#### THE NEEDS OF CREATIVELY GIFTED CHILDREN WITHIN THE ART CLASS

The frustrating belief can exist that children with exceptional talent for art will develop and improve simply as a consequence of maturation. In this dissertation I wanted to examine how best the gifted student may be served in the art class. Whether they should be given enriched or accelerated programs of study. My major finding was that differences in the education of artistically gifted students should be differences in degree and not in kind.

For the practical part of my dissertation I used tow of Torrance's 'Creativity Tests' on a group of students in order to critically assess its validity as a tool for identifying giftedness in the visual arts. Though these tests have their uses, I found that the real evidence of how gifted a pupil is at art lies in her portfolio of work undertaken over the course of the year.

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# THE NEEDS OF CREATIVELY GIFTED CHILDREN WITHIN THE ART CLASS

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in

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I

#### INTRODUCTION

Artistically talented visual arts students in our schools are victims of many beliefs and practices that discourage attention to their superior abilities. Often they do not receive appropriate education in their art classrooms nor do they receive the kinds of administration and program support that their ability demands. Ogden Lindsley (1971), when talking about exceptional children, emphasised that while the retarded drop out of the bottom of the normal class the gifted pop out of the top.

Gifted and learning disabled students are retarded by the curriculum assigned them in the average classroom. The gifted child is not stimulated to perform to his ultimate; the retarded child can't perform to the average.<sup>1</sup>

In Chapter 1 I will examining the educational and emotional needs of the gifted child. Outlining six special roles which the teacher can play in helping the gifted child.

Terman's Stanford-Binet scale made possible the identification of students with high IQ, no such instruments exists, at this time, with equal power for identification of students with superior gifts or talents in the visual arts. Joanne Whitmore suggests a working definition of the intellectually gifted as

.....those who manifest notable ease and speed in the development of cognitive behaviour, producing outcomes which are readily described as exceptional in quality and quantity.<sup>2</sup>

During the 1940's Torrance and many others developed what became known as 'creativity tests' and creativity became an educational by-word. In chapter 3. I will be examining the evolution of these tests. This will be in an attempt to establish how best to identify the visually talented student. For the practical part of this dissertation (chapter 3) I undertook two of Torrance's Creativity tests (The making of a multi-coloured mosaic, and an alternate uses test) on a group of students in order to critically assess its validity as a tool for identifying giftedness in the Visual Arts. With a view to find out if these creativity tests would be better replaced by evidence of progress from a child's daily work or portfolio. My contention is that a child's own work has more meaning for him/her. And as such is a better indicator of their giftedness then what appears at least on paper to be somewhat unreliable test for creativity. Therefore I want to assess these tests. In chapter 2 I will be examining the needs of a gifted student in Art.

Using a model formulated by Clark and Zimmerman which plots artistic ability and potential on a scale from a naive understanding of art to a sophisticated level of skill. I will be using this model to work out how the gifted should be educated in the art room.

For recognising the gifted is very important it seemed to R. Callon (1982). In his teaching of previously unrecognised gifted children that

.....before they had been identified and given special teaching, the children had been on their way to developing poor work habits. He found that they had been failing to develop the strategies necessary to tackle difficult problems which did not yield to superficial approach, so that much of their talent could have stagnated.<sup>3</sup>

I find the idea of artistic talent stagnating particularly bad.

#### FOOTNOTES INTRODUCTION

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O.R. Lindsley, "Giftedness", in <u>Exceptional Children in Focus</u>, J. Payne, J. Patton, J. Kauflman, G. Brown, R. Payne. (Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company 1983) p.137.

Joanne Whitmore, "New Challenges to Common Identification Practices" in <u>The Psychology of Gifted Children</u>, ed. Joan Freeman, (John Wiley & Sons, New York. 1985), p. 96.

Jan Freeman, "A pedagogy for the Gifted" in <u>The Psychology of gifted</u> <u>Children</u>, p.11.

#### CHAPTER 1

#### THE NEEDS OF THE GIFTED CHILD

The frustrating belief can exist that children with art talents will develop and improve simply as a consequence of maturation. A further application of this misunderstanding is that talented students need no <u>special</u> instruction other than that given to the 'normal'/'average' student in art. i.e. that they will realise their potential on their own.

The content to be learned in a program for artistically talented students should be accelerated and enriched learning experiences about art history, art criticism, art production and aesthetics. The settings for these special programs need not be different to the usual schools or trips to museums. Gilbert Clark and Enid Zimmerman in 'Educating Artistically Talented Students' maintain that ".....differences in drawing skills and art behaviours of highly able and less able students are differences in degree and not in kind"<sup>1</sup> This philosophy does not offend against "Ockham's razor", i.e. if a general principal or educational practice works, one does not need a different type of education for children at either end of the scale. An Art education for gifted children should only be different in degree and emphasis, but not in content or overall philosophy. Clark and Zimmerman go on to quote Newland (1976) saying,

.....it is not justifiable to think in terms of a philosophy unique to the gifted..... The general philosophy which should underlie all education would seem to hold.... In the cases of all children.... at the most only a shaper delineation of the principles relevant to the education of the gifted would appear to be needed.<sup>2</sup>

Or as Joan Freeman put it in her essay 'A Pedagogy for the Gifted' "it is arguable that if educational provision were to meet the needs of all children, then there would be no reason for special concern for any exceptional group".<sup>3</sup>

Beyond this E. Paul Torrance has outlined at least six special roles which teachers and school guidance councillors can play in helping highly creative children.

- 1. Providing the highly creative individual a 'refuge'
- 2. Being his "sponsor" or "patron"

- 3. Helping him understand his divergence
- 4. Letting him communicate his ideas
- 5. Seeing that his creative talent is recognised and
- 6. Helping parents and others understand him.<sup>4</sup>

I shall now discuss some of these roles .

(A) Being his sponsor and providing a refuge: The sponsor encourages and supports the student in expressing and testing his ideas and in thinking things through for himself. He/she might protect the individual from the reaction of his peers in the art-room long enough for him to try out some of his ideas and modify them. He can keep the structured of situation open long enough so that originality can occur. For a talented student may often be reluctant to make a fool of himself. The success won through long hours of practice is not easily relinquished in favour of journeys into the unknown, in terms of media or practice.

Neither gifted children (Torrance, 1959) nor creative scientists (Roe, 1959) are free of handicapping anxieties and fears. Many creative children desperately need help in coping with their anxieties and irrational fears. Otherwise they may fail to be fully functioning mentally; they will be afraid to breakaway from the safest, most frequently travelled paths.<sup>5</sup>

In the art room when a child has developed a way of painting or drawing he may be very reluctant to try new things though he may be gifted.

<u>B) Helping him understand his divergence</u>; Carl Rogers in his essay "Towards a Theory of Creativity" observers that:

Perhaps the most fundamental condition of creativity is that the source of evaluation judgement is internal. The value of his product is, for the creative person, established not by praise or criticism of others; but by himself.... these are the only questions which really matter to the creative person.<sup>6</sup>

Some writers argue that the individual creates primarily because it is satisfying to him. Frequently creative children are puzzled by their own behaviour. They desperately need help in understanding themselves, there being crucial times in the lives of creative children when being understood is all that is needed to help the cope with a crisis and maintain their creativity.

(C) Letting him communicate his ideas; The creative child has an unusually strong urge to explore and to create. When he thinks up ideas, or tests them and modifies them, he has strong urge to communicate his ideas. This can be disruptive in the art room, a sympathetically oriented teacher can help here. Again the gifted students internal locus of evaluation may favour the providing of a climate for such children in which external evaluation is absent. Similarly Dr. Daniel Murphy sums up the views offered by six eminent Irish visual artists in interviews in which their artistic educational autobiographies were examined:

Six of the artists interviewed emphasised, in one way or another, the importance of allowing the artistically talented student the freedom to formulate, on his or her own terms. This idea was not so much one among many other ideas forwarded, but was one which was employed by the majority of those interviewed as the main criterion by which they evaluated the role of formal education in the development of their artistic talent.<sup>7</sup>

Or put more vehemently by the painter Camille Sonter during her interview for the same report: "It doesn't matter what you teach, because anything you really want to know, my gosh you are going to find it out"<sup>8</sup>

The teacher of a gifted art student must foster originality and the necessary anti-authoritarian thinking within what is generally (and of necessity) an authority based school environment. The pupil should be encouraged to accept nothing on faith or because is has behind it the voice of authority. Such matters might be accepted, but only after the student on his own has demonstrated to himself their validity. Gifted children learn faster and in greater depth and breath. An Art teacher must allow for this difference. Joan Freeman maintains that

There is a recognisable relationship between educational planning and the kind of teaching it produces. For example, the effects of curricular research incorporated into teaching involve breaking up the subject matter into tiny consequential parts, obliging the gifted to spend tedious, educationally negative time working through them, when they could easily jump a few stages.<sup>9</sup>

This can be particularly evident in the art room where I have seen a gifted child in a low ability class become very frustrated at having to work through the simple stages of a poster project when he could have easily jumped to quiet a finished artistic statement.

William Stern (1967) has made an argument along the same lines. He maintains that ability is only a single necessary condition amongst others for the production of outstanding performances. Other properties are very important especially interest and will. Based on empirical research, J.S. Rewzulli developed a 'Three-Ring' conception of giftedness which involves factors other that cognitive. They described giftedness as consisting of

An interaction among three basic clusters of human traits - these being above average general abilities, high levels of task commitment and high levels of creativity. Gifted and talented children are those possible or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance.<sup>10</sup>

#### Table 1.

The Three-Ring conception of giftedness. (Rewzulli, 1978)



It is important to point out that in Rewzulli's Three-Ring model, no single cluster 'makes giftedness' each cluster contributes equally. I think this is a very gook conceptual model for creativity. Over this can be placed the familiar triangle of school, home and peers in order to take the gifted pupils social setting into accord. Any difficulty in an area of the triangle will effect pupil performance.



Triadic model of giftedness.







A poster by Eoin a gifted child in a low ability class of 5th years.

Killinarden, Tallaght, C. Dublin.



Gifted children will also question more and may be abusive at the slow and clear way in which an art teacher must explain things to the rest of the class. The art teacher must hold the <u>entire</u> class however the gifted child must be given special assignments and encouraged to realise that teachers do not know everything. The child must develop self reliance and questioning if he/she is to develop to their full potential. Philip. E. Vernon states that

.....the opportunity should be taken whenever possible to show both that adults are not omniscient and some questions not soluble, and that it is possible to find out and learn more about the matter himself, e.g. by searching in a book, or by some form of practical research or direct observation. If everything is too easily answered he may lose the desire to explore.<sup>11</sup>



This seems to me especially important in art where there is really no fixed answer or 'correct' way to do anything.

Psychologists who see psychological processes as essentially involving the building up of associations between stimuli and responses (S-R theorists) have accounted for the phenomena of creativity in their own way. This involves the notion that human behaviour is essentially a matter of buildings up links and bonds between stimuli and responses. A. J. Cropley has formulated an S-R theory of creativity in terms of instrumental conditioning. Basically, instrumental conditioning involves the building up of S-R bonds by rewarding responses which are desired and failing to reward or even punishing, linkages which are not required. He emphasises the importance of positive reinforcement in nurturing creative talent.

The extent to which a child is able to make creative responses will be heavily dependent on the extent to which he has been rewarded or punished for creative thinking during his past childhood, and implies that parents will have an important effect on the disposition towards creative thinking as a result of their child rearing practices.<sup>12</sup> So the setting up of conditions of psychological safety and freedom for the adolescent in order to maximise the likelihood of the emergence of creativity is essential.

(D) Seeing that his creative talent is recognised and helping parents to understand him: The school should help parents recognise that criticism making fun of the child's ideas or laughing at his art work can prevent his expression. Joan Freeman in the 'Psychology of Gifted Children' cites the example that: "Gifted children can be overly responsive to criticism, so appearing to take it more to heart than the average children."<sup>13</sup>

One of the first question the art teacher should ask is "have I notified the parents that their child has a special talent?" The very act of acknowledging the students gifts will further motivate him/her. Joan Freeman in her essay 'Finding and Helping the Able Child' states that: "A general theory of how labelling affects a person's behaviour has been the concern of social psychologists for some years"<sup>14</sup>

This labelling may help favourably after parents perceptions of their child's art activities. For many parents attempt too early to eliminate fantasy from

the thinking of the child. Fantasy is regarded as something unhealthy and to be eliminated, but this type of fantasy must be kept alive until the child's intellectual development is such that he can engage in sound creative thinking.

Parents should also be counselled on the value of an Art education. Schools often place students with low intellectual abilities in art classes with the belief that such children can succeed in art through they may not succeed in other academic subjects. Zimmerman and Clark have outlined

An even <u>more detrimental practice</u> the opposite of this in which all students with superior intellectual abilities are counselled away from art classes in the belief that art classes can make no contribution to the needs of such students.<sup>15</sup>



#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF THIS CHAPTER.

- Differences in the education of artistically gifted students should be differences in degree and not in kind.
- The student should be provided with a 'refuge' and directed through a series of accelerated and enriched learning experiences.
- Though artistically talented students have and internal locus of evaluation they may paradoxically be over sensitive to criticism.
- On identifying a gifted child the art teacher should notify the parents.

#### FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 1

Gilbert Clark & Enid Zimmerman, Educating <u>Artistically Talented</u> Students, (Syracuse University Press 1984), p. 25.

Ibid. p. 31.

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Joan Freeman, "A pedagogy for the Gifted" in <u>The Psychology of Gifted</u> <u>Children</u>, ed., Joan Freeman (John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1986) p.11

E. Paul. Torrance, in <u>Guiding Creative Talent</u>, (Huntington, New York: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1976) p.8

E. Paul Torrance, in Guiding Creative Talent, p.158.

<sup>6</sup> C. R. Rogers, "Towards a Theory of Creativity" in <u>Creativity: Selected</u> <u>Readings</u>, ed. Paul E. Vernon, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1970) p.141

Daniel Murphy, "Conclusions" in <u>Education and the Arts: The Educational</u> <u>Autobiographies of Contemporary Irish Poets, Novelists, Dramatists,</u> <u>Musicians, Painters and Sculptors: a Research Report</u>, ed. Daniel Murphy (Dublin; Department of Higher Education and Educational Research, 1987) p.295.

<sup>8</sup> ibid. p.257

Joan Freeman, "A Pedagogy for the Gifted" in <u>The Psychology of Gifted</u> Children, p.14

<sup>10</sup> Franz Monks, Herman W. Van Boxtel, "Gifted Adolescents a Developmental Perspective", in <u>The psychology of Gifted Children</u>, p. 278.

<sup>11</sup> Philip E. Vernon, Georgina Adamson and Dorothy F. Vernon, in <u>The</u> <u>Psychology and Education of Gifted Children</u>, (Meathew & Co. Ltd. 1977) p. 134

A. J. Corpley, "S-R Psychology and Cognitive Psychology", in <u>Creativity</u>
ed. Vernon p.118

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- <sup>13</sup> Joan Freeman, "Emotional Aspects of Giftedness" in, <u>The psychology of Gifted Children</u>, p. 251
- <sup>14</sup> Joan Freeman, "Giftedness", in <u>Finding and Helping the Able Child</u>, ed. Trevor Kerry (Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1983) p.22

<sup>15</sup> Gilbert Clark and Enid Zimmerman, <u>Education Artistically Talented</u>

Students, p. 14

#### CHAPTER 2

#### THE NEEDS OF THE ARTISTICALLY TALENTED CHILD IN THE

#### ART ROOM

The frequent separation of academic and artistic pursuits as wholly different from one another has had many detrimental effects on education in the arts. In order to create a context for understanding the present it is necessary to know how giftedness has been viewed and identified in the past.

Galton's highly original 'Hereditary Genius' (1869) was principally concerned with showing that hereditary transmission played a major part in the endowment of gifted individuals and succeeded in doing so. Galton's method was retrospective examining the biographies of eminent men of the past. Though he proved the importance of a hereditary pre-disposition to high intelligence he failed in his attempt to measure intelligence from an empirical standpoint. The French psychologist Alfred Binet developed standardised intelligence tests at the turn of the century. This led eventually to the concept of mental age and IQ. Intelligence is measured on a scale that ranges from minimum, to average, to maximum intelligence. If graphed the normal distribution of IQ will form something like a Bell Curve.

#### Table 4

Normal distribution, mean and standard deviations and presented cases under portions of the normal curve.





All children may possess art talent in much the same way. Art talent may be normally distributed on a scale that ranges from minimum, to average, to maximum talent. Clark and Zimmerman have created.....

....an art education content model in which we advocated the design of curricula that acknowledges entering level, beginning art students as naive in their understanding about art. From this naive stage, learning experiences and teacher interventions move learners through a series of stages that culminate in attainment of sophistication of learning about art. In this model, the learner moves from a hypothetical naive stage (NN) to a still predominantly naive stage (NNs) in which the learner requires introductory, readiness-building learning experiences.... More demanding teacher interventions and learning experiences decrease naiveté until the learner reaches a state (Sn) in which sophisticated skills and learning predominate. Further learning leads to the attainment of understanding and skills as a stage (SnS) where sophistication is demonstrated at near mastery level.<sup>1</sup>

#### Table 5

Normal distribution, deviation IQ's naive to sophisticated model and related

stages of development in their understanding and practice of art.





This model can be used to create an organising framework for researching identifying, assessing and developing art talent. The designers of this model do not wish to imply that art talent is related to IQ. All they mean it that innate art giftedness is distributed in much the same way as intelligence is across the population. Clark and Zimmerman have placed the eleven causes of inefficiency in drawing isolated by E Meumann in the 1920's beside each of the eleven factors as a sophisticated drawing skill. This is an attempt to develop a working model for identifying and developing the talent of gifted artistic students.


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MEUMANN: FACTORS OF NAIVE	CLARK & ZIMMERMAN:
DRAWING SKILL (NNs)	FACTORS OF SOPHISTICATED
	DRAWING SKILL (SnS)
The will to analyse and to notice forms	The will to notice and analyse forms and
and colours has not been stimulated.	colours is aroused.
The intention to analyse may be	The intention to analyse is aroused and
aroused, and yet the individual may find	is practised with success.
the analysis too difficult.	
The memory of that to be represented	The memory of that to be represented is
may be deficient. It may be incomplete	complete and correct in respect to form,
or vague in form or in colour. The	colour and spatial relationship.
memory of spatial relations may be	
inadequate.	
There may be a lack of ability to hold	The ability to visualise an image during
the image during the act of drawing.	the act of drawing exists and is practised
	until completion of the drawing.
The memory image and the perceptual	The memory image and the perceptual
image may not be co-ordinated with the	image are congruent and successfully
movements in the drawing	delineated by the movements in
	drawing.
The sight of the drawing in its	The sight of the drawing is accepted as
imperfections as compared with the	congruent, compared with the memory
memory image may disturb the image.	image, and does not disturb the student.
The drawer may lack schemata on	The student generates a variety of
which to found his drawing.	scheme on which to found his or her
	drawings.
There may be failure to comprehend	The student comprehends, and
how one may project space in three-	successfully depicts, three-dimensional
dimensions upon a plane.	space on a flat plane.
Manual skill may fail.	Manual skills and psycho-motor co-
	ordination are used appropriately in
	drawing.
There may be no artistic sense.	The student senses his or her artistic
	processes, progress, and completion
	while drawing.
Inability to draw may arise from a	There are no blocks to a students
combination of various of these	capacity and ability to draw.
deficiencies.	

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The criteria which I found particularly appropriate and indicative of gifted students in Clark/Zimmermans model are:

- A developed visual memory; the stock of mental images which the student possesses are of a higher quantitative and qualitative nature than average. i.e. A heightened visual fluency.
- 2. A heightened perception and ability to analyse colours and forms;
- A sensitivity to media and good co-ordination; also the willingness to experiment with the media.
- 4. General verisimilitude in depiction; i.e. the image has the appearance of 'reality' when depicted on a flat plane, especially spatial relationships is most indicative of high ability.
- 5. The student generates a variety of schema on which to found his or her drawings; here the gifted student evidences his/her own awareness of the possible range, means, elements and style of

depiction. i.e. A personal/intuitive understanding of the vocabulary of visual art.

So with this model and my own intuition as an art teacher I feel I would be able to differentiate between the child who is merely skilful and the child who is genuinely creative. From my research I will now outline an number of ways in which I would help a hypothetical gifted child.

- I would not compare or contrast his/her work with other classmates this could result in bad feeling in the class. However
- 2. I would encourage the gifted pupil to give advice to other students in a <u>very</u> informal manner. Thus raising the skill level of the class and heightening the self esteem of the gifted pupil. I would always watch to make sure that the gifted pupil was not actually <u>doing</u> other pupils art work.
- 3. In assessing a gifted pupil I would put more weight on how much time he/she spends doing art work of his own accord; out of school, on back

of copybooks etc. then I would on results of creativity tests.

- 4. I would continue to teach the normal curriculum to the class while at the same time giving the gifted pupil slightly different assignments (though related to what the class is doing). These assignments could take the form of extra homework, special work of which I could give him/her feed back on. This could even take the form of
- 5. Introducing a portfolio preparation class within the school timetable or after hours. The purposed of this is not to offer more of the same, which would be study in depth, but to broaden the child's horizons, introducing new media etc.
- 6. Encourage the gifted to go to galleries, films etc. on own or attend Saturday art classes. Much as a football coach will train the players for matches on a Saturday i.e. the provision of learning opportunities outside the normal school curriculum designed to challenge the mind of the gifted.

- Criticism would only be given if the student asked for it. I would prefer to <u>indicate</u> or gently <u>direct</u> the gifted towards higher goals.
- I would always be on the watch in case the gifted pupil fell into easy, facile or repetitive ways of making art.
- 9. I would not see the necessity for special equipment of materials other than what the rest of the class uses. A gifted pupil instead would use the media with greater depth and detail. Except in extra-curricular classes.
- In instructing the gifted pupil I would point out and draw his/her attention to aspects of art production which would be out of reach of his/her classmates.
- 11. I would encourage cross-curricular activities. If he/she had a talent for observational drawing but was not so good at imaginative composition I might notify the English teacher so the student could be encouraged to <u>stretch</u> his/her imagination. Maybe this could take the form of writing and illustrating his/ her essays. This could then be bound into a book

by the student in the Art room.

- 12. Notify the pupils parents.
- 13. Encourage the student to increasingly draw on his/her own perceptions/views of 'reality', encourage his/her own solutions to visual problems. Encouraging the work to come from the pupils own perception and environment.
- 14. I would attempt not to 'rail road' the student into a art career. Helping the student to eventually make his or her own <u>informed</u> decision.History is replete with people who showed a talent for one activity but ended up excelling at a different activity.
- I would always be on guard in case I gave too much attention to the gifted child.

Table 7

A paper mache head made by a "gifted" second year pupil in killinarden

Community School.



This pupil understanding of proportion, volume form and even the planes of the face show an ability far ahead of his classmates. His 'higher understanding' translates into his drawings on a regular basis. I would consider drawing skills a good indicator of over artistic giftedness.



### FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 2

Gilbert, Clark and Enid, Zimmerman, in <u>Educating Artistically Talented</u> <u>Students</u>, (Syracuse University Press, 1984) p.19.

ibid. p. 22.

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### CHAPTER THREE

#### CREATIVITY TESTS

We must identify gifted pupils so that the appropriate modifications in curriculum and instruction can occur to guide each pupil toward a more complete development of his/her potential. This may be difficult for teachers who still tend to expect a gifted child to excel, or to exceed the norms, in all areas of development and learning. At this time, there are no agreed upon or validated criteria, instruments or procedures that can be used for the identification of artistically talented students. Artistically talented students, as a unique research population, have not been studied with the dept of inquiry that exists about students who are intellectually gifted. One could be flippant about it and say that 'a definition of creativity is what creativity tests measure'. Salome(1974) found that

Creativity is commonly defined as the degree of successful performance on a standardised test of creativity, such as the Torrance test of creativity. Art talent as a construct separate from intelligence or creativity, has not been operationally defined as a performance level on a standardise test. As a result, few researchers have devoted attention to studying talented children who have superior abilities in the visual arts.<sup>1</sup> Torrance attempts to measure creativity as results of complex tasks that require simultaneous application of several distinct abilities especially divergent thinking. The components of his tests tend to measure fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration as the demonstration of 'creativity'. Clearly the more a person treats data which look to have nothing to do with each other as through they were related, the more likely he is to make data combinations which are unusual i.e. to think creatively.

Mednick has advanced a theory of creativity which is of the associative sort thus he suggests

That divergent people tend to link stimuli with highly unlikely responses, whereas in most people any particular stimulus is usually linked with the response with which it has most frequently been paired in the past. In other words, highly divergent people are particularly skilful at linking together, in an effective way, aspects of their environment which, on the basis of experience, do not really belong together. In most people, such happy S-R linkage seldom occur, except by chance, whereas they are more or less commonplace among highly creative individuals.<sup>2</sup>

Torrance (1965) and Yamamoto (1963) claim that children rated as showing 'curiosity', or as having most original ideas, score highly on divergent tests: the same holds for pupils nominated by their peers as having 'wild and fantastic' ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Torrance found that both groups (Divergent and Convergent) were good achievers, though the diverges were not as much liked by their teachers, and the children were aware of this.

If creativity tests tend to rate divergent thinking highly then the artistically talented will tend to score high for divergent thinking. The less 'artistically' confident convergent thinker, as Erika Landu points out in "The Psychology of Gifted Children".

.....is most likely from the start, to accept only those data which seem to fit in with a socially acceptable, and safer way of thinking and will question little of what he perceives.<sup>4</sup>

S-R psychologists have found that convergent thinkers are more inclined to report a problem as simply unsolvable when standard logic will not provide help. The creative child is likely to find himself in an educational climate in which there are predetermines 'correct' answers to most problems.

Landu goes on to say that

If the norm is to be conformist even the creative pupil will be easily satisfied, and as Getzels and Jackson (1962) describe it, he will suppress his creative talent in order to be accepted by society. This is not to deny the value of the acquisition of conformist knowledge in creative thought, since there is ample evidence that to a sizeable body of information is essential if an individual is to have the base from which he can think divergantly. $^{5}$ 

In order to assess the validity and usefulness of creativity tests as a tool for identifying children gifted at art. I decided to subject a group of students to an number of such tests.

Due to the timetable I was only allocated half a class for these tests which had to be undertaken on a day other that my normal teaching practice days. I would obviously have preferred a larger group.

The group chosen were the upper echelon i.e. the top half of a 5th year class. The classes regular art teacher Miss C. and myself selected the 'top half' from our own subjective appraisal of ability groupings within the class. In all eleven pupils took part in the tests. The tests I undertook were:

 "A test which called for an unrestricted flow of unusual ideas in order to elicit unconventional and original thinking, either among children, college students or adults"<sup>6</sup>

This test was devised by Torrance in 1962, I will call this test "<u>Alternate Uses</u>"

 The making of an eight by ten inch mosaic out of coloured squares within a thirty minute period. The <u>"Mosaic Test"</u>.

This test was used by D. W. MacKinnon amongst other tests in an impressive study of 124 American Architects (1962) who were subdivided into three groups, rated and classified by eminent colleagues as representing clearly different levels of creative ability. The architects were divided into three group identified as I, II and III in descending order of creativity. It came as no surprise to MacKinnon that

The creative architects' mosaics received relatively high ratings, but there was considerable variation among them, and as one might also expect there was a significant even though low positive correlation between the over all artistic merit ratings of the mosaics made by the architects and their creativity as architect as judged by the editors, the correlation between the two being +0.35.<sup>7</sup>

I was interested in the same correlation, though in a school setting, I wanted to see if high scores on these correlated with their creativity and 'giftedness at art' as judged by my subjective view of their ability, much as the 'editors' ' had judged the creativity of the architects. i.e. the view that I had formed from my classroom experience teaching them.

The Alternate Uses Test.

I asked the group to think up and write down unconventional uses for (A) a newspaper and (B) a tin can. I was aware that the performance of the children would be affected by the way the instructions were phrased, and the frame of mind of the testees. Torrance generally administered his test with time limits and "instruction to think of as many ideas as you can..... that no one else will think of."<sup>8</sup>

Hudson (1968) found that students produced more responses than usual when asked to think of what a Bohemian artist might say. I made a similar request of the students.

One of the drawbacks of this test was that scoring was excessively tedious and time consuming. Because one cannot readily define just how different a response should be. Scoring has to be assessed by <u>quality</u> and <u>rarity</u>. If a child is asked what to do with an empty tin can and said: keep marbles in, keep pencils in, keep nails in.... are these different?

The editor of creativity, selected readings; Paul E. Vernon

Advocate, scoring responses 2, 1 or 0: 2 being those which are unusual and appropriate or clever, and given by not more than 5 per cent of subjects of the same age. 0's are common responses given by 10 per cent or more; and all the rest are 1's . By totalling these scores one covers the quantitative and qualitative aspect simultaneously.<sup>9</sup>

There may be a common assumption that there cannot be criteria for creativity. That creativity is a purely subjective inner process which therefore cannot be assessed. If one followed this argument then how could one identify the creativity gifted at art? Well obviously one can recognise something as creative even though one may not be able to state the criteria for creativity.

I read an example of a poet who was trying to explain the character of creative poetry to a class of rather dull children.

He asked them, by means of the words they chose, to make him see some aspect of the countryside which they had recently visited. At first he was given a series of banal descriptions..... then a boy at the back said that he had seen 'a living flash of blue at the water's edge (a Kingfisher).' The poet excitedly exclaimed: 'That is what I want! That is the beginning of real poetry'<sup>10</sup>

An example of a poor score for alternate uses of an newspaper as given by

Meadhbh

Hat0
Boat0
Bag0
Wallpaper0
Cover books0
Wrap up in on a cold night - homeless in parks1
Swat flies0
Designer suits1
Stick under the leg of a wobbly table <u>1</u>

TOTAL SCORE

3 points

An example of a high score would be

Newspaper: Alternate uses: Emily

Floor covering	0
Clothes Fabric	1
Shreds can be used as hair	2
Shreds can be used as bandages for toys	2
Scrunched up can be imitation food	2
Can be used for many different effects	0
If folded, scrunched shredded etc	1
Letters used for sending anonymous treating letters	2
Interesting + up to the minute wallpaper	2

TOTAL SCORE

12

Emily also scored high for her 'tin can' uses.

Empty tin can: Alternate uses: Emily

Andy Warhol painting (soup)	2
Something for collecting money in etc	1
Plant pot	0
Many uses in art and craft - making figures etc	2
Stilts	0
Goldfish bowl	,0
Musical instrument	2
Remove both ends and make Egyptian armlet	2
If cut up, sharp ends could be used as a knife	2
* * *	

TOTAL SCORE

11

Empty tin can: Alternate uses: Sarah, who scored low.

House for an insect	0
A Jewellery box	0
Cup	0
Goldfish bowl	0
Put it upside down on a page and draw a circle	1
Cut it and make a ring	1
Flatten it and use as a Frisbee	0
Cut it up and make a mobile	<u>1</u>
TOTAL SCORE	3

Of course adolescent subjects can treat this test as an opportunity for obscene or macabre jokes.

2

2

Newspaper: Alternate uses: Sarah

Stuff you bra with it

Empty tin can: Alternative uses: Audrey

Fill it with concrete and drown yourself

The Mosaic Test

I preferred the <u>Mosaic Test</u> as a test of all round creativity. C. R. Rogers assumes that there is no fundamental difference in the creative process as it is evidenced in painting a picture, composing a symphony, developing a scientific theory etc.

My definition, then of the creative process is that it is the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people or circumstances of his life on the other.<sup>11</sup>

The task set was the making of a mosaic out of a huge amount of one-inch squares cut from twenty-two different colours of painted card. The subject is asked to use these in any fashion she chooses to construct within a thirtyminute period a pleasing, completely filled-in 8x10" mosaic.

They were rated by a senior lecturer in Fine Arts; Painting, at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. This lecturer is also the chairman of the RHA, Dublin. I chose him primarily because I knew him to be a skilled colourist and for his thorough manner in assessing art work. For I had to get an independent person to assess these mosaics, someone who did not know the personalities of the students or their ability at art. Example of a rating card for an mosaic.

#### MOSAIC NO. 1

Over all artistic merit Good use of colour Good use of Form Originality Warmth Pleasantness

%
%
%
%
%
%

The subject is asked to use these colours in any fashion he/she chooses to construct within a thirty-minute period a pleasing, completely filled in 8x10" mosaic.

I supplied the independent assessor with examples of all the available colours. I had given great thought to the choice of colours in terms of saturation, tonal balance/ contrast. primary, secondary colours, etc. 22 colours in all.

Results of This Tests.

Almost all the students scored between 37% and 49%. However the assessor did find two students who scored be far and away the highest marks Eva 65.8% and Emily 70%.

# Table 8



Mosaic by Sarah, score 37.5%, a low score.

Score card for Sarah.

MOSAIC NO. 10	
Over all artistic merit	45 %
Good use of colour	35 %
Good use of Form	35 %
Originality	40 %
Warmth	35 %
Pleasantness	35 %

The subject is asked to use these colours in any fashion he/she chooses to construct within a thirty-minute period a pleasing, completely filled in 8x10" mosaic.





Mosaic by Emily, score 70%





Score card for Emily.

MOSAIC NO. 7		
Over all artistic merit	80	%
Good use of colour	70	%
Good use of Form	50	%
Originality	80	%
Warmth	70	%
Pleasantness	70	%
The subject is asked to use these colours in any fashion he/she		
chooses to construct within a thirty-minute period a pleasing,		
completely filled in 8x10" mosaic.		





Mosaic by Eva, score 65.8%



Table 13

Score card for Eva.

MOSAIC NO. 6			
Over all artistic merit		65	%
Good use of colour		70	%
Good use of Form		55	%
Originality		65	%
Warmth		70	%
Pleasantness	-	70	%
The subject is asked to use these colours in any fashion he/she chooses to construct within a thirty-minute period a pleasing,			

completely filled in 8x10" mosaic.





Table 14

Mosaic by Audrey, score 45.1%

Table 15

Mosaic by Yvonne score 50.8%







Table 17

Total score on all tests.

	Alternat	e uses		
Name	Newspaper	Tin-Can	Average	Mosaic score
1. Audrey	4	6	4	45.1%
2. Mary	4	4	4	46.3%
3. Adelle	6	5	5.5	51.3%
4. Jenny	5	4	4.5	46.5%
5. Meadhbh	3	0	1.5	49.1%
6. Eva	5	11	8	65.8%
7. Emily	12	11	11.5	70.0%
8. Belinda	2	2	2	35.0%
9. Yvonne	5	3	4	50.8%
10. Sarah	6	4	5	37.5%
11. Ruth	4	4	4	40.8%

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Table 16

Mosaic by Meadhbh score 49.1%



#### Table 18

Name	Newspaper	Tin-Can	Average	Mosaic score
6. Eva	5	11	8	65.8%
7. Emily	12	11	11.5	70.0%

Results of tests in identifying children gifted at Art.

Above two subjects who scored high on all tests.

# Findings

I was pleased to find that the independent assessor's assessment of Emily's mosaic matched my assessment of her overall art work this year. For she is indeed a gifted student.

Moreover I found that her high score on the Alternate uses test correlated with her mosaic score. This would lend credence to the theory that high creativity scores correlate with how gifted a child is at art.

Emily mosaic showed a far more mature and advanced perception and use of colour. The decision to limit herself to mainly earth colours was original and divergent from the rest of her classmates. Her mosaic had as her art work always has, a high overall artistic merit.

As a teacher I find Emily is far more questioning then her classmates. From a subjective standpoint I would say she is a divergent thinker. If a profile of a gifted student in art were outlined as follows. I would say that Emily fulfils most of these criteria.

- 1. A gifted pupil observes acutely and has a vivid memory.
- Is good at handling problems which make use of imagination and is open to new experiences.
- 3. The artistically gifted student takes art seriously, is self motivated to make drawings, is the source of "spontaneous art" usually done at home or in spare and stolen time. i.e. Gets a great deal of personal satisfaction from art work.

4. Is quick to adapt to new media and explore these to their full potential.

It is interesting also that Emily's drawings exhibit many of the characteristics outlined in Clark and Zimmermans model of sophisticated drawing skills.

## Table 19

A brush and ink, still-life study be Emily (gifted at art)

Score on mosaic test 70%

Score on Alternate uses test 11.5 points





Table 20

# A still-life study by Belinda

Score on mosaic test 37%

Score on Alternate uses test

2 points.




# Table 21

## Still-life by Audrey. (This pupil is not gifted at Art)

Scored on mosaic test 45.1%

Scored on Alternate uses test 5 points





## Table 22

## Still-life by Eve Barry ( This pupil may be gifted at art.)

Score on mosaic

65.8%

Score on alternate uses test 8 points.





Findings and Evaluation of 'Creativity Test' Used.

Though these tests did succeed in identifying Emily as a gifted pupil. I would consider the alternate uses test to be too dependent upon verbal skill to be valuable for the art teacher. I also consider the mosaic test to be too artificial though I could see its application as a test for more advanced art professionals like Architects. I would prefer to get the children to mix up colours, paint and cut up the squares themselves with an end product in sight. An 'artistic goal' as it were. I would ask them to make a mosaic depicting a season they liked "Autumn, Winter, etc. They would mix up there <u>own</u> colours for this and make a mosaic bigger than 8x10". This way they would have something to represent, it would be an all over better test of art. The present test is too dependent of 'art skills' like colour matching which they may or may not have learned; to be an objective test of creativity.

Of course the real evidence of how gifted a pupil is at art lies in her portfolio of work undertaken over the course of the year

#### FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 3

- Gilbert Clack and Enid Zimmerman, in <u>Educating Artistically Talented</u> <u>Students</u>, (Syracuse University Press, 1984), p.38
- <sup>2</sup> A. J. Cropley, "S-R Psychology and Cognitive Psychology" in, <u>Creativity;</u> <u>Selected Readings</u>, ed. Vernon. (Penguin 1970) p. 117
- <sup>3</sup> P. Vernon, G. Adamson and D. Vernon in, <u>The Psychology and Education</u> of Gifted Children, (Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1977), p. 92
- <sup>4</sup> Erika Landu, "Creative Questioning for the Future" in, <u>The Psychology of</u> Gifted Children ed. Joan Freeman (John Wiley & Sons 1986) p.382
- <sup>5</sup> ibid. p.382

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<sup>6</sup> The Psychology and Education of Gifted Children p.87

- <sup>7</sup> D. W. MacKinnon, "The Personality Correlates of Creativity: A Study of American Architects" in, <u>Creativity, Selected Readings</u> p.295
- <sup>8</sup> The Psychology and Education of Gifted Children, p.88
- <sup>9</sup> ibid. p.87
- <sup>10</sup> David Best in <u>Feeling and Reason in the Arts</u>,(George Allen & Unwin, 1983) p.78
- <sup>11</sup> C. R. Rogers, "Towards a Theory of Creativity" in, <u>Creativity</u> p. 139

#### CONCLUSION

Though a case can be made for special schools for ballet and music, most writer I have read on giftedness in children do not consider a separate education to be good for them. Joan Freeman considers that, " The extra intellectual stimulation they receive seems to be out weighted by the strong possibility of unbalanced emotional development"<sup>1</sup>

Most writers seem to propose a course of acceleration or enrichment by allowing a highly achieving pupil to jump some of the formal school curriculum by moving in with an older class. It is hoped that she will not be as intellectually frustrated as she would be were she is kept back below the level of her ability. However this only applies if the student is excelling across the range of subjects. For example it is unlikely that an art class would be time tabled at the same time for first years and second years within the same school. Only an arrangement like this would allow the pupil to be accelerated in just one subject. I would prefer enrichment, it is seen as the least controversial and is usually welcomed by pupils, teachers and parents. The purpose is to offer a broader study of art and in greater dept. Enrichment activities for the gifted can also improve the teachers' awareness of alternative teaching strategies. Joan

Freeman states that

.....gifted children are more concerned with the trial and error of experimenting with new information than the teacher, who is usually keener to assist the child simply to more knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

So the teacher must remember that a gifted child will learn differently then the average. If there is one overriding conclusion to this essay, it is that the giftedness of a child in art can best be assessed by the totality of her/her art work, then by creativity tests.

## FOOTNOTES CONCLUSION

Joan Freeman, Emotional "Aspects of Giftedness" in, <u>The Psychology of</u> <u>Gifted Children</u> p.258

ibid. p.260

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### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

I found "Creativity Selected Readings" edited by Paul E. Vernon invaluable in researching the nature of creativity. Especially those gifted with high levels of creativity. Within this book I found D. W. MacKinnon's essay on the personality correlates of creativity especially useful as he used the "Mosaic Test for Creativity" which I used on my students.

Also I found C. R. Rogers essay "Towards a Theory of Creativity"invaluable in understanding the motivation of gifted children. And again A.J. Cropley's essay on "S-R Psychology & Cognitive Psychology" was usefulin understanding how creative thinking occurs and why.

The collection of essays edited by Joan Freeman in the "Psychology of Gifted Children; Perspectives on Development and Education" was very broad and wide ranging in its application to gifted children. The essays contained in it provide a clear overview of current international understanding of the psychology of gifted children. Here the social development of the able child is also considered. The major concerns of this book are (1) definition and identification of the gifted (2) the behaviour of gifted children and (3) considerations and suggestions about their education.

Philip E. Vernon, Georgina Adamson and Dorothy Vernons the "Psychology and Education of Gifted Children" was also useful. Here professor Vernon and his two co-authors discuss the provision of special facilities for gifted children and the merits and difficulties of alternative schemes for the gifted.

I found "Exceptional Children in Focus" by Payne, Patton, Kauftman, Brown and Payne to be very compact overview of the subject.

E. Paul Torrance's "Guiding Creative Talent" has placed a bit two much emphasis on the psychological aspect of the gifted and not enough on the practical questions of how to teach them.

However, Gilbert A. Clark and Enid D. Zimmerman's "Educating Artistically Talented Students" was a very practical discussion of how best to deal with students gifted specifically at art. I found Daniel Murphy's research report "Education and the Arts" broadened my view the subject. Dealing as he did with the educational autobiographies of six eminent Irish painters and sculptures. This report drove home the point that no matter how gifted a student may be at art there is no way of telling if he/she will eventually become an art professional. Moreover there is <u>no</u> way to predict who will become a "gifted adult artist".

Though I did not quote from Howard Gardners "Multiple Intelligence", it informed my own view of the subject of giftedness, making me realise that there are many different types of intelligence and therefore giftedness.

David Best's "Feeling and Reason in the Arts" dealt with the sticky philosophical problem of exactly how can one assess quality and therefore giftedness in the Arts? Seeing as art production is by nature subjective, can objective criteria be brought to bear?

Again Joan Freeman in Trevor Kerry's "Finding and Helping the Able Child" was also very useful.

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As with Gardner, Anthony Storr's work "The Dynamics of Creation" was invaluable in supplying me with a broad emotional understanding as to where the gifted were coming from.

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