The visual arts

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each precise term with its definition.

1 aesthetic ____	**a** a strong contrast of light and shadow in a painting
2 installation ____	**b** the material or technique an artist uses
3 medium ____	**c** a large-scale, often immersive artwork occupying a space
4 provenance ____	**d** the documented history of ownership of an artwork
5 chiaroscuro ____	**e** experimental, pushing beyond current artistic norms
6 avant-garde ____	**f** the placing of two contrasting elements side by side
7 juxtaposition ____	**g** representing recognisable people or objects
8 evocative ____	**h** using only one colour or shades of it
9 monochrome ____	**i** a set of principles concerning beauty and visual taste
10 figurative ____	**j** strongly suggesting a feeling or memory

2 Choose the word with the most suitable connotation.

1 For a strong light-and-shadow contrast: chiaroscuro / flat lighting.

2 For an experimental, boundary-pushing artwork: avant-garde / conventional.

3 For a work using only shades of one colour: monochrome / colourful.

4 For art representing recognisable figures: figurative / abstract.

5 For a documented ownership history: provenance / anonymity.

6 For placing two contrasting elements together: juxtaposition / uniformity.

7 For a piece that strongly evokes memory or feeling: evocative / neutral.

8 For a large, immersive artwork occupying space: installation / miniature.

3 Complete the art collocations with one word.

1 an _____ movement (= experimental, boundary-pushing)

2 a documented _____ (= ownership history)

3 a striking _____ (= placing contrasting elements together)

4 an _____ palette (= evoking strong feeling)

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5 a _____ sensibility (= relating to visual taste and beauty)

6 a large-scale _____ (= immersive artwork occupying space)

7 a _____ effect (= strong contrast of light and shadow)

8 _____ representation (= showing recognisable figures)

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4 Complete the case notes with words and phrases from the box.

aesthetic | avant-garde | chiaroscuro | evocative | figurative | installation | juxtaposition | medium | monochrome | provenance

Case A: The painting's dramatic 1 _____ effect drew clear inspiration from classical technique.
Case B: Experts questioned the work's 2 _____, as records of its ownership before 1960 were incomplete.
Case C: The artist's choice of 3 _____ - recycled plastic rather than paint - reflected an 4 _____ approach unusual for a gallery of this size.
Case D: The 5 _____ of a modern smartphone beside a Renaissance 6 _____ painting created a deliberately jarring effect.
Case E: Visitors described the large-scale 7 _____ as deeply 8 _____, evoking childhood memories for many.
Case F: The gallery's overall 9 _____ favours restraint, with much of the space given over to 10 _____ works in black, white and grey.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Authenticity and the art market

Provenance has become central to the contemporary art market, as buyers increasingly demand documented proof of an artwork's ownership history before committing to a purchase. This concern extends beyond financial risk: works with contested or incomplete provenance raise ethical questions, particularly when pieces may have been looted or unethically acquired during periods of conflict. Museums have faced growing pressure to research and, where appropriate, return works with problematic histories, even when doing so is legally complex. Some critics argue that an overwhelming focus on provenance risks overshadowing genuine aesthetic engagement with a work, though most agree that ethical transparency and artistic appreciation need not be mutually exclusive.

1 What has become central to the contemporary art market? _____

2 What do buyers increasingly demand? _____

3 What ethical questions can contested provenance raise? _____

4 What growing pressure have museums faced? _____

5 What do some critics argue about an overwhelming focus on provenance? _____

6 What do most agree, according to the text? _____

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6 **Rewrite each sentence using the word in capitals. Do not change the meaning.**

1 The painting used a strong light-and-shadow contrast. CHIAROSCURO _____

2 The artwork's ownership history was unclear. PROVENANCE _____

3 The piece strongly evoked childhood memories. EVOCATIVE _____

4 The movement pushed far beyond conventional norms. AVANT-GARDE _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 120-150 word critique of an artwork or exhibition (real or imaginary), distinguishing technical observation from personal aesthetic response.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Control connotation carefully. [ ] Avoid unsupported assumptions.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Precise terms

1 i 2 c 3 b 4 d 5 a 6 e 7 f 8 j 9 h 10 g

2 Connotation

1 chiaroscuro 2 avant-garde 3 monochrome 4 figurative 5 provenance 6 juxtaposition 7 evocative 8 installation

3 Collocations

1 avant-garde 2 provenance 3 juxtaposition 4 evocative 5 aesthetic 6 installation 7 chiaroscuro 8 figurative

4 Case notes

1 chiaroscuro 2 provenance 3 medium 4 avant-garde 5 juxtaposition 6 figurative
7 installation 8 evocative 9 aesthetic 10 monochrome

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Provenance.
2 Documented proof of an artwork's ownership history.
3 Whether pieces may have been looted or unethically acquired during periods of conflict.
4 Pressure to research and, where appropriate, return works with problematic histories.
5 It risks overshadowing genuine aesthetic engagement with a work.
6 That ethical transparency and artistic appreciation need not be mutually exclusive.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 The painting used chiaroscuro. 2 The artwork's provenance was unclear.
3 The piece was evocative of childhood memories. 4 The movement was avant-garde.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check lexical precision, appropriate connotation and separation of fact from inference.