

THE POLICE

WOOD-CARVING

by Anthony
Manning

Anthony Manning
Thesis

No.
163

T137



SANCTA MARIA

By Peter Grant, A.N.C.A., woodcarving, Church of
Christ the King, Cabra. (By courtesy of V. Rev. Canon
D. O'Connell, P.P.)

THESIS

WOODCARVING

(Why not teach woodcarving in Dublin Secondary Schools -
it would open the eyes of the children more)

BY: ANTHONY MANNING

LINDA RONSTANT.

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CHAPTER 1:WOODCARVING (MAIN THESIS)

I first experienced carving wood in my 2nd Year Diploma at the National College of Art and Design. Before this I had carved stone but I had seen wood carving being done and I was fairly confident that I could do it. However, I was mistaken and failed, and before I could get any where I had to learn the nature of wood whereas you can compare stone and wood. My treatment of the wood was much the same as my treatment of the stone. I had treated wood as I would stone, so the first thing the students must learn and come to understand through carving is the nature of the material. They must learn it is soft except with very hard wood which just requires a little heavier mallet.

So we give them a piece of wood and get them to appreciate and know about what they are handling and are going to make something out of it.

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CHAPTER 2:WOODCARVING

So why not teach craft in Secondary Schools. Why not teach woodcarving? It would be a completely new subject. It would require a completely new way of thinking. This experience would be also very necessary as some students are bound to opt for jobs that require skill when they are leaving so that craft woodcarving would give them the edge and a start.

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CHAPTER 3:

It would be a completely new subject and way of thinking. Thinking in three dimensions is quite demanding. First of all you have got to plan ahead and know your design. Secondly you must think of your technique and also your approach. Then most of all, you have got to combine your sense of sight, your inner eye and your sense of touch. You must think of the back while you are carving the front and this develops a further awareness of form.

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CHAPTER 4:

This craft is truly education through the senses and not only the sense of sight is used but also the sense of touch. This is finally how you smooth a surface by touching. The smell of wood also adds to the experience. At the end of it all we have expression (expressing oneself through form).

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CHAPTER 5:

Surely this is what our aim is - to educate the child not necessarily to produce an artist. As Aristotle said "There was nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses". And did not Montessori discover how the tactile sense was a sure way to develop and prepare the child for writing. He uses the sense of touch a great deal. Is it not marvellous how a blind person can recognise a face by feeling it? Now woodcarving combines this sense of touch with the sense of sight and the two working together advance the child and open his awareness. That is the theory - God only knows what it might be in practice - but if we take the right approach and know our aim surely it can succeed.

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CHAPTER 6:


The sense of sight is also greatly enhanced because we are going through changes with the wood. If the children are taught to take it easy and also to enjoy themselves, then it will work that they will gradually begin to see more fully and not only that, but will form an opinion on form for themselves.

I gave a Second Year class an exercise, a lesson which was as follows.

They started out with a slip of paper and a sheet of cartridge paper and a pencil. They divided the sheet up into nine squares and in the first square they did a drawing of the piece of paper, in the second they made one fold with the paper and drew it, in the third it was two folds until finally in the ninth it was eight folds. Now the interesting thing about it was that they all ended up with a form and the most interesting thing was that through understanding the form they drew it well. (I must admit some of them did not do so brilliant but all made a good attempt and some were excellent). Now my point here is that it would be the same with a piece of wood if it is approached the right way. They would in other words create and make something they can understand.

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CHAPTER 7:

However, I am not advocating that we should abandon 2D work as I think that this is also very interesting. But why not also have a craft — after all it is on the curriculum for the Inter and Leaving Certificates. So the schools should take this up and do something about it. It is done on the Continent so why can't we see the value of it and introduce it more fully here.

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CHAPTER 8:

They (the students) come from an English or Maths Class or language which has no practical value at all and come into an atmosphere of work and practice. They handle tools . This gives them skill as they get to know how to use them. They take a piece of wood, it smells good, it becomes their own and they learn the nature of the material. They make a design in three dimensions which has infinite possibilities in profession when they leave. They make a clay model, handling another material. This helps in differentiating between the materials they know. They are going to learn to manipulate the wood.

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CHAPTER 9:

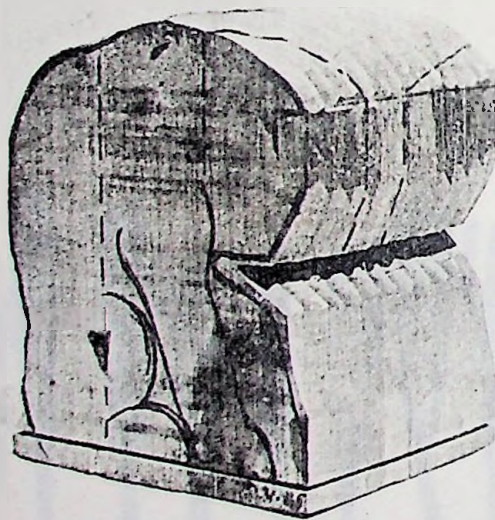
MAKING THE DESIGN

They will be asked to make a design to suit a piece of wood given to them. Now this piece of wood will belong to them so they are given something which they can be personal about. The rough design is worked out roughly and is finalised with tracing paper until the design attains to perfection. We can then go on to working a model from a piece of clay and when we have a rough idea of what we want we go on to the block of wood. The design making prepares them for the block so that they have a rough idea of what to do.

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CHAPTER 10:

We then go on to drawing an outline on two opposite sides of the block and we are ready to begin.



a

Fig. 57 (a) Profile drawn on wood and shap

Outline on a block

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CHAPTER II:

Just to go on now to talk about the tools they will use. The basic tools necessary are the following:

Carpenter's Chisel

Number 4 + Number 6 half inch gouge.

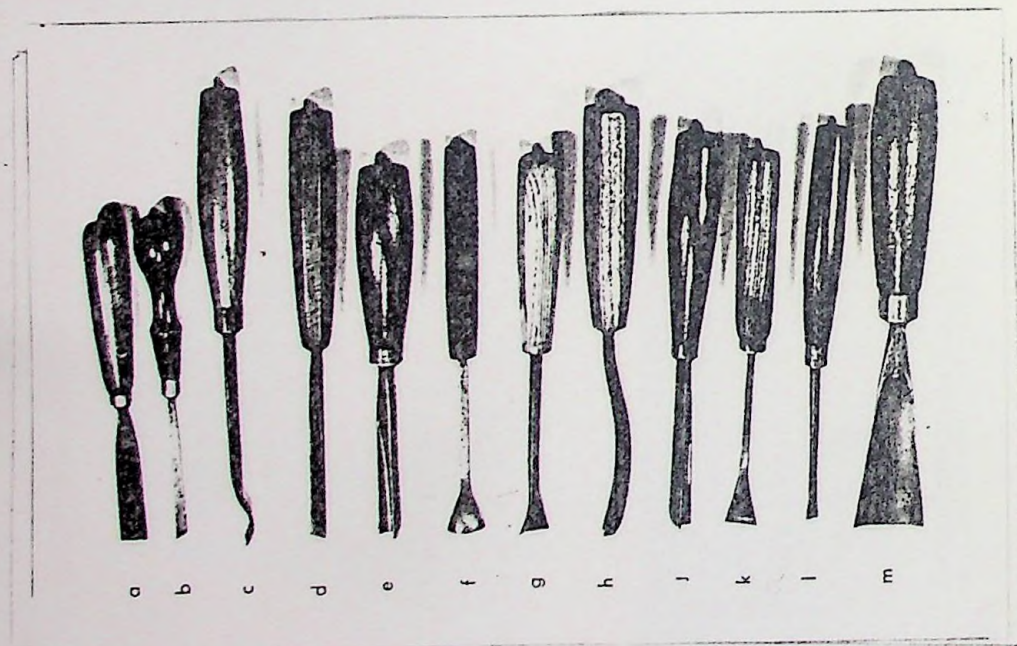
Number 5 + Number 8 quarter inch gouge

Number 39 $\frac{1}{4}$ inch parting tool

and lastly

Number 11 three sixteenth flutter

Now an atmosphere of the preciousness of tools and also teaching them how to hold and use the tools develops skill. Tools should also be kept sharp and oil and indian stone are used in this. There is a skill necessary here also. It is of course necessary to have a mallet which I forgot to mention.



Tools

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Next it would be necessary to teach them something about the wood they are going to carve. How it grows and how it is composed, where it comes from, types of wood and the nature of wood.

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CHAPTER 12:

Let me just reassure you that children get a great kick out of carving wood and children especially get a great thrill out of whittling which could be a good introduction to the craft. Whittling is indeed a part of wood carving but it is a craft in itself really. Figures 3 and 4 are good examples of whittling. However, to get back to carving: figures 5, 6, 7 and 7 are examples of childrens work. In them we can see simplicity and imagination in the forms. Notice how the wood grain is used. This also would be an important thing to think about. I won't go into the reasons why but these pictures of carvings by children speak for themselves. Don't you think they have that beautiful childish feeling about them?

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Figures: 3 + 4 Whittling

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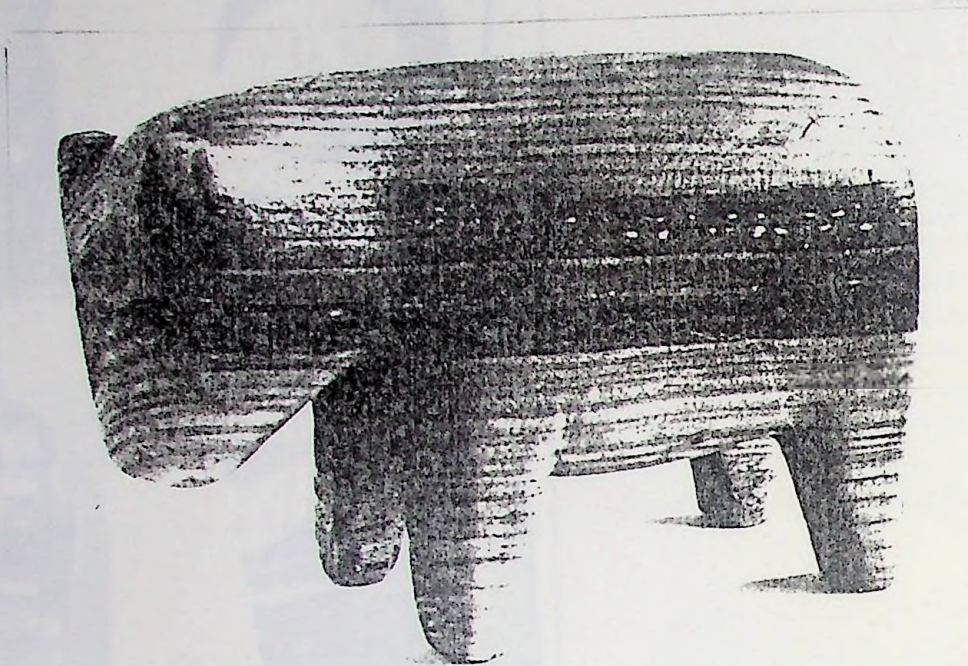


Figure 5

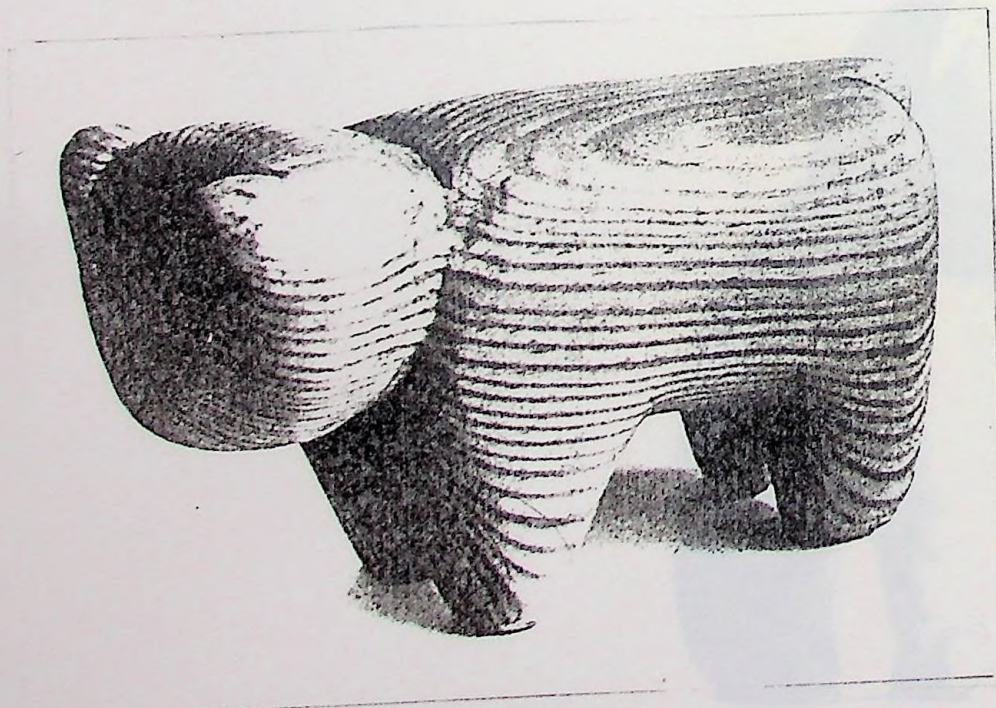


Figure 6

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Figure 7



Figure 8

26 C 14 Scotch Pine

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CHAPTER 13:CARVING THE WOOD

Now this is where it all begins — the satisfaction of the first blow learning self control. Doing with patience. Patience is a very important thing to learn, and wood carving teaches patience because it is not a fast process. As well as this, you have plenty of time to think and also you have a lot to think about. Problems have to be solved — i.e. How does this form join with that form? How am I going to make the shape even? How will I make the eyes in a head? How do I make a round shape? A shape with plains or a mixture of both? Where do I start? But the thrill of the first piece is also an experience. Hammering, paring, cutting, chipping, outlining, all the time shaping and finally smoothing the form. It is great fun but it is also a great experience. Its an eye opener. Then later we could go on to lettering, lathe work and relief. Lets now go on to some of my own and others work and discuss them and see what they reveal.

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PART 2 - CHAPTER 1:MY OWN WORK

I am going to talk about figures A, B, C and D. I have slowly followed and learned the craft of woodcarving. In figure A I tackled the wood as though it were a piece of stone and failed in my task. You see you must treat wood gently and gradually whereas stone can be treated with harshness and speed (when you get proficient at it). You must be patient. In figure B we see a piece of relief carving. I started with a drawing and a design. I then proceeded to make many different models. I then drew an outline on my piece of wood and began to carve.

The effect of colour and form is achieved by cutting into the form at different angles. It is also important to place your relief with the light coming from a side. My figure is in high relief, that is with the background down and the form prominent and this helps in catching light.



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CHAPTER 2:

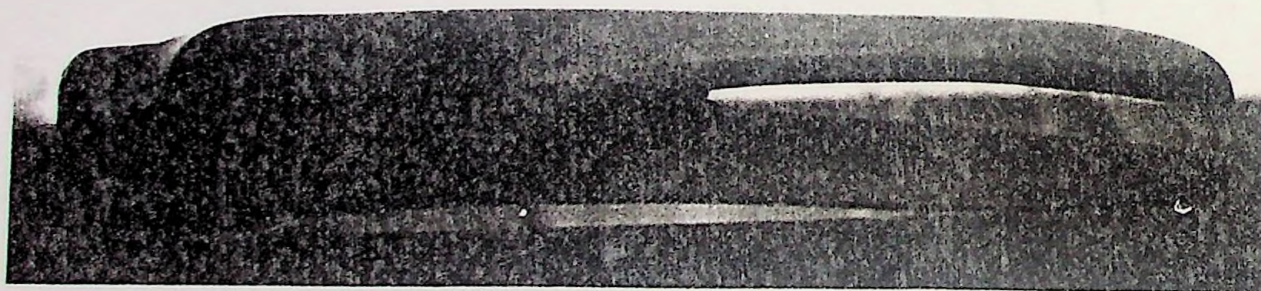
This brings me to figure C. It is a piece of yew wood and I carved it from a block about 3 feet high by 4 inches thick by 7 inches wide. I use the outline method on it and I did this with a wide carpenter's chisel. I had learned a great deal about tools in this one, especially sanding and smoothing tools. It is a beautiful feeling to smooth something and then feel it.



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CHAPTER 3:

Figure D is round and plane combined and this is a great technique. It is a well finished piece and was carved from a log.



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CHAPTER 4:

I would like to say here that woodcarving should not be used to make artists but rather to educate the child. I feel also from my experience that woodcarving creates in pupils balance of mind, increased awareness, thinking in 3 dimensions. But most of all letting the child think for himself.

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CHAPTER 5:

I have gone through all the stages of the craft and in my work I have explored and learned about the nature of the material.

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PART 3 - CHAPTER 1:WOODCARVINGS IN DUBLIN

I have learned patience and perseverance. Also I have learned the technique necessary in the craft. I have succeeded in carving forms both in relief and in three dimensions so there is a wealth of information that I can now pass on.

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CHAPTER 2:SOME WOODCARVINGS IN DUBLIN

There is also a good history to the craft and examples of furniture carving and figure carving abound. Slides 1, 2, 3 and 4 are from the National Museum and they have a history worth teaching. Also if we were going to polychrome the wood, they would come in very useful.

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CHAPTER 3:

Figure 9 is a Statue of Our Lady of Dublin and the history of which all Dublin children should know. It has been compared to sculptures in Henry VII Chapel. It is a life size figure in oak holding the Infant Jesus. It was originally polychromed but the white wash that was on it in 1914 was removed and with it went the paint. It was found by a member of the Priory in a Dublin shop but before this, during the reformation, it was disгарded. At one stage it was used as a big trough, so the story goes. You see these statues were hollowed out at the back to keep them from cracking.

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CHAPTER 4:

It is a beautiful piece of carving the way in which the drapery is folded and falls and how the hair comes off the forehead and falls in waves and curls over the shoulders. The child is beautifully nestled in the arms of the Virgin. It belongs to the Carmelites of Whitefriar Street and has a niche all of its own with a porch where Mass can be said.



Figure 9

Our Lady of Dublin

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A POINT MADE ABOUT TOUCHING



Figure 10

A POINT MADE ABOUT TOUCHING

Keeping in touch with the world of art a blind girl learns to appreciate a work she will never see. She is examining Venus with a necklace by Aristide Maillol at an exhibition arranged for the blind and partially sighted at the Tate Gallery in London. We can learn a lot from this learning to be more sensitive when we touch and feel.

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PLACES TO GO IN DUBLIN

There are numerous places throughout Dublin we can go to appreciate woodcarving, modern Churches abound with them. Peter Grant has a wonderful carving in Cabra Church and the Church of St. Michael's in Dun Laoghaire contains a complete set of carving of the Stations of the Cross. Raheny Church, Glasnevin Church and these are to name but a few. But there are also woodworkers and furniture manufacturers worth a visit and these can be found throughout the city. The Museum has a beautiful reproduction of Ronatello's Crucifixion and numerous examples of Irish, German and Spanish woodcarving, as well as this their furniture room abounds with examples of carving.

Many stately houses contain tables and other pieces of furniture.

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FINALLY

Finally, I would like to say that if you give a boy a piece of wood he will make something out of it. We have all made stick houses and boats and toy soldiers in our childhood if we have been given the chance. So why not educate through woodcarving, or indeed ceramics and other crafts.

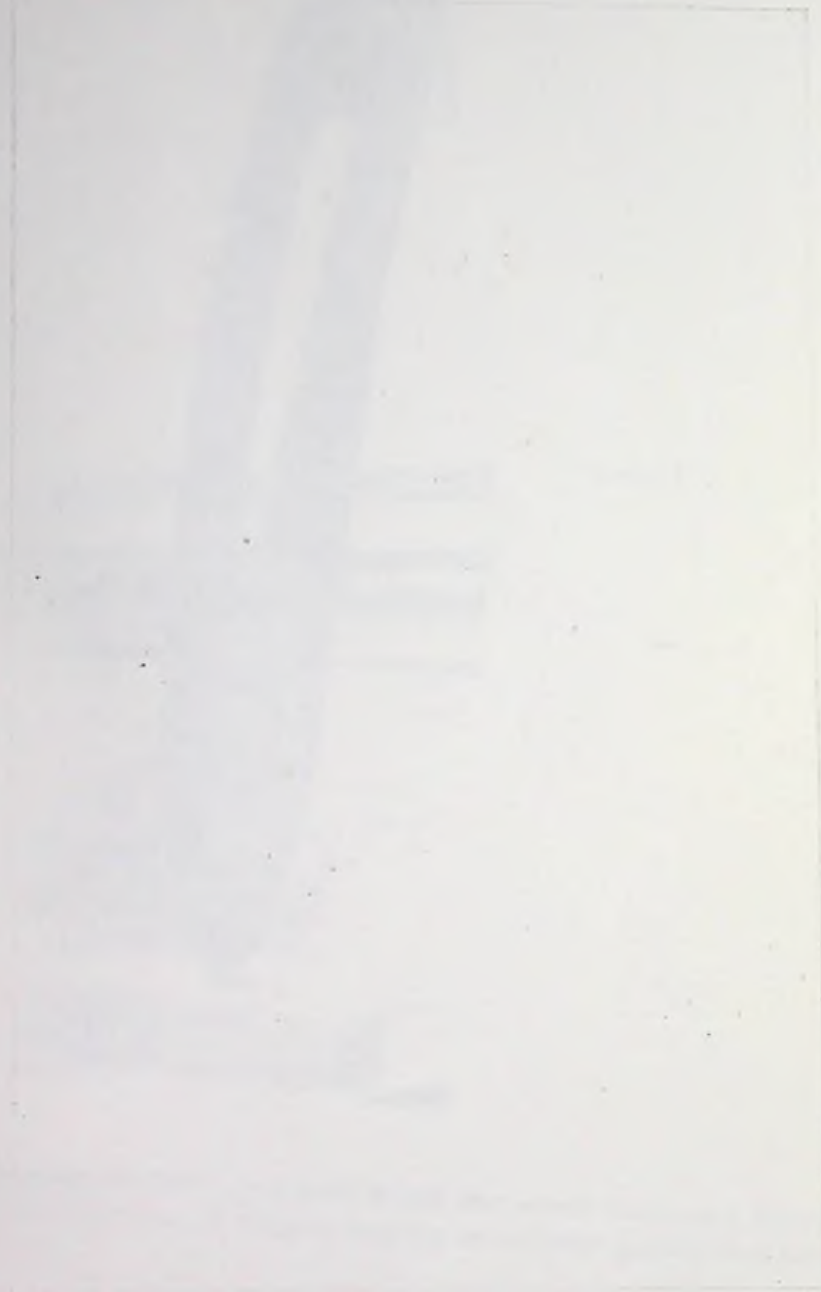
The sense of achievement I feel after all the learning and development lasts a life time, i.e. it gives confidence.

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Figure 11



In this piece by Paul MacHugh we can see how he has tackled a whole log. The piece of wood itself determined the design and it is another important thing to note that he had his own idea in mind. It is a tubular form and we can see how wood can be used to create flow and interlacing. Woodcarving is a very versatile material and if we were to look at some other of this sculpture's pieces you would be amazed (I hope).

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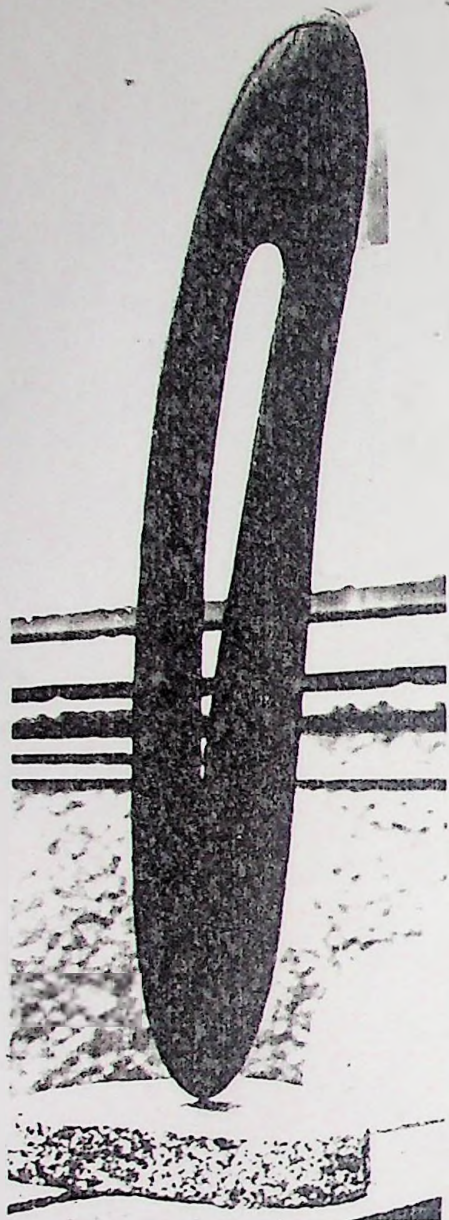


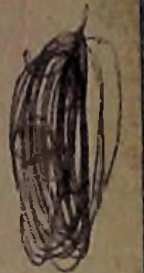
Figure 12

This is a piece of bog oak which is very hard to get and which has a very hard but beautiful texture and colour. It is a warm deep grey and has an ancient quality that makes it stand out.

In this piece we can see simplicity and perfection combined. It is a beautiful shape which is personal to MacHugh. The gap runs the whole centre of the wood and there is a twist which was natural in the wood. Paul followed this twist and used it to make something of it. The top forms a point towards the sky and the base forms a dome resting on the stand.

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1790
220

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