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**The Importance and Value of Teaching  
the Appreciation of Art and Design  
History at Senior Cycle.**

**A Dissertation submitted to the  
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**by**

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## INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I hope to look at the History of Art syllabus at senior cycle from various viewpoints.

In chapter 1, I hope to, by reviewing the literature, give a general indication of the importance and value of art history to the pupil. I will also discuss the need for history of art and look at the role of the teacher within the subject.

In chapter 2, I will look at the art curriculum and the various aims within Irish Art education. I also hope to identify the main problem areas within the History of Art and design syllabus and Examination paper. After establishing the problems I hope to put forward some suggestions of my own for the improvement of the leaving certificate course and examination. I also hope to, in this chapter, stress the importance of appreciation within the art class.

In chapter 3, I will look at the role the gallery plays in senior cycle art history and what it can give the pupils.

In chapter 4, Methodology chapter, I will discuss my school, its curriculum and its facilities for art. I will also introduce details of my research project which will involve both pupils and teachers attitudes to the history of art syllabus and examination.

In chapter 5, I will record the findings of my questionnaires, and hopefully identify the wants and needs of art teachers and current leaving certificate pupils. I hope to show that the current leaving certificate syllabus and examination needs a complete face-lift and restructuring into something visually exciting and relevant to the busy, modern life and times of the pupils.

The arts are not only to do with the development of practical skills. They are to do with exploring ideas and feelings, issues and events that concern artists both as individuals and as individuals and as members of society. (1)



### **FOOTNOTES - INTRODUCTION**

- (1) Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Report cited in Macleod "Gallery and School: Art Study Programmes", Critical Studies in Art and Design Education, Ed. David Thistlewood (Essex: Longman Group, 1989), p.91.

## CHAPTER 1

### IMPORTANCE OF ART HISTORY IN SCHOOLS

#### A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

....Works of Art are among the most complex, demanding and puzzling things created by human genius, and it would be odd indeed if learning to understand and appreciate them did not involve a prodigious amount of tuition and study, of plain hard work. Naive and unskilled voyagers into the art world might find much to admire and enjoy, but without proper preparation and a sufficiently long stay they would miss much that could enhance their enjoyment and increase their understanding. (1)

The study of the works of art holds great value and importance for the pupil. It educates and develops their appreciation of works both contemporary artists and cultures and also of past cultures and traditions. The Gulbenkian Foundation states "it is important to help the pupil understand and appreciate both contemporary and traditional works of art. It would be a very narrow vision of art education which only saw importance in pupil's own work". (2)

When people think of art education in school, they automatically picture the scene of white paper, pots of paints and messy children. There seem to be an emphasis on practical work.



This, I feel, puts many students off, they believe that without artistic "skill" they are unable to take part in "art classes".

As the British Association of Art Historians stated:

Most of the teaching which takes place in the school art room at the moment has a strong bias in favour of the practical. Artefacts are produced and emphasis placed on observation, analysis and interpretation. Such an approach has a lot to recommend it, but is it a true visual education? (3)

Art education is not simply about the acquisition of manual or perceptual skills, it is much broader "enriching not only the potential practitioner, but those who wish to have an informed appreciation of the environment, the different media of visual communication, their own past culture and that of others" (4)

The importance of art historical education is again highlighted by Laura H. Chapman who, in her book Instant Art, Instant Culture, states

The accomplishments of artists and others who devote their lives to art certainly are worth knowing about, not only because their efforts are superb models of individual achievement, but also because their work can teach us about our own potentials. From the artistic heritage we can learn much about feelings and concerns that have been grasped by the human mind and given visual form...studies of the artistic heritage can teach us that there are more telling, poignant and powerful examples of human imagination that we may encounter in ordinary life. (5)

Chapman's views have to be admired because of the emphasis she places on the understanding of the feelings and concerns of the artist. In doing this the "barriers" that lie





between pupils and paintings are broken down. By discussing the feelings and concerns of the artist, who beforehand seemed distant, the pupil may understand, even empathise with the artist.

### CULTURAL TRADITION, AESTHETICS, CRITICAL STUDIES

These terms have been mentioned but what exactly do they mean? Louis Arnaud Reid applies the term aesthetic to "whenever we look at any visual object 'for itself' or for 'its own sake' - without any extraneous interest such as its information or its economic value". (6) This of course is different to aesthetic appreciation in an educational sense, the information should be available to the pupil to examine, look into and discuss so as to develop, as an aim, an understanding and appreciation of the work and of the wider context which surrounds it:

To develop in our pupils an appreciation of the aesthetic field of each art discipline is not only to increase their individual grasp of many specific works of art, it is also to extend the expressive possibilities of their own art. (7)

In agreement, Harold Osborne states that "it is common form to emphasize that aesthetic attention is a form of perception - for-its-own-sake, freed from the practical



interests that dominate perception in ordinary life" (8)  
 However, Osborne goes a step further than Chapman by giving specific attention to art works:

Works of art present more complex objects for our attention, organic wholes which challenges and extend our powers of percipience. But in their case, too, appreciation - the aesthetic act - finds its fulfilment and completion in the perception itself without ulterior motive (9)

Unfortunately with the Irish exam system the way it is today, 'aesthetic appreciation' the Osborne way does not really exist. He states that "aesthetic education envisages the expansion of our perceptual powers and the cultivation of the sensibility which belongs to direct apprehension of the world in which we live" (10)

Rod Taylor writes that "an education which ignores the aesthetic is therefore one which risks impoverishment by failing to cultivate and develop feeling, sensation and sensibilities" (11) Taylor goes on to define aesthetic education as:

The aesthetic then must be concerned with all that works through and on feeling sensation and sensibility ... touch, taste, feel: these are words suggesting in their uses the intimate relationship between sensation and feeling which best brings out the nature of the aesthetic mode. (12)

Cultural heritage is defined in three levels by Raymond Williams, these bear directly on the idea of the 'cultural heritage':



- (1) There is the lived culture of a particular time and place only fully assessable to those living in that time and place.
  - (2) There is a recorded culture of every kind of art to the most everyday facts: The culture of a period.
  - (3) There is also, as a factor connecting lived culture and period cultures, the culture of the selective tradition
- (13)

The school art history syllabus would be mainly concerned with groups two and three, the art works and information behind them giving pupils insight, whether selectively or not, into past cultures and traditions. Leading on from that, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation put forward four categories or aims to describe a cultural education:

1. Helps pupils to understand cultural diversity by bringing them into contact with the attitudes, values and institutions of other cultures as well as exploring their own.
2. Emphasises cultural relativity by helping them to recognise and compare their own cultural assumptions and values with these others.
3. Alerts them to the evolutionary nature of culture and the potential for change.
4. Encourages a cultural perspective by relating contemporary values and historical forces which moulded them (14)

Finally critical studies is defined by David Thistlewood as:

...an accepted abbreviated term for those parts of the art and design curriculum in all levels of education, that embrace art history, aesthetic theories, and the



social, economic, political, religious and numerous other contexts within which the practice of art and design exists. (15)

One of the most important aspects of working with critical studies is to find ways to encourage the pupils to give proper time, attention and focus to the work of artists. According to Rod Taylor the "constant bombardment of visual images in their daily life through television, film, advertising and the media, it is all too easy for their reading of images to become very undifferentiated". (16) This is one of the challenges for the art teacher: how to make the works of the great artists as spellbinding as the latest M.T.V. videos.

### IS THERE A NEED FOR HISTORY OF ART?

To begin with, let's look at art itself - what are the justifications for teaching art? Elliot Eisner puts forward two justifications, a contextualist and essentialist justification, according to Eisner these are defined as follows:

A contextualist justification emphasises the instrumental consequences of art in work and utilises the particular needs of the students or the society as a major basis for forming its objectives.

An essential justification emphasises the kinds of contributions to human experience and understanding that only art can provide, it emphasises what is indigenous and unique in art. (17)



Also Louis Arnaud Reid states the "function of art education in liberal education is to develop understanding of the arts, aesthetic education should develop increased awareness of the aesthetic everywhere" (18)

If we look at the aims of arts education at post-primary level identified in the Report of the Curriculum and Examinations Board of Studies : Arts we see that:

- 1) Arts education should extend the range and quality of pupils experience in art/craft/design by continuing, deepening and broadening the visual arts education begun in primary school.
- 2) To provide adolescent pupils with an important personal resource during the transition from childhood to adulthood.
- 3) To develop pupil's skills and abilities in making art in a variety of media.
- 4) Through active involvement, to further the understanding and appreciation of design in all its forms.

Since point 5) specifically deals with the importance and need for history of art, I have italicised it to give it greater emphasis:

- 5) *To extend pupils knowledge and understanding of the history of art so as to foster their capacity to make developed critical judgements and authentic personal choices.*
- 6) To develop pupils critical awareness and understanding of the visual elements of popular culture including film, video, fashion and the mass media.
- 7) To develop a practised understanding of the continuum between art and the environment and consequently a sense of responsibility for the natural and built environment. (19)

This need is summarised in the final report from the National Curriculum Art working group in England:



We believe that it is important for the pupils to gain a developing awareness of the work of others. The history of art and diverse way in which it occurs in other cultures and contexts should be taught in their own right. Until pupils have gained sufficient experience to make informed judgements they must proceed intuitively, by simple likes and dislikes rather than by reason. As pupils get older, this process should be complemented by the study of art, history and social, economic, religious and cultural contexts. Pupils need the ability to 'engage' with an artefact i.e. be willing to devote time and energy to responding and relating to it. (20)

This seems more detailed than that of the Irish board. The English board have taken into account the age of the pupil and how to relate the works of art to the various ages. In Ireland, the introduction of the Junior Certificate art syllabus allows the pupil to be involved with and begin to appreciate works of art. Prior to this pupils entered the Leaving Certificate art course without, or very little interaction with art works.

The English board also go on to list aims like that of the Irish board: however I am going to concentrate on the list of aims specifically for the history and appreciation of art and design:

- 1) Identify different kinds of art and their purposes.
- 2) Begin to identify the characteristics of art in a variety of genres from different periods, cultures and traditions.
- 3) Make imagination use in their own work of developing knowledge of the work of other artists.
- 4) Identify the conventions used by artists and assess critically their effect.
- 5) Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the principle features of our artistic heritage and appreciate a variety of other artists traditions.





- 6) Apply imaginatively the methods and approaches of other artists in the presentation of their ideas and feelings (21)

These aims try to incorporate a wide level of visual art and combine the historical and contemporary with the child's own work. In the summary by the National Curriculum art working group, the idea of art works for younger children, is I mentioned before, rather like that of "Support Studies" in our art, craft and Design Junior Certificate syllabus.

I accept Louis Arnaud Reid's views on the importance and value of aesthetic education, he states:

Everyone comes to the arts as individuals with certain temperaments, dispositions, and gifts, with special personal associations which effect which is seen, with a particular cultural background in which the arts and the aesthetic may or may not have played a part, and perhaps with some, or little experience of trying to work in some medium. (22)

Reid puts emphasis on the individual and on social differences and, ultimately, in the art class the individual and his/her experience is and must be emphasised. However, this experience may be non-existent depending on each individual's social background.

Reid goes on to say that "for organised aesthetic education to proceed there will have to be, on the one hand open exposure to works of art of various kinds, and on the other, some initiation into their place in the historical cultural context, some learning about techniques, manners and styles". (23)



### TEACHING ART HISTORY

We will begin by looking at the role of the teacher in the arts, to do this we will go the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation whose report Arts and Schools states that:

The role of the teacher in the arts is at once vital and complicated. The task is not simply to let anything happen in the name of self-expression or creativity. Neither is it to impose rigid structures of ideas and methods upon the children. The need is for a difficult balance of freedom and authority. (24)

The Gulbenkian Foundation go on to state an aim which is very relevant for the teaching of history of art, this is that:

Teachers must avoid giving the impression that only their views count. If we want to promote independent, critical and creative thinking, we shall be working against ourselves if we try to achieve these things by methods of teaching which stifle the initiative and promote the acceptance of an authoritarian body or establishment. (25)

This shows that there is a major difference between the teacher's inputs which need to be structured and the responses of the pupils which can be open-ended. The Gulbenkian Foundation follow on to say that arts teaching is not just a simple matter of passing on the cultural heritage: "In contrast to the diverse, relative and evolutionary nature of culture as it actually exists, a picture is conjured up of a universally valued archive of stable treasures. The arts teacher is seen as a kind of guide around this archive" (26)



Looking at Peter Abbs' view, he states that the arts teacher should use teaching methods that "keep the response of the pupils in the aesthetic mode, deepening it, refining it"

(27) Abbs states that the task for the art teacher is to:

Promote that reciprocal play between the repertoire of artistic conventions inherited through the culture and that innate proclarity in the individual and group for symbolic expression. The formal aesthetics we have proposed would have the arts taught as aesthetics activity where the conventions and meanings of art are grasped through the medium of art and through sustained practical experience of art making. (28)

Although the practical side of art education is important, I disagree with Abbs in his belief that all concepts and meanings should be grasped by practical means. I believe that concepts and meanings should be backed up by practical but the voicing of opinions, discussion and the vocabulary of art history used in conversation in the art history class is the most useful and beneficial way for a pupil to gain a full knowledge and appreciation of works of art.

Of course the question then arises of what should be taught, I agree with Anthony Dyson's view that "there is always some connection between what artists do and what is considered by teachers proper for children in their art lessons to do"

(29) This view relates to that of the Gulbenkian Foundation, that art teachers act as guides, therefore passing over some works and concentrating on others. However, not only does this view make art teachers out to be guides, it also gives the impression that art history teachers are partaking in censorship.

The Gulbenkian Foundation ask the question:

Whether or not the children should be encouraged to understand the work of the great artists - we have no doubt that they should - but which artists do you choose and by what criteria do we call them great? (30)

This is an interesting question which, in relation to the Leaving Certificate syllabus, can be answered easily - the criteria one uses to decide who and what one chooses, is who and what is most likely to appear on the Leaving Certificate art history examination paper. This is a very clinical and sad fact but there is such a wide programme to be followed (see Fig 1 and Fig 2 Chpt 2) one has no option but to pick and choose. These have to be worked on to bring about the best possible results for students. The problem is, in using these artists, the art teacher has to try and enable the student to visualise, voice feelings, recognise styles, appreciate, criticise and examine. Then this knowledge and understanding can be applied to the student's life and environment.

Another view relating to this, is that of Frederick Palmer who says:

A truly visual education is not only about making artefacts, studying the environment, expressing feelings. These are important aspects germane to the development of us all, but for our full intellectual and aesthetic growth we rely also on a knowledge of cultural relevance, an appreciation of past achievements and an understanding of current ideas and initiatives.

The rest of this quotation I have italicised so as to stress its importance.



*If we are to grow and extend ourselves educationally we must be capable of placing what we see and what we make within a wider context, be able to make relationships across subjects, across art forms, across cultures and so establish links between the different visual and aesthetic elements of our experience (31)*

This quotation states quite simply what should happen as a result of a good visual education in the art class, however for this to happen the teacher must create opportunities for the pupils to do it. Therefore, it is not the quantity of what is done that matters but how it is taught. Of course the student should be exposed to a wide variety of visual art - the wider the better - but a smaller quantity with in-depth discussions on actual styles etc gives the students the chance to appreciate, and hopefully use, this ability "to see" in the world around them.

...You've seen the world  
 the beauty and the wonder and the power,  
 the shapes of things, their colour, lights  
 and shades,  
 Changes surprises.  
 What is it all about?  
 To be passed over, despised or dwelt  
 upon. Wondered at?  
 At this last of course! you say (32)  
 'Fra Lippo Lippi' Robert Browning

## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 1

- (1) Ralph Smith, Function and Assessment of Art in Education (Leeds: Association of Art Advisers, 1980), pages unnumbered).
- (2) Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Arts in Schools (London: Oyez Press, 1982), p. 36
- (3) Association of Art Historians, Art History and Criticism in Schools (London: Inner London Authority and University of London, Institute of Education, 1986), p. 1.
- (4) Ibid; p.1.
- (5) Laura H. Chapman, "Unspoken Policy for American Schools", in Instant Art, Instant Culture (New York and London: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1982), p. 31.
- (6) Louis Arnaud Reid, "Art Teaching and the Conceptual Understanding" in Art Education: Heritage and Prospect, Ed. Anthony Dyson, (London: University of London Institute of Education 1983), p.11.
- (7) Peter Abbs, A is for Aesthetic: Essays on Creative and Aesthetic Education (London: Falmer Press, 1989), p. 37.
- (8) Harold Osborne, "The Aesthetic in Education and in Life" The Aesthetic in Education, Vol 5 of the series Curriculum Issues in Arts Education, Ed. Malcolm Ross, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1985), p. 98.
- (9) Ibid; p. 99.
- (10) Ibid; p. 84.
- (11) Rod Taylor, Visual Arts in Education



(London: Falmer Press, 1992), p. 2.

(12) Ibid.

(13) Raymond Williams, quoted in Arts in Schools Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (London: Oyez Press, 1982), p. 39.

(14) Ibid; p. 40.

(15) David Thistlewood, Critical Studies in Art and Design Education, (London: Longman and National Society for Education in Art and Design, 1990), p. viii (Introduction).

(16) Taylor, Visual Arts in Education, p. 33.

(17) Louis Arnaud Reid, "Meaning in the Arts", in Study of Education and Art, Eds. Dick Field and John Newick (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 301-304.

(18) Ibid.

(19) Curriculum and Examinations Board, Report of the Board of Studies : The Arts (Dublin: Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1987), p. 25.

(20) National Curriculum in Art Working Group in Robert Clement, Art Teachers Handbook, (Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes, 1993), p. 162.

(21) Ibid.

(22) Arnaud Reid, "Aesthetics in the Curriculum", in Study of Education and Arts, Eds, Field and Newick, p. 165.

(23) Ibid; p. 166.

(24) Gulbenkian Foundation, Arts in Schools, p. 33.



- (25) Ibid; p. 34.
- (26) Ibid; pp. 37-38.
- (27) Abbs, A is for Aesthetics, p. 38.
- (28) Ibid; p. 39.
- (29) Anthony Dyson, "History of Art in Schools: Grasping the Nettle", in Art Education: Heritage and Prospect, ed Idem, p. 38.
- (30) Gulbenkian Foundation, Arts in Schools p. 38.
- (31) Frederick Palmer in Art History and Criticism in Schools, pp. 1-2.
- (32) Extract from a poem by Robert Browning entitled "Fra Lippo Lippi" source Ibid; p. 85.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CURRICULUM

#### THE ART CURRICULUM

A curriculum is a written statement outlining education goals and the means of achieving them: basically a structure outlining what is to be taught and the reasons why.

According to Laura H. Chapman a curriculum:

...is not intended to give a detailed picture of classroom activities; rather, it is designed to present a philosophy of art education, goals for instruction, and content to be included in the program. In principle, a curriculum is a document that can be examined by anyone who wants to know what is being taught and why (1)

Chapman goes on to state that:

The goals for instruction in art are based on two principles: (1) helping children continue their self education in art, and (2) developing children's understanding of relationships among their own artistic endeavours, the works of professionals in art, and the social impact of visual forms. Expression and response are interrelated and equally important modes of experiencing art. Approaches to study should reflect major concepts of art in Western culture, as well as anthropology. (2)

These goals, according to Chapman, should be the basis of a syllabus, but in my opinion, these goals are quite "airy fairy". The goals are not very specific and would not inform somebody a great deal about art education.





The Irish Curriculum and Examinations Board's publication Issues and Structures in Education states that:

Young people should be helpful to develop an appreciation of their artistic heritage. The development of the arts can contribute in many ways to the development of the personality. It can also contribute greatly to the production of new products of good design, high quality finish and presentation, and to the enhancement of the environment. (3)

In this quotation, from the foreword by the Chairman of the Board Dr. Edward Walsh, importance is given to the fact that art develops the personality of the pupil. This, in my opinion, is one of the greatest goals of art education: developing the personality of a pupil. Art is one of the very few subjects on offer in the school situation which allows the child as a "whole" to become involved, not only in the also and importantly in a mental and emotional way. Pupils in the art class have to draw from their own experiences, their feelings and also their imagination. In addition, the pupils in the class are given the freedom to be more open with themselves and each other than in other subjects and, therefore, art develops their skills in both visual and oral communication.

Walsh also makes reference to the design area and to the "enhancement of the environment" (4) Enabling the student to work with their environment helps him/her to break down the barriers that sometimes exist between themselves and the mysterious, quite separate world of art and the art gallery.

If the pupils are encouraged to see and make art in and for their environment, they begin to relate to all art in a more personal manner.

This, in my opinion, is very important for pupils in a disadvantaged area. **I**f these pupils can be encouraged to see art and beauty in their own environment, no matter what or where it is, it may perhaps lead them to use their skills to enhance their own areas. It will also enable them to identify and relate to many forms of art through their own experience. As the Curriculum and Examinations Boards states:

The visual arts help to develop self-esteem, self-reliance and personal identity through creative achievement. A good visual arts education enables the students to create and master their world in order to understand it and affect it positively (5)

#### THE OWATTONA PROJECT (USA)

Art education was often affected by what people believed to be important social needs. In America, during the late depression years, the Owattona Project was undertaken. This was an experimental project which sought:

To discover how the art needs of current American life could be picked up and made the basis of a school curriculum. The thrust of the project was to take art out of the museum and see it as a factor that pervades daily life. (6)



1

The director of the project was Melvin Heggarty and the problem that he and the Owattona staff had, was to devise an art programme that would be relevant to decisions that the "average citizen" might have to make during the course of his/her life. Decisions about furnishings, room layout, landscaping and other decisions that in part required aesthetic judgement. Although this sounds very basic for the framework of a curriculum, it dealt with the specific needs of the pupils and bore great relevance to their life-styles.

I feel it is of great importance that art classes should relate to the future life-style and environment of the pupil because not only does this motivate but, at a basic level, encourages parents and school authorities to allow children to take up art. How often is the question posed: "what can he/she get from studying art" been quoted as a reason against studying art? I feel that what a pupil can get from studying art should be written down, as specifically as possible, in the curriculum so as to answer Chapman's statement by information "anyone who wants to know what is being taught and why" (7) I am in agreement with the following aims of the Curriculum and Examinations Board.

There is a general lack of awareness among teachers, parents and pupils of the intrinsic and practical advantages of a rigorous visual arts education at senior-cycle level. (8)

and also

Furthermore the high achievers in academic subject areas are very often discouraged from following a visual arts course at Leaving Certificate level and are directed towards other areas of the curriculum. (9)



I feel that both of these questions back up my ideas and arguments on the uses and advantages of studying art as a central aspect of the curriculum at second level.

### IRISH AIMS FOR VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION

In 1987 the Curriculum and Examinations Boards Arts Board of Studies issued a report. In Section 8 the Board dealt with the Visual Arts, their general aims for visual arts include the following:

1. To foster in pupils a love of, an interest in and a value for the visual arts.
2. *To help pupils to know themselves and the world in visual terms through a structured integration of the dynamic between perceiving, thinking, feeling and expressing.*
3. To offer each pupil a wide range of visual arts experiences with an appropriate balance between artistic education (the pupil making art) and aesthetic education (the pupil receiving art).
4. To develop pupils' ability to make a wide range of symbols, images and forms appropriate to their developmental level, cultural background, and personal disposition.
5. To develop the ability and confidence of pupils to make and understand visual symbols and so to think visually.
6. *To foster personal and social development though encouraging the making of art individually, in pairs and in collaborative group projects.*
7. To engage pupils in the creation of problems which must be perceived and solved and which are inherently ambiguous and have no single correct solution.
8. *To place value on the individual visual expression of each pupil and so to foster a sense of purpose and achievement in each one and a mutual respect for the work of others.*

9. To provide pupils with experience in a wide variety of media so as to develop their awareness and understanding of the range of quality of ideas, meanings and feelings that can be created and expressed.
10. To foster in pupils a developed understanding of the continuity between art/craft/design and other curricular areas and between art/craft/design and the world outside the classroom.
11. *To introduce pupils to the history and traditions of art, including the art of other cultures, and to develop a particular understanding of the work of contemporary artists.*

These aims are quite specific and they also include and given importance to the individual and the relationship between the person, their art and the environment. However, in my view, the Board tends to pass over the history of art (Section 9) although the appreciation and study of history of art and design would be included in many of their general aims, the last section seems very superficial. I feel that words such as 'appreciate' and 'identify with' should have been used in Section 11 of general aims. Section 11 to introduce pupils to the history and traditions of art, including the art of other cultures, and to develop a particular understanding of the work of contemporary artists. In the study of art and design history, appreciation and identification with, are two of the most important areas.

The Curriculum and Examination Board's Arts Discussion paper of 1985 states that:

The History of Art paper of the Leaving Certificate examination accounts for more than one third of the art examination marks. The course covers an unrealistic time-span and is concerned with memory and verbal



skills at the expenses of appreciation and enjoyment of art. The examination allows little scope for genuine aesthetic response. (11)

I partly agree with the last statement, although the word appreciation was used, it is mentioned in a very casual manner. I feel that no matter where or how visual art or design is introduced in a classroom situation, some level of appreciation and enjoyment are lost over memory and verbal skills. The level of appreciation may be lowered because of time constraints and the amount that has to be covered but there is always some level of appreciation taking place, even in the simple questions a pupil may formulate in his/her mind e.g.

What does that remind me of?

That colour is like the colour of my shirt

Even in subject matter, the composition of a painting may remind the pupil of something they may have experienced or seen. Even these responses show that the pupil is identifying and appreciating the work. The level of appreciation a not be very high, but these responses show that the pupil is looking, seeing and relating visual art to themselves. The appreciation is there, and I feel, in some cases wins out over the verbal.

Unfortunately in an examination situation, the memory and verbal areas are far more important. This will have to be changed in the future to allow for appreciation and a more "visually" related examination paper.

THE HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN ELEMENT OF THE LEAVING  
CERTIFICATE ART (INCL. CRAFTS) COURSE

The history of art and design course is one of the widest courses that has to be covered in a school situation. This fact seems to go unnoticed by many school authorities, timetable planners and some teachers who insist on pushing the weaker pupils into art or time tabling art with physics or chemistry, for example. Many believe that art is an easy option, however the art course spans from 7000BC to the present day and the following list of areas to be covered will hopefully show that art history is most definitely not an easy option. There are two main sections that have to be covered - European Art and Irish Art (both sections include art, design and architecture). The main sections in European art can be seen in Fig 1.



Figure 1.

EUROPEAN ART

Romanesque Architecture  
Gothic Architecture  
Early and Late Renaissance  
Baroque Art  
Rococo Art  
Realism  
Classicism  
Neo Classicism  
Romantic Art  
Pre Raphaelite Art  
Realist Art  
Impressionism  
Post Impressionism  
Symbolist Art  
Art Nouveau  
Cubist Art  
Futurism  
Bauhaus Art and Design  
Expressionism  
Development of Abstract Art  
Dadaism  
Surrealism  
Pop Art  
Op Art  
Kinetic Art  
Contemporary Works

The sections in Irish art can be seen in Fig. 2.

Figure 2.

IRISH ART

Mesolithic Period  
Megalithic Period  
Neolithic Period  
Bronze Age  
Iron Age  
Early Christian Period  
High Christian Period  
9th - 10th Centuries  
Romanesque Period  
Anglo Norman Period  
Georgian Period  
19th Century Art  
20th Century Contemporary Art



To cover this course and give adequate time to appreciation is impossible. It would be impossible to cover this course fully in two years even in third level education so what can be expected to be achieved in approximately thirty five weeks, for about thirty five minutes each week in fifth and sixth year/ It is a ridiculous amount, yet it has remained unchanged for years, is it too daunting a situation to be tackled by our many boards and education groups? Something has to be done to change this course, for example, look at the English course, does this pupil have to acquaint himself or herself with every piece of prose, poetry and story ever written? Does a fifth and sixth year history pupil have to know every war and battle that was fought in the last two centuries? No, because in these subjects the pupils are allowed to specialise in one or a few areas of the course. A similar type of approach to the art history syllabus should be thought about, for the exploration and appreciation of art and design history when the time comes to draw up a new syllabus.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ART HISTORY CURRICULUM

Returning to the idea of specific study areas within the syllabus, a curriculum like that in English or Irish should be put forward for art. Three or four areas or periods should be compulsory for a specific year, in the same way that a Shakespeare play is taken each year in English. This would immediately allow the pupils and teachers to become more involved with the period and, I feel, a far greater

appreciation level would be reached as time would not be such a major factor. However, in this the pupils are being cut off from many great art works and movements.

Along with three or four periods, twenty or twenty-five specific paintings should be chosen by the art education curriculum planners which show examples of the various other periods and styles. These paintings would be changed every year and would allow the teacher to introduce what he/she felt relevant or appreciate to the themes or method through which they taught. Giving the class teacher more freedom to work within the syllabus would be a big advantage to weaker pupils as the class teacher could make learning more relevant for those pupils by working with the syllabus and maybe choosing themes within paintings that were relevant to the pupils' environment.

Referring to the exam situation I feel that an illustration of some kind should be included with the history of art and design paper. There should be a question that centres around a coloured reproduction of a painting. In this case the pupil would have to draw on aesthetic; appreciative responses to work e.g. ideas on style, colour, atmosphere, brushwork. If the course is titled the History and Appreciation of Art and Design then why is appreciation not questioned specifically in the exam. Appreciation is not something which is taken down and learned off by the pupil, appreciation comes from the pupil working one to one with the art work and what comes from within.



This type of question would not only be suited to a visual subject such as art, but it would also give weaker pupils a fair chance if their retention level is low, yet their appreciation level to something seen is high.

Art is a visual subject so why is the history side not examined in a visual way? At the moment, the Woodwork examination paper is far more visual than the appreciation of art and design. One can say that the third section of the examination paper is about appreciation, but it is more to do with the pupils everyday life and design.

The appreciation I would like to see developed is the inner appreciation within the pupil to all forms of art and that this would lead the student to make comparisons and relationships between the art "greats" of the past and present. My ideal is that the pupil would appreciate all type of visual art work, historical or contemporary, and that this appreciation would be used in all areas of life. Louis Arnaud Reid states that:

that 'knowledge' with which nearly all the school curriculum is concerned with is the kind of knowledge and understanding of concepts and facts which can be clearly expressed in words or symbols e.g. maths, science, geography. (12)

However the

experience of art is cognitive, a kind a knowing, yet through art presupposes a lot of factual knowledge (such as this is an oil painting), as well as the ordinary conceptual understanding, the cognitive forces in our experiences of art - whether it is making or looking - it is not on factors or concepts as such but directly on the work art it itself (13)

I feel that Reid leans towards a very appreciative view of history of art and design and I especially feel and next quotation backs up what I have said on the importance of appreciation.

Experimental knowledge of art involves the whole person, actively feeling, body as well as mind. Knowledge of art always occurs via sense perception of physical objects, and in the experience of art, mind and body together are far more clearly indivisible. *One cannot know aesthetic and artistic values without feeling them.* In art the 'feeling' which is involved is cognitive, a condition of our coming to know and understand the intrinsic significance of works of art. (14)

### APPRECIATION

The Oxford dictionary defines appreciation as "perception, especially of delicate impressions or distinction" (15).

This, I feel, has to do with appreciating works of art. A structure for art appreciation was put forward by Hildred who drew much of his information and research from Harold Osborne (16). These are divided into five main areas which are:

1. Production of Art and Design - Hildred describes this as the person's first hand experience of art/craft/design, this process is an important mode of art appreciation. This section is to do with work in a class situation, the pupils own work, the appreciation they develop by executing it and then the appreciation that develops from this, enabling them to appreciate their classmates work and the art world.
2. Critical Activity This area is derived directly from Osborne's theories. Osborne defines Critical Activity as involving comparison, evaluation and judgement which can be applied their own work or towards the evaluation of the works of others.

Again I feel that is closely related to the first section, to appreciate goes hand in hand with evaluate.



The level of appreciation in the classroom should hopefully be applied to the various areas of the pupils life, environment etc and therefore a new way of seeing and appreciating is achieved. Pupils in the classroom, by producing and evaluating their own work should hopefully be able to use the same 'technique' when engaging with a work on the syllabus.

3. History of Art - Osborne describes this as the memorizing of externally selected facts. This is a very clinical way of viewing the subject but, in relation to the exam, that is what is covered. Therefore a change is needed so appreciation becomes the important achievement not the pupils ability to retain hard facts.
4. Connoisseurship - This, Osborne describes as a product of a persons "contemplation" based on close contact with an object. This is what I would like to see happen in art and design history lessons. Time to study, dissect and contemplate maybe one or two pieces of work in class. At the moment reproductions of art works are glanced over in quite a superficial way because of constraints such as exams and time. However if time could be spend just becoming "one" with the art work, a great level of appreciation would be reached and this could be transferred to other art forms and, more importantly, life, as that is what we lead our pupils towards.
5. Aesthetic Response - finally Osborne states that this involves the person's enjoyment of a particular response e.g. "noticing that you are noticing". Again, this type of achievement, I feel, can be reached in the art class if time was given to specific works and the value of appreciation and not retention. (17)

The current syllabus must be modified and changed to allow the students own, personal appreciation to develop. Not only in the practical side, but aesthetically, so they can learn to appreciate art, people and their own environment. The only way the syllabus can be changed for the better is by listening to the suggestions and criticisms of the art teachers themselves. In the following chapter we can see some of their responses and their unified desire for major syllabus changes.

## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 2

- (1) Chapman, Approaches to Art in Education, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 117.
- (2) Ibid., p. 138.
- (3) Curriculum and Examinations Board, foreword by Dr. Edward M. Walsh in The Arts in Education: A Civic and Ex Board Discussion Paper, (Dublin: Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1985), p. 3.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid., p. 16.
- (6) Elliot W. Eisner. Educating Artistic Vision (New York: MacMillan, 1972), p. 55.
- (7) Chapman, Approaches to Art to Education, p. 117.
- (8) Curriculum and Examinations Board, Arts in Education, p. 19.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Curriculum and Examinations Board, Report of the Board of Studies: The Arts, (Dublin: Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1987), pp 23-24.
- (11) Idem, The Arts in Education: Discussion Paper, p. 19.
- (12) Arnaud Reid, "Art Teaching and the Conceptual Understanding" in Art Education: Heritage and Prospect, Ed. Dyson, p.11.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Ibid., p. 12.



- (15) Oxford Dictionary, Volume 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 95.
- (16) Harold Osborne, Art of Appreciation, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.9.
- (17) Ibid.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE GALLERY IN ART HISTORY EDUCATION

The nature of art history is a simple concept. It is a record of artists, works of art, schools of art and significant events in the development of art. Art history is capable of providing us with direct contact with the historical object, always sensorally experienced either through the original or reproductions. The gallery is one of the best places to allow the student to fully interact with the work of art.

Giving the pupils the chance to see the original art work, breaks down the barriers that are formed between the viewer and reproduction. The pupils are enabled to see sculptures as forms and see the texture and true colour of paintwork. By building up this one to one relationship with the work of art the pupils are allowed greater freedom for appreciation, they can spend time enjoying the art work in front of them. Gain a basic knowledge of the historical context and the artists background and maybe empathise or identify with the artist or work. Also, having the work in front of the pupils allows greater access to the art elements within it.





Andrew Mortimer, in the book Critical Studies in Art and Design Education, discussed integrating the classroom and the museum successfully. He lists primary sources for the study of art works, the first and most obvious source he mentions are museums and galleries. Mortimer suggests these offer the art teacher:

An alternative to the academic chronologically - based body of knowledge which traditionally governed the approach to art history in schools. It also called into question the divisions between "high" and "low" culture and attacked the cult of the end product - the framed masterpiece (1).

#### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CLASS TEACHER IN THE GALLERY**

Many teachers believe that the best way to be shown around an art gallery is by a professional so they engage a gallery guide. In my opinion this is not a good idea. The gallery guide may know each painting and be an expert on every art work within the confines of the gallery, but many gallery guides see pupils as uniform-clad clones that they have to impart knowledge on. Most of the information given washes over the pupils heads as it is not relevant to them.

However, if the class teacher takes the responsibility of showing the class around the gallery, the results are much better. The class teacher knows:

- the interests of the pupils so they can direct and



motivate them.

- the pupils attention span so they can encourage concentration on one source for an appropriate time.
- how to question the pupils so both pupils and teachers get what they want and its relevant to class work.
- the pupils individuality and social background.

With these advantages the class teacher must be the best gallery guide available.

In the United States of America the value of gallery tours has been questioned:

.....Dissatisfaction with the traditional group tour, in which docents herd children through the museum, lecturing all the way, is not new, but increasing numbers of art museum educators have begun to despair of it. To many museum educators ... the traditional tour often seems to impose a passive learning situation on children, to give them irrelevant information, and, even in the hands of the most sympathetic and stimulating lecturer or docent, to be antithetical to the idea that children learn best through participation, discovery, and the stimulation of their natural curiosity (2).

The National Gallery of Ireland, in addition to gallery tours, has a varied selection of work sheets, these are of great use to a teacher. A specific period/painting can be

questioned and examined through the work sheet. These are useful because it allows the art teacher to choose work sheets which are relevant to the current work in the classroom. However, after viewing many samples of the National Gallery worksheets I feel that they are underestimating the pupils abilities by the questions asked. As Katy MacLeod states about classes in a gallery situation:

Anxious school teacher, anxious gallery teacher, each intent on not drawing a blank and so keeping the pitch far below the childrens capabilities (3).

The National Gallery worksheets are aimed at the ages 10 to 18 years. In my opinion, this is far too much of an age difference. Questions directed at a ten year old have to be structured in a totally different way to the more abstract questioning allowed at eighteen. One can see in the worksheet (appendices) the types of question asked. Questions such as:

Do you know what an angel looks like?

And

Tick which of the colours you can see? (4).

These questions are suitable for primary school and maybe first and second year at junior cycle. But hand these to any senior classes and they would probably laugh, yet the National Gallery has aimed these for 10 to 18 years.

Again this proves the need for the specific art teacher to guide his/her own class around the gallery and make out their own worksheets. The teacher's work sheets are



invaluable for the amount of information and knowledge that can be gained, the choice of the right paintings, the use of the proper language and questioning. The art teacher can lead or direct the pupils to the most useful areas and paintings, with this ability for relevance the opportunities for appreciation and development can only be heightened.

Contact with the contemporary arts, or with the living world of the art of the past would seem to be an indispensable source of personal stimulus and nourishment. A teacher's personal involvement in the processes of art is likely to give his teaching relevance and vitality - also teaching will become neither perfunctory nor mechanical in his hands (5).

**FOOT NOTES TO CHAPTER 3**

(1) Mortimer, Andrew "Approaches to the Teaching of Critical Studies" in Critical Studies in Art and Design Education, Ed. David Thistlewood (Essex: Longman Group, 1989), p.59.

(2) Newsome, B.Y. and A.Z. Silver, The Art Museum as Educator cited in MacLeod, "Gallery and School: Art Study Programmes", in Critical Studies in Art and Design Education, Ed. Thistlewood, p.88.

(3) Macleod, Katy "Gallery and School: Art Study Programmes", p.89.

(4) National Gallery of Ireland, Worksheet no. 2

(5) Ross, M. Art and the Adolescent. Schools Council working paper no. 54 (1975), p. 44.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **SCHOOL: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Cabinteely Community School, Cabinteely, Dublin 18 grew out of the Ursuline Secondary School which was founded in 1963 and which became a community school approximately twelve years later. In 1978 the new building took 800 students. At present the numbers enrolled stand at just over 800 with about 350 boys and 450 girls. There is a teaching staff of about fifty.

The catchment area of the school takes in Cabinteely, Loughlinstown and Deansgrange. The school is co-educational and multidenominational and welcomes students from all religious backgrounds and traditions. The school's board of Management includes two nominees of the Ursuline Order, one nominee of the catholic Archbishop of Dublin, three nominees of the Co. Dublin Vocational Educational Committee, two teacher's nominees and two parents' nominees. The school's aim is as follows;

To ensure that each and every student matures towards confidence, compassion and creativity, enabling them to take on the challenges of the modern world. (1).

## CURRICULUM

Curriculum followed in the first three years is that of the Department of Education junior certificate. After the three years in junior cycle, students may proceed to a fourth year programme or straight into the two year leaving certificate course. There is a vocational preparation and training programme which is a one year course which is designed to help students make the transition from school to a working adult life, to enhance existing skills, and to acquire new ones. Actual work experience is an integral part of the programme which is certified by the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee in conjunction with the Curriculum Development Unit in Trinity College. In fifth and sixth year the curriculum is that of the Department of Education leaving certificate.

## ART

Art is not a compulsory subject in the school curriculum, however it is quite popular right up to leaving certificate. There are two full time art teachers and two artrooms. Both artrooms are quite well lit and have a shared paper store. The larger art-room contains three kilns, one sink and sufficient storage space (figure 4.1). In my opinion the layout is not good, the large art-room is quite long so classes held there seem to divide into two sections. The



FIGURE 4.1





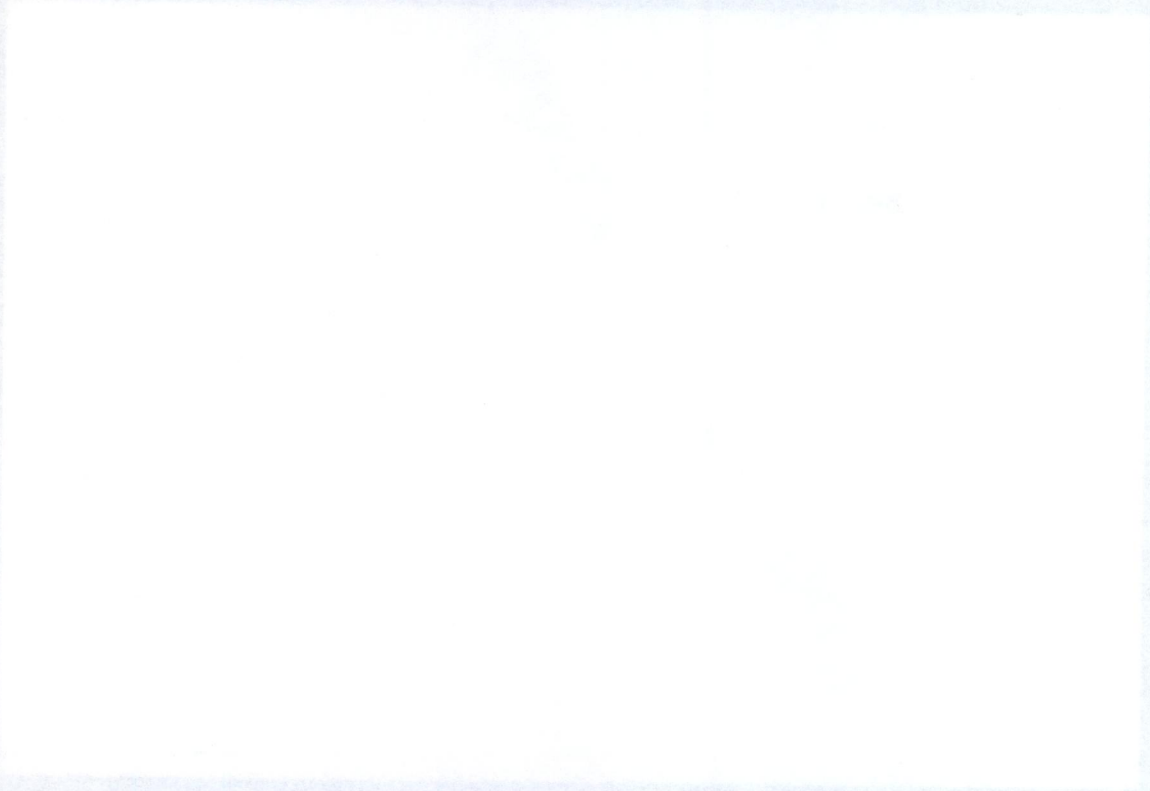




FIGURE 4.2









adjoining art room is much smaller (figure 4.2) this contains three sinks, a materials store and a slide projector.

There are 24 first year pupils in the group I teach, this class is composed of mixed ability students. The average age is 12 to 13 years. My other practical class is fifth year, this is composed of 25 very weak pupils, average age is 15-16 years. My other class group is sixth year art history, this class is composed of 24 pupils, abilities range from remedial to honours level. The average age in this group is 16 to 17 years.

### **INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROJECT**

In this chapter I will describe the procedures I employed in conducting my own research project. The study is designed to establish the attitudes of art teachers to the Leaving Certificate Art and Design History syllabus and examination paper itself. To do this I devised a questionnaire, the details of which will be discussed more fully later on.

I also wished to ascertain the views of an actual leaving certificate art class on the syllabus and examination. The group of sixth years that I teach myself answered a selection of questions from the questionnaire and again the results will be discussed fully later on.

## **DETAILS OF RESEARCH PROJECT**

### **THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

This consists of 13 basic questions and it was drawn up to obtain first hand information from the teachers themselves. It concerns their attitudes towards the Leaving Certificate History of Art and Design syllabus and also the Examination paper itself. As an example, question 1 was asked to establish what teachers felt were the main problems within the current Leaving Certificate Art History syllabus. Question 2 and 3 relate to the areas that most need changing according to the teachers. Questions 4 to 6 relate to ideas on changing the syllabus for a more structured approach. Questions 7 to 12 relate to the actual History of Art Examination paper. Finally question 13 related to the books available for the study of Art History for the Leaving Certificate. The questions were mainly quite general which allowed for more personal answering methods used by the teachers.

The questionnaire given to the sixth year pupils consisted of 7 questions. It again concerns their attitudes to the history of art syllabus and examination. The questions were



quite similar to the other questionnaire apart from a more specific question on the structure of the syllabus. This question got the pupils to compare the history of art and design syllabus to that of their other subjects and make suggestions for its change.

The questionnaire was filled out by five teachers from a variety of school backgrounds, both community schools and convent schools. The other questionnaire was filled out by 5 sixth year pupils, all from my own History of Art and Design class in Cabinteely Community School.

**FOOT NOTES TO CHAPTER 4**

- (1) Cabinteely Community School, School Prospectus, p.2.



## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Teachers

In writing these results I formulated the teachers' answers, most of which were in point form, together and outlined the general attitudes and feelings to each question. To indicate different viewpoints or to reinforce the general consenses, I included a quotation taken from the actual questionnaire (see appendices). If a quotation is used or if I am referring to a specific questionnaire I use the terms subject A, for example.

Question 1 asked what the main problems within the History of Art syllabus at senior cycle are. The general feelings were that the course itself is much too broad to be studied in such little time. Subject A stated:

The course is much too wide to cover in two years even if students have been familiarised with art history in junior years.

There was also agreement among teachers that the course should have more relevance to modern life and greater emphasis should be placed on modern art and its appreciation.

The answers I received seem to agree with the faults that I discussed within the Art History Syllabus in chapter 2. The syllabus being too broad and the time factor seem to be the main areas that cause worry for the practising art teacher.

The second question asked teachers what were the main areas that needed change within the syllabus.

All teacher were in agreement that the whole Art History syllabus, in general, needed changing and restructuring. Subject B suggested that the Art History course should be:

Structured like that of the Leaving Certificate History course, where a personal research project is chosen by the pupil and then a question relating to this is then asked on the paper.

Also Subject D put forward the idea that art history should be run in conjunction with the general Leaving Certificate History course as they would compliment each other. The general History students receiving a visual awareness to go along with the facts and vice versa for the history of art pupils. According to subject E:

All the areas need to be more structured, the course at the moment is much too difficult for weaker students. Art history should not take precedence over practical work but should be an integral part of it, like the projects run in Junior Certificate level.



Question 3, asked what changes should be made in the near future. Again, two teachers agreed that History of Art should be incorporated into the practical work like that in the Junior Certificate.

All teachers agreed that the course will have to be made more relevant to contemporary life, for example subject C, who stated:

The present course is not relevant to anything and the students get so bored with facts and dates. I would like to see more use being made of galleries such as the Douglas Hyde and Municipal Gallery where the students would see modern work.

This statement agrees with what I have previously said, by bringing the pupils to galleries, viewing modern and contemporary work, it may lead to the pupils themselves empathising or identifying with the artist. The fact that the artist may still be alive can only lessen the barrier between some pupils and the "artist".

Subject D would like to see history of art being made into a separate subject so that "pupils who have not got the practical skills do not miss out on an artistic education".

Another general agreement was that the Department of Education should publish detailed guidelines for the history of art syllabus. Also the Department should produce videos and packages on topics, themes and artists which would be sent to the schools.

Question 4 was asked to see if teachers would like to see the History of Art course structured like that of the English Leaving Certificate course. Three out of five teachers questioned agreed with this especially if it was run in conjunction with my suggestion in question 5, that 20-25 paintings would be studied under a thematic structure.

Subjects A and D believed that the students would loose out yet both agreed with question 5.

Subject E believed that the freedom the selection of works gave to the teacher would be of great benefits to the pupils.

Themes could be chosen that are relevant to the pupils, their social background and their ability. The class teacher would be able to formulate his/her own methods of teaching around the selection of works which could be made very exciting and get away from the more academic approach to Art History in classroom.

The general comment in question 6 was that the History of Art syllabus cannot change properly until the practical course is changed with it. Question 7 and 8 were directed towards the History of Art Examination paper. The results were as follows;

Too structured	2/5
Too factual	5/5
Not visual enough	5/5
Unfair to weak pupils	5/5
Does not allow enough appreciation	5/5



I was surprised that only two out of five answered that the exam was too structured. In my opinion the exam is structured in such a way that it allows very little appreciation and personal preference on the part of the pupil. I personally would like to see a more open examination paper with more starting points for discussion as opposed to specific questions.

The teachers all agreed that the examination itself was not visual or exciting enough, one even went so far as saying that the examination was "boring".

Subject B stated:

Questions should be simplified, have a more visual content and the written standard expected is much too high for a lot of second level pupils.

On the area of appreciation, subject A stated:

The exam itself allows for very little personal appreciation by the pupil, facts and dates are looked for instead of the pupils own understanding. The so called appreciation section is not catered for in any of the texts and tends to be forgotten about compared to the rest of the syllabus.

Again, this refers back to the area I spoke about in chapter 2 - the importance of Appreciation. Maybe if the Appreciation section, as it is now, was removed and the Appreciation directed towards the periods of art and contemporary studies, the general benefits to the pupil would be greater.

Questions 9 and 10 both asked about the value of having a greater visual content within the examination paper. All teachers agreed that the visual reproduction of a painting should be included in the examination. They also want the whole visual element emphasised within the examination itself.

Subject B and E both suggested the use of slides in the examination. Subject C suggested varied diagrams of paintings, although this left out colour it allowed discussion on composition and subject matter maybe the development of a theme leading on from the illustration.

Subject D stated that the use of colour and reproductions would:

Act to stimulate and excite the pupils.  
Colour would evoke more personal responses  
from the pupils as it would stimulate  
their senses. Then this type of self  
appreciation would make what they write  
much more important to them.

In question 11, teachers were asked to make other comments in relation to their feelings on the art history syllabus and the teaching of it.

Most teachers agreed that there is far too much emphasis on the "academic" learning within the Art History class and not enough on the pupils own senses and feelings. Subject A stated:

A lot more learning should come from attending galleries and also artists should come to the



school and speak to pupils, this would allow the pupils to see the artist as human beings, learn from them and identify with them.

This is an interesting point and one which Mortimer includes in his list of primary sources for the study of art works (1). He suggests visits to the school by professional artists and crafts people. Pat Van Pelt a former Art Education Officer at the British Arts Council stated:

A school environment, by its very nature tends to be insular and isolated. All we can do to enrich and enlarge this world is therefore vital. An artist brings to the school a wealth of new experiences from which he/she selects, records, examines, rejects, reassesses, codes and decodes. To be witness, even in part to this process, both stimulates enquiry and heightens perception (2).

The final question applied to the books available for the teaching of art history. There was unanimous agreement on this question. The teachers were far from subtle when commenting on Henry's Sharpe's Art History and Appreciation and Lourda Shephard's Sight, Insight, Excite.

Henry Sharpe's book was viewed to be:

- Too academic
- Hopeless because there are no colour reproductions
- Text completely unsuitable for pupils especially for weaker/pass pupils.

Lourda Shephard's book:

- Text is rubbish
- Reproductions excellent but no information given

to them

- When information is given on an artist or work it is never followed up by the actual reproduction.

The general consensus is that there is no "decent" book available. The book which was given slightly favourable comments is Art History Revision which is published by Folens Press. This book breaks everything down into very simple terms, basic summaries of the artist are accompanied by black and white outline drawings of the works. According to subject A:

Everything is broken down into the basics, but yet again there is no colour. This book is completely geared towards the existing examination paper.

### PUPILS

When questioned, many of the pupils gave the same type of answers. To indicate their answers I will use some quotations which represent the types of answers received (questionnaire: see appendices).

Question 1 asked about the main problems involved in studying History of Art. The pupils answered:

"Far too much to be studied".  
 "Too broad, hardly anything specific".  
 "No time to cover it, it is like one subject".

The second question was asked to indicate what the pupils themselves would like to do in the History of Art syllabus:

"Loads of Modern Art".



"Everything should be modern and up to date".

Question 3 asked what the pupils would like to see less of within the History of Art syllabus:

"Religious paintings".

"Old paintings".

"Less ancient Irish work".

The next question, number 6 asked the pupils about the structure of the History of Art syllabus and if they would like something like that of the English Leaving Certificate course. The pupils wanted to see:

"More direction as to what to study".

"Set questions or areas to study".

The next question dealt with the examination paper itself and the pupils views were that the:

"Sections are too broad".

"Questions too specific".

"Questions should be asked in simple english".

"Questions should be relevant to our life".

The next section asked them about the inclusion of a reproduction with the exam paper. There was unanimous agreement on this. The pupils wanted a lot more visual references within the exam so that they could follow their own theme through.

The final question asked about their views on the textbooks available. Some of the comments were as follows:

"Books are useless".

"The books should be more relevant to the exam".

The final comment, I feel, illustrates exactly how the very weak pupil find the history of art syllabus at leaving certificate level:

"Everything should not be written in "Romeo and Julliet" language".

### CONCLUSION

It was surprising how many of the pupils answers were similar to those given by the teachers. There is general agreement that the History of Art syllabus is;

1. Too broad and the time allowed is inadequate.
2. More emphasis should be placed on Modern Art and Contemporary Art.
3. The syllabus itself should be more structured and more relevant to contemporary life.
4. The visual elements within the History of Art examination paper should be increased.
5. A relevant textbook is needed for the course.
6. The Department of Education should produce detailed guidelines on the teaching of history of art. They should also provide educational videos for the school dealing with artists/themes and topics within the history of art syllabus.
7. The standard of the history of art syllabus and examination is much too high and very unfair to weak and pass pupils.



If teachers and pupils agree on so many points, it is then up to the Department of Education and the Arts Board to recognise their wants and needs, and make these changes for the most important people in the future of Irish Art Education - the pupils and teachers.

### **THEMATIC EXAMPLES**

The suggestion of themes, within History of Art, came up many times in the questionnaires of both teachers and pupils. I took two titles that could be used for thematic studies and selected various works relating to the themes. These titles and selections are just examples of the many themes and varied works that could be taught in this way.

The titles/themes I have selected are:

1. What happened my head?
2. Doorways and windows.

For the first theme, What happened my head, I chose ten works that either represented the head in a strange or an unusual way or showed an actual severed or decapitated head. These types of images relate to the life of the pupils. They see various distorted faces and heads within computer games and science-fiction films, this theme highlights the same imagery from ancient history right up to contemporary society. This theme could also be run in conjunction with practical work. A number of activities, such as puppetry, design work and media studies, could be influenced by the works. The list of works can be seen in figure 5.1.

The second theme, Doorways and Windows, is a little more reserved than the first, yet there is a wealth of images to be drawn from taking in everything from architecture to stained glass. Again, this theme allows for many practical project starting points. Project entitled "Doorways for the Future" or "Old meets New" could all stem from the History of Art works and modern examples of doors and windows will be used by the pupil everyday, regardless of age and social background. The list of works can be seen in figure 5.6.



**FIGURE 5.1****THEME:      WHAT HAPPENED MY HEAD?**

<u>Artist</u>	<u>Work</u>
Roman Sculpture (Fig 5.2)	"Nike of Samothrace"
Michelangelo	"The last Judgement"
A. Mantegna (N.G.I.) (Fig.5.3)	"Judith with the Head of Holofernes"
<b>T.</b> Gericault	"Severed Heads"
A. Beardsley (Fig.5.4)	"The Kiss"
S. Dali	"Woman with Rose Head"
U. Boccioni	"Unique Forms of
Continuity	in Space".
M. Jellet	"I have trodden the Winepress"
N. Rolf (Fig.5.5)	"The African Flower"
L. Le Brocquy	"Homage to Clonfert".

T



FIGURE 5.2

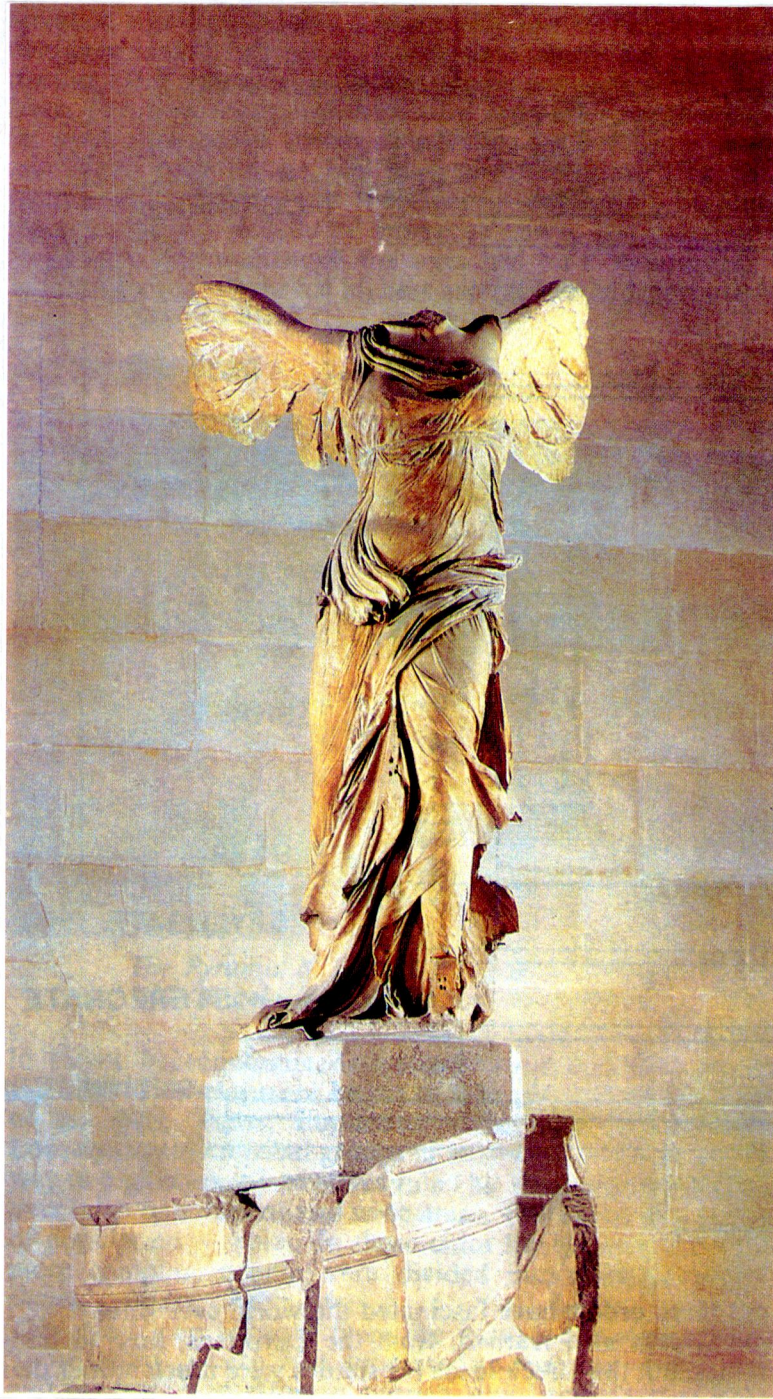








FIGURE 5.3





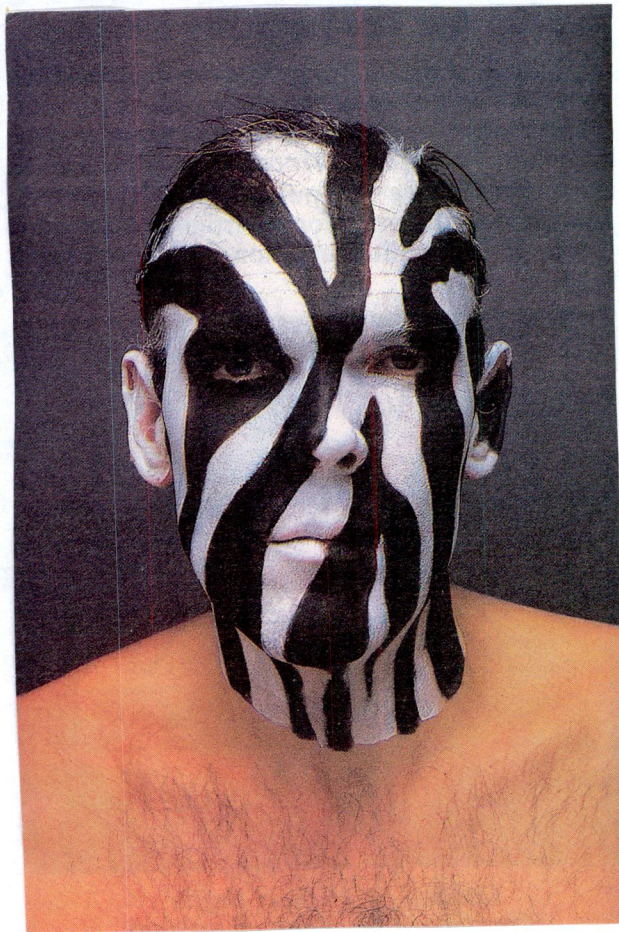




FIGURE 5.4



FIGURE 5.5





**FIGURE 5.6****THEME:****DOORWAYS AND WINDOWS****Artist****Work**

	Clonfert Doorway, Co. Galway
	Rheims Cathedral
(Fig.5.7)	Rouen Cathedral
L. Ghiberti	Baptistery Doors
L. da Vinci	"Last Supper"
Raphael	"School of Athens"
J. Vermeer (Fig.5.8)	"Girl Reading a letter at own open window"
S. Chardin	"Back from the Market"
D. Rossetti (Fig 5.9)	"Ecce Ancilla Domini"
E. Manet	"Balcony Scene"
C. Monet	"Rouen Cathedral"
R. O'Connor (NGI) (Fig 5.10)	"Lezavier, Finistere"
Gaudi	Church of Holy Family
M. Van der Rohe	"Seagram Building"
H. Clarke (Fig 5.11)	"St Agnes Window".

FIGURE 5.7

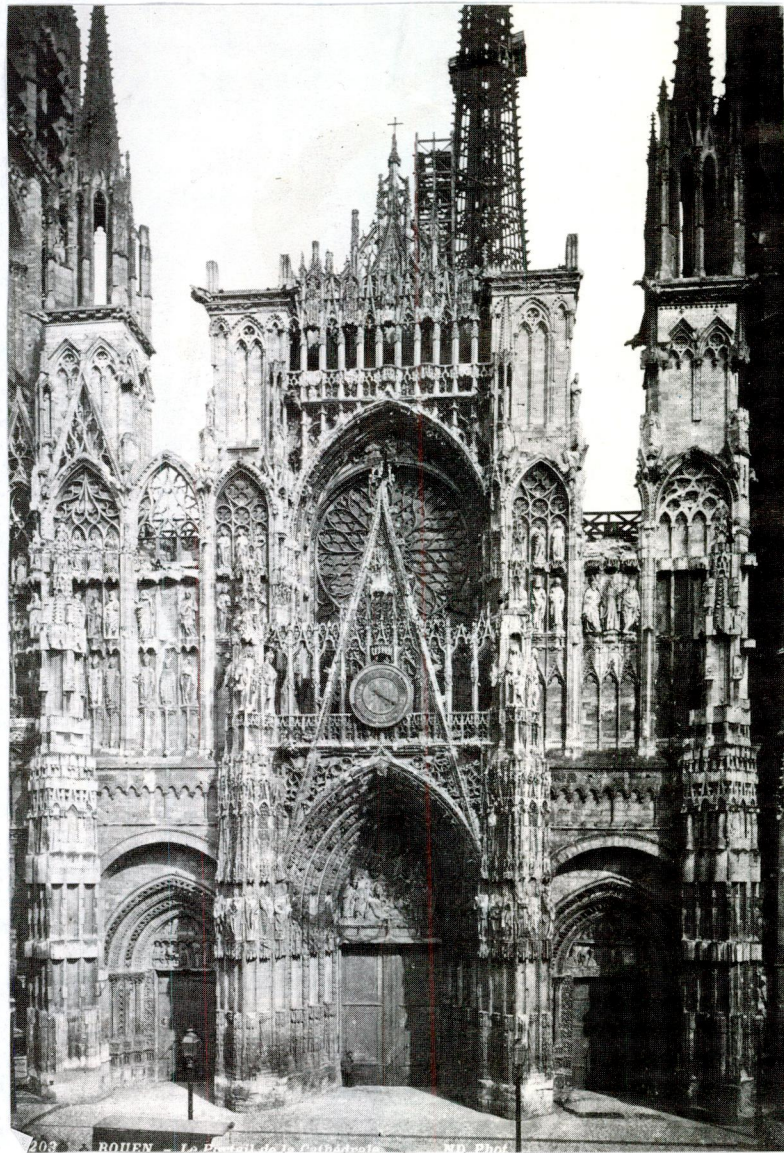








FIGURE 5.8





1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed description of the experimental procedures and the statistical analysis performed.

3. The third part of the document presents the results of the study. It includes a series of tables and graphs that illustrate the findings of the research. The data shows a clear trend in the relationship between the variables studied.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings and provides recommendations for future research. It suggests that further studies should be conducted to explore the underlying mechanisms of the observed phenomena.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study and summarizes the key findings. It reiterates the importance of the research and the need for continued investigation in this field.



FIGURE 5.9







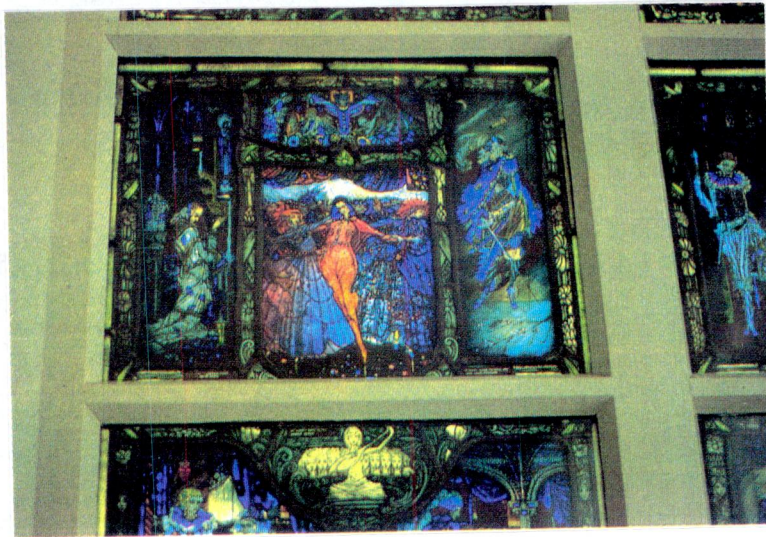


FIGURE 5.10

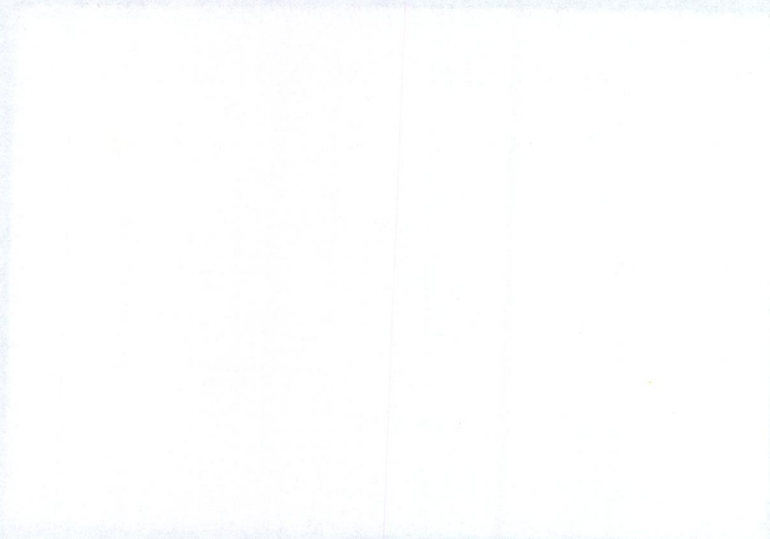




FIGURE 5.11









**FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 5**

(1) Mortimer, "Approaches to the Teaching of Critical Studies" in Critical Studies in Art and Design Education, Ed. Thistlewood, P. 59.

(2) Van Pelt, P. 5 Artists in Schools cited in "Approaches to the Teaching of Critical Studies", Mortimer, p.61

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this dissertation I looked at the History of Art syllabus at senior cycle from various angles. In chapter 1, I looked at the value and importance of History of Art at senior cycle level. I reviewed and discussed many authors that have written on the subject of Art History Education. I also looked at the qualities and the role of the art teacher within History of Art.

In chapter 2, I looked at the art curriculum itself. I identified the major problems within the History of Art and Design syllabus and the Examination paper, and put forward some suggestions for its improvement. Many of these suggestions had to do with greater emphasis being placed on the area of appreciation. I feel the appreciation and enjoyment of art works is not being allowed in the artroom because the syllabus and examination are structured in a very academic and factual manner.

In chapter 3 I looked at the role of the gallery in Art History Education. After looking at what the gallery has to offer second level art students, I concluded that the class art teacher was the most valuable person to the pupils when in the confines of the gallery.



In the next chapter I described the school in which I am currently doing my teaching practice. I looked at the schools general curriculum and their facilities for art. I then introduced my research project, in which pupils and teachers were asked for their views and attitudes towards the current Leaving Certificate History of Art syllabus and Examination paper.

I presented the findings of questionnaires in chapter 5. I concluded that both teachers and pupils were in agreement over where the problems lay. The facts that the Art History syllabus is too broad and the Examination paper lacks visual content were two of the most common findings. The senior cycle History of Art course needs complete restructuring and I hope the comments I received from both teachers and pupils highlights the main problem areas.

Hopefully this change will come about soon but until then, it is down to the art teacher to work the syllabus to their own and the pupils own advantage. By concentrating on themes within the course, placing much more emphasis on Modern Art works, and trying to make the course as relevant to modern life as possible. It is also important for the teacher to allow for general Appreciation and enjoyment of art within the class and gallery.

The teacher, knowing his/her pupils interests and backgrounds, should find appropriate techniques and methods to allow each, individual pupil grow and learn from the

world of art. Developing each pupils' individual appreciation so that they not only look at the world of art around them, but that they inhabit its history.



**APPENDICES**

### TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What in your opinion are the main problems within the current leaving certificate History of Art syllabus?
2. What are the main areas that need changing?
3. What changes would you like to see made, in regard the History of Art syllabus, in the near future?
4. Would you agree or disagree that the Art History syllabus should be structured like that of the English/Irish leaving certificate course?  
  
Yes ☐ No ☐
5. In addition to a more structured syllabus, what would you think of the inclusion of 20-25 works which showed the development of art through the ages. These paintings would be compulsory but act as starting points for thematic studies?  
  
Yes ☐ No ☐





6. Any other ideas in relation to this?

7. What are your views on the current History of Art  
leaving certificate examination paper?

8. Is the examination paper (tick as appropriate)

Too Structured ☐

Too Factual ☐

Not Visual Enough ☐

Fair to weak pupils ☐

Unfair to weak pupils ☐

Open to voicing of opinions/appreciation? ☐

9. Any recommendation for the examination itself?

10. Would you agree that the examination paper should be  
much more visual with at least one question centring  
on/around a given coloured reproduction?

Yes ☐

No ☐





11. What would the advantaged be of this type of visual questioning?

12. Other suggestions or comments?

13. Comments on the books available for teaching the History of Art course?



### PUPILS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What are the main problems in the study of Art History for the leaving certificate?
2. What would you like to see more of or changed in History of Art?
3. What would you like to see less of?
4. What way would you like the course to be structured? Maybe like the English/Irish leaving certificate course?
5. What do you think of the examination paper in History of Art?
6. Would you like more visual questions - maybe a question on a painting-reproduction given in examination?
7. What do you think of your textbook? Is it of use?

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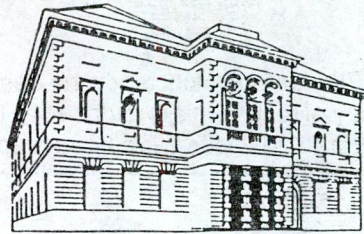
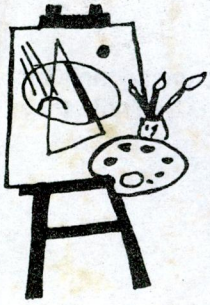
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WORKSHEET

2

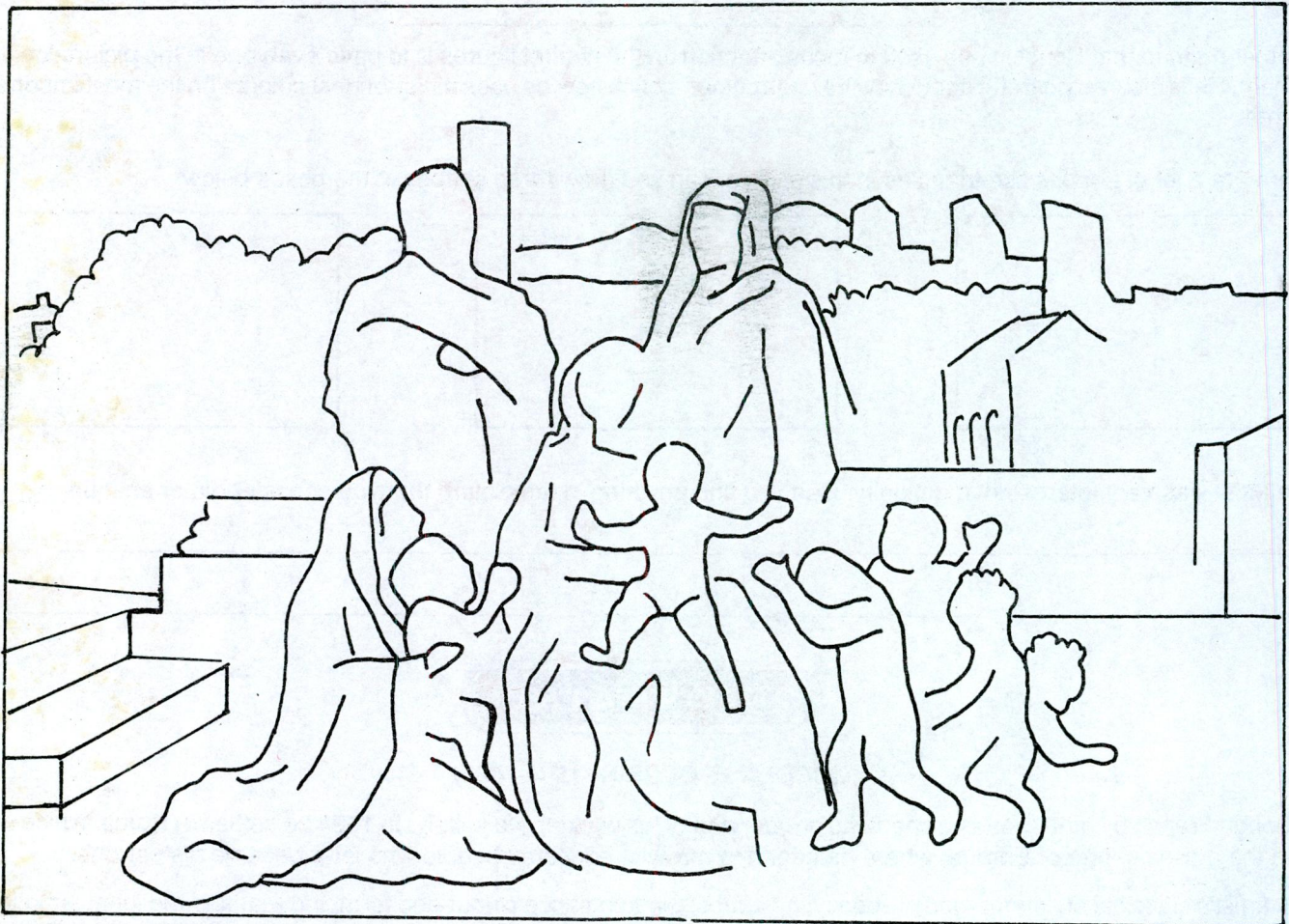
AGE 10-18

NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND  
MERRION SQUARE WEST, DUBLIN 2. PHONE 615133

*Ask for directions to the French Rooms and find the picture shown below*

## THE HOLY FAMILY

NICOLAS POUSSIN (1594-1665)



Complete the missing details and colour in this picture.

- How many figures are there in this picture: \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you know what an angel looks like: \_\_\_\_\_
- Can you describe an angel: \_\_\_\_\_
- The child Jesus is seated on Our Lady's lap, who is the man in the background, what is he doing: \_\_\_\_\_
- Who is the child Jesus looking at: \_\_\_\_\_
- Tick which of these colours you can see: ☐ orange, ☐ blue, ☐ yellow, ☐ red, ☐ green, ☐ pink, ☐ mauve, ☐ brown.
- What is in the background of the picture: (a) old ruins, (b) landscape, (c) city.
- Would you say the figures had been: 1. Casually grouped. 2. Carefully arranged in this position.



◦ LOOK

◦ SEE

◦ LEARN

Poussin was the leading French artist of the 17th century. Notice how he has carefully structured the picture so that Our Lady and the child Jesus are in the centre. A way of testing this is to draw two triangles (as shown in fig. 1). See how they converge in the centre, where Our Lady and the Child Jesus have been placed.

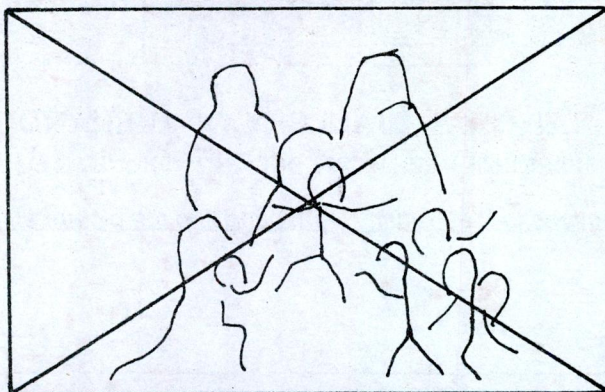
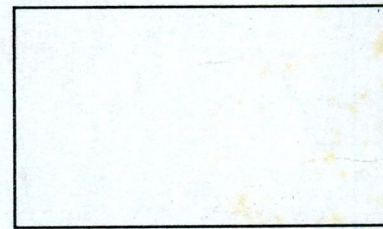
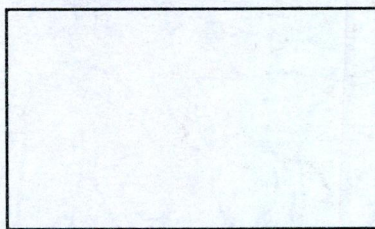
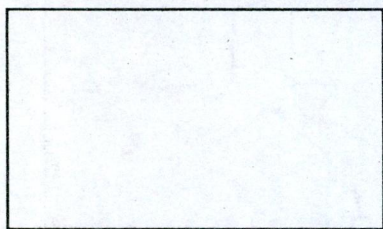


Fig. 1

Another method that Poussin has used to focus attention on the central figures is to have everyone in the picture looking at them. He is also very careful about how he uses colour, notice how he uses the strongest colours on the most important figures.

There are a lot of shapes like triangles in this picture, can you draw three shapes in the boxes below.



The artist was very interested in antiquity. Can you find anything in the picture that you consider old or antique: \_\_\_\_\_

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### INFORMATION

**NICOLAS POUSSIN (1594-1665)**

Although French by birth, Poussin spent the greater part of his working life in Italy. In 1624 he settled in Rome, which was then the artistic centre of Europe, where he began to mix with educated people who later became his patrons.

The artist's classical style emerged gradually; he learnt how to balance colour and form, the real and the ideal, emotions and beauty. He studied antique statues and ancient Roman ruins to help him convey his vision and 'The Holy Family', painted in 1649, shows the results of these studies.

The picture is a deeply spiritual one reflecting the peace and contentment of its subject—The Holy Family. The structure is clearly laid out, the figures are statuesque displaying little emotion and the background buildings are undoubtedly inspired by Poussin's surroundings in Rome. Poussin is considered the greatest French painter of the 17th century and 'The Holy Family' is a superb example of his style.

### PROJECT

'The Holy Family' is a very special subject to paint, and over the years artists have tended to set the scene in their own century. We would ask you to consider 'The Holy Family' as it might appear today, think about where the scene would take place and look at newspapers and magazines to help you with details.

Gallery Opening Hours: Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Thurs. 10 a.m.-9 p.m., Sun. 2-5 p.m.

Drawing boards may be borrowed from Reception.

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