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COLAISTE NAISIUNTA EALAINÉ IS DEARTHÁ
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

SELF-IDENTITY AND ART IN ADOLESCENCE

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BRENDA FRIEL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | PAGE NO. |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| List of Illustrations | iii |
| Introduction | iv |
| Chapter I | |
| - Self-Identity in Adolescence | 1 |
| Chapter II | |
| - Art in Adolescent Education | 20 |
| Chapter III | |
| - Mask Project | 33 |
| Conclusion | 52 |
| Appendix I | |
| - Mask Project Questionnaire | 54 |
| Bibliography | 57 |

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

| | | PAGE NO. |
|--------|---|----------|
| Fig. 1 | Ego Development Trajectories | 6 |
| Fig. 2 | A Hierarchical Organisation of Self-Concept | 13 |
| Fig. 3 | Pupils at work on Wire Drawings Stage 1 | 37 |
| Fig. 4 | Stage II of Mask Making | 39 |
| Fig. 5 | Patricia's Mask | 42 |
| Fig. 6 | John's Mask | 45 |
| Fig. 7 | Selection of Masks | 46 |
| Fig. 8 | Selection of Masks | 47 |

INTRODUCTION

My own interest in the area of self-identity has been evident in my personal work for approximately four years ranging initially from actual exploration of my identity through figurative means, later moving to identity as a theme in the work through more symbolically associated ideas, media and method. The art process has been for me a very useful method of organising, clarifying and creating greater understanding of my own identity along with providing access to creative solutions.

It was therefore of great interest to me to learn through the course of my teaching diploma lectures, of adolescence as being a developmental stage where the preoccupation is concerned with the formation and clarification of one's self-identity. Therefore this project based on self-identity and art in adolescence interests me in two ways: (i) it allows me personally to investigate more fully the formation of identity and (ii) more importantly it will provide the pupils with a valid experience through which they can investigate and hopefully come to a greater understanding of their own identity while also experiencing and partaking in the art process.

In Chapter I, I look at adolescence, the developmental stage of identity formation as described by Eric Erikson. Cognitive development which is a contributing factor which facilitates greater understanding of self-knowledge and identity has been included. The formation of the self-concept which is integrally related to self-identity is also investigated.

Chapter II focuses on the relevance and value of art in adolescent education and examines the processes involved in art making. The works of John A. Michael, Viktor Lowenfeld and Paul E. Torrance¹ have been most informative during this stage of research.

Chapter III utilizes my practical teaching experience in Ballinteer Community School where I implemented a lesson sequence which was designed to encourage the development of self-identity in my 2nd year pupils. In this Chapter I include my aims for the project, the various stages involved in the sequence and an evaluation of the work. This evaluation was facilitated by questionnaires which each member of the class completed.

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER I

SELF-IDENTITY IN ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is generally perceived as a period fraught with difficulty as the transition from childhood to adulthood occurs. The formation of a coherent identity has been described as the main task facing the adolescent.

In this Chapter I examine the formation of identity as a developmental stage in adolescence along with the structures that inform and facilitate a sense of self-identity.

Ego Development

Eric Erikson in his developmental stages of personal growth describes adolescence as a stage where the preoccupation is identity. In many ways the question "who am I?" is the central issue of adolescence. Before the adolescent can safely abandon the security of childhood dependence on others, he must have some idea of who he is, where he is going and what are the possibilities of getting there. In discussing the problems in terms of "ego identity" Erikson suggests that:

The identity the adolescent seeks to clarify is who he is, what his role in society is to be. Is he a child or is he an adult? Does he have it in him to be some day a husband and father? What is he to be a worker and earner of money? Can he feel self-confident? Overall will he be a success or a failure?¹

Erikson feels that the problem of ego identity becomes acute at adolescence for a

number of reasons. Change in childhood is gradual and regular compared with the rapid body growth at puberty and adolescence which cause a sense of questioning. Erikson notes that the rapidly changing adolescent is confronted with this psychological revolution within himself along with the varied intellectual, social and vocational demands that are directly ahead of him.

The formation of a coherent identity during this time can be difficult. Erikson notes that adolescents are caught between two major systems, both of which are in flux. They have to cope with internal, cognitive, and glandular changes at the same time that they are confronting a series of inconsistent and changing regulations.² The adolescent has, as it were, a foot in both the world of the child and the adult - a child no longer, though not always recognised as an adult. This time can be fraught with role confusion.

Originally Erikson posed his framework in terms of stages of crises, with bipolar definitions of the crisis at each stage, for example identity versus diffusion. The positive outcome of this developmental stage is a firm sense of self-identity. If however, a strong sense of self-identity is not established then identity diffusion will occur. Erikson equates identity diffusion with role confusion. This may be paralleled in the level of experimentation that often accompanies adolescent behaviour. In the search for a self-identity (s)he may try out a number of different kinds of behaviour³ as if asking "Which of these different kinds of people is really me?" The choice of these behaviours may be influenced by people that the adolescent sees as a role model

for example a friend, teacher, pop star, sportsman - someone perhaps whose lifestyle or whose values he admires. This change in behaviour may be facilitated or encouraged through a peer group. Since identity is often expressed through the groups to which one belongs, the peer group also becomes very important and the adolescent may change his behaviour (clothes, speech, habits as well as values and opinions) in order to be accepted by it. I believe that in this particular developmental stage, (the search for a coherent sense of identity), a unique and individualistic sense of self maybe resolved through the process of diffusion. The crisis imbued in this stage which are evolutionary in nature can become integrated within the experience of events within the adolescent. As recently as 1982 Erikson has suggested that each of the opposites of the developmental stages can be combined⁴, emphasising that people adapt to their world best when they possess both the positive and negative qualities of a particular stage provided that the positive quality is significantly stronger than the negative quality.⁵

Possessing both positive and negative qualities will give a greater understanding and empathy of the difficulties involved in personal development. However, if the positive quality is outweighed by the negative in any given stage, difficulties in development and adjustment will arise.⁶ The adolescent or adult with a strong sense of ego-identity sees himself as a distinct individual in his own right. Indeed the word individual implies perceiving oneself as somehow separate from others, no matter how closely one may share motives, values and interests with others. Closely related to the sense of the individual is the need for self-consistency. When we speak of the integrity of the self, we imply both a separateness from others and a unity of the self

where there is a workable integration and understanding of ones needs, motives and patterns of responding.⁷ In Adolescents and their Families, Hauser identifies the separation of the adolescent from the family while at the same time connecting with it in new ways as one of the challenges and paradoxes of adolescent development. The world of the adolescent is expanded to include peers, teachers and their significant adults.⁸

As the "kaleidoscopic changes (of adolescence) do not occur in a vacuum"⁹ these people are also influential in the personal development and experience of the adolescent.

Developmental influences which contribute to confident self-perceptions of one's self as separate and distinct from others, as reasonably consistent and integrated in his definition of himself, and as having a continuity of the self over time, contribute to an overall sense of ego-identity.¹⁰

Similarly, "influences which impair any of these self-perceptions foster ego-diffusion".¹¹

When teenagers handle the changes inherent in adolescent development successfully, they become clearer about themselves, their goals and their directions. However, adolescents vary dramatically in their coping ability.¹² Hauser traces four main paths of ego development through adolescence.¹³ If ego development is good, it generates a range of responses to the normal vicissitudes of living and facilitates a healthy balance of autonomy and involvement with others. If, Hauser continues, ego

development does not go well, its results are evident in frustration, confusion and ultimately limitation.

The development of ego can be varied during adolescence. Hauser has identified a number of categories of ego development. They are profound arrest, steady conformist, progressive, accelerated, moratorium and regressive.¹⁴

In adolescence the development of ego can be varied ranging from the category of profound arrest to the categories of progressive and accelerated development.¹⁵ (See Fig. 1.) The stage of profound arrest refers to the person who remains in the early (preconformist) stage of ego development and has a high level of dependence on others. This person is likely to use basic and underdeveloped cognitive structures. Adolescents who remain at this level for more than two years are said to be at a stage of profound arrest.

Adolescents in the "Steady Conformist" stage are preoccupied with being accepted by their friends. Awareness of individual differences is limited and questions of values and/or social norms rare. Hauser believes that if a teenager persists at this level during the adolescent years they are a steady conformer and exemplify attenuated arrests in ego development.¹⁶

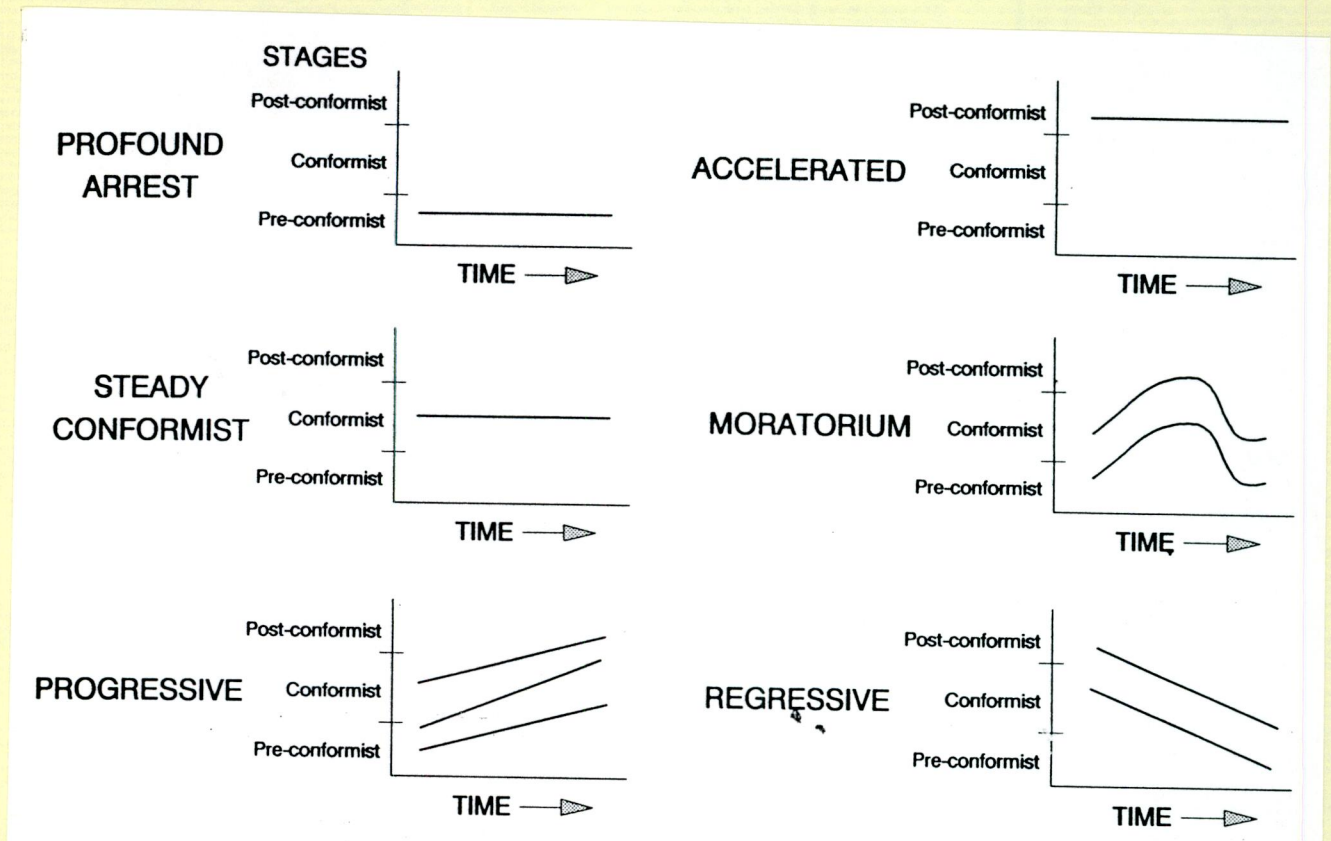


Fig. 1 - Ego Development Trajectories
 Ref. Stuart T. Hauser, Adolescents and their Families,
 (New York: Free Press, 1991), p. 13.

Handwritten text on a piece of paper pasted onto a larger sheet. The text is mostly illegible due to fading and bleed-through from the reverse side. It appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly related to a collection or inventory.

The adolescent who gradually moves from preconformist to conformist, or from conformist to post-conformist stages over a number of years is described as being in a stage of "progressive development".¹⁷

Cognitive Development in Adolescence

Adolescent cognitive development also plays an important role in personality development and in the formation of a clear sense of identity, as it gives the adolescent a new way to think, a new way to perceive what's going on around him and a new way to help him make sense of himself and his world. Piaget in his stages of cognitive development saw the ages of eleven to sixteen as being the stage of formal operations. The stages of growth are distinctly different from one another, change occurring both quantitatively and qualitatively.¹⁸ The content of each stage is a major system that determines the way we understand and make more sense of our experiences.¹⁹ The characteristics of formal operations are: (i) Possibilities and Hypothesis testing; (ii) Expanded Thought: Metathinking; (iii) Perspectivistic Thought.²⁰

The "mechanics" of this new way of thinking facilitate the adolescent in coming to terms with an understanding their developing self. Expanded thought facilitates the adolescent to think about their own thinking and the thoughts of others. This kind of self-reflection allows for a wide ranging stretch of the imagination.

Due to the preoccupation with thought about oneself, the adolescent boy or girl is

likely to become introspective and analytical.²¹ At this stage of cognitive development, unlike previous stages, new insights can be reached without actually needing to test each solution in concrete reality.

Ideas can be tried out in the mind. Teenagers can talk to themselves, a process sometimes called an internal dialogue. Cognitive structures may also facilitate problem solving through intellectualization.²² This process may be employed by some adolescents as a psychological defence to deal with troubling anxieties. Intellectualization involves casting into an abstract, impersonal, philosophical form issues that are actually of immediate personal concern.

One of the most important characteristics of formal operational thought is the ability to entertain hypothesis on theoretical positions. The adolescent using constructs of hypothesis is now able to grasp not only the immediate state of things but also the possible state they might or could assume.²³ However,

... the awareness of the discrepancy between the actual and the possible also helps to make the adolescent a rebel. The adolescent is always comparing the possible with the actual and discovering that the actual is frequently wanting.²⁴

Changes in cognitive development play a central and integral role in the transition of adolescents into adulthood. Cognitive changes play a critical role in helping young people deal with increasingly complex educational and vocational demands during this time. Cognitive development also influences:

... changes in the nature of parent - child relationships, emerging

personal characteristics, planning of future educational and vocational goals, mounting concerns with social, political and personal values and a developing sense of personal identity.²⁵

Overall, cognitive development could be said to play an especially important role in the emergence of a well-defined sense of identity:

By getting away from the concrete, by reasoning, by 'concentrating' by trying out hypothesis, he meets up with himself. Who is he, this person, who thinks, who adopts an attitude who speaks his opinion? What is he? What is it in him, what is this centre where his ideas are shaped, where his thoughts are produced, where his assumptions are formulated? Is it not himself?²⁶

The Self-Concept

Our definition of ourself - how we see ourself and how others see us forms the foundation of our adult personality. Our self-concept is an essential part of our personality and affects our personal development. Burns²⁷ suggests that self-concept is:

...the individual's percepts, concepts and evaluations about himself, including the image he feels others have of him and of the person he would like to be, nourished by a diet of personally evaluated experience.

Self-concept is a very important factor affecting behaviour.²⁸ Educators have become

increasingly aware of the impact that an individuals self-concept and self-esteem have on classroom behaviour and achievement.²⁹

Our knowledge about ourselves changes during adolescence both in its level of complexity and in our ability to understand and assimilate it. Our stage of cognitive development facilitates both in a qualitative and in a quantitative way the knowledge we obtain about ourselves. Many psychologists believe that the self has two aspects - self-description and self-evaluation - and therefore distinguish between self-concept and self-esteem. Philosopher, G. H. Mead in 1925 suggested that when reflecting on the self we should separate it into subject and object. "I" (subject) know about "me" (object).³⁰ The "I" is pure awareness and the "me" is the thing about myself of which I am aware. This model allows us to talk about important issues such as self-image and self-concepts, issues that profoundly affect the way in which I feel about my life and the way in which I try to live it.

The self itself is simply a learnt construct³¹ - we see ourselves in the way in which we have learnt to see ourselves. Denis Child in agreement believes that the structures of the self-concept, valuing processes that evolve in the child, are directly influenced by the methods parents use in solving day to day problems.³² The regard with which the individual builds up his or her own competence to solve these problems is also influenced as a result of interaction with significant others.³³

There is evidence that the acquisition of self-knowledge is a developmental process: it is something that we learn in the same way that we learn to walk, talk, and relate

to others. The Bannister and Agnew study in 1979 showed this to be so.³⁴ In this study, groups of children were tape recorded, answering a variety of questions about their school, home, favourite games and so forth. Four months later the same children were asked to identify their own statements (the tape recording was replaced using different voices). The children's ability to recognise their own statements increased steadily with age and the strategies they used to pick out their own answers changed and became more complex with age.

Knowledge built up about ourselves is also dependent upon what other people tell us about ourselves directly and indirectly through the way in which they treat us. Bannister sums this up by saying that "our picture of ourselves is not derived by sitting in isolation but is generated by our engagement with others".³⁵ Kelly³⁶ argues that we derive our picture of ourselves through the picture we have of other people's picture of us and their reaction to us. He believes that each person has a theory about themselves, other people and the world around them. Kelly suggests that we each experience reality in our own way and that this way is essentially a consequence of learning. He called this theory the Personal Constructs System. Constructs help us to form opinions about our world and our relationship within it.

A number of investigations have provided important data to help explain the characteristics of the self-concept (March, Byrne, and Shavelson, 1988; Marsh and Shavelson, 1985; Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton, 1976).³⁷ They are as follows: (i) The self-concept is organised. To arrive at a general picture of the self, the individual organises the information into broad categories. (ii) Self-concept is multi-faceted.

Individuals categorise self-perceptions into such areas as social acceptance, physical attractiveness, athletic ability and academic ability. (iii) The multi-faceted structure of self-concept may be hierarchical on a dimension of generality (see Fig. 2). (iv) Self-concept is stable. This fact is supported by Ludwig and Maher who in 1967 found that success and failure in an athletic task changed subjects self-concept of specific physical ability but did not change their general self-concept. (v) The self-concept hierarchy is developmental. As children mature, they develop concepts and categories for organising events and situations. During pre-adolescence and early adolescence pupils "learn" to regard themselves positively or negatively as they assimilate their experiences with significant people in their life - parents, peers and teachers. (vi) Self-concept is evaluative. Not only do individuals form a description of themselves in a particular situation, but they also form evaluations of themselves in the situation.

Two factors especially mould various dimensions of students' self-concepts: firstly, physical growth and development, and secondly, school experiences.³⁸ The physical changes of adolescence are understandably linked to and integrally influence our notion of self-image at this time. The physical and biological changes mark the outward and visible transition into adulthood. With biological changes and the onset of puberty, the notion of sex identification is particularly prominent. To the adolescent girl, menstruation may be seen as a symbol of sexual maturity and womanhood. In the adolescent boy, the growth spurt, an acceleration in growth of

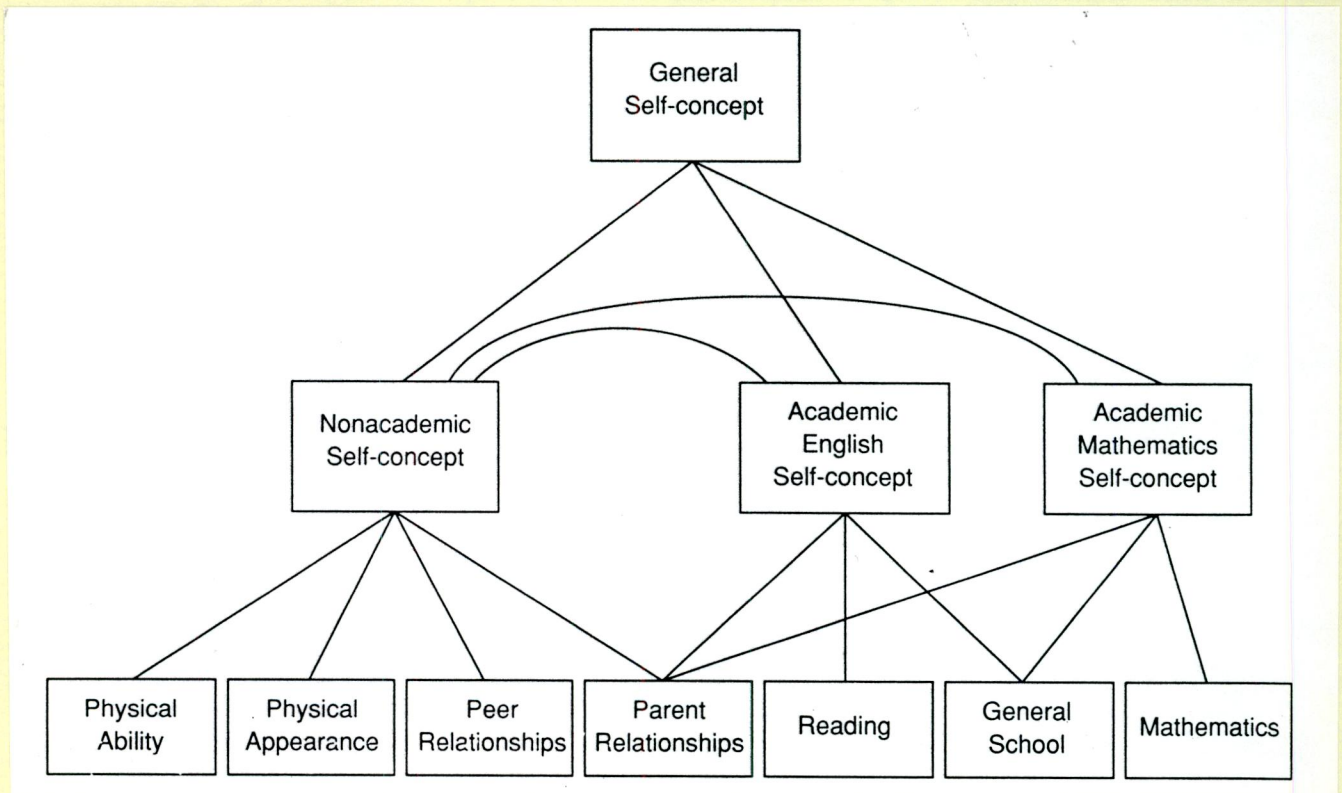
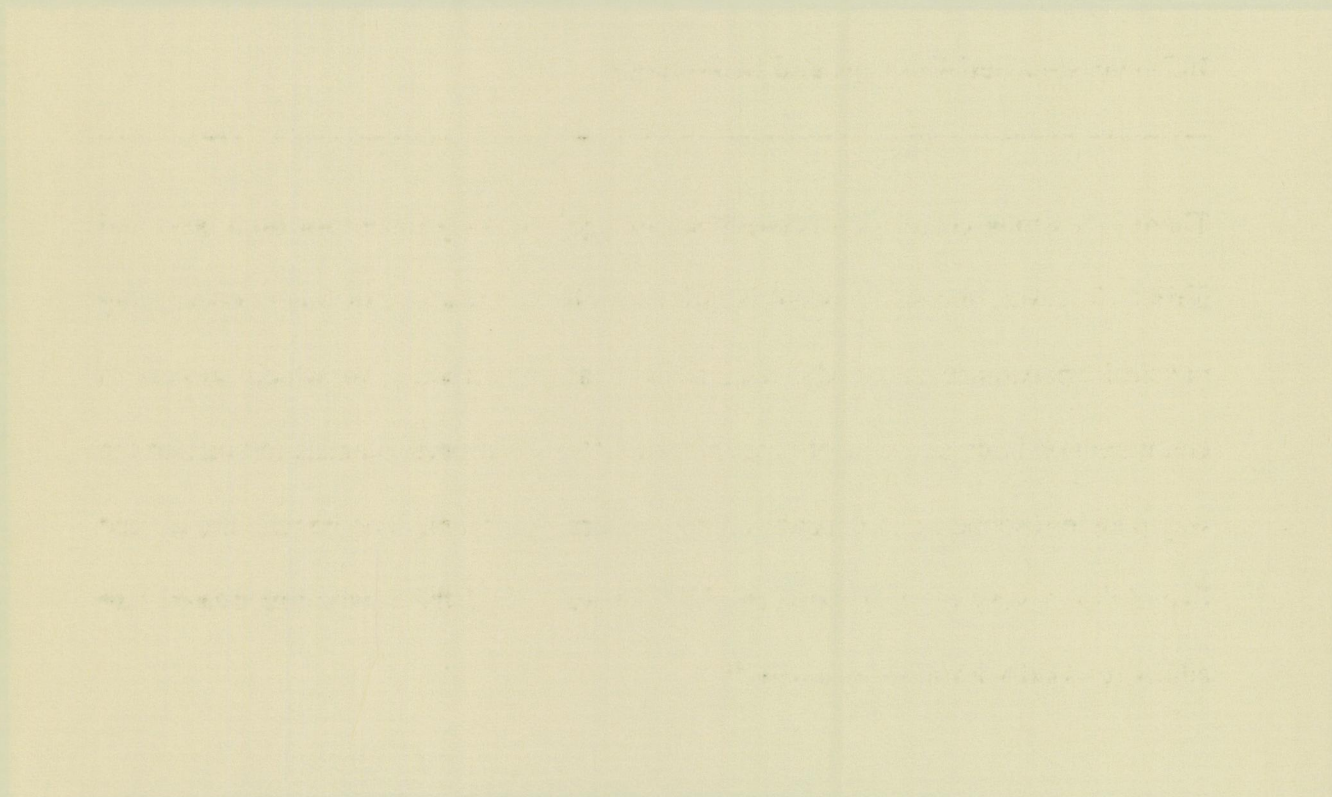


Fig. 2 - A Hierarchical Organisation of Self-Concept
 Ref. Myron H. Dembo, Applying Educational Psychology in the Classroom,
 (New York: Longman, 1991), p. 140.



the penis, the appearance of facial hair and the lowering of the voice include some of the physical changes that he undergoes in his development into manhood.³⁹

Influences on Self-Concept and Self-Image

There is a strong correlation between self-image and body image for both boys and girls. However, the self-concept is influenced by the reaction of others concerning physical appearance and body size, as well as by activities in which success is contingent on body size and/or physical skills.⁴⁰ Social psychologists tell us that the way people respond often depends on how others treat them. People who are treated like children very often respond in childlike ways, and those who are treated like adults respond with more maturity.⁴¹

Children and adolescents of both sexes are also open to influences by mass media stereotypes of the beautiful body. Television, films and magazines reinforce ideas about body build with which individuals compare themselves. Another area of growth that can affect the self-concept is one's rate of development (i.e. early versus late maturation). The emergence of puberty can have important psychological and social implications for the adolescent.⁴² It has been found that for adolescent girls the effects of early or late maturation are generally less extensive and more variable than in boys.⁴³ Early maturing males have been found to be more relaxed, less dependent, more self-confident, and attractive to both adults and peers than late maturing males.⁴⁴ These positive qualities are possible for a number of reasons. Early maturing boys tend to enter into relationships with girls (who develop

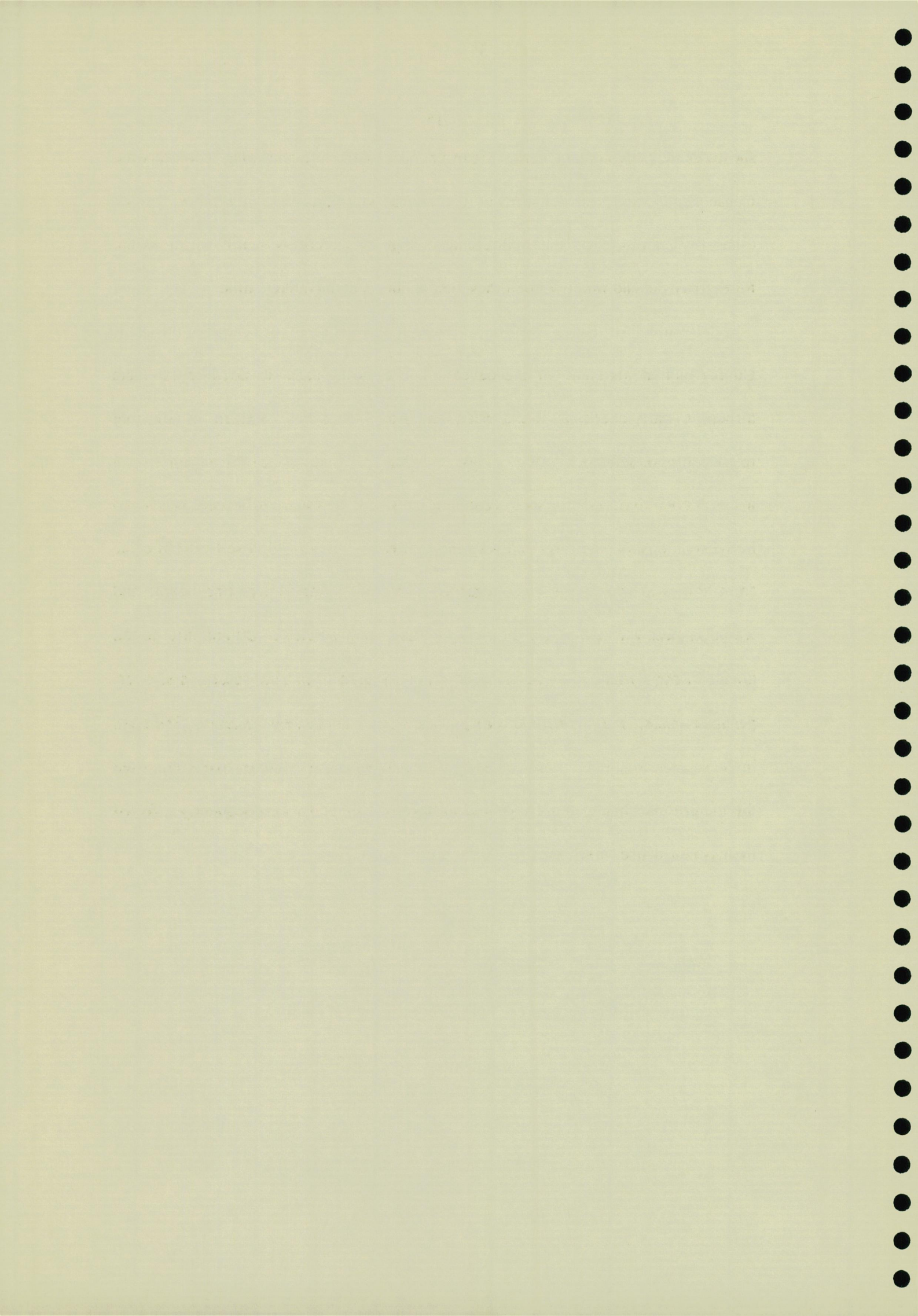
approximately two years earlier) earlier than their late maturing counterparts. Consequently, they have a greater confidence in interacting with other people, especially members of the opposite sex, due to their developing social skills. Furthermore, a physically more developed male has an advantage in many activities, especially athletics. Here, his physical strength may help him to succeed in this area, gaining him prestige and confidence. The late maturing male is more likely to have a harder time excelling in athletics and other activities, and in establishing relationships with girls.⁴⁵

Self-Esteem

As children form identities and concepts about themselves, they implicitly assign positive or negative value to their own profile of attributes. Collectively these self-evaluations constitute the child's self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to one's evaluation of one's own qualities. Rogers, in describing self-esteem, used the term "positive self-regard".⁴⁶ Lack of self-esteem can be a major factor in the development of psychological ill-health. People with low self-esteem seem:

... unable to regard themselves as significant acceptable members of the community and labour under feelings of inadequacy and ever hopelessness, and consistently underestimate both their abilities and the regard in which they are held by other people.⁴⁷

Self-esteem often varies for different domains of behaviour. Children rate themselves differently in different areas.⁴⁸ On the Perceived Competence Scale, there are



subscales for three content areas - cognitive, social and physical skills. A fourth scale measures general feelings of self-worth. Children's evaluations of their physical skills differ from ratings of social skills, and their general feelings of self-worth do not necessarily depend on how good they feel about their cognitive skills.

Copperfield in his study of the development of self-esteem in boys of 10 years through to early adulthood found that parental behaviour was a significant influence in the levels of self-esteem in the boys.⁴⁹ While there was no significant difference in either cognitive ability or socio-economic background, a sharp difference was noted in the relationships the boys had with their parents. Boys of high self-esteem came from homes in which they were regarded as significant and interesting people and where respect was shown for their opinion and point of view. By contrast, in the homes of boys with low-self esteem, discipline veered from over-strictness to over-permissiveness. Parents here knew significantly less about their children. The boys in the study were certainly influenced by their parents and seemed to have internalised the picture that their parents appeared to have of them. This consequently affected their performance in school.⁵⁰

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

- 1 Paul Henry Mussen; John Janeway Conger; Jerome Kagan and Aletha Carol Huston, Child Development and Personality, (New York: Harper and Row, 1984) p. 621.
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CHAPTER II

ART IN ADOLESCENT EDUCATION

The Relevance of Art in Adolescent Education

Having researched the development of self-identity in adolescence it is my belief that the combined process and experience of art can have a very real and valuable contribution to make to both personal and cognitive development of the pupil. The teaching of art involves both nurture (extrinsic aspects of which the content of a field, such as art, is to be learned by the student) and nature (intrinsic qualities and abilities which are to be developed by the student).¹ The contribution of art can, in my opinion, be most valuable and useful during the adolescent years, as a process which can both facilitate and become part of the transition of the young person from childhood into adulthood in a symbolic way.

At a stage where the predominant question is one of identity the advantage of participating in art activity is particularly significant. With the contradiction of desire for both peer group conformity and the desire for individuality (individuality coming to the fore in late adolescence) present in the adolescent, an art process which aims to develop creativity where the uniqueness and personal expression of each student is valued, can be very helpful.

John Michael believes that when the individual student is recognised by the teacher

as being the primary importance in the art-room art experiences can be used to develop the abilities needed for a fulfilled life.² When the objectives of art education aim to bring together student learning and developmental needs, and the need for sensitivity, awareness and some expertise in the field of art, then art and art experiences can be used to facilitate students in their learning and development towards a higher level of knowing (about themselves, art and culture), feeling, and perceiving.³

Overall, art education can be seen to be a means of providing balance in life and education.⁴ Art activities help to balance the development of abilities of the right and left side of the brain, they thereby help the human processes of thinking, feeling, perceiving and expressing/communicating, which are needed for fulfilment and satisfaction in life.

Most non-art school experiences deal with the left brain functions which include verbal, rational, linear, analytic, symbolic and logical aspects. Functions of the right hemisphere are non-verbal, visual, spatial, perceptual, intuitive, global, imaginative, subjective and sensitive. Since art experiences for the most part are right brain in nature, such experiences bring about a balance in the growth, development and education of an individual.⁵ Robert Masters and Jean Houston, researchers in the area, argue that a child without access to a stimulating arts programme "is being systematically cut-off from most of the ways in which he can perceive the world". They suggest that the brain of the child is being "systematically damaged" that he is in fact in many ways being "de-educated".⁶

More specifically in the development of right-brain functions, art provides a means of expression and communication in a non-verbal way while also being a means of increasing knowledge and understanding of oneself and ones integrative relationship within the environment.

Art experiences can permit the release of emotion in a positive manner. This is especially important during adolescence when tensions, irritations and frustrations build up and need to be released. When individuals express themselves in art they "see themselves" somewhat mirrored in their expressions and consequently can begin to see themselves more objectively.

Overall, the arts have been said to "vivify and extend human experience, make us sensitive and aware of who we are and what we believe" while "mirroring ourselves and our society".⁷

Psychologist Jerome Bruner believes that we need training for creative experiences somewhere in the school curriculum. Researchers have shown that art experiences are ideal for cultivating, exercising and stimulating the imagination and for developing creative thinking. Victor Lowenfeld argues that while art is building, designing and painting, it can also mean an attitude towards living, a means of formulating feelings and emotions and giving them tangible expression. It is a means, he says, by which "sensitivities to experiences are heightened and refined".⁸

John Michael suggests that if a meaningful art programme is to occur the teacher

must understand the needs and characteristics of adolescents. Objectives, stimulations, curricula, methods, media, art processes and subjects must be designed and tailored in order to accommodate the adolescent's needs. Therefore, an art programme is needed that will assist students in coping with a variety of needs. These include the need to accept their changing physical/sexual development, the need for responsibility and self-confidence, the need for the development of the unique and distinctive personality of each individual and the need for personal expression. These needs could be facilitated through the implementation of a well planned art programme, accommodating the acquisition of knowledge, skills and a greater awareness of perception in the pupil. Adolescents also need to come to terms with their interrelationships with the visual and physical environment of which they are part of. This environment is composed of the art elements of line, shape, texture, space and colour. Art education develops ones ability to deal with these visual and aesthetic qualities of images and objects.

The adolescent artist with a new level of awareness (as a result of physiological and psychological changes) consciously looks at his work of art critically and as an adult. John Michael suggests that the aim of the artist is to express himself aesthetically at the highest human level. These personal expressions involve sensitivity to colour, shape, line, texture, form and movement giving a feeling of "presence or completeness". The artist expresses himself by communicating his own point of view, feeling and personal interpretation, about something within his experience and environment.

Modes of Perception

Research suggests that people have different modes of perceiving their surroundings. Victor Lowenfeld describes the two perceptual types as the visual and non-visual, the latter being called haptic.⁹

The visual type, the observer, usually approaches things from their appearance. He feels as a spectator. One important factor in visual observation is the ability to see first the whole without an awareness of details, then to analysis this total impression into detailed or partial impression, and finally to synthesize their parts into a new whole. This visual penetration deals mainly with two factors: first with the analysis of the characteristics of shape and structure of the object itself; and second, with the changing effects of these shapes and structures determined by light, shadow, colour, atmosphere and distance. The visual approach towards the outside world is an analytic approach of a spectator who finds his problems in the complex observation of the ever-changing appearances of shapes and forms.

The person who perceives in the haptic mode uses the body - himself - as the main intermediary, focusing on muscular sensations, kinaesthetic experiences, touch impressions and all experiences which place the self in a value relationship to the outside world. Therefore the formal characteristics of the art work are a result of the synthesis of bodily, emotional and intellectual apprehension of shape and form.

The haptic type can primarily be seen as a subjective type where sizes and space in

the art work are determined by their emotional value in size and importance.

Lowenfeld found that a great number of students show both visual and haptic characteristics but more commonly there is a preference for one over the other. Of every four persons of an average population, Lowenfeld noted that 47% are clearly visual, 23% are haptic and 30% are not identifiably, having no dominant tendency and working in both ways.¹⁰

Considering the statistics noted, it is important that teachers become aware and sensitive to both modes of perception in order to accommodate the needs of all pupils and to give stimulus and balance for both perceptual types.

Creativity

Creativity which is generally acknowledged to be an integral part of the art process, is seen to produce a number of attributes within the person which may aid their personal development. Calvin Taylor believes that creative people are "more devoted to autonomy, more self-sufficient, more independent in judgement" as well as being "more self-accepting, more resourceful and adventurous and more controlling of their own behaviour by self-concept, and possibly more emotionally sensitive".¹¹ In a study on the personality of the highly creative child, Weisberg and Springer found that the creative child rated significantly higher on strength of self-image and appeared to have a realistic perception of themselves in relation to school and family.¹² Torrance is of the opinion that these findings show that the creative child

has a creative acceptance of himself along with a greater self-awareness. In a study by Hammer of the personalities of gifted adolescent artists it was found that truly creative adolescents differed from those who were less creative in that they exhibited deeper feelings, greater original responsiveness, stronger needs for self-expression and stronger determination, ambition and independence along with integration of feminine and masculine components, a greater sense of self-awareness and a fuller range of emotional expression.¹³ Creative people on the whole appear to be more autonomous, self-sufficient and self-assertive than the average.¹⁴

Barron suggests that creative children actually search for their own uniqueness. He maintains that creative individuals reject the demands of their society to surrender their individuality because

... they want to own themselves totally and because they perceive a shortsightedness in the claim of society that all its members should adapt themselves to a norm for a given time and place.¹⁵

The value of the creative process to personal development is seen to be so great that Torrance suggests that the creative child who abandons his creativity is likely to become a conforming child who consequently grows up with a lack of confidence in his own thinking, uncertainty of his own self-concept and overly dependent upon others in decision making.¹⁶ It can therefore be seen to be of great advantage to the personal development of the child/adolescent to become engaged in the creative process.

Creativity has been variously defined. American and British psychologists have used the word synonymously with "imagination", "originality", "divergent thinking", "inventiveness", "intuition", "venturesomeness", "exploration", and "giftedness".¹⁷

Guilford suggests that creativity involves fluency, flexibility and originality.¹⁸

While Mednick says that creativity is

... the forming of associative elements into new combinations which either meet specified requirements or are in some ways useful. The more mutually remote the elements of the new combination, the more creative the process of solutions.¹⁹

Still advances the definition of creativity when suggesting that creativity results when a normal work is accepted as tenable or useful or satisfying by a significant group of others at some point in time.²⁰

David Fontana suggests that while creativity is difficult to define one approach would be to see creativity as a special kind of thinking, one that involves originality and fluency, that breaks away from existing patterns and introduces something new.²¹

Both lateral thinking and divergent thinking would be involved in the creative process. Guilford claims that divergent thinking is the ability to generate a range of possible solutions to a given problem, in particular to one where there is no single right answer. Divergent thinking also will increase the possibility of originality occurring as the wider the range of possibilities that one is able to generate the more likely it will be that one of them will carry originality. The importance of encouraging divergent thinking in students (especially during the adolescent search for identity) is therefore evident. The imaginative leap involved in divergent thinking which

produces an answer different from the conformist one and the readiness to take the "cognitive risk" is inseparable from creative endeavour.

Influences on the Creative and Art Experiences of Pupils in the Art Room

Children (as has been noted in Chapter I) are influenced by their surroundings and people around them. One of the first influences on the child is undoubtedly the parents. The attitudes and behaviour of parents can be an influencing factor in the development of the creative child. Research has shown that the relationship parents have with their children maybe a determining factor. Weisberg and Springer²² in their study on the personality of the creative child found the family pattern of highly creative children to be very interesting. Here they found that there was little stress on conformity to parental values, along with an open, though not always calm expression of strong feeling. There was often found to be a strong and positive interaction between father and child. The mother, while also interacting strongly, may sometimes have ambivalent maternal feelings. The creative child is often an older sibling. Getzels and Jackson in a study of high IQ students and highly creative students found a noticeable difference in the attitude of parents of both types.²³ Parents of creative children were less critical of their children and the school than the parents of high IQ students. The parents of creative children were found to focus their concern on less visible qualities (as opposed to their counterparts in the study) such as the child's openness to experience, his values, interests and enthusiasm.

Art teachers as a result of being in direct contact with students in the art room are

also of major influence on the creative activity of the student. Teaching styles have been classified by Bennet as either formal or informal.²⁴ Informal teaching styles have been associated with higher levels of creativity. The informal style employs more right brain aspects. Those whose styles are more informal tend to integrate subjects, provide students with considerable freedom in determining their activities, do not emphasise tests and academic achievement and tend to rely on internal sources of motivation such as self-satisfaction. Similarly, Turner and Denny in 1965 found that warm, caring teachers are more likely to encourage creative behaviour in their students than are teachers characterized as business-like.²⁵

Teacher expectations have also found to be a contributing factor in student motivation which thereby affects performance. Bardwell found that by simply stating an optimistic expectation, teachers significantly increased students' performance.²⁶ Researchers, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson found that students tend to live up to the expectations held of them.²⁷ When teachers believed that their students were high achievers, even when they were not, those students tended to learn more. This phenomenon where people tend to become what they believe they are Rosenthal and Jacobson called the self-fulfilling prophecy.

The value of the art process has been noted to be of value to the adolescent and is the linking factor between pupil and environment. The creative act which is an integral part of the art process has been seen to show positive personal attributes which can influence strong ego development. Art can therefore be seen to be of value in the education of the adolescent.

The next Chapter focuses more specifically on an art sequence which aims to encourage a sense of self-identity in my second year pupils.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

- 1 John A. Michael, Art and Adolescence, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1983) p. 3.
- 2 Ibid., p. xiii.
- 3 Ibid., p. 26.
- 4 Ibid., p. 9.
- 5 Ibid., p. 130.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., p. 3.
- 8 Victor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 346.
- 9 Lowenfeld, The Nature of Creative Activity, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1959), pp. 264-266.
- 10 Ibid., p. 263.
- 11 Michael, Art and Adolescence, p. 76.
- 12 Paul Torrance, Guiding Creative Talent, (New York: Robert E. Krieger, 1976), pp. 76-77.
- 13 Ibid., p. 82.
- 14 David Fontana, Psychology for Teachers, (London: The British Psychological Society, 1988), p. 242.
- 15 Torrance, Guiding Creative, p. 121.
- 16 Ibid., p. 126.
- 17 Denis Child, Psychology and the Teacher, (Great Britain: Cassell Educational Ltd., 1986), p. 223.
- 18 Guy R. Lefrancois, Psychology for Teaching, (California: Wadsworth, 1994), p. 242.

- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Fontana, Psychology, p. 111.
- 22 Torrance, Guiding Creative, p. 77.
- 23 Ibid., p. 82.
- 24 Lefrancois, Psychology, p. 221.
- 25 Ibid., p. 264.
- 26 Ibid., p. 270.
- 27 Michael, Art, p. 109.

CHAPTER III

MASK PROJECT

This Chapter utilises the work I carried out with my second year pupils in Ballinteer Community School. The particular sequence used was one I hoped would enhance some aspect of pupil's self-identity. The project involved making a mask based on the pupil's own face and then adapting the surface and/or surrounding area to incorporate some personally identifying features.

Because these pupils are adolescents 13-14 years I felt this sequence would be particularly relevant.

My Aims and Objectives for the Mask Project

My aims throughout the mask project were many fold. The main aim was to provide pupils with an experience through which they could explore and investigate elements of their own identity. Integrally related was the aim that self-esteem and confidence would be increased and self-image become more positive. However, it was important also that pupils become familiar with art processes both materially and technically in order to facilitate the expression of their ideas. It is important, I believe, that pupils have the means to communicate their particular expression through technical competence in the manipulation of materials.

As identity is described as the critical preoccupation of adolescence and "children tend to become interested in those things that help them deal with problems and difficulties in their lives because they see them as having 'relevance'"¹ it was my hope that this project would benefit the personal development of these pupils. This project based on the self provided pupils with an internal motivational source.

The procedure used in this sequence has been described as a closure experience.² Initially strong direction and instruction was given in order to give pupils a "base" to work from. Pupils later closed or completed the sequence in their own manner. John Michael described a closure experience as one which helps students gain confidence in themselves and their work. He sees closure experiences as useful in getting students to create art works of expressive, creative and aesthetic quality.

The reasoning in choosing masks as the subject of the sequence was very specific: (i) the masks were based on the form of each pupils face and so demanded that pupils become familiar in part with their own self-image and (ii) masks have traditionally had a theatrical association assuming another identity for the wearer (false faces at Halloween become a second face for the person who wears it) - the mask can therefore facilitate expression for the self-conscious adolescent. The variety of materials available to students was intentional. As these students were more familiar with two-dimensional materials utilised in what might be described as a graphic approach, I hoped that these new and "unusual" materials would force the students into more creative experimentation of media.

In the making of the masks, it was emphasised to the pupils that the masks were an opportunity to explore some aspect of themselves that was not obvious to everyone. This exploration could take the form of an interest or hobby, some aspect of themselves that they liked/disliked (for example physical features, mood, dress) or examine how they would like to be or become. This latter suggestion encouraged pupils to look at role models and people they admired. Expression was therefore to be personal and individualistic directly linked to the pupils own experience. It encouraged pupils to contemplate more deeply on their thoughts about themselves in a positive and constructive way. Viktor Lowenfeld suggests that:

We should provide pupils with various means with which they can identify, which take them beyond the mere acceptance of the immediate and provide for very creative projection.³

The Mask Making Process

Before describing and explaining the different stages involved in the making of the masks it is important to look at the context in which this learning experience takes place. The mask project was the second sequence that I undertook with this second year group. This project was preceded by a drawing sequence based on the head and shoulders which explored its formal qualities. In my first encounter with this class (the first of the drawing sequence) two drawings were produced which (i) explored how students perceived themselves in terms of how they looked and would describe themselves and (ii) looked at how students would like to be or become in the future. It was important that pupils should begin to see themselves as central to the art

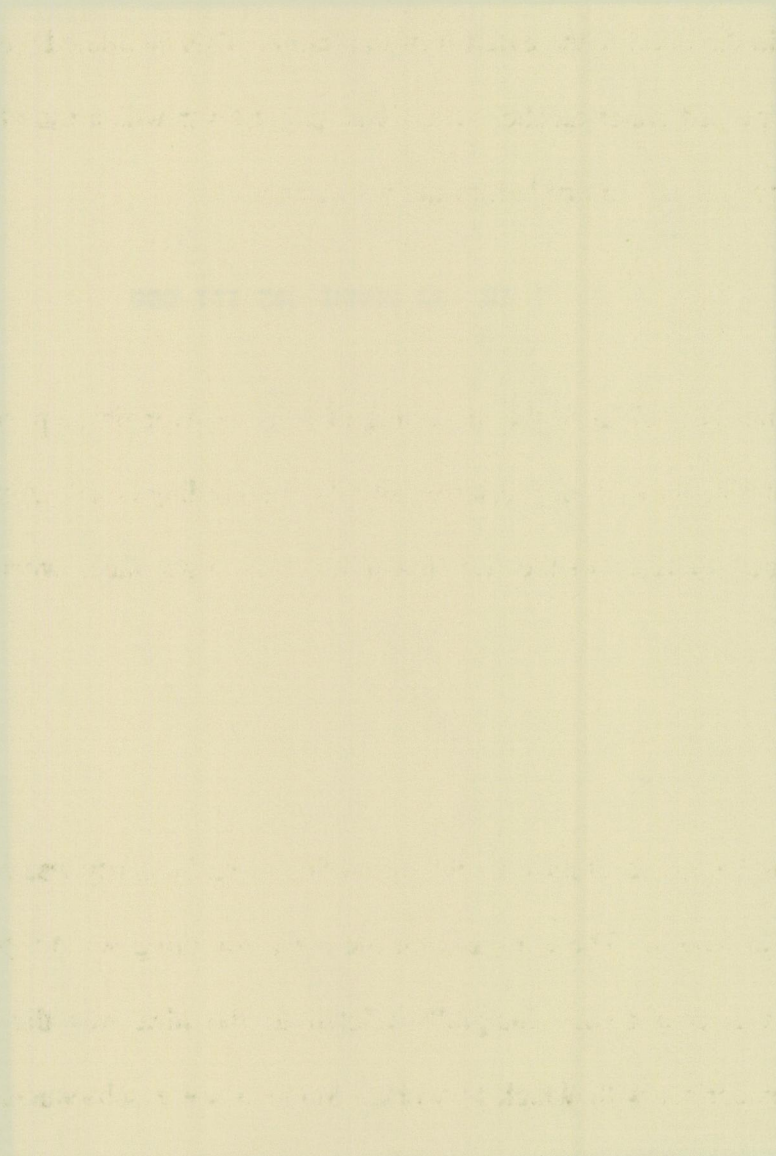
process. In these drawings I emphasised that what I was looking for was visual information as opposed to drawing skill. Despite this pupils were dissatisfied with their results as they did not look exactly as they had hoped. Subsequent drawings in this sequence aimed to develop pupils' drawing skills while drawing their own face and shoulders looking in a mirror. Drawings aimed to investigate shape, contour, form and structure of head and shoulders. The resulting drawings showed a wide range of skill and aptitude in drawing with some students experiencing difficulty and frustration in drawing from life. These reasons influenced the route I took in the mask making procedure.

Stage I

A wire frame or grid was constructed from 12" lengths of flower wire, in other words a three dimensional drawing of the face was made. As no student had used wire before, each pupil had equal advantage in this initial stage. The necessity for the grid to be made life-size was emphasised. A process of wire weaving and joining ensued. The form of the face was achieved by pressing inwards receding areas such as the eye sockets and pushing outwards advancing forms of nose and chin et cetera. At all times students were encouraged to measure their grid against their own face while also referring to drawings of form of face from previous sequence. Due to the ease with which the wire could be manipulated, students not happy with the form created could readjust the wire grid as required. Unlike the two-dimensional drawing the "mistake" was not visible. Indeed the very process involved in using wire demanded that the form be constantly manipulated and adjusted until as required. The process of making wire base took approximately two to three classes.



Fig. 3 - Pupils at Work on Wire Drawing



Stage II

This second stage involved covering the wire frame with strips of tissue paper coated in PVA, both in the interior and exterior of the frame. This facilitated the subsequent application of pulped paper mache. The tissue paper layer which took two to three classes to apply was left to dry before the next stage.

Stage III

Pulped paper mache facilitated the modelling of features over tissue paper and wire base. This material allowed for greater sensitivity in recording detail. Again students were encouraged to refer to the life model i.e. their own face, when modelling features.

Stage IV

At this point in the project (fourth week) the notion of self-identity was reintroduced and discussed at length. The emphasis on the mask revealing some aspect of their own identity was reiterated. Integrally related to the idea was the choice and suitability of materials with which to work. Students were subsequently asked to design a map of their mask recording information both visually and through note taking. Various examples of masks from many different cultures were shown to students as an example of the many different approaches that were possible. At this point I also encouraged pupils to continue to think in three dimensions while considering the space around the mask with the possibility of extending their ideas "outwards" from the mask surface.

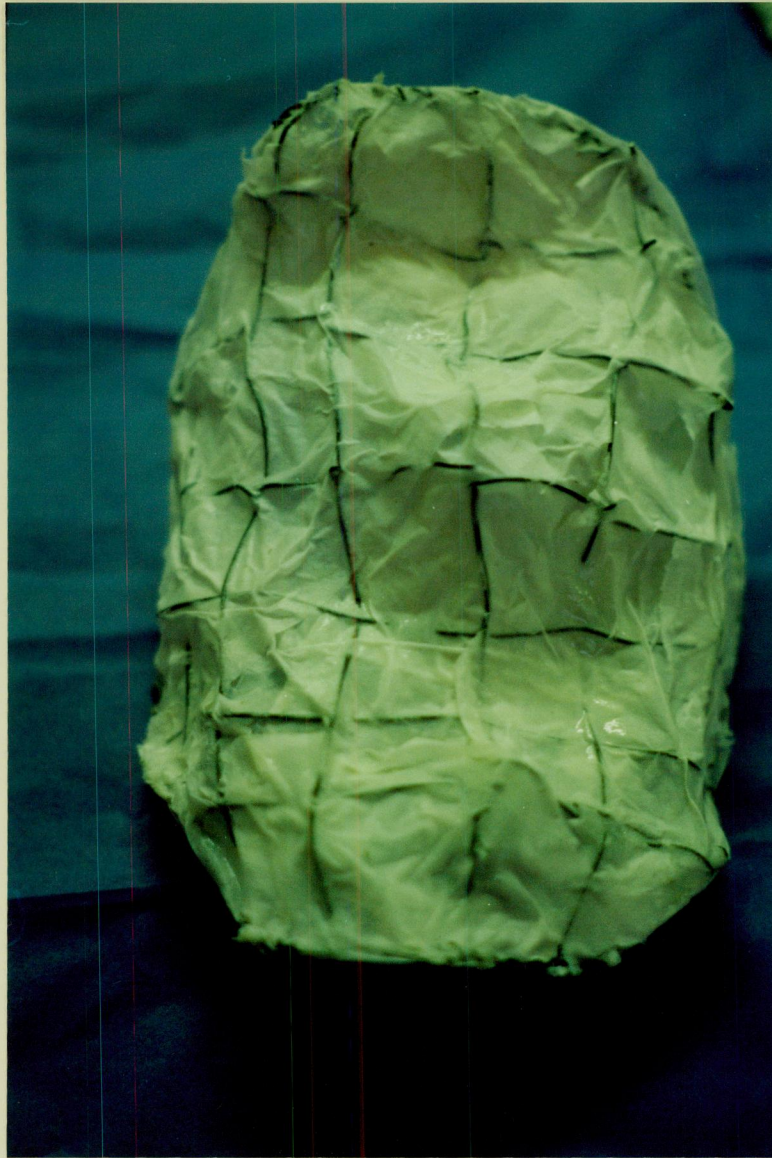
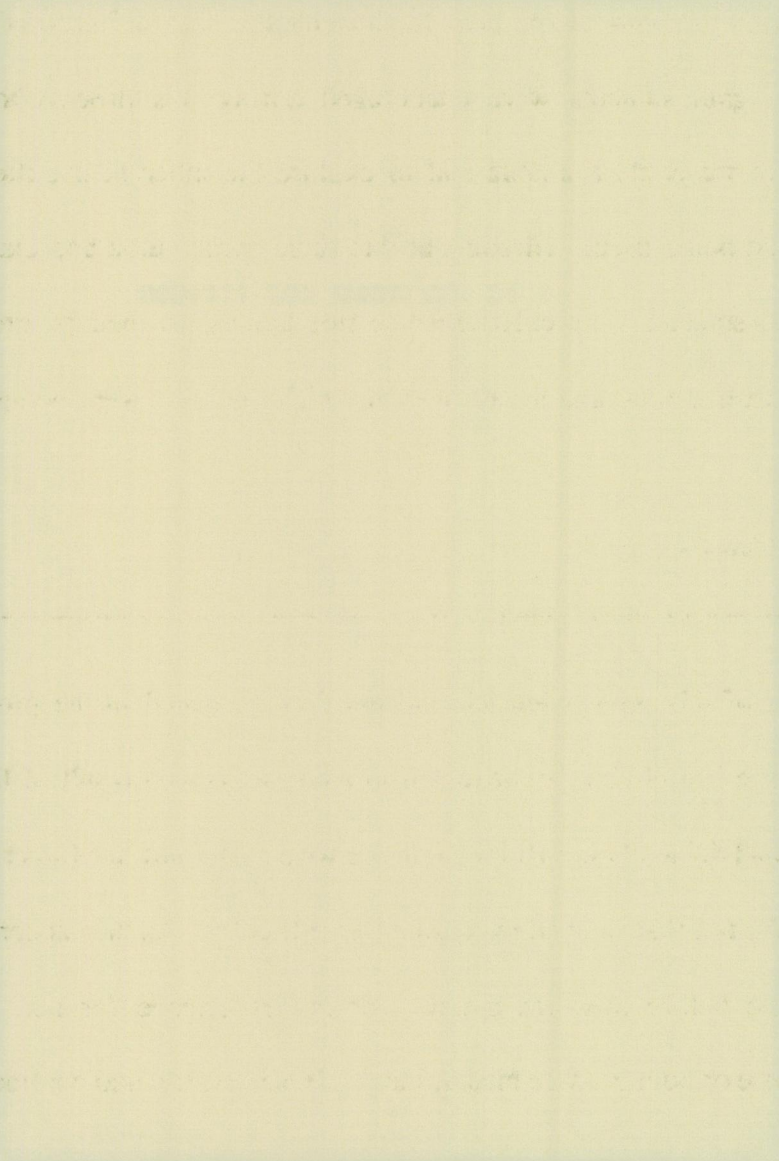


Fig. 4 - Stage II of Mask Making



Stage V

Ideas from the drawings were now implemented as the surface of the masks were adapted. Again students were encouraged during this process to consider the suitability of materials available and to explore the inherent qualities of materials available and being used. Throughout this stage (which took approximately four to five classes) students were encouraged to stop and assess their progress in terms of what they set out to do and the manner in which the ideas were being implemented.

Patricia's Mask - Fig. 5

At the start of this project Patricia did not feel interested in the proposed subject. However, she had obviously benefited in many ways as a result of the procedures. While she had difficulty in manipulating the wire as it "hurt her fingers and was hard to shape" she felt that she had overcome that difficulty. As this student had not used paper mache before this was a new learning experience for her. Through the successful use of both of these media, Patricia's self-esteem and confidence have been increased.

This student is open to new ideas and was influenced by examples of other masks as they suggested to her ideas for treating the surface of her face. This mask is a rich source of information and descriptively communicates aspects of this student's personality. The mask completed describes both the interests and personality of this student. Sophisticated concepts have been used by this student in the interpretation

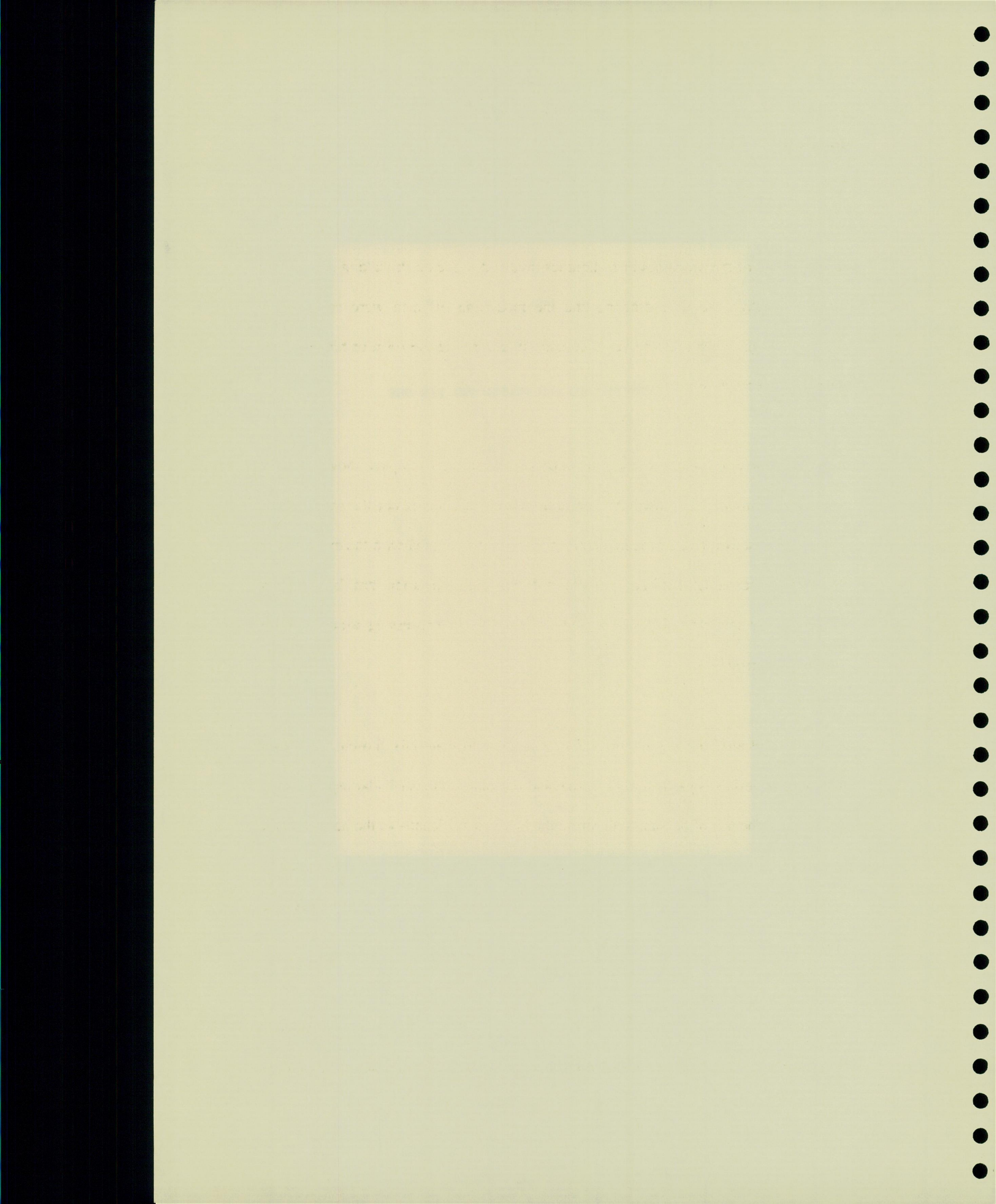
of the overall brief. Her mask which was initially based on the "Pierrot" doll (white forlorn face with tear dropping from one eye) has been adapted to incorporate another aspect of her personality. While initially identifying herself with the character of the Pierrot she also recognised another side to her personality. This has been demonstrated through the use of glitter dividing the face - on one side a silver tear on the other a red musical symbol to show her interest in music. Beading, which this student enjoys working with is a significant component of the mask. She describes the beads of different colours as a means of expressing her "colourful" personality with each bead signifying a different part of her personality.

Through the course of this sequence Patricia has displayed a stronger sense of motivation and interest compared with that of the previous sequence. Patricia found the materials available in school to be unsuitable. She showed a great concern in obtaining materials that would have personal relevance to her own identity. Following a discussion with her in class she went home, with mask in hand, and not only collected her own materials of beads, netting and glitter, but completed the mask in whole that evening.

The process involved throughout can therefore be seen to have been of value to Patricia. Not only had she displayed inner motivation and interest in the subject but she herself sees the project as being successful in communicating aspects of her personality. I believe that Patricia has through the processes involved in the mask making found a method of communication which she will utilise again and again.



Fig. 5 - Patricia's Mask



John's Mask - Fig. 6

While John was not interested in the project initially, he was pleased with his end result. None of the processes or techniques involved in the mask making caused him difficulty. Both the wire drawing and the modelling of form were competently handled by this student and he has succeeded in describing the form of his own face with great perceptive sensitivity.

John has not acknowledged the influence of the mask examples shown, in the designing of his mask. However it is quite evident that this is not the case. Many of the masks shown had a predominantly primitive feel coupled with the extension of the three-dimensional surface. While not realising this John has been subtly influenced by the examples shown and utilised this in expressing aspects of his humorous personality.

John does not attribute any importance or relevance to materials chosen. However his use of materials is particularly creative and relevant to the particular aspects being described. The use of hessian to describe the hair is significant - as the hessian came in a two-dimensional and woven form it was necessary to unweave the hessian to obtain long strands. The processes involved here were indeed exploratory and creative.

This student has included his interest in planes in his mask. The plane is extended by means of a wire length over the top of his mask. His construction of the plane is

inventive. It utilises a slot system so that horizontal and vertical planes can be seen.

Through the use and manipulation of materials and techniques John has succeeded in making a mask which combines texture, colour and materials in a balanced and harmonious way. The process in the mask making has been of value to John and the end produce a success because John especially feels that this mask gives some clues about him as a person.



Fig. 6 - John's Mask



Fig. 7 - Selection of Masks

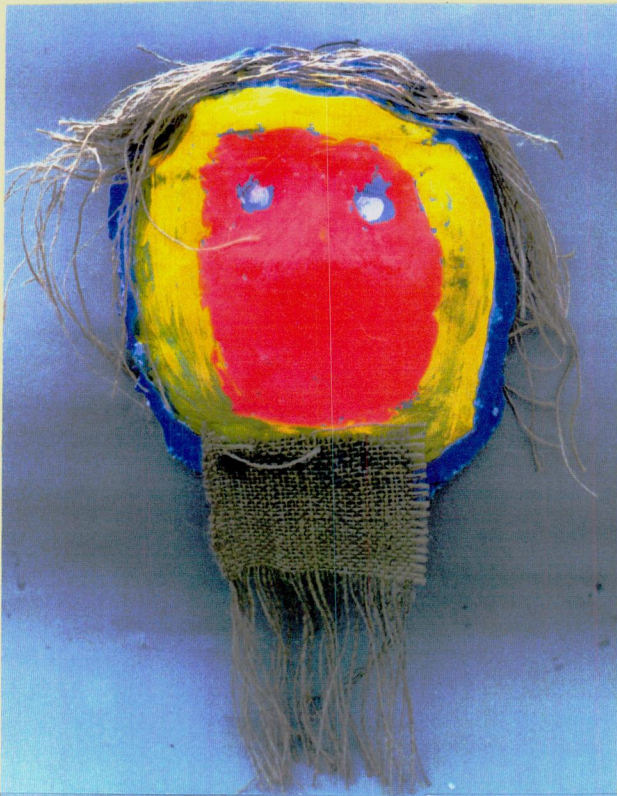
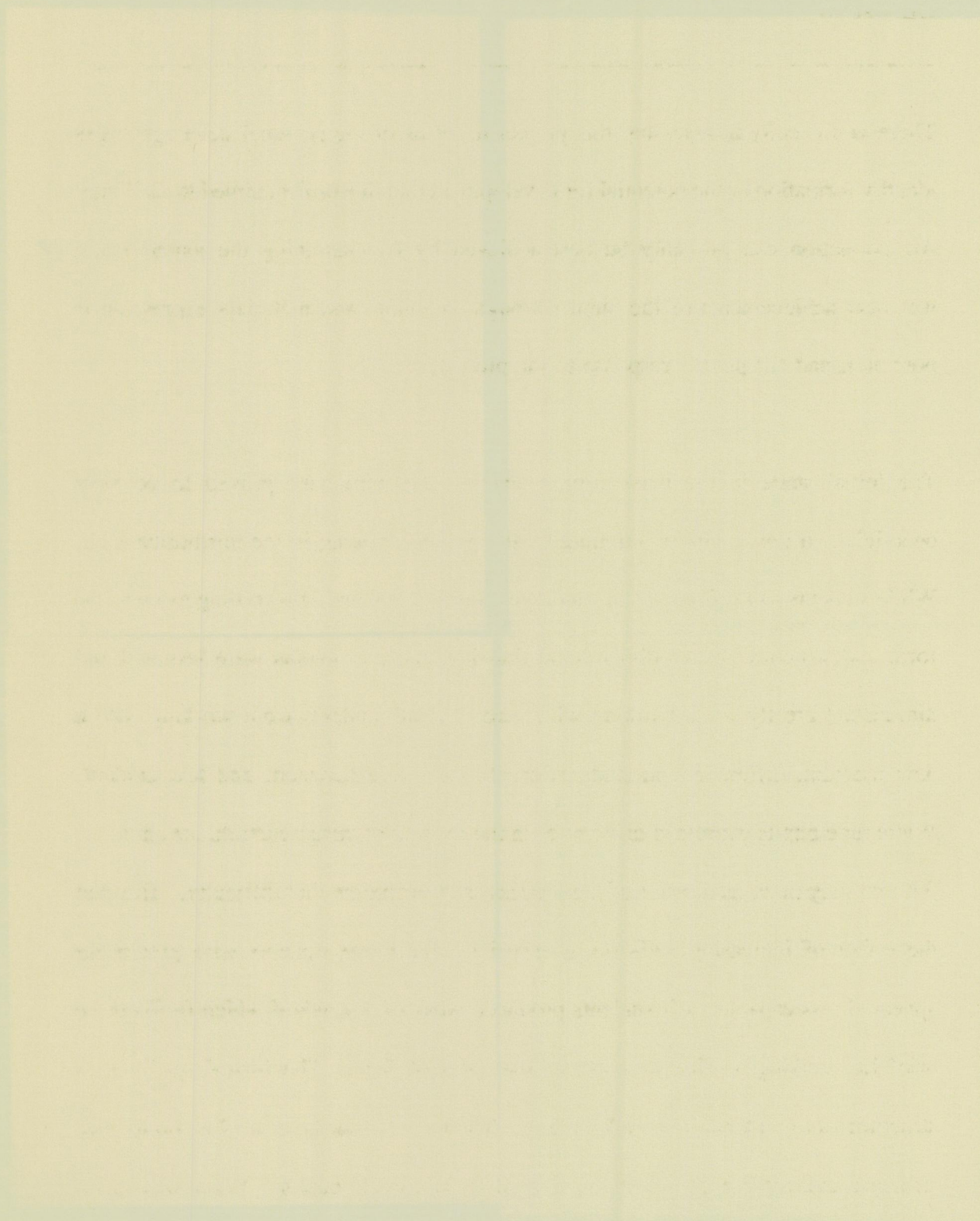


Fig. 8 - Selection of Masks



Evaluation

There is difficulty in assessing this project in terms of the personal development in identity formation or the potential for development that this project aimed to facilitate. An evaluation can probably be best achieved by (i) examining the material and technical achievements of the pupil (through technique and materials expression is possible), and (ii) pupil's response to the project.

The initial stage in the mask project making the wire base proved to be very beneficial. It unknowingly introduced the pupils to drawing in the third-dimension. While students had difficulties in hand-eye co-ordination and in recording as they saw form and structure in two-dimensional drawing, these problems were lessened and diminished greatly when working with wire. As all students were working with a new medium, differences in students capabilities were lessened, and less evident. While nine pupils expressed difficulties in the making of wire structure, seven pupils felt that they now, as a result of the process, had overcome that difficulty. This had the effect of increasing self-esteem especially for those students who previously appeared less capable. All students produced work of a standard which fulfilled the brief i.e. making a wire structure of the form of face. The formal qualities of structure were understood by all students. The tissue paper layer applied on to wire structure evidently enforced the notion of form for all pupils. Form was again reinforced with modelling of features in paper mache. This material allowed greater build-up of form especially for those pupils whose wire structure lacked somewhat in describing the structure of the face accurately. Paper mache also facilitated a very

sensitive handling and interpretation of the form of the face - some students actively exploited the roughness of the material to give a raw surface while others intentionally smoothed the material giving a more precise finish.

Choice of materials for the ensuing stages was much more personal and deliberate. Students were actively encouraged throughout the following procedures to consider material suitability with the idea being pursued. Materials made available to students included hessian, muslin, string, wire, coloured tissue paper and rope. Manipulation of materials was varied and creative in the exploration of their possibilities. Nine pupils felt that the materials that they chose were important and specific in describing some aspect of their work.

This project involved sixteen pupils. Pupil's response to this project has been interesting with feelings of interest and satisfaction expressed, increasing as the project progressed. At the initiation of the mask project seven pupils stated that they felt interested in the subject. By the end of the sequence, feelings had changed as a result of both process and product with only one student expressing dissatisfaction with their mask. Eleven pupils were pleased and three were very pleased with their end result. Eight pupils said that they included interests of past-times in the design of their mask thereby visibly incorporating an identifiable aspect of their personality in the mask. Fifteen students out of sixteen stated that they enjoyed participating in the project.

Students were, from the beginning, encouraged to think about themselves. This was

initiated with the wire drawing and modelling of features based on their face. The theme of the self was sustained throughout with students encouraged to (i) think about self-image and (ii) think about themselves and their integration within their environment in terms of their personality, interests and surroundings. Art provided that link between student and environment. Creative use of materials which was both investigative and boundary breaking (in terms of obvious usage of materials) was evidently employed in the making of the masks.

It appears to me that pupils have begun to become more familiar with some aspect of their identity through contemplation on the self and creative expression through materials in the art process. The art process which evolved throughout this project may therefore be seen to have been a part of the personal development of the pupil. As Elliot Eisner has said

... the experience that constitutes art does not begin when the enquiry is over - it is not something at the end of a journey, it is part of the journey itself.⁴

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III

- 1 David Fontana, Psychology for Teachers, (London: The British Psychological Society, 1988) p. 217.
- 2 John A. Michael, Art and Adolescence, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1983) p. 115.
- 3 Viktor Lowenfeld, The Lowenfeld Lectures, (New York: Macmillan, 1970) p. 340.
- 4 Elliot W. Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, (New York: Macmillan, 1972) p. 280.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the research carried out it has been found that the formation of identity as seen in adolescence is a complex matter. The research of Erikson shows that adolescence is the developmental stage of identity formation. If development of identity does not successfully occur then identity diffusion will result. Identity formation has been noted to be a developmental process where identity can undergo many different paths of development. Both external environmental aspects and internal factors have been shown to be influencing factors in identity development.

Art education in adolescence has been shown to have a positive contribution to make to the personal development of the pupil. Art processes and experience have been noted to aid the growth of self-esteem, confidence, communication, expression, perception and aesthetic awareness. However, in order to facilitate these aspects the teaching of art must be approached from a humanist perspective where the student is seen to be central to the art process. Therefore art in education can provide a valuable contribution to the pupil's personal development when the needs of the pupil are a central consideration in curriculum planning. Teacher approach, attitude and expectations are influential factors in pupil performance. When an art programme aims to attach relevance and meaning to the students life, then art can be seen to form the bridge between student and environment.

A sequence of art lessons carried out with a second year class in Ballinteer Community School which aimed to increase self-identity has been found to be

successful both in terms of the art process and personal evaluation (through questionnaire). The success of such a project in terms of personal development in the long-term is difficult to assess, however, this project has been shown to form part of the process of development itself.

APPENDIX I

Mask Project - Questionnaire

1. At the start of the project did you feel interested in the subject?
Yes [] No []
2. Have you ever made masks based on your face before?
Yes [] No []
If yes, describe

3. Do you think the drawings made of your face (looking in the mirror) helped you when you were making the wire drawing of the face?
Yes [] No []
4. What part of the process, if any, did you find difficult?

Why? _____

5. Do you feel you have overcome that particular difficulty?
Yes [] No []
6. What new techniques did you learn in making the mask?

contd/...

7. Did the examples shown to you of other masks guide or influence you in designing your mask?

Yes []

No []

Explain _____

8. Describe your mask _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

9. Did you include any of your interests or pastimes in the design of your mask?

Yes []

No []

If yes, list the interests/pastimes _____

10. Were the materials that you chose important in describing some aspect of your mask?

Yes []

No []

Where did you use those materials and why? _____

11. What clues do you think your mask can give about you as a person?
- _____
- _____

12. In what way do you think it describes you/your personality?

13. Were you: Not Pleased []
 Pleased []
 or
 Very Pleased []
with the end result of your mask.

14. Did you enjoy the mask project?

Yes [] No []

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