

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship Visual Arts 2020

Standards [93306](#) [93307](#) [93308](#) [93309](#) [93310](#)

93306: Painting

Part A: Commentary

For Painting Scholarship in 2020, candidates engaged in projects grounded in an area of research they were seeking to understand via a process of enquiry; one they were passionate about and which had some effect on them. These investigations kept moving through multiple strands of research and exploration that could inform the ongoing body of work. This included working with various sources, a range of media, historical layers, materiality, social politics, grounding in traditional and contemporary approaches, looking forward and back. Given this rich pool of subject area, candidates were able to 'own it and enjoy it', which was evident in the scope of personal, social, political, formal conceptual, abstraction submissions.

Claiming ownership over an enquiry is a crucial requirement at Scholarship. Successful candidates demonstrated a clear idea of their intent. They were always open to changes, making unanticipated shifts, and had a reasonable expectation of what they were hoping to achieve versus an impossible ideal. A high understanding of the appropriate technology required for their proposition was also evident. Candidates consistently demonstrated fluent media handling, either through development phases (processes of experimentation analysis and review) or by exploring a variety of formats and scales – challenging themselves to investigate different compositional solutions to a pictorial problem.

Colour was used compositionally as a conceptual tool / enquiry, rather than to enhance the theme – seen through more nuanced treatment of colour selection, varying the mutations of colour and tone. Overall, there was more variation with scales and forms within the format sizes employed and the combined use of text and imagery. Candidates who researched text in art looked at how lettering operates – stencil, linear, advertising, graffiti, drawing on the body, embossing (means beyond their handwriting) – transforming text into composition. The panel noted a positive increase in those utilising an expanded range of painting-related materials, media, and processes, including some craft-based enquiries. Students were brave in how they experimented with the materials they chose to explore painting concepts.

It was excellent to see more candidates responding to their own work to reflect and analyse.

In workbooks and on portfolios, movements between work sequences were (obviously) development in-practice versus applying artist models' devices. It was good to see a move away from a "grab-bag" of references to other artists' work, just because it looked visually relevant. Candidates are encouraged not to be afraid to work with the "appropriate" model to find that deep understanding versus an arbitrary reference. Analysis of artist models is most valuable when the discussion advances the answers to the questions being asked (the how / why / what of the artist's practice versus a biography per se). Workbooks that were produced in parallel with art work did an excellent job of providing a holistic picture of the candidate's journey in relation to the Scholarship criteria.

Part B: Report on performance standard

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

- engaged fully in their project, supported by thorough research, enabling a genuine endeavour and understanding of their proposition through a true process of enquiry
- demonstrated a consistently fluent use of media, which they constantly sought to build upon through a process of developing phases via experimentation, analysis, and critical review

- showed intelligent integration of relevant artistic practice tied to their proposition, which was clearly communicated in their workbook and built upon in ongoing production for the folio
- presented a rich proposition, which often contained multiple strands to explore in a range of different media-like technology, print, sculpture, etc. that through further critical analysis provided a depth of ideas
- produced a large body of work, which reflected a sense of excitement and full engagement with art-making at this level.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- had ownership of a clear proposition that had meaning for them personally, which was reflected in their high levels of sustained engagement
- presented consistently high-level painting skills across the folio, and the workbook often contained additional drawings and paintings, demonstrating their depth of ideas
- showed through their production a genuine process of exploration appropriate to the conceptual framework with intelligent research ongoing across phases of development
- verified strong ability to critique work and move their proposition forward through an understanding of picture-making concerns in partnership with ideas, further evidenced by careful consideration around the use of artist references.

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

- showed inconsistency between the two sites of evidence – the portfolio and the workbook
- filled workbook pages with description of the folio layout, rather than presenting analysis and reflection of their decision-making processes
- included extensive biographical outlines of too large a range of artists without indicating relevance to their own practice
- relied heavily on secondary sources, showing a lack of ability to drive their proposition personally or to source their own imagery (through photoshoots, drawing in the landscape, etc.)
- did not develop work through ongoing production and were sometimes hampered by tracing imagery, rather than building a skill set of their own.

93307: Design

Part A: Commentary

For Design Scholarship in 2020, candidates presented authentic enquiries developing briefs overflowing with inventiveness, enabling them to fully engage in the design process. This personal investment helped keep these enquiries moving forward. Therefore, content and ideas drove how candidates thought about design conventions, whether their primary mode of generation was two-dimensional, three-dimensional, hand-drawn, or photographic. Consideration and invention of formats and artefacts genuinely related to selected topics were intrinsic to performing at Scholarship level. Candidates are encouraged to continue to seek out their passions and find a relationship with a topic or issue; this level of motivation and interest can drive the work ethic and ensure the briefs have real-world context at the forefront.

Tactics such as humour, metaphor, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, and shock (when executed well), propelled lateral and unanticipated avenues for ideation and content generation that stood out at Scholarship level. Application to formats and media identifying interaction, functionality, mass production, printed matter, prototypes, object, display, and site-based work revealed the potential for briefs to perform and have traction in the real world. Some candidates developed interactive, tactile, foldable, and active artefacts to engage and reinforce concepts between user and message, again making the proposition believable. A high level of analysis guided production values and media procedures in these instances, both evidenced in the portfolio presentations and the analysis within the workbooks.

Workbooks that are dense and packed with research, thinking, and practice are encouraged to create an indexing and / or highlighting system to extrapolate and tease out key analysis, turning points, critical findings, and reflections, which aid a holistic reading of a candidate's work. The best of these approaches is where the candidate uses the workbook to talk through ethics and ideologies, and creates a reason to believe in the topic and findings. Here, the workbook acts in support and expands the thinking evident in the folio work. Art work and resolved assets that arrive and are not then substantiated or supported by process and procedures in the workbook can limit a candidate's ability to reinforce links and create visual and conceptual reciprocity.

Candidates who were able to move beyond models and established practice, and deepen their research enquiry to generate content, located critical tactics that were lateral and inventive. Where content and ideas drove the selection and expansion

of design conventions, briefs were structured and well-positioned to open up enquiry and provocation, enabling a candidate to investigate message, making, and meaning pertinent to topic and users / audience.

Part B: Report on performance standard

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

- were deeply engaged in their topic, unpacking research to deepen and locate turning points, juggle complexity, and inform an ideational quest
- demonstrated a fluency across a range of media types and applications, managing an interplay between print and site; between two-dimensional and three-dimensional artefacts; between performance and interviews with users
- utilised strategy to create believability by consciously determining how to position their audience and viewer interaction with the brief, format and message
- managed phases of synthesis, whereby new content and critical contexts created iterative and new stages of development across the workbook and folio
- expanded and integrated devices and conventions pertinent to storytelling, copyrighting, craft values, visual effects, motion graphics, visual representation, and three-dimensional making.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- constructed a repertoire of resources and visual skills to test and explore graphic treatment, demonstrating an array of technical facility across a range of media
- constructed a repertoire of resources and visual skills to test and explore graphic treatment, demonstrating an array of technical facility across a range of media
- created images, characters, props, symbols, icons, and scenarios, and investigated formats appropriate to the topic and relevant to communication design and real-world contexts
- consolidated and confirmed the research inquiry in relation to production and process, and considered the design and layout of the workbook to expand, catalogue, and archive the range of design phases undertaken
- worked diligently and managed an experimental and iterative process, conceptually driving ideas using information on the topic to produce sequences, characters, text and image relationships pertinent to narrative and message
- learnt about their subject, and thought about the role of communication design, scoping links between eras of design and technologies with underpinning ideas, such as sustainability and global impact

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

- produced descriptive workbooks explaining steps undertaken towards each linear outcome and idea versus using design-thinking processes and research to expand and investigate new or less obvious options
- did not depart or learn enough from research models; a slow journey unfolded that was reliant on a stylistic set of conventions with superficial analysis (essentially, the same idea was remade with no new approach or tactic applied)
- relied solely on a brand name where image-making experiments would have benefitted from more copywriting, taglines, and information about the topic to reveal and integrate alternative concepts with visual design
- managed a short phase of ideational iteration, quickly arriving at outcomes, which prevented synthesis, as not enough making and testing had transpired to clarify and capitalise on starting points
- set briefs that were too linear or overly complex from the outset and, therefore, investigation into the topic and surrounding contexts (historical, social, cultural, political) was inactive and absent.

93308: Sculpture

Part A: Commentary

For Sculpture Scholarship in 2020, candidates presented original student-based, student-led work. They embraced sculptural language with excitement and willingness to experiment and explore diverse materials and processes. There was lots of testing, trialling, and reworking; they exhausted the potential of materials through in-depth engagement via *making*. They didn't rest on one way of doing something; multiple tests were undertaken and explored, and then installed in various formats and sites. This type of practising further conceptualised the work in context, bringing more political and site-specific readings to the art work.

Candidates were able to take an idea or conversation and develop their own visual vocabulary while moving in and out of various modes of operation. In this way, it was clear they understood that their methodology was essential for making /

developing the work beyond a singular outcome. Thinking about a material or object's symbology was core to many of the investigations within Scholarship; this was usually attached to the topic and its place within history or contemporary culture and art. There was a playfulness to the way images and objects were utilised to tease out candidates' points of view or perspectives (socio-political or formal conceptual). These were well-founded and always made innovative links to established practice, popular culture, and trends associated with the topic.

There appeared to be a nuanced understanding of visual language as a tool and how to apply it with sophistication. Materiality and the intrinsic nature of how materials can be read was played out many times in these personally driven folio / workbooks, i.e. how and what was used (media, materials, processes, arrangements, performance) in relation to making meaning.

Scholarship candidates in Sculpture continually found opportunities – they were open and receptive to everyday “things” (from within their lives and outside of their experience), and how these might become subject matter for their propositions. They were interested in conceptual thinking and timely issues related to the real world and, therefore, tended to address a broad spectrum of social political topics – for instance, humour and absurdity (anthropomorphism), gender stereotypes, equity issues in education, skin and the idea of self (revealing and covering), migration, and environmental enquiries.

The editing process utilised by candidates in Sculpture during the making process is strong. This aspect is particularly evident in how art work is presented on the folio and then expanded on in the workbook. Often candidates employed ambitious, to-scale ways of making. They weren't reliant on spaces inside classrooms; they went outside, installed at home – found alternative sites, approximated scale relations where appropriate, and engaged in smart use of materials, media, and process integral to the central proposition.

Part B: Report on performance standard

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

- operated in a multitude of sculptural modes that were pertinent to the central proposition of the submission
- operated in a multitude of sculptural modes that were pertinent to the central proposition of the submission
- employed a confident approach to testing ideas in sculptural form that took risks, unafraid of the potential for success
- understood which threads of sculptural activity had the potential to expand the complexity of their sculptural proposition
- used documentation systems that gave an exact representation of the work in both time-based and static sculptural work
- demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of sculptural materials and processes that allowed the candidate to articulate diverse sculptural ideas.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- used the workbook to expand and clarify the conceptual context of the sculptural activity on the folio
- presented personal, often idiosyncratic, observations about the real world they inhabit through a range of sculptural activity
- expanded the conceptual richness of the work by exploiting site, scale, or material qualities in the production of work
- understood the role of the audience in activating the sculptural work on an authentic and often ambitious scale
- used analysis of established sculptural practice to advance the work's proposition in a range of modes of practice.

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

- engaged in sculptural activity that was highly derivative of established sculptural practice
- used written language to describe sculptural intentions when the work was unable to communicate these ideas
- employed a narrow attitude to technical and conceptual research that remained firmly within preconceived sculptural outcomes
- failed to recognise the potential of ideas to inform new phases of working within the central proposition
- took minimal steps in developing ideas so that the end of the submission did not significantly advance from the beginning of the submission.

93309: Printmaking

Part A: Commentary

For Printmaking Scholarship in 2020, candidates presented submissions that were fully engaged by the printmaking medium as a tool. They were clearly enthralled by process, using multiple print methods and approaches to image construction. While widely (and sometimes, wildly) experimental in the types of print methods used, candidates pushed their ideas far through media material layering to create complex and engaging images.

There was a high level of risk and experimentation in media use, pushing the boundaries of what constitutes print, asking the question: What is print? Here, the workbook was an essential factor in framing their perspective and line of enquiry, analysis, and synthesis of the question. Other topics included storytelling, narrative, formal, conceptual topics that provided the ideal forum for those interested in exploring the graphic nature of the medium. These submissions often had backstories that were deeply personal, with students taking their own photographs to create personal connections and authentic representations of the subject.

Candidates recognised where their strength and primary interest lay, and kept pushing that area of investigation and making. They did this by playing with drawing, composition, layering, colour, light / dark, positive / negative space, and realism / abstraction. Control over colour palettes was a particular strength also.

Many candidates extended their practice by incorporating other modes of making, including sculptural explorations, and installation with some performative content. When used, interactive elements were well-handled (they didn't become gimmicky and were utilised appropriately for the chosen subject matter / topic). A strength of the submissions this year was seeing candidates engaged in making as thinking. While this should be an obvious method for all visual arts subjects, it is not necessarily how most develop their work. Often a candidate decides on the image / outcome based on their topic and conceptual take; this is a useful and successful approach, but so is *making* to find out what a medium can generate through its conventions and conceptual underpinnings.

It was good to see a different range of experimentation that obviously came out of the COVID-19 lockdown periods, such as provisional making practices. These gave the work an edge that opened up new experimental territory for some candidates. The authenticity of this journey was well supported by in-depth discussion and reflection in workbooks. It was clear they were hunting where they could; curiosity and fascination drove their looking.

Workbooks matched the level of engagement and prolific commitment to printmaking, drawing in and drawing out through sketches, thumbnails, photos as drawings, and scale images. There was a distinct and easily recognisable advantage for those making and notating, analysing, and reflecting upon their own practice while making (as it related to the field and established practice).

Part B: Report on performance standard

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

- engaged in an authentic and inventive enquiry, posing questions and investigating complex concepts with exceptional depth
- engaged in an authentic and inventive enquiry, posing questions and investigating complex concepts with exceptional depth
- explored and analysed technical, pictorial, and conceptual concerns intelligently and articulately to clarify and expand options
- demonstrated an interconnected relationship between the folio and workbook with a large number of works presented in both, to show critical thinking, self-reflection and decision-making
- showed a very high level of technical fluency and willingness to take risks to build on and expand ideas using printmaking as drawing to investigate individual stylistic strengths and interests intuitively.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- established a straightforward proposition, usually with personal significance that allowed for a broad investigation and enabled opportunities to explore a concept in depth
- employed a range of pictorial devices informed by combining own ideas with aspects from established / contemporary practice to explore compositional possibilities and extend into innovative new works
- demonstrated a high level of fluency of technical skill, seamlessly integrating processes to create further possibilities
- showed sustained research across workbook and folio, including critical analysis of their own work and works from established / contemporary practice, taking photographs to explore composition, technical explorations, collages / thumbnail studies, and future possibilities.

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

- had a narrow or unclear proposition, which limited the scope to communicate their ideas or concepts
- showed a high level of technical skill, but often produced similar works with repetition, taking space where further development or refinement could have been presented
- described artists' works and included images with little reference to how these had informed their thinking and decision-making
- used past tense in the workbook to describe *what* had been done, rather than recording their thinking as notes or drawings explaining *why* decisions were made.

93310: Photography

Part A: Commentary

For Photography Scholarship in 2020, candidates presented a wide range of approaches – documentary, social, constructed, narrative, portrait, formal, abstract, and staged installations that were also political, social, ecological, issue-based, self-reflective, deeply felt narratives and storytelling. These submissions all established clear propositions from their inception. They then set off on an exploratory enquiry, drawing from literature, media studies, film, art history, personal cultural contexts, and a range of artistic fields.

Of note this year were the candidates who submerged themselves in a topic that meant something significant to them. This approach ensured success from multiple viewpoints; the proposition held their attention and enabled them to grapple with more complex content, image-making practices, and techniques. By complex, we mean that candidates' engagement was genuine. They positioned something (an issue, idea, concept, thought, feeling) that not only held significance, but was what they wanted to explore and share through photography.

It was good to see candidates were willing to take risks and be adventurous in surprising ways. Candidates knew where they stood in terms of their approach to photography, i.e. ownership of the methods they used and where they positioned themselves to photography (the medium). There was explicit control of the folios' colour, mood, and communication strategies through photographic conventions (lighting, tone, composition, arrangement). These were well matched by expanded practice approaches, such as sculpture, site-based, mixed-media, drawing, painting, and print methods, creating lateral links to topics and weaving them together to create a more profound proposition. In all instances, where the scope of making was extended, the investigation remained pertinent to photography and its conceptual, theoretical terrain.

With the submissions achieving Scholarship, they often appeared to be simple enquiries, but the underlying complexity and layering of formal to conceptual considerations were astounding. There was some excellent editing; astute and well-considered inclusion / exclusion of the work on the folio equalling a genuine photographic enquiry.

Overall, the research into the field was more expansive. It felt like a broader scope of thinking was activated in the way candidates researched, and the span of contexts they identified as relevant. They exhibited a willingness to engage deeply and be influenced by contexts to help shape but not dominate decisions made in the work. This was the year of the "individual"; of candidates claiming who they were and how they wanted to represent themselves and their stories, viewpoints, insights, and state of being through the photographic medium.

Part B: Report on performance standard

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

- established a proposition that was personal or reflective and could mobilise a future beyond the folio
- offered a parallel body of work through many photo shoots in the workbook to support the directional scope of concepts
- thought about the role the workbook needed to serve to contribute to the body of work successfully; the workbook demonstrated the thinking, conceptualisation, decision-making, and the journey
- produced large volumes of work that was technically fluent and aesthetically defining to present complex and multi-layered photographs
- demonstrated a refined understanding of photographic conventions, which enabled ambitious and sophisticated outcomes.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- displayed a high level of technical fluency and ownership in the making of images and constructed realities to photograph
- expanded a concept and proposition that was well-founded in research and related to extensive photo shoots
- tested, trialled and experimented, enabling a substantial degree of decision-making and self-reflection, which supported the expansion of their concept
- developed a proposition that drove the work through self-exploration of ideas, producing a positive relationship and engagement in the folio and workbook.

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

- lacked research towards a concept, with limited expansion of image-making and often technical inconsistencies that interrupted the readability of the folio and workbook as a holistic body of work
- produced a workbook with pages that often emulated other artists' work, with their proposition being driven by artist models, rather than exploring their own ideas
- described in their workbook what was already visually communicated on the folio; a form of analysis of all three panels with the approach, "I did this and ..." and "I have done that and ..."
- didn't invest in learning about photographic conventions, thus reducing the opportunity for engaging in the language of photography.

[Subject page](#)

Previous years' reports

[2019](#) [2018 \(PDF, 146KB\)](#) [2017 \(PDF, 77KB\)](#) [2016 \(PDF, 238KB\)](#)

Copyright © New Zealand Qualifications Authority