

# Component 1 Fine Art

## Standard Mark – 72

Performance Level 6: Exceptional

	AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4
Mark	18	18	18	18
Performance Level	6	6	6	6
	Fully exceptional ability	Fully exceptional ability	Fully exceptional ability	Fully exceptional ability

Keywords from the taxonomy:

**Accomplished, Inspired, Intuitive, Insightful, Powerful, Extraordinary, Unexpected, Outstanding**

# Moderator commentary

This Fine Art component 1, consists of an A3 hard-backed landscape sketchpad and a selection of extraordinary painted outcomes in acrylic, oil and mixed media. The practical work is accompanied with an A5 booklet that describes their visual journey, making insightful observations on the work of relevant artists. Images of the work selected here reflect the characteristics of work at the top of Performance Level 6, Exceptional, with full marks of 72/72.

The candidate's independent theme of 'Imaginations of the Sublime' focuses on landscapes and seascapes. Their investigations begin by studying the work of British artists J.M.W Turner, Stuart Davies, Australian artist Tony Smibert and American artist Dennis Sheehan. Accomplished and powerful transcriptions and inspired development studies are made, using watercolour, inks and charcoal.

Working from sketches and photoshop edited imagery, the candidate effectively renders atmospheric effects, with outstanding results. Insightful references to Ten Chi Jin philosophy (Heaven, Earth, Man) are made through intuitive annotation and visual responses: "swift skies represent the fleeting moment, calm yet everchanging seas represent the human lifetime, and a vast immobile cliffside conveys a sense of eternity".

Further sketch pad pages powerfully document atmospheric and fast-moving skies, compositionally dominant, inspired by the work of British landscape artist Clare Haley, and Constable's quickly painted cloud studies. Compositions are intuitively considered and colour theory is repeatedly explored and refined: "I started each painting with a photo reference and preparatory sketch. I typically followed a light to dark approach. Although this is more typical with watercolour than opaque mediums such as acrylic. I did not want to lose the natural glowing warmth of the yellow ochre undercoat."

A visit to the Faroe Islands fuels the candidate to document the trip through a series of accomplished photographs and sketches, with reference to the work of British Photographer, Norman Ackroyd. The drama of the Danish landscape inspires the candidate in an unexpected way. They insightfully annotate: "I completed numerous fairly largescale paintings, some with the same Leviathan under a tumultuous sky rendered moving by swift sweeping brushstrokes". An accomplished palette of Burnt Umber and Prussian blue dramatizes the contrast between the landscape and the cold sky.

The submission reflects an extraordinary understanding of painting technique, and the ability to capture a passing moment through light, movement and form. The accompanying A5 booklet supports and evidences the candidate's exceptional development and recording of ideas through an outstanding level of critical language.



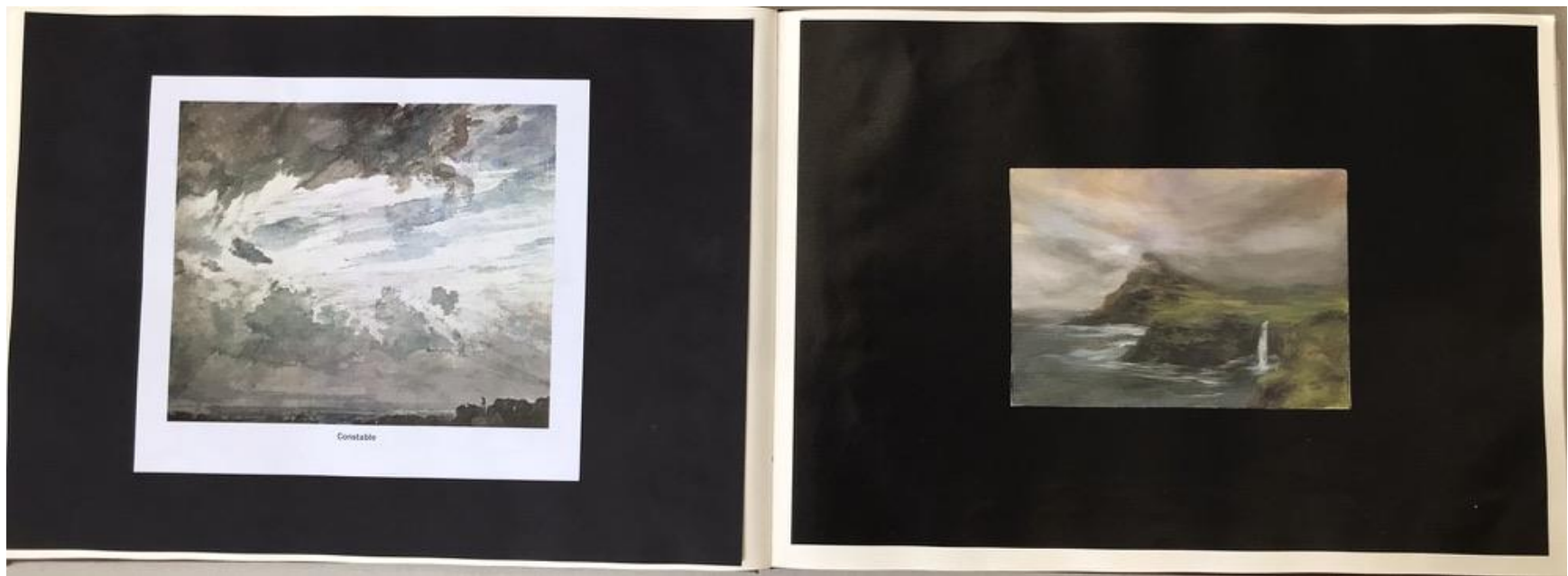








72 marks - FA01 C1









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72 marks - FA01 C1

Annotations

## Imaginings on The Sublime

2024

brush to reveal highlights instead of using white or yellow – this retains local hue and does not interfere with the general sense of atmospheric depth.

The concept of 'The Illusion of Detail' – as outlined by Stuart Davies – was key here and somewhat of a breakthrough. Using simple line and rhythm as well as atmospheric perspective and a balance between blending and texture is an effective and simple way to describe area and detail. A sense of atmospheric depth can also be achieved by using contrast or a lack thereof such as in Rembrandt 'The Mill' – light against dark, dark against light, light against light and dark against dark can be seen along the mill's four blades. I attempted to employ this understanding in my painting of the Snowdon Horseshoe, where I also used what I had learnt in the first series, utilising swift, broad brushstrokes to depict clouds as a form of rhythm across the landscape.

In this series, I was able to experiment with media, developing skills with charcoal and Indian ink to produce quick sketches whilst refining rapid pencil sketching too. I also discovered the important role of planning a composition in Photoshop before attempting a painting. Whilst spontaneity is key in my paintings, a basic structure needs to be developed prior to commencing on the final work in order for it to be a success. I did, however, struggle when it came to depicting trees using this rapid Tonalist method. Texture from a crumpled piece of tissue applied over thick, dark paint to reveal highlights was not entirely believable in my opinion. Helpfully, my next source of subject inspiration in Series 3 was the Faroe Islands, a landscape devoid of trees.

### Series 3:

After planning to visit the Faroe Islands for the Summer holiday, it became clear that the magnificent landscapes, seascapes and skiescapes present throughout the islands should develop into a theme in my portfolio. I found a series of images of the Faroe Islands online which showed a great variety of subject matter: seascapes, landscapes and skiescapes in weather conditions of varying degrees of ferocity, clear or shrouded in mist. I was struck by the power of these images alone to conjure emotions of awe and veneration at the marvels of 'the sublime' and the natural world.

I was introduced to the work of John Virtue and Norman Ackroyd whose work resounded with me after I had collected images of the Faroes and developed new ideas about the potential direction for my portfolio. Their use of black and white further reinforced the ability of contrasting tones to convey the mood of dramatic atmospheric phenomena, an approach which is highly effective in capturing the awed emotions that settings such as those in the Faroe Islands inspire. I experimented in greyscale with simple compositions from images of the

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Faroes. I used spray paint as a means of introducing physical movement across the canvas or board by standing the surface vertically and allowing gravity to carry beads of pure black or white paint downwards. I would then meet these drips with swift and broad lateral brushstrokes, blending the paint into the previous layers, creating complex and rhythmic tonal variety.

Whilst I enjoyed the effects of this technique, it was clear that it could be overdone, particularly when employed on a larger scale. I also felt that I should retain some element of colour in my paintings so as not to discount the knowledge I had gained in previous series. However, the idea of using drips of white paint to depict a light source returned later in the project.

This series culminated in a large painting of a Faroese cliff-face on paper using Indian ink, acrylic paint and spray paint. It was difficult to prevent large areas of black from overwhelming the viewer on this larger scale. I felt my desire to achieve an illusion of detail was somewhat hindered by this. The next step was to make use of large ambiguous space to depict clouds and atmosphere, and not rocks or less free-flowing subject matter.

Throughout this series, I felt that I had also managed to maintain much of the tonalist influence of Series 2 as well as drawing upon my admiration of artists such as Turner, who took pride in their ability to effectively render atmospheric effects and perspective with an emotional quality.

### Series 4:

Upon a visit to a small gallery in Oxfordshire, I discovered the work of Kerr Ashmore, Harry Brioché and Clare Haley. Each depicted dramatic landscapes with varying degrees of realism or abstraction. All three inspired techniques I could use to enhance works based on the previous motifs touched upon in Year 10. The subject matter of Harry Brioché showed a more vibrant and modern take on Tonalism and Luminism, whilst also having a major focus on atmospheric phenomena, lighting and perspective. I could see that the technique of wiping out was frequently employed in his paintings, whilst also using blotting with a crumpled tissue to create texture and foliage. This led to experimenting over the holidays which resulted in my largest finished painting on board at the time. Kerr Ashmore's technique felt to me like a blend of the tone, hues and hazy form of Turner with the texture and rhythmic movement of John Virtue. I found that a larger board enabled me to experiment with greater textural detail as well as to expand the sense of scale within the picture, adding small details of buildings in the distance to convey the vastness of the surrounding landscape. This provided further inspiration for work during the next term, building on that of previous series.

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Clare Haley's impressive landscapes, also depicting bold and pronounced light sources through stirring skies, contained greater foreground detail, often comprising of a fence post or stone wall. This inspired the idea of placing a 'cairn' in some of the foregrounds of my later paintings. A cairn is a human-made mound of stones piled up to mark a boundary or path; a symbol depicting a journey, adventure and path through the unknown. This seemed like a suitable motif for my work, which contained much ambiguous space, as a way of encouraging a viewer to forge their own path through a painting. Clare Haley's paintings are often completed in a portrait format which increases the importance of the sky in the composition. This was an effect I enjoyed during later experimentation.

Paintings over the holiday were mostly done with oils on board. I had some difficulties here with blending and surface coverage as well as the unpleasant tackiness of oils after a few days of drying, which impeded blending and mark making. This brought me to the conclusion that paintings done at school (where work could not be completed in long sessions, but instead numerous shorter lessons spaced over a week) should be done in acrylics built up in several layers to convey depth and subtle nuances in tone and hue.

#### Series 5:

A visit to Faroe Islands and the accompanying sketches I made there reinforced the place these islands should take at the forefront of my portfolio. Although the summery greenery of the Faroe Islands was apparent and striking, using a limited palette of Burnt Umber and Prussian Blue to capture the tone felt somehow more appropriate given my previous Tonalist work. Although I had had some success mixing natural greens previously, the contrast between the warmth and coolness of the two colours respectively, along with their mixing to form a neutral dark grey, made them a superior option in my opinion. Small studies using these two colours, along with Burnt Sienna and Titanium White were done in acrylic in the sketchbook and on small board.

I found a suitable method of priming MDF board with yellow ochre paint to provide both smoothness for ease of coverage and warmth to add sophistication to atmospheric perspective and highlights in clouds. Conveniently, Prussian Blue and Yellow Ochre mix together to create a spectrum of neutral, greyish greens that are not at all overpowering. If a Prussian blue wash were to be applied over this ground, therefore, the result would be believable in a sky, even where greens are not typically seen.

The photographs I took on the trip as well as my memories, impressions and quick sketches I completed there provided a manifestation of the contrast, light, bold line and rhythms I had sought to achieve in the earlier series in one umbrella subject.

The graphite and pen sketches I made during our stay served to depict the rapidly changing and fluvial nature of the skies, the ambiguous spaces this created, and the way shadows flexed and rolled across the barren hills and their nooks and crannies. Photo references pushed through Photoshop, following the same process of enhancing contrast and subduing and removing of colour as before, further emphasised the arresting and imposing nature of these striking images, particularly in the sky areas.

I completed numerous fairly large-scale paintings, some with the same shared subject of a distant headland rising from a calm sea like a Leviathan under a tumultuous sky rendered moving by swift, sweeping brushstrokes. This linked back to Ten Chi Jin philosophy as outlined by Tony Smibert, where swift skies represent the fleeting moment, calm yet ever-changing seas represent the human lifetime, and a vast immobile cliffside conveys a sense of eternity.

As mentioned, after experimenting with landscape and portrait compositions, a portrait format seemed to increase the illusion and realisation of sweeping cloudscape. This helped inform my decisions for the ensuing final project. The use of thick paint, applied with a palette knife and then lightly brushed out, to portray a strong light source was inspired by Turner and Kerr Ashmore. Adding a tactile element to the paintings provided a fifth form of contrast (movement vs stillness and permanence, warm vs cool, ambiguous vs defined and light vs dark) – almost like the necessary dimension to create a more 'believable' abstraction. However, on a smaller scale, these marks looked overpowering and a little out of place. I assumed that this would not be the case if I were to complete my final project on a larger scale. This section marked the definite return of Turner's work to the forefront of my inspiration, as is seen in my choice of colours and use of texture; prioritising warmth, coolness and tone over hues, tints and shades.

I started each painting with a photo reference and preparatory sketch. I typically followed a light to dark approach. Although this is more typical with watercolour than opaque mediums such as acrylic, I did not want to lose the natural glowing warmth of the yellow ochre undercoat. To me, therefore, this seemed like a more logical method of achieving a convincing atmospheric perspective. Many thin layers of paint were applied in the same limited palette of Burnt Umber, Burnt Sienna, Prussian Blue and Titanium White. In the later stages of the painting, I would rely less on the photo reference and work by feel, assessing where contrast or chroma needed to be increased or decreased to add nuance to cloud shapes and better mimic natural movement.

A wood varnish applied to each painting revealed a much greater depth, especially in darker and more ambiguous areas. Brushstrokes, otherwise lost under added thin acrylic washes, suddenly emerged again, creating an effect of swirling winds in the sky and craggy rocks on the cliff faces.