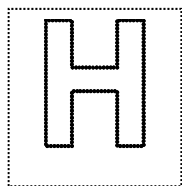


CANDIDATE NAME	CLASS	INDEX NUMBER
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DUNMAN HIGH SCHOOL  
 UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LOCAL EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE  
 General Certificate of Education Advanced Level  
 Higher 1  
**YEAR 6 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION**

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**GENERAL PAPER**

**8807/02**

Paper 2

**28 August 2017**

INSERT

**1 hour 30 minutes**

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

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*Lou Perez writes about the fate of art, artists and museums.*

- 1 In ancient temples, the consecrated images and statues of the divine served as a focal point for devotees to worship at, meditate on, or otherwise communicate with their gods. In spite of their contribution, the sculptors who built these sacred monuments did not receive much recognition. In fact, they were even treated with disdain by the common folks who saw the menial task of chipping images out of stone as a low form of grunt work. For evidence of maltreatment of these unsung heroes, look no further than the Sphinx statue in Egypt where many sculptors toiled under the harsh desert weather, sometimes without food, to create a masterpiece that is today a proudly touted emblem of Egypt, appearing in coins and official documents. The discrimination faced by these sculptors was also accurately observed by philosopher Seneca who said, "One venerates the divine images, one may pray and sacrifice to them, yet one despises the sculptors who made them." Unsurprisingly, people at that time would not even deign to speak to these sculptors, let alone perceive them as craftsmen, artisans or artists. 5 10
- 2 Today, artists are no longer physically tortured, but are tormented when forced to compromise on their artistic integrity, having to make their artworks more saleable and less provocative than they wish. They continue to receive limited respect, and ironically, their artworks receive more recognition than they ever will. We worship artworks, so much so that museums of art are now our new temples. We make 'pilgrimages' to museums and experience 'transcendence' before major paintings or large-scale installations. 'The Scream' at the National Gallery in Norway is displayed in its own niche, all the better for genuflection, while the artist Edvard Munch was consigned to oblivion. When is the busiest day of the week for most contemporary art museums? That would be Sunday: the day we used to reserve for another house of worship. 15 20
- 3 Granted, museums are a platform for learning: they provide a graphic and physical way of educating people about history and heritage of their own and others, reinforce the formal education system without the formality of the classroom, and host community education programmes which level the disparate world between rich and poor. In addition, they develop communities by building identity through reflecting shared collective values, contributing to social cohesion, and providing public spaces for leisure. The permanency of museums, buildings that we see and touch, endows them with significant roles as guardians and repositories of our collective memory, which enables us to learn from the past, understand the present and foreshadow the future. With government funding, museums help us to reflect, construct, and explore national values, which contribute to a sense of local pride that we have something which is unique and appreciated by others. 25 30
- 4 However, being reliant on government funding is an encumbrance to museums attempting to retain its credibility to the masses. It is impossible for any museum to give a balanced view of what our society and others are about. The lesser known Yushukan, a government-commissioned military and war museum located within Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, constructs the impression of Japan as the hero of the war, with dioramas highlighting the support of Asian countries for Japan's role in the national liberation of Asian peoples. This sits well with the Japanese as it appeals to their nationalistic sentiments but understandably incurs the wrath of the victims of their atrocities. In order to maintain their relevance and continue to enjoy the welcomed government funds, museums toe the line and become the state's instrument in the evolution and propagation of national identity. A quick solution is to wean museums from such funding so that they can stay autonomous and true to their purpose, but concerns over survival necessitate their commercialisation. 35 40 45

- 5 Museums need visitors and money, and to meet these needs, they water down their mission to educate and preserve history in order to improve their bottom-line. To remain relevant and popular, these for-profit museums commoditise the so-called wonder rooms containing cabinets of curiosities and map a path so that visitors can experience history that spans several centuries within a leisurely afternoon. Moreover, thematically decorated cafes within the museum grounds allow them to rest their feet and sip tea, and souvenir shops are strategically located as the last stop to entice visitors to pick up memorabilia. How we get acquainted with art and its history leaves much to be desired. It is clear that there is a conflict of interests because self-funded museums will cherry-pick collections, and become purveyors of popular culture instead of serving as bastions of art, culture and history. Either way, museums find themselves between a rock and a hard place. 50 55
- 6 As if finding survival within this tight space is not difficult enough, museums have gone further to dig a deeper hole for themselves. There is now a broad consensus within the art community that the prowess of technology is a new-age solution, and almost a panacea, for the long-standing issue of declining visitorship. But who can deny that all too often, our attention gets drawn to all the technological frills instead of the art works? Unfortunately, even the Louvre in Paris, one of the world's most well-visited and antiquated museums, has found it necessary to ride on this technological tide. As today's museums get all flustered over multi-media techniques to engage the audience through visual, aural, and tactile means to help to contextualise the objects, we forget that museums are meant to educate and not to scintillate. In time to come, museum curators could almost single-handedly contribute to museums' possible demise if they were to exhaust all options and money in their attempts to attract visitors. As visitors have higher expectations for live events to justify their invested time and effort, museum curators pander to these demands and organise events that are more social and interactive. Consequently, visitors ask for even more and expect everything that is made available digitally to be more gimmicky and unique than before. Evidently, they are never satisfied. So museums end up running round in circles and going up in smoke eventually. 60 65 70
- 7 Today, there is a need for a paradigm shift in how we view art and artists. Although we are becoming increasingly accepting of art, our understanding of their significance remains rather limited. In highly pragmatic societies, art is too often overlooked, while good academic grades in schools continue to be traditionally valued. Very few are aware that artists often have to first explore issues of interest, take risks, experiment and create many artworks, of which only a small percentage are truly masterful. Even for the very few that stand out, artists themselves have to convince museum curators to acquire them. Hence, we have artworks that stop us in our tracks and gawk at them, but few among us actually understand the artistry involved from start to finish. Perhaps, we have to stop treating artists' creations as artworks and start appreciating them as works of art. 75 80
- 8 While we used to ignore the sufferings of ancient sculptors, at least their divine images were paid homage. But too often now, museum goers venerate the temple of frills and technology surrounding artworks, and sideline artworks and the hands which made them. Alas, we should not be too surprised at the impending doom awaiting art, artists and museums. 85

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