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SPIRITUALITY AND ART EDUCATION

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by

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INTRODUCTION

The true path of life lies in the affairs of this world.

— Nichiren Daishonin

It is my intention in this dissertation to investigate the relationship between Spirituality and Art Education. The aim of this work is twofold: firstly, it attempts to offer an explanation of spirituality as experience; secondly, in an effort to identify the link between spirituality and art, it seeks to explore the possibility of an individual's spiritual development through art education.

Contribution to the spiritual development of the individual is one of the general aims outlined in both the Junior and Leaving Certificate curricula and is also in the aims of the Transition Year programme.

The study of spirituality has, like psychology, a triple objective. One studies it to understand it, but one also studies it in order to foster one's own spirituality and to foster the spirituality of others.

As an aspiring teacher of Art Craft and Design, this study is, for me, a necessary investigation into what I believe is not just an appendage to art education, but an inherent and vital dimension of it, which offers the individual a way of getting into intimate touch with the visible world and, through it, with themselves.

I feel that an harmonious balance must be maintained within all teaching subjects, as Art Craft and Design constitutes only one part of the overall curriculum.

The imparting of a body of knowledge, the acquisition of skill, the development of the creative, the artistic, the imaginative qualities of the student, the formation of character and other aspects of personal development, must also be considered in an interaction with other subject areas. These elements, I feel, are essential if students are to grow in maturity, acquire a balanced harmonious personality, and develop to live a full and happy life.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

It is quite conceivable that some people live and act consciously all their lives, but in so far as they do not reflect on their actions and the implications of those acts, they never actually come into consciousness or become present-to-themselves.(1)

For example, one day I could be sitting on a bus worrying whether or not the rain will stop by the time I have to get off. The next day I could be sitting on the same bus and become conscious that I am actually sitting on the bus and that there are smells and sounds and sights and vibrations, and that they are all happening to me. It is at this point that I come into consciousness or that I become present-to-myself.(2)

This presence-to-self is central to my understanding of a person's spirituality. It is only through contemporaneously reflecting on the experiences of everyday life that I become present-to-myself. Likewise, it is only through everyday life that I experience my spirituality.

Spirituality in Christian terms is mainly concerned with the human person in relation to God.(3) In the East, it is spoken of as the Buddha nature inherent in all of us.(4) In philosophical terms it is concerned with the human person's capacity for self-transcendence through knowledge and love.(5)

Spirituality is a term mainly current in religious spheres and the experience, it has been persuasively argued, is fundamentally the same, irrespective of the linguistic, cultural or historical circumstances in which it occurs.

For this reason, and in order to avoid denominational narrowness, I will not discuss spirituality in terms of religion, but rather in terms of the consciousness mentioned earlier.

What follows is a methodical look at the conscious human person and how one comes into consciousness, and indeed becomes present-to-oneself.

To be conscious is a human reality. But we are not conscious at all times, for example, under anaesthesia or while comatose or while deeply and dreamlessly asleep. Nor are we conscious of the growth of our hair or the circulation of our blood.

Conscious activities, as Charles Hefling explains (6) are ones like seeing, hearing, tasting, dreaming, feeling, imagining, thinking, enquiring, considering, supposing, deliberating, deciding, judging, evaluating, loving, doing. Each of these activities has two things in common: The first is that the activities are intentional. This does not mean that we do them deliberately or in a planned way. It means that the activity intends something or that each activity makes something present to me. For instance, dreaming makes a dream present, hearing makes sound present, tasting makes a flavour present, and so on. As intended, in this open-ended sense, the dream is defined as the object of dreaming. In the same sense, the object of hearing is sound.(7)

However, although the conscious activities listed make present objects, and thus are all intentional, this intentionality is not what makes them conscious. Their consciousness is the second characteristic common to such acts. Each act makes me conscious of myself, each reveals me to myself.(8)

With regard to this, Augustine(9) said that when the human mind follows the ancient precept 'know yourself', what happens is not like knowing cherubim or seraphim, which are absent; nor is it like examining one's own face, which can be present for inspection only as reflected in a mirror. Rather, the mind knows itself in the very act in which it understands the word 'yourself', and this it does for no other reason than that it is present to itself.

It is important to distinguish this self-presence, which is consciousness, from the other two kinds of presence that Augustine talks about. One is the presence in the sense of vacinity (proximity?), such as the presence of the jar to the jam; the other is the intentional presence, already discussed, of the objects of conscious acts as intentional, the presence of a colour as seen or of an idea as being considered. My presence to myself is neither of these. It is the presence of the one whose present intentional act is making some object present. In other words, I have only to open my eyes in order to become aware that I am seeing something, and my awareness is both of an act (I <u>am seeing</u> something) and of myself as performing it (<u>I</u> am seeing something).

The experience of consciousness, Hefling observes, is the presence to oneself <u>of</u> oneself and of one's acts. This experience is similar to sense experience in its giveness, but it differs in that what is given is not sensed. For example, there are data, or the experiential givens of sense, which are the intended objects of hearing, smelling, touching, tasting and seeing. On the other hand, there are the experiential givens of consciousness - the intending subject of conscious acts, which may be acts of seeing or hearing but may instead be acts of thinking, believing, understanding, defining, feeling, praying.

Consciousness, conceived as experience, is to be distin-

guished from the seemingly compatible, but in fact thoroughly opposed, notion of consciousness as perception or observation. The analogy often drawn between consciousness and perceiving an object does seem plausible. This, however, leads to scepticism such as Hume's(10) as to whether the conscious subject exists at all.

In his Treatise on Human Nature I, Hume declares: 'When I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.'

In one regard this is quite right. According to Charles C. Hefling,(11) this kind of introspective spying that Hume describes will never manage to sneak up on the subject and take it by surprise. It would be like looking at one's own eyes. What frustrates the attempt that Hume describes is that the self he is looking for is a subject apart from conscious acts and, therefore, would be precisely not conscious, not an actual subject, anaesthetised as it were and incapable as such of looking for anything.

Looking at one's nature is not an introspective effort at examining one's own mental processes; still less does it require us to submit to the ministrations of a psycho-analyst. I am in agreement with Hefling that there is no such conscious act as introspection, if the word is meant, as it

often is, in the sense of somehow looking at oneself as object.

There is, however, a less simplistic meaning of introspection, connected not with self-observation, which I believe is impossible, but with self-knowledge, which is both a possibility and, for some, a fact.(12)

By the very fact that I am operating consciously, I already have a preliminary, unpatterned awareness of myself and my operating. But I need not have noticed this awareness and it need not have been acknowledged, explored, distinguished, named, described, intrepreted, explained or understood. Just as the outer experiences of sensation are not yet full knowledge of the intelligible world, so likewise the inner experience of consciousness is not yet full knowledge of consciousness. Human knowing is a matter of raising and answering questions about experience. Such an inquiry, when it regards the data of sense, is direct; when it regards the data of consciousness, it is introspective.(13)

In order to raise questions about one's own consciousness articulately and explicitly, one has to make use of some suprastructure of language that is not immediately given but is mediated by one's culture. However, I do not intend to describe or anlayse the various suprastructures. Suffice it to say that they are necessary to express and objectify the

contents of consciousness. This can promote the conscious subject's knowledge of herself or himself, in and through conversation with that component of culture which is some more or less authentic tradition of spirituality.

The four successive levels of consciousness, which I am about to refer to, belong to such a suprastructure.(14) Briefly, they are: empirical, intellectual, rational and moral. Empirical consciousness is the inchoate, helpless, minimal consciousness of the dreamer, which passes over on waking into intellectual consciousness. Self-presence is now enhanced and intellectual activity takes place - inquiring, investigating, understanding, conceiving, defining and hypothesising. Rational consciousness is testing an hypothesis or weighing evidence for a bright idea and, finally, moral consciousness, the human yearning for what is not just true, but truly valuable as well, with freedom, responsibility, commitment, promise, trust and faithfulness. Questions are what effect the transition from one level to the next.

The importance of the metaphor of levels is that the conscious human subject, who is self-present as intending the sensible, the understandable, the verifiable, and the valuable, is no static entity.(15)

When I exercise my intelligence in response to my wonder and curiosity, I move beyond a merely biological habitat into

the world of human meaning. At the same time, it is a moving beyond myself.

Likewise, when I try to rationalise something in response to further questions, I move beyond speculation and idea into knowledge of how it is. This is a further achievement of moving beyond myself, or self-transcendence. Not only do I transcend myself, I thereby constitute myself as well. In other words, I effect my own becoming.

Even then, however, my becoming is only cognitive. I can, as human, be responsible. In my opinion, real self-transcendence is the extent to which I actualise this responsibility in my evaluations, moral judgements, decisions and actions.

However, decisions accumulate and the actions they bring about become second nature. Nobody has the time to consider every deed every day, and so most of what we do is habitual or behavioural. The result of this is ingrained virtues and vices, inclinations and dispositions, which make up and manifest themselves in our character, mentality and lifestyle.(16) That is why 'not to decide is to decide'.

There can, however, come a point at which the conscious subject knowingly and deliberately effects her own becoming. It is at this point that consciousness becomes conscience.(17) Not that self-transcendence stops here - it never does.

Mortals are always taking responsibility for who they are and are to be. The subject who is conscientiously and consciously making this transition is, to the same extent, becoming a person in the fullest sense.

Spirituality pertains most to this highest or deepest or most intensely personal level of consciousness. As experience it is one of consciousness, and like other contents of consciousness, it need not be recognised or named or even attended to, much less understood and known. Even if it is noticed, because it is as yet unknown it is an experience of mystery, of what is beyond one's achieved knowledge, and an experience of awe, of what is above one's acknowledged values.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Joan Wolski Conn and Walter E. Conn, 'Self', in Michael Downey, ed, New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, (Collegeville,Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 874.

2. A similar experience is referred to in what is called Seeing/Drawing, Frederick Franck, The Zen of Seeing (London: Wildwood House, 1973), p. 7.

3. Michael Downey, op. cit., 'Editor's Preface', p. viii.

4. 'Introduction' in Richard Causton, Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism (London: Rider Books, 1988), p. 10.

5.Sandra M. Schneiders, 'Spirituality' in Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot Lane, eds, New Dictionary of Theology (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), p. 981.

6.Charles Hefling, 'Consciousness',in New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality,p.204

7.Ibid.

8. The Zen of Seeing, pp. 104-105.

9. Augustine, De Trinitate, X. IX. 12.

10. Cited in New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, p. 203.

11. New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, p.204.

12. Dom Aelred Graham, Zen Catholicism, p. 33.

13.'Consciousness' in New Dictionary of Spirituality

14. Hefling,'Consciousness' in New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, p. 205.

15. This transition from one level to another stems from the concept that all life is in a constant state of flux. This concept is shared by most Eastern philosophies and religions, and it also has found expression at times in Western ones. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus, for example, who lived before Socrates and Plato, was said to have summed up his belief in universal change in the statement: 'All things are flowing'.

16. This is known in Buddhism as karma, a Sanskrit word

which means action, life tendency or destiny, which each individual creates through thoughts, words and deeds. One's actions in the past have shaped one's reality at present, and one's actions in the present determine in turn one's future. Thhis is the law of cause and effect at work.

17. Timothy O'Connell,'Conscience'in Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, p.119

CHAPTER 2

SPIRITUALITY AND ART

In my last chapter, I spoke of spirituality as personal experience. In order to avoid denominational narrowness, I discussed it in non-denominational terms. Art, however, thoughout the ages, has been inseparable from religion. There may not even be any significant difference between art and ritual if, as the English author Jane E. Harrison,(1) writes:

> It is at the outset one and the same impulse that sends a man to church and to the theatre.

Considering this, throughout this chapter I will be referring to various religious beliefs. To understand the spiritual in art would be difficult without some understanding of the cultural traditions from which the art evolved.

The phenomenon of the artist isolated by choice or by exclusion from the community was unknown in earlier cultures. In ancient times, creative and artistic activities were not separated from other aspects of life. People sang while they worked, added decorative elements to their crafts, and danced in ritual celebrations because it was a natural thing to do. As primitive women and men saw gods in the bushes and

the rocks, their natural urge to create art works was an expression of the resonance of spirit within them and of the awe they felt at the sacred space in which they found themselves. The aboriginal culture and the Ayres Rock is only one of many examples of this.

Myths, symbols, images and patterns, complete sets of inherited teachings, in cultures such as ancient Greek or Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim, medieval Christian or Plains Indian, were the joint responsibility of leaders, ordinary citizens, institutional priests and unaffiliated sages, artists and craftsmen.(2)

Since ancient times, art has appeared as a natural, irrepressible manifestation of human spirituality. In its various forms, spontaneously, art has always symbolised a fundamental reality. The Egyptians, for example, considered their king to be a divine being who, through death, would ascend to the gods from whom he came. (This is similar to the beliefs of the Mayan and Inca civilisations.) Because of this belief, thousands and thousands of lives were spent quarrying stones, dragging them to the building sites (which in some cases were on the tops of mountains) and then shifting them with the most primitive means until these gigantic meaglithic tombs were ready to receive the king.

These lives were not spent (by choice or otherwise) on

erecting mere monuments. The pyramids were erected in order to assist man's ascent to the gods.(3)

Works of art and architecture created an environment reminding people of things held to be self-evident within their culture. The altar painting or sand painting spoke as clearly as a word. Art accepted a special mission in virtually every ancient culture: to depict the sacred.

Let us return to the Egyptians, who saw the preservation of the body as crucial if the soul was to live beyond death. They went to extraordinary lengths to prevent the corpse from decaying, by embalming and binding it up in strips of cloth.(4) It was for this mummy that the pyramids were built. They laid it in the middle of these mountains of stone in a stone coffin. Everywhere around the burial chamber spells and incantations were written to guide their king on his journey through death to the other world.

The likeness of the king was also to be preserved and sculptors were ordered to carve his likeness from hard imperishable granite. This was then placed in the tomb, where it would help his soul to stay alive in and through the image (see fig. 1). In appearance, these images lie somewhere between primitive masks of Ancient America (see fig. 2) and the naturalistic portraits of Nigeria (see fig. 3), in their simplistic solemnity.

Fig.1. Portrait head of limestone, found in a tomb at Giza, made about 2700 B.C.

Fig.2. Ritual mask from New Guinea

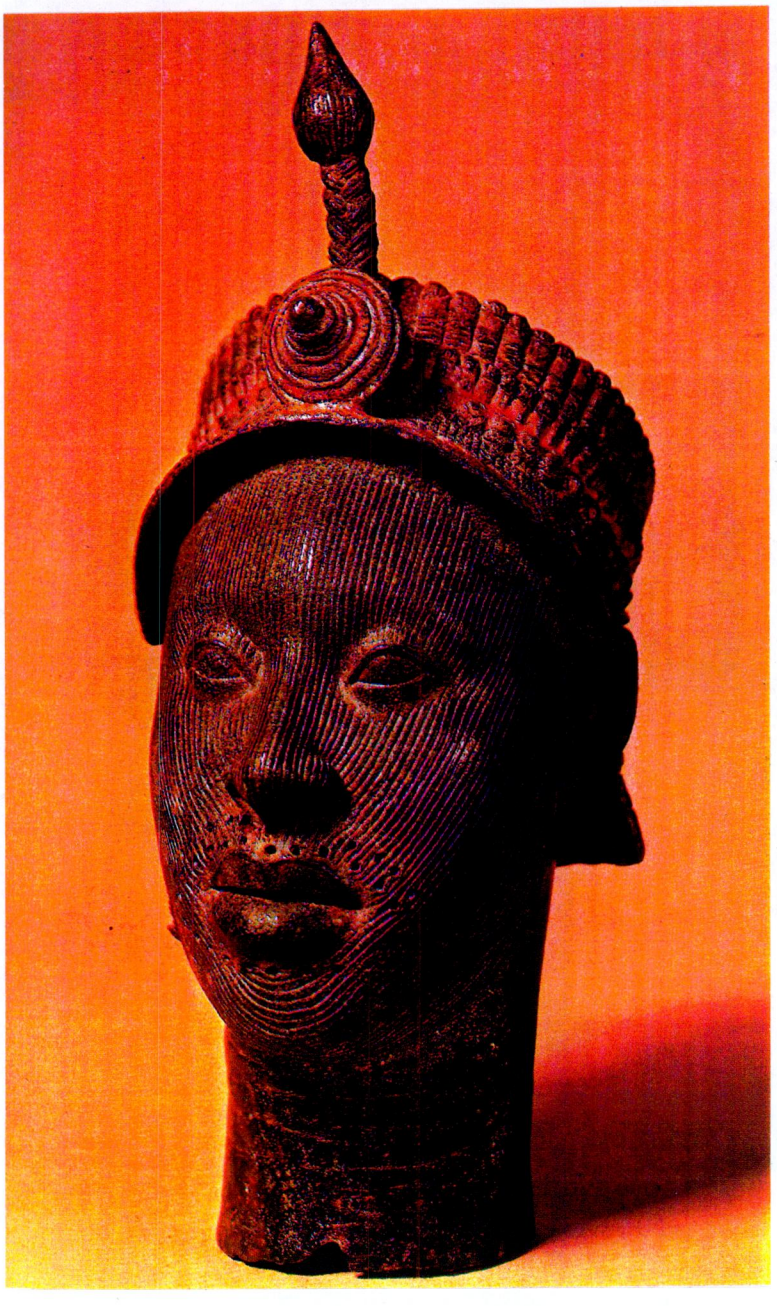

Fig.3. Bronze head, excavated in Nigeria, probably some 400 years old

The pyramids, the likenesses, the geometric reliefs and paintings which adorned the walls of the tombs, along with the evidence they left us of their knowledge of the stars etc., are evidence of a culture where art served religion and religion allowed art to explore and report the beauty it discovered and to be inventive.(5)

This evidence, in my opinion, points to the inseparability of the culture's beliefs from their keeness in the observation of nature and their clear understanding of the regularity of the universe.

The belief in the afterlife and the eternity of the soul is inherent and evident not only in Egyptian culture but also in the culture surrounding Newgrange, the Incas of South America, the Ancient Dynastry in China, the Polynesians, and the Tibetans.

This understanding, in my opinion, begins with a sensitivity and awareness of the cycle in nature, brought about through the observation of growth. It is through being present to oneself that one becomes conscious of the self in relation to the environment and thus conscious of our place in the horizon of ultimacy.

That is not to say that this understanding is inevitable through being present to oneself, but that the soul of the

artist tends to reunite and rediscover this fundamental reality that we can call universal life.

Daisaku Ikeda refers to this universal life as "the substance of life itself, grasped in all its dynamism through a profound fusion between the self (in other words microcosm) and the universe (macrocosm). It is from this fundamental reality that man derives the energy needed for rebirth. It is here that he finds the reason for his being and the axis of his search."(6)

There is a Buddhist term, kechi-en, which describes the concept of a causal relationship that links life with its environment. This concept arises from the theory of 'dependent origination', a philosophical construct existing throughout the history of Buddhism, since Shakyamuni's time.(7)

The theory holds that every phenomenon, social as well as natural, results from a link with another phenomenon, and that nothing can occur in isolation. (Usually, we consider interaction in spatial terms, but the causal relationship, in Buddhism, is multidimensional, transcending both time and space.)

The importance and relevance of the reference to Egypt and the other ancient cultures lies in the power of their art to

link with the universal. This capacity of art to bring together and unify disparate elements is referred to as 'the power of synthesis'.(8)

This power of synthesis, characteristic of art, actualises itself in the opening of the limited to the unlimited, of individual existence to universal significance. This link with the universal was, as we have seen in the ancient cultures, at one time very much part of religious rites.

There was a famious Kabuki actor who visited Europe one hundred years ago.(9) While he was here, he visited the Louvre and viewed masterpieces of Western art. When he was asked about his impressions, he answered, 'One sees Christ throughout.' This comment is certainly no more than the testimony of a visitor from the East expressing a personal opinion of Western art, but he was able to discern the fundamental reality through the particular and to express it very concisely.

More examples of arts' power of synthesis lie in Notre Dame de Paris and in the cathedral at Chartres.Both are pure expressions of Gothic architecture in Europe while actualising the world view of the Christian Middle Ages.

The examples I have used so far, all relate to some form of organised religion. In modern times, however, there has been

a decline in numbers and a developing apathy for what is often seen as dogmatised religion.

Even only one century after the industrial revolution, brilliant minds becoming weary of the materialistic idealism and the poverty of Western culture, foresaw the decline in what has been referred to as 'arts' power of synthesis'.

Mondrian (10) had described life as becoming more and more abstract and emphasised the need to look inwardly for the universal. Cézanne (11) had spoken before him of the experience of consciousness in the world as a question. The Theosophists punctuated the stuffy nineteenth century with thousands of pages of cosmology, philosophy, comparative religion, science, history, magic, occult studies and spiritualism, offering a radically other description of the world and man.

Although it may seem paradoxical, it would appear that the apathy towards dogmatised religion, coupled with the growing awareness of the earth's pollution by modernisation, led to the greatest freedom directed inward, with the desire to repair the fractures of the soul that had lost connection to its native land.

Albert Camus, in his speech at the acceptance of the Nobel Prize in 1958, relates clearly, his link as an artist to the fundamental reality which we call universal life,

I cannot live as a person without my art. And yet I have never set that art above anything else. It is essential to me, on the contrary, because it excludes no one and allows me to live just as I am, on a footiong with all. To me art is not a solitary delight. It is a means of stirring the greatest number of men by providing them witrh a privileged image of our joys and woes. Hence it forces the artist not to isolate himself: it subjects him to the humblest and most universal truth. And the man who, as often happens, chose the path of art because he was aware of his difference solely by admitting his resemblance to all. The artist fashions himself in that ceaseless oscillation from himself to others, midway between the beauty he cannot do without and the community from which he cannot tear himself. This is why true artists scorn nothing … (12)

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1.Cited in The New Dictionary of Theology,p.59

2. Roger Lipsey, 'What is Spiritual Art?' in An Art of Our Own - The spiritual in twentieth century art (Boston: Shambala, 1988), p. 11

3. E. H. Gombrich, 'Art for Eternity' in The Story of Art (London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1989), p. 31-33.

4. Junod, Battiss, Franz and Grossert, 'Egyptians' in The Art of Africa (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1958), p. 13.

5. Hermann Leicht, 'Tutankhamen' in History of the World's Art (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952), p. 133.

6. Daisaku Ikeda, 'Art and Spirituality in East and West' in The Seikyo Times, October 1990 (Santa Monica: Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism Publications, 1990), p. 44.

7. Shakyamuni lived roughly 3,000 years ago. He is the first recorded Buddha. After forty years of teaching, he wrote The Lotus Sutra, the highest teaching, revealing to all people that they themselves - without exception - inherently possess Buddhahood, the highest state of life, and so can develop the qualities needed to conquer their sufferings. The Buddhist concepts which I refer to are expounded in The Lotus Sutra.

8. Daisaku Ikeda, The Seikyo Times, October 1990, p. 44.

9. This story was referred to in *The Seikyo Times*, p. 45.

10. R. Lipsey, An Art of Our Own, p. 35.

11. Ibid., p. 16.

12. Albert Camus' acceptance of the Nobel Prize, May 1958, in Irving Kaufmann, Art and Education in Contemporary Culture (N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing Co. Ltd., 1966), p. 33-34.

CHAPTER 3

SPIRITUALITY IN ART EDUCATION

As art educators we are offered a privileged opportunity to introduce to students, a way of getting into intimate touch with the visible world and through it with themselves. Herbert Read's concept of education through art recognises the validity of this opportunity:

> From our stand point in the phenomenal realm in which we live and have our being we can only perceive the values of the transcendental realm; and perception is the essential link between the two realms. We can only become increasingly and ever more accurately aware of these values by training or educating the faculty of perception to the end that it may have the quality of universal insight … Every man is a special kind of artist, and in his originating activity, his play or work (and in a natural society, we have held that there should be no distinction between the psychology of work and play), he is doing more than express himself: he is manifesting the form which our common life should take, in its unfolding.(1)

Being present-to-oneself, as I explained in my first chapter, is central to the students spiritual development. Read explains that through the training of perception, this can lead to the "quality of universal insight."

Through the students perception of their environment, they

can develop a heightened awareness of the senses and thus an awareness of themselves in relation to the environment.

Irving Kaufmann (2) recognises the importance of the student attaining this level of perception so that "the distinctions between real and ideal values can be mediated, the latter becoming more recognisable and capable of attainment through the natural, but necessarily educated propensities of personal vision."

The spiritual development of a student is not something we can either force or gage, but, in being aware of the purposes in art relating to spirituality, we can certainly encourage its development.

Janet Walton (3) has divided the purposes of art in relation to spirituality into eight categories. These are, Particularity, Meaning, Revelation, Illusion, Emotion, Awareness Conversion, Memory and Values. These categories serve, in this chapter, as a structure, through which I will explore the potential for spiritual development through art education. I feel it is important at this stage to express the necessity of the individual teachers' understanding of the nature of art and its links to spirituality. Without this understanding, the direction of spiritual development could become vague and ambiguous.

Particularity

No two people experience life in the same way. Each person is influenced by cultural background, class, religion and race. Through art education we can communicate the value of such difference as a primary resource for interpreting human situations. Teachers, according to Kaufmann should also be aware of the 'perceptive selectivity' (4) that operates in all human beings. "the act of 'seeing' and the resulting creative and formative expression of what is being experienced are not mechanical ones." Kaufmann states that "the positive learning aspects and growth potential lie in the ability of the student to perceive within a meaningful, independent and personal framework." (5)

Students can learn that art reflects in both form and content, 'particularities' of history and society, and from this learn, that it can also connect with other specific human realities beyond these roots. For example, there are many illustrations and compositions that convey a sense of the crucifixion of Jesus. They remind us of a particular historical situation affected by the political, religious and social intricacies of the time. One particular experience is honoured and yet it informs us of many different subsequent ones and sets a tone for interpretation. (6)

Cynthia Oswick's words about the purpose of literature are valid for art in general,

> to tell, in all the marvel of its singularity, the separate holiness of the least grain. (7)

Meaning

> Art connects with the essence of human experience (feelings, dreams, ideas, imaginings) and discloses its meaning.(8)

Students of art and design are given opportunities to reflect on their experience and capture it in a moment of time. Through art they can also relate to other human experience, thus heightening their awareness of their similarity and connection with their environment. Walton explains that meaning emerges through a process, the artist interacts with the materials, then the participant interacts with the completed work. The goal need not always be to teach the 'right' meaning in a piece of work but to allow the students to uncover whatever connects with their own experience. Through these connections the student can begin to raise and answer questions about the data of their consciousness, a form of introspection.

Revelation

Through art education we can open doors to a deepening and broadening of students understanding. Art can invite connections between shapes, sounds, textures and movements with lived experience or imagined possibilities. If the student makes these connections, revelation is found in the

realisation of something not grasped before. It could be in the repetition of a certain rhythm that brings them face to face with the persistence of their life's' spiritual quest or of God in their midst. They may see the surprising qualities of a friendship identified in the irregularity of a pattern or the experience of anticipated pain in a jagged movement. These 'seeings' should be encouraged, through dialogue between teacher and pupil. It is through these revelations about human living and spiritual experience, that we can affect changes in our choices, our activities and our convictions. (10)

Illusion

Contrary to some classical thinkers ,Walton does not believe that art is to imitate nature. In Susanne Langer's words (11) art is "the bearer of an idea". Although, she says art is "charged with reality", it points beyond it. This quality which she calls illusion, is inherent in symbolic communication, inviting participants into a world of knowing where literal understanding is enlarged. The student can discover something beyond imitation. Art can unfold for them an experience of fusion with the universal (12), felt in the boldness of design, in the exaggeration of colour in textures or in gentle touch and movement.

Emotion

Art also makes emotion tangible. Kandinsky spoke of compon-

ents in art(13), in particular line and form as providing a form of expression of emotion, the 'soul' of human life. In the expression of emotion, the essence of art is known, "with its distinctive ambiguity, its compelling power, its innate invitation to wonder, its passion, its holistic embrace"(14). Through this expression and through the interaction with it "human life and divine relationships are more deeply understood and potentially lived." One can feel courage, hope and can be inspired to act.

Awareness Conversion

"Awareness is the first step toward change"(15). Art can ask questions, it offers insights and at the very least, enlarges the parameters of our consciousness. "It can pierce vagueness and uncover apathy." Georgia O'Keefe talks about her intent, "I paint pictures big, so no one will be able to walk by without noticing"(16). There are many examples of contemporary art which expand awareness and difference. For example, the sculptural pieces in Marley Park, Dublin can bring to the awareness of the viewer both the works themselves and the links they make with the environment.

Memory

Walton uses the examples of the paintings in the Sistine Chapel, the diary of Anne Frank, and the poetry of Adrienne Reich, to illustrate how art can challenge human beings to remember(17). Art can keep alive for the student not neces-

sarily facts (although some information can be conveyed) but rather the spirit embodied in an event or moment in time of both their experiences and the experiences of others. Itcan point to the reason for a tragedy or triumph. "It can underscore the determination that is underneath the struggle to survive."(18)

Through art we can summon the student to interact with what is good and true. "art makes present what is, what was, and what might be."(19)

Values

Inevitably artists communicate values. Likewise students should be encouraged as visionaries in the midst of their society, mirroring, interpreting and clarifying values from personal to universal. Martha Graham (20) suggests that art finds its roots in human values. What students cherish, hate, avoid, condemn and desire should be expressed through art.

Walton explains that art, because it plays such a powerful role in reflecting values, can be clarifying for some people but at the same time threatening for others. What terrifies one generation as shocking may turn, within a century into a classic. Students exposed to art should experience it as reflecting change,as anticipating human longings, unmasking, naming, criticizing and pointing to possibilities. Let them see art as challenging human values and affirming them.

Through these experiences, their consciousness of the world can be expanded and their tolerance for differences celebrated. In the words of Jane Walton,

> Art promotes seeing beyond the obvious to what lurks in the crevices of human divine experience. Art offers an unmatched source of history and experience as well as a resource for transformation. To reap its benefits requires risk, imagination and courage, qualities felt in art, known through the activity of God with humankind, qualities as well that sustain ongoing development of spirituality. (21)

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 3

1. Herbert Read, in Education Through Art (N.Y.: Pantheon, 1945) p. 300.

2. Irving Kaufmann in Art and Education in Contemporary Culture (London: Collier Macmillan Ltd, 1966) p. 505.

3. Janet R. Walton, "Art" in The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, ed. Michael Downey, pp. 60-63.

4. Irving Kaufmann in Art and Education in Contemporary Culture, p. 196.

5. Ibid. p. 189.

6. J. R. Walton, "Art" in The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, ed. Michael Downey, p. 60.

7. Cynthia Ozwick, Art and Ardour: Essays (N.Y.: Knopf, 1983) cited in The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality.

8. Walton, The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, p. 60.

9. I referred to this form of introspection in Chapter 1.

10. I referred to this in Chapter 1 as "effecting our own becoming".

11. Susanne Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art (N.Y.: Scribners. 1953).

12. Daisaku Ikeda refers to this fusion as art's "power of synthesis. Chapter 2.

13. Wassily Kandinsky, Point and Line to Plane (N.Y.: Dover, 1979) p. 55.

14. Walton, The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, p. 61.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Cited by Walton in The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, p. 61.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 62.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Spirituality is both a lived experience and an academic discipline. The nature or identity of the discipline is a primary issue in this study. A standard test is for obvious reasons unavailable for the measurement of a students spiritual development and it would be impossible to prove beyond doubt, any such development taking place.

What I have considered in this project, is Sandra Schneiders(1) explanation of the contemporary understanding of the term 'spirituality'. What follows are the basic characteristics of the discipline, Schneider suggests,which purports to study spirituality:

1. This discipline will be descriptive and analytical rather than prescriptive and evaluative.

2. An interdisciplinary approach is essential, very diverse phenomenon fall within the field of spirituality and each demands its appropriate method.

3. Spirituality is now committed to an ecumenical and even cross cultural approach. Part of understanding any phenomenon is seeing how it fits into the larger picture of the human quest for meaning and integration.

4. Spirituality is inclusive or holistic in its approach. It is not 'the soul' who seeks integration in

holiness of life but the whole person, body and spirit, mind and emotions, individual and social, female and male.

5. Spirituality seems to be a necessarily participant discipline. The researcher must know the spiritual quest by personal experience if he or she is to understand the phenomena of spirituality.

6. Spirituality studies not principles to be applied nor general classes or typical cases but concrete individuals: persons, works, events. Consequently the researcher in spirituality is necessarily involved in what Riceour (Interpretation Theory, 1976) has called the "science of the individual" in which interpretation plays a key role and validation of interpretation through a dialectic of explanation and understanding rather than verification of repeatable scientific results is the objective.

7. Spirituality, like psychology, has a triple objective, that cannot be simplified. One studies it to understand it, but one also studies it in order to foster one's own spirituality and to foster the spirituality of others.

It has been observed in the previous chapters that a link between art and spirituality does exist and the following hypothesis is provided through my research on spirituality and related educational topics:

> If we accept the links between art and spirituality, then spirituality is not an appendage to art education but an integral and identifiable dimension of it, which offers the student a way of getting into intimate touch with the visible world and through it with themselves.

In order to take account of the broadest spectrum of human experience, each of the themes presented is firmly grounded

in a specific tradition of spirituality. Highlighting the universality of each of these themes was a major consideration, promoting an understanding and appreciation of other cultural traditions and their relevance to the individual student's own experience of everyday life.

Central to the success of these schemes was the environment created through teacher-pupil interaction and through the personal interaction amongst the students themselves. Malcom Ross (2) recognises the following conditions as necessary for creativity. I hold that in my study, these conditions evolved naturally through the development and process of the projects.

1. An established sanctity of mutual truthfulness.

2. Developed trust (trust worthiness and trustfulness).

3. Freedom for students to explore and invent in an atmosphere that is non-judgmental.

4. Condition of psychic safety- compassion.

5. Devotion to the childs learning and growth.

The first step I took with the two classes was informal dialogue, which I conducted outside in the open air. The purpose of this dialogue was to establish a confident and open form of communication within the group and to provide an opportunity for me to become familiar with the particularities of their youth culture. This excercise proved in-

valuable in discerning the suitability of the concepts chosen for the respective groups.

The Schemes

Japanese Traditional Headcloths

The students involved in this scheme were a first year group of mixed ability.

> … Among the Tai the head is considered to be the seat of a persons magical power. All Tai are concerned to maintain the purity of the head and will never allow contact with a debased object. A person will never roll up a pair of trousers or a skirt to use as a temporary pillow. These are objects worn below the waist and are not proper to bring into contact with the head. Nor can a headcloth be patched with fragments from one of these garments. These headcloths are seen and given as tokens of respect …

This brief and simple introduction to the scheme was immediately linked to elements of the students own culture. The production of these headcloths was undertaken as a sign of self-respect at the outset of their secondary school career. We undertook the project in Autumn and in the initial stages heavy emphasis was laid on the observation of nature.

Drawing was an important avenue of research development and acquisition of skills and this was backed by discussion on the cycle of nature and the importance of appreciating nature itself.

On the topic of the cycle of nature, I introduced very simply, how in Eastern cultures, there is no difference between the cycle of nature and the cycle of life. I used the analogy of the tree and the various seasonal stages it goes through to explain their belief in rebirth. This concept was received with enthusiasm by the class and a comparison was offered by one of the students, as to how we in our culture, also believe in eternal life in heaven.

During the first two stages of the project the group were involved in drawing the outline shape of a variety of leaves. Through this observation the group were asked to check if any of their leaves were perfectly symmetrical. Of course, each attempt to fold the leaf exactly in two was in vain. This very simple excercise was to further encourage observation while reminding the group of the variability in nature and how futile it is for us to suffer over our various 'inadequacies'. This particular excercise led to various informal discussions around the class on how the media presents images of perfection that we should apparently be striving for. This may have been a revelation to some of the first year students.

In the third stage of the project the group were introduced to the traditional Japanese motifs used on the authentic headcloths. These consist of the Pine, Bamboo and Plum. The three trees are ancient symbols of longevity, fidelity and integrity.

The Pine

The pine is an evergreen, which lives to be a thousand years old, and is in the dwelling place of the Gods.

The Bamboo

The bamboo bends under heavy snow but never breaks. It is a symbol of endurance and resilience, a place where a God descends to earth as a participant in religious ceremonies.

The Plum

The plum courageously blooming in February's cold, before any other flower, symbolises bravery. It is associated with wisdom, for it is said that the plum blooms when human knowledge is advanced.

These are commonly known as the three friends of unfortunate times …

Having been introduced to the motifs and their importance as elements on the headcloths, the group were asked to contemplate for two minutes what element of their life would be most suitable as a personal motif in the design of their headcloths. Again, at this point self-respect and the reasons for engaging in the project were reinforced through questions and answers.

It was at this point that the importance of relating the

groups own work and ideas to those of long established and respected forms of work, began to manifest itself. Through the interaction of ideas on the value of the Japanese head-cloths, the motifs, and the relevant topics relating to themselves through the observation of nature, what slowly began to evolve was a mutual respect for what was personal to the individuals within the group.

Each student, was asked in turn, to share with the group, what personal object they had chosen and why. An important aspect of the groups development came to light with choices relating to two particular pop groups, which had previously served as a dividing point in the class culture. The two pop groups concerned are a recent development in contemporary youth culture, who seem to have monopolised the 'pop idol' market of girls ranging from the ages of ten to seventeen. The two groups in question are 'Take That' and 'East 17'.

In the sharing of these highly personal statements, (some of which related to this sore point within the class) the students reacted with a noticeable sensitivity and respect for their fellow students.

This learning experience highlighted for me, what Walton described as 'Meaning' in her categories of the purposes of art in relation to spirituality(3). The students were given an opportunity to reflect on their own experience of what is

important to them and thus were enabled to relate to other human experience heightening their awareness of their similarity and connection with their environment.

Having established what was precious and important to each individual student the project developed with further observations of nature and the surrounding environment. The observation of shape, rhythm, movement and balance allowed for the opportunities to discuss the inherent qualities of these elements in our daily lives as human beings. I used the example of walking to highlight our often unnoticed connection with these elements and the students were asked to demonstrate and identify these qualities both physically and visually. This exercise was intended to highlight the importance of the five senses in our understanding of the environment and to illustrate our connections with it.

Through this form of explanation, I found that the students responded in a very positive manner, knowing that the answers to my questions were simply extensions of what they already knew. The illustration, in the art class, of what it means to be human, in very basic ways, seemed to establish a very strong foundation from which the students could explore their surrounding environment.

This scheme, due to a lack of forsight on my part, at the stencil making stage proved to be very challenging for the

class. Due to the nature of the motifs and resulting patterns very concentrated and detailed work was necessary in order to produce the stencils (see fig. 4). Each student had to cut their design out in newsprint using craft knives. Admittedly, I had to intervene at certain stages of this process with some of the students and frustration was evident in the practical difficulties some individuals were faced with. I suggested at this point a shift in direction but the class were determined to see the project through to completion and they overcame the difficulties through sweat, support and a great deal of respect for the efforts that had gone into reaching the stencil making stage. I suspect that without the very personal input from each student, shared both visually and verbally, the project would have collapsed at this point.

In the final stages of the project,the students demonstrated very healthy co-operative working relationships. They had from the beginning collected the materials necessary for the research and now at the final stage purchased the fabric needed for printing. A number of students in the class who were for various reasons unable to get the material were discreetly supplied with what was necessary by some more fortunate members of the group.

The pieces of cloth were tye-dyed with a personally chosen colour, then ironed and screenprinted. Each student without

Fig. 4. Concentrated work was necessary to produce patterns of this detailed nature.

exception took great pride in their work and were co-operative in taking turns on the limited number of screens available to them.

On the eighth of December 1994, five of the students travelled into Dublin city laden with kimonos, chopsticks, headcloths and make-up supplied by their respective families and classmates. Each of the girls dressed in their kimonos and headcloths underwent a complete make-over. Slides and photographs documented the day and were presented to the group shortly after, so they could experience the fruitfulness of their work, presented professionally, reflecting the manner in which they had approached it (see figs. 5, 6 and 7).

The Ten Worlds

The students involved in this scheme were a second year group of mixed ability.The project was based on The Ten Worlds (or states of being) central to the Buddhist philosophy of life. Through discussion, exploration and understanding of these states, the students were presented with a suprastructure within which they could develop an awareness, verbalise and express visually aspects of their 'self' in direct relation to their daily lives.

These expressions of the 'self' took the form of masks, based on the African concept of an 'Abode of the Gods'.

> ... Buddhism explains that all life contains ten potential

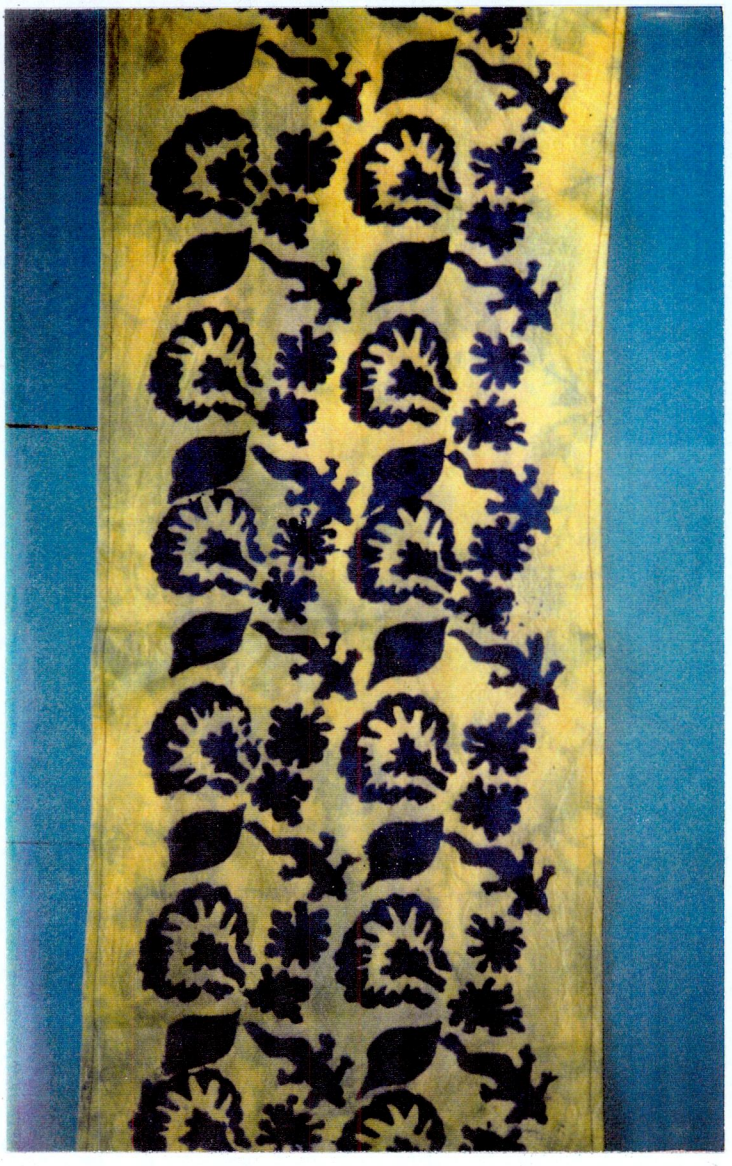

Fig. 5. A detail of a student's work.

Fig. 6. One of the photographs taken on project completion.

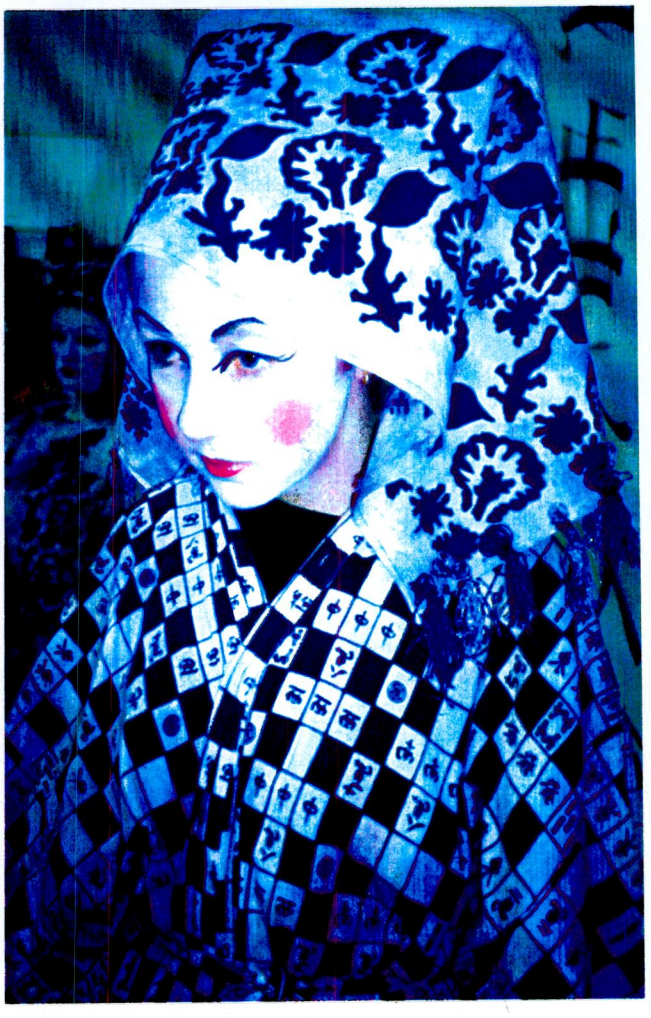

Fig. 7. A close-up of one of the students wearing her headcloth.

> states of being called the Ten Worlds. With the exception of Buddhahood, all possess both positive and negative aspects. The Six Lower Worlds arise in an individual in response to his or her environment. By contrast the Four Noble Paths, appear only when an individual makes effort.

These Ten Worlds, through which, according to Buddhism , we fluctuate are:

> Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Rapture, Tranquility (Six Lower Worlds).
>
> Learning, Realization, Boddhisattva and Buddhahood (Four Noble Paths).

The students were introduced to The Ten Worlds, through a narrative, based on everyday life. We then discussed The Ten Worlds in terms of our own everyday life and the elements in our environment that each particular state responds to. An important part of this introduction was to highlight the positive aspects of each of the Ten Worlds. For example, one of the students writes:

> For my mask I chose the state of anger. This is because it is the feeling I encounter most in my life. I am usually in a state of conflict. I have a bad temper and I am quite intolerant so I get angry quite easily. However, I also stick up fo my rights and the rights of others. Injustices make me angry …

Having established an understanding of the concepts ,each student was asked to reflect on their daily life and to choose from the Ten Worlds , one which they considered to be most dominant in their life.

This reflection was taken on by the students with great sincerity, evident in both the silence and resulting responses. At this very early stage in the project, I noticed a somewhat unexpected yearning for self discovery and expression within the group.

It seemed that because the project was centred on self questioning and discovery, the students took on full responsibility for their work which for them was a truly personal statement.

At a very early stage, through student responses, I was made aware of the number of students who saw Fear as the most dominant aspect in their lives. This response resulted in a further discussion on what in Buddhism are referred to as The Three Great Evils: Greed , Stupidity and Fear.

I felt that to enforce an adherence to The Ten Worlds, in their personal expressions may have hindered the developing openess in discussion and so, in some of the masks Fear as the dominant state was expressed (see fig. 8).

Throughout this project the students were encouraged to reflect on their actions and the implications of those acts both within the classroom situation and elsewhere. What emerged from this were genuine efforts to analyse relationships in both the class and society (mainly boyfriend-girl-

Fig. 8. One example of a mask based on fear.

Fig. 9. Expressive colour exercise.

friend orientated) and an openness in personal responses. This was evident in the informal interaction within the class.

Support studies played an important role in the gathering of visual information relating to human expression. The students collected images of expressive people throughout the project that were not necessarily directly related to their own mask. This ongoing collection encouraged a sensitivity to visual expression which manifested itself in their work.

Another stage in the project, which interupted the construction of form in the masks, was the exploration of complimentary colours. The element of colour was of vital importance in the expression of the mask. Each student chose a colour which they felt was most relevant to their chosen state. What resulted were fresh, original and imaginative responses to the possible meanings of colour which took the form of abstract painting exercises (see fig. 9). For example, one of the students writes:

> I chose the colours red and green for my mask. I think they are symbolic of anger, because of their bright colour and because red is associated with fire. Red is a primary and green is a secondary colour. Red and green are also complimentary colours so they clash angrily together …

The techniques used in this exercise varied from traditional brushstrokes to explorative work with found objects.

I was not responsible for the suggestion of the variety of methods used, this came as a natural extension of the student's enthusiasm for self expression.

It was in the final stages of their work that I began to see how important these masks had become to the individuals in the group. A wealth of materials began to appear, that the students had collected at home and an obvious amount of personal time had gone into their appropriation. These collections proved that the students had developed a sense of responsibility for their own discoveries and a sensitivity to the visual elements of their surroundings.

More importantly the documentation of their work and their willingness to share it with each other demonstrated a sensitive and compassionate element in each one of them.

These highly personal statements could quite easily have been used as means to jeer and antagonise, instead they were treated with the utmost respect and were shared openly in what appeared as a genuine effort to form a connection and understanding between the very different characters within the group.

Because this project was grounded in a form of introspection, very personal statements arose. Most of these statements were manifestations of the individuals desire for self

expression and self exploration. In the case cited below, however, I felt it was more than self expression, and referred the student to the Career Guidance Counsellor who in St Raphaela's is a qualified Reality Therapist. The student in question responded to the project as follows :

> I chose the state of Hell, as in Fear. To express myself clearly, I showed fear and suffering in the mask. In the mask the tongue is coming out and the eyes are going into the head from shock. The hair is standing on end and the mouth is wide open, to show a letting of a scream of fear. The beads coming across the mask are trying to bring the effect of the face pulling back, trying to get away from whatever is frightening it. Other beads are trying to show that the eyebrows are standing up in shock.
>
> I chose this state because it shows my true feelings in life.In life I fear death everywhere I go. I wouldn't step into a lift for fear of never getting out. For example, when I went to Spain one year on holidays, we were on the eleventh floor, so every day I would climb eleven flights of stairs and never once did I step in the lift.
>
> I have a fear of drowning in water and so I'm not a very good swimmer and I have no room for improvement because of my fear of death. I don't like travelling on planes or boats as I feel when I step on the boat or plane, as if I have just handed my life over. In life I don't think I will ever get over my fear of death but I will try to beat my fear because when some people think of it they think it's really stupid, but to me it's a big problem which prevents me from doing some things. I'll just have to deal with it and hopefully not for the rest of my life (see fig. 10).

The project, as I understand it offered this student an opportunity to express herself in a dignified manner through

Fig. 10. Fear mask.

the success of her work, while allowing for an offer of professional guidance from an adult member of the school. I also noticed that the behaviour of this student developed from a disruptive approach in the class to a quiet confidence (brought about by success in her work) and a deeply compassionate understanding of the personal responses of her classmates.

It is not practical in this study to quote all the individual responses, however , there was a significant division in the conceptual manner through which the work was approached.

For this reason, I am including an excerpt from one example of what I would consider a more 'universal' approach taken by some of the students in response to the project :

> My mask is a symbol of peace and war, I made my mask like this as it resembles people and the world. The scary bit of the mask is a face with just the one tooth, this symbolises the war, fighting, famines and all the bad points about the world. The bird part symbolises the peace and good will and the good points of the world, it also says that no matter how much hate there is (scary part) everyone is free (bird part) (see fig. 11).

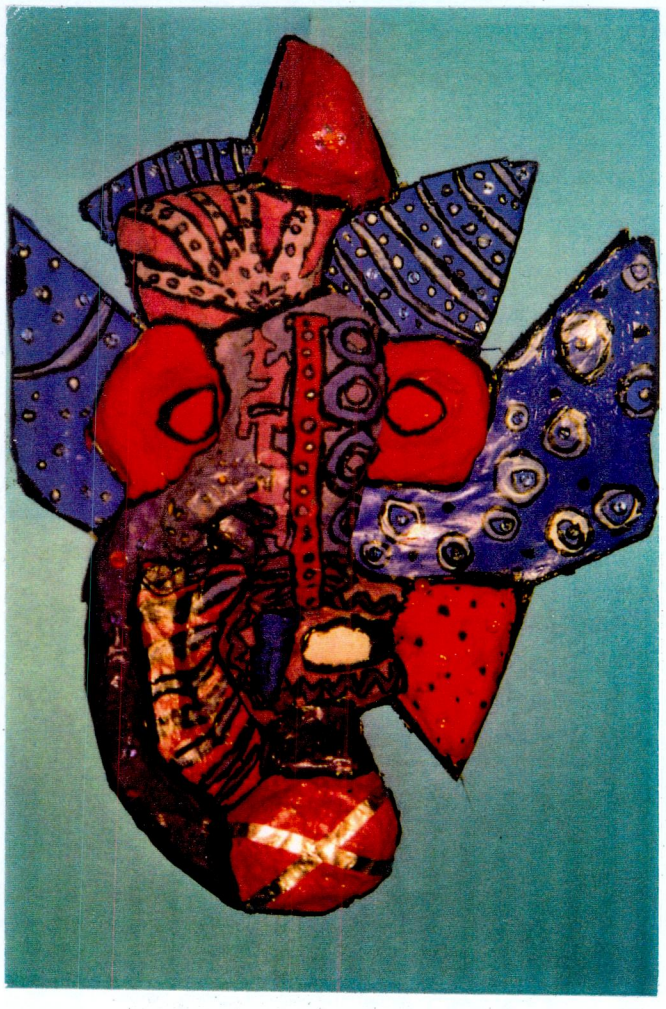

Fig. 11. Mask based on war and peace.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 4

1. Sandra Schneiders, "Spirituality" in The New Dictionary of Theology, ed. Komanchek, p. 981.

2. Malcolm Ross, The Arts and Personal Growth (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980) p. 110.

3. I referred to these categories in Chapter 3.

CONCLUSION

I believe that Spirituality, presented and explored through art activities and extended on cross curricular links, prepares students to defend individual rights, which is a keystone in any education progamme.

This education through art means helping in the development of individual potentialities and requires areas of activity and situations that lay emphasis on the development of self reliance, a willingness towards innovation, an ability to express ideas, a capability to understand the differences in others, and a keeness to share experiences.

Following this study on Spirituality in Art Education, I would like to make these recommendations:

1. That the Department of Education define the term Spirituality as they use it in relation to the aims and objectives in the curriculum.

2. That the issue of spirituality be considered in the three pedagogical courses for Art Craft and Design teachers, presently operating in Ireland, by adding it, with a 'programme of enlightenment', which could form an integral part of the philosophy of education programme in each course.

3. That we as art teachers provide a stimulating environment where our students can express their emotional state in a variety of art forms.

4. That we as art teachers, in our daily classroom interaction and in our cross-curricular links promote, where relevant, a sensitivity and awareness of cultures worldwide where Spiritualism is commonplace.

5. That when planning creative activities for our students, we consider seriously the spiritual dimension that lies on various levels of consciousness with each of our students. Let a Junior Certificate and Transition Year programme further develop integrity, pride, self acceptance, individuality, creative autonomy and all other aspects of a developing integrated personality.

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