

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary Level

History of Art 8285/01
Paper 1: Renaissance Art

Specimen Paper for Syllabus for first examination in 2004

Additional materials:

None

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

Total marks: 50

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

There are two sections in this paper.

Each section is worth 25 marks.

Each question in Section B refers to photographs provided as part of the question paper.

Answer **two** questions - **one** question from Section A and **one** question from Section B.

You should not repeat material or make use of identical material in your answers to separate questions.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

SECTION A

Choose ONE option from this section and answer ONE question from the chosen option..

OPTION 1: Fourteenth Century Italian Art.

1. With reference to specific works, discuss the religious context and patronage in Florence and Sienna.
2. Compare narrative techniques of Giotto and the Pisanos.
3. With reference to specific works, discuss the stylistic differences and painting techniques in Sienna and Florence

OPTION 2: Naturalism and Science in Fifteenth Century Italian Painting

1. Discuss the development of ideas concerning perspective and their application in fifteenth century Italian painting. Refer to works by at least **two** artists.
2. What important developments occurred in fifteenth century Italian landscape painting?
3. Discuss how artists used gesture and expression to portray the narrative in fifteenth century Italian painting.

OPTION 3: The High Renaissance.

1. Examine the influence of antiquity on the work of either Michelangelo or Raphael.
2. Using portraits by Leonardo and by Raphael, explain how characterisation of the individual is achieved.
3. Discuss the influence of patronage on the work of **one** High Renaissance artist.

OPTION 4: The Renaissance in Northern Europe

1. With reference to specific works, discuss the methods used to create convincing space and landscape in painting.
2. Explain the symbolism used in **three** works by at least **two** Northern Renaissance artists.
3. Compare the independent portraits of **two** northern artists.

SECTION B

Photograph images are provided for questions in this section.

Choose ONE option from the list of works given to answer the following question.

Make a careful and comparative analysis of the two works and attempt to place them in their appropriate historical and cultural contexts. Refer to stylistic features and content in your discussion

List of works:

Option 1

Giotto	Maesta (Ognissanti Madonna) Uffizi
Duccio	Maesta Cathedral Museum Sienna

Option 2

Masaccio	Baptism of the Neophytes (Brancacci Chapel)
Verrocchio (and Leonardo)	Baptism of Christ Uffizi

Option 3

Michelangelo.	Moses San Pietro in Vincolo
Michelangelo.	Birth of Adam (Sistine Ceiling)

Option 4

Van Eyck	Rolin Madonna
Durer	Madonna of the Rose Garlands

Specimen Answers at different Mark Levels

Question 1 Choose TWO fifteenth century artists and explain how a work by each artist was influenced by Alberti's theories on perspective in painting.

Answer 1

Grade A 25/25

There were only two artists in the fifteenth century whose obsession with Alberti's theories on perspective overtook the naturalism those theories intended to create. Those artists were Uccello and Piero della Francesca.

Uccello is famous for the often-quoted remark "Ah, what a sweet mistress this perspective is", and indeed his paintings show an affair with perspective. 'Sir John Hawkwood' is perhaps most illustrative of Uccello's fascination with perspective. The pedestal has its own vanishing point, while the rider is seen from a different angle. The effect is odd, and Hartt believes Uccello painted the entire fresco in the perspective of the pedestal, so only the horse's belly was seen, and was then forced to paint over it by the horrified patrons. Vasari's observation that maybe Uccello "painted it like that because he was not in the habit of riding", is no less amusing, proving the quasi-mythological status Uccello is endowed with by scholars.

Piero likewise takes perspectives to extremes, but in less ridiculous ways than Uccello. In 'Flagellation' Piero's perspective is so exact researchers have been able to 'reverse' it and create a scale model of the space. The recession has been calculated at 84metres. Piero understood Alberti's system perfectly, as well as its flaws. The recession of the tiles on the floor is halted by a wall only after they become almost indeterminable, thus creating the deepest space possible while maintaining clarity. He similarly avoids another flaw that the transversals eventually curve off to their own vanishing point.

Uccello was not so clever, or else the effect pleased him because he exploits the flaws in Alberti's system to create strange airless scenes in 'Miracle of the Host'. In one scene there is an inside and outside view, making the room look like a tunnel, peopled by puppets. Likewise in the first scene, Uccello it seems deliberately shows the floor and walls in recession to create a vortex, from which his figures cannot escape.

While Uccello adopted Alberti's theories and subverted them in ways that would have horrified the author of De Pictura, Piero developed his own. Publishing De Prospectiva Pingendi, Piero showed a broad understanding of not only Alberti but of the geometry of Euclid and the philosophy of Plato.

Piero creates a space that is perfect. Every detail is precisely measured, every term flawlessly delineated. The perfection of his space though, precludes naturalism. Real space is implicitly perfect in that it is real. Nature obeys her own laws, but humans do not necessarily stand in golden sections, or arrange themselves in harmonious groups. Piero's space goes beyond naturalism, creating perfection but not reality.

Both Uccello and Piero absorbed Alberti's ideas, but instead of becoming a means to naturalistic ends, it became the ends. So that Uccello played endlessly with its nuances and flaws, while Piero combined it with geometry to create paintings of numerical and compositional symbolism.

Alberti, no doubt, would be unimpressed with the use of his noble theories. It is Piero and Uccello's use though, that helped make them famous. While naturalism in both is surpassed by a fascination with mathematics, it was this fascination that drove Piero to improve Alberti's

theories, while for Uccello it provided the classic rejoinder to a naggy wife. The "sweet mistress this perspective is" captivated both Uccello and Piero to a degree not seen in any other fifteenth century Italian artist.

Answer 2

Grade A 23/25

Alberti's method of perspective and space construction were a defining influence on the portrayal of naturalism in Fifteenth Century Italian painting. Alberti's method of space construction provided a single harmonious method by which artists could portray the illusion of a three dimensional reality on a two dimensional surface. The influence of Alberti's methods can be seen in Uccello, in the works the Sir John Hawkwood Fresco, the Battle of San Romano and Piero della Francesca in the Resurrection, the Brera altar piece and the Flagellation.

Alberti's methods of space construction involved dividing up a base line into equal parts, drawing orthogonal from these divisions meeting at a single vanishing point in space, and by using the scale of a human figure drawing on the grid to calculate a horizon line at the head of the figure.

In the Sir John Hawkwood Fresco an illuminating moment in painting, inconsistencies in Uccello's application of Alberti's method appear. The work was intended to be placed in a circle high above the second floor, and to accommodate this Uccello painted the pedestal on which the base and rider would be placed from a viewpoint below, looking up at the pedestal using perspective to successfully show the underside of the pedestal ledge. If the horse and rider were to be painted from the same viewpoint only the underbelly of the horse and the knees and chin of the rider would be seen, so Uccello painted this guardian from a frontal viewpoint. This is inconsistent with Alberti's methods as there should only be one viewpoint.

In the "Battle of San Romano", a combination of some successful use of perspective and inconsistencies with the use of the old International Gothic Style are apparent. In the attempt to show depth in the background stage to the battle, broken lances are positioned on the stage moving towards but never reaching a single vanishing point in deep space, which create a sense of depth which is not completely accurate. There is successful foreshortening. The depiction of figures as they move into the space of the fallen soldier and the signature on the scroll on the ground, however the soldier is out of proportion to the other figures.

In Uccello's flaws in Alberti's perspective can be seen in his use of the method. In the first scene is a soundly executed portrayal of perspective in the shop counter, walls and the excellently foreshortened balustrades. The problem is Alberti's method is seen in the second scene, where the viewpoint from the far right of the wall causes the tiles to become absurdly flattened to the point where they become trapezoids.

In Piero della Francesca's The Resurrection, the artist both uses and modifies Alberti's methods of space construction, in that he deliberately uses two vanishing points not only to create the illusion of space but also narrative. The first vanishing point is behind the head of Christ, bringing focus, which is interpreted by the use of atmospheric perspective, the precision of form and detail moving further into space. There is successful foreshortening in Christ's leg and forearm, as well as in the hats and faces of the sleeping guards. The second vanishing point is at around the eye level of the sleeping figures. The effect of the use of two vanishing points is to offer the viewer the choice between the temporal and spiritual world. In Piero della Francesca's Brera Altarpiece, the artist uses Alberti's methods of space

construction to create the illusion of the painting as an expansion of the architecture of the San Bernardino Chapel it was placed in. When in situ at the far end of the chapel behind the altar, it seemed to be an extension of the architecture through the illusionistic correspondence of the dimension of the architecture into the painting.

The Flagellation is an example of a flawless mathematically precise application of Alberti's methods of space construction. The walls, ceiling, tiles portico and figures are specifically constructed according to Alberti's rules of perspective. The three unknown figures outside the main scene are placed at the foreground of the picture plane and intensifies the mysteries of the identification of these figures. The space construction contains so much illusionistic depth that if the scene were reconstructed in real life, it would contain a depth of 76 metres. Scholars have been able to play on the perspective of The Flagellation backwards.

Question 2: Discuss Alberti's theories of space construction and their application by artists.

Answer 1

Grade B 19/25

In the early 15th century, basic methods of space construction developed. This was in the search of successfully portraying 3D space on a 2D surface.

This also called perspective. Giotto introduced a method of infinite perspective where ideas of 3D space were portrayed through what was usually seen. In 1403 Brunelleschi further developed this by creating a mathematical method of construction incorporating strongly the use of line or linear perspective. Although realistic emergence of space was constructed, the system had flaws.

The first successful linear perspective system was created by Leon Battista Alberti. Born in 1404 in Genoa, Alberti was the son of a wealthy merchant. His system of creating realistic 3D space on a flat surface was through the use of a mathematically constructed, linear framework. This involved the base line of a painting being divided into sections called braccia, these approximately 1/3 the height of a person portrayal. Orthogonal lines were taken from these divisions to meet a single centre point, centrally positioned and 3 braccia high. Intersecting the orthogonal were transversal lines. Taken from divisions on the side of a painting based on a fixed point 3 braccia high and outside the picture plane, these transversals created a grid-like format with its relation to orthogonal lines which get smaller as they recede into the fixed view point. This is an accurate representation of reality as the eye usually sees things getting smaller as they recede into the distance.

In 1435 Alberti's perspective system is expressed to other painters through *Della Pittura*, a published handbook of his discoveries.

Alberti's influence is clearly obvious in the works of Paolo Uccello. Born c1397 Uccello developed the majority of his works based on linear perspective. His strong interest in perspective is shown through his quote "Oh, what a sweet thing perspective is". Sir John Hawkwood, 1366, is a strong example of this. Alberti's idea of intersecting transversal and orthogonal lines is obvious, especially in the architectural structure of a plinth in which Sir John Hawkwood riding his horse is placed. This plinth recedes to a fixed viewpoint. Not only did Uccello use Alberti's successful system but he also made development on it, including the use of two viewpoints. One is for the Plinth which, also unlike previous works, angles below the base line of the painting to make the viewers feel as though they are looking up at the structure. The second viewpoint is used to mathematically construct the horse and rider. If a

single viewpoint was used in both parts of the painting, the horse would not be clearly seen, but in an unattractive position where it would be seen looking up at the underneath of it.

Piero Della Francesca 1415, a very intelligent mathematician, also used strongly Alberti's perspective methods. The Flagellation c1445 is a strong example of this. Not only are orthogonal and transversal lines used to create the general architectural design but, like Uccello, further developments have been made. Francesca's mathematical knowledge is applied in using Alberti's system to create complex geometric forms. In the Flagellation the extremely realistically depicted 10 humans are an example of this. Also developed is an idea of using linear perspective in the creation of human faces. Piero della Francesca does this through his own mathematical method based on Alberti's ideas. This results in an extremely realistic portrayal of the face.

In these examples it is made obvious the huge influence Alberti had in the development of creating a realistic portrayal of 3D space onto a flat surface - even to the extent that his methods and ideas are referred to even today.

Answer 2

Grade B 19/25

Alberti's theories of perspective influenced the art of Uccello and Piero della Francesca. Albertian perspective included the concepts of linear perspective, atmospheric modelling in light and shadow and foreshortening. Uccello did this in the works of Battle of San Romano and the Royal Hunt, Piero in his The Resurrection and Madonna and Child with Saints, all of which contain a sense of three-dimensional space.

Uccello shows an extreme interest in his works, although they contain inconsistencies. The Battle of San Romano is a complicated arrangement of a battle scene which shows a range of neatly arranged figures. Uccello applies Alberti's perspective by displaying linear perspective in the placing of discarded weapons and armour in orthogonals and transversals, leading towards a vanishing point in the distance. The most significant aspect is in the depiction of a dead soldier, lying on an orthogonal, emphasised by the foreshortening of his body. This was the first time such a figure was painted in the history of art. However, inconsistencies are seen in the lack of atmospheric perspective, where the distant objects are supposed to be tighter in colour and weaker in detail. Rather this scene resembles a stage of Gothic-inspired ornamental decoration instead of a real war scene. Uccello was also weak, here, for the failure to model the figures and objects in light and shadow - this technique which would provide a sense of three dimensional form. Uccello's figures resemble dolls rather than real people.

The Royal Hunt is a more successful painting in terms of perspective. The arrangement of fallen logs, deer, riders, and greyhounds is neatly aligned to the orthogonals and transversals which are reinforced by the gathering of hunters in the distance, leading the eye into the forest. Atmospheric perspective is applied here in the darkening of shades and blur of detail to depict the dense atmosphere of the deep forest. Furthermore, the figures are modelled in light and shadow to emphasize real life and the three dimensional form. Foreshortening is also seen on the hunter on his horse, the centre of the composition. His shoulders and arm are shortened in comparison to the rest of his body.

Piero della Francesca was the master of perspective, extending on Albertian theories. The Resurrection includes spiritual symbolism in his use of linear perspective. He incorporates two separate vanishing points in the same painting. One is among the sleeping guards,

reinforced by the lines which are formed by the ends of the tomb and the arrangement of trees. Another is above Christ's head, reinforced by atmospheric perspective. The low vanishing points represent the two worlds: the temporal and the spiritual. Christ's body is modelled in light and shadows, especially visible in the muscles on his chest, which gives him the naturalistic and humane appearance. Foreshortened parts of the bodies of the guards are also evident.

Madonna and Child with Saints is another work which shows Piero's ability to apply perspective. The architecture of in the background is so accurately arranged that it matches the real architecture of the niche of the church in which the painting is placed. The steps, the corners of the carpet, the coffered ceiling all lead the eye into the vanishing point - the head of Madonna. All of the figures are modelled in light and shadow and foreshortening is seen throughout.

Question 3: Discuss Alberti's theories of space construction and their application by artists.

Answer 1

Grade D 9/25

Alberti codified theories on Perspective and Space construction, this revolutionised the naturalism in Renaissance Art.

Pablo Uccello, a painter, used perspective in a mathematical and precise way while contrasting with Gothic style figures. In the battle of San Roman he uses linear perspective - this is shown through the uses of lances and a soldier lying on the orthogonals and receding in length as the objects crosses the transversals.

A later painting of his, The Hunt, uses Alberti's theories on atmospheric perspective. As a object recedes in space the object decreases in size, clarity, and colour. The misty forest recedes and as it gets further into the background space the trees become bluish, hazy and smaller giving the illusion of space within the picture plane.

Piero della Francesca uses perspective to symbolise different religious concepts. In The Flagellation he uses two vanishing points, one at Christ's head giving importance and respect also drawing the viewer's eye to be challenged by Christ. The other vanishing point is starting at the bottom of the painting near the peasants lying there. This represents the temporal and the spiritual worlds implying that through Christ's salvation we are linked to God.

The Baptism of Christ, is another work by Piero della Francesca where he again uses perspective and the vanishing points to symbolise related connotations. Mathematical ratios produce geometric shapes in this work creating a triangle that represents descent from heaven, and a pentagon, the five wounds of Christ, and a circle which portray harmony, uniting a perfection related to God.