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"AN ARTS CENTRE FOR A RURAL AREA"

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INTRODUCTION

An Arts Centre for A Rural Area

The belief that the arts have a central role to play in the life of any town or area is the main motivating force for a proposal for an arts centre. That this proposal poses more questions than it answers is deliberate, in that a centre, should really reflect the spirit of the community, rather than a rationale that echoes the aesthetic judgements of one small group of people.

I have addressed the question of an arts centre along the lines of educational values since I feel that the role of education and aesthetic values are often inextricably linked.

In Chapter I, "An Arts Centre for A Rural Area", I propose a definition of an arts centre and a guideline of some considerations for policy-making.

In Chapter II, "Development of an Arts Centre", I attempt to relate some of the contributions that art makes to the individual experience. I feel it is instrumental to have varied and coherent ideas about the contributions of art when formulating policies and objectives. Does the arts centre serve solely as a means for information or can it play a social role in the life of the community?

In Chapter III, "Research and Recommendations", I pose some general points and reasons for a rationale for an arts centre in a rural area.

CHAPTER I

AN ARTS CENTRE FOR A RURAL AREA

What Are Arts Centres?

According to the National Association of Arts Centres in USA:

> Arts Centres are places which can attract people keen to learn pottery and those wishing to watch an opera; they can draw children for a puppet show and film buffs for a rare screening; audiences may come for a top-flight touring company or a home-grown pantomime. (1)

Within an education curriculum and in a broader sense, art centres have a lot to offer both educationally and socially. Current trends in employment indicate that people have more and more leisure time. This is but one area in which art could have an important role to play. Victoria Neumark, in The Magical Exercise, illustrates the importance of having an arts centre when she states that "arts centres which are properly used by the community become a forum for communication." (2) Neumark continues,

> ... Art centres at their best provide a jolt of aesthetic experience which can transform the recipients' experience of the arts and enable them to grasp techniques and forms for their own expressive needs - you see or hear professional artists, you work with them, and you gain something of what they do for your own. (3).

In Chapter II, I discuss the nature of art, but art as a concept or phenomenon is too diverse to be categorised into a single theory or set of logical criteria. The interpretations of form and content, and the manner of art are too broad, but as Stuart Richmond argues in his essay, "Assumptions about Art Education", it would be a mistake to take this position at face

value. (4) Richmond states that educationalists, teachers and the like must have,

> ... some coherent ideas about art that can be justified in an educational scheme. They need to know what to strive after in the name of art. They must plan activities, choose content, decide on teaching methods, evaluate students' progress and collaborate effectively with students and colleagues. (4)

He suggests in his discussion that art is on a parallel with education. That there exists no perfect theory of education, or of art, their essence can be answered only incompletely, just as questions about the meaning of life can never be answered conclusively.

Maybe the question to be asked is: "what type of art can be most worthwhile educationally?" As Richmond suggests in his essay,

> ... what kind of art for example, most fruitfully develops mind and feelings; develops understanding of ourselves, other human beings, and the world of experience? What kind of art furnishes us with the most appropriate models, languages, and skills needed for the achievement, articulation and expression of understanding? (5)

The choice and medium of art could be related to experience, and it could be,

> ... dependent on the kinds of problems and achievements deemed worthy of effort. Valued ends underlie both educational and artistic directions. (6)

In other words, the task of establishing a structure or centre could be understood in the light of values and direction taken. In the establishment of a centre in a rural area such as Mayo, the direction could relate to the experience and immediate resources available, maybe in an historical context, to show how art can be connected to historical traditions. As Richmond states,

> ... artistic creativity, and understanding of present-day artistic concerns cannot properly occur without a grounding in the problems that have preoccupied our artistic forbears. (7)

To clarify and further this point, in the intrinsic arguments for the arts in education made in The Curriculum and Examinations Board's Discussion Paper: The Arts in Education, the rationale put forward for the arts in education states that,

> ... arts education must be to acquaint the student with the traditions of art. All art objects exist in a cultural world. The full significance of the art object emerges when it is seen in the context of that tradition in which it arises and in terms of the contribution which it makes to the development of that tradition.
>
> Consequently, it is of crucial importance that a student of the arts be acquainted with tradition from an historical and critical perspective. The understanding of tradition which informs this third aim of arts education must take full account of the contemporary world in which the art object exists and in which the young person and teacher live. (8)

This country is proud of its literary reputation, and our cultural resources should have an important role to play in carrying on that and other traditions. As Udo Kultermann states in Art and Life,

> ... This world, the here and now of our political, social and psychological situation, includes more than the real and present perceptions registered by our consciousness; it also includes all past forms of the real, even those reaching far back into history. (9)

Guidelines and Considerations for Policy-Making

There are many factors to take into consideration when setting out to put a rationale together for an arts centre. Firstly and most importantly, the aims and objectives of a proposal should be put together, that objective policies should be

formulated through extensive research into the actual needs of the community. Such issues as:

1] The need for a centre, i.e., what type of arts centre for a rural area?

2] The possible clientele, i.e., respond to the needs of the particular area. Incorporated into the format could be a rationale for the arts based on contemporary and historical resources available within the immediate area.

3] The funding available for such a project needs to be assessed.

4] The management or committee, i.e. should have responsibility for implementation of an arts project with a view to developing an interest and initiating a response for a permanent centre.

Secondly, the consideration of finance. Will it be necessary to establish a fundraising committee to raise finance for purchase and refurbishment of appropriate premises and for possible ongoing revenue to sustain the centre in the future. The body of people selected could cover a cross section of the community, business as well as cultural and educational. David Rockefeller, in his report Coming to Our Senses, notes that in the instance of arts administrators and educationalists programmes are,

> ... too often designed without the necessary consultation and co-operation between those in the arts and those working in education, policy planning should emerge from a common source and should follow a common channel of implementation within which the two streams of arts and education could flow as one. (10)

In conclusion, the questions that need to be addressed, are firstly, the types of activities that most "fruitfully develops mind and feelings". Secondly, the types of activities that suit

the area, taking into consideration the available resources and experience of the community. And finally, the implementation of these activities, choices such as the type of centre, the possible clientele, funding and the role of management.

FOOTNOTES

1] Victoria Neumark, The Magic Exercise: Twelve Arts Education Projects (Darlington, National Association of Arts Centres, 1989), p.10.

2] Neumark, The Magic Exercise, p. 12.

3] Neumark, The Magic Exercise, p. 11.

4] Richmond, Stuart, "Three Assumptions That Influence Art Education", The Journal of Aesthetic Education, 25 (1991, 2), p. 4.

5] Ibid., p. 5.

6] Ibid., p. 4.

7] Ibid., p. 5.

8] A Curriculum and Examinations Board Discussion Paper: The Arts in Education, (Dublin: CEB, 1985), 2.4.4., p. 8.

9] Udo Kultermann, Art and Life, translated by John William Gabriel (New York: Pagger Publishers, 1971), p. 8.

10] David Jr. Rockefeller, Coming to our Senses: The Significance of the Arts for American Education, (New York: American Council for the Arts, 1977), p. 260.

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT OF AN ARTS CENTRE

The Question of "What is Art?"

The fundamental question that should be posed before establishing or implementing any sort of arts project or structure in the community is "Why Arts at all?" As Eisner so aptly asks,

> What is it that arts in general, and the visual arts in particular, can do to increase the quality of individual and social life? What are the contributions that art can make to the real world in which men live? (1)

In its simplest context art is comparable to life, a journey that takes us through a series of continuous experiences, developing our senses and intellect. How this takes place becomes more evident through the actual experience and it is often this intangible or unique quality of the arts that makes the question of "what is art?" a difficult argument to categorise in the human experience. As Richmond suggests,

> We cannot state the essential criteria of that concept whose very employment demands there shall be no exhaustive set of criteria. (2)

If we examine human behavioural patterns, there are three different levels in which we function, the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor domains. In the making of art these areas of the human experience, the thinking, the feeling and the actual manipulation of the materials and techniques all contribute to the process of art. Even as an onlooker the individual is provoked into drawing upon the cognitive and affective domains, one is stimulated into thoughts and feelings of appreciation,

whether positive or negative. In other words, it is impossible to remain unaffected: the arts are provocative, stimulating, cause questioning and initiate response from the observer. As Elliot Eisner states in Educating Artistic Vision:

> When experienced, the arts contribute to the fund of our experiences, develop our perceptivity and hence enable us to savour the previously insignificant. In this sense the arts develop the sensibility necessary for human concern. To be callused is to be hardened, to have a callus is to have a layer of hard skin between one's nerve endings and the world, hence not to be able to feel. Experience in the arts is a type of callus remover, a vehicle by means of which one's nerve endings become more acute and responsive. The arts thereby enable us to make sense of the world. (3)

The arts, more specifically the visual arts, function in many ways. Firstly, they can be seen as a vehicle for articulating our sublime visions, our fears, dreams and recollection. Secondly, they often serve as a means of making the spiritual visible through the image of icons. (4) In the past these religious paintings embodied the central beliefs on which medieval orthodox christianity was based. The masters of these works having come from the ranks of the peasantry, expressing their thoughts and deep faith in the simplest and most instinctive form of art. (5) According to Eisner in Educating Artistic Vision:

> When the artist takes an idea such as the divine and transforms it into a visual metaphor, he creates not only a specific object worthy of attention in its own right, he also creates a form within which man's most cherished values can be embodied. When art performs this function it transforms the personal and ineffable into a public form in which others may participate, thus, the ideas of culture can take on a corporate significance that they would not otherwise have. (6)

And thirdly, through the visual arts the artist can act as a sort of social critic and visionary, giving us the essence of what society is about at any given time, depicting its sense of values

in both an historical and contemporary context. (7) Society needs the artist, that supreme sorcerer. (8) In The Necessity of Art, Ernst Fischer suggests that the artist has to be conscious of his social function. In the past the role of the artist was not only to represent reality, but to shape it. As Fischer notes,

> The Moses of Michelangelo was not only the artistic image of renaissance man, the embodiment in stone of a new, self-aware personality. It was also a commandment in stone to Michelangelo's contemporaries and patrons: 'That is what you ought to be like. The age in which we live demands it. The world at whose birth we are all present needs it.' (9)

Through a particular approach to a given subject or area the artist through his own individuality as an artist could express the processes taking place in that society. As Fischer recognises,

> His ability to bring out essential features of his time to disclose new realities was the measure of his greatness as an artist. (9)

These are some of the very unique qualities of art.

Devling further back into our prehistoric past, to an almost ideal situation, art was seen not as an individual but as a collective production. (10) Society in prehistoric times was a dense, close-knit form of collectivism and art, according to Fischer, was seen as,

> ... a magical tool, and it served man in mastering nature and developing social relationships. Sexual allurement - bright colours, pungent smells, splendid coats and feathers in the animal world, jewels and fine clothes, seductive words, and gestures among humans, may have provided the stimulus. (10)

In creating art, primitive man found for himself a real way of increasing his power and enriching life. Fischer elaborates,

> The frenzied tribal dances before a hunt really did increase the tribe's sense of power; war paint and war cries really did make the warrior more resolute and were

> apt to terrify the enemy. Cave paintings of animals really helped to build up the hunters' sense of security and superiority over his prey. (11)

In effect, through his art, early man learned to take control of his life by conquering and confronting his fears through visual imagery (12). It was in this light that art was seen as an almost magical vehicle for self-expression. Today as it did then, art confronts issues that are very close to us. Indeed with regard to education the emphasis has now shifted from the more traditional idea of academic learning to a more student centred philosophy. In order to accomodate people's increasing awareness of how they feel about themselves, the issue of education and resources that influence this range and variety of experience, needs to be addressed. Though it may seem unanswerable to question what is art? What is the purpose of art? What is aesthetic experience?; one cannot deny that after the experience one cannot remain unaffected. As Jerome Hausman in his article on "Quality and Living" suggests,

> ... what is important is not the physical object or the sights and sounds that comprise whatever it is we are looking at or listening to. Rather it is what the work does to our experience, what happens to us when we encounter it and how it leaves us changed, how it alters the way we subsequently experience the rest of the world. The work, in other words has a dual impact, or does so under the best of conditions. It entertains as it edifies. It is an object of immediate pleasure or at least it draws us in as spectators or audience, and it is also an instrument of change, a tool whose power to entertain and delight goes hand in glove with its capacity to enlighten and instruct. (13).

In conclusion, experience of the arts can contribute to this quality of life. It enriches and enlightens our perceptions of the world, instilling an awareness for aesthetics, a sensitivity to line, colour, form, beauty, harmony and order. Since the

beginning of time this need for expression and communication has been part of the human make-up although art may serve many functions, in artistic as well as educational circles, it is associated with the well-being of the individual and of society as a whole.

Community Needs and Art

In the first part of this chapter, some general points on the necessity of art were raised with regard to the individual and the community as a whole. What now needs to be examined is the context in which the artistic experience occurs. In rural communities the main focus of experience is in schools. In David Baker's essay "Git Real: On Art Education and Community Needs", he succintly highlights one of the major problems of learning by the isolation and separation of community, and the arts experience.

> ... For all that we might want for them in terms of our enlightened beliefs, values, and educational practices - especially those related to art objects, and events, artists, aesthetic propositions, cultural abstractions, expressive skills, and technical processes - **for all that we want for them**, it will be rejected without trial the moment our students sense its lack of relevance to their needs and aspirations - **as they know them.** (14)

Integrating education and real life experience is essential if students and the community at large are to understand or accept art as fundamental to our human consciousness. To put the visual arts in proper perspective, one has to be sensitive to the communal and environmental needs of young people, otherwise the visual arts will continue to remain remote and of little

consequence in their experience. As Baker suggests,

> ... to children, adolescents and adults if they do not relate in explicit and immediate ways to where they live, work and play - and to what they believe, value and desire, bottom line, if arts instruction doesn't make sense on our students terms, it simply won't make sense to them no matter how righteous we are in our curricular postures. (15).

But in making such a statement, it is of course understood that other needs have been addressed, physiological needs as well as the social needs have been satisfied. Until this has happened, aesthetic and cognitive thinking is less likely to develop (see diagram 1). The relevance of such a point may be seen in the light of the role of the Arts Centre. Will the Arts Centre play a role other than that of an information centre, i.e. will it have a social responsibility, will it contribute to the social as well as the aesthetic needs of the individual?

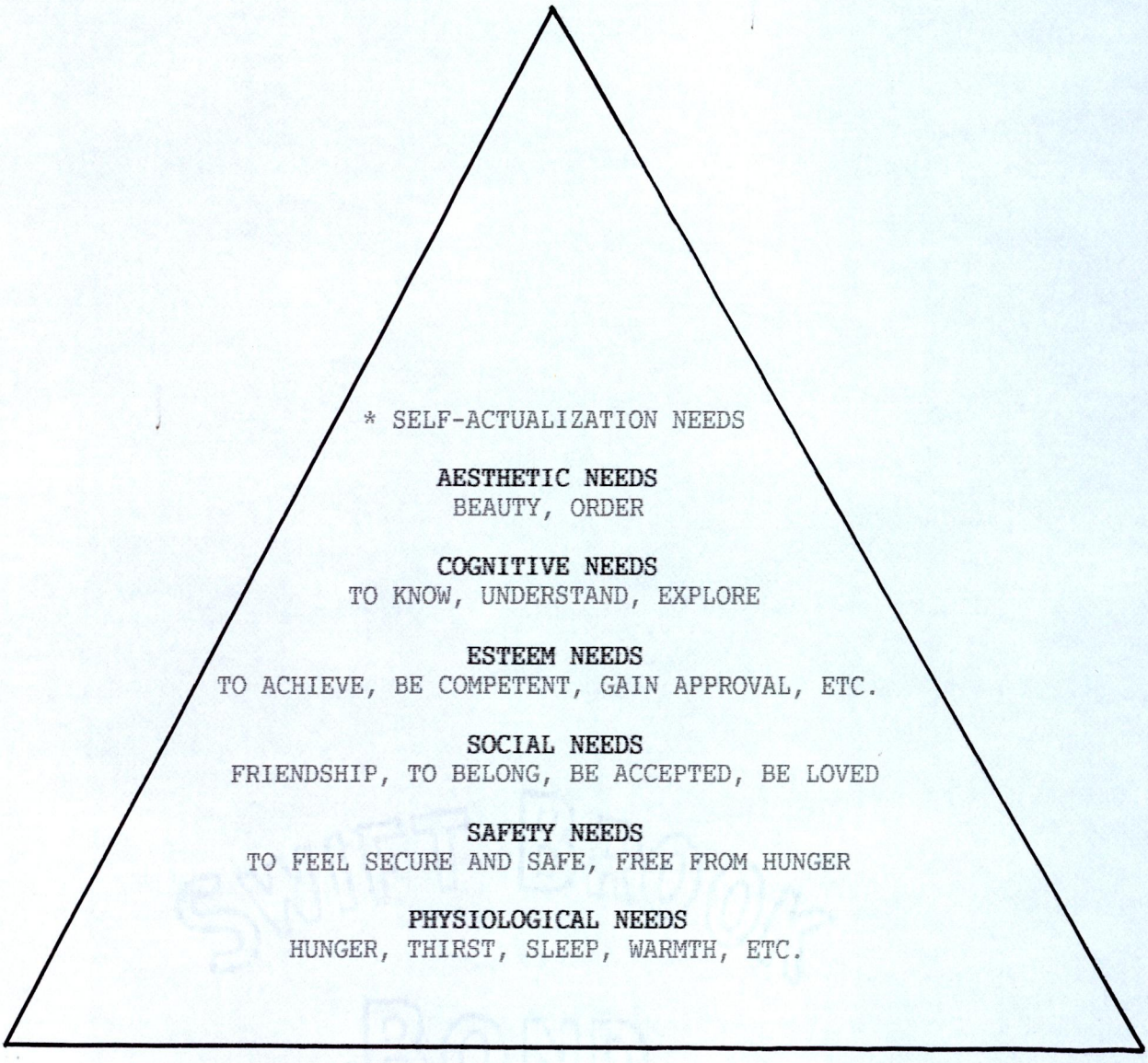
For art to make real sense it cannot be taught in isolation. Support sources should be available to provide important back-up. For example, contact with orignal source material and contemporary artists, should be an important function of the Centre's policy. John Berger in his book Ways of Seeing argues against the dangers of being exposed to reproduction.

> ... For the first time ever, images of art have become ephemeral, ubiquitous, insubstantial, available, valueless, free. (16).

He continues in his argument that

> A people or class which is cut off from its own past is far less free to choose and act as a people or class than one that has been able to situate itself in history. (17).

In short, access to original material should be an important part of a centre's work in a rural area.



* To find self-fulfilment, personal development, growth.

A Model of Human Motivation based on a Hierarchy of Human Needs
Abraham H. Maslow. (18)

Diagram 1

Sir Joshua Reynolds DCL, Self-Portrait, (Detail) 127 x 101.6 cm (on wood). 1773-1780. The Royal Academy of Arts.

The essence of true learning is 'creativity' according to Jim Wright in his article "The Artist, the Art Teacher and Misplaced Faith: Creativity and Art Education" (19). Not alone is it fundamental to making and viewing art, creativity can be applied also to the other processes in human activity such as those of the scientist, writer, musician or anyone involved in creating or inventing. Wright poses the question

> Creativity: What is it? Picasso, in outrage painted 'Guernica' in a burst of astonishing creativity and in a relatively short time. A scrap of paper blows across Mark Twain's feet and inspires him to write his best story. Flashes of inspiration ... serendipity ... biological gift ... the product of drugs or passion? (20)

However, the teaching of artistic skills and competencies are not the sole functions of art and art education. Floyd Martin examplifies this idea along with material from work by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his paper, "Sir Joshua Reynolds 'Invention': Intellectual Activity as a Foundation of Art",

> Too often the making of art is perceived in our society as a craft that uses mechanical skills, and not as an activity that demands the powers of the intellect. (21)

Sadly, this attitude and misconception, once the concern of Sir Joshua Reynolds in 18th century England, still prevails today. Artist and writer (1723-1792), Reynolds believed in the concept of invention as an intellectual activity, explaining that

> Invention, strictly speaking, is little more than a new combination of those images which have been previously gathered and deposited in the memory: nothing can come of nothing: he who has laid up no materials, can produce no combinations. (22)

In truth, nothing can come of nothing. To draw on experience or knowledge one has to have a wealth of source to investigate. Reynolds continues,

> The more extensive therefore your acquaintance is with the works of those who have excelled, the more extensive will be your powers of invention; and what may appear still more like a paradox, the more original will be your conceptions. (23).

In conclusion, original source material is fundamental to learning, to appreciating and understanding art, and placing it in its wider context of a cognitive rather a merely pychomotor process of human experience. We need to be informed on 'how' and 'what' it is that the artist actually does. The artist needs to be seen and understood as a knowledgeable person who works through related problems in a purposeful and sequential manner. For this information we look to our community and what it offers in the arts, not only as a support reference to reinforce learning taking place in the school room but also to give credence and purpose to art education. For example, in the manner envisaged in the general aims of the Junior Certificate course

> ... aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral ... for working life, for living in the community and for leisure. (24).

Art education can be viewed as a continuum integrated with the values and activities of the community.

FOOTNOTES

1] Elliot, W. Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, (New York: Collier MacMillian, 1972) p. 280.

2] Richmond, "Assumptions That Influence Art Education", 2.

3] Eisner, Educating Artistis Vision, p. 281.

4] Ibid., p. 11.

5] Augustine Hope and Margaret Walch, The Colour Compendium, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990), p. 166.

6] Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p. 9.

7] Ibid., p. 12.

8] Ernst Fischer, "The Origins of Art" in The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach, Translated by Anna Bostock, Handsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 46.

9] Ibid., p. 47.

10] Ibid., p. 37.

11] Ibid., p. 35.

12] Ibid., p. 36.

13] Jerome J. Hausman, "Quality in Art and Living: An Editorial", Journal of the National Art Education Association, 43 (1990, 6): 4.

14] David W. Baker, "Git Real: On Art Education and Community Needs", The Journal of the National Art Education Association, 43 (1990, 6): 47.

15] Ibid., p. 47.

16] John Berger, Ways of Seeing, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972) p. 32.

17] Ibid., p. 33.

18] Robert F. Biehler and Jack Snowman, Psychology Applied to Teaching. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986), p. 475.

19] Jim Wright, "The Artist, The Art Teacher and Misplaced Faith: Creativity and Art Education", Journal of The National Art Education Association, 43 (1990, 6): 52.

20] Ibid., p. 50.

21] Floyd W. Martin, "Sir Joshua Reynolds "Invention': Intellectual Activity as a Foundation of Art", Journal of the National Art Education Association, 40 (1987, 6): 6.

22] Ibid., p. 6.

23] Ibid., p. 15.

24] The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, and the Department of Education, The Junior Certificate Art, Craft, Design: Guidelines for Teachers. (Dublin: The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, NID).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A Rationale for an Arts Centre in a Rural Community

> A lanscape fossilised
> Its stone-wall patternings
> Repeated before our eyes
> In the stone walls of Mayo ... (1)

The above verse is from a poem about Belderg, a neolithic settlement in North Mayo, by the poet and writer Seamus Heaney who was shortlisted for the European Literary Prize last year. The motivating force behind a proposal for an Arts Centre comes from the realisation that along with the inspiring rural landscapes and rich cultural heritage of Mayo there is a wealth of creative talent that needs to be documented. As Richard Murphy in his introduction in the Mayo anthology suggests

> ... our strongest incentive apart from love, is to keep some portion of ourselves, our families and our friends alive. (2)

In an article entitled "Art Transplants", I would agree with Katie Donovan that a current trend seems to have come about at least in part through the present scheme of tax exemption for artists.

> ... not to mention an open invite from C.J., Ireland's finally gaining street cred within the European artistic community. Scores of painters and sculptors are foresaking their native soil and succumbing to the lures of the bog ... for good. (3)

Declan McGonagle, Director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art, has long campaigned against having art centralised in the cities, leaving "the rest of the country a wilderness." (4) In an interview with Erica Loane for her article "Neighbourhood" in In Dublin Culture, McGonagle discusses his hopes and objectives for

the recently opened IMMA. He considers that this museum will have an important role to play in bringing art to the provinces.

> The museum, he stresses, should be a much needed facility for provincial art galleries. He hopes that by forging links with international artists and institutions it will act as an inlet for the whole country, at the same time as an outlet for art iniatives coming from the provinces. (4)

James McGuire in his book, Steeple and People; The Story of Ballina and its Catherdral, believes that

> ... we are on the verge of a whole new appraisal of our cultural heritage in Mayo consequent upon the ceide field archaelogical finds and this history of Ballina is a good example of the wealth of material available to foster that new interest. (5)

What better time might there be then during this present interest in things cultural, to forward plans for the establishment of a permanent centre. Here drawings and paintings could be housed with written works, papers and other memorabilia.

However, aside from the importance of making original material available as back-up for educational purposes, and the rich resources yet to be exploited, there is another reason for making it necessary to establish an independent centre in Mayo. There is emerging evidence to show that Mayo has been sadly neglected when it comes to the recent funding schemes made available for various arts projects throughout the country. According to Fiona Barber, guest editor for Circa's September/October 1991 issue

> The whole question of access to the arts in Ireland is also one fuelled by the current controvery over the distribution of public funds within the jurisdiction of the Southern Arts Council. Larry McCluskey's remarks in July at the opening of an exhibition in Mullingar (reported in Circa notes), have drawn attention to a serious imbalance in The Arts Council's disbursement of funds, with roughly five times the amount of money per capita available in Dublin than in the regions. Once

> the afterglow of the Irish Museum of Modern Art's opening has subsided, some hard questions will need to be asked about the implications of **all** current funding policies for the exercise of cultural power within Ireland. (6)

There are two examples that would seem to indicate this point. The first is the Arts Council's committment to making its collection of work accessible to the public. Chris Bailey in a recent article in Circa provides more details about the first of these:

> In May 1986 an Chomhairle Ealaion commissioned twenty artists ... to produce work on the theme of 'school' under the title 'The School Show' and promoted by the Education Department of the Council, it toured schools throughout the Republic. Three similar exhibitions - Heroes, Heads and a Special Place - were subsequently commissioned and toured 1987, 1988 and 1989, accompanied by illustrated catalogues which also contained the artists' throughts on the theme in question. (7)

Yet according to all the information made available in an interview with the Arts Council, only one of the exhibitions was shown in one area of Mayo and then only for a period of one week.

The project called Art and the Ordinary: The Ace Report instigated in collaboration with the Gulbenkian Foundation to explore the arts in the community it seems has also failed to recognise the needs of such a rural area as Mayo. Its policy was

> ... namely the indentification of areas of potential and need in the arts; the formulation of polcies which would realise that potential and address that need ... and effective strategic action taken. (8)

The Arts Community Education (ACE) Committee received 104 applications from individuals and organisation, of this number six proposals were successful and brought to completion over a three year period. Of those six projects, four were based in Dublin, one in Cork and one in Galway. The funds allocated for each project were as follows.

TABLE 1

PROJECT	TITLE AND LOCATION	GRANT IR£
1	Art Education Workshop, Cork	51,500
2	Look at my Hands, Dublin	40,500
3	The Poetry Project, Dublin	8,000
4	The Big Game, Galway	40,000
5	Information Network Project, Dublin	70,000
6	Environmental Project, Dublin	18,000
		228,000

Note 1: Current figures taken from Ace Report. Forthcoming funds available for the continuation of the projects yet to be included.

Source: Data is taken from Art and the Ordinary: The Ace Report, (Dublin: The Arts Council, 1989), pp. 49, 59, 67, 81, 89 and 95.

From this table a total of IR£228,000 was provided for the projects from the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Arts Council. Of this total IR£136,500 or 60% was allocated to the Dublin region.

In conclusion, there seems to be very little concern for the focus of arts in the Mayo region. This may be due in part to a lack of initiative from the region itself, or it may be a discrepancy in the allocation of public funds, or a combination of both. But whatever the reason, and whoever's responsible, should not detract from the issue that Mayo is lacking in a good arts programme and that this problem should be addressed. John Pick in

his book The Arts in a State: A Study of Government Arts Policies from Ancient Greece to the Present, makes the point that

> In a developed country, if government money is drawn out of the arts ... 'the industry' (it) will continue to lose its audience, its meaning and its importance; it makes no sense at all to praise the high standards of artists who are simply shouting into a void. (9)

In short, to ensure the success of the arts industry, the Government must be committed to a reasonable arts funding policy for all of the regions.

A Model for an Arts Centre - Phase 1

As a starting point a project much like Burren 5 (10) could be instigated. The project involved people from a cross section of the arts, a poet, a weaver and two visual artists coming together to examine

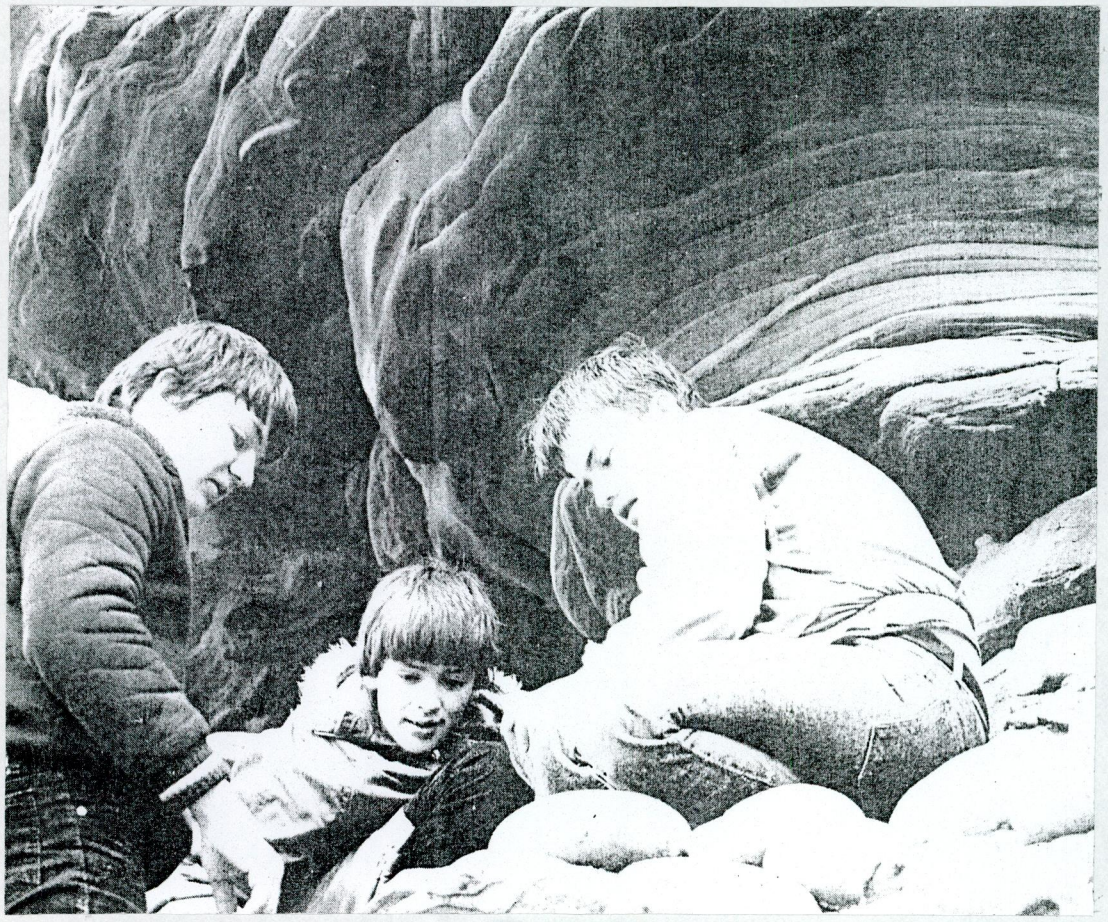
> ... their perceptions of their work in the disruption of isolated circumstances which were based upon the Burren... (10)

The emphasis of such a project in Mayo could be on exploring the particular qualities of the area. As Terry Kelly states in her introduction to Burren 5

> All of this discussion involved examing the Burren itself, as the location which was also the catalyst. That included not only the geography and history of an area, but also that area as a form of cultural and national statement and the ways in which an individual may feel compellled to express those aspects of it. (11)

The resulting exhibition of work would take place in Dublin and Ballina itself to coincide with the Ballina Annual Festival as a sort of launching pad to:

1. Publicise the committees intention to set up and run an arts centre with arts activities in the area.



Construction of pictures with sand and found objects, Lyth Arts Centre, Caithness.

2. Raise awareness of the creative potential in the area.
3. Raise awareness of the positive characteristics of developing the image of the area through the arts.
4. Highlight the benefits of having a permanent structure for the organisation and development of festival activities, etc. in Mayo.

Other programmes involving the local community could be developed like that of the arts project in Lyth Arts Centre, Caithness, where the emphasis was again on the environment. The project was a multidisciplinary project for secondary school children which was to use the coastal environment as a stimulus for arts activities. Two schools were to be involved, and local teachers and artists associated with Lyth would collaborate in setting up an exhibition of the work that resulted. (2)

A Model for an Arts Centre - Phase 2

A Profile.

Committee Members

Business, educational, religious, legal and youth representatives of the community.

Policy

I would envisage the centre as being a non-political organisation solely concerned with providing the Mayo locality access to the arts which are currently centred in Ireland's larger towns and cities. The enterprise could be commerically based, with an emphasis on the essentialists view or justification that the arts in themselves have very unique qualities to be explored as opposed to a contextualist (13)community based policy, where art is seen

as a means of social change. (14)

Aims and Objectives

1. To house objects and articles of local artistic, literary and historical merit. As a structure that documents local interests the centre would hopefully invite active involvement.

> ... in the arts because of its imaginative diversity of forms. There is something going on for everyone, and importantly those events are readily accessible. (David Rockefeller, Coming to Our Senses, p. 242). (15)

2. Initially the centre's emphasis would be on nurturing, encouraging and supporting local artists with a view to developing into a national and international forum for the visual arts through travelling exhibitions, etc.
3. To change the low status attached to artistic education and aesthetic values in the school, and the community in general by creating an environment that would accentuate the productive values of art in both its making and appreciation.

Location

Ballina - Commercial and Industrial

Ballina is an extremely busy and expanding community. According to Dr. Thomas A. Finnegan, Bishop of Killala

> It now serves almost a quarter of the population of the diocese and indications are that it will continue to grow. (16)

It is the largest town in Mayo and is the third largest in the province of Connaught after Galway and Sligo.

- The town is well serviced including an airport (Horan International Airport is nearby - 25 miles).
- It is the location of the government Department of the

Ballina Mills

Environment offices which were recently decentralised to the area.

- It has been designated an urban renewal area and generous government concessions on taxes are available for development projects. Extensive areas of the town are being redeveloped under this scheme.
- It has a well-established industrial base with Japanese, American and German as well as Irish based manufacturing and service industries.

Ballina - History

The town itself is of considerable interest and has a long and distinguished history. James McGuire provides us with an insight to this history in his recently launched work Steeple and People; The Story of Ballina and its Cathedral. (See footnote 18).

The Building or Venue - Ballina Mills

> If the views on entrance to Ballina were "uncommonly pleasing" in Young's day, they are so much more so in the present day, when the arts of man have come in to supplement bounteous nature so delightful and charming there. From Bunree Bridge which spans the Bunree river bounding with such sparkling life by lovely downhill and the great mills ... (17)

Some Reasons for Proposed Venue for Arts Centre

1. Location. Accessibility to town and surrounding region.
2. Size. Adequate room for gallery, café and workshops. Possible room for future expansion.
3. History. A building with an historical past where the original shafts and machinery still exist today. These could become special features of the building, allowing the centre to break away from the more traditional layout of the museum and to create its own unique character or atmosphere.

FOOTNOTES

1] Seamus Heaney, Richard Murphy Editor, "Belderg" in The Mayo Anthology, (Castlebar, Mayo County Council, 1990), p. 1.

2] Ibid., p. 10.

3] Katie Donovan, "Art Transplants" in Image Magazine, October 991, 0. 68.

4] Erica Loane, "Neighbourhood", In Dublin Culture, Summer 1991, p. 125.

5] James McGuire, Steeple and People: The Story of Ballina and its Cathedral, (Ballina Western People, 1991), p. 162.

6] Fiona Barber, in "Editorial" Circa Art Magazine, 59 (1991): 21.

7] Chris Bailey, in "Collections", Circa Art Magazine, 59 (1991): 40.

8] Ciaran Benson, "Foreword from the Gulbenkian Foundation", Art and the Ordinary: The Report of the Arts Community Education Committee, (Dublin, The Arts Council, 1989), p. 7.

9] John Pick, The Arts in a State: A Study of Government Arts Policies from Ancient Greece to the Present, (Bristol, Bristol Classical Press, 1988), p. 154.

10] "Each year, the Crafts Council of Ireland runs a week-long course in the Burren, in which practitioners from the 'Crafts', and in recent years the 'Visual Arts participates'. Terry Kelly in the introduction, Burren 5; The Crafts Council of Ireland, (Dublin, Crafts Council of Ireland, 1988), p. 3.

11] Kelly, Burren 5, p. 4.

12] Neumark, The Magic Exercise, p. 48.

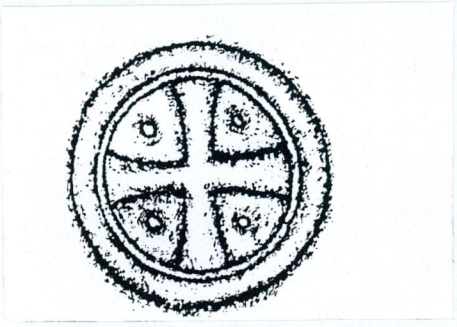
13] Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p. 2

14] "Cafe recognises the importance of collective creative action as a means of achieving social change". Jude Bowles, Arts Action, (Dublin: Cafe Ltd., 1991), p. 83.

15] Rockefeller, Coming to our Senses, p. 242.

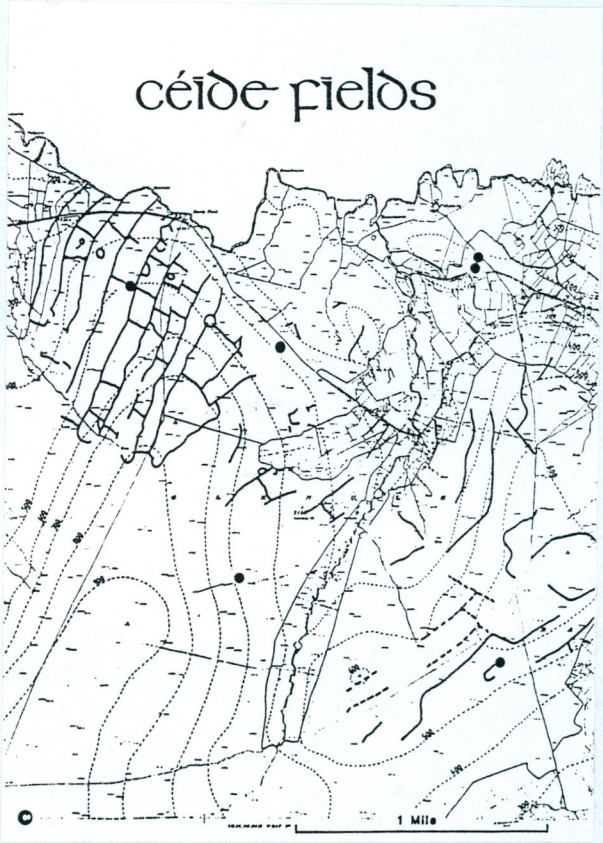
Dolmen of the Four Maols, Ballina

Ceide Fields, Ballycastle



St. Patrick's Cross, Leigue Cemetry.

Ceide Fields: a 5000 years old man-made landscape preserved beneath the bog. The darker lines show the known extent of the prehistoric field. Patterns, the black dots indicate location of stone age megalithic court tombs. (Dublin: National Heritage Council; Annual Report, 1989/90), p. 12.



16] Dr. Thomas A. Finnegan, Bishop of Killala, "The Next Phase", in Steeple and People; The Story of Ballina and Its Cathedral James McGuire (Ballina, Western People, 1991), p. 160.

17] Rev. James Greer, "The Windings of the Moy" in Steeple and People, Edited by James McGuire, p. 19.

18] In Steeple and People, James McGuire recounts the history of Ballina.

> The town gets its name from this (the) ancient ford (Beal Atha an Fheadha, translating as the mouth of the ford of the wood) and on the east bank Ardnaree takes its name from the ancient tale of a multiple execution on its heights of the Kings of Connaught (Ardnaree translates as the hill of the executions).
>
> Having been promised the territory of Tirawley if they removed the then Bishop of Killala Ceallach, as a contender for the throne of Connaught and leave the usurper, Guaire, safe in his claim, the four who had the same "maol" in their names and who were disciples of the reclusive bishop, killed him and claimed their reward. The crime was discovered by Muredach, the youngest brother of the murdered bishop and he only arrested the four maols and had them executed on the heights overlooking the Moy which was always a strategic position and eventually to have a castle to guard the approaches to the ford where the Augustinians founded they Abbey in 1427. Tradition has it that the four maols were buried under the huge cromlach at Primrose Hill located beside today's modern railway station. (p. 3). The growing national interest in North Mayo as a major archaeological centre with the emerging proof that stone age farmers tilled the soil there five thousand years before Christ at the ceide fields is now generating a new interest in the richness of another North Mayo heritage.
>
> Dr. Seamus Caulfied's revelations that we had an active agrarian civilisation in North Mayo that predated the building of the pyramids have laced new foundations under many of the legends and folklore of the region. We did have communities living as farmers, fishermen and hunters along the sea coast and exploring the interior in activities that reach as far back into the corridors of time as the imagination can stretch. (The Monastic Tradition, p. 148).
>
> He continues:
>
> What also merits attention as a religious parallel to the archaeological perspective is the unique and recorded association North Mayo has with St. Patrick and the claims in particular of the diocese of Killala as having a special place in his apostolate.
>
> The saint proceeded along the Moy and eventually arrived in the present day parish of Kilmoremoy because it was

there, on a hill that still exists, a unique physical momento of the arrival of St. Patrick.

The very cross inscribed by St. Patrick on a rock can still be seen to this day and the graveyard within which the rock stands also contains the ruins of an ancient church. The rock lies immediately on the hill to the south of the ruins is simply called Liag or Leigue, from which the graveyard takes its name.

The rock has a very large, flat surface having the beautiful cross inscribed on its south-western face. The figure of the cross is surrounded by two concentric circles with the exterior circle about sixteen inches in diameter. (pp. 148-149).

CONCLUSION

> Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak. (1)

Visual images are fundamental to our understanding of the world. It is seeing which establishes our place in the world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. (1) The visual arts allow us other visions, art can frame our view and capture the moment. (2)

Jane Remer has identified the following more specific ways in which the arts can be influential:

1. The arts provide a medium for personal expression ... communication through speaking and writing as well as through drawing or singing.

2. The arts focus attention and energy on personal observation and self-awareness.

3. The arts are a universal human phenonomenon and ... can promote a deeper understanding and acceptance of the similarities and differences among races, religions and cultural traditions.

4. The arts involve the elements of sound, movement, colour, mass, energy, space, line, shape and language.

5. The arts embody and chronicle the cultural, aesthetic and social development of the world's people. Through the arts children can become more aware of their own cultural heritage in a broad historical context. Arts institutions, cultural organisations, and artists have a vital role to play in the education of children, both in schools and in the community.

6. The arts are a tangible expression of human creativity ... children and adults can become more aware of their own creative and human potential.

7. The various fields of the arts offer a wide range of career choices to young people.

8. The arts can contribute substantially to special education ... learning disabilities such as the mentally retarded and physically handicapped.

9. The arts, as a means for personal and creative involvement by children and teachers ... can be very important in encouraging positive attitudes toward schooling.

10. The arts are useful tools for every day living. An understanding of the arts provides people with a broader range of choices about the environment in which they live, the life-style they develop and the way they spend their leisure time. (3)

The arts are a means for self-expression and interpreting human behaviour and experience. The main goal of an arts centre should be in fostering an arts programme that provides quality and opportunity for all.

In conclusion, when launching an arts enterprise of any sort it should be a priority to define clearly the overall objectives. This is to give the enterprise a sense of direction. These objectives should progress from the needs and resources of the immediate area. In a rural area with a small population the type and size of audience available for any variety of arts activities needs to be examined. In urban areas because of a larger population, a city can attract its own specialist audience. The task or objective should be to find things relevant to all the kinds of people who live in a rural community like Mayo. In doing this it is necessary to understand the rural nature of the area, for every aspect of the centre's work should be an exploration of the role of an arts centre in the country. In truth to reflect the real needs of the area, when formulated the arts policy of a centre should allow for free critical debate when establishing its boundaries. To be coherent the arts policy should be considered in the light of the following points made by John pick in his book, The Arts in a State.

> First, they must recognise and acknowledge the entirety of the traditions which give all the arts meaning. Second, they must then fully describe all the resources which exist in the creation, conveying, participation in and spectatorship in the arts. Third, they must analyse the distoritions which prevent a desirable creativity, prevent the arts being conveyed to those who want them, prevent people participating in arts activities and prevent people from being spectators at the arts. Fourthly, policies must propose the means of correcting that distortion. (4)

By placing art and art education on a parallel throughout this dissertation, it was my hope that by pushing forward an argument for art education, that the arts resources necessary to back up a good arts curriculum should naturally have to follow. Second, my hope to go some small way in highlighting the 'distoriton' that John Pick speaks of, and question a means for correcting it.

FOOTNOTES

1] Berger, Ways of Seeing, p. 7.

2] Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p. 12.

3] Jane Remer, Changing Schools through the Arts; The Power of an Idea, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1982), p. 50.

4] Pick, The Arts in a State, p. 151.

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Censuses of Population of Ireland 1980-1990.

INTERVIEWS

ARTS COUNCIL:

Cornelius McCarthy, Consultant, Exhibition - Visual Arts

Emer McNamara - Freelance Arts Administrator (previously Regional Arts Centres Officer).

FORAS AISEANNA SAOTHAIR:

Peter Finnegan, Programme Co-Ordinator for Programme Development.