
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

9239/13

Paper 1 Written Examination

October/November 2019

1 hour 30 minutes

INSERT (RESOURCE BOOKLET)

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Resource Booklet contains Documents 1 and 2 which you should use to answer the questions.

You should spend approximately 10 minutes reading the documents before attempting to answer the questions.
This is allowed for within the time set for the examination.



This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

The following documents consider issues related to arts in an international context. Read them **both** in order to answer **all** the questions on the paper.

Document 1: adapted from an article in Indian Express: *Protests against Art show our laws encourage a free reign to feeling 'offended'* by Nandini Rathi, which was published in 2016. The author is a senior sub-editor with indianexpress.com

India has extraordinary ethnic, religious, language and cultural diversity. But alternative views on religious and sexual morality are not welcomed. As a result, any Indian artist, author or performer who wants to push boundaries, does so at their own risk. Sure, freedom of speech and expression is an important part of the Indian Constitution. However, the constitution also includes so-called 'reasonable' restrictions.

The Indian state of Kerala's leading daily newspaper recently ran a front-page apology for two images published in their literary magazine. The images offended two local groups. 'Representatives' of the Hindu Ezhava community complained about a distorted image of a sculpture of the Guru, Sree Narayana. Also, Christian groups protested about Tom Vattakuzhy's painting which resembled Da Vinci's *Last Supper*, but included nudity. The magazine was withdrawn within a day, then re-issued with the image of the painting cropped beyond recognition.

This withdrawal and apology is, unfortunately, a common response in India to images and art that happen to 'hurt' the feelings of certain groups. Playwright, C Gopan, said, "It's a war against the image. This is dangerous." The painter, Vattakuzhy, was shocked. He felt that the opposition to his painting was due to the image being shown out of context. The experience of the late M F Husain — one of India's great modern artists — is probably the most tragic in modern India. Trouble started in 1996 when his sketch of a nude goddess, drawn long before, appeared in a magazine. "The sketch is an elegant white-on-black line drawing, which makes the viewer reflect on the old Indian tradition of "nirakara", or formlessness," observed Salil Tripathi. Husain's picture of a distressed nude woman challenged the common image of the goddess. Consequently, extremist Hindu groups filed multiple criminal lawsuits for insulting their faith. Husain's house was attacked and his artwork vandalised by members of Bajrang Dal, an extremist group. Both the High Court and the Supreme Court eventually ruled in Husain's favor, stating that he had no intentions to insult. This did not reduce the anger, lawsuits and threats to his life. He could not paint in peace and left India in 2006, until his death in 2011.

The Indian state has similar pressure from other faiths to ban art and literature they find offensive. In 1989, under pressure from a Muslim group, India became the first country to ban Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Christian groups successfully pushed for a ban of Dan Brown's book *The Da Vinci Code* and the movie of the book, though they were not banned in any other country.

Laws that encourage people to feel 'offended', using their feelings as a valid excuse to suppress any different view, achieve little. They give a small section of society control over community beliefs, customs and sentiments. As disagreement and debate is part of a healthy liberal democracy, art and satire should never cause anyone to go to jail, be killed or injured. If liberal democracy is to survive, these laws must be changed.

Document 2: adapted from *Art Is a Window to the Arab World's Soul*, an article written by Kim Ghattas and published in *Foreign Policy* 2016, a US-based global magazine of news and ideas. The author is a Lebanese author and BBC correspondent covering international affairs.

In the past, art in Middle Eastern countries was elitist, limited to state galleries or museums. Independent art was censored or hidden. In Gulf countries, this is still so. Many young artists face enormous risks: In Saudi Arabia — a country without any museums — Palestinian-born poet Ashraf Fayad was recently accused of rejecting Islam and sentenced to eight years in jail. Elsewhere, however, artists are moving into public spaces and expressing a new generation's hopes. During the Egyptian revolution, many graffiti artists protested and communicated through artwork on Cairo's city walls. While some revolutionary graffiti has been painted over by the authorities, some is still there, as a reminder.

Middle East news is gloomy. In a recent survey of young Arabs, 52% said religion is too dominant in the Middle East, and 67% said women's rights must improve. Yet many in the West ask: Where are the young, forward-thinking Arabs to lead the region to a better future? Thankfully, some American organizations recognize that art can help dialogue and Washington's highest-status venues are exhibiting Arab art. Rania Matar's photographs of young women in their bedrooms in Lebanon show us ordinary life. We see young people with stuffed animals on the beds, a portrait of Marilyn Monroe on a wall, a chaos of beauty products on the night dresser. As a Lebanese, I welcome this reminder of the beauty, creativity, and even normality of life in the Middle East. To really learn about the Arabs, head to an art show.

A few art exhibitions won't completely change how Washington views the Middle East. But Lyne Sneige, director of Arts and Culture at the Middle East Institute says it may help. "It's important to recognize that there are people working on issues of freedom and expression in the Arab World and give them a platform in Washington."

The Arab uprisings forced many artists to challenge politics and social structures in their countries. That experience helped them to come to Washington and interact with American audiences. "I believe in art pushing social and political change," Saudi artist, Ahmed Mater told me during his visit to Washington. "Our art is revolution. Art is not separate from society."

Mater's art causes trouble with the Saudi state and religious establishment. But his art is part of a global conversation about shared issues, including the "commercialization that has invaded all of us". His pictures of Mecca contrast the spiritual journey to the holy city of Islam with glitzy hotels and Coca-Cola advertisements. He exposes the terrible conditions of construction workers, showing them dangling dangerously from construction towers, or packed into one room in their living quarters.

Arab artists' voices will affect their region's culture and its political development. These representatives of the new, creative, young, vibrant Middle East deserve to be seen, heard, and amplified. They are a window into the vast changes happening in the region. That's why it's so important for Washington policy makers to get to know them.

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