



# NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

## FINE ART PAINTING

The Value of Art Education Within the Irish Prison System

by

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Republic of Ireland (population 3.5 million) there are about 2,200 people imprisoned at any one time. This thesis is based on what happens to these 2,200 people once inside the prison walls. While contemplating my childhood, I remember watching television and wondering what happened to the 'baddie' who was taken away and put into prison? What did he do for the rest of his life if he did not live happily ever after? I have never had any personal contact with prison. However, my mother drove a friend to a prison to visit a cousin. My mother came home very upset by the whole experience. The walls, the security and the small windows of the building frightened her however she did not enter the actual prison, but waited anxiously outside for her friend. Years later she told me of this experience and was adamant in telling me that the people inside were trapped, their freedom taken away. From that moment on I have been interested, curious and perhaps haunted by life behind bars.

To research this subject I have spoken to Vincent Sammon (Organiser of Education), Kevin Warner (Co-ordinator of Prison Education), Carol Diver (Art Teacher in Mountjoy Prison) and Bernie Masterson (Art Teacher in Mountjoy Prison). The prisoners in Mountjoy Male, St. Patrick's Institution, The Special Unit, The Womens Section and Arbour Hill completed a questionnaire. Brian Maguire (Artist who has completed numerous workshops in Irish Prisons) and Bernie Power (Art Teacher in Wheatfield Prison) also completed questionnaires.

To develop this subject from its original idea, I have given a brief introduction to art education and to the history behind education within the Irish prison system. I will mention art therapy and its place within the education system. I will discuss creativity in captivity by asking questions such as why prisoners create?; what do prisoners create?; what are the actual benefits of creation and what satisfaction do prisoners receive from the visual arts? I have been to two exhibitions of prisoner's work. The first was the work from Dublin Prisons, which was held in Dublin at the Ilac Centre and the second



was the work of Portlaoise prisoners, which was held at the National College of Art and Design.

The basic idea throughout this thesis is the following: a discussion on the value of art education within the Irish prison system and to prove arts right to be on the education curriculum for prisoners.



## CHAPTER 1

The history behind prisons and an introduction to Education.





In the late 18th century prison was thought of as a form of punishment for the ordinary law breaker. The objective was not one of education. In the period since then reforms have taken place. By the mid 19th century the curative effects of solitary regime had begun to be abandoned in favour of collective labour. Hard work was thought to keep prisoners physically and mentally fit at the same time as having a deterrent effect. Although some thought differently, according to Edmund du Cane (Chairman of the British Prison Board in 1885) the punishment of hard dull useless, uninteresting monotonous labour was all that was being experienced in prison by prisoners (Warner, 1985, pg. 89). He was in a sense leading the way for the need for education to be introduced. "It is surely more realistic to concede that it is the objective of penal establishment to contain anti-social characters, a task it can do successfully, and to drop the pretence of reformation" (Bloom-Cooper, 1974, pg. 4). If this were the case there would be no point in education and no progress because of education. Prison education has been introduced because it is about progress; progress on a personal level. According to Bloom-Cooper, education has taught the backward to read, the bright to become brighter. It has guided individuals like Jim Gilbert in Wakefield prison towards a comprehension of painting as an art of life (Bloom-Cooper, 1974, pg. 10). Moreover, Jimmy Boyle of the 'Special Unit' in the Brixton Prison in Scotland has written two books and has had numerous exhibitions of his sculpture. These two men are lucky, but success of this order is not in abundance within the education system in prison.

Work in prisons appears to have three justifications: it acts as an antidote to boredom, an alternative to sitting in a cell all day; it offers the possibility of 'training' people for a job in the outside world; it offers a timetable, bringing normality into unnatural settings by offering possibilities of social education, providing that the possibilities are recognised. Valuable learning processes come about through designing, creating, co-operating, punctuality, persisting and working as part of a team or on your own. All the above are intrinsic within the situation. Profitability and even future job expectations might be met, but they should not be a prime purpose. "Prison education has been most successful when it has seen its role as





primarily educative and immediate, not inductive and futuristic (Bloom-Cooper, 1974 pg. 11).

Education should work on the principle that you are trying to instil in people something of importance to them, by helping prisoners to bring the inside out and to draw from their own experiences. According to "An Analytical Didactic": Man is not a block of wood from which you carve a statue which is completely subject to your will, he is a living image shaping, misshaping and reseating itself (Bloom-Cooper, 1974, page 7).

Prison education in Ireland goes back as far as the last century but in its present form it started in 1972 when C.D.V.E.C. teachers began work in St. Patricks Institution. Then, in 1988, the V.E.C. teachers went into all other places of custody in Ireland. There are 130 teachers, 97 of whom are full-time and the remaining 33 are summer teachers, (subject to change). There are other agencies involved such as, The Open University, The Art Council, and U.C.C., who cater for two Post-Graduates and a Sister of Charity of Shanganagh Castle. A co-ordinator of education based in the Department of Justice has the overall responsibility for monitoring and developing the services provided in conjunction with the agencies concerned.

The last survey of participation in prison education (taken in November 1987) showed that 79% of all prisoners took part in education. This involvement is voluntary and could range from one class a week to full time study. The educational facilities available in the prisons are adult literacy, writing, creative activities such as art, music, drama, video-production and photography. There are also home economics classes available which deal with social education and general personal development. Physical education and (in two open prisons) outdoor pursuits, woodwork, metal work and computer studies are also available.

There is a strong emphasis on the creative arts within the prison education programme. The philosophy underlining prison education is adult centred, i.e. it is based on second level V.E.C. strategy where a wider variety of subjects are available. Class sizes are small



(normally seven to eight in one group) and this allows teachers a lot of scope for organising individually based study. An attractive challenge for many teachers is the necessity to engage in Curriculum development. An integrated curriculum (including some team teaching) is a feature of prison education.

There was a number of outstanding developments during 1991/1992 in Dublin Prisons. The 'Open Forum' exhibition (which was held in the Ilac Centre) represented work produced in Dublin prisons on a regular basis. It gave a broad overview of the development of education in Dublin prisons over the past 10 years, which illustrated the strong emphasis placed on the creative arts within the programme. "Just Us and Rock and Roll", an album/cassette, was recorded entirely within the prison. There were also three publications compiled and edited by prison teachers: "Adult Basic Education - A Developmental Approach"; "Six plays by writers in prison"; "Health Education - Its your body the only one you've got". Another major development was the visit of President Mary Robinson to the Education Units and Separation Unit in Mountjoy Prison. She was also involved in the launching of two of the above publications. The education programme in the six Dublin prisons were filmed by Alan Gilsenan. It is currently being edited.

The most important role that education can play is to offer to the prison system an alternative to the treatment model.

"Most offenders are not sick people but ordinary human beings with a disproportionate amount of human frailty and a history of an environment of strong negative influences they have adopted a pattern of inadequate and unacceptable behaviour" (The Whitaker Report, 1985, pg. 93).

Neither prison nor education can do much to change the general negativity, but they can do something towards improving individual prisoners, by giving prisoners opportunities to improve self-esteem, self-reliance and help them to achieve realistic goals, rather than achieve reform in a matter of two months or two years. In the Whitaker Report it states that "Education in prison should have something to offer to everyone and should not concentrate on either the backward or the bright" (The Whitaker Report, 1985, pg. 47).





When the routine of a normal day in prison is considered it can be seen that education is like a breath of fresh air:

8 - 8.15 am	-	Morning call unlock
8.30 am	-	Breakfast and lock-up
9.30 am	-	Unlock - work/education
12.30 pm	-	Dinner and lock-up
2.15 pm	-	Unlock - work/education
4.30 pm	-	Tea and lock-up
5.15 pm	-	Unlock and recreation
7.00 pm	-	Supper
7.30 - 8.00 pm	-	Lock-up.

Remand prisoners may have one visit of 15 minutes duration each day. Prisoners may write two letters a week, while they receive all incoming mail. All letters are 'censored' and any comments on prison conditions or related matters are deleted.

Catherine Coakley, a teacher in Cork Prison has written numerous articles on prison education suggesting that art and the expression of creativity are about freedom and hope and this is why they are so important within a prison context (Coakley, 1990 pg. 111). When looking at some of the rules and regulations of the prison system you have to agree with her. Furthermore, education has changed its role, from being a self-help study done by prisoners in leisure time, to a major service occupying a lot of time and playing an important role in a prisoners time in jail.

The prison education system states that its education objectives are that education should help prisoners to cope with their sentences, that it is widening and strengthening the options prisoners might have open to them upon release, and finally afford opportunities to the prisoners for increased self-development, self-esteem and self-reliance.

In a report written by Kevin Warner on education in prison, the idea was to develop the whole person. A set of recommendations agreed to in 1989 by the member states of Council of Europe, two overall complementary themes predominate: Firstly, that the education of prisoners must in its philosophy, methods and content be brought as



close as possible to the best adult education in the outside society; secondly, that the education should be a constant seeking of ways to link prisoners with the community outside (Warner, 1992 pg. 3). To develop this idea, one must understand that adult education is about drawing from adults' experiences. Education should enhance and respect the adult being taught. Adult education is achieved in prison through the respect and honesty teachers show their students, because it is possible to deal with prisoners on a more personal level.

"Education in prison shall aim to develop the whole person bearing in mind his or her social economic and cultural context" (Warner, 1992 pg. 6). Kevin Warner added that the linking of prisoners with the community outside, has been achieved by "normality been brought from the outside in" (Warner, 1991 pg. 3). Thus, the importance of visits from artists, performers, thespians, visiting speakers to name but a few of the people who bring a fresh face from the outside in to the prison. There is also the day release concept which is being practised extensively in Denmark. Treatment, rehabilitation and vocational training are targets which are related to prison education, but Kevin Warner had more insight when he suggested that feelings, expressions and physical well-being should be included in the subject matter of education.

Art can deal with feelings and emotions, hence, there is a strong emphasis on the arts in prison. Art, music, drama, video production and photography, as well as writing, now comprise about 30% of all teaching time within prisons. "An increased role for creative activities reflects the growing awareness of how through them adults, with very little previous education can find that they grow as people and gain a sense of their own value" (Boyle, 1985 pg. 44).

Jimmy Boyle said that "sculpture took on a vital importance, not only in the sense that it was a medium to channel all my aggressions, but a medium in which to build up and repair the damage to my inner self" (Boyle, 1977, pg. 252). Art is more than a way to pass time; it makes you feel satisfied when you have created a piece of art. Art has healing properties; by healing the mind you are healing the soul. Hopefully through encouragement and understanding, art will be







giving a person with little hope some hope in the world outside and make their stay inside more bearable.



## CHAPTER 2

Art therapy and the reasoning behind Art Education in Prison.



"Art is a means of widening the range of human experiences by creating equivalents for such experiences. It is an area wherein experiences can be chosen, varied, repeated at will. In the creative act, conflict is re-experienced, resolved and integrated ...." (Hill, 1945, pg. 15).

Therefore, art can act as a form of therapy and should be taken into consideration in prison.

When speaking about art therapy in a prison context, I feel that the actual involvement of art behind prison walls is such a counter idea that it must be therapeutic, in the sense that people are taken out of confined spaces and given a freedom by becoming involved in such an expressive art form. I find personally that by creating art I can solve some of my own problems; this is a form of therapy for me. There are some who would disagree and feel that the art classes are purely educational and art therapy can only be introduced as art therapy <sup>1</sup>

There are many reasons why art can be justified by being on the education curriculum. Art covers a wide variety of people. Bernie Masterson is an Art Teacher in Mountjoy Prison, Dublin. She has outlined three different reasons for people to be interested in the arts. She first considers The Antiquity of Art, which is an ancient art much appreciated by historians and anthropologists, chemists, geographers and artists; from cave paintings to videos art has survived the traumas of the world, thus enabling us to enjoy it throughout the centuries. The Universality of Art; art has no language, it is readable to all nations. Every country has produced art. Why is this? People who ask these questions are sociologists, psychologists and theologians. Finally, there is the Preservations of Art, which proves that art has survived wars, religions, business men and patrons. Therefore, all these people when added together give you a universal view of the people involved in art. This proves that art does belong on a curriculum that it is of value to everyone and this should also include prisoners.

Bernie Masterson has set out a number of arguments which suggest that the creating of art is important. She believes that art develops and extends the perpetual range. Sight and touch brings more awareness of the physical environment and enables one to have a greater





understanding of people, things and of oneself. It is through these senses that a prisoner can learn to develop his work. "Hopefully at some stage in the future, by using a combination of both types of painting (one which is free-like impressionists and one which is tense-like copying), I will be able to work from memory to convey my own feelings and thoughts". This is a quotation from a Portlaoise prisoner who completed a workshop with Brian Magurie, a Dublin born artist <sup>2</sup>.

Art gives people another way to express ideas and feelings. People think about their feelings. For example, one prisoner in Portlaoise had been painting before ever starting the workshop with Brian Magurie. He said that, due to the classes, he realised that his "paintings tended to be of a happy and pleasant nature. I now know that they were unreal, in a sense, because they didn't reflect every day feelings or experiences (i.e. sorrow, anger, hatred etc.)" <sup>2</sup>.

Art is useful for personal integration. By expressing your feelings and questioning them you can find out more about yourself.

"Tutorials taught me to be creative, not to hang back if you felt like painting something you felt strong about .... we were encouraged to think about a subject, then drive on, stand back, observe closely, think again about it and drive on again" <sup>2</sup>.

Decision making has a lot to do with art. It confronts problems, like what size paper to use, what materials, etc. It can help a prisoner with decisions in their own personal lives. By making the right decision and by realising that some solutions are better than others, prisoners will find the correct decision for themselves.

The aesthetic value of art can be questioned: what is beautiful? This is being asked by prisoners. Through their search for what they like, they are educating themselves, their tastes, their opinions, thus enabling them to question their surroundings and themselves. Art is being used in daily life, inside and outside prison. Education of the senses is part of what art can do. Questioning yourself and your work: "Stand back, observe closely think again about it and drive on" <sup>3</sup>.





When creating you explore personal values. These are achieved through artistic activities. When you create you get a sense of pride, you appreciate your work, you care about it. By caring for your work it can lead on to caring about yourself, others, even your country. Prisoners begin to get a feeling of identity. They are beginning to get to know themselves and others. They begin to realise who they are and perhaps re-shape their personality. It can be proved that art can actually help a person to get to know themselves, thus enabling them to help themselves and that is why art is connected with education in a therapeutic sense.

"Art is the meeting ground of the world inside and the world outside" (Hill, 1945, pg. 72). This was said in connection with the mind but can also be applied to the prisoners' world. Art is the meeting ground, it helps prisoners to deal with limitations in this world, constricting size, materials, not being to observe the world outside. Prisoners will have to learn to deal with their immediate problems. By painting what they feel they are expressing it to the world, thus helping them to deal with their present 'world'.

According to the book "Art Therapy", art's motive power comes from within the personality. It is a way of bringing order out of chaos - chaotic feelings and impulses within the bewildering mass of impressions from without. It is a means to discover both the self and the world, and to establish a relation between the two. In the complete creative process inner and outer realities are fused into a new entity (Gyles, 1972, pg. 82). If part of this was established within the prison system some of the problems may be solved. Unfortunately this is not possible. Everyday life in prison causes a lot of the problems for teachers, due to necessary interruptions such as prisoners being released half way through the course, visiting times, doctor's visits, lack of interest on the prisoners behalf, to name but a few of the basic obstacles. To have an ideal art course would be to have uninterrupted classes, good lighting, flexibility and a broadly based class system. Prisoners should be allowed to experiment. The learning process is important, the making of a piece of art is where all the self-discoveries take place. "A good arts programme should respect and exploit those



personal values of the artist/prisoner which makes art so difficult to define" (Coakley, 1990, pg. 107).

Also, the prisoners feel resentment towards teachers pushing them to express themselves, because they are afraid of the authorities finding out what they really feel, thus giving more power to the authorities which they feel can be used against them. There is also a positive aspect hidden away. When a prison officer sees the work of an inmate and appreciates it, it can act as a bond between the two. Prison officers purchase paintings and from time to time they ask prisoners to do a painting of a family member for them. In this sense it helps both sides to respect each other.

At its worst the least art therapy can do is fulfil the need to create, be it a grand passion or a mere impulse. This can give a sense of satisfaction, "but their adequate development provides tranquillity and a sense of well being which can powerfully influence the life and outlook of a sick person" (Gyles, 1972, pg. 111). "When one is feeling low, the creative spirit can be there to offer encouragement and "promote healing in the heart". Art therapy can be considered "a self-indulgent luxury in most prisons today" (Gyles, 1972, pg. 111). By its benefits, proven with the sick, it is slowly being considered by authorities as to what it can do in prisons today.

Whatever the psychological benefits of creative work, there is much to be said for the actual activity which "supports and sustains an individual in an unreal situation" (Gyles, 1972, pg. 112). It is in itself an unreal activity and its value is short lived, due to the fact that prisoners are living in an unreal world where they have no personal freedom.

However, the creative arts do have long-term psychological benefits. It makes time more bearable inside; it gives the prisoner a better understanding of himself; it gives him a sense of his own individuality and capacity as a person. The prisoner may even realise that his future is important. Now that he has an interest he may be able to stay out of trouble, because he can now do something enjoyable with his leisure time. Prisoners have new interests and an education can act as a





'horizon widener'. The actual craft that a prisoner learns can act as a confidence builder. As you can see the benefits are many, theoretically speaking, but it is hard to pinpoint the advantages. As a Swiss Prison Governor said: "In the short term we like to feel it eases the prison situation and in the long term we hope that inmates will be able to take something valuable away with them (Gyles, 1972, pg. 113).

#### Endnotes

- No. 1 See Appendix No. 2
- No. 2 See Appendix No. 2
- No. 3 See Appendix No. 3





## CHAPTER 3

Creation in captivity, why men create what they create?



Al Capone felt he was a much misunderstood man. Throughout the world millions of convicted criminals feel as Al Capone did. Art can give prisoners the freedom to reveal something about their situation and themselves.

Balano Frombon, a South American poet, recognised a bitter truth when he wrote "On a door that leads to the prison is written in chalk this verse: 'tis here that good man turns bad, and the bad man changes to worse" (Gyles, 1972, pg. 12). Prison is a place where creativity is stifled, where decisions are made for people "where there is great pressure to 'fit in' and be the same, because it is believed there is great safety for everyone in conformity" (Coakley, 1990, pg. 105). But, what is art all about? Making decisions, making choices and also making a personal statement. When creating you are taking risks and will take responsibility for what you do.

Art is an antidote to boredom. It "offers an escape from that system, from the boredom, from the tension" (Coakley, 1990, pg. 107). People, if only for the chat, the cup of coffee and cigarette, will attend the classes. Once you have them in the class, the possibilities are numerous. Many have preconceived notions about art. They think it is only for the middle class, that you need talent to do or to enjoy art, and that you also need to be intellectual to understand it. As Jimmy Boyle said "the nearest I have ever been to an art gallery was when we found a way of stealing empty bomb shells from the museum part of Kelvingrove Art Gallery" (Boyle, 1977, pg. 250). However by watching others getting enjoyment from creating a painting, this will arouse curiosity amongst the others, because they too might enjoy it.

While in prison, prisoners can make things for their families from book shelves to paintings. This helps to give the prisoners the feeling of still being the family provider. It helps the ego and self-esteem in relation to the family outside.

In prison, men are robbed of their personal identity. They are nothing but another number in a long list of numbers. By creating art it can help them to assert themselves and prove that they are different.



There are extreme cases:

"men who consider themselves to be professional artists - some remain aloof from the other inmates and do their best - which in prison cannot be much - to create a bohemian aura about them. Their painting gives them a sense of purpose" (Gyles, 1972, pg. 55).

Being creative in prison can give a prison an ego boost. Fellow inmates can come to them to write a love poem for a girlfriend or paint a portrait of a family member. All of these can help prisoners to impress fellow inmates. "Adler would say it was an expression of will to have power, as each con believes himself to be the most important person in the world" (Gyles, 1974, pg. 40). They can prove how important they are through aggression by punching, kicking, swearing, but also by painting, even by writing down their inner thoughts.

The response of some prisoners in their creativity shows a response of the pains of imprisonment. As one prisoner said, he found a "freedom of the mind, a sense of awareness and the pain that goes with it" (Boyle, 1977, pg. 252). Another prisoner wrote:

My prison is man-made,  
But the prison that's so painful,  
Is the prison I have made for my soul,  
It closes around me at night,  
These walls are high, too,  
They stretch up and around,  
Offering no escape to their weary prisoner,  
(O.P. 'Walls' : "ref": Coakley, 1990, pg.106).

Prison is a depriving experience. Attempts to ameliorate it are only natural, the prisoner will try to protect himself through his art work, if only by counter attack on the prison system, by painting horrific paintings about the justice system; hostile paintings about the prison itself or by painting forms of fantasy which act as a form of escapism for the prisoner (See Plate 1).









**PLATE 1**  
**WHY, PORTLAOISE PRISON.**



"Captivity stimulates creativity because the mind seeks the freedom denied by the body. I think it is natural for the prisoner to seek sublimation in the imagination. Compared with the civilian population almost everything else is denied him anyway" (Gesenway, 1974, pg. 45).

This would be the reasoning behind erotic paintings, thus helping the prisoner to deal with what he is denied, "To certain prison inmates, creativity is not so much a means of communication as a means of liberation" (Gyles, 1974, pg. 46). A prisoner may not be necessarily trying to get across a certain meaning or message in his work, but a feeling, an emotion. He has never been able to tell anyone. One prisoner commented about his experiences with the art workshop led by artist Brian Maguire: "I never thought time in prison could mean as much as each minute did with Brian, the two weeks with Brian thought me about depth, colours, background etc, but also how to express my emotions, beliefs in my work".<sup>4</sup>

Creativity can act as a safety valve. If a prisoner needs to plead a case or air a grievance he can do so through painting. Prisoners go to classes to see a fresh face, or you could take the view Jimmy Boyle had of his art therapist: "we liked her coming as she was a pretty looking bird" (Boyle, 1977, pg. 250).

It would be nice to think that prisoners come to class to help their mental condition, but so few are aware of the advantages. Art may be able to help sort out a problem for them. "Of course creative activity isn't an antidote that allows a previously repressed person to suddenly express him or herself and thus change. However, it is possible to maintain the 'hard-man' image and still write poetry. Some kind of balance can be achieved and a process of self-awareness, however tentatively begun (Coakley, 1990, pg. 106)". If prisoners attend art or music classes several times a week the moment of truth is when they go back to their cells. Are they still prisoners? In the physical sense, yes, but what about their minds? "Everyday is automatic. You don't think the same thing everytime the door opens or is locked .... so it's a negative atmosphere, but you can make it positive" (John, Cork Prison, radio interview 1989 "ref" Coakley, 1990, pg. 111). All of the above would be chief factors why prisoners turn to the creative arts. In other words, "Stone walls do a prison make and creative activity makes the situation more bearable" (Gyles, 1944, pg. 47).





Due to the frustrating situation that prisoners live in, their work may not necessarily be an expression, but rather a representation of it. Naturally prisoners are conscious of their surroundings and their work is thus a form of protest. What sort of work do prisoners do? It can vary from copying famous paintings, to still lifes, to wild free expressive paintings. One art critic said: "A prison art show is much the same as an ordinary amateur mixed show of rather low standard" (Gyles, 1972, pg. 52) done by ordinary everyday average people who have slipped up and are now paying the price in prison.

Some work is bound to be of a sexual content, as some outlet for sexual frustration is obviously necessary. A lot of the work is copied art. This is because they are afraid and do not have enough confidence. There is a certain assurance in standing back and looking at what you have done and being proud, because it looks exactly like the original one. The painting has previously been recognised and they can feel good about themselves. Plate 2 is an example of a piece of copied art. When looking at any amateur form of copying they will never get it exactly right. This is adequate because they are still participating in the creative act. Copying can be soothing. It can be a relaxing pastime, and by giving the prisoner a little more confidence in himself, it might lead him to his own creativity gently.

Occasionally you do come across an original work full of honesty and with a sense of sincerity about it where the artist is struggling to say something unique rather than going with the current fashion, perhaps by direct reproduction of their surrounding or a change in the style of painting. Plate 3 shows us the typical cell door; it is a sad painting, because it makes one realise that he cannot open that door and see what is outside. His view is the door, whereas we can open and close doors as often as we like. Plate 4 is a sea-scape with minute detail. The day portrayed is a dull and windy day, but previously this artist had painted bright vivid sea-scapes. Spontaneity is not unknown, but unfortunately when a prisoner realises what he has created is good, he may use the idea over and over again, which will devalue his spontaneity. This is hard to understand when you want prisoners to be creative when "they simply seek entertainment, relaxation and perhaps a certain amount of relief from inner tensions" (Gyles, 1974, pg. 53).





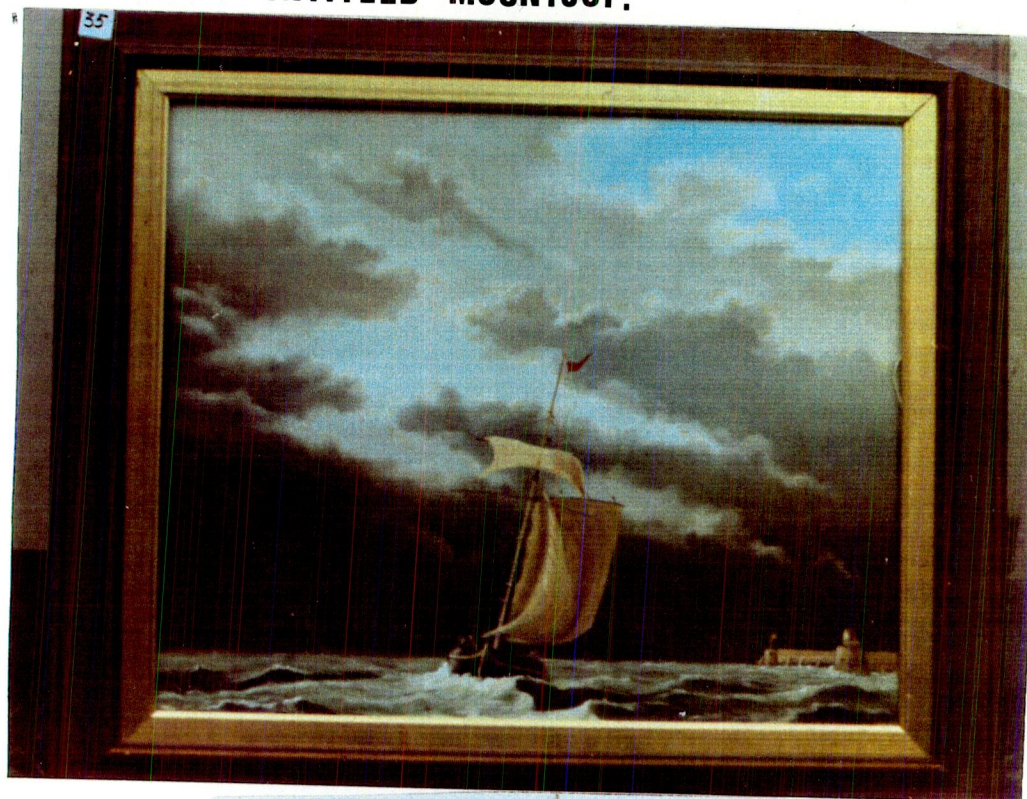


**PLATE 2**  
**UNTITLED, MOUNTJOY PRISON.**





**PLATE 4 UNTITLED MOUNTJOY.**



**PLATE 3. UNTITLED, MOUNTJOY.**





The self portrait is perhaps the most revealing form of creativity undertaken in prison. When Gyles Brandreth, writer of "Creativity in Captivity" was shown an ordinary portrait of a prisoner, he could see nothing different about it until he met the prisoner. The prisoner had flattered his own features beyond recognition, he had some inner need to see himself in an idealised way. In the words of Sir John Verney, "All art has the element of magic, it is a means of capturing a world of one's dreams and of bringing it closer" (Gyles, 1974, pg. 54). In other words, when a prisoner decides to leave the world of copying behind, the only place to go is to his dreams. In my questionnaire, one prisoner in Mountjoy said that all he dreamed about was the devil and deamons, so, therefore, this was depicted in all his paintings <sup>5</sup>.

Prisoners original subject matter can be categorised into three subsections. The first being paintings about 'escape' Plate 4. Next, there are the self-searching themes which would involve inner conflicts, Plate 5. Thirdly, women play an important role in men's subject matter whether it be a painting about a girlfriend or a mother. Much of the time they are used simply as sex-objects, but what about the man lurking behind the easel, which is depicted in Plate 6? The standard of the work should be irrelevant, it is the process that matters. These people are using paint as a form of self-expression which may lead to an increased self-awareness. Unfortunately for the prisoners, the end product is the most important fact. "The finished product is like a concrete statement saying: 'I have achieved this' or 'I am good at this' (Coakley, 1990, pg. 108). The question must be asked as to why are so many joining the art classes. Is it because it brings people together, or simply that it can make people happy ?

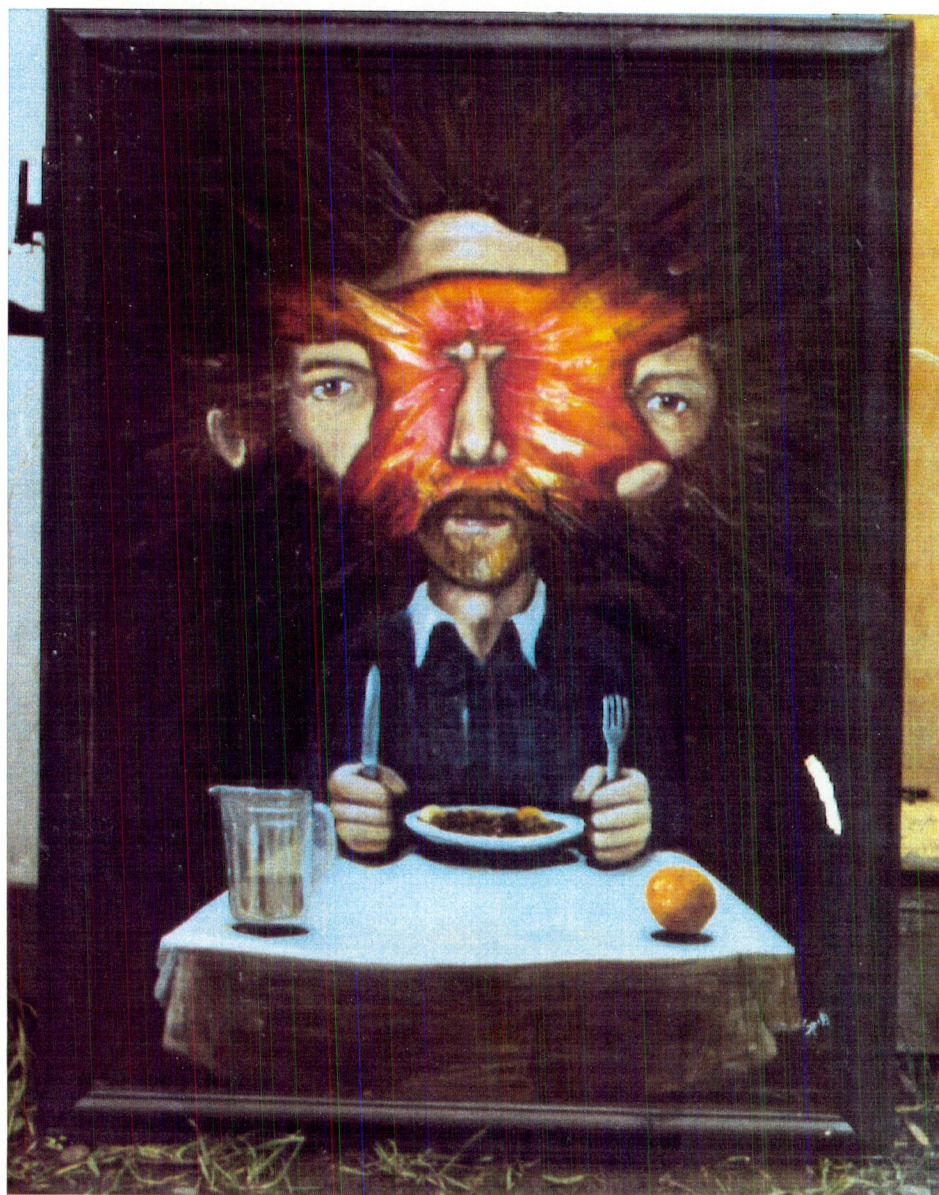
#### Endnote

No. 4 See Appendix No. 3

No. 5 See Appendix No. 4







**PLATE 5**  
**UNTITLED, MOUNTJOY PRISON.**







**PLATE 6**  
**UNTITLED, MOUNTJOY PRISON.**



## CHAPTER 4

The benefits of creation, the satisfaction men receive from the arts and also discussing exhibitions which have been held outside the prison.





The effect you make in attaining a goal depends on qualifying that effect. People in or out of prison are ordinary people who have been less fortunate than ourselves. Men are sent to prison as punishment, not for punishment. Therefore, life inside should be made less traumatic. By participating in the creative arts they enjoy themselves and relax. That is a good enough reason to have the creative arts available in prison. Sir John Verney, a Koestler Award Judge said why he thought prisoners participated in his art classes; "not especially for therapy, but because it is fun". " 'Art is noble play said Picasso. Perhaps people who end up in prison have never had enough time playing, of the kind that is creative. Too few people enjoy a really happy childhood nowadays and, therefore, do not grow up" (Gyles, 1974, pg. 104). Small minded people would disagree and say that it is a waste of Government money, but it is the duty of those who did have more time to play to be open minded and try to help others. Brian Maguire, the Dublin artist who works in prisons, was asked why he did this work. He answered with honesty, "for the money, and the fun". He does not see himself as the 'do-gooder', he is enjoying himself, so, therefore, the prisoners will also <sup>6</sup>.

One of the main words, when discussing the benefits prisoners receive from the creative arts, would have to be 'satisfaction'. People whose lives are full of frustrations should have outlets, but prison is organised frustration and what can they do? By taking part in art, satisfaction can be achieved. In prison you lack identity. This can be given back to a prisoner through his creative work by self expression. He can do something which will be considered exciting and different by an interested art teacher. Prisoners are restored with pride, they can hold up a piece of work and say 'look, I made that'. This gives the prisoner a feeling of satisfaction.

Many prisoners have come from broken homes, broken marriages and have broken hearts. They are the 'breakers down' of our world. However by 'building' something they are joining the lives of the 'builders-up', and once outside they may carry on building their hearts, their lives, their future. Prisoners have generally very little self-confidence, but, by creating art, they are creating something which gives a sense of importance, thus increasing their own confidence.





Creativity can give a prisoner a sense of achievement and a sense of being useful to the community.

It helps him to restore his greater qualities.

"Where institutional life has blunted the finer feeling and weakened the relational sensitivity, creative work is able to restore to mankind, imprisoned by his feelings and inadequacies, something of his original image" (Gyles, 1974, pg. 105),

eloquently said by an American prisoner Governor.

Jimmy Boyle, while in prison, said "I worked at a prolific rate, with most of the work based on the expressions of my pain/anger/hate/love//despair and fears embodied in it". (Boyle, 1977, pg. 251). Jimmy Boyle found a direction, a purpose and reason as opposed to playing and justification. Prisoners need to receive satisfaction out of life, they need a sense of purpose and the recognition gives them a sense of achievement. It may not be world-wide recognition, but by giving a family member something small it holds the links with the family outside, which should make life a little easier once outside prison, when you are "cut off from sex and emotionally damned up" (Gyles, 1972, pg 107). Trying to develop an inner life is difficult, though this prison experience can be one which leads to self-reliance and creativity. When faced with the prospect of not being sexually active for a number of months/years, art can help to express some of those frustrations to let some emotions lose on to a piece of paper. Not everyone is level headed and capable of coping. Some go over the top. They believe they are better than others and become too self-assured, but this rarely happens and a sensitive teacher can anticipate this happening and deal with it before it gets out of hand.

Prison is an emotionally depriving experience, depriving in every sense. Prisoners have no personal life, no identity, but through the possibilities that art offers, perhaps it offers a way of revealing past and present depravations, thus enabling prisoners to overcome these problems. As Freud remarked: "What makes a artist or a writer different from a crippled neurotic is that the artist paints or writes out his dreams and get the approval of society for doing so" (Gyles, 1979, pg. 108). If prisoners can copy the artists and writers of the world, it





will enable them to act out some of their fears and frustrations, thus enabling the creative arts to act as an outlet for all those pent-up emotions.

The Cathartic experience is discussed regularly within the prison context, you can ask does it really work? However, like everything else within the prison system you cannot say definitely. As Brian Maguire said, it 'Can do'. Jimmy Boyle, the Scottish prisoner who wrote about his life, who he was, what lead him to prison, gave the facts of his life as honestly and as openly as one can. He was not looking to be forgiven, but to explain that his past does exist and is very much part of him. By expressing these facts it must help him to realise what he has done and what he is capable of doing now. If you express what you feel inside the consequences can only be good. The Cathartic experience can work on a different level through painting your inner fears as it does by writing a book, as Boyle did.

Why is it that so many prisoners, when outside of the prison environment, forget about art? It is no longer needed? While in prison, prisoners receive a lot of attention and their views and feelings are important there and then. People listen to them in class, but once outside they are no longer special. They meet up with old friends living and work conditions are still the same. They are often back doing the same things with the same people, living their lives the same old way, which is leading them back to prison before they even realise what has happened. The security of the old life has a stronger hold on them than the so-called new life they are trying to develop. It is a lot easier to be creative within the prison for a lot of prisoners than it is to be creative outside the environment, where it is difficult to escape, for the old ties that are still very binding. For example, a Dublin prisoner, who is an elderly man serving a long prison sentence, is now creating a cartoon out of a fairy tale he wrote. I ask myself would he be doing this today if he was "on the outside"? He said that he was happy to be inside, because he has the opportunity to make his dream come true, he receives all the help and support and technical advice from the teachers <sup>7</sup>.



Being encouraged and told you have great talent is inspiring, but once you are outside, there is nobody there to continue to nurture this. If you want something bad enough you have got to try and achieve this yourself on your own. This is taking education from a negative point which encourages the fantasy which, in return, hinders the reality.

Teachers must be aware of this and bring prisoners back to reality and educate them to do it on their own. I feel they do realise this and explain that it is hard out there and you yourself can only achieve your goals.

Again, what are the benefits of creativity in prison? What Florence Nightingale said in her notes on nursing in 1860 relates to the prison situation and indicates that there are important benefits:

"the effect in sickness of brilliancy of colour is hardly at all appreciated ... people say the effect is only on the mind. It is no such thing. The effect is on the body too. Little as we know about the way we are affected by form, by colour and by light we do know this that they have an actual physical effect". (Gyles, 1974, pg. 110).

Creative art can brighten up a room, put a smile on someone's face, help a person to forget about themselves and their problems, help them to feel better about themselves, give them a craft, which can surely help to develop a person's confidence.

The ability to escape from reality depends on the level of development of the student (B. Power), but if the prisoner can escape he can question, examine and come to terms with the reality in which he exists. The creative pursuits can be used as an escape from real life. If a prisoner can forget for a while and enjoy a few hours of a restful mind then this has proven to be very effective.

Before a prisoner can escape, he must first want to create. What drives a person to create? According to Harriet Wadeson: "What visual artists are about originally derives from a basic drive to understand and grasp the world through sight" (Bloom-Cooper, 1974 pg. 42). A prisoner has hours to contemplate his life, boredom makes him look to himself, to question himself as to whom he really is. Then unawares he can grasp his life through paint, creativity, he can question what he does, who he is and where he is going in his life.





The creative arts can help him to sort out his mind "the creative are less likely to suffer from their psychopathology; because they are fortunate enough to have a better way than the average person of coping with their inner tension (Bloom-Cooper, 1974, pg. 17). If this works for an artist, then when a prisoner is creating art it should help him to sort out inner tensions.

"Man may be driven to produce an original conception by his need to defend himself against depression or by the feeling that he must restore what he has in fantasy destroyed. He must be impelled by the need to reunite himself with a world from which he feels alienated, and thus come to build creative bridges between subjective and objective. He may experience a compulsion to impose order upon a world which he feels to be chaotic or, more simply, wish to compensate in fantasy for what he feels to be missing in reality" (Gyles, 1972, pg. 56).

Basically man needs to understand himself, he needs to know where he stands in his world. Prisoners are taken out of their worlds and thrown into new ones. To come to terms with this he must realise that art can build bridges, it can fill the unreal situation with reality or it can act out fantasies which he is having. All freedom is taken away from prisoners. The creative arts can give them a sense of that freedom. Plate 3 is an example of this, this is a fantasy world, the open sea, ship sailing with the breeze pushing it onwards. The prisoner is fulfilling a fantasy. He can not be out there in body, but he can be in spirit.

Being conservative, prisoners wish all their paintings to look 'good'. The greatest roadblock in creating self expression is performance, the fear of your work not being recognised by your peers. The only way to overcome this is not to put such an emphasis on the finished product, but unfortunately everyone is interested in what it will look like in the end. Encouragement and gentle pushing from the teachers will help. It is a slow process and only a few will reach their goals in the end. Bernie Power said that it happened rarely and only with great difficulty. There does not seem to be much hope for the arts on a long-term basis, but if the art classes in prison can help a prisoner's time to be less destructive and more enjoyable, then it has won its purpose to be there. It may not be changing the criminals of the world drastically, but each time you have helped a prisoner think once, they





may think twice the next time they are outside. "The work for example for a moment re-orders and brings into balance the tensions of form and space, and in so doing moderates the inner tension of the observer giving him a sense of encounter and fulfilment" (Bloom-Cooper, 1974, pg. 36).

The need for encouragement is vital within a prison context, hence the reasoning behind exhibitions. A lot of prisoners like the idea that the public can go and view their work. Their families can stand by their paintings and be proud of them. Also, there can be financial gain involved. Most of the work is for sale and at reasonable prices. The "Irish Times" on Thursday June 18th 1987 wrote about the exhibition of prisoners work from Mountjoy Training Unit.

"As a means of self-expression and self-examination their art work is powerful. Particularly in photography, it combines the aesthetic strength of pushing a medium experimentally, with the obsessive viewpoint which any form of visual expression needs".

Plate 7 is an example of this photography. When one is discussing the aesthetic value of the creative arts one must go back in time to when primitive man first depicted animals on cave walls. It was not for its aesthetic value but a practical rite designed to help him, in his pursuit of the animal. In the prison context it would be the prisoners pursuit of self-exploration or simply the passing of time. We would not dismiss a cave painting; likewise we should not dismiss prison art.

For prisoners it is generally their first time creating something to be proud of. Therefore, by putting their work on show it gives prisoners an ego boost which will lead to more self-confidence. Also, by exhibiting their work it acts as a reminder to the public that prisoners do exist, that they are human with rights, and we should become more aware of why we have place of detention. Is there anything we can do to give these people a better start in life and to stop the high numbers entering the prisons?

The self portrait is the most revealing and this is how prisoners see themselves. Plate 8 shows a portrait of a prisoner in Portlaoise Prison. Caroline Lynch wrote a review on an exhibition of prisoners from the Portlaoise prison, which was held at the National College of Art and





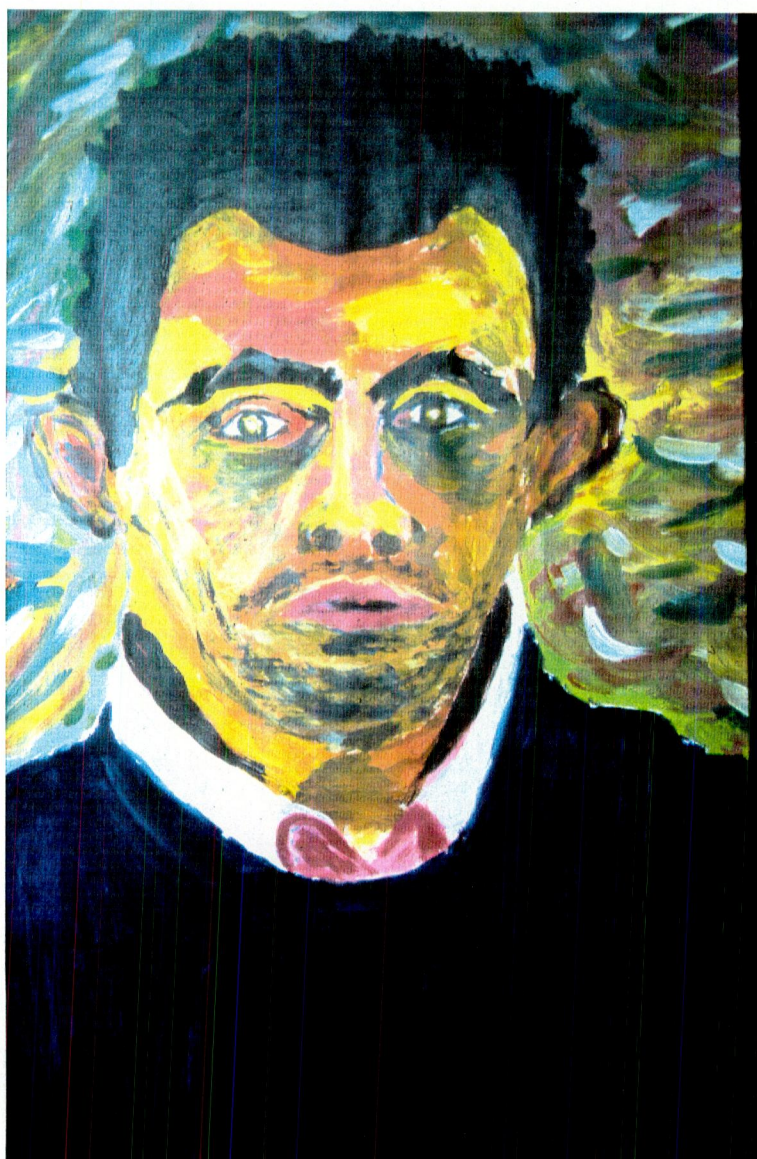
One of the exhibits in the show of prisoners' work at the ILAC Centre. — (Picture: The Training

**PLATE 7**  
**PHOTOGRAPH, MOUNTJOY PRISON .**









**PLATE 8**  
**PORTRAIT, PORTLAOIS PRISON.**



Design in Dublin in May 1992. She suggested that the work illustrated the contrast between the starkness of prison life and freedom outside the prison walls (The Sunday Tribune, 1992, pg. 5). "The National College of Art and Design director, John Turpin, hailed the 'excellent quality of the work'. He thanked the Justice Department for seeing the value of art and backing the initiative" (The Irish Times, 1992, pg. 2). When inside prison, the only contact prisoners have with their families and friends is through visits, but most importantly through letters; they can receive as many letters as they wish. One prisoner showed his views on this by reconstructing a cell with the furniture lined with letters to show the importance of correspondence (Plate 9).

'Imagination on temporary release' was a show of Cork Prisoners art work in 1989, which was held at the Triskal Arts Centre in Cork. Brian Maguire was the visiting artist and he wrote in the catalogue

"to show work in public is to offer a gift, without conditions, to the public. Often this is done with the expectation of nothing but abuse and ridicule. We should respect the courage of each of these men in allowing their work to enter this strange new place, the Triskal Art Centre, as they say, on temporary release for our benefit".

The prisoners' work stands proudly on its own, whether in Cork, Dublin, London or New York. It is their work, it has its own heights, its own limitations, but it is what it is.

When a prisoner was asked what he felt about art, he said "art is not only a means of expression for the prisoners it is also a form of escapism .... It is the secret of doing time. When you have achieved something like this it doesn't feel like those years were wasted". So why should the work not stand proud and let the world see what these people do? Inside the wall, inside the gate, inside the locked door, inside the cell.

Endnote:

No. 6 See Appendix 1

No. 7 See Appendix 4







**PLATE 9**  
**INSTALLATION, PORTLAOISE PRISON.**



## CONCLUSION

"'Doing time' is difficult for free people to imagine, it is tedious, dangerous and unpredictable. Any decision which is made or action taken may lead to punishment or death. It is an environment of violence and fear where inmates must take refuge in emotional numbness and self protective paranoia" (Cleveland, 1992, pg. 2).

However, prison life can also be the height of activity with people taking political classes, art classes, yoga and business studies. The choices are numerous. Classes within the Irish prison education system are fun, but serious when necessary. The prisoners 'time' is made as easy as possible for them.

As I have proven, the creative arts in prison are in high demand and it is up to the people in charge of prison education policies that the highest quality of teaching reaches the students. The Department of Justice has a budget of £335,000 to spend on educational resources and a further £2 million for teachers pay. The present system, as I have found out, is not perfect but has come a long way from its original aims in the last 10 years. Nevertheless, with the widening of subjects being made available and an increase in visiting artists and lecturers invited into the prison, the education system can only improve.

Throughout my research I have found that prisoners do not change drastically from attending the art classes once outside and that the search for a brilliant student is not a priority; but if one is found, all the after-care help and encouragement is given to that student by the teachers themselves and by people in positions of power.

The benefits have been proven and the question has been answered, art in prison is of great importance to the ordinary prisoner, but there is room for improvement. I have given the last words of my thesis to a prisoner, as Catherine Coakley (Cork prison Art teacher) said he wished to continue art once released which only proves my point that the value of art education within the Irish prison system is of great importance.





"But when I get out, I'll make a new life  
and stay away from the bar for a start  
because if I don't I know for sure  
I will be definately be very good at art.  
Art in prison has kept me human and not the animal  
some of them regard me. Art in prison can have  
many positivie benefits, the main one being psychological: They can't  
touch me, my thinking, my beliefs, my fears, my happiness in my art  
world. It's the Great Escape" (Coakley, 1990, pg. 5).



## APPENDICES

- No. 1      Questionnaire with Brian Maguire.
- No. 2      Questionnaire with Bernie Power.
- No. 3      Examples of prisoners views on workshops  
                 with Brian Maguire.
- No. 4      Examples of questionnaire answered by  
                 prisoners.





1. Why do you think the Government has provided facilities for the creative arts?

Yes - with all kinds of restrictions. - security restricts  
but you <sup>150,000</sup> / 250,000 / shut fall in education budget. - budgets restrict  
taken up by overtime not being used.

2. Why is there education in prisons?

for the same reason it's in  
society: - i.e. to educate people.

3. 'Prison education has been most successful when it has seen its role as primarily educative and immediate - not futuristic' Do you agree?

yes.

4. Do you have previous education in the teaching profession?

yes.

5. Have you completed any Art Therapy courses?

no

6. Is Art Therapy considered a self-indulgent luxury in most prisons today?

There is the therapy good but not in prison.

7. What do you see as the role of Art Therapy in prison?

yes/no - without therapy i.e. medical / spiritual  
area not with education.

8. How do you get the class relaxed and in a friendly environment?

of course, by being honest.

9. One of the greatest roadblocks to creative self-expressions is performance. How do you overcome this with your students?

pubbish honest crash out of performance +  
commitment to a few sessions to show  
improvement. - democratic manner of education.

10. Dealing with a group on different levels according to the needs of the different prisoners must be difficult, how do you deal with this?

like 4th years.



11. How do you prompt the way of bringing the inside out?

with very little, other than discussion,

12. When you see someone in trouble, say when mixing paint, how do you know when to interfere or if to interfere at all?

The rule is not to point at the student painting  
after it can be that a point is best demonstrated by  
you (the teacher) making a piece.

13. Why are you in the teaching profession?

for the money & the fun.

14. When setting up an Art class, do you make a set out objectives for yourself?  
What are they?

yes - to discover hidden talent.

15. What do you see as your role in the prison?

lighting the atmosphere, educating, being an  
artist in a small tight community

16. What in your opinion is the point of Art classes?

time out, a freedom of expression, metaphysical,  
philosophical,

17. Do prisoners ever question the purpose of their Art work, 'Why bother doing any'. What would be your reply?

as long as the line between the work & the prisoner  
is shut the answer quite doesn't arise except where  
it has broader context e.g. in depression.

18. What happens to prisoners while they paint?

they have fun, serious fun

19. Do prisoners have view points on their work? How do you get them to discuss it?  
Do you discuss it on a one to one basis or in groups?

yes. by facilitation, yes to both.

20. What sort of obstacles do you normally come up against?

conservatism,

in that case you deal with the  
whole person from a position of you being another human  
being not as a teacher.





21. Creating Art can be a confidence builder, does this bear any relation towards other educational factors? Or 'outside' life?

*this is what occurs in prison once after left behind when prisoner ceases to be a prisoner.*

22. Art acts as a form of 'Escapism' but the 'illusions of art are made to serve the purpose of closer and truer relation to reality'. Do you think this is true in the case of prisoners?

*yes - understood that escapism is not an overriding of reality but a transcendence of reality in which reality is embraced, examined, understood.*

23. Art is a key to survival. Do you think this is true in the prison context?

*for some way 7/14/.*

24. Do you push the prisoners towards self-expression? Do you have any influence on their work?

*yes, yes, though in my you might not see overtly.*

25. Is Art an antidote to boredom?

*yes.*

26. Prisoners who take up the pen and paintbrush are not consciously searching for a cathartic experience but through painting and writing does the cathartic experience work?

*can do.*

27. What do you suggest prisoners use when first starting off? (material wise)

*pen, paint,*

28. The advantages of the creative arts in prison are considerable. What are they?

*The advantages, drawbacks, risks, are the same as any other area, but here to turn to their own needs.*

29. Could you give me any examples of your students who have improved and developed through Art?

*not for publication, if you want to know here you must first get in touch with the people concerned.*

THANK YOU





## QUESTIONNAIRE

NO. 2

1. Why do you think the Government has provided facilities for the creative arts?

Its one of the functions of Government  
to fund services

2. Why is there education in prisons?

Because prisoners have a right  
to education

3. 'Prison education has been most successful when it has seen its role as primarily educative and immediate - not futuristic' Do you agree?

yes

4. Do you have previous education in the teaching profession?

yes

5. Have you completed any Art Therapy courses?

yes

6. Is Art Therapy considered a self-indulgent luxury in most prisons today?

No - it is not provided as most  
prisoners don't necessarily need "therapy"  
education yes - but not "therapy".

7. What do you see as the role of Art Therapy in prison?

If there are particular prisoners with psychological  
problems - perhaps then as part of a broader  
program - but not in isolation - or as part of

8. How do you get the class relaxed and in a friendly environment? art education

By making it a "safe" environment within the  
context of a prison environment which is quite  
the opposite.

9. One of the greatest roadblocks to creative self-expressions is performance. How do you overcome this with your students?

with great difficulty - it rarely happens

10. Dealing with a group on different levels according to the needs of the different prisoners must be difficult, how do you deal with this?

By dealing with each student individually  
- I have tried group projects but without  
any real success - each student has his own  
agenda



11. How do you prompt the way of bringing the inside out?  
Most prisoners ~~are~~ don't need any prompting
12. When you see someone in trouble, say when mixing paint, how do you know when to interfere or if to interfere at all?  
It depends on the individual concerned
13. Why are you in the teaching profession?  
It pays reasonably well, it's permanent and the holidays are great, why else?
14. When setting up an Art class, do you make a set out objectives for yourself?  
What are they?  
My objective is to provide my students with any professional help which they may require to attain their self set goals, not mine.
15. What do you see as your role in the prison?  
My role is to take as many prisoners off the units each day and keep them as quiet as possible.
16. What in your opinion is the point of Art classes?  
Do ~~art~~ classes have to have a point? It could be recreational, it could be to develop self image, it could be . . . . .
17. Do prisoners ever question the purpose of their Art work, 'Why bother doing any'. What would be your reply?  
If they don't want to do any work then they shouldn't be there - there must be some self motivation when working with adults.
18. What happens to prisoners while they paint?  
The same as happens to non-prisoners
19. Do prisoners have view points on their work? How do you get them to discuss it?  
Do you discuss it on a one to one basis or in groups?  
Yes, they love to discuss their work, sometimes on a one to one, sometimes as a group.
20. What sort of obstacles do you normally come up against?  
Gates, doors, prison officers, management and that's before I get to the classroom.





21. Creating Art can be a confidence builder, does this bear any relation towards other educational factors? Or 'outside' life?

Of course it does.

22. Art acts as a form of 'Escapism' but the 'illusions of art are made to serve the purpose of closer and truer relation to reality'. Do you think this is true in the case of prisoners?

Depends on the level of development of the student.

23. Art is a key to survival. Do you think this is true in the prison context?

Every prisoner finds some form of survival in prison, for some, its art.

24. Do you push the prisoners towards self-expression? Do you have any influence on their work?

Yes, Yes.

25. Is Art an antidote to boredom?

Yes.

26. Prisoners who take up the pen and paintbrush are not consciously searching for a cathartic experience but through painting and writing does the cathartic experience work?

Sometimes

27. What do you suggest prisoners use when first starting off? (material wise)

What they feel most confident with usually pencils / marker / pens.

28. The advantages of the creative arts in prison are considerable. What are they?

... they are considerable. - -

29. Could you give me any examples of your students who have improved and developed through Art?

Geraldine - I'm sorry I took so long to fill this questionnaire for you - but when I read your questions they just made me

THANK YOU

feel very angry - Yet another thesis from

N.C.A.D. culled from reading through  
other peoples research, which was probably  
based on yet other research with no real  
fieldwork whatsoever, You dont say  
in your letter what area you are in,  
whether education, fine art or whatever,  
If you are interested in det in Prisons  
then the only way to find out  
about it is to come into the prison  
and talk to the guys yourself and you  
would be most welcome to Wheatfield -  
If your main interest is in writing a  
thesis as quickly as possible that will  
help you get your degree, then why  
bother with questionnaires - just make  
up the answers yourself - after all thats  
what the last student<sup>die</sup> who wrote a thesis  
on the subject that I read - can't remember  
her name at the moment, but she misquoted and  
misnamed most of her sources. Anyway, either  
way - best of luck with your degree - and  
remember, the only standards you must maintain  
are your own

≡ Bernadette Power  
Wheatfield.



4

NO. 3

1

I think that the idea here is to explain the impact of the 'workshop' so far on myself <sup>is concerned</sup> and how I feel about it, and perhaps offer a limited and hopefully constructive criticism. I have most likely already done this in our discussions, so I will, briefly, in 4 or 5 points lay out the experience and make a few suggestions at the end, as well as mentioning some problems.

The central point of the whole experience is meeting a professional contemporary artist. Being able to discuss with Brian the Why? and How? of his painting and also seeing his work in the flesh, so to speak, (Our first experience of seeing paintings) shored both the weakness of my own experience <sup>ability</sup> and at the same time the possibility of breaking free of all self and externally imposed constraints.

The experience has broadened my views of the possibilities of painting and has injected a desire, and the energy to express the things that concern myself. In everyone I see a shift from eclecticism, ~~and~~ outright copying, from a desire for naturalism and realism, and a concern with form, to a desire to express feelings, emotions, beliefs and past <sup>present</sup> experiences, a shift that is to a concern for content and not just technique. I think the above expresses the personal satisfaction I have achieved through the workshops and explains, briefly, the direction the workshop has taken, and should continue to do so.

The problems that have arose are obvious and probably unsolvable & due to our location. The limited time of each session while ~~not~~ helped in some way,





Always seems to leave so much unsaid and undone, it means that many subjects (paintings) could just not be tackled. The limits in size of canvases, boards, or paper etc. and to one medium, pushes one back into the constraints that one is struggling out of.

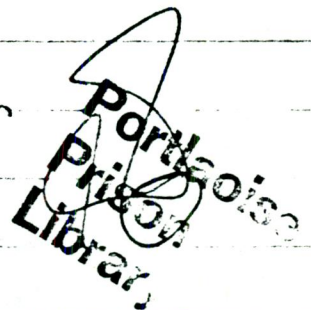
for discussion. If I could finally offer a few suggestions that might overcome, to some degree, the time problem, and offer some continuity from week to week, and for the course overall, I'm suggesting that we be given something to do in the week between workshops, perhaps continuing where we left off in the workshop, a discussion and critique of work done could then start each workshop. It might also be worthwhile to attempt a longer term project to be finished by the end of the course, this would be started a few weeks into the course and criticized right through.

In conclusion I would like to express my general satisfaction with the whole course and sincere appreciation to Brian for his efforts and help to us, and I suggest that the seeds sown now ~~should now~~ should be followed up overtime.

15 Miss Re Mess

Proinsias

Corrigh



P.S. excuse the mess





(3)

NO. 3

Dear Brian

Just a few words to let you know what I think of the Art Class.

I found the foundation course given by you, to be of great value to me. Before the class I was having great trouble coming to terms with the "Acrylic Medium". I now have a better idea of how to use the different mediums, Gels, Retards, Glosses, etc.

I have more control over my palette ever since the color wheel was explained to me. When mixing the colors I use to be left with a lot of much of colors that were of little value to me.

I now have the ability to paint a picture by using only the three primary colors plus white.

I have learnt about secondary colors, and complementry. I've also learnt about warm and cold colors, and how they describe mood, time, space, etc. and how the colors are used to give you the three dimensional picture.

After your talks on the different artists, I now have a better understanding of what art is.

Instead of looking for pictures to





copy. I now find my self, thinking of what would make an interesting picture. I never would have done this before the class.

I've enjoyed the slide-show, and the talks on art every bit as much as I did the actual painting.

I would like before the course ends for you to write out a list of books similar to the ones you brought in for us to study. I think this would be of great value to us all.

The only thing I can say bad about the class is, The studio could do with a few wall lights. I find it very hard to distinguish color when I'm painting shadows.

I like the way you collect or work at the end of the day, so that we can compare and make comments on them. I think this helps every one in the class to be more understanding of one's work.

As a finishing note, I don't mind telling you, I for one am very happy with the class. I only wish it was for a longer period.

With fond regards

Peter Rogers





2

NO.3

1 Class brought me face to face with my prejudices regarding painting. Indeed I would suggest that the tutorials forced each class member to overcome his prejudices with the result that people now tend to be more supportive when one tries something innovative and when critical offer constructive criticism.

2

Tutorials taught me to be more liberal with the paints, to loosen up in the use of different colours, not to be afraid to vary brushes and brush strokes.

3

Tutorials taught me to be just creative, not to hang back if you felt like painting something you felt strongly about, in a language peculiar to oneself and, in any particular fashion that took ones fancy. We were encouraged to think about a subject then draw on, start back, observe closely, think again about it and, draw on again.

4

Tutorials taught me how to use colours and, how colours can be used to indicate a mood.





5

Tutorials taught me how to achieve these dimensions.

6

Tutorials taught me how to achieve perspective

7

Tutorials taught me how and when to stand back to achieve a proper overview,

8

Tutorials taught me how to position a subject, how your eyes are drawn to a particular object - and thereafter led around the painting

9

Tutorials introduced us to the work of living artists.

I feel that the class was somewhat restricted, because of the lack of varied materials on which to paint, class was confined to hardboard and waterpaper, both 24" by 16". Materials on which to paint of widely different essential,

Also the ten weeks course which very helpful is of insufficient length, and, ideally, should be extended indefinitely.

2. Dean





MM  
NO.4

ART QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello my name is Geraldine, I am preparing for my thesis next year in the National College of Art & Design and I would be very grateful if you would answer my questions as I am extremely interested in the work that you are doing.

Thank you very much. mr Eastwood.







## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How often during the week do you attend Art classes?

3 days a week

2. Did you do Art before you came into Prison? Where?

yes, in school and Shangang Open prison

3. Do you enjoy the classes? Why?

yes i do very much, Because it pass's the time away and i'm still learning. plus i love making a mess

4. What materials do you enjoy using?

well Acrylics is easier and more forward and it dries more quickly, the oils are ok But takes longer to dry and to Master.

6. Do you like 3-D work (modelling, sculpture etc)? Why?

i do but Unfortunately, i havent had the chance of the following.↑







7. Do you find the classes helpful? How?

well the teachers are helpful and,  
can pick + choose and do my own thing

8. Do you work in your cell? What kind of work?

i used to work in my cell last year  
But i was using acrylic then. i like to  
paint demons + Angels + ghosts etc.

9. Do the classes help you express your feelings?

well nearly everything i do is out of my  
own head which seems to be all evil  
so it helps me express my feelings

10. Do the classes help you to come to terms with where you are? How?

well i've improved alot and the art  
only keeps my mind off the rest of the jail

12. Do you like using your imagination in Art? Why?

yes as i said its all out of my own head  
and its good that to no nobody else has  
another drawing like it!







13. Do you prefer to copy from other paintings/photographs?  
Why?

no not Really only if i take a  
liking to a Certain Picture and i also  
do family Photo's

14. What do you think of your work going on exhibition?

well i Send Most of my work home  
But if they were here and finished i  
wouldnt mind

14. Does Art help you with other subjects?

no it only clears whats in my mind.

15. Would you like to carry on Art when you leave? If the  
answer is yes, what would you like to do?

i would like to, but there is loads of  
Competition and it gets boring Sometimes  
and Evil + Devil Work Suits me fine







NO. 4

ART QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello my name is Geraldine, I am preparing for my thesis next year in the National College of Art & Design and I would be very grateful if you would answer my questions as I am extremely interested in the work that you are doing.

Thank you very much.

Kenn Kawaguchi







## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How often during the week do you attend Art classes?

5 Times a week

2. Did you do Art before you came into Prison? Where?

No

3. Do you enjoy the classes? Why?

YES. Because it allows me to pursue  
a life long ambition to create a Cartoon film.

4. What materials do you enjoy using?

Acrylic Paints

6. Do you like 3-D work (modelling, sculpture etc)? Why?

I do a lot of paper sculpture which is in  
many respects unique.







7. Do you find the classes helpful? How?

Yes. Our teacher Chris Jones is a most patient and encouraging man. He and six others including my self are engaged in making a fifteen minute animated version of a fairy tale I wrote.

8. Do you work in your cell? What kind of work?

Yes I do most of my paper sculpture in my cell as well as making soft toys. I am by profession a toy designer. I also study for my open University and my french class. I got a B ADVANCED IN THE HEAVENS CERT

9. Do the classes help you express your feelings?

Yes, very much so. I find the teachers most encouraging and kind to even the most difficult students, though students might be going overboard a little.

10. Do the classes help you to come to terms with where you are? How?

They do in the fact that they are interesting and help me to forget that none of my family have ever visited me or forgiving me. And at 72 yrs of age it helps to soften an ease the hurt

12. Do you like using your imagination in Art? Why?

I do. I have a very fertile imagination and it gives me a chance to express myself more than I ever had a chance or the time to do outside these walls







13. Do you prefer to copy from other paintings/photographs?  
Why?

No. I am not so interested in painting as such.  
I love animation and have always since seeing  
Snow White when I worked as a messenger boy in  
Moore street

14. What do you think of your work going on exhibition?

I hope when we finish this picture that many  
people will be able to see it. There is an innocence and  
a beauty in cartoon films that one never sees in  
real life.

14. Does Art help you with other subjects?

I find it about the best form of therapy in the world.  
Better than Valium or the old ~~psy~~ psychiatrist couch.  
For with it one can enter a whole new world of make  
believe. Where one can create a world of love and care  
and everyone lives happily ever after.

15. Would you like to carry on Art when you leave? If the  
answer is yes, what would you like to do?

I doubt I will live to see beyond these walls for by  
then I will be seventy six and every day I live  
in here is a bonus. But should I live to get out I  
would like to work at the things I love till I die.







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