AQA GCSE Art and Design Themes 2014

Resource Pack

- **Openings** hole, peek, passage, gap, vacancy, view, reveal, rupture, beginnings, genesis, ceremony, display
- **Disguise** hide, cover, obscure, mask, change, disfigure, deceive, illusion, conceal, camouflage
- **Atmosphere** feeling, air, ambiance, aura, effect, mood, quality, background, environment, milieu
- **Edges** boundary, threshold, contour, seam, fringe, border, outline, angle, cropping
- **Arrangements** composition, structure, organisation, sequence, display, collage, plan, meeting, get together
- **Texture** surface, touch, design, feel, uneven, pattern, substance, distress
- **Fragments** pieces, broken, particle, scrap, remnant, debris, shard, disjointed

When collecting research and contextual influences:

- Consider **how** the artist has made the work.
- Look at **what materials** have they used.
- **Why** do you think they used these materials?
- Do you think the medium effectively portrays the **concept/theme** of the work?
- Do you think there is **more than one** theme in the work?
- Do you see **inspiration/influences** from other artists, art movements or events in the work?
It is usually the case that Artists, Designers and craftspeople use materials specific to the theme of their work, so they can illustrate a specific meaning, mood or story. They may also consider composition, scale, colour, text and style. They will develop their ideas, refine them though testing, reflect and record their work in writing and practical outcomes and present their work to reflect the theme running through it.

The following artists particularly illustrate some of the themes within their work. Artists in the New Order II exhibition located on Level 2 of the Saatchi Gallery have (NOII) after their name:

**Openings**: Justin Matherly, Helen Verhoeven, Marianne Vitale, Oliver Osborne (NOII)

**Disguise**: Francis Uprichard, Makiko Kudo, Oliver Osborne (NOII), Martin Poppe (NOII), Tom Gidley (NOII)

**Atmospheres**: Marianne Vitale, Eddie Martinez, Makiko Kudo, Helen Verhoeven, Martine Poppe (NOII), Hannah Perry (NOII), Tom Gidley (NOII)

**Edges**: Henry Taylor, Tanyth Berkeley, Finbar Ward (NOII), Dominic Beattie (NOII)

**Arrangements**: Eddie Martinez, Helen Verhoeven, Dominic Beattie (NOII), Finbar Ward (NOII), Hannah Perry (NOII), Sarah Dwyer (NOII)

**Texture**: Justin Matherly, Andra Ursuta, Eddie Martinez, Dan Rees (NOII), Virgile Ittah (NOII), Tom Gidley (NOII), Sarah Dwyer (NOII)

**Fragments**: Justin Matherly, Andra Ursuta, Marianne Vitale, Hannah Perry (NOII), Tom Gidley (NOII)
LA-based artist Henry Taylor paints single or group portraits, combining flat areas of earthy colours, thick outlines and sketchy brushwork which together create a disjointed feel and add a psychological edginess.

In some paintings he applies luxurious sweeping washes of bright colour, punctuated with enough detail to depict friends, lovers, strangers and role models – all portrayed with similar deadpan expressions. Taylor's work combines instinctive raw energy, with the technical skills of a painter who respects and understands the materials he is working with. He has the ability to convey a lot of information in a few select gestures, using a limited palette and the directness in his application of paint is echoed in the expressions and demeanour of his subjects. Some scenes have the same immediacy and anecdotal quality as snapshot street photography – a couple of kids taking their dog for a walk pass by a parking lot and a shop sign (*Walking with Vito*) – while nude female figures are presented with a sexual confidence, (*Terri Phillips*) inviting us into their realm.
Makiko Kudo’s lonely figures float and tumble through landscapes of lush, brightly coloured plant life like lost children in fairy tales. Unlike real scenes, Kudo’s imagined places draw on her own dreams and memories, freely reconstructing and organising them through painting. Like memory, canvases are patchy, with areas left barely painted. Allusions to a tradition of escape, from Monet to Gauguin, are referenced here; running away from contemporary woes into childlike fantasy, and, with her specific Japanese cultural context, into the immersive world of computer games and Manga comics. Kudo’s childhood within the socially conservative and economically depressed environment of late twentieth-century Japan, led her and many of her generation into a detached existence. In this way, the figure, lying across a swan in Floating Island or sitting alone amidst the twisted limbs of trees in Invisible, might become the artist’s alter-ego, like a character in a game. What might first appear purely sentimental, acquires a resonant force due to the value of escape for artist and viewer alike.
Eddie Martinez Gallery 3

Atmosphere/ Texture, Arrangements

ambience, aura, mood, effect/ surface, layers, mixed media/ composition, placing, ordering, structure

Eddie Martinez’s paintings epitomise restless energy; oil paint, spray paint and collage are laid down with frantic immediacy guided, but not restrained, by technique. Drawing on the tradition of the gestural mark, Martinez seems to hint at his forebears (de Kooning, Picasso, even Da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*) and popular culture (Donald Duck appears at the dinner table in *The Feast*), but the result is his own, disentangled from the past. The overabundance of food in *The Feast* runs parallel to the visual feast of Martinez’s paintings, in which no surface is left alone. Characters are created with lively mark making, allowing them to evolve during the process like thinking aloud, eventually uniting as recognisable forms. This method of layering and effacing the surface is transferred from his practice as a graffiti artist in New York and creates figures which suggest contemporary hieroglyphics. There is a compulsion to enliven every area, giving his work its relentless dynamism, while retaining a somewhat surrealist sense of mysterious event.
Atmosphere, Arrangements, Openings

ambience, mood, feeling, air/ gathering, meeting, composition/ ceremony,

Helen Verhoeven is a Dutch-American painter whose large scale panoramic scenes bring together seemingly random groups of people. The painting brings out the anxieties and formalities that exist in social gatherings and explores the relationships between the types of people who attend them. The disparity between the 'types' of figures depicted in Event One and Event Two heightens the tension as the viewer is left to question what could be going on, and what will happen next. Verhoeven borrows a wide angled cinematic format to accommodate this large group of disparate subjects all contained in a nondescript grand interior also with paintings on its walls. The figures are depicted in simple gestures with zombie-like faces that stare blankly forwards - each figure expressionless which when combined with areas of blank canvas cause the paintings to appear deliberately vague and unsettling.
Brooklyn-based Justin Matherly is best known for his large scale sculptures inspired by Ancient Greek and Roman statues, reinterpreted with contemporary materials. In these smaller works distorted forms are contorted around, and supported by ambulatory frames which at first glance appear to be clinical and severe. The walking frames offer a substitute for the traditional plinth and also reference the affects of age and deterioration on the human body. Matherly permits the surface of the concrete to be rough and scratchy, allowing the unpredictable casting methods to take effect, deliberately unlike the smooth contours of classical sculpture and statues. Instead of presenting incomplete body parts he manipulates lumpy limbs into abstract forms and lets the concrete become cracked and brittle, while the metal walkers suggest enforced assistance and support, calling for the viewer’s sympathy rather than adoration. In doing this, he pays homage to the origins of technical sculpture, but allows failure, and addresses the problems inherent in looking to the past for inspiration and direction.
Openings/ Atmosphere/ Texture/ Fragments

Holes, gap, view/ feeling, air, ambience, mood/ surface, rough, touch, pieces, broken, disrupted, remnant, debris

Marianne Vitale’s series Markers consists of reclaimed wood sourced from a New York lumberyard that has been carved into the shape of tombstones. Each stands at the same height and is of the same design, yet remains individual, literally carrying the burns, scrapes and cuts of their previous existence, whether they were once part of a factory floor or a beam from an old barn house. We are presented with a natural material that has been bruised and abused before being remodelled then arranged into a uniform display. The graves stand formally ordered in the gallery like proud soldiers on parade, wearing their scars like war wounds. This installation references the theatricality and geometry of minimalist sculpture by the likes of Carl Andre and Donald Judd, but retains an emotional content allowing the materials to reveal past histories. In Markers, Vitale achieves an anthropomorphic transformation as these gravestones become stand-ins for human bodies; they are both a tribute to the deceased and the deceased themselves.
Francis Uprichard is a New Zealand born, London-based sculptor who makes small-scale work ranging from displays of found objects to rainbow-coloured corpses. The Misanthrope is hunched over, feeble and fragile, hiding beneath a lurid cloak; he appears to be protecting himself from something in the world, but at the same time provokes a sense of curiosity, bringing into question his scale, the bright colour of his skin and clothing, and the totemic relevance of the small chain dangling from his pocket. There is strong evidence, as with much of Uprichard’s work, of a very handmade quality – combining hints of various cultural and historical references - the result of which borders on a faked antiquity. The tie-dyed colours and ephemera we associate with 1960s counterculture is re-imagined in human form, to the point where this figure becomes the embodiment of embellished versions of history merging with commercialised spirituality.
These photographs portrait both biological and transgendered women. These subjects come from a cross-section of inner-city societies, who have been outcast and suffered hardships, but who have survived. Traditional values of beauty are discarded, and this work can be intended as a study of femininity, of bodily curves, dress, make-up, and flowers that invites the viewer to ponder his own response questioning traditional notions of beauty. The process of selection of the models, met in subways and streets, links the practice of documentary and art photography. In Berkeley’s work, whether shot on the street or in mysterious interiors, there is both a sense of theatrical staging and spontaneity. Her photographs simultaneously recall the Renaissance portrait and the contemporary street-style snap, which both share a love of exhibitionism and selective self-expression.
Andra Ursuta moved from Romania to New York to study art in the late 1990s and the cultural differences between these two places are explored in much of her work. Vandal Lust is a large scale installation that features a trebuchet catapult which has apparently been used to propel the artist into space: the evidence being a break in the wall and a mangled body laying on the floor a few metres away. This work is partly homage to Ilya Kabakov’s 1984 installation ‘The Man Who Flew Into Space From His Apartment’. Ursuta’s update reflects a similar motivation – escape from the former Soviet Union – and it is renewed with a sense of slapstick humour as the trebuchet is fashioned from a variety of seemingly random bits of reclaimed wood and cardboard that look like they have been sticky-taped together. The nearby body is clothed as a Babushka, modelled with the artist’s own face, and lies pitifully on the floor.
Finbar Ward’s deconstructed paintings, which sit on the gallery floor, occupy the space of a room like something you stub your toe on. Usually paintings are hanging on the walls, but these are lying on the floor, the paintings resting on top of a stack of wooden frames like flat-pack furniture. Ward confounds our usual way of looking – we stoop, squat, or even stumble – but by doing so returns our experience of painting to the life of the body.
Sarah Dwyer Gallery 11

Arrangements/ Texture

Composition, structure, get together/surface, uneven, pattern

Her paintings record a making process which is thoughtful, contemplative, sometimes spontaneous and physical, and always animated by changes of mind or mood. Canvases are often worked on simultaneously then left to gestate in the studio; old works are revisited and remade – undergoing a continual process of editing and refining, subsequently retaining something of their past through the paintings’ multiplicity of layers. This sense of the passing of time attempts to slow the viewer, revealing periods of objective contemplation and a keenly developed intuition. Dwyer’s works seem to hover between the abstract and the real, just as the dreaming mind alternates between the familiar and the strange, recomposing fragments (memories of images and painting techniques).
Dominic Beattie’s work plays with the composition of geometrical forms in an original way: forms are pure and abstract, whereas materials are deliberately perishable and wonky. Different fragments of different textures are juxtaposed, and every material displays its own eccentric qualities. The homemade quality of these arrangements creates a tension with the high minded formalism of the tradition of abstraction and homespun crafts.
Oliver Osborne  Gallery 12

Openings/ Disguise  Hole, peek, view/ hide, conceal, illusion, camouflage

Never mind what artists want, we see images everywhere, in clouds, in plants, and, especially in abstract art. A Rothko might be a sunset, a Pollock a thick hedge, a Kandinsky a diagram of the solar system. In every case the artist sought the pure response abstraction is supposed to bring about, but sometimes we cannot help but see images regardless. In Oliver Osbourne’s work this compulsion to read, to recognise, becomes a deadpan joke about the baggage we bring to the act of looking. For example Eyes (Tom Hanks Paintings) features a coloured chessboard layered with ghostly white, thus becoming blanched and flattened. But this image is suddenly interrupted with a collage of the familiar eyes of Tom Hanks. This abstraction (it has literally been removed from its original source, a publicity photograph) jars with the painting’s associative seriousness. It is a blast of the mass-produced within a hallowed abstract space. Osbourne’s paintings present the reproduced and the handmade on a level field.
Her initial constructions are in wax mixed with white spirit, which allows the material to maintain its flexibility. The carved figure, based on a real person, gradually succumbs to gravity, slumping towards the floor. The use of wax recalls its early usage when it was mixed with pigment in Roman Egyptian tomb portraits, as well as its association with candles. Elegy, transience and mortality seem embedded in the material itself. Ittah also adds a mixture of white pigment and marble dust, which lends her figures a classical solemnity at odds with their apparent disintegration. Ittah has spoken of her interest in ‘fake whiteness’, such as that found in the Venetian Ghetto, where Jews, forbidden by the city to make use of real marble to decorate their synagogues, used painted marble instead (‘marmorino’).
Disguise/ Atmospheres  Hide, cover, change, conceal/ feeling, aura, effect, mood

In Martine Poppe’s paintings, something has happened to the image. It is as though you are seeing it from behind veils of gauze, or that it has been reproduced so many times it has lost its colour. Painted onto restoration fabric, a support the artist chose specifically for its translucency, Poppe’s paintings seem illuminated from behind, like images laid on a light table waiting to be copied. An investigation of the copying of images is in fact a central part of Poppe’s practice. She selects images notable for their ambiguity and translates them with deliberate vagueness, as though willing herself not to see the source image clearly. The collective title of this group of works, Analogical Change, underscores the strange transformation of original to copy: it is a term used in linguistics to describe an invented word based on learned principles of language (‘goose’ becomes ‘geeses’, ‘sheep’ becomes ‘sheeps’). Poppe’s altered copies play out analogical change in visual terms. Her copies, though recognisable, aren’t quite the same as the originals from which they derive, something’s off.
Dan Rees Gallery 14

**Texture** Surface, touch, design, feel, uneven, substance

Rees’ use of the material makes self-evident allusion to childhood play, and draws comic parallels between the artist labouring away in the studio and the kid squidging plasticine between his fingers: in this sense these works represent the clash of the high-minded and the infantile. When engaging with the history of abstract painting, as Rees does, the satirical intent is clear. By leaving his pressed finger mark on every surface of each work, Rees makes a point about authorship. The artist is everywhere always, the kid who wants to be taken seriously but would rather play, joyously making his mark wherever and however he can.
Tom Gidley’s work recast the gallery space as crime scene, obliging the viewer to unpick and find meaning in his startling combinations of two and three-dimensional objects. These different fragments drag the wrong footed viewer into play, and oblige him to situate the objects in a narrative, which slithers away when lunged for. The ceramic sculptures and the painting establish a dialogue between two different textures, and express the uncertainty about the artist’s authentic voice. In Pacifist, a monochrome painted portrait is surmounted by a glazed ceramic form like an oyster shell, which seems to have dribbled down the painting’s surface, part erasing the young man’s features. Meaning is gathered through a process of both creating and curating.
Atmospheres/ Arrangements/ Fragments

Feeling, effect, ambiance, mood/ structure, composition/ pieces, disjointed

*Kicking My Game*, Hannah Perry’s immersive installation, occupies a territory between architecture, sculpture, sound and video. Perry processes amateur footage, some taken on her iPhone, some found elsewhere, through VHS players or other post-production tools. The processed material takes on a complex existence between different states; the analogue and the digital, the public and the private, the autobiographical and the stumbled-upon. Glitches and flaws disrupt the images; text appears, building additional layers of potential meaning on top of the ostensible banality of the footage, like scaffolding. Perry’s work is not a simple replication of the audiovisual bombardment of contemporary experience; it is an attempt to salvage something from the wreckage, to find a thread that binds.