



AO1 Develop ideas and demonstrate critical and contextual understanding of sources.

Definition

Critical and contextual understanding involves making careful judgments about the art/design work you are reviewing. This includes understanding the context in which the artist or designer was working.

For example, when examining the work of a designer from the 1930s, you might consider the influence of contemporary news or fashion trends. Similarly, if you are studying the work of a contemporary painter from West Wales, you might reflect on social factors or the physical environment and how these impact their work.

Tip

Practise your critical skills by reviewing the work of a past student, aiming to arrive at fair and balanced judgments and providing reasons for your decisions.

What sort of visual sources could be explored?

These are the objects or ideas that inspire you. They can be artefacts, images and other visual or written references such as films or songs. While many examples are accessible online, the best sources are often found in museums, galleries, studios, workshops or even specialist shops. Try to explore these sources firsthand, as this will help you make authentic personal observations and develop your critical skills.

What is the purpose of this AO?

In the same way that you develop writing abilities by studying novels, poems and other types of written material, this AO requires you to study various visual sources to enhance your art and design abilities.

What are critical skills?

Critical skills are sometimes mistakenly thought to involve making only negative observations. However, they are actually about asking the right questions and probing deeply to find answers. This process also involves considering various types of information, such as biographical, descriptive and evaluative, to reach well-informed judgments. These skills are also developed in other subjects, such as in language lessons, by asking and responding to 'higher-order' questions.

Achieving your best in this AO

This is best shown by:

- thoughtfully using images and words together to demonstrate that you have a deep understanding of relevant works of art and design
- investigating why and how they were produced analysing selected examples using methods such as Content, Form, Process and Mood
- clearly explaining why you chose to study selected examples and how they inform your own approach.



Why is it helpful?

This AO should help you to:

- increase your knowledge and understanding of works of art and design produced in different times and places
- raise awareness of the methods and approaches used by other artists and designers
- reflect on their intentions (why they produced their work) and purposes (what it was made for)
- enable analysis of selected works of art and design.

It can:

- provide starting points for generating creative ideas and informing further development
- initiate a search for connections between contextual sources and your own work
- allow for comparisons and contrasts to be made prompt the development of more refined approaches.