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THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE VISUAL ARTS TO EDUCATION

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page No</u>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I - THE NATURE OF THE VISUAL ARTS	7
CHAPTER II - THE EFFECTS OF THE VISUAL ARTS ON THE INDIVIDUAL	13
CHAPTER III - THE VISUAL ARTS - A SYMBOL SYSTEM IN USE: A LOOK AT THE WORK OF POST-PRIMARY STUDENTS	22
CONCLUSION	57
APPENDICES	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY	59

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1	Bison, found in the cave of Ahamira	7
1A	Animals on the roof of the cave at Lascaux	7
2	The Pharaoh Tutankhamun and his wife	8
3	Jan van Eyck: The Betrothal of the Arnolfini	9
4	Hieronymus Bosch: The Garden of Earthly Delights	10
5	Karel Appel: The Cat	11
6	Adolphe Mouron: Railway Poster	12
7	Francisco Goya: 3rd May 1808	13
8/9	Observational studies of a still life grouping by First Year students	37
10	Pencil drawing by a First Year student	39
11	Collages by First Year students	40
12	Charcoal drawings by First Year students	41
13/14	Gouache studies by First Year students	42
15	Working drawings by First Year students	44
16	Design work by First Year students	45
17/ 18/ 19	Pen, wax and gouache studies by Second Year students	47
20	Mixed media work by Second Year students	50
21	One minute life drawing exercises by Second Year students	51
22/23	Pen, wax and gouache life drawings by Second Year students	52

INTRODUCTION

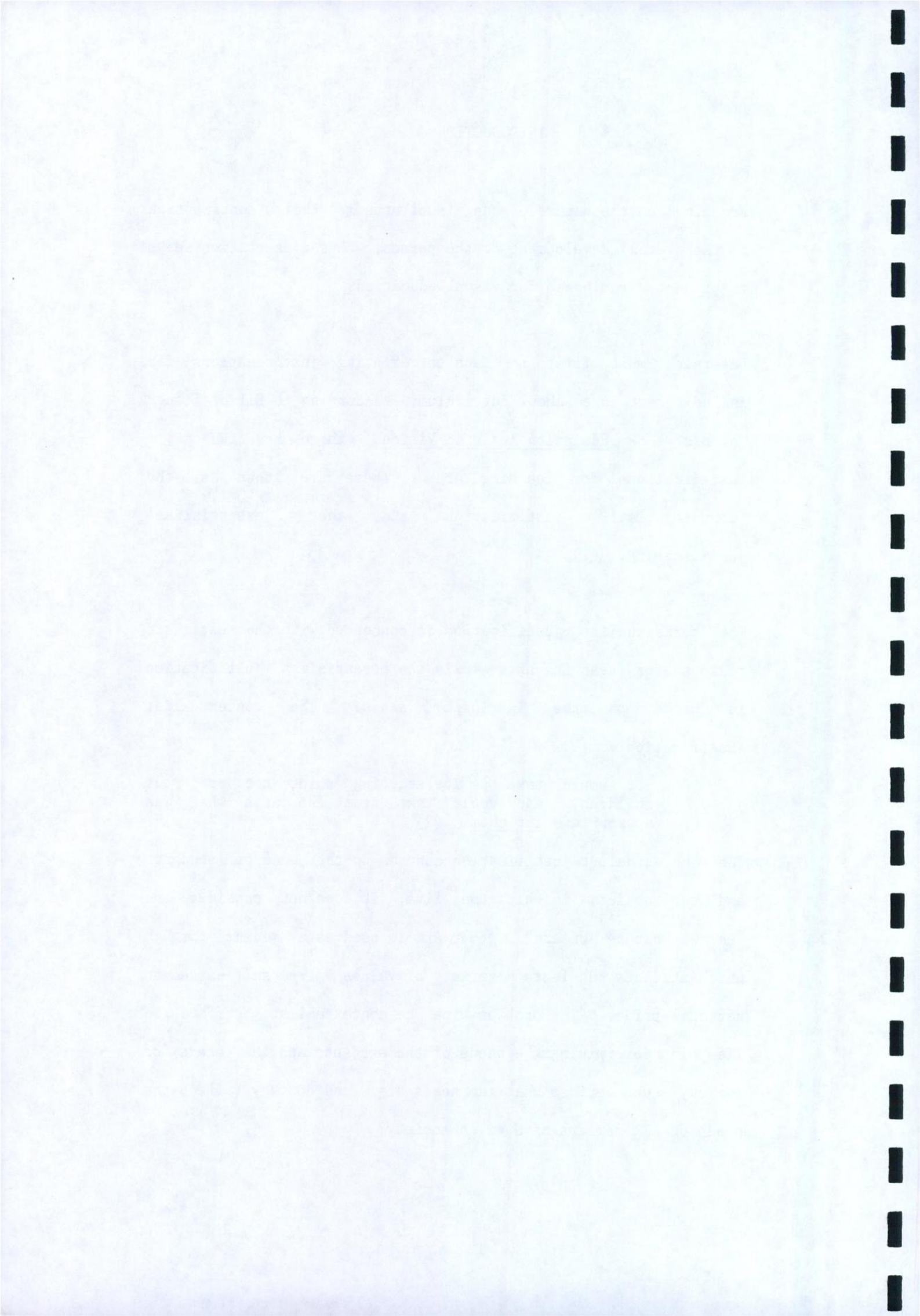
Focusing on the nature of the visual arts and their contribution to the overall development of the person, this dissertation seeks to present a rationale for visual education.

Reference must first be made to existing justifications for including art in a school curriculum. According to Elliot Eisner in his book Education Artistic Vision, there are two major justifications for teaching art. These are known as the 'contextualist' justification and the 'essentialist' justification. (1)

The contextualist justification is concerned with the extrinsic reasons for teaching art, while the essentialist justification is based on the intrinsic values. The contextualist justification:

... would take as its starting point not art, but children, and would take from the arts what was appropriate for them. (2)

The contextualist justification centres on the needs of students and the society in which they live, it does not consider the "unique nature of art". (3) Art is used as a medium through which students can learn a variety of values - from self-esteem to national pride. The problem with the contextualist justification lies in determining the needs of the students and the needs of society - who decides what the needs are, and do they reflect the needs of all members of a given society?



The second justification, the essentialist justification, argues that

Art is a unique aspect of human culture and experience and that the most valuable contribution that art can make to human experience is that which is directly related to its particular characteristics. What art has to contribute to the education of the human is precisely what other fields cannot contribute. (4)

Eisner argues that art is a "form of experience having special and valuable characteristics". (5)

If art has unique characteristics, it will have a special contribution to make to the field of education. Eisner says

In opposition to the contextualist, the essentialist holds that the most important contributions of art are those that only art can provide, and that any art education programme using art as an instrument to achieve other ends primarily in diluting the art experience, and in a sense, robbing the child of what art has to offer. (6)

What are the values and functions unique to art? What does art have to offer? The first chapter will be concerned with analysing the nature of the visual arts, the intrinsic characteristics of art. In Educating Artistic Vision, Eisner quotes Suzanne Langer who says that:

Art is a constructed symbol that presents to our perception an artist's knowledge of the forms of feeling. (7)

Langer examines the unique character of art, and it is to her we turn in the first chapter.

The contribution that art makes to education depends on the intrinsic characteristics of art, and the unique part it plays in human life. The second chapter will deal with how we understand

art, aesthetic and artistic awareness and appreciation.

It will also look at the nature of human ability and how the process of making and receiving art affects this.

The implementation of Art, Craft and Design in relation to the aims of the new Junior Certificate course can only be effected through the art teacher. The third chapter will look at the role of the teacher, focusing on the learning objectives which could be employed to obtain maximum benefit from the Art, Craft and Design syllabus. This will relate directly to my own teaching practice in Loreto College, Beaufort.

A conclusion will be drawn from the body of work obtained, and will summarise the reasons why Art, Craft and Design must be included on the school curriculum.

FOOTNOTES

- 1] Elliot W. Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 2.
- 2] Ibid.
- 3] Ibid., p. 3.
- 4] Ibid., p. 5.
- 5] Ibid.
- 6] Ibid., p. 7.
- 7] Suzanne Langer, Expressiveness: Problems of Art, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1957), p.p. 13-26, quoted in Elliot W. Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p. 6.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF THE VISUAL ARTS

The basis of the rationale presented here is the assumption that art and design are unique modes of communication and expression - knowledge of which would enhance the development of any student. To establish that this is indeed the case, it is necessary to analyse the nature of the visual arts. If the intrinsic properties of the visual arts are unique, then art will have an important contribution to make to the school curriculum.

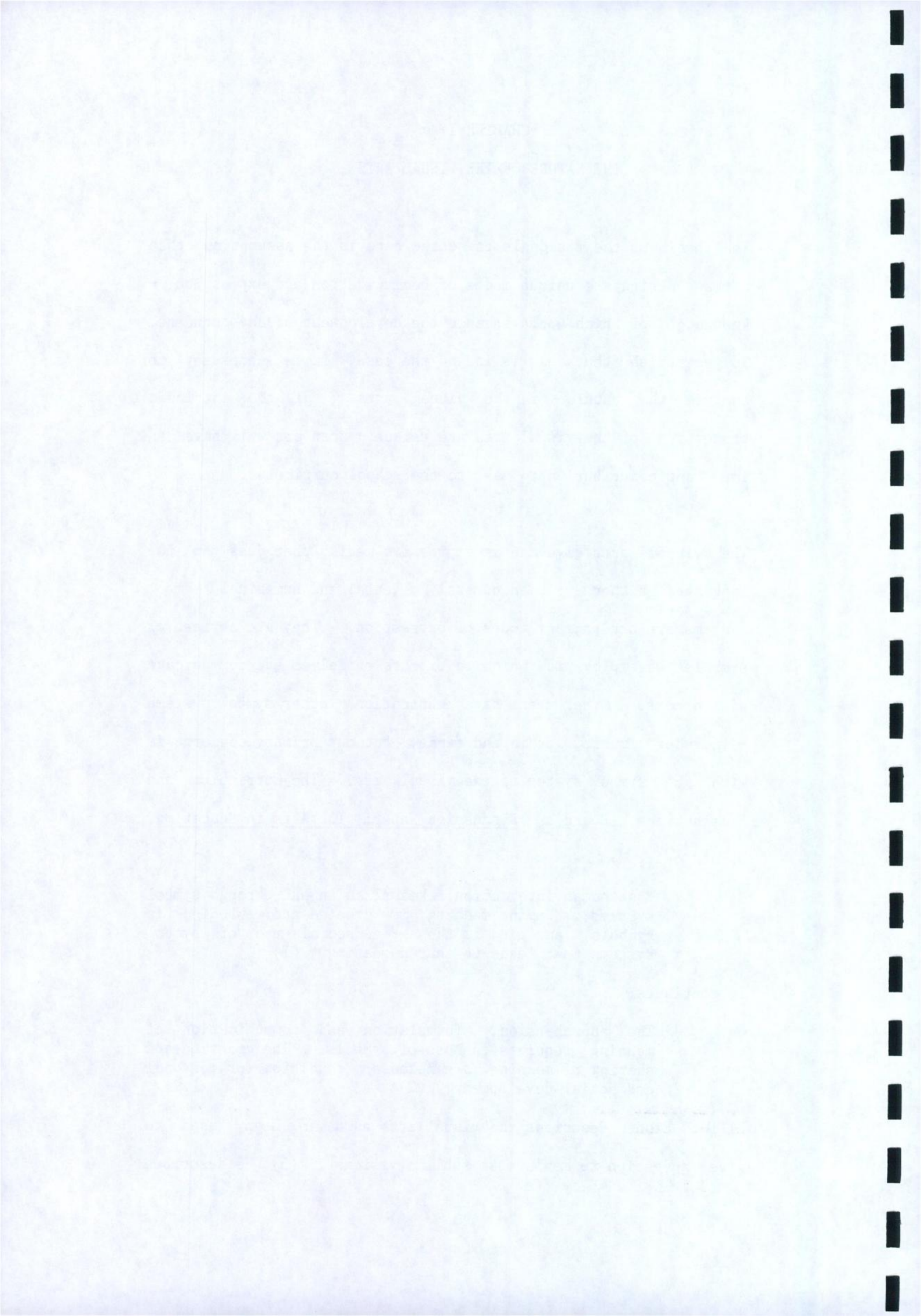
The visual arts give man an expressive medium that does not use language, either written or oral. Verbal and numerical symbol systems are our primary modes of expression. They are series of symbols we employ with which to express ourselves and communicate with others. Other means of communication - other symbol systems - include: music, drama and dance, but our primary concern is with the symbol system of the visual arts. The Curriculum and Examinations Board's Discussion Paper: The Arts in Education, points out:

Most human interaction takes place in and through symbol systems. Human meaning is created and embodied in symbols, and it is the agreed social use of symbol systems that leads to shared meaning. (1)

It continues:

The apprehension, formulation and communication of meaning requires the use of symbols. The creation and sharing of meaning is a necessary condition for personal and social development. (2)

Elliot Eisner describes the visual arts as having been "used to give expression to man's most sublime visions". (3) He describes



how art has been used through the centuries as a vehicle for man's spirituality - visual art was used for so long as a religious medium:

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 a culture can take on a corporate significance that they would not otherwise have. (4)

Figures 1 - 4 illustrate this point. In each case, the artist is trying to capture the spiritual values prevalent in his society.

It becomes clear that the visual arts can contribute to human life in a way that language cannot - in a way that is an alternative to language. Ideas that may sound trite if expressed in verbal form can seem fresh and exciting in visual form.

Figure 5 illustrates The Cat by Karel Appel. This painting captures the essence of a cat in a way that words could never manage.

Similarly, Adolphe Mouran's (Cassandre) 1930's railway poster (Figure 6) makes the prospect of a night-time train journey seem exciting and dramatic. The same message could never be conveyed using words alone.

The revulsion and horror felt by Francisco Goya is almost tangible in 3rd of May 1808 (Figure 7). This anti-war statement captures the brutality of the soldiers and the terror of their victims in a graphically nightmarish scene. Could words convey the same emotional message so succinctly?

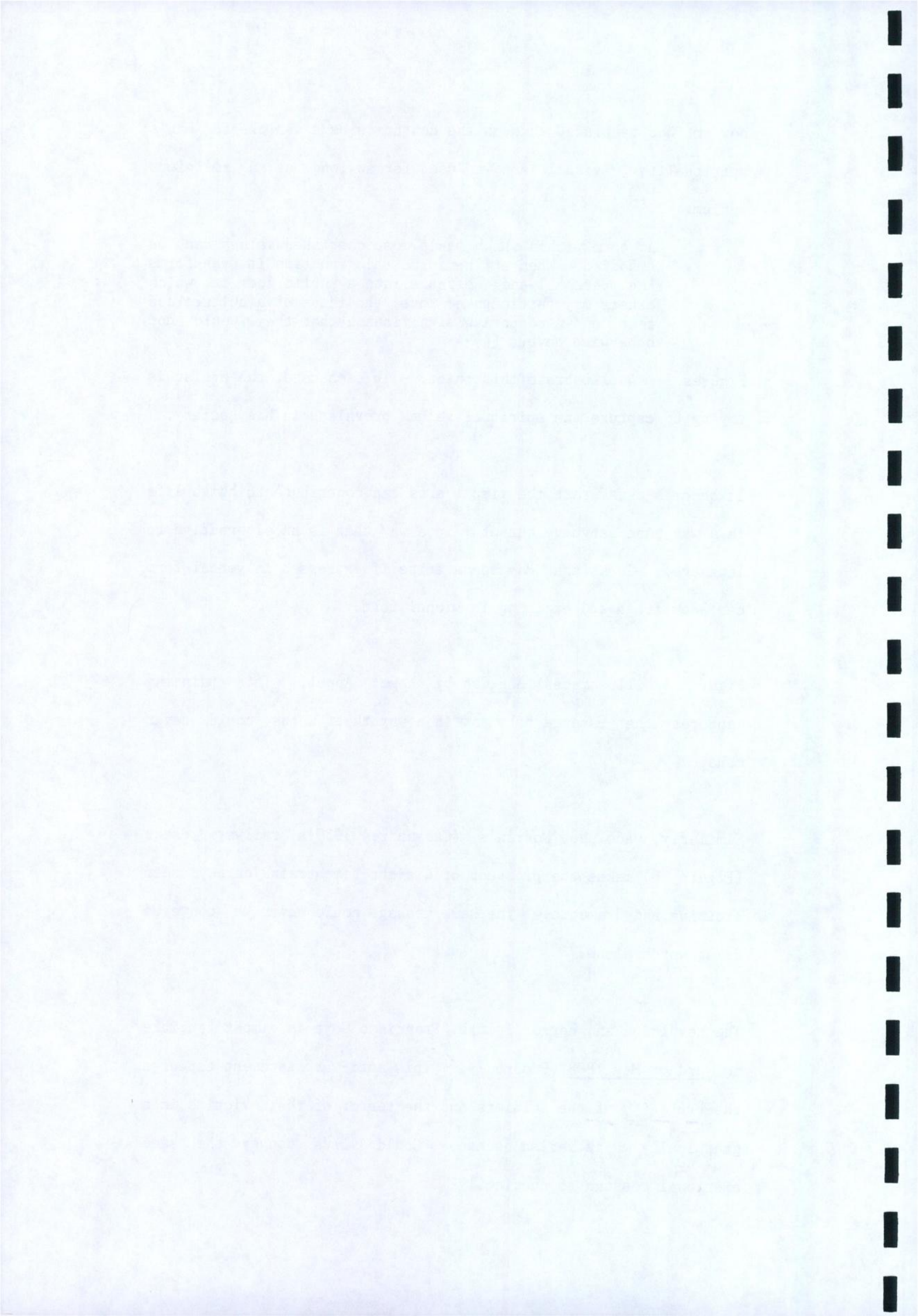


FIGURE 1

Bison, found in the cave of Altamura (Spain).

FIGURE 1A

Animals on the roof of the cave at Lascaux (France).



FIGURE 2

The Pharaoh Tutankhamun and his wife. Gilt and painted woodwork from the throne found in his tomb. Made about 1350 BC. Cairo, Museum.



FIGURE 3

Jan Van Eyck: The Betrothal of the Arnolfini, 1434. London, National Gallery.



FIGURE 5

Karel Appel: The Cat, 1955. London, The Tate Gallery.

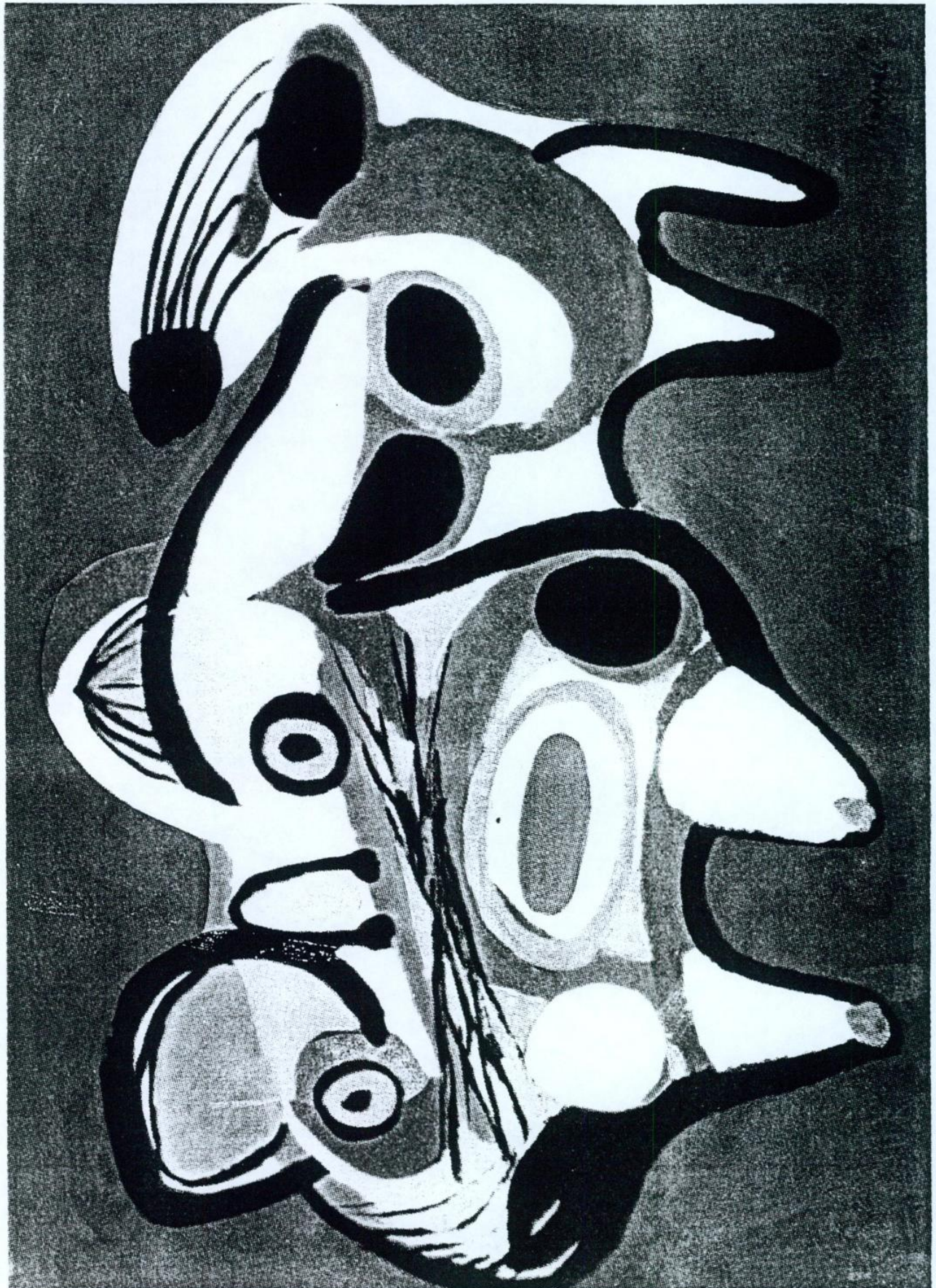


FIGURE 6

Adolphe Mouran (Cassandre): Railway Poster, 1930.

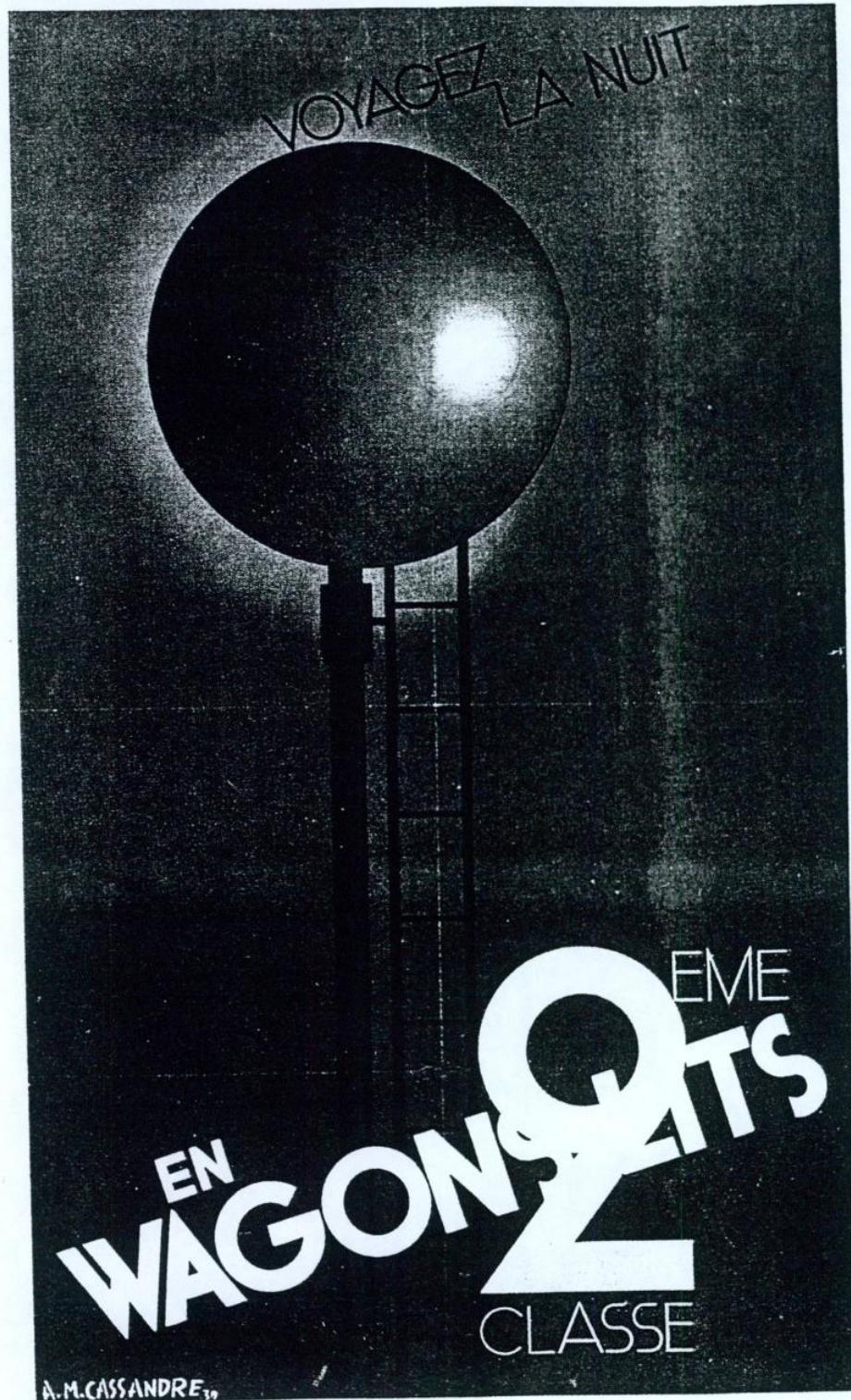
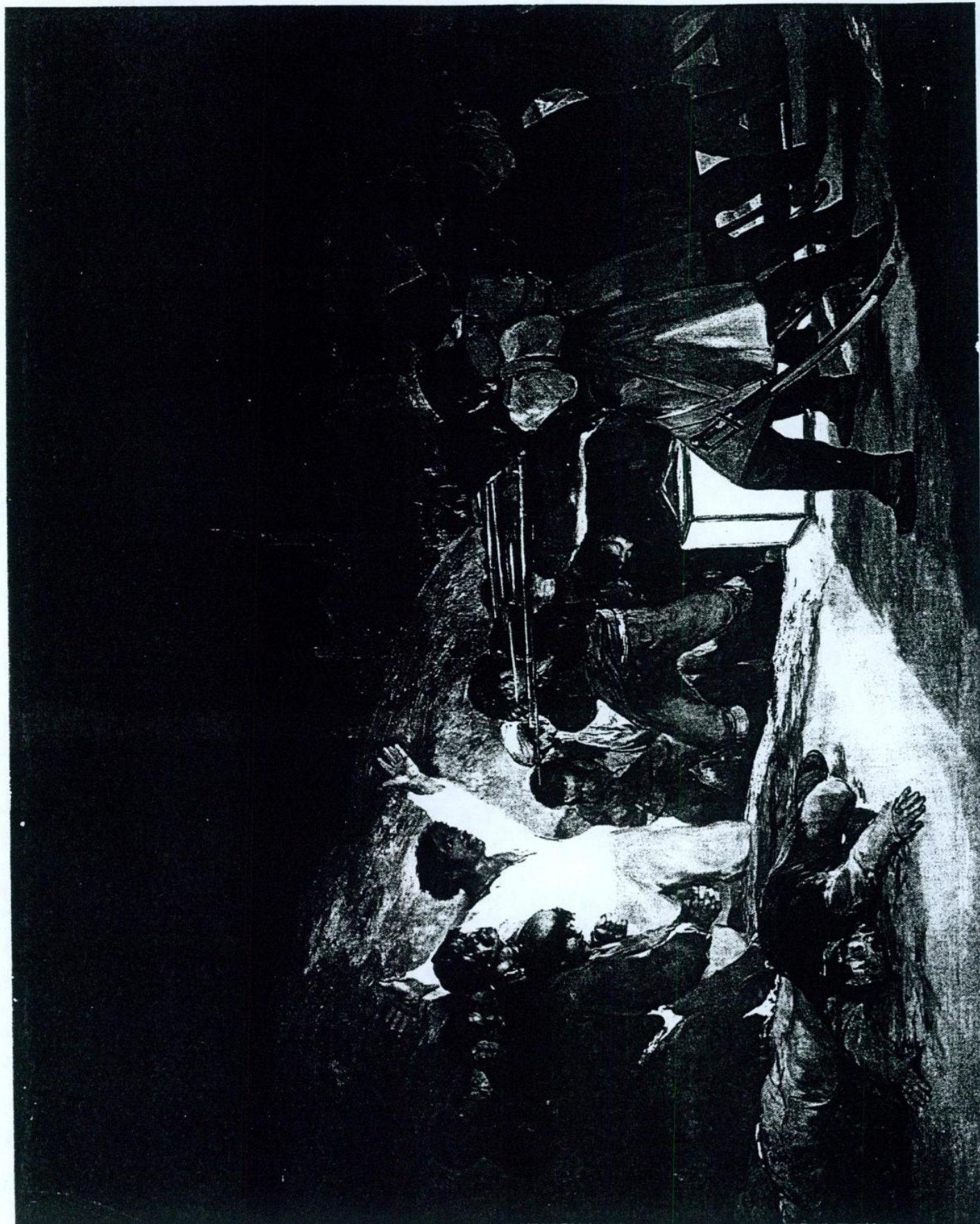


FIGURE 7

Francisco Goya: 3rd of May 1808. 1814. Madrid: Prado Museum.



The visual arts give man a means to express himself where words may be inadequate.

Art is not only a medium for spirituality, it also serves as a medium for self-expression: feelings and fears in relation to oneself, the environment and society. The visual arts can be used to portray a vast range of ideas and feelings which the artist does not wish to or cannot express verbally.

Art also functions as a means of focusing attention on some particular point - it brings our attention to whatever the artist was interested in. As Eisner says

The artist's ability to heighten our awareness of vistas that many of us may have encountered before, but have not seen. (5)

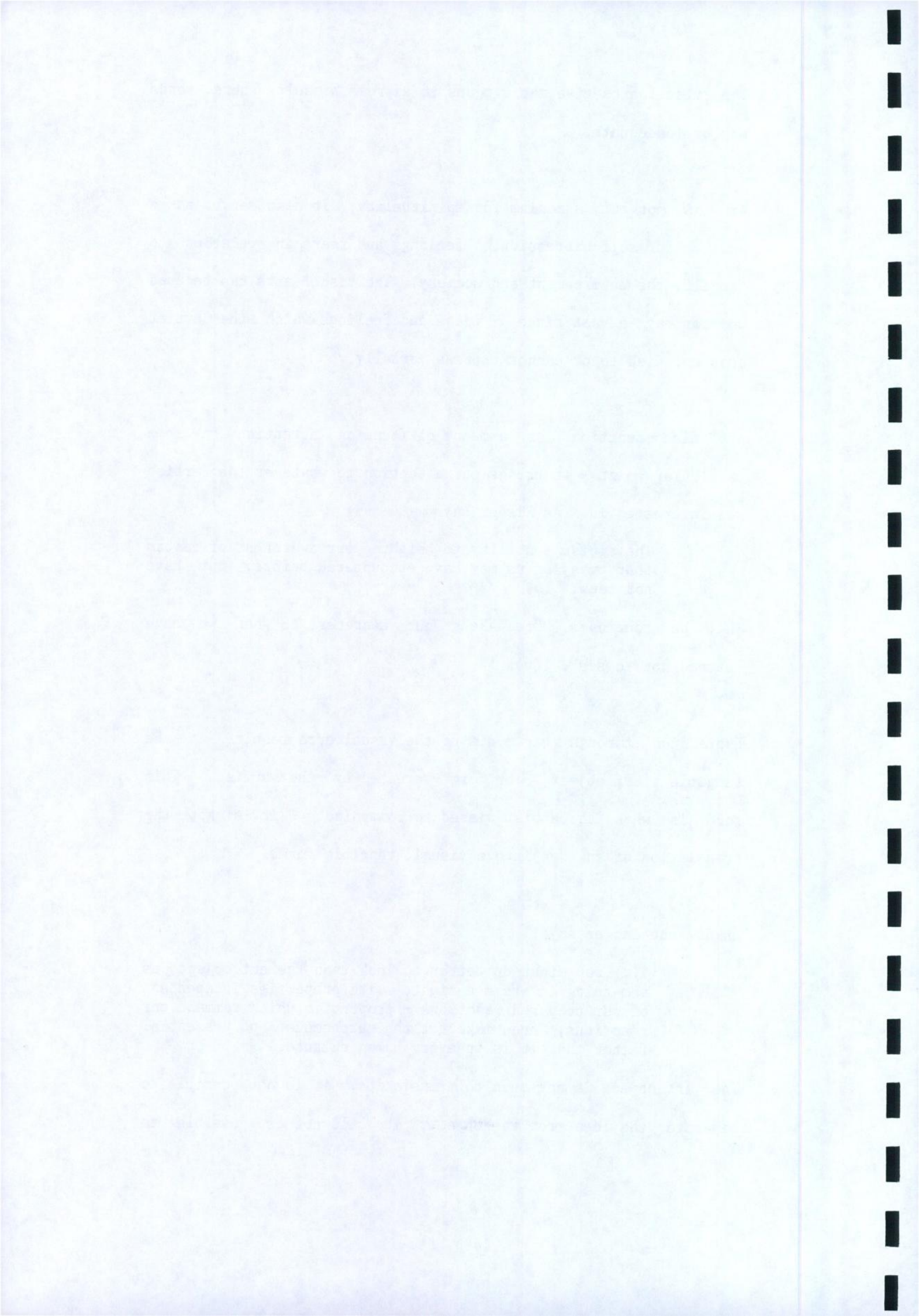
And, he continues, "reawakens our awareness to what we have learned not to see". (6)

Expression through the media of the visual arts results in the tangible 'art object' - or form - created by the artist. This form is what the artist wished to communicate - it is not the translation of an idea into a visual, tangible form.

As Suzanne Langer says:

... we might do better to look upon the art object as something in its own right, with properties independent of our prepared reactions - properties which command our reactions, and make art the autonomous and essential factor that it is in every human culture.

The art object is not open to translation, it is not possible to separate the idea from the object, it would not be possible to



express the same idea to its full extent through any other medium or symbol system. The Curriculum and Examinations Board's Discussion Paper outlines this point:

Every art form uses its own particular materials, from which emerges a distinctive realm of meaning. The ideas of painters are ideas in paint. A poet does not have an idea and then translate it into poetry. The idea is intrinsically poetic. The arts are not just ways of expressing ideas or of self-expression. They are ways of having and making ideas, and of making the self. (8)

Point 2.3.6 explains further:

A good work of art cannot be paraphrased. It means what it is rather than what it refers to. (9)

Suzanne Langer also holds this view:

A work of art is a single, indivisible symbol, although a highly articulated one; it is not, like a discourse (which may also be regarded as a single symbolic form), composite, analysable into more elementary symbols - sentences, clauses, phrases, words and even separately meaningful parts of words: roots, prefixes, suffixes, etc. (10)

Langer argues that the visual art object is itself a "prime symbol", not a series of symbols - it is a complete statement in itself. It is an idea which has been abstracted, and produces a new form of which the original concept is an intrinsic part. The intrinsic expression creates a new abstract form. Langer says:

In art, forms are abstracted only to be made clearly apparent and are freed from their common uses only to be put to new uses: to act as symbols, to become expressive of human feeling. (11)

The art object itself, therefore, is not just a physical object and should not be taken at face value. It is a tangible expression of human feeling - the art object is on a different level to the ordinary, mundane objects of our everyday life.

Langer says that:

Forms are either empty abstractions, or they do have a content; and artistic forms have a very special one,

- namely their import. They are logically expressive, or significant forms. They are symbols for the articulation of feeling, and convey the elusive and yet familiar pattern of sentience. And as essentially symbolic forms they lie in a different dimension from physical objects as such. They belong to the same category as language, though their logical form is a different one. (12)

This is an intrinsic characteristic of art - that the art object is the physical embodiment of the artist's concept, it is a symbol of the artist's feelings - a physical manifestation of his intent - yet it has presence in its own right. As Langer says:

... herein lies the 'strangeness' or 'otherness' that characterises an artistic object. The form is immediately given to perception and yet it reaches beyond itself; it is semblance, but seems to be charged with reality. (13)

When the art object works well as a symbol it is successful as an art object.

So far, we have seen that art has intrinsic characteristics which do not occur in any other facet of human experience. Art is a unique means of expression and communication, and for these reasons it is important that all students should have the opportunity to explore it.

FOOTNOTES

- 1] Curriculum and Examinations Board, Discussion Paper, the Arts in Education, (Dublin: Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1985), p. 6., 2.2.2.
- 2] Ibid.
- 3] Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p. 9.
- 4] Ibid.
- 5] Ibid. p. 12.
- 6] Ibid., p. 16.
- 7] Suzanne Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953, p. 39.
- 8] Curriculum and Examinations Board, Arts in Education, p. 6, 2.3.1.
- 9] Ibid., p. 7.
- 10] Suzanne Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 368.
- 11] Ibid., p. 51.
- 12] Ibid., p. 52.
- 13] Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE EFFECTS OF THE VISUAL ARTS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

The intrinsic properties of Art, Craft and Design have been discussed in the previous chapter. Now it is necessary to see how art and design can affect the developing student. To do this, Chapter II will look at the nature of human ability or intelligence and how the processes of making and receiving art affect this.

Although there is no absolute definition of intelligence or ability, certain characteristics have been attributed to 'intelligent' people. In his book, Developmental Psychology: Theory, Research and Applications, David R. Shaffer refers to the work of Cornell University undergraduates:

Recently a group of Cornell undergraduates were asked to list the characteristics of "intelligent people". They attributed a wide range of qualities to the intellectually exceptional person, including a broad general knowledge, an ability to think logically, common sense, wit, creativity, openness to new experience, and a sensitivity to one's own limitations. (Neisser, 1980). (1)

The easiest way to understand intelligence is to look at the way it manifests itself in terms of behaviour. The intelligent person should have:

- 1] The ability to carry on abstract thinking (Terman).
- 2] The capacity to act purposefully and think rationally and to deal effectively with the environment (Wechsler).
- 3] Adaptive thinking or action (Piaget).
- 4] Ability to grasp the essentials in a situation and respond appropriately (Heim).

In addition, innate general cognitive ability is also a contributing factor.

These are but some definitions of ability that range from 1920 - 1960, and collectively they provide some notion of what intelligence might be.

Howard Gardner, in his book Frames of Mind, puts forward his theory of multiple intelligences. Six different kinds of intelligence are identified:

- 1] Linguistic intelligence.
- 2] Musical intelligence.
- 3] Logical - mathematical intelligence.
- 4] Spatial intelligence.
- 5] Bodily - kinesthetic intelligence.
- 6] The personal intelligences.

Although these have been identified by Gardner, he himself says "there will never be a master list of three, seven, or three hundred intelligences". (2)

According to Gardner, the prerequisites of intelligence in a human intellect must entail a set of skills in problem solving:

- 1] Enabling the individual to resolve genuine problems or difficulties that he or she encounters.
- 2] And must entail the potential for finding or creating problems. (3)

In 1938, Thurstone divided intelligence into a number of primary

abilities, i.e. verbal comprehension, word fluency, number, space, memory, perceptual speed and reasoning.

The skills needed to create and appreciate art relate to the criteria which defines ability or intelligence. A good education in Art, Craft and Design will stimulate and develop these skills in the student. The art teacher can promote development in the student by formulating learning objectives which expand the student's ability.

Educational objectives have been classified into three categories:

- 1] Cognitive domain (Benjamin Bloom).
- 2] Affective domain (Kratwohl et al).
- 3] Psycho-motor domain (Simpson).

These classifications correspond to the three modes of human function. The cognitive refers to the thinking or reasoning function, the psychomotor refers to manual dexterity and the affective to feeling and emotion. Elliot Eisner extends these educational objectives to include:

- 1] Behavioural objective leading to behavioural activity.
- 2] Problem-solving objectives leading to problem-solving activity.
- 3] Expressive activity leading to expressive outcome.

How can the study of Art, Craft and Design contribute to the development of the student? The C.E.B. Discussion Paper points out that:

... the making and receiving of Art in an educational context calls for human processes which, of their nature, are not required in other curricular areas such

as the sciences, languages or business studies. (4)

It also points out that an education in Art, Craft and Design requires the student to develop certain skills.

Through the process of solving problems in art and design, the three modes of human function, or domains, are stimulated. In response to any problem, there must first be research - into past and present alternatives - then synthesis which leads to the student's own intellectual and creative (which embodies spiritual) response and then to the physical creation of the solution. At each stage, there is evaluation which combines both cognitive and affective modes.

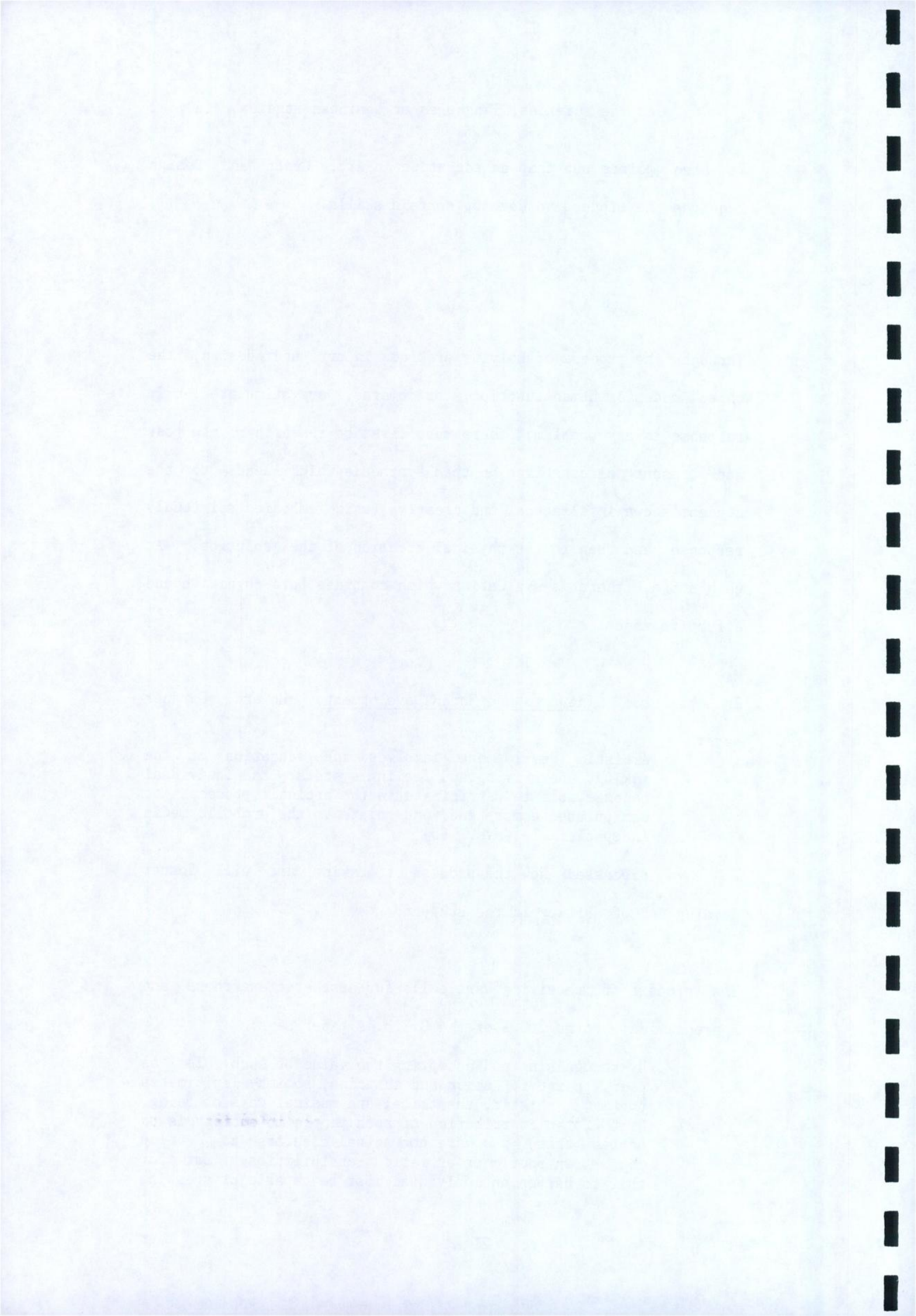
In his book The Arts and Human Development, Howard Gardner says:

Artistic development involves the education of the making, perceiving and feeling systems; the individual becomes able to participate in the artistic process, to manipulate, comprehend, and relate to the symbolic media in specifiable ways. (5)

We have discussed how the process of 'making' art will foster development of ability in the student.

The process of 'receiving' art calls for aesthetic awareness and appreciation. Point 2.3.2 of the C.E.B.'s paper says:

By recognising and accepting the value of such roles as poet, painter, actor and musician, society legitimates poetic, artistic, theatrical and musical ways of being. Part of the contribution of such people to society is to enable those who are not actual creators to develop their own poetic or artistic sensibilities. But for this to happen an individual must be capable of grasping



a poem as a poem or of seeing a painting as a painting. This requires that the person actively explores this poem or this painting before rushing to compare it conceptually with what he or she already knows. (6)

We have discussed the nature of art and found it to be a unique means of expression used by man. The 'message' conveyed by an art form is not open to translation, no other symbol system can convey the same message in the same way. Therefore, one needs to have an understanding and awareness of art in order to 'read' art forms. One can acquire this understanding through an education in Art, Craft and Design in school. Perceptual skills need to be developed in order to 'see' beyond the obvious. As the C.E.B. paper points out:

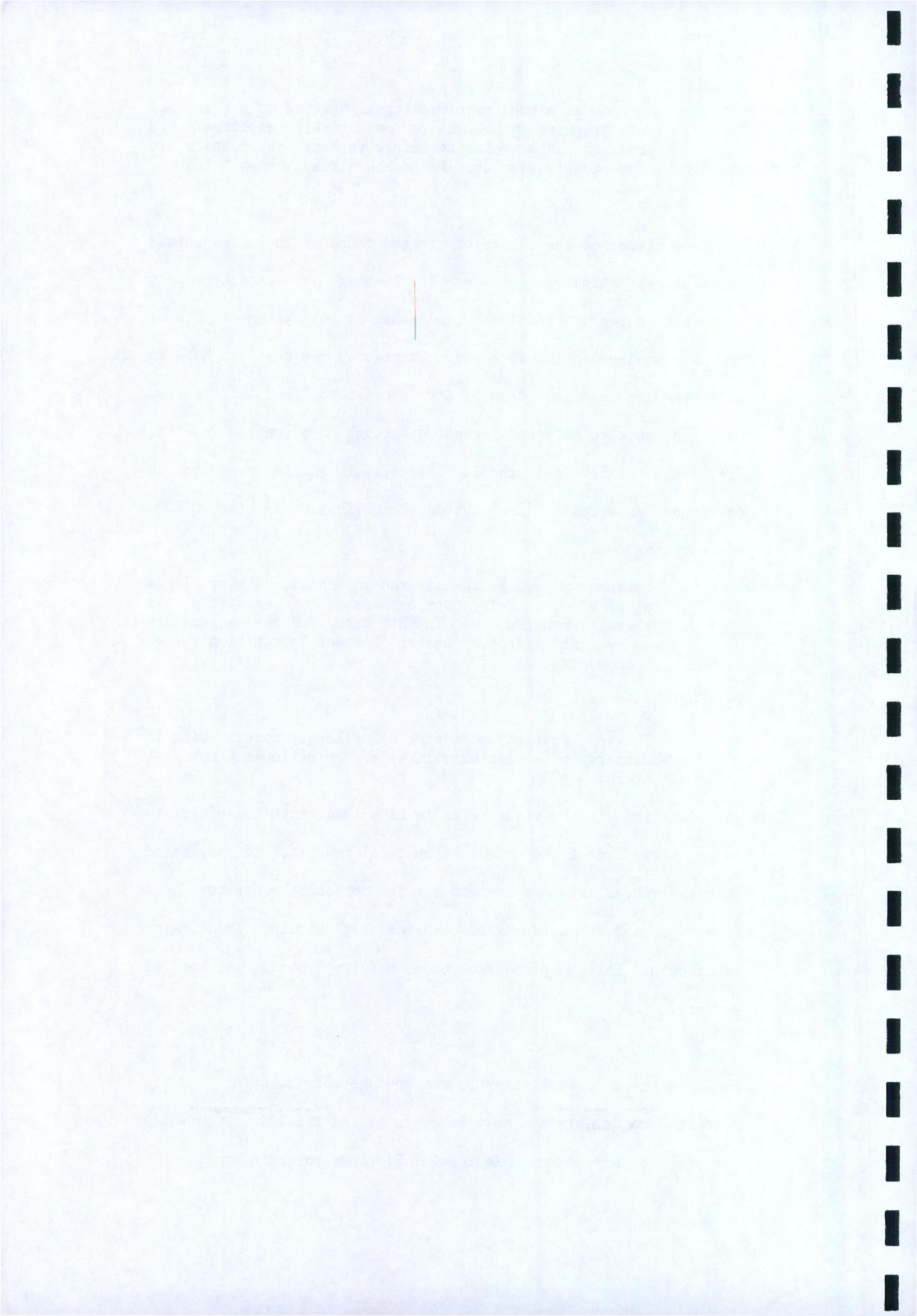
Because we see so readily and so easily, a very large part of our being, or our sense of existence, is visually constructed. In this ease lies the danger that as we get older our 'seeing' becomes recognition rather than perception. (7)

It continues:

The very facility of seeing effortlessly carries with it dangers of seeing uncritically, or of looking but not seeing. (8)

An education in the visual arts is also important in order to learn the value of the arts in a cultural context, to understand that the visual arts are in fact a major component of culture. A knowledge and an awareness of one's cultural heritage is a major requirement for a person to become a fully rounded member of society.

To understand a work of art, one must be able to place it in context - to do this one must be aware of the tradition from which the piece of work comes. As the C.E.B. paper points out:



It is of crucial importance that a student of the arts be acquainted with tradition from an historical and critical perspective. (9)

It continues:

Arts education must take full account of the contemporary cultural world in which the art object exists and in which the young person and teacher live. (10)

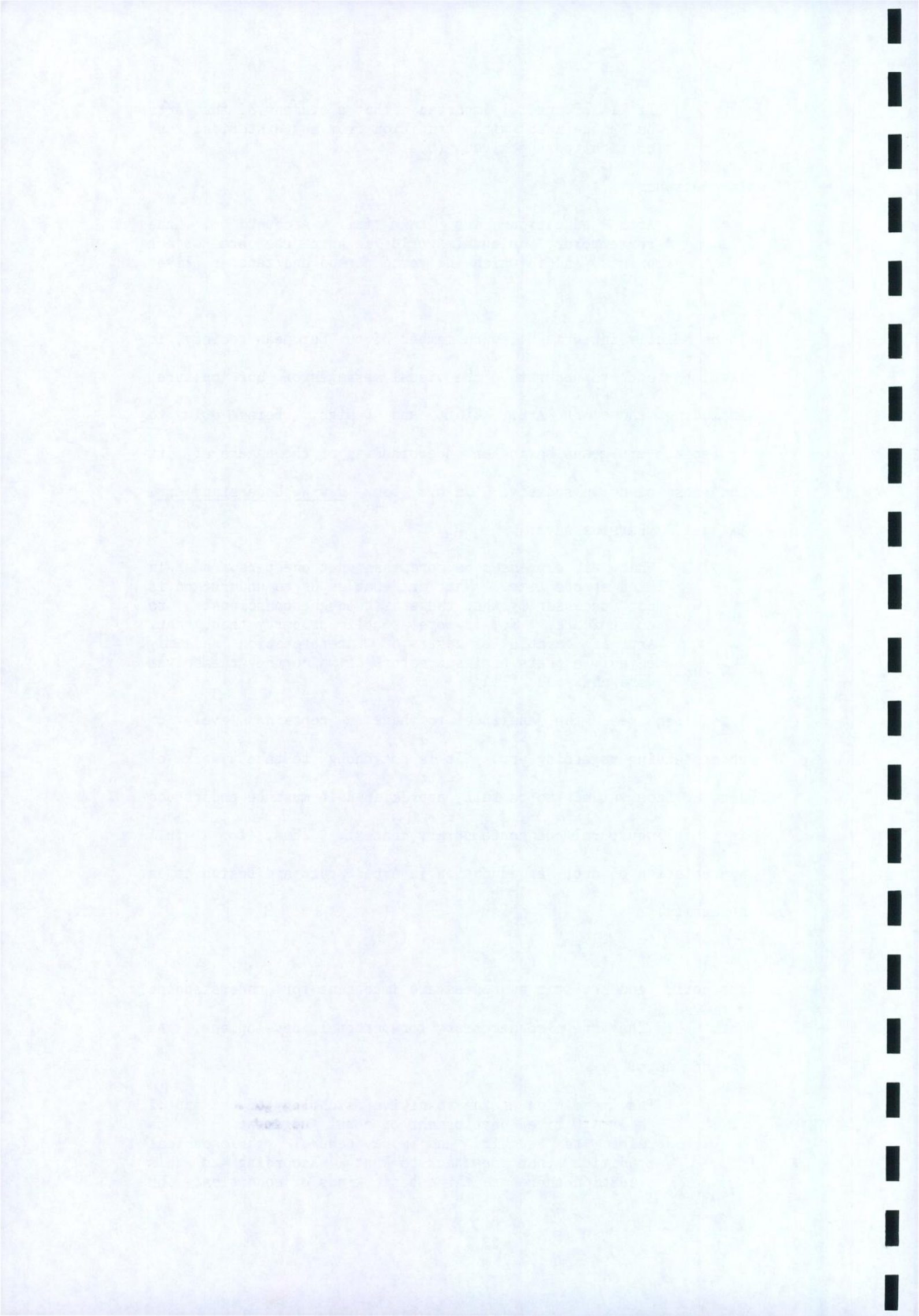
To be a fully integrated, aware member of our European society, it is important to understand the visual messages of our culture, including those of Art, Craft and Design. Being able to appreciate art means having an understanding of the nature of art and its place in society. In his book How We Understand Art, Michael J. Parsons says:

What art expresses is more than what one person has in mind at one time. What art enables us to understand is not necessarily what the artist sought consciously to communicate. It is more a public property than that. Art is capable of layers of interpretation and may reveal aspects of its creators of which they themselves were unaware. (11)

This requires the audience to have a certain level of understanding regarding art. It is not enough to take a work of art at face value - to be fully appreciated it must be understood in a full cultural and contemporary context. Thus, for a full appreciation of art, an education in Art, Craft and Design is a necessity.

Aesthetic and artistic awareness are important for understanding art, but they are also necessary for personal development. As Parsons says:

The tradition of the cognitive psychology of art and of the cognitive development of moral judgement - is to refer to a third and more general philosophical tradition that goes back to Kant. According to this tradition there are three basic kinds of cognition: The



empirical, the moral and the aesthetic. (12).

He continues:

In general, there is much less conversation in our society about aesthetic matters than about moral or scientific things. Of course this situation is reflected in our education system, where the arts have a notoriously marginal place in the curriculum. (13)

Thus, we can see that aesthetic cognition is an important aspect of man - one that is often disregarded. This neglect of aesthetic cognition is something that can be remedied by the inclusion of Art, Craft and Design in the curriculum.

On cognitive developmental theory, Parsons says:

The most basic notion is that we reach the complex understandings of our maturity by a series of steps. An adult understanding of science, morality or the arts requires some sophisticated abilities. We must, for example, consider the point of view of other people, and sort out subjective from objective influences on our experience. (14)

The series of steps described by Parsons correspond to the stages people pass through in reaching aesthetic awareness - from childhood to adulthood. Without a sound education in the visual arts, many people remain at a very basic stage of aesthetic and artistic awareness. As Viktor Lowenfeld and Lambert Brittain point out in Creative and Mental Growth with reference to that they identify as the pseudo-naturalistic stage - 11/12 years:

For some, this stage marks the end of their artistic development and we often find that adults, when asked to draw something, will make a drawing that is very typical of the twelve year old. (15)

Elsewhere they say:

Art is a reflection of today's world that can provide a direction for the future, students need to be able to evaluate change and be curious about the new. (16)

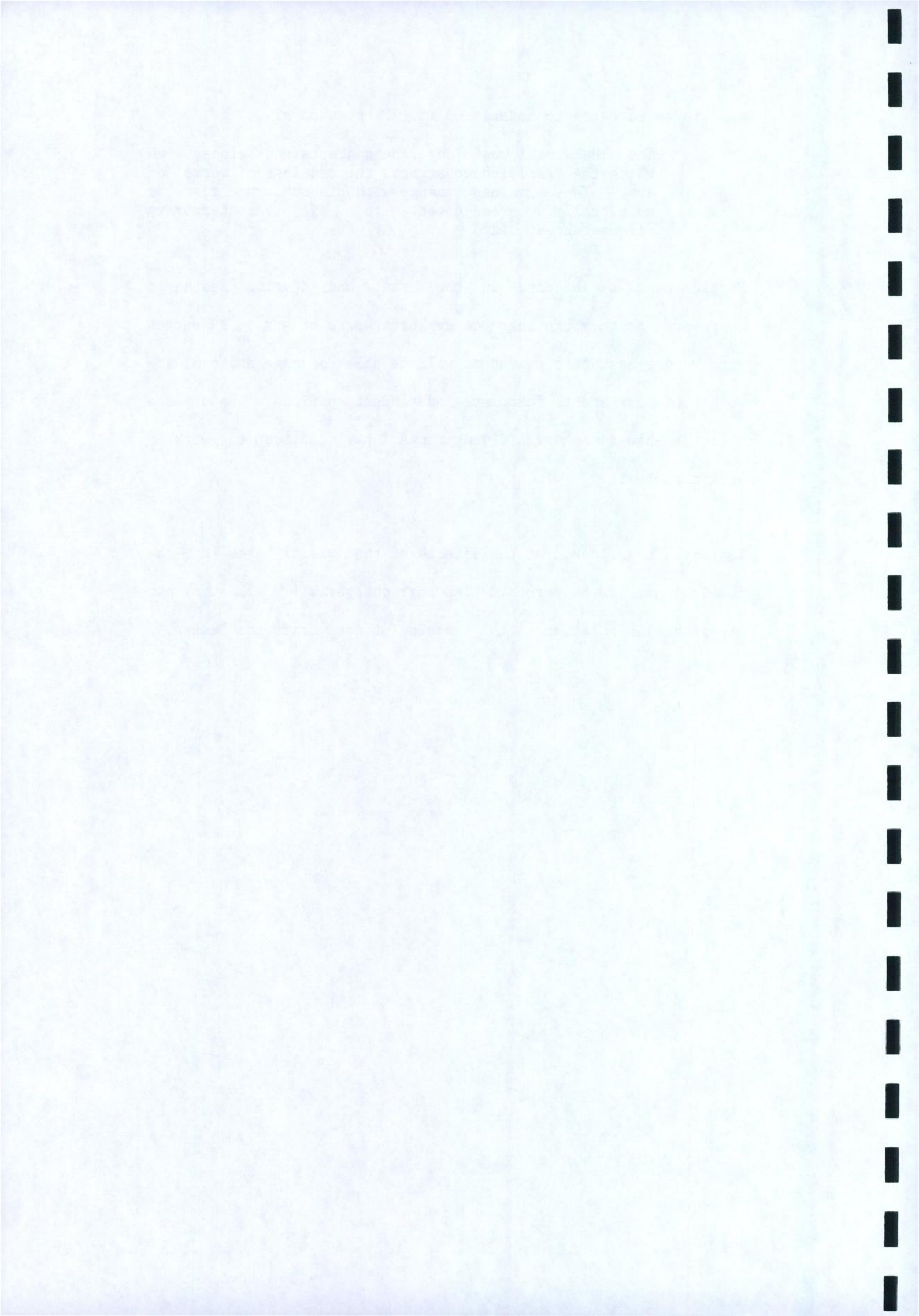
To fully appreciate the significance of art in our society, people

need to be educated to understand it. Parsons says:

The individual must judge the concepts and values with which the tradition constructs the meanings of works of art. These values change with history, and must be continually readjusted to fit contemporary circumstances. (17)

People must be educated in the arts, and develop aesthetic awareness so they can learn to evaluate works of art. A person with mature aesthetic awareness will be able to judge and evaluate works of art and to formulate independent opinions. He or she will be able to make valid judgements, having placed the work of art in context.

We have now looked at the effects of the visual arts on the development of the person. The next chapter will look at my own experience in relation to the teaching of Art, Craft and Design.



FOOTNOTES

- 1] Neisser, (1980). 'The Concept of Intelligence'. In R. J. Sternberg and D. K. Detterman (Eds.), Human Intelligence: Perspectives on its theory and measurement. Narwood, N. J: Ablex. Quoted in David R. Shaffer, Developmental Psychology, Theory, Research and Applications, (California: Brooks/Cole 1985), p. 381.
- 2] Howard Gardner, Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, (London: Paladin Books, 1985), p. 59.
- 3] Ibid., p. 64.
- 4] Curriculum and Examinations Board, The Arts in Education, p. 7, 2.3.6.
- 5] Howard Gardner, The Arts and Human Development: a Psychological Study of the Artistic Process, (John Wiley 1973), p. 283.
- 6] Curriculum and Examinations Board, The Arts in Education, p. 6.
- 7] Ibid., p. 7, 2.3.3.
- 8] Ibid.
- 9] Ibid., p. 8, 2.4.4.
- 10] Ibid.
- 11] Michael J. Parsons, How We Understand Art: a Cognitive Developmental Account of Aesthetic Experience, (Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 13.
- 12] Ibid., Preface, xiii.
- 13] Ibid.
- 14] Ibid., p. 10.
- 15] Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 39.
- 16] Ibid., p. 337.
- 17] Parsons, How We Understand Art, p. 25.

CHAPTER III

THE VISUAL ARTS - A SYMBOL SYSTEM IN USE:

A LOOK AT THE WORK OF POST PRIMARY STUDENTS

Artistic learning is complex and is strongly influenced by the environmental conditions in which it occurs. The ability to perceive the qualitatively subtle, to understand the context in which works of art have been produced and understand the relationship between the two, to be able to utilise highly refined skills in the creation of a visual art form are not easy or simple achievements. When left to their own devices children show great ingenuity in devising forms to convey certain ideas. But these achievements, as real as they are, fall short of what is possible to achieve when learning is facilitated. For many youngsters the lack of such skills has bred a sense of impotence in art, a conviction that they are inherently unable - or as they say 'untalented', in this area of human activity.

Elliot Eisner, in Educating Artistic Vision. (1)

Thus far, this dissertation has looked at the unique qualities of Art, Craft and Design, and established that the Arts are indeed an independent symbol system. We have also seen that both the making and receiving of Art, Craft and Design can help the development of students.

In order to use and appreciate a visual symbol system effectively and maturely, students need to be educated in its properties. This is the case with any symbol system, be it verbal, numerical or visual. Students need to be educated to "see and to think visually" (2), as the Curriculum and Examinations Board Discussion Paper points out. It continues:

This learning process involves both the artistic and the aesthetic experience. At primary and post primary levels it develops through the related activities of the disciplines of Art, Craft and Design. (3)

The inclusion of Art, Craft and Design in the second level school curriculum is therefore very necessary. Students will not mature and develop in the use of a visual symbol system unless they receive a sound education in its properties - in turn an education in the visual arts helps the overall development of the person. As Eisner points out:

The acquisition of complex skills in any field of activity is seldom achieved in a single session. To learn to write, to drive, to walk, or to draw or paint requires sustained opportunities to develop and practice certain skills so that they become internalised resources available when needed. (4)

A general aim of art education is to make people aware of the unique nature of art, its intrinsic properties, that it functions as a mode of expression and communication.

At second level, art education has certain aims and objective which make a permanent contribution to the student's total education.

~~The aims~~ of the new three year Junior Certificate programme for Art, Craft and Design identifies the following aims:

- 1] To promote in the student an informed, inquiring and discriminating attitude to his or her environment and to help the student relate to the world in visual, tactile and spatial terms.
- 2] To develop a sense of personal identity and self-esteem through practical achievement in the expressive communicative and functional modes of art, craft and design.
- 3] To develop in the student an understanding of art, craft and design in a variety of contexts - historical, cultural, economic, social and personal.
- 4] To develop in the student the ability to apply evaluative criteria to his/her own work and to the work of others and in

his/her daily encounters with the natural, social and man-made environments and with the mass media.

- 5] To promote in the student a practical understanding of and competence in the principles and skills underlying visual and constructional design and problem-solving.
- 6] To develop through structured practical work the student's aesthetic sensibilities and powers of critical appraisal, appreciation and evaluation and to enhance the student's qualities of imagination, creativity, originality and ingenuity. (5)

The course objectives are:

The Art, Craft and Design course develops the student's ability to:

- 1] Give a personal response to an idea, experience or other stimulus.
- 2] Work from imagination, memory and direct observations.
- 3] Use drawing for observations, recording and analysis, as a means of thinking and for communication and expression.
- 4] Use the core two-dimensional processes in making, manipulating and developing images, using lettering and combining lettering with image, in expressive and communicative modes.
- 5] Use the three-dimensional processes of additive, subtractive and constructional form-making in expressive and functional modes.
- 6] Use and understand the art and design elements.
- 7] Use a variety of materials, media, tools and equipment.
- 8] Use an appropriate working vocabulary.
- 9] Understand relevant scientific, mathematical and technological aspects of art, craft and design.
- 10] Sustain projects from conception to realisation.
- 11] Appraise and evaluate his/her own work in progress and on completion.
- 12] Develop an awareness of the historical, social and economic role and value of art, craft and design and aspects of contemporary culture and mass media. (6)

These aims and objectives mean the visual arts as a school subject differ from other subjects, as the Curriculum and

Examinations Board Discussion Paper points out:

The visual arts differ from many other school subjects in that they do not seek to provide ready-made answers, but to equip students with ways of working, to identify problems and to arrive at their own answers at their own pace. (7)

Whether or not the aims and objectives of art education can be realised depends on the art teacher. Art, Craft and Design in second level schools is implemented by the art teacher. As Lowenfeld and Brittain say in Creative and Mental Growth:

Because art is essentially an expression of the self, because there are no answers in the teacher's stack of books, because art cannot be produced by the usual threat of failure or rewards, the teacher of art becomes a crucial person in art production. It is only through a strongly supportive teacher who encourages and interacts with youngsters that an increased sensitivity to the environment can grow. The development of positive attitudes toward the self and toward art is something that does not happen automatically. The creative spirit needs reinforcement, and the teacher is one who can provide the environmental conditions that will make the art experience an exciting and rewarding one. (8)

The teacher must set learning objectives through which the student comes to an understanding of the visual arts. The teacher must motivate and stimulate the pupils to fulfil the learning objectives. By structuring lessons in a sequential manner, the aims and objectives of art education can be fulfilled. As Elliot Eisner says:

The provision of programmes that provide for continuity and that build sequentially are needed if work with art material is to be more than a superficial excursion into novelty. (9)

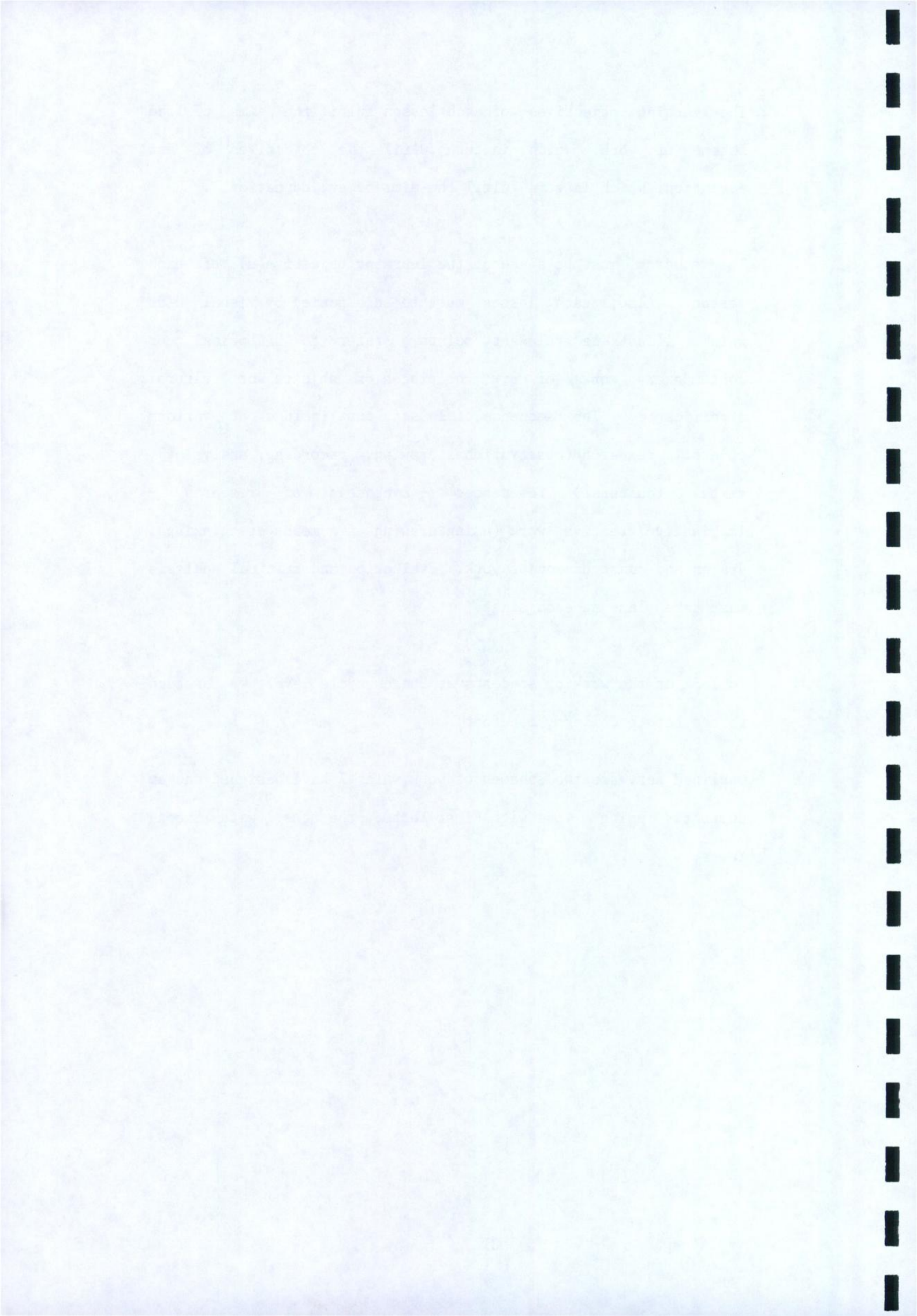
From a scheme of work, each lesson plan is carefully worked out beforehand. The lesson plan is the sum of certain components: content, process, materials, aims, learning objectives, motivation, evaluation and the teacher's own personal evaluation.

The learning objectives of each lesson fulfil the aims of the scheme of work, which in turn fulfil the objectives of art education, which in turn fulfil the aims of art education.

The student must be aware of the learning objective(s) of each lesson. Also, each lesson must be accompanied by visual aids which illustrate relevant points, refer to historical or contemporary works of art, or places or objects of cultural significance. The sequence of lessons must include at various points: research (observational drawing, recording, analysing), visual (cultural) references - synthesis of research - imaginative/creative work (using drawing as a means of thinking), design and construction of work. Evaluation and critical analysis must take place at each stage.

To look at the work of students at Junior cycle level, we now turn to the Loreto College, Beaufort.

Outlined here are two schemes of work which I have designed and am currently using - one with First Years, the other with Second Years.



Scheme of Work

Term One

First Years - Group Two

Theme: The Circus

Observational drawing - still life including: colour study, use of viewfinder, collage, leading to 3D work in the following term.

Week One: Still life, gouache painting.

Week Two: Still life, gouache painting.

Week Three: Still life, using viewfinder (pencil drawing)

Week Four:)

Five:) Still life - collage.

Six:)

Support studies used through the term - visual aids showing work by:

Rembrandt: An Elephant (drawing), 1637.

Rubens: Portrait of his Son Nicholas, 1620.

Durer: Portrait of his Mother, 1514.

Toulouse Lautrec: Circus drawings, 1899.

Max Ernst: Collages, 1920 - 1922.

Satish Gurjal: Paper collage, 1964 - 1968.

Wassily Kandinsky: The Elephant, 1908.

Degas: Two Harlequins, 1885-6.

Seurat: Le Cirque, 1887-8.

Mainie Jellett: Under the Big Top at a Circus, 1922

Term Two

Observational studies leading to design and construction of large body jewellery, e.g. collars, armbands, belts, etc. - with reference to collections in the National Museum (visit to Museum to see Tara Brooch, Broighter collar, gold collection, etc.).

Week One: Introduction - video of circus: "Cirque du Soleil".

Week Two: Observational studies/research - still life. Charcoal drawings using viewfinder.

Week Three: Observational studies - still life - gouache painting.

Week Four: Working drawings of ideas for final piece - based on research work.

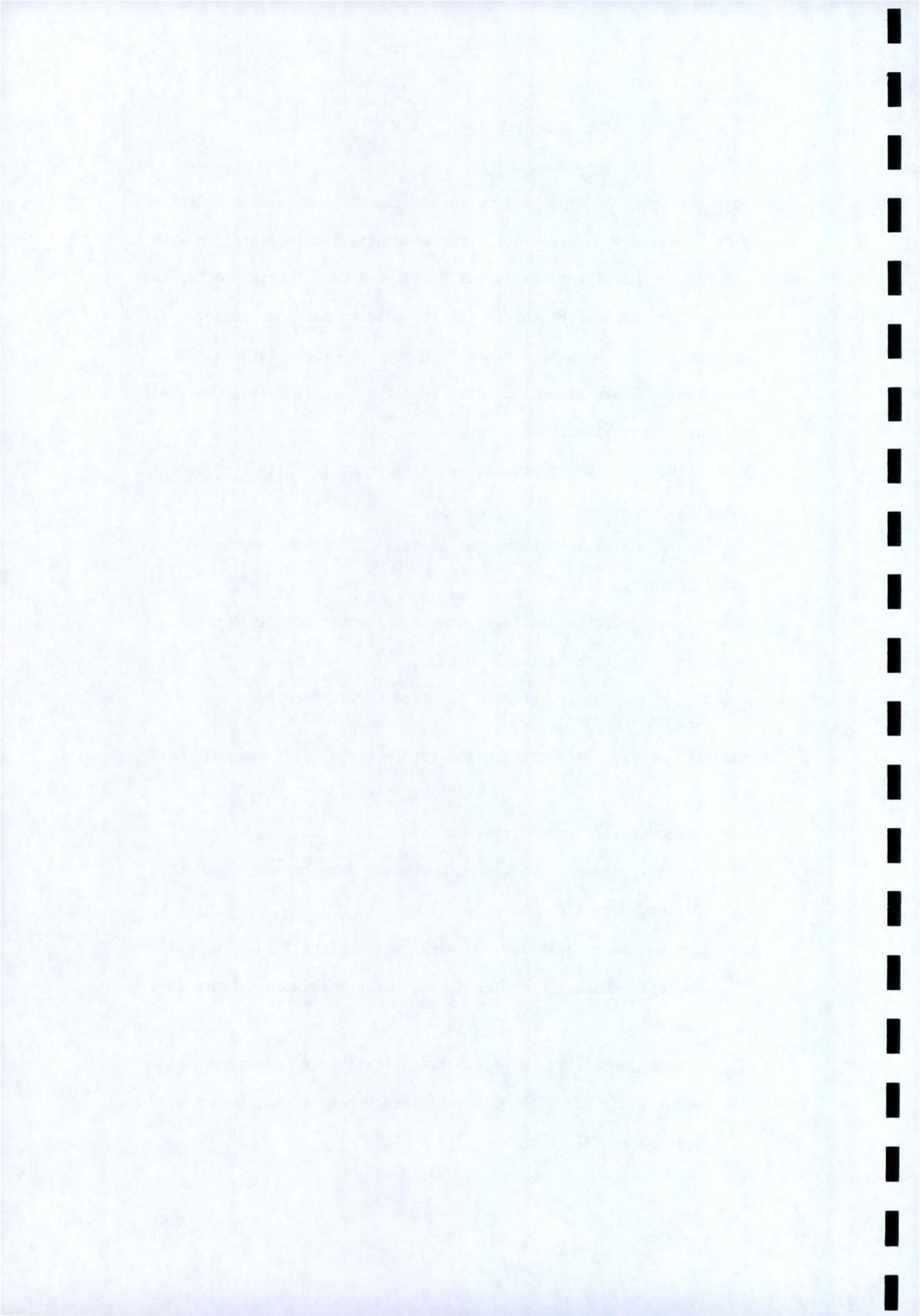
Week Five: Selection and development of design for final piece.

Week Six: Visit to National Museum.

Week Seven:) Construction of 3D mixed media piece.
Eight:)

Support studies used through the term - visual aids showing work by:

- 1] Video of circus: "Cirque du Soleil".
- 2] Jewellery from the National Museum: Tara Brooch, Broighter Collar, Petrie Crown, gold collection.
- 3] Contemporary jewellery: work by designers such as Slim Barrett, Chanel, Charmian Inman, Minor Metalworks, Laura Lee, Ken Boyd.
- 4] Ethnic jewellery: Nepalese traditional bridal costume, Surma women's lip discs, Muslim Jat women - nose rings, traditional Spanish bridal costume.



Scheme of Work

Term One

Second Years - Group Two

Theme: The Circus.

Observational drawing - still life. Colour study, line/tonal study, 2D mixed media work.

Week One: Still life - colour study using gouache.

Week Two: Still life - line/tonal study using pen, wax, gouache.

Week Three:) Using viewfinder to select and enlarge section, and
Four:)
Five:) complete a 2D mixed media piece of work.
Six:)

Support studies used throughout the term - visual aids showing work by:

Japanese line drawings.

Rembrandt: An Elephant (drawing), 1637.

Rubens: Portrait of his Son Nicholas, 1620.

Durer: Portrait of his Mother, 1514.

Henry Moore: Figure study, 1923/24.

Toulouse Lautrec: Circus drawings, 1899.

Wassily Kandinsky: The Elephant, 1908.

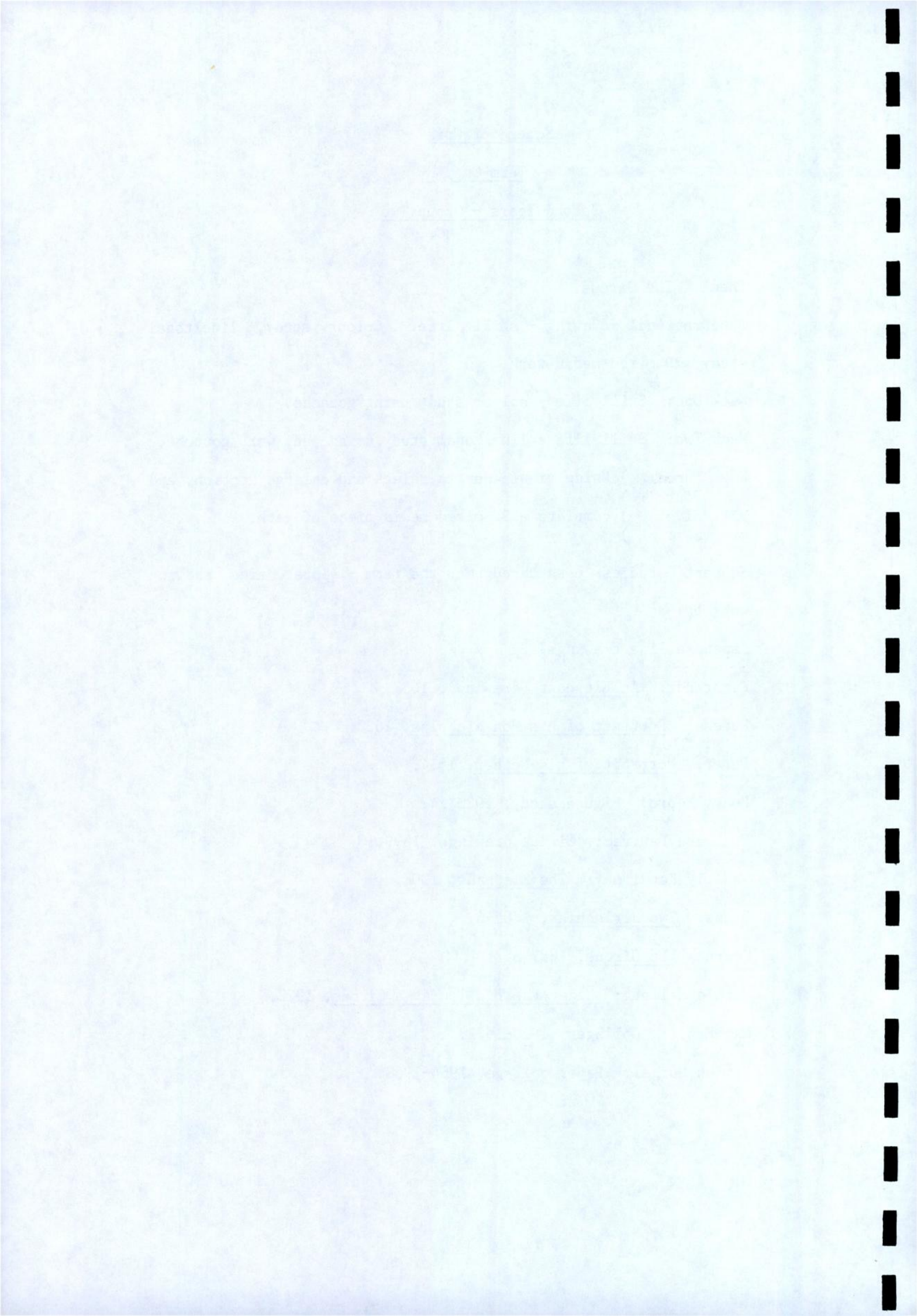
Degas: Two Harlequins, 1885-6.

Seurat: Le Cirque, 1887-8.

Mainie Jellett: Under the Big Top at a Circus, 1922.

Max Ernst: Collages, 1920-1922.

Satish Gurjal: Paper collage, 1964-1968.



Term Two

Life drawing - 3D mixed media construction - built environment
(Term 3).

Week One: Life drawing - charcoal study.

Week Two: Life drawing - pen, wax, gouache.

Week Three: Life drawing, pencil, charcoal.

Week Four: Life drawing, contract colour study (gouache).

Week Five:) Mixed media construction based on life drawing,
Six:)
Seven:) observational studies.

Support studies used throughout the term - visual aids showing
work by:

Leonardo da Vinci: Cartoon for the Virgin with St. Anne. (1452-
1519).

Tintoretto: Draped standing figure. (1512-1594).

Henry Moore: Study for Northampton Madonna, 1943.

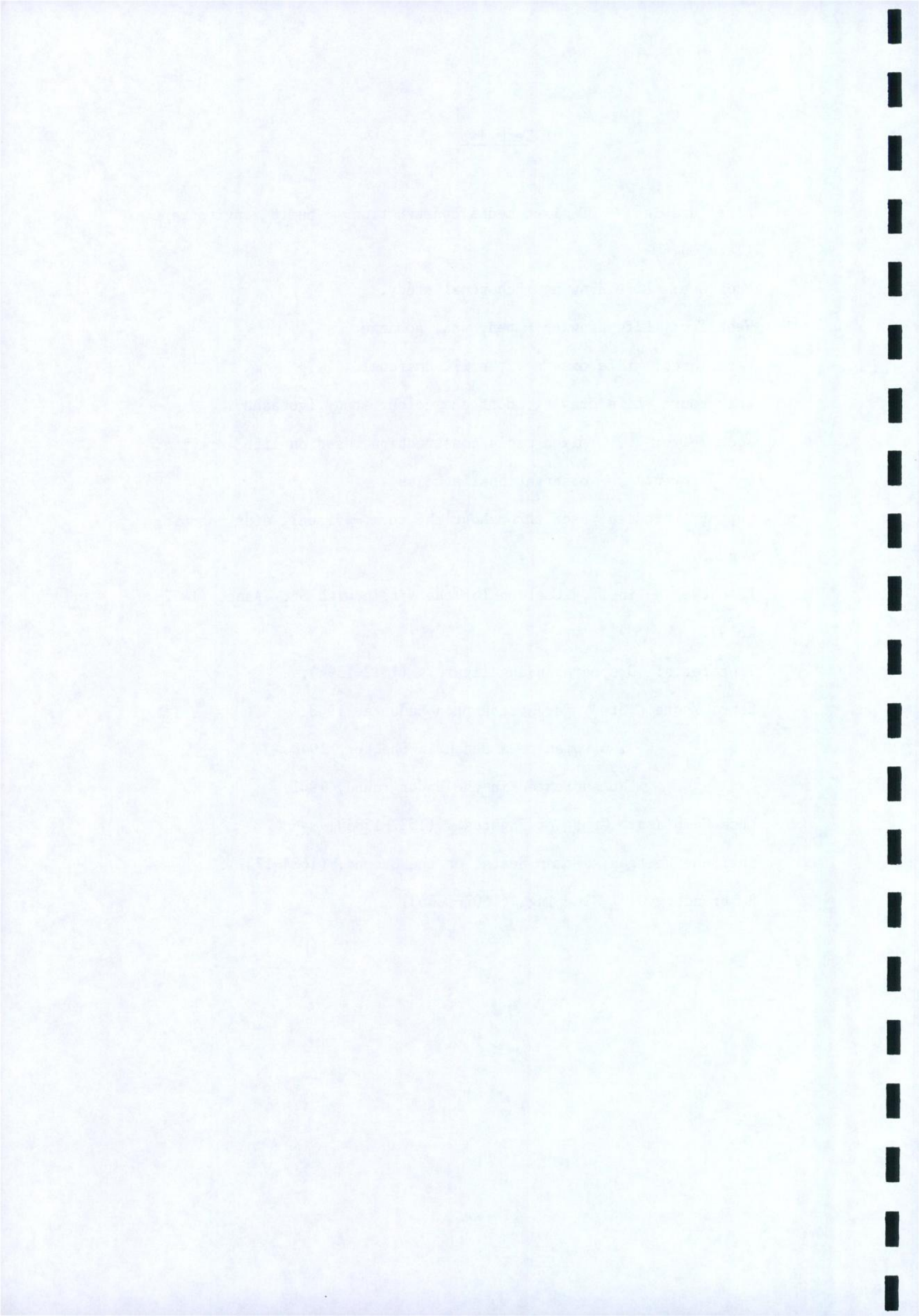
Two women on a Bench in Shelter, 1940.

Woman Seated in the Underground, 1941.

Luca Cambiaso: Group of Figures. (1527-1585).

Antionne Watteau: Woman Seated on the Ground. (1684-1721).

Rembrandt: Girl Sleeping. (1607-1666).

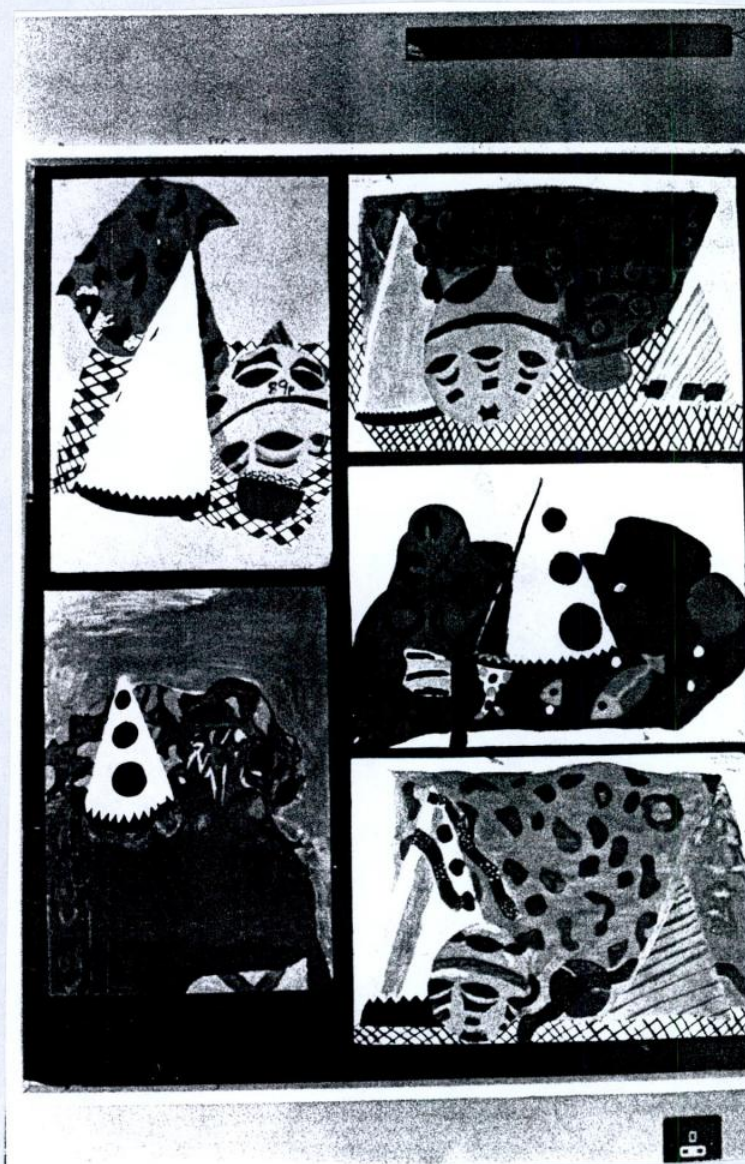


The circus has been used as a starting point for both class groups. It is a theme that provides scope for a wide variety of work which can avoid being directly derivative. The circus is something with which most students will be familiar, it also provides a useful opportunity for reference to other art forms: i.e., dance, drama and music, and how the visual arts relate to these (stage sets, costume, etc.).

From these schemes of work, specific lesson plans have been produced (see appendices). The resulting work of the students is shown here.

Figures 8 and 9: Observational studies of a still life grouping
by First Years.

Learning objective: How to mix paint, to explore composition and
vibrant use of colour (A2 size). This work is from the first two
weeks of Term One.



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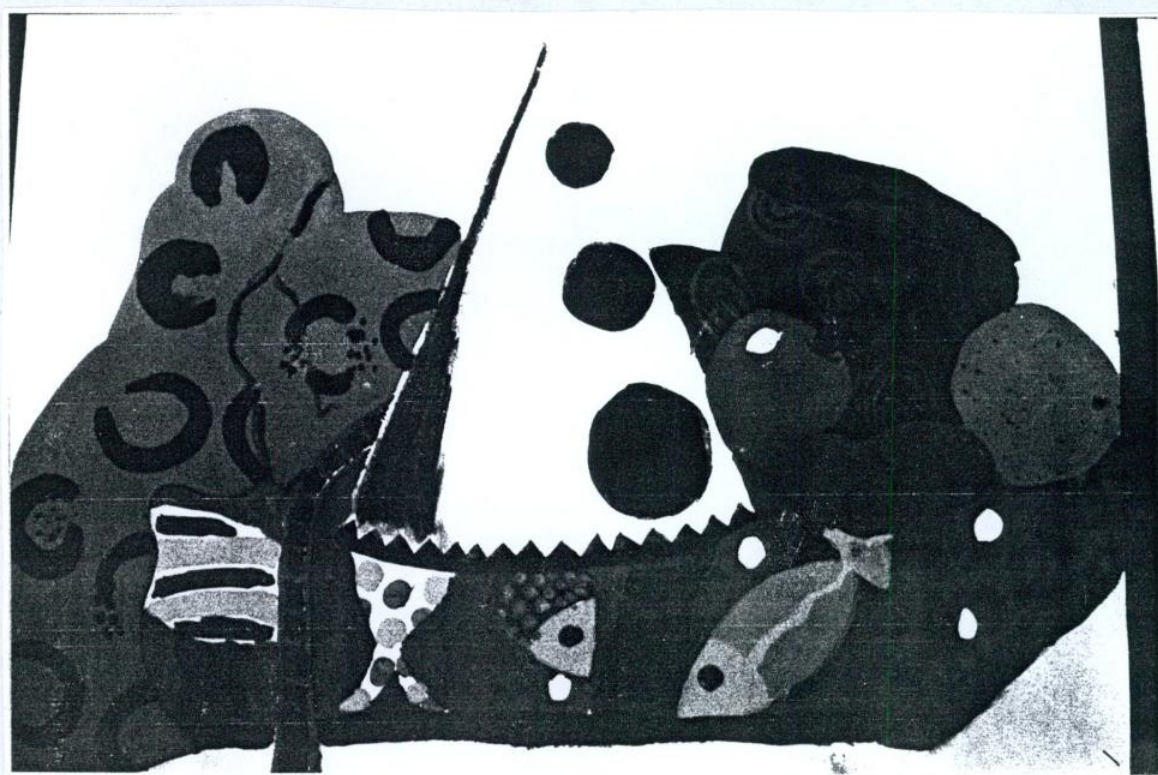




Figure 10: Pencil drawing by a First Year student. This work is from the third week of Term One, where students used a viewfinder on the still life grouping.

Learning objective: How to make and use a viewfinder. To explore line using pencil. Here, students begin to work in a more abstract manner.

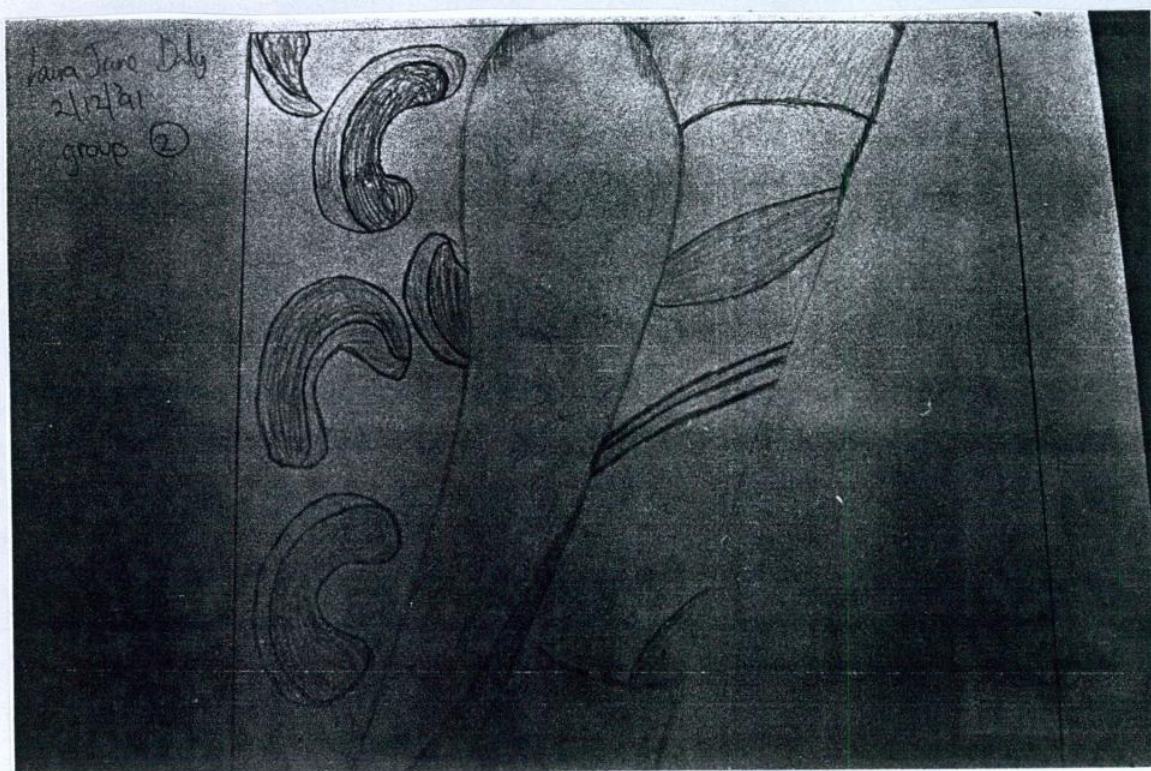




Figure 11: Illustrates the work of the last three weeks of the First Term. Here the students explore colour and texture through collage - using their observational studies as a source. Size: A2 and A3. Through this process, many of the pieces become quite abstract.



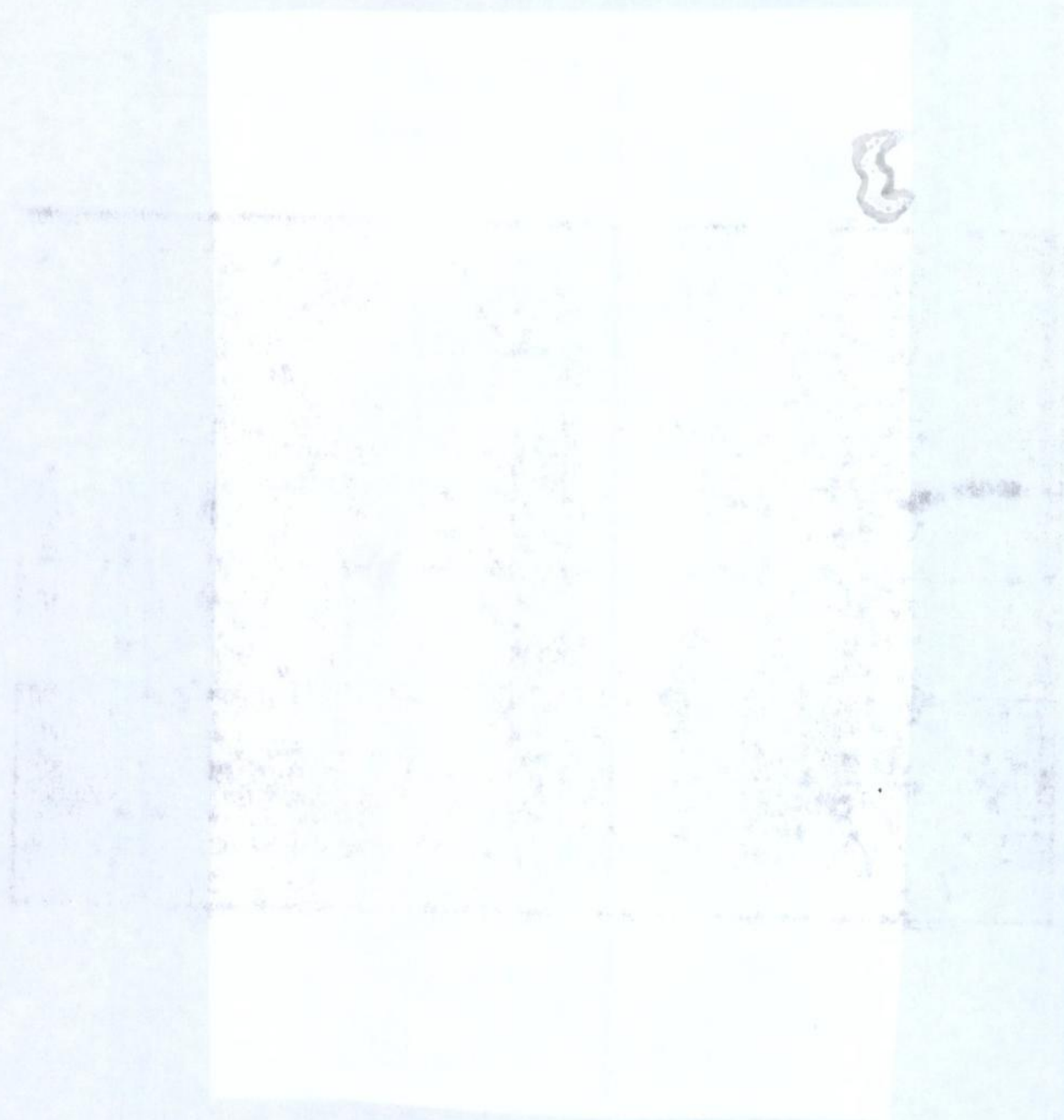
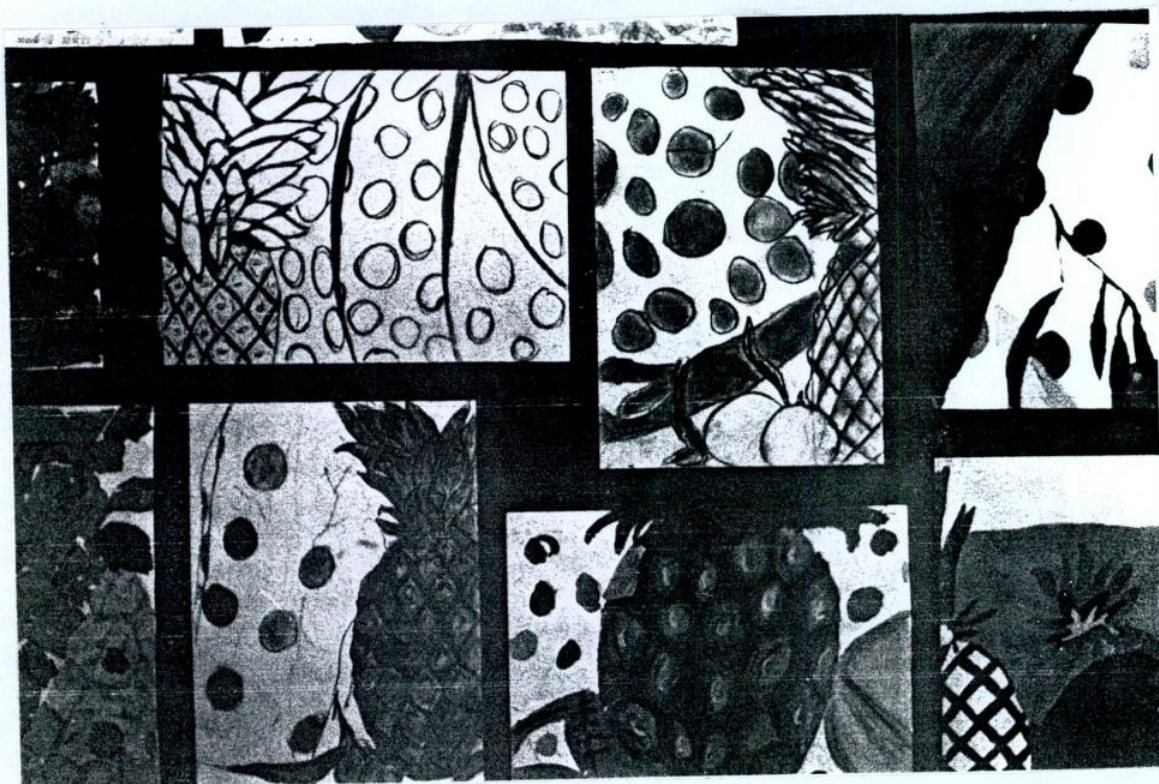


Figure 12: Illustrates work from the second week of Term Two. The viewfinder is again used on a still life grouping, this time charcoal is the medium used.

Learning objective: To explore line and tone using charcoal; also to build up observational research for design work. Size: A3. This work shows the students have become bolder and more confident in using the viewfinder.



Figures 13 and 14: Students' work from week three of Term Two.
Learning objective: To heighten observational skills. . Using a
viewfinder to select a section of the still life grouping - using
gouache. Size: A3.





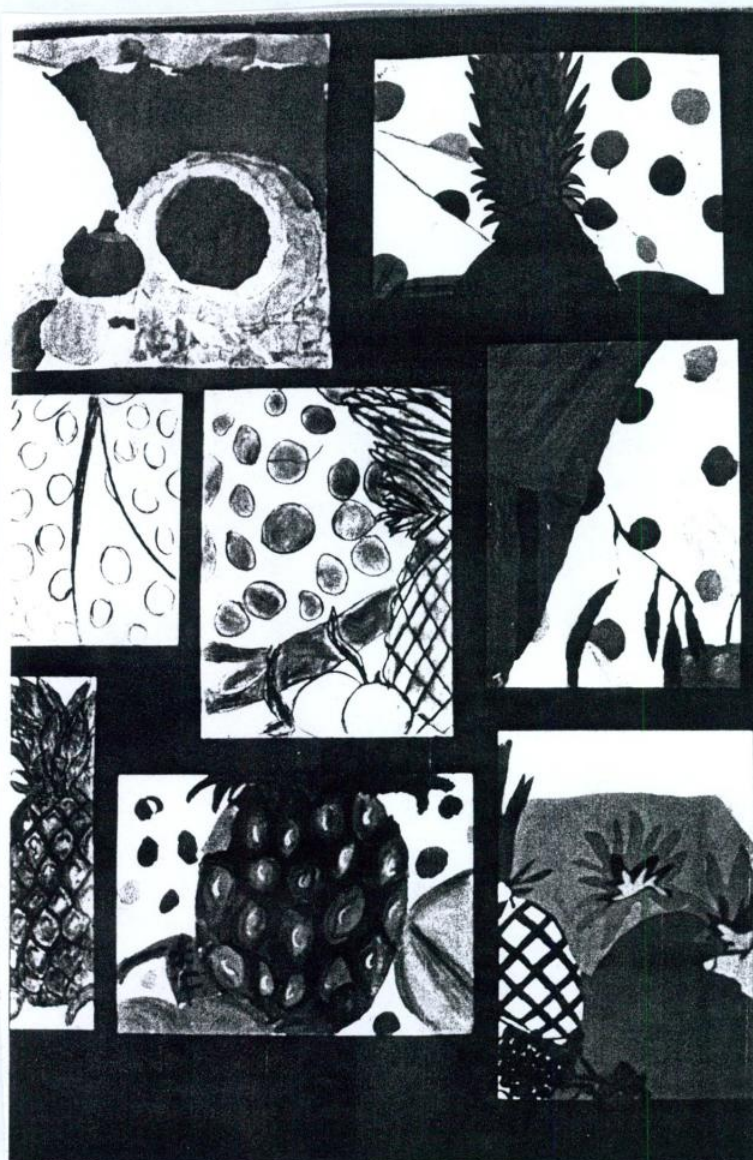


Figure 15: Here students begin to design for 3D - based on observational studies - producing an A3 sheet of working drawings. Learning objective: To use drawing as a means of thinking, also to heighten critical and evaluative skills through selection of ideas.

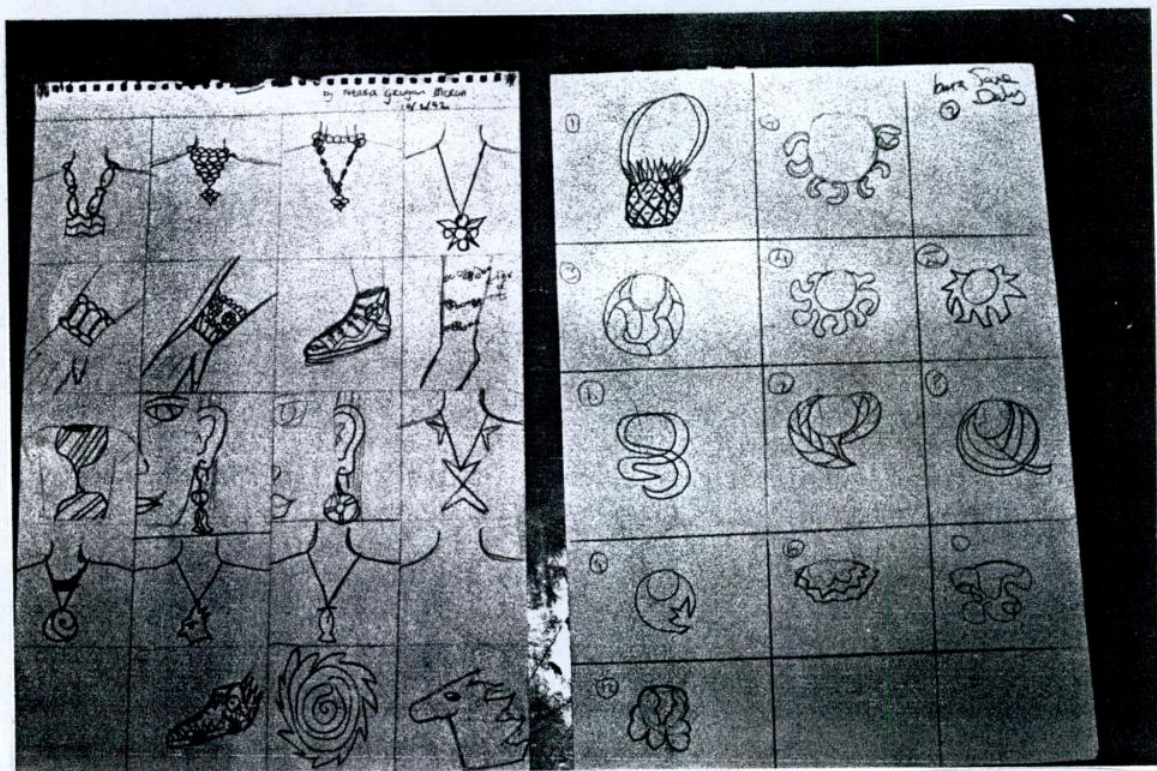
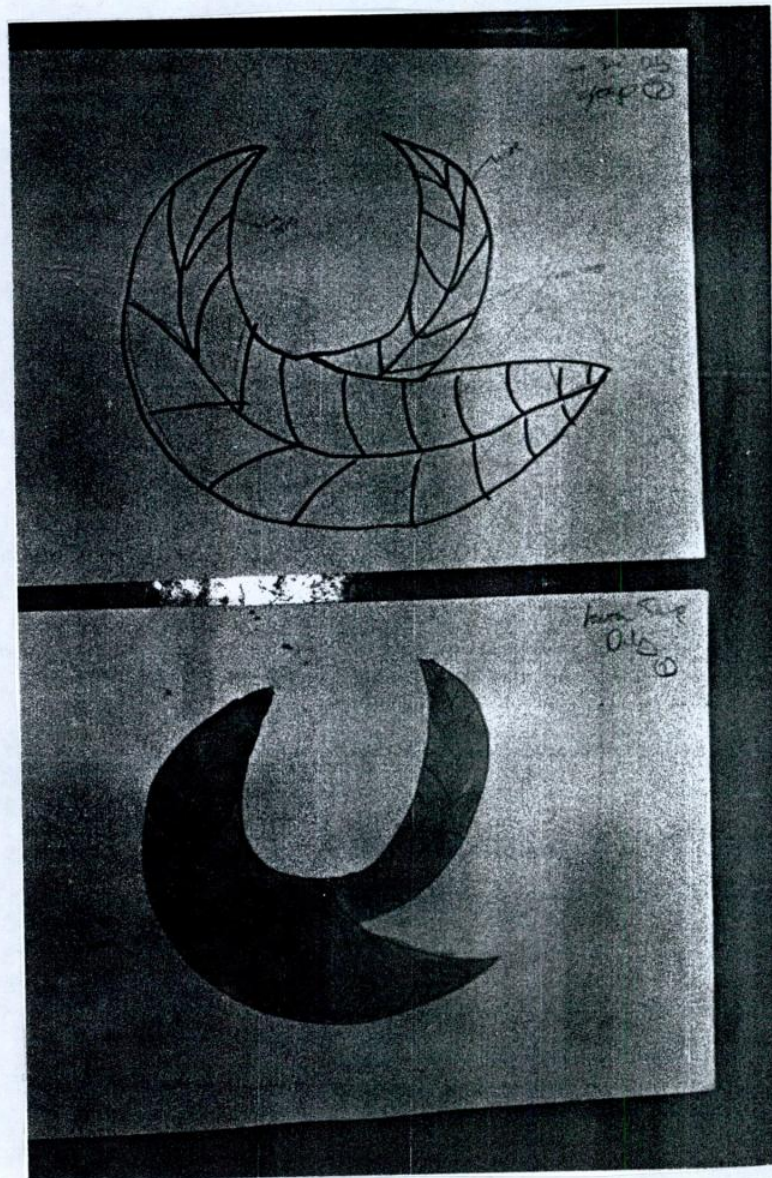
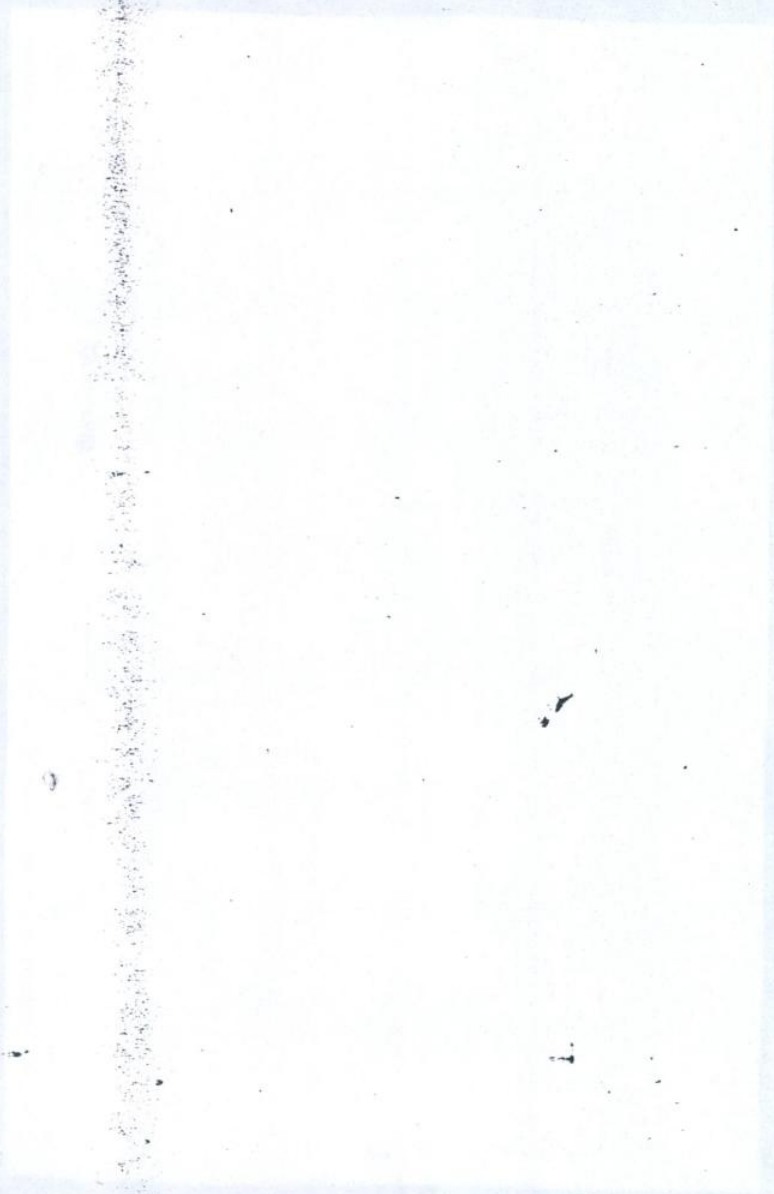




Figure 16: Student has reached an idea and is in the process of finalising the design.

Learning objective: Learning how the design process works. To encourage powers of discrimination and judgement as applied to their own work - to encourage aesthetic awareness. Size: A3.

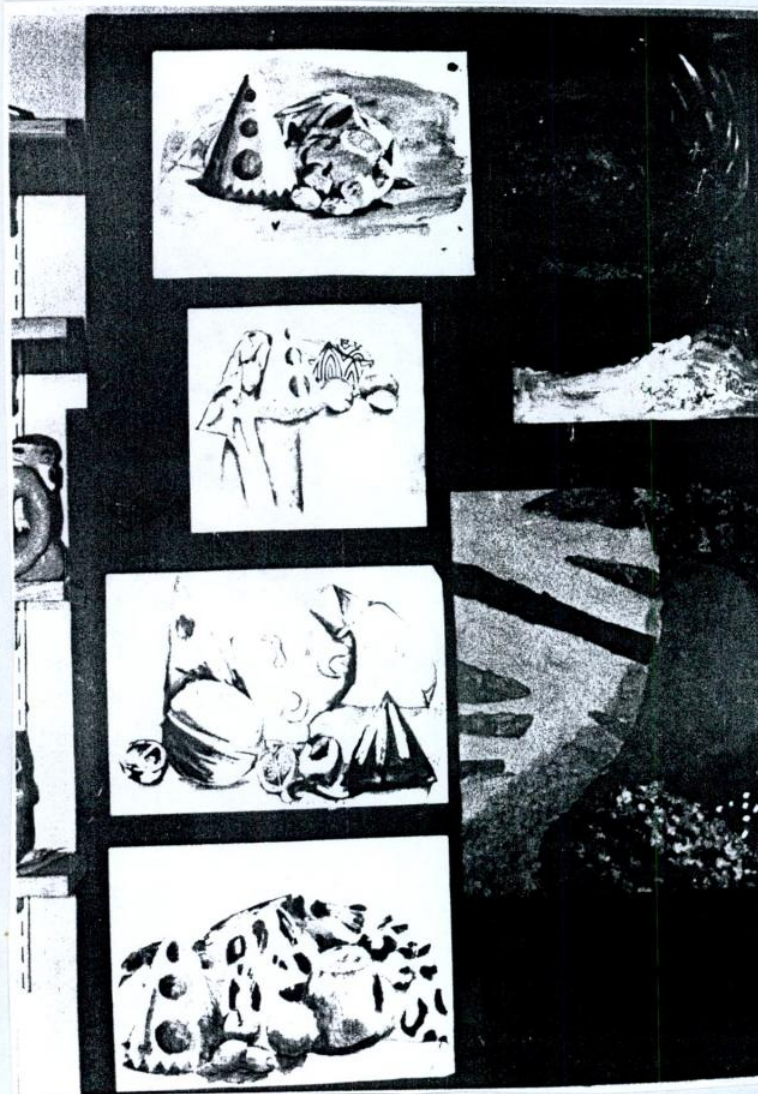


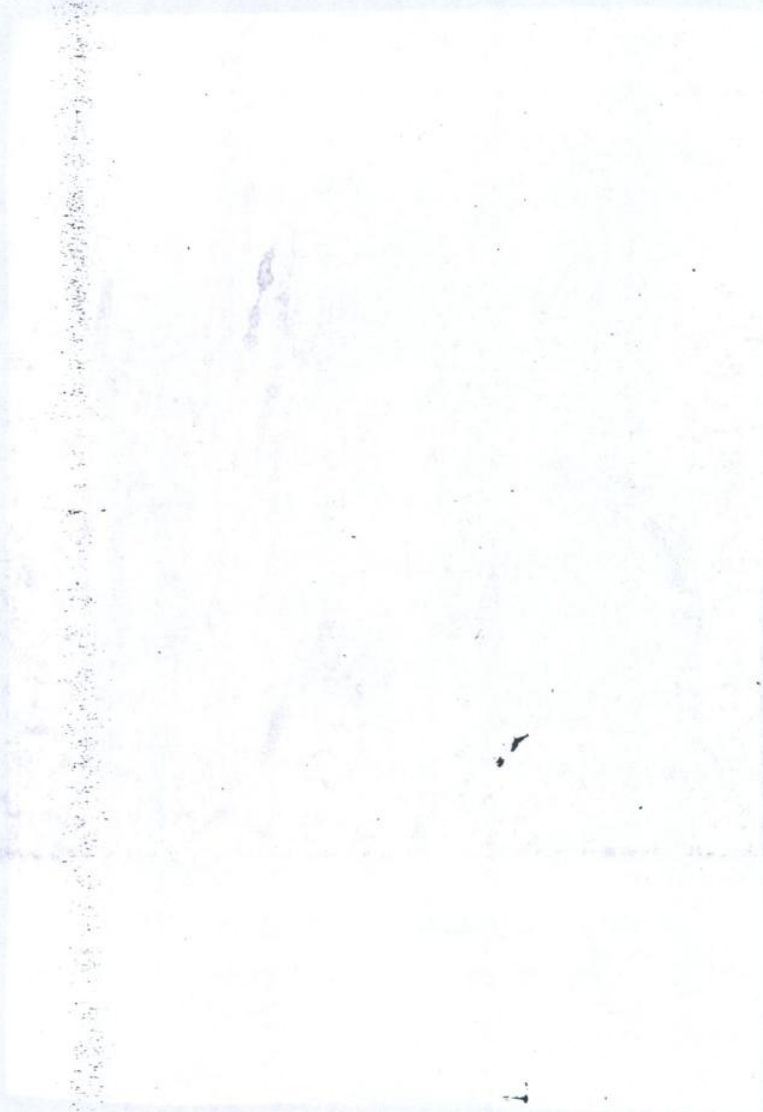


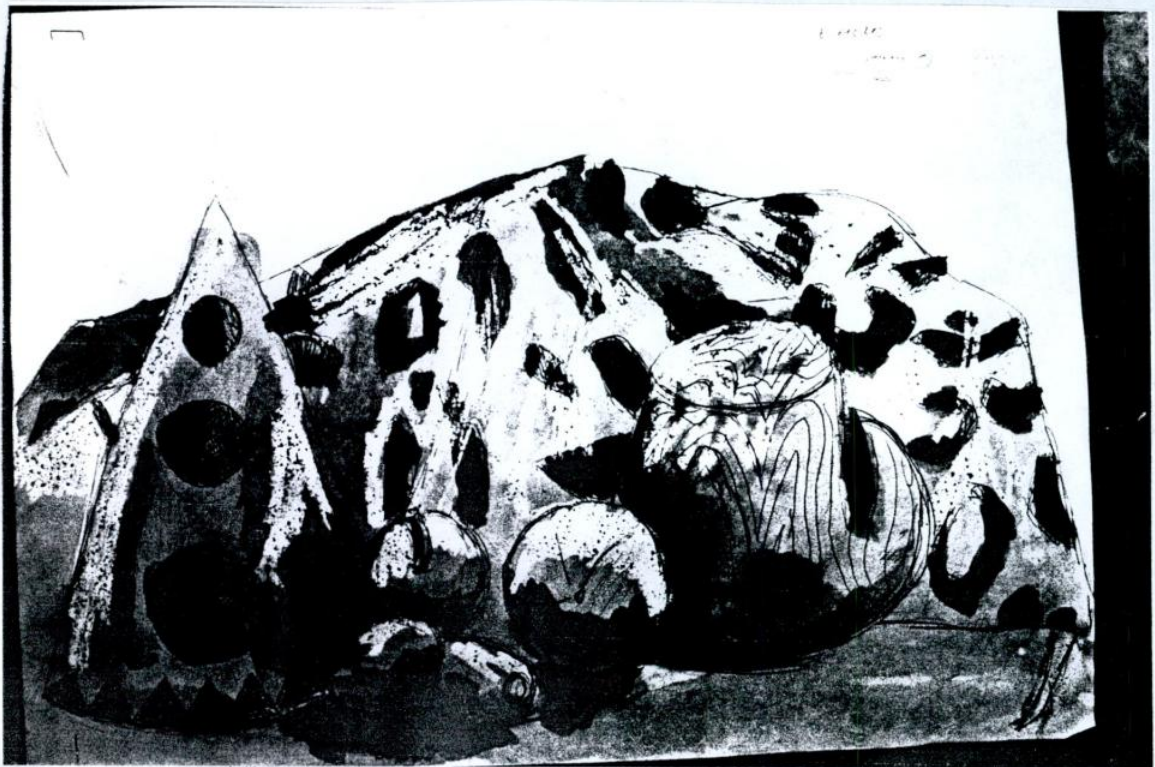
This outlines the progress of the students to date. It demonstrates the students recording, analysing, abstracting and at the initial stages of creating - the students are using the visual arts effectively as a symbol system.

Figure 17, 18 and 19: Illustrate the work of 2nd Year students. This work is the result of the first week of Term One. Here the students have used pen, wax and gouache media. This is an observational study of a still life group.

Learning objective: To explore line and tone.







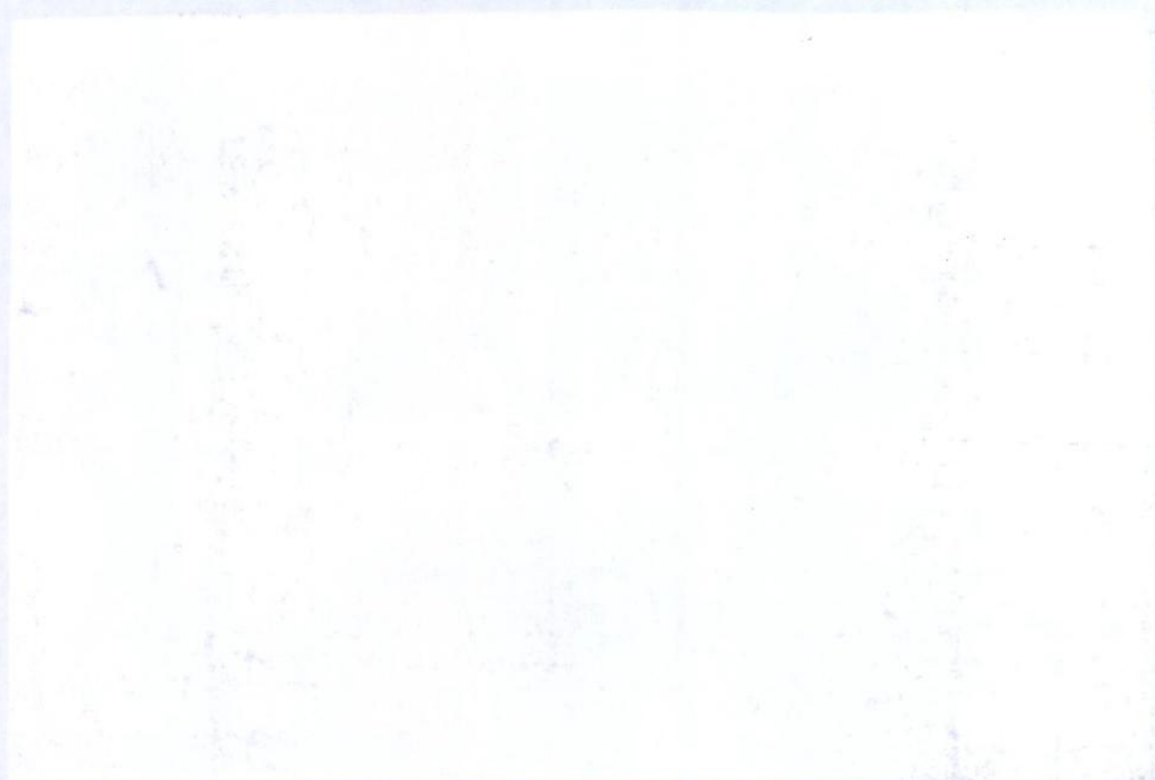
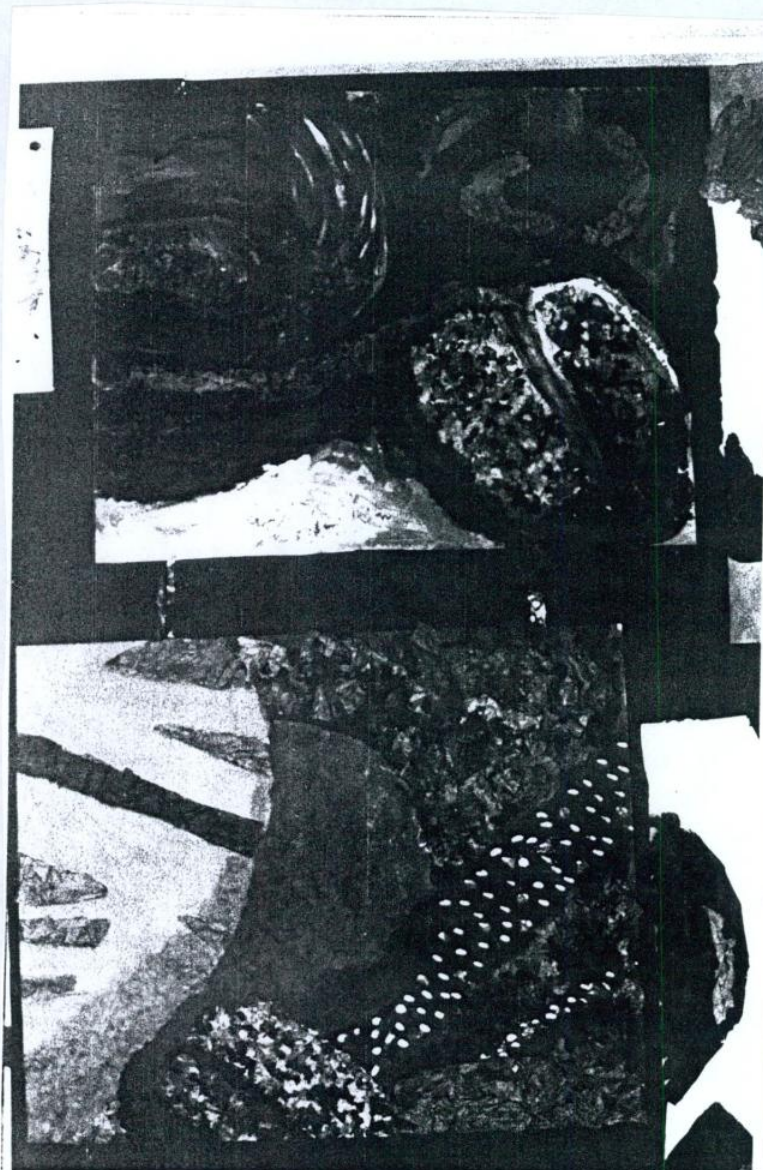






Figure 20: Using a viewfinder on the still life group, enlarging to slightly larger than A2. This shows the results of weeks two, three, four and five of Term One. Process used: mixed media.

Learning objective: To explore texture, shape and colour in 2D. These pieces illustrate the confidence and enthusiasm of Second Year students in using mixed media.



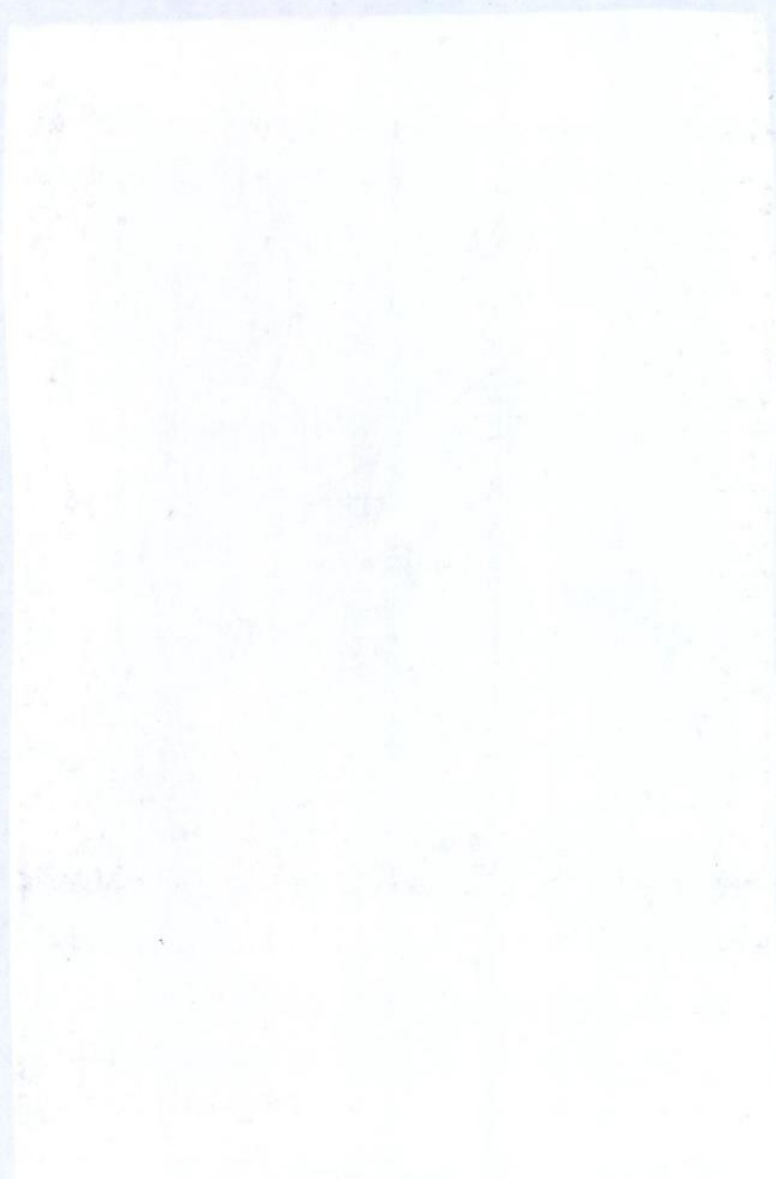
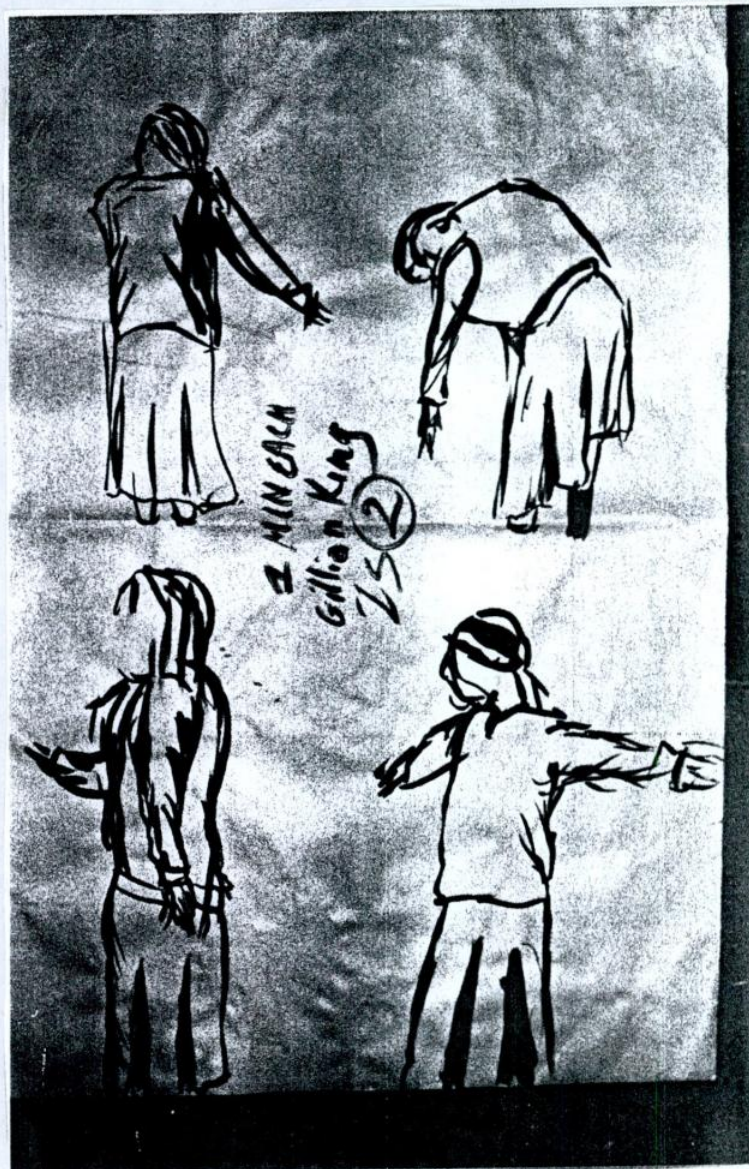


Figure 21: Shows the results of week three, Term Two. Using gouache, students carried out a series of one minute warm up exercises.

Learning objective: To become aware of the dynamics of the human figure through movement. Size: Slightly larger than A2.





Figures 22 and 23: Work from week three of Term Two. Using pen, wax and gouache. Figure 22: 20 minute study. Figure 23: 25 minute study.

Learning objective: To become aware of shape, weight and structure through life drawing.









At the time of writing, students are still involved in life drawing exercises.

In these illustrations we see students using the visual arts as a symbol system. As discussed in Chapter I, an art object is an idea which has been abstracted and produces a new form, to result in a complete statement. At the time of writing, students are still involved in completing work as laid out in the schemes, yet enough has been completed to establish that what will be achieved will be a complete statement. Although lacking in the technical skills to produce works of art as accepted by the art world, these students are successfully learning to use art as a symbol system.

The schemes of work are designed to enable students to employ all three modes of human function. They are involved in the process of making and receiving art as outlined in Chapter II. Support studies introduced at every stage cause the student to develop aesthetic awareness and appreciation. Thus the educational objective as outlined in Chapter II are being fulfilled.

This chapter has dealt with students employing visual symbol systems at Junior cycle level, as this is the level at which I am teaching.

It is necessary to point out that at Senior cycle level, the teacher must continue to motivate and facilitate students to build and expand upon what has been learned at Junior level.

Having now seen visual education in practice it is clear that it is a vital and worthwhile part of a student's overall education, and should be included in every school curriculum.

FOOTNOTES

- 1] Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p. 263.
- 2] Curriculum and Examinations Board The Arts in Education, p. 16, 6.1.2.
- 3] Ibid.
- 4] Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p. 158.
- 5] Department of Education, Art, Craft and Design Junior Certificate Syllabus, (Dublin: Department of Education, n.d.), p. 2, 2.
- 6] Ibid., p. 3.
- 7] Curriculum and Examinations Board The Arts in Education, p. 17, 6.2.2.
- 8] Lowenfeld and Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, p. 345.
- 9] Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p. 264.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has looked at the nature of the visual arts and found it to constitute an independent symbol system. It has also found that through the process of making and receiving art, this symbol system can make a major contribution to the cognitive development of the person as well as to affective and psycho-motor development.

To educate the whole person, we must have an holistic approach to education. This means educating people not only in verbal and numerical systems, but also providing education in the visual arts. Thus the visual arts must be included in the curricula of all schools.

Currently, the position of Art, Craft and Design on the timetable of second level schools means many students cannot experience art education. This means they cannot develop skills in a visual symbol system.

Not having the means to express oneself in any one symbol system means an aspect of the personality is left undeveloped. Education in the visual arts is important for fostering fully developed human beings, which will not only benefit the individual, but ultimately society as a whole.

APPENDICES

Lesson Three

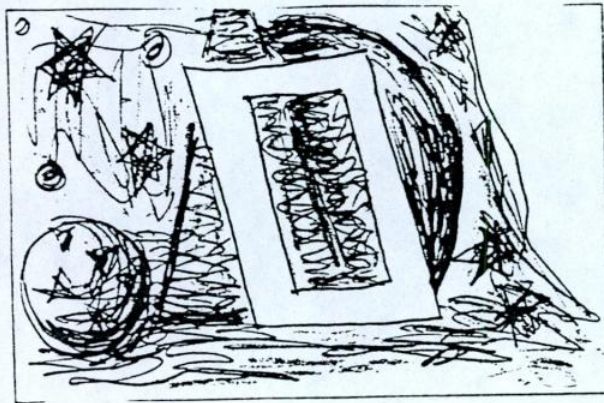
Date: 2 December 1991

Class: First Years - Group Two

Content: Observational Study - Stim
lite

Process: line drawings

materials: pencils, paper



Aims:	Follow on from lesson One
learning objectives:	How to make and use a viewfinder. To explore line with pencil.
motivation:	Examples of line drawings by Rembrandt, Durer and Japanese line drawings.

Evaluation:

Are the results of today's still life class different to last week? why do you think so?

Personal
evaluation:

As the art teacher was not in today, the cupboards were locked & there were no craft knives - had to use one. The first half of the class was spent discussing and making viewfinders, there was no drawing done until the second half of the class. While the craft knife was being passed around, the class began to get restless - went into a discussion of how to use a viewfinder to bring them back to order. Line drawings were finished in this class.

Lesson Ten

Date: 24 February 1992
Class: First Years - group 2

Content: Design and construction of 30 piece.

Process: selecting an idea (from sheet of working drawings) and working up to A3 size to finalise design. Beginning construction of piece in mixed media (if time allows)

materials: for A3 size design: paper, pencil, gouache paint.
for construction (mixed media): chicken wire, wire, card, paper, glue, fabric, beads, etc.

Aims: Follow on from the previous lesson.

Learning objectives: To use drawing as a way of thinking, to stimulate creativity, to heighten critical and

evaluative skills
through selection
of ideas - to acquaint
students with the
design process. With
construction, to help
students realise their
ideas in 3D - and
improve skills in
handling various
materials.

Motivation:

Showing examples
of work by contemporary
designers:

Slave bracelet - Pearl
Beck

Crocheted necklace -
Pearl Beck

Crocheted gold lame
neckpiece with
coloured insets -

Ruth Nivola

Ethnic Jewellery:

Surma women

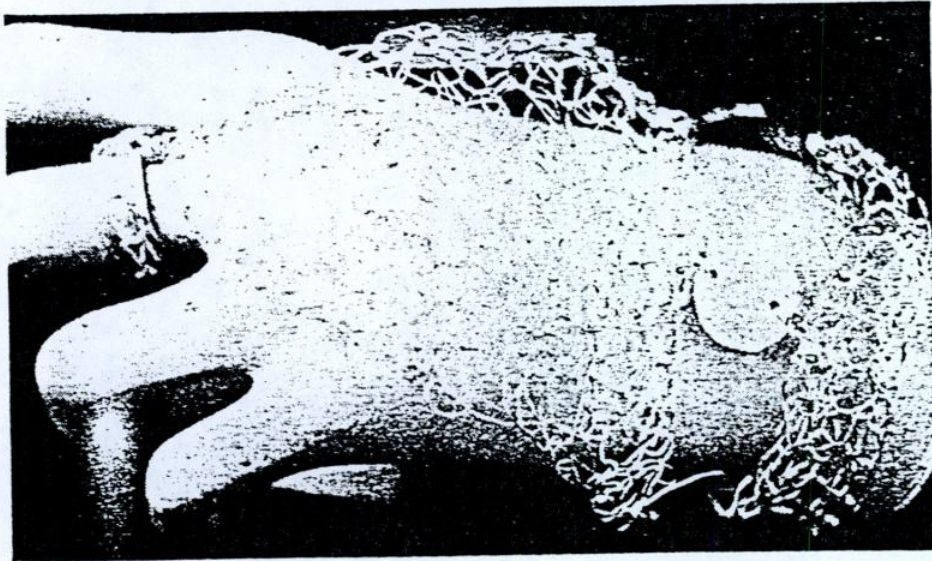
wearing lip discs

Muslim Jat women

wearing nose rings.

A selection of pieces
from the gold collection
at the National Museum.

Slave bracelet with brass circles. The ring is bent sheet brass with a strip of crocheted wire cemented around the top. Pearl Beck.



Evaluation :

Why is it necessary to do working drawings before selecting a final idea? Why should we work the idea out thoroughly on paper before construction? What is meant by the term '3D construction'?

Lesson Nine

Date: 4 February 1992
Class: 2nd yrs - Group two

Content: observational study -
life drawing.

Process: Drawing from the
figure.

Materials: Pen, wax, gouache,
paper.

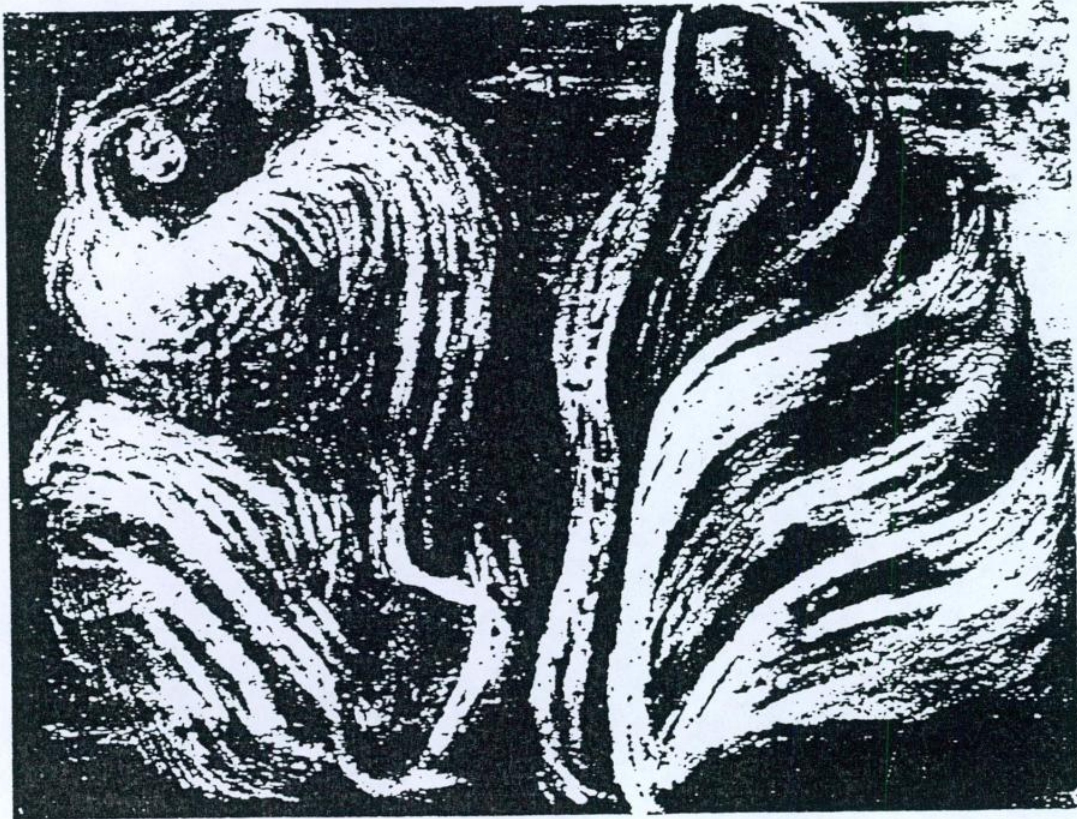
Aims: To develop observational
and perceptual skills
through life-drawing.

Learning
Objectives: To explore the
figure in line and
tone.

Motivation: Showing figure
drawings by Henry
Moore.

Evaluation: name the artist whose
work we looked at
today? what method
of drawing did he
use in these works?

why do we need
tone in our
drawings?



218 Shelter Scene: Two Swathed Figures - 1941



Personal
Evaluation:

This was the second lesson in life-drawing. There is a great extreme of ability in this class - ranging from very weak to very good. Next week, students will have to look at proportion and structure in more depth, as these two aspects are weak.

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