

**Pearson Edexcel GCE**

# **Art and Design**

## **Advanced**

### **Unit 4: A2 Externally Set Assignment**

**Timed Examination: 12 hours**

Paper Reference  
**6AD04–6CC04**

**You do not need any other materials.**

#### **Instructions to Teacher-Examiners**

Centres will receive this paper in January 2015. It will also be available on the secure content section of the Edexcel website at this time.

This paper should be given to the teacher-examiner for confidential reference **as soon as it is received in the centre** in order to prepare for the externally set assignment. **This paper may be released to candidates from 1 February 2015.**

There is no prescribed time limit for the preparatory study period.  
The 12-hour timed examination should be the culmination of candidates' studies.

#### **Instructions to Candidates**

This paper is given to you in advance of the examination so that you can make sufficient preparation.

This booklet contains the theme for the Unit 4 Externally Set Assignment for the following specifications:

9AD01	Art, Craft and Design (unendorsed)
9FA01	Fine Art
9TD01	Three-Dimensional Design
9PY01	Photography – Lens and Light-Based Media
9TE01	Textile Design
9GC01	Graphic Communication
9CC01	Critical and Contextual Studies

**Candidates for all endorsements are advised to read the entire paper.**

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**PEARSON**

Each submission for the A2 Externally Set Assignment, whether **unendorsed** or **endorsed**, should be based on the theme given in this paper.

**You are advised to read through the entire paper, as helpful starting points may be found outside your chosen endorsement.**

If you are entered for an **endorsed** specification, you should produce work predominantly in your chosen discipline for the Externally Set Assignment.

If you are entered for the **unendorsed** specification, you may have been working in two or more different disciplines in Unit 3. **For the Externally Set Assignment, you may choose to produce work in one discipline only.**

**The starting points in each section will help you generate ideas. You may follow them closely, use them as background information or develop your own interpretation of the theme. Read the whole paper as any section may provide the inspiration for your focus.**

You should provide evidence that each of the four Assessment Objectives has been addressed. It is anticipated that A2 candidates will show in the Externally Set Assignment how their knowledge, skills and understanding have developed through their work in Unit 3.

The Assessment Objectives require you to:

Develop your ideas through sustained and focused investigations informed by contextual and other sources, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding.

Experiment with and select appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes, reviewing and refining your ideas as your work develops.

Record in visual and/or other forms ideas, observations and insights relevant to your intentions, demonstrating your ability to reflect on your work and progress.

Present a personal, informed and meaningful response demonstrating critical understanding, realising intentions and, where appropriate, making connections between visual, oral or other elements.

## **Preparatory Studies**

Your preparatory studies may include sketchbooks, notebooks, worksheets, design sheets, large-scale rough studies, samples, swatches, test pieces, maquettes, digital material... anything that fully shows your progress towards your outcomes.

*Preparatory studies should show:*

- your development of a personal focus based on the theme
- a synthesis of ideas
- evidence of your development and control of visual language skills
- critical review and reflection, recording your thoughts, decisions and development of ideas
- the breadth and depth of your research from appropriate primary and contextual sources
- relevant selection with visual and/or written analyses rather than descriptive copying or listing processes.

## **Timed Examination**

Your preparatory studies will be used to produce an outcome(s) under examination conditions in **twelve hours**.

## **The Theme: FLAWS, PERFECTION, IDEALS OR COMPROMISES**

Imperfections and mistakes often bring character to an art or craft work that greatly enhances its appeal and sometimes its aesthetic qualities. Spontaneous chemical reactions can have extremely pleasing effects such as the transition of bronze from gleaming yellow to its exquisite green brown patina in reaction to the elements. Ceramic artists have long recognised these effects and await the opening of the kiln with a mixture of excitement and dread. Glazes can be transformed by the intense heat to glittering jewels or dull brown shards in an instant, depending on factors that are sometimes beyond the control of the potter.

Ultraviolet light and X-rays have given us insight into the mistakes of famous painters whose decision-making processes may be coloured by random effects of composition or colour. Some artists such as Jackson Pollock and Howard Hodgkin have intentionally tried to explore these spontaneous effects by creating artworks that are driven by their subconscious, rather than their conscious thoughts.

It is interesting to contrast these works with those of artists who go to the other extreme and try to control every brushstroke and shade to produce perfection. Euan Uglow's and William Coldstream's measurement systems, ensuring accuracy and aiding proportion, can often still be seen in the final works, blatantly demonstrating their concern with precision. Superrealist artists toy with our perceptions of reality by bringing the entire picture plane into focus, something that the eye is incapable of.

Rodin's battles to achieve perfection can be seen in his unfinished figurative marble sculptures, many of which he consciously chose to leave as if the figures are attempting to draw themselves out from the raw materials. Flaws and imperfections in the natural stone were embraced and acknowledged in the final composition.

Japanese artists always realised that discordant elements and imperfections can actually enhance the aesthetic characteristics of any work and this is reflected in their philosophy of Wabi Sabi. Leonard Koren defines this as "the most conspicuous and characteristic feature of traditional Japanese beauty".

Here are some further suggestions generated by the theme that might inspire your journey:

- geological faults, gemstone inclusions
- forest fires, landslips, quarries, gorges, ruins, urban decay
- stains, cracks, blots, accidents, spills, rips, patches
- make-up, disguises, masks, clothing, artificial fur, plastic surgery
- politics, deceit, trickery, concealment
- selective breeding, genetic modification, cloning
- shows, competition, pageants
- mutation, bacteria, viruses, scars
- families, relationships, communities.

## Fine Art

### Optional disciplines:

- Painting and drawing
- Printmaking
- Sculpture
- Alternative media

### Possible starting points:

Few portrait painters gloss over the imperfections of their sitters, as they understand these aspects convey character and humanity. In the past this was a risky business for artists commissioned to paint royalty, as the truth of what they saw, when consigned to canvas, may not always have been complimentary. Artists who followed their convictions give us a rare insight into characters of the past, such as Velázquez's portraits of the Spanish royal family. When commissioning his portrait, Oliver Cromwell is reported to have said to the artist Peter Lely, "I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me, and not flatter me at all; but remark all these roughnesses, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me, otherwise I will never pay a farthing for it". Graham Sutherland's portrait of Winston Churchill was destroyed by his wife after his death, indicating her lack of appreciation of its honesty.

It is an interesting fact that the inclusion of what would commonly be perceived as eyesores in landscape paintings can actually give them aesthetic and appealing qualities. The painting *Totes Meer* by Paul Nash depicts a scrapheap of World War II aircraft and yet has a haunting beauty that is hard to explain. Artists of the English Romantic movement were inspired by derelict and ruined buildings and captured their strange configurations with the same elegance and nostalgia. Similar effects are evoked by Andreas Gursky in his photographs of landscapes and factories. Peter Prendergast also is inspired by these blots on the landscape and produces vigorous abstract studies of Welsh open cast slate mines.

Many classical Greek and Roman sculptors sought to depict all forms as perfect, tending to stylise and correct imperfections in their studies of their subjects. Contemporary sculptors, however, have often moved in the opposite direction seeking to display the flaws and inadequacies of their subjects, especially the struggle of humanity to find stability and harmony. A few examples are Jake and Dinos Chapman's *The Disasters of War, Maman* by Louise Bourgeois and Marc Quinn's portraits of Alison Lapper and John E. Sulston. Some carvers seek out a certain diseased wood called spalted timber for their sculptures, due to the fantastic patterns created by the invading fungi.

It could be argued that the Dutch still-life painters of the 17th century and the superrealists of the 20th century were following the same aim of trying to create perfect two-dimensional facsimiles of the objects they studied. The illusions and images created when trying to bridge the gap between two and three dimensions continues to fascinate artists such as Audrey Flack. In paintings such as *Queen* and *Marilyn* she epitomises the ethos of photorealism. This is a fascinating approach in a world obsessed with superb digital imagery and the power of Photoshop.

## Three-Dimensional Design

### Optional disciplines:

- Scenography
- Architectural, environmental and interior design
- Product design

### Possible starting points:

Alternative energy sources such as wind turbines and solar panels are becoming increasingly prevalent. Their design appears to be driven solely by their function and this may now be causing issues as the landscape is transformed into a network of whirling blades and acres of reflective mirrored panels. Clever design here may help address the concerns of many who see those constructions as detrimental to the aesthetics of the landscape. Site-specific sculptures rely on the integration of the pieces with their environments, the two elements symbiotically enhancing one another. Perhaps this is a factor that might influence both the design and siting of these alternative energy sources.

Fashion affects domestic goods in the same way that it does clothing. Trends of the day have a massive impact on design and marketing. The rocket era of the 1950s and 60s inspired many space-age designs such as the *Party Chef* electric cooker by Cory. Folk art and rural interest inspired the pine and craft pottery designs of the 1970s and the Shaker simplicity of clean lines and minimalism are a current vogue. It is impressive how the shapes of simple domestic items such as kettles, toasters and vacuum cleaners are altered and modified to fit contemporary trends. The design flaws evident in previous generations of implements often re-emerge, as function is sacrificed for form. Inadequate handles and badly-pouring spouts are examples of this. The novel and appealing designs of the *Alessi* citrus squeezer and the Luckies of London *Karoto* vegetable slicer raise some interesting issues about practicality.

The flawed and imperfect nature of humanity has provided a rich source of inspiration for playwrights and has resulted in some outstanding set designs for plays as diverse as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, to contemporary productions such as Mikhail Bulgakov's *The White Guard*, Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem* and Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. These last three all won The Laurence Olivier Award for best set design. The designers were Bunny Christie, Ultz and Bunny Christie with Finn Ross respectively.

Air turbulence and resistance has had a major impact on the design of fast moving vehicles. Any irregularities, imperfections or design flaws on the surfaces of these can have a dramatic effect on their performance. This is true for many vehicles such as aircraft, automobiles, trains and boats. Whilst streamlining has a fundamentally practical role, its impact on the aesthetics of the shapes of these vehicles is well documented. It is interesting to see that the science behind this phenomenon continues to evolve and influence design. Look for instance at the differences between *Bluebird-Proteus CN7*, Donald Campbell's world land speed record breaking car, and *Bloodhound SSC*, the current car developed for this purpose.

## Photography

### Optional disciplines:

- Film-based photography
- Digital photography
- Film and video

### Possible starting points:

Dust marks, light leaks and scratches are traditionally seen as blemishes that impede a photograph's depiction of reality. However, some photographers have taken advantage of creative opportunities to explore the relationship between these unforeseen elements and the image captured by the camera. Stephen Gill is interested in how 'accidental' or 'mistake' layers interact with his exposures in his series *Talking to the Ants*. In his *Buried* series Gill explores the degenerating visual effects of burying and exhumeing Polaroids. The distressed and weathered surfaces of Rita Bernstein's photographs are integral to her exploration of human relationships. The title of Cornelia Parker's piece, *Twenty Years of Tarnish (Wedding Presents)*, hints at symbolism that can be inferred when contemplating her pair of unloved, silver goblets.

Photographers have revealed extraordinary visual interest and occasionally exquisite beauty in the most unlikely of mundane, discarded subjects. Alina Szapocznikow's photo-sculptures consist of 20 black and white photographs of used chewing gum, stretched and shaped into dramatic abstract sculptures. Irving Penn's series *Cigarettes* is made up of 26 photographic studies of discarded cigarette butts. The appearance of these forms becomes strangely dislocated from our usual perceptions and associations. For Penn it was also chance events that triggered photographic responses and his *Theatre Accident* documents the cosmetic spillage from a lady's handbag. In much of Aaron Siskind's photography it was the cracked charm of decaying surfaces that seemed to him to hold an ironic beauty and his work from the 1940s and 1950s relates closely to the American Abstract Expressionist painters from that period.

Rubens is just one of numerous European painters to have depicted the beauty contest in the mythological story of *The Judgement of Paris*. Attitudes towards beauty contests have changed dramatically over the last 50 years and these are now felt to be far less socially acceptable. Many photographers in the Magnum Photos cooperative have documented beauty contests in ways that expose awkwardness and absurdity, but shows that promote ideal non-human specimens, such as dogs, or cars or vegetables, remain enduringly popular. Martin Parr's and Elliot Erwitt's gently humorous photographs explore our often strange notions of beauty and our obsessive pursuit of perfection. Interestingly, some of the most powerful and enduring portraits of Hollywood stars hint at the more complex truths beneath the beautiful façade. Richard Avedon's unsettling portrait of Marilyn Monroe is a good example.

Ansel Adams is greatly admired for his photographs of the might and majesty of nature. His black and white images evoke the notion of landscape as a sublime and peerless force in a manner that compares with painters such as Turner and Friedrich. Interestingly though, mountains and rugged landscapes were not necessarily always perceived by Europeans as sublime; before the industrialisation of the 19th century untamed nature was seen by many as ugly and frightful. The works of Adams, Turner and Friedrich make interesting comparison with John Pfahl and his photographs of industrial chimneys billowing dramatic plumes of smoke into the atmosphere. Breathtaking as these may be, for an environmentally-informed audience they are deeply troubling. Jeff Wall's

magnificent photographic construction *A Sudden Gust of Wind* (*after Hokusai*) addresses our relationship with nature, our aspirations and the frailties and imperfections that make us human.

## Textile Design

### Optional disciplines:

- Constructed textiles
- Dyed textiles
- Printed textiles
- Fine art textiles
- Fashion textiles

### Possible starting points:

Rips, stains, pulled threads, paint splatters, knots, splices and patches, traditionally the bane of clothing and fabric designers, are now exploited by the fashion industry to create exciting and individual collections. It is interesting to see that even extreme examples witnessed on the catwalks are tempered to produce commercially viable products. Stone washed, faded and torn denim jackets and jeans are typical examples of this. Tory Burch, Cédric Charlier and Diane von Furstenberg are just a few of the designers who have used these methods to enhance their collections.

Hand-produced, multi layered print designs are still in extensive production in the Far East and specialised workshops in Europe. They rely on perfect alignment of the print blocks for success and major errors in judgement can result in hours of work being ruined. However, small anomalies are inevitable and it is this factor that makes these fabrics unique, with no two rolls of material ever being identical. Examples of these techniques can be found in the collections produced by Soham Dave and Sarah Waterhouse. Kalamkari textiles are produced using a combination of hand painting and block printing and are some of the most sophisticated fabrics produced using hand techniques.

The difficulty inherent in transferring an image to fabric using embroidery has captivated textile designers for many centuries. Embroidery was often used to decorate fabrics that adorned the buildings that housed them. From great castles to nomadic tents, tapestries and ornate silks softened and humanised the interiors, converting them from mere shelters to individual homes. This technique reached near perfection in Japan during the Edo period and can be seen on many Uchikake Kimonos displayed in national galleries such as the Victoria and Albert Museum. The stitching and combination of subtly dyed threads create images that reflect the same precision as the paintings of the day. Contemporary embroiderers often use sophisticated sewing machines to make the process less labour-intensive but, even when assisted by computer software, they may struggle to match the sensitivity of these early pieces.

The tradition of recycling damaged or part-worn fabrics has a long history going back at least as far as the rag rugs and patchwork quilts of the 18th and 19th centuries. Contemporary charity outlets for recycled garments can provide a cheap and interesting source for exotic fabrics, with garments unsuitable for sale often simply being thrown out. Up-cycling used fabrics into wall hangings, decorative pieces and even back into garments has recently become very fashionable. At one end of the scale there are large fashion outlets such as Maison Martin Margiela producing jackets and thigh boots from recycled handbags in their Fall/Winter 2010 collection and Melissa Siegrist's recycled denim outfits from her Fall/Winter 2013 collection. Then, at the other end, you have fine artists creating fabric hangings in the form of installations such as those produced by the Uruguayan artist Margaret Whyte.

## Graphic Communication

### Optional disciplines:

- Advertising
- Illustration
- Packaging
- Typography
- Interactive media

### Possible starting points:

Occasionally graphic artists will introduce what initially appear to be mistakes into their designs that on closer inspection reveal themselves as deliberately calculated devices, specifically relating to the message communicated. David Carson's posters advertising a post-tsunami fundraising event featured the word 'Help' with the 'p' cast adrift from the letters 'hel' – a graphical context that mirrors the human tragedy experienced.

The crossings out of spelling errors on the front cover of *The Essential David Shrigley* book reflect his casual, rule-breaking style of art and humour. The low-tech, no-budget graphics used by Iginio Lardani in the credit sequence for Sergio Leone's *Fistful of Dollars* have a dramatic immediacy that captured and defined the spirit of the spaghetti western in the 1960s. William Kentridge's politically charged stop-go animations, like *History of the Main Complaint*, are made from charcoal drawings repeatedly rubbed out and redrawn. These are all the more powerful and visceral for rejecting the slickness of more sophisticated animation techniques.

Designers tend to avoid making computer-generated characters that have a perfect human resemblance. Digitally animated characters that are too real are often perceived by audiences as being creepy and evoke a strange revulsion rather than empathy. This phenomenon has been defined as an 'uncanny valley' reaction. Stephen Bayley points out that the first CGI film *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* in 2001 flopped because 'the characters were generally found to be too disquietingly perfect with their chillingly regular features'. Similar criticisms were made of *The Polar Express* in 2004 but in 2011 *The Adventures of Tintin* was praised for its realistic animations that avoided the 'uncanny valley' effect. The graphic artist David Moratilla creates digital portraits that incorporate small flaws to add individuality to his characters, enhancing rather than undermining their beauty.

*The Perfect Storm*, *Accidentally On Purpose*, *Beautiful Disaster* and *Ordered Chaos* are all novels with titles that are oxymorons. For book jacket designers these provide opportunities for playful contrasts and ironically juxtaposed motifs. Jan Bajec is one of a number of graphic designers who have explored oxymorons in their work. In the book *Pretty Ugly: Visual Rebellion in Design*, Martin Lorenz and Lupi Asensio showcase the work of designers who deliberately flaunt the traditional rules in graphic design, with varying degrees of success. One more universally acclaimed design that juxtaposes a playfully naïve approach with a contrastingly macabre theme is Saul Bass' fantastic credit sequence for *Anatomy of a Murder* in which crudely cut-out pieces of paper, sequenced in a puzzle-like format, represent dismembered body parts.

Traditionally, stylistic cohesion has been a critical factor in successful graphic design but there are significant examples where different media, combining realistic and more stylised approaches, have been fused in highly effective and imaginative ways. The graphic novel *The Photographer* is an extraordinary collaboration between the late French photographer Didier Lefèvre, graphic novelist Emmanuel Guibert and graphic

designer Frédéric Lemercier. Photographs, text and drawings combine in a powerfully synchronised account of Lefèvre's gruelling Médecins Sans Frontières expedition to Afghanistan in 1986. The animated documentary film *Waltz with Bashir*, written and directed by Ari Folman depicts his experiences as a soldier in the 1982 Lebanon war. The film, heralded as 'inventing a new cinematographic language', ends with animation dissolving into actual footage.

## Critical and Contextual Studies

### Possible starting points:

In the early 20th century, Modernism's route to aesthetic perfection lay in objectivity, functionality, order and minimalism – an anonymous, international, collective style. German Bauhaus graphic designers like Herbert Bayer and László Moholy-Nagy were producing similar work to that of Theo van Doesberg in Holland, El Lissitzky in Russia and, later, Paul Rand in America. From the 1960s designers like Wolfgang Weingart, Emil Ruder, Max Bill and Katherine McCoy challenged the Modernist paradigm, championing more diverse and intuitive approaches, which reasserted self-expression and the individual stamp of the designer. Current technology and global networks have radically changed the context for the graphic designer. Helen Armstrong, in her book *Graphic Design Theory: Readings from the Field*, suggests 'As more and more designers, along with the rest of the population, become initiators and producers of content, a levelling is occurring. A new kind of collective voice, more anonymous than individual, is beginning to emerge'. It could be argued that the pursuit of perfection and the assertion of stylistic independence are contradictory aims in graphic design.

In a discussion about his portrait of John Mortimer, the painter Tai-Shan Schierenberg describes the dilemma of 'trying to be specific about the person being painted and trying to get the personality as closely as possible' whilst 'creating a beautiful abstract surface', taking advantage of 'exciting accidents'. He suggests that producing very large heads has allowed him to be 'precise as well as painterly'. Other artists have sought to address and explore this relationship between subject and surface, which can be just as much a feature of photography as painting. In her *Thrice upon a Time* series the Australian photographer Odette England made prints from negatives she had taken whilst growing up on her family farm. Later in life she asked her parents to revisit the farm with these negatives stuck to the soles of their shoes so that they would become imprinted with dirt and debris. 'My parents are semi-supervised ghosts; I ask them when and where to haunt. Their repetitive, ritualistic motion helps me remember, depict, and fantasise.'

The Golden Section is a mathematical calculation of aesthetically pleasing proportions and generally felt to be in tune with the order of the natural world. First defined by the ancient Greeks, then further explored by Fibonacci and Luca Pacioli, it has profoundly influenced artists and designers for over 2000 years. Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* famously documents the proportions of the human figure defined by the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius as the ideal from which classical ratios in architecture were drawn. In 1948 French architect Le Corbusier updated *Vitruvian Man*, further developing a system of proportions based on the human body which he called *Modulor*. Such rules presuppose that perfect beauty is a singular paradigm, arguably constraining artistic expression to neutral conformity.

Ideals, realities and spirituality are often inextricably linked for artists and designers. In Islamic art, arabesques and geometric patterns reflect Islamic belief in an infinite spiritual order that encompasses all things beyond the material world. The popularity of organic arabesque motifs in European Art Nouveau was in part a backlash against the machine age. In England, William Morris's designs based on natural forms stem from his desire to be free from the dirt and drudgery of industrialised Victorian Britain. Earlier in the 18th century, Ann Lee escaped the squalor of her impoverished upbringing in Manchester to begin a new life in New York, where she established the Shaker community. In their buildings, furniture and utilitarian designs the Shakers aspired to a clean and graceful purity of style that reflected their spiritual beliefs. Lee insisted that 'good spirits will not live where there is dirt'.

## **Reference material**

Please note that URLs are checked at the time of printing but are subject to change.

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## **Endorsement specific reference material**

### **Fine Art**

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## **Three-Dimensional Design**

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