SECTION 2 – DESIGN STUDIES – 25 marks

Attempt this question.

7. Identify **two designs** by different designers that you have studied who have worked in the same design area.

(a) With reference to these two selected designs, comment on:

- Fitness for purpose
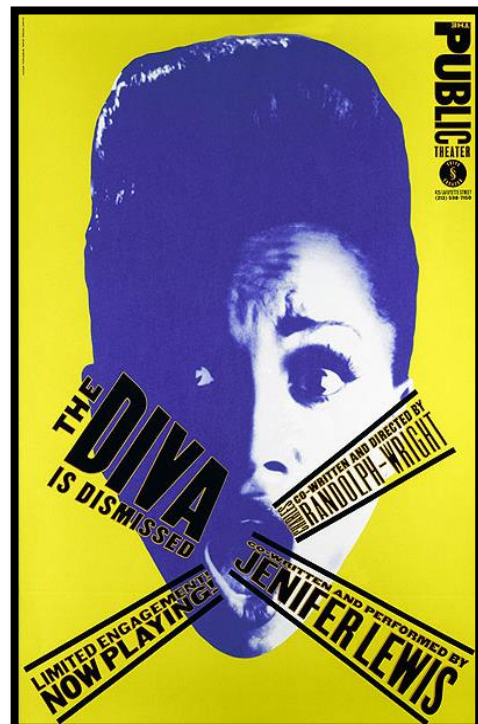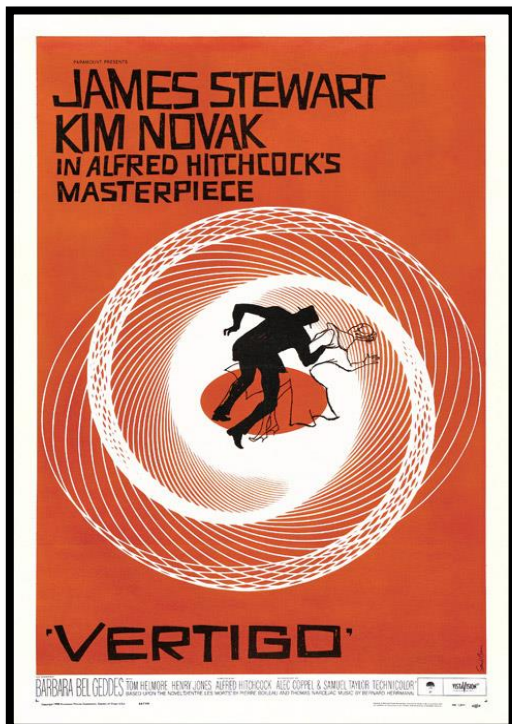- Style
- Materials and techniques.

Which of these two designs is the most effective? Give **two** justified reasons.

10

(b) Select **one designer** from part (a)

Explain the impact of social, cultural and/or other influences on any of their work and practice.

5

7. (a)

I will discuss two designs by two graphic designers: 'Vertigo' (1958) by Saul Bass and 'The Diva Is Dismissed' (1994) by Paula Scher.

<u>Fitness for purpose</u>
'Vertigo' is fit for purpose because it advertises the film in a clearly legible and stylish way. The font is displayed in big bold letters which makes it easy to read and understand. The letters are hand-drawn and the slightly off-kilter, irregular capitals hint at the disorientating feeling of vertigo. The famous actor James Stewart was the principle actor in the film and his name is placed in the biggest and most prominent position on the poster. This makes the poster fit for purpose because the cinema-going public can easily recognise a famous actor and, subsequently, will want to see the movie.
The Diva is Dismissed is fit for purpose because it advertises the play in an unconventional and eye-catching way. The eye is immediately drawn to the shouting central figure which, together with the bold text, suggests a wild and enjoyable play. The text is positioned both diagonally and vertically which further enhances the idea that the play is wild and playful.

<u>Style</u>
Vertigo is simplified but sophisticated. The swirling white lines draw your eye to the figures in the middle of the poster. The hand-drawn letters and silhouetted figures contrast with the red and orange background and white vortex design, giving the poster strong visual impact.
Paula Scher's design could be described as Post-Modern. This is a design style that was fashionable in the late 20th century and notable for appropriating (borrowing) design styles from the past and adding an ironic, humorous twist. Scher appropriates the work of Russian designer Alexander Rodchenko. He also used floating heads and diagonally placed text to catch the public's attention. The expression of the woman's face gives the poster its humorous edge for even though she is shouting, she does not look very serious.

<u>Materials and techniques</u>
Saul Bass uses hand-drawn letters and cut shapes together with the screen printing process to create his design. The screenprinting process gives the colours a vivid, flat and bold finish. The hand-drawn letters were influenced by techniques used by German Expressionist movie poster designers and give the poster a unique, highly stylised appearance. The spiral vortex was created by the animator John Whitney snr. and link to the opening credits of the film, which Bass also deigned.
Scher used the lithographic printing process to create 'The Diva Is Dismissed'. A photograph has been used for the central figure while stencils have been used for the text. By using unorthodox spacing, mixing font weights and employing uncommon and historic typefaces, Scher's poster presents information in a dynamic, expressive way.

The limited colours (yellow and blue with black text) allows scher's exciting layout not look too confusing and is easy to read despite the wild nature of the design.

Most effective
In my opinion, Bass's poster is most effective. The spiral vortex in the centre of the poster creates a sense of intrigue because the viewer is left uncertain about what it means or represents. This would make the audience want to know more about the film.
The spiral vortex design stems from Bass's interest in the work of the French mathematician Lissajous. He incorporated them into his design because he felt that they perfectly captured the disorientating feeling of vertigo. This attention to detail, considering every part of the poster and how it links to the themes and title of the film, ensures that the design is highly effective. Vertigo is now seen as a classic and iconic design.

7(B)
I have chosen to look at the influences on the designer Saul Bass. A primary influence of Bass's work and practice was his mentor György Kepes who focussed Bass's ideas about psychology and modernism to help him become a distinct and famous designer.
Another influence on Bass was jazz album design. He was inspired by the simplified shapes that were common in 1940's and 50's jazz album covers to incorporate great simplicity using basic shapes in his designs.
He also took inspiration from World War Two propaganda posters. The bright, bold colours and large text of the old posters that he saw as a child motivated him to create posters to catch the viewer's attention.
Bass was inspired by the European 'Swiss Style' of design that he was taught at Brooklyn College. This type of simplistic and often bold design helped him to integrate and visualise his ideas on stylish, counter culture designs.
Finally, Bass was influenced by the hand-drawn letters in German Expressionist movie posters. These letters gave each poster a stylised feel, which could be used in many ways to describe the themes in the movie.
All of these factors would inspire Bass to use his style to effectively redefine the movie poster genre. His simplistic cut-outs in imagery and text and limited colour schemes displayed in 'Vertigo' and 'The Man with the Golden Arm' are excellent examples of his eye-catching designs.