate. Hence, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish the work of each unit. Centres are advised that each portfolio should be separated for each component, and for each candidate, in order to demonstrate that it is clear to the moderator how marks have been awarded for each component and what the relevant evidence is.

In general portfolios were organized so that planning, exploration and development could be clearly mapped. There were some very good examples of candidates making personal comments and judgements throughout the process as well as summative comments after the completion of realizations. As last year, all centres are reminded that teacher evidence should never outweigh candidate evidence for the awarding of marks. Printed relevant material was appropriate evidence only when it had relevant annotations. There were fewer examples this year of material being included in portfolios without personal comments from candidates. Photographic evidence was extremely well used to show how work developed, identify candidates and reflect bulky realisations such as 3D models or large pieces of art work.

The best work resulted from quite detailed exploration of artworks and a study of the skills and techniques employed by the practitioners using the areas of study. Some centres explored practitioners in a uniform manner but usually teachers clearly encouraged individual and personal responses. Teacher input was most successful when, while it was obvious that candidates had been given clear guidelines, each portfolio was personal and individual and without any sort of obvious writing frames. Lower ability candidates in a small minority of centres

used writing frames to access marks at a limited level but in some cases, it was apparent that candidates may have been capable of achieving a level of skilful or better without this restriction. All centres are reminded that scaffolding and writing frames are not permitted in this specification. Where technology was used it was apparent that centres have been very resourceful in how this was documented in candidate portfolios. Screen shots of software programmes in use and good referencing to websites and software showed clearly how students have adapted their technological skills. A range of music software was evident and this was well used. Some quite successful backdrops were produced to support drama performances on large TV screens. Music/ sound effects were used effectively in some cases.

SPECIFIC TO A691

All planning and realisations appeared to be within time limits and authenticated as such by centres.

Most of the work was group based, although in some centres candidates worked alone or in a pair. Where larger groups worked in sub groups this had mixed success, and where smaller groups worked together this generally was more productive.

There were fewer examples this year of candidates following their own interests and exploring practitioners not taught in class. In only a few cases, candidates found relevant practitioners for themselves. Most of the usual practitioners were studied by centres. There were some interesting realizations from centres where the practitioners' works were clearly linked by a theme. Dance appeared to be a very popular art form, often used to support another art form. The skills/techniques associated with the practitioners in drama, music and creative writing were often only briefly explored. An interesting stimulus was the exploration of the NHS using the work of the practitioners to inform the development of skills.

Dance

- Diversity (popular dance group)
- Frantic Assembly and Lloyd Newson: Enter Achilles (Dance / physical theatre)
- Christopher Bruce: Swansong
- Lea Anderson: Cross Channel
- Matthew Bourne
- Akram Kahn
- Bob Fosse
- Julie Taymor

Drama

- Enda Walsh: Chatroom,
- John Godber: Teechers
- Willy Russell: Blood Brothers
- Constantin Stanislavski
- Bertolt Brecht

Music

- Paloma Faith
- The Beatles: Drive My Car
- Jessie J: Price Tag
- Sting
- Verdi –
- Holst - Planets

Art

- Banksy
- Kandinsky

- Edward Munch: The Scream
- Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein: Pop Art
- Anthony Gormley – Another Place
- Anish Kapoor
- L.S.Lowery
- Vincent van Gogh

Creative Writing

- Simon Cowell (Script from Britain's Got Talent)
- Some films, musical theatre & TV
- Boy in the Striped Pyjamas
- Diary of Anne Frank

Realisations tended to focus on Drama, Dance, Creative Writing based work. There was often little reference to the evolution of Drama in planning, an ongoing issue. Drama and creative writing were very popular. Some drama performances included dance as part of the plot. There were some creative performances using African masks made by candidates as part of the performance. An interesting and effective integration of art forms occurred when candidates used their 3D artwork as props.

Drama and dance - Dance integrated into plot in drama. Some pieces were a little long with the dynamic of the piece being lost along with some of the quality. Work was presented in a variety of forms including:

- Drama and dance
- Dance and art
- Creative writing, art and drama
- Drama and creative writing: 'Theatre with a message' was successful - placards/banners for example used in drama presentations.
- Dance with art and/or creative writing as a backdrop or a prop/part of the set
- Art with dance art and/or creative writing – rewrite of lyrics

Occasionally candidates used a small number of single words superimposed onto their art work. This isn't really in the spirit of creative writing and whilst it does show integration of the art forms it does not always display candidates' creative writing skills at their best.

The areas of study were generally referred to, often by means of a template supplied by the teacher.

Most centres provided evidence of exploration of practitioners' works in terms of the areas of study. The influence of practitioners was sometimes evident in candidates' ideas for projects. The strongest portfolios included this influence, in planning notes, and gave explanations as to how the areas of study would be applied to their work. There were some examples of thorough understanding but these were in the minority. More often, candidates responded to sub-headings and didn't fully develop points made. Often the link between the area of study and the actual work being studied was missed.

There was a good example of consideration of the areas of study where the candidates used them as a framework for planning but less evidence of them using them to inform their evaluations.

In the best portfolios, reference to the areas of study continued throughout the whole portfolio and was not a separate page dedicated to the areas of study headings. In this better work candidates clearly understood how the areas of study helped a piece of work be created and convey messages to an audience. In weaker work this section was, at best a page explaining very briefly what the various terms meant.

SPECIFIC TO A692

All planning, realisations appeared to be within time limits. All centres' candidates presented individual work.

Effective links were made with the stimulus and a range of artworks based on the same theme. Art forms considered and practitioner influence apparent in many cases although a narrower range of stimuli than in previous years.

Themes:

- Fear
- Confined Spaces
- Alice in Wonderland
- Misconceptions
- Artworks/Practitioners usually used as stimuli
- Youth culture
- Abuse (Alcohol and drugs, child etc)
- Practitioners listed in A691 were also used by centres in A692

Dance

- Christopher Bruce
- Frantic Assembly
- Stomp

Art

- Joseph Cornell: Memory Boxes
- Banksy (Very popular)
- Edward Munch
- Matthew Reinhart, Barney Saltzberg, Lothar Baumgarten
- Luiza Vizoli
- Andy Warhol
- Roy Lichtenstein

Creative Writing

- Lord of the Flies
- Roald Dahl – range of stories
- Dr Seuss
- Katherine Holabird – Angelina Ballerina books
- Richard Bradshaw – Shadow puppets

Drama

- Enda Walsh: Chatroom (more than one centre)
- Brecht (more than one centre)
- Denis Kelly: DNA
- Stanislavski (more than one centre)
- Tim Burton: Alice in Wonderland and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (Director)

Music

- Avril Lavigne 'Alice' soundtrack
- 4Minute – Crazy
- Meghan Trainor

There were very few instances where the areas of study were not referred to in some way. The target audience and narrative were the most well-understood. Genre, mood and atmosphere were usually considered and often reflected in realisations. Understanding of symbolism was vague but stronger realisations appeared to enjoy exploring this area. Motif and context were sometimes over looked although some aspects of context such as culture and political were sometimes considered in an interesting way. The social moral and cultural influences were the best understood with the strongest realisations grasping the context of when artistic pieces were created and what motivated the artists in their creations. Political context was covered especially well. Structure and Shape was usually implicit.

All centres provided a range of realisations. There were no examples of centres focussing on a specific type of outcome.

Examples/combinations:

- Dance and art: swan dance in costume & mask, effective and accomplished performance
- Use of film on backdrop effective. Voiceovers and music helped to create mood and atmosphere.
- Illustrated story books on the theme of fear were interesting and effective, particularly the ones for children
- Drama monologues with dance - quite simple in terms of drama skills. Dance varied – sometimes satisfactorily related to theme.
- Monologues with supporting art work around a theme of war produced some moving work as did work based on the theme of emotions.
- Poems with artwork; focus on art and poetry, mostly simplistic.
- Interesting/creative picture frame – art and creative writing. Successful integration of art forms
- Dance, art and creative writing – rewrite of lyrics. Performance separate to writing hence not a cohesive whole
- Artwork – hat and clock on Alice in Wonderland theme with creative writing linked to theme
- Drama and creative writing: monologue, war theme
- Creative writing and art – children's storybooks.
- Use of film on backdrop effective. Voiceovers and music helped to create mood and atmosphere.

Only a few examples of music being presented as an art form – in the form of a rap

Drama performances were mostly quite weak on drama skills and techniques – unlike previous years when some monologues have been very emotive

There were some examples of on-going reflection and retrospective evaluation. Some centres addressed the ideas for future development via a spider diagram which evidenced interesting considerations.

There were some very weak evaluations where candidates simply described what they had done in order to produce their realizations. Some centres are still not giving the correct guidance to candidates as to what to include in their evaluations so what is written does not necessarily lend itself easily to the awarding of marks as laid out in the descriptors in AO4. The strongest evaluations involved candidates making judgements at all stages of the work and responding to those judgements so that they made improvements to their work. Stronger responses were analytical in their evaluations making comparisons to their own work and development alongside the skills and techniques and outcomes, identified in professional works.

Portfolio evidence was usually well structured although there were some examples of portfolios being an erratic collection of notes. The best portfolios were those in which candidates had adopted the scrap book approach. Well-constructed portfolios clearly identified candidate's individual contributions using a range of notes photographs and DVD evidence. There were fewer examples this year of research on practitioners and artworks being carried out independently by candidates. In some centres, it was obvious that all candidates were given the same hand-outs and individual responses were quite limited. However, there was some quite thorough and detailed research in the strongest portfolios. Greater significance seemed to be placed on context (maybe reflecting its importance in other subjects being studied by the candidates such as English Literature) Stronger portfolios provided clear evidence of exploration of artworks in terms of the areas of study. There were some portfolios submitted in large bulky folders which were unnecessary for the work presented. The best portfolios followed a logical order, mapping a journey from initial ideas to the final realisation. Some centres' candidates provided rough notes and sketches without any comments, and hence failed to provide clear evidence of development and progression.

Without exception the strongest portfolios were those where candidates had used independent skills to record their ideas, exploration and developments in producing their final communication and had succinctly and accurately evaluated their work.

A693 Responding to a Commission in a Community Context

This is a unit marked by a visiting examiner. Examiners reported that the paper had been well-received, and that there had been plenty of opportunity for candidates to access the commissions in an imaginative way. For the first time a piece of art was the most popular commission.

The range of practitioners used to influence candidates' work continues to provide a broad experience across the arts.

Generally, portfolios were of a slightly better standard with plenty of reference to Areas of Study, Cultural/Social/Historical aspects and the influence of practitioners. Candidates have been trained well during A691 and A692 to produce the right kind of evidence and it is clear that teachers monitor and closely review and re-organise portfolios before they are presented on the examination day. Centres where marks are lower have presented candidates where their responses have been superficial, or where there is no reference or a misunderstanding of areas of study.

Areas of study

Most portfolios contain a range of references to the areas of study and candidates are much clearer about their significance in their own work and that of practitioners. Symbol and motif seem to be well understood by most candidates, whereas structure and shape were often present and effective in the final presentation, but were not always clearly considered or explored at the planning stage. Genre is often misunderstood and the candidates where areas of study were understood best were the ones who referenced then closely to practitioners' artworks.

As last year, some candidates produced interesting outcomes that demonstrated clear understanding of the areas of study, and yet they failed to refer to them in their portfolios, thereby failing to attract marks for that section of the exam.

Communities

Candidates had thought more carefully about their selected community. In many cases, this was the same as their audience, but where imaginative responses were developed generally they were different. The community should be reflected not just in the realisation itself, but also in the development work in the portfolio, and was not always apparent. A single line stating, 'My community is...' with no other references, is not satisfactory. Several examiners noted that there was a preponderance of education type audiences, or generic terms such as 'teenagers', and this often led to unimaginative work.

Portfolios

An improvement was noticed in the standard of portfolios. They were generally direct, compact and focused, and on the whole there was little padding. In a small number of centres they were occasionally lacking depth and/or compiled afterwards; sometimes they were too bulky with large stiff covers; the ideal is a flimsy loose-leaf A4 binder or a scrapbook no larger than A3 with soft back. A small number of centres are still researching all commissions and in some cases this takes up most of the portfolio.

Assessment by centres was often accurate, and there were helpful explanatory comments in some key areas. A small number of centres still do not complete the Working Mark Sheet

correctly by failing to highlight the bullet points and criteria. This is a requirement, not a voluntary activity, and must be completed.

Sometimes links with Commissions were not always clear or even close and individual voices and emphases were frequently smothered in information and conventionally rather than imaginatively delivered. Similarity in interpretation and presentation suggested a lack of individual approach in a few cases. More individuality and personality (and change of tone) could increase impact. In some centres all candidates used the same pattern of presentation: often a monologue written and performed by the candidate and then a dance. In such centres it would be good to see candidates given more independence to design and structure their own presentation with better merging of the way the art forms are used.

Practitioners and works studied included

- Turner's "The Slave Ship"
- Michael Jackson's "Thriller"
- "I wish I was our Sammy" from Willy Russell's "Blood Brothers"
- "She's leaving home" by the Beatles
- Lowry's "Coming Home from the mill"
- Pater Darling – "A town called Malice", from "Billy Elliott"
- "Teechers" by John Godber
- Art of Jason Mercier (materials made of rubbish)
- Art of Georgia O'Keefe
- Diversity (dance)
- Jim Carey (face and mask)
- Art of Sebastian Kaulitzki
- Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings"
- Matthew Bourne (various)
- Art of Lichtenstein
- Brecht
- Georgina Campbell (drama)
- Akram Kahn
- Sting
- Pop art, Bimbo Booth, Theodore Gericault, Beryl Cook, Banksy, Picasso, Tracey Emin, Rachel Carter, Barbara Kruger, Christian Boltanski,
- Rene Magritte: The Therapist, The Double Secret, Clairvoyance
- PJ Liguori Italian/British Youtube photographic artist,
- Chiharu Shiota – a fibre instalment artist,
- Roy Lichtenstein
- John Godber, Stanislavski, Brecht, Frantic Assembly, Sarah Kane
- Wayne Sleep, Steve Paxton, Martha Graham, Jerome Robbins, Phoenix Dance Co., Christopher Bruce - Ghost Dances, Swansong
- Julia Donaldson, Lauren Childs, Roger McGough, Bruce Lansky, Charles & Mary Lamb
- David Bowie, Gary Barlow, Kelly Clarkson
- The Book of Eli, The Fallout Games, Lord of the Rings
- Stephen King, Edvard Munch, Lovi Jover (artist), Dr Seuss, Barbara Kruger (art) and The Joker (Batman)

In the practical examination, some of the most successful practices included:

- Technically adroit use of film (including skilled editing, angled shots, fades, slow motion, graphics, sound effects, appropriately atmospheric music)
- Frequent evidence of balanced use of three (sometimes four) Art Forms
- Purposeful links with practitioners and works studied earlier in the course
- Constructive employment of set and props – often minimalist, as in use of a single chair, mirror or photograph

- High-impact performance of dance or drama in front of live screen projection
- Structured presentations, including sharp start and neat conclusion
- Mature and confident use of technical aid (including professional expertise offered by technician in one Centre)
- Ready identification of candidates by voice and by display board

Weaker points that surfaced from time to time included:

- Inappropriate and ineffectual wearing of school uniform when supposedly 'in character'
- Speaker turning back to audience (by addressing back projection on screen, for example)
- Social issues (drunkenness, loneliness, poverty, charity appeals, depression...) over-dominant and sometimes applied randomly to a Commission
- Speeches sometimes drowned by music or sound effects
- Use of (often unclear) recorded speech when live projection could have more impact and immediacy
- Some gabbling or failure to communicate coherently to audience
- Grossly inaccurate spellings on screen projections.

Some examiners reported that examples of live dance were comparatively few, probably because time constraints reduced opportunities for planning sophisticated choreography. Candidates are reminded, however, that the dance element need not be extensive. A few were over-elaborate, possibly drafted in from preparations for a dance examination and not fully related to the chosen Commission. The best, on the other hand, were vibrant, imaginatively created, closely linked to the drama and fully engaging.

In contrast there was a greater use of candidate-composed music with some fine examples of songs and some exciting and atmospheric background music.

Evidence of humour was rare, partly because it demands high levels of sophistication, preparation and rehearsal. Where used, it was almost exclusively by male candidates, often on film, and largely in response to 'Our Man in Havana'.

Multimedia work was prominent again this year. When it is used well it adds further communication and a further level of complexity to performance pieces.

Garage band seems over popular for use in music outcomes - the skill level is often very low as the computer has done most of the work! Candidates need reminding that ICT in all of its guises should be the vehicle to help communicate the arts work that they have completed, rather than the art form itself.

Candidates' selected audience was often vague or generic (School Assembly, Options Evening...) while one was certainly specific – 'A Christian audience with a developed tongue-in-cheek humour on You-Tube or Netflix!' Almost all sought an educational purpose

Some centres are still guiding candidates towards one or two commissions within the 10 commission exam paper and are not allowing a more free choice. Within larger centres this leads to many outcomes of a similar nature and some candidates clearly feel restricted by this in terms of their creativity.

Although candidates do not have to use a performance as their realisation, many do. If the performance mode is chosen successful candidates are aware of audience needs by:

- Facing the front (not turning back to read off the screen)
- Looking up from the printed page
- Articulating clearly
- Pacing the delivery appropriately

Use of accent to convey mood and character can also add depth and raise impact. Recorded voices, too, should not be garbled, rushed or unclear.

Some presentation issues included:

In performance

- Clearer vocal delivery (recorded or live)
- Direct eye contact with audience
- Avoidance of head-down reading; if a monologue cannot be learnt, candidates should devise ways of delivering it that either make a feature of reading (eg diary entries) or record a voice-over
- Appropriate use of pausing and pacing
- Use of accent/wider vocal range to convey character and mood.

In production:

Poor performance space and production values do nothing for candidates' confidence. Sometimes this is unavoidable, for example, when a classroom is the only space available. Even that space can be cleared of furniture and made to resemble a studio. Candidates dancing in school uniform is somewhat incongruous. Effective use of costume can lift a performance, and at the very least an art form appropriate mode of dress should be worn unless the clothing is integral to the piece itself. When visual art is offered it is best presented when displayed on a board or wall rather than hand held in a very transient and often crumpled manner.

There were many examples of story-books for children, and these were often very well illustrated and imaginatively scripted. On the other hand, weaker offerings sometime submitted poorly finished booklets. 'Small but perfectly formed' is a useful description of what candidates need to aim for when presenting their work for A693.

When story-books were also submitted dramatically, they were sometimes less successful. However the strongest performances could deliver a story with clarity and expression whether live or as a pre-recorded voice-over.

Increasingly, candidates are submitting work on film, whether by using actors or creating animation. These were often of very high standard, despite time constraints, and there were many examples of sophisticated techniques such as film noir features, angled shots, split screen and slow motion. Atmospheric music and sound effects were frequently well employed, and editing was stylish and mature. In the creation of trailers and of Charity appeals in particular, slogans and informational snippets were integrated and had a strong impact.

Most candidates communicated their ideas very successfully. The strongest performances were of drama. There were some examples of two art forms being quite strong but the third being much weaker. For example, the reading of a story, with the reading being the drama skill but being quite poorly read.

Some centres performed drama pieces based on scripts they had written and used mime/dance/synchronised movement to illustrate themes. Some candidates produced quite strong pieces integrating art forms, although in some cases candidates' dance/drama contributions were rather thin and in one case the candidate forgot to include the dance altogether on the day.

Many candidates presented work individually. Some candidates performed monologues in character with varying degrees of success.

Group sizes were appropriate in all centres. All candidates seen had at least 2 minutes exposure, some pieces were a little longer than they ought to be, mostly monologues.

In almost all cases there was a good use of commissions. The 'Portrait of a Woman' was common and led to some interesting outcomes based around mental health. 'Don't Give Up', although in many cases a little 'clichéd', led to some interesting outcomes regarding survival against the odds.

As in previous years, the effectiveness of Artwork used as a backdrop for drama varied. Sometimes it failed to contribute to the drama, simply being art of a similar theme.

Some examples of realisations included:

- Dance using a banner to promote a theme or message
- The drama scripts were interspersed with dance and movement
- Animated films using characters created through voices
- An effective backdrop of shadows and the use of shadow puppets successfully developing the commission. The voices created character
- Artwork T shirts worn by candidates as costume for characters they performed
- A children's presentation with artwork doors to open
- Education Packs with teacher resources
- A mash-up of lyrics in popular music
- Docudramas, which were often effective
- 3D circus model with story & music
- A Jack in the box as part of a story
- A children's book
- Dance around artwork letters with some character dialogue

Candidates had prepared well generally, with live performers knowing lines and moves. Presentations were of appropriate length and were well structured, with (usually) strong conclusions.

Responses to the Commissions:

1. TOY SYMPHONY

Of the few choosing this, presentations included:

- Cartoon (on film) of child's story book
- piece on issue of domestic violence, loosely connected with Commission
- Well-costumed dance conveying warning about extinction of animals
- Video on recycling (images of discarded dolls and toys)
- Solo pieces – about children being alone with mental health issues.

It was disappointing in one centre, wherein a number of candidates had chosen Toy Symphony as their commission, to learn that candidates had not studied the piece of music and in two cases had not even listened to the piece. In these cases the outcomes were purely linked to the idea of 'toys'. This pays only lip service to the examination paper and any opportunity to stretch candidates is rather lost.

2. WELSH HERO

Four Art Forms were frequently used for this third most popular commission.

The most original and imaginative presentation seen by one examiner was a trailer of an action movie where an elderly school janitor saves pupils from terrorists. Another saw an imaginative film creating a range of different characters who were apparently just ordinary people but had actually done something heroic in their lives. Other topics included:

- Alzheimer's disease and dementia
- Loneliness in old age

- Help the Aged appeal (in imitation of the John Lewis Xmas advert)
- 'Get to know your Granddad' appeal
- Address to pupils on World Book Day on "Hero"
- Homelessness and poverty
- Dangers of stereotyping
- Humorous piece about 'being a hero' make good choices – Good mix of music went with dance.

3. GRANNY'S BOOT

Issues and performances for this popular commission were about:

- Problems of being bipolar (based on Spike Milligan's life)
- Abuse of women
- Official talk about pop festival
- Bullying (= weak link with Commission)
- Puppet show – boot recreated.

4. FUERZA BRUTA

This often elicited the most vibrant and colourful of responses, notably in dress. Presentations included:

- Stranger Danger
- Slavery
- Domestic abuse of men
- Advertising trailer (on screen) for a music festival
- Comic – hooray! – dance at Festival (nuns, caretakers et al)
- Piece on 2 trampolines and Djembes exploring the dark side of carnivals.
- Piece under UV lighting – costumes and props with UV paint and samples sounds.

5. DON'T GIVE UP

This commission was the second most popular and particularly attractive to less able candidates but responses were often predictable and clichéd.

The best live performance concerned an imagined GCSE student's monologue on receiving her examination results – a recording of her inner thoughts leading to live delivery of her shocked response.

In some Centres, the most frequent format was through public information films or charity appeals

Other issues included:

- Drug addiction
- Mental health (suicide and depression)
- Coping with cancer
- Olympian has amputation and is obliged to enter Paraplegic Games
- Self-help group.

Coincidentally two Centres had already used this for one of their earlier units.

6. OBSESSIVE ENVY

The Portrait of a Woman commission was by far the most popular commission although some weaker performances went off on somewhat of a 'jealousy' tangent as opposed to 'envy'. Again this commission gave itself over easily to strong community links. Some of the stronger work here looked at the entire range of paintings by the artist (Gericault) and links to the seven deadly sins.

Some live presentations were often highly emotional, including 2 genuine breakdowns, with intense personal experience and loss motivating the candidates. There are clear dangers of having too personal an impetus – it may be best to distance in some way.

One interesting contribution was where the candidate analysed other problems painted by Gericault (man suffering from kleptomania, woman addicted to gambling...)

More conventional (but generally well-structured and performed) pieces raised issues of:

- Schizophrenia and mental illness
- Racism
- Depression
- Autism and self-harm
- Suicide
- Eating disorders
- Bullying

Not all of these were closely related to the chosen Commission

7. OUR MAN IN HAVANA

This was a fairly popular commission, the best of which were often presented on film and (usually) used comedy. Two were trailers of Cold War spy films, making humorous use of accent (eg Polish candidate hamming up the stock East European villain)

Another successful comic film was a parody-satire on Donald Trump (with link to Commission explained and justified)

Grime music – artfully used – added moody tones to 2 presentations

Particularly amusing was the entrant for 'worst film of the year', with knowing gestures, slapstick, deliberately stylised and abrupt editing, overblown mid-Atlantic voiceover and cheesy dialogue. (A live audience would have lapped it up.)

Two movingly serious presentations were based on the horrors of being victims of ISIS terror.

8. LES ENFANTS TERRIBLES

This was the second least popular choice; less able performances latched onto the idea of naughty children but better candidates were more creative. One group of three presented a lively and imaginative rewriting (modern update) of Red Riding Hood. This had a fine set (trees and pathway), a screen which allowed for brutal murders to be presented in silhouette, a structured and substantial script and the use of comedy to ensure audience engagement.

9. SPIDER AND THE FLY

The Spider and The Fly inevitably led to themes of entrapment and grooming, particularly with regard to the internet. This work was well linked to a community context with clear message and purpose. In other centres links with the Commission were sometimes tenuous, with a few having to be explained to the examiner. Clearest was a Road Safety Awareness Campaign, but other issues presented included:

- Alcoholism
- Dance based on theme of Insanity
- A 'Princess Protection Programme'
- A room redesigned as a spider's web and highly interactive mix of Song and Drama and creative writing.

10. LE NAVET BETE

This was the least popular commission, which candidates seemed to avoid perhaps as they found it a little confusing and didn't enjoy the slapstick and silly nature of it. Those who did respond took the idea of clowns and developed their responses in a fairly one-dimensional way.

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