

Appreciation - Public/Street Art | Public Sculpture

Sample answer

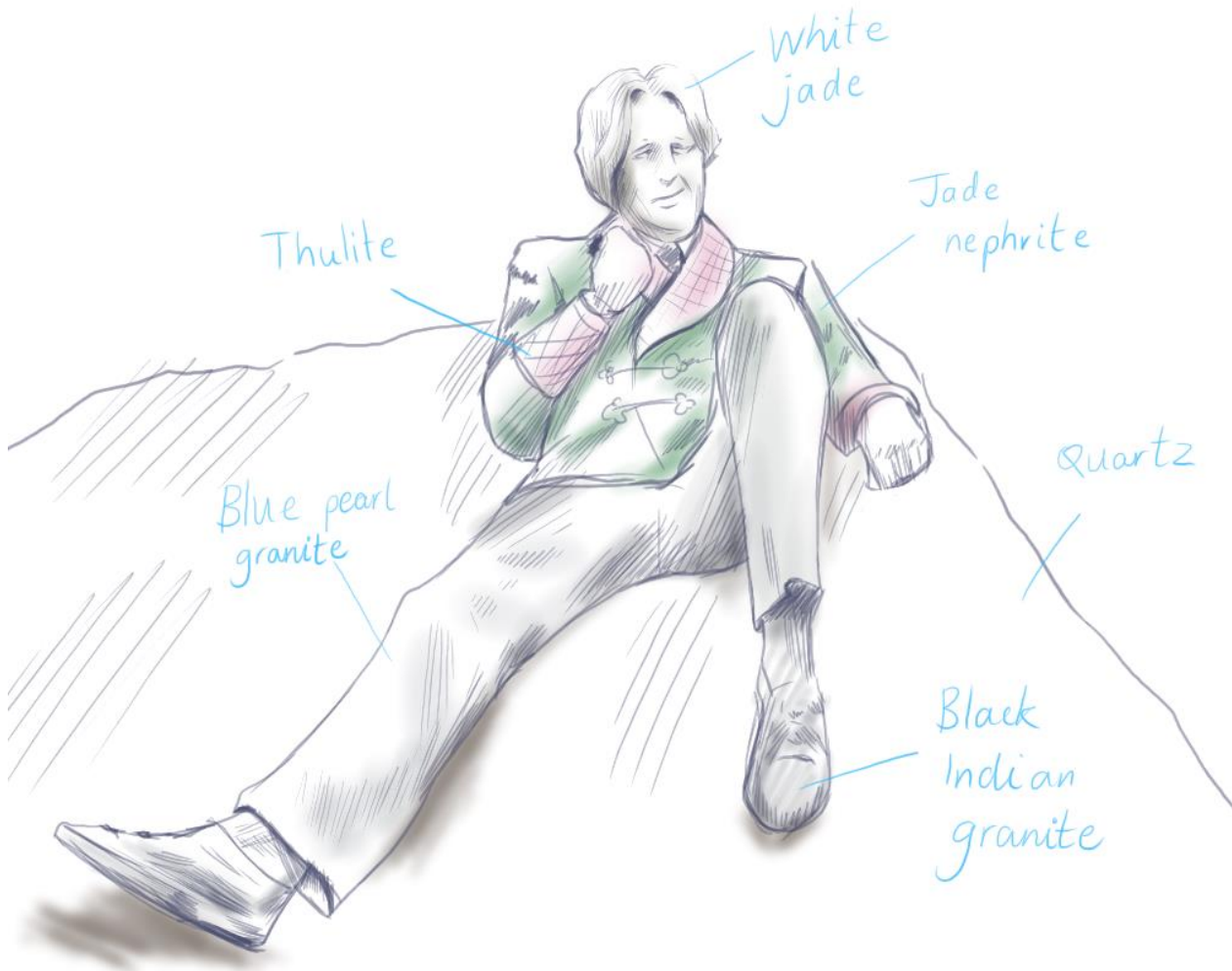
2017 Higher Level Question 17

Public sculpture plays an important role in commemorating people and/or events. Discuss this statement with reference to a named public sculpture you have studied. In your answer refer to subject matter, composition, materials, techniques, location and the context of the work. AND Briefly outline your visual concepts for a public sculpture in your locality to commemorate a person or an event. Illustrate your answer.

The Oscar Wilde Monument is located in Merrion Square in Dublin, Ireland. A life-sized sculpture of Oscar Wilde can be found here facing his childhood home at number 1 Merrion Square and just around the corner from his old alma mater, Trinity College, Dublin. As a young boy Oscar would have played at the very spot where the monument now stands, making this location a suitable site. The sculpture is to commemorate the famous Irish poet, who is known to be one of the most successful playwrights of Ireland. Interestingly, it took almost a century since Wilde's death for him to be commemorated in the city of his birth and in his adopted city, London. The old conservative elements among the Dublin public would not have dared to allow his city to commemorate a man who was initially known for a scandalous death and possessed a bad reputation after a prison sentence. However, soon his work was highly praised and recognised.

The monument consists of three pieces, the stone sculpture of a lounging Oscar Wilde, a pillar with a bronze of his pregnant wife and a pillar with a bronze male torso. These were designed and created by Danny Osborne, an Irish sculptor, and commissioned by the Guinness Ireland group. It was unveiled in 1997 by Oscar's grandson, Merlin Holland. The statue depicts Wilde, aged about forty, at the height of his career, dressed in his famous smoking jacket, portraying two contrasting moods; joyfulness and a state of deep sadness. The distinctive ornate stones capture Oscar Wilde's flamboyant and colourful personality. The sculpture is constructed from exotic materials, such as solid green nephrite jade from the Yukon for the jacket. White jade from Guatemala was used for the head and hands, and a rare pink stone called thulite from Norway for the collar and cuffs. The trousers are of blue pearl granite and the shoes and socks are black Indian granite. Shoelaces, buttons and the green carnation are constructed from bronze and he wears a Trinity Old Boys tie, made in coloured glazed porcelain. Two scarab rings that he wore on his left and right hands in honour of both good and bad luck are also included in the sculpture. All this is placed on top of a large quartz boulder sourced from the nearby Wicklow Mountains. The unusual

choice of materials and colours symbolise Wilde's controversial character, his love of beautiful objects, including stones, and his bright personality. The jade symbolises immortality and the power to live forever, something which Oscar has certainly achieved so far through his work and life.



The remarkable thing about this statue is its ability to embody two distinct moods. The right side depicts Wilde smiling bemusedly with this leg bent at an angle, almost provocatively. The body language of this side resonates relaxation bordering cockiness. It symbolises the witty, charismatic side of Wilde that is seen through most of his plays. The other side is deeply sad and reflective. His posture is sad and deflated and holds onto a wilting rose. Wilde's nature was deeply divided, and it was his tragedy that he could always see both sides of the paradox - the truth behind the mask. His face here is both life-like and mask-like, both tragic and comedic.



Oscar Wilde is remembered for his extensive writings, his sharp wit and his flamboyant dress. This fine sculpture is a fitting memorial to his art and his life.

A sculpture idea for Ashbourne Library I have is a life-sized statue depicting Athena, the Greek goddess of knowledge and wisdom. She would be in a pose similar to the Statue of Liberty, with her left arm raised and right hand supporting a book. The hand-raised would be releasing an owl, with its wings spread out ready to take off. Owls are generally seen as a symbol of wisdom and also the spirit animal of Athena. The manuscript would represent knowledge, linking to the location of a library. The statue also represents freedom, conveyed through the pose and the flight of the owl. I believe knowledge is what frees us and everyone should have the access to knowledge. The sculpture celebrates our freedom and access to a wide range of information and our power to enjoy the liberty to pursue our own preferences and interests. It also reminds us to appreciate the existence of public libraries.

The sculpture would be cast in copper or bronze. A clay version of the piece would be made first and then a mould or cast could be taken from it. There would be no need for paint or additional colours. It would be a figurative piece of sculpture and placed outside the library, possibly beside the entrance. The life-size scale would be suitable since there is not a lot of open space around the library and if it was too large it would crowd the area. There would be no other functions to the sculpture other than representing the freedom of knowledge.

