



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit State Examinations Commission

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2014

ART

Imaginative Composition and Still Life

Higher Level

100 marks are assigned to this paper, i.e. 25% of the total marks for Art

Monday, 28 April – Friday, 9 May

Morning, 9:30 – 12:00

This paper should be handed to candidates on **Tuesday, 8 April**

Instructions

You may work in colour, monochrome, mixed media, collage or any other suitable medium. However, the use of oil paints or perishable organic material is not allowed. You are not allowed to bring aids such as stencils, templates, traced images, preparatory artwork or photographic images into the examination.

Write your Examination Number clearly in the space provided on your A2 sheet. Write the title 'Imaginative Composition' or 'Still Life' immediately below your Examination Number.

If you wish to work on a coloured sheet, **the superintendent must sign this sheet before the examination commences** stating that it is blank. Maximum size of sheet: A2.

Choose one of the following:

1. Make an **Imaginative Composition** inspired by **one** of the descriptive passages: A, B, C, D or E. Your starting point and the rationale for your Imaginative Composition should be stated on the reverse side of the sheet indicating their relevance to the descriptive passage you have chosen.
2. Make a **Still Life** work based on a group of objects suggested by, or described in **one** of the descriptive passages: A, B, C, D or E. You are required to bring relevant objects to the examination centre for the purpose of setting up **your own individual** Still Life composition. **This must be done in time for the commencement of the examination.** Your starting point and the rationale for your Still Life should be stated on the reverse side of the sheet indicating their relevance to the descriptive passage you have chosen.
3. Make an **Abstract Composition** inspired by and developed from **one** of the descriptive passages: A, B, C, D or E. Your starting point and the rationale for your Abstract Composition should be stated on the reverse side of the sheet, indicating their relevance to the descriptive passage you have chosen. State clearly whether your Abstract Composition is following 1 above – Imaginative Composition, or 2 above – Still Life.

Descriptive Passages

Passage A

The ocean is the biggest ecosystem on the planet, and I love taking the plunge into any piece of it. My favourite part is below the ‘twilight zone’, where light completely disappears – the deep sea.

Down there it’s night all the time. Yet you’re surrounded not by absolute darkness but by firefly light – living light, the light that is emanated by 90 percent of the creatures that live in the deep sea: jellyfish, sea cucumbers, little fish, bacteria. Most of the life in the deep sea has the capacity to flash or sparkle or glow. It’s like diving into the Fourth of July.

There are luminous creatures even in shallow water, but they are especially abundant in the deep sea because there is no natural light. They use their luminescence for a variety of purposes. To see where they’re going, flashlight fish actually shine a light ahead. Angler fish use illumination as allure to tempt prey to come close enough to eat.

To visit the deep sea, you take a submarine – that is, unless you want to do it just once. I love all subs (the Beatles’ *Yellow Submarine* was my song; it just strummed my heartstrings). A small one-person sub is like a diving suit that happens to be made of metal and acrylic instead of material. It’s the closest thing to diving that you can have in a machine.

You get lowered over the side of a boat, and away you go. You’re free in the sea! It takes only about five minutes to reach 500 feet. At the surface, the water is sky blue, but as you descend the blue goes through every shade you can imagine: sapphire blue, violet, indigo. Finally the blue becomes blue-black – and then just black.

Sometimes I like to simply drift, like a piece of plankton, looking at the light show that’s all around. I may switch on the lights to see who is creating the bioluminescence. It may be long chains of salps, which are like sea squirts, each about two inches in length. They live in colonies, gelatinous chains that may stretch for 50 feet.

Seeing things like this makes me want to encourage other people to go down and see for themselves. You never know what you’re going to find.

I once had a memorable encounter in the ocean off the island of Lanai in Hawaii, at a depth where I could just barely see – light above, dark below. On the surface, the sun was shining and people were swimming, sailing, and doing all the things people do in the sunlit blue waters of Hawaii. But I was far below, 1,300 feet underwater.

I noticed something out of the corner of my eye that at first I thought was a piece of trash (you often see trash drifting around). But when I turned my little submarine and put my lights full on this thing, it turned out to be a big octopus, about six feet long.

It just kind of hung out, clearly looking at me. And for the next hour, this octopus and I literally danced. It would move back a bit, then move gently toward me. I would turn, and it would come over to me and stop. At one point, the octopus actually plastered itself on top of the submarine and looked at me through the bubble – it was a bit like a Gary Larson cartoon. It was mesmerizing, magical, a wonderful ballet with a creature from the deep.

Adapted from *My Favourite Place on Earth* by Sylvia Earle, compiled by Jerry Camarillo Dunn, Jr. National Geographic, 2009.

Passage B

In a house of owls, my father, Seamus, was a lark. Dawn on summer mornings would see him in the kitchen, looking up above the white-washed wall of the back garden to the eyelet of sky beyond the sycamore tree. He could hear the reveille of the army bugler in the barracks that topped one of the hills out of which the terraces of Cork's northside are carved. He made the breakfast, squeezing oranges, stirring in boiling water and sugar, making toast. While the eggs boiled, he brought marmalade, butter and cereal from the red-painted cupboard in the corner. There was no fridge: houses built into the cliff face had pantries where no sun ever entered, and tiled floors ensured permanent chill.

Bebhinn, my sister, and I could hear already the sound of chisel on stone from the corrugated - iron shed where Seamus carved statues and inscriptions in daylight, in the open air. On the other side of the yard was the studio proper, where he worked in winter and where he made many portrait-heads in clay, later to be cast in bronze, or carved in stone. There, in the veiled light, that angled in from the north, it was the silence of that assembly of heads looking at us from various heights, that I remember. And the clean smell of plaster and clay.

The heat, the hissing of the water as it boiled at the touch of the chisel, the anvil's profile like a knight's helmet: all these were magic. And then the little chisel, in his hand, gliding through stone, leaving only white dust in its wake. Oh it looked so easy, the taming of one element by another, where the chink chink of the chisel sounded the refrain in a game of merry craft over solid mass.

Clay was easier: warm, smooth and malleable. He put an apple-sized lump on the wooden table in the studio and patiently watched as we tinkered. He offered us spatulas or scrapers, and encouragement. We could remember how it was done: we had seen it at home during those long summer evenings; it must have been summer, as the attic where he shaped our skulls, or recreated us, was unheated. There was talk, but there must also have been silence because we could hear the army band, this time practising marches in the barrack square.

The surface was built up with tiny pieces of clay, which he rolled between finger and thumb and pressed on with the most elegant of all the tools, a wooden spatula, double-ended, slender and light, polished with age and use. He concentrated all of his effort on the head itself but took care over detail: a bow in Bebhinn's hair, a Cork brooch below the collar for me, saying that the Cork brooch was like the Tara brooch but that the pin was placed vertically.

At last, when the light started to wane, the clay head was wrapped in wet towels. He washed his hands and went to work on a drawing or, at last, to read.

Adapted from *A Lark In a House of Owls* by Orla Murphy, RTE, A treasury of Sunday Miscellany, 2011.

Passage C

I am standing on some waste ground on Lower Dominick Street with Sam Bishop and Aaron Copeland from the Upstart Collective. They are helping me to envision the pop-up park that will be here in six weeks.

Granby Park will have pallets on the ground, cafes, edible plants, art installations, a woodland walk, poly-tunnels, bike-racks and an amphitheatre. Knitters will even help 'yarn-bomb' the ugly railings with colourful wool coverings.

Now, however, the grass is patchy. There's rubble. One side looks out on American-style graffiti, the other, some particularly noisy roadworks.

Upstart are all about ‘interventions in public spaces’. They first came to notice during the last general election when they hung art-pieces on lamp posts across the city – these included legends like: “Only Batman can save us now”. “There was a loophole in the law which said you could hang anything if it referenced the election,” says Copeland, a secondary school teacher.

Upstart has been working on Granby Park, a much more ambitious project, for two years. “These spaces are kind of inevitable in cities”, Bishop says. “We are trying to create a model for using them, a toolkit that’s shareable, where communities or individuals or someone working for the council can say we have loads of empty spaces”.

“I grew up thinking that the street was where the guards could tell me what not to do, rather than thinking of it as the public’s street...”

For now, Upstart needs help. It needs manpower and money, volunteers, donations of plants. It needs knitters and money for insurance and security. The local community is on board. Dublin City Council has been fantastic, going so far as to give it an office overlooking the park. Businesses have also been generous. Sean Harrington Architects has devised a design for an amphitheatre made entirely out of pallets.

“They’re not a once-off,” Copeland says of vacant sites. “They’re always going to be in the city. We’d like to show how these vacant places, which don’t attract anything but rubbish, can be filled with more green, more arts, more people – just nicer things”.

Adapted from *‘Pop-up’ Parks and Recreation: How one Dublin Community Fills a Vacuum*, Patrick Freyne, Irish Times Weekend, 2013.

Passage D

The road he climbed from the lake was no longer passable other than on foot. Parts of it had been torn away by floods and never resurfaced. A rusted iron gate stood between two thick round stone piers but the entrance was choked with fuchsia and sally. There was a fresh gash in the ground where the gate had been pushed open and there were recent footprints. The whole street was grass-grown. Beside the door was a small pile of tins and bottles and plastic bags and milk cartons. Both the house and sheds were iron-roofed and solid but they hadn’t been touched by paint or white-washed in years. Beyond the house, the old hayshed had been torn down in a storm. A mangled sheet of iron hung from an iron post like a dispirited brown flag. It was to this house that Patrick Ryan had moved when he allowed the house he had grown up in to fall.

There was no answer to Rutledge’s knock and call. The door was unlocked.

Inside, the room mustn’t have changed in fifty or so years. It hadn’t changed since Rutledge first saw it ten or fifteen years before, the brown dresser, the settlebed, the iron crook above the open hearth, the horse harness hanging between the religious pictures on the wall – the smiling Virgin, the blood drip from the Crown of Thorns all faded now with damp spots underneath the glass.

In the small window the stone walls were at least four feet thick. The naked electric bulb that hung from the ceiling answered to the switch. By the fireplace was a bale of peat briquettes and in the centre of the floor was a pile of dry branches. A brand new red Bushman was thrown among the branches and here and there on the floor were little piles of sawdust. A bowl of sugar, unwashed cups, milk, part of a loaf, a sardine tin, a plate with eggshells, a half-full bottle of Powers, a bar of soap, butter, an empty packet of Silk Cut, red apples, a pot of marmalade, salt, matches, a brown jug, an open newspaper, a transistor radio and an alarm clock littered the table. In stark contrast, one

small corner of the room was spare and neat. An iron rested on an ironing board. Two perfectly ironed white shirts were hung beside a pressed dark suit. A pair of fine black leather shoes that had been polished till they shone sat on a chair.

Adapted from *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, by John McGahern, 2002.

Passage E

Gallantly, then, in the name of my children's expectant palates, my first stops – at the farmers' market and excellent Field's – were nostalgic, self-indulgent, cliché-ridden bonanzas. Fresh and smoked fish, modestly named 'prawns', soda bread, butter, double cream, marmalade, duck eggs, bacon, Clonakilty pudding, strawberries and tomatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, Irish cheeses and potatoes. Oh man, the potatoes . . . Field's also sells handy bags of local, fresh, ready-washed mixed salad leaves, which makes life so much easier.

The restaurants beckoned, but for seven or eight of us, eating out daily was out of the question, and cooking at home with Irish ingredients was a joy. My rental kitchen was better equipped than most, and the cooker had a split-level grill, perfect for the emergency toasted cheese I miss so much in France. Our meals were as simple and every bit as tasty as those I prepare in Chavenay. So far, so rose-tinted, but as we travelled around the country, a glaring reality became apparent. Farmers' markets, artisan shops and world-class restaurants thrive side by side with the chicken 'n' chip joints and across the street from the 24-hour corner shop, where the only unprocessed vegetables are a few onions, chilled apples and tomatoes and potatoes.

People are encouraged to snack and, in most places, its trash they're offered: gigantic cupcakes; bucket-sized soft drinks; deep-fried, pastry-clogged, sausage-filled gunge; mayo-sodden sandwiches; and crisps, always crisps.

Glossy magazines full of glossy recipes with "easy" tips for "effortless" fantasy entertaining and healthy living sit next to mountains of confectionary, soda and snacks that customers mechanically pick up – even if they've just finished breakfast and all they really need is some washing-up liquid. Viewers rarely attempt the stuff they see on TV cooking shows. Thrift shops are full of chef and yummy-mummy cookbooks that people were given as presents, from which they have never cooked a dish.

Adapted from *A French Foodie Homecoming* by Trish Deseine, courtesy of *The Irish Times*, August 2012.

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