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POPULAR EDUCATION
Contemporary Art, Social Class and Culture

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BY

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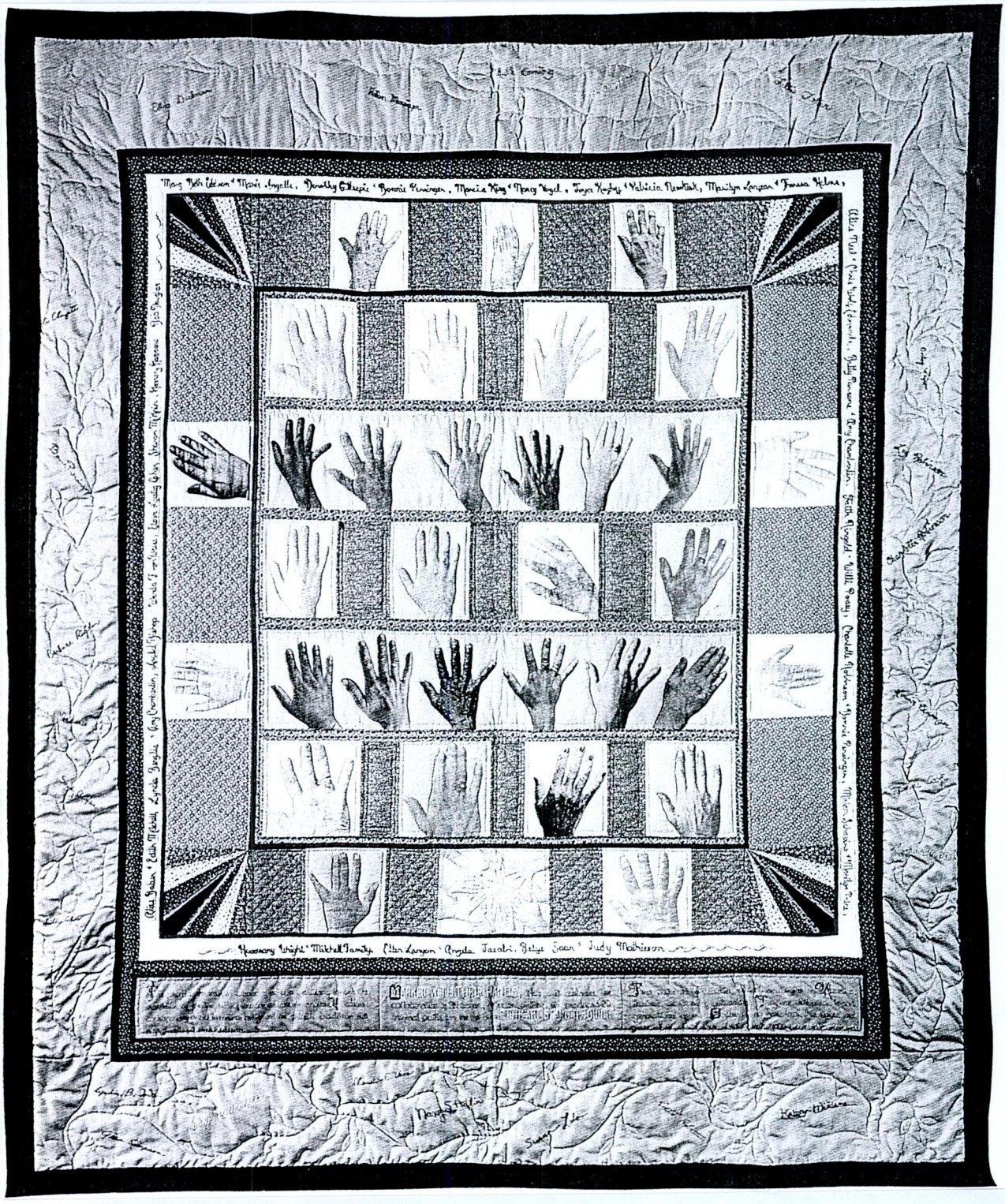
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SIGNATURE QUILT NO. 1



C. Robinson and Quilt Research Staff, 1982.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to introduce secondary school pupils to contemporary art. To make this art accessible and relevant.

Contemporary artist's use accessible media like video and photography - communicating through the signs, symbols and languages that define our culture.

However, in conversation with art teachers one invariably finds that contemporary art is seen as complex, over loaded with concepts and issues that have little relevance for the school.

In posing the questions. Is this art relevant? Is it possible to make it accessible to school pupils? I uncovered some startling discoveries.

In chapter 1 I want to discussed this paying particular attention to the theories of three educationalists, John Schostak, Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein. Examining their ideas on the relationship between education and culture.

In chapter 2 I want to turn my attention to a discussion of culture and politics. In particular John Fiske's ideas on appropriation, I want to draw parallels with this practice in contemporary art and to John Schostak's ideas in education. When he states that the "movement to re-presentation is the educational process"[1]

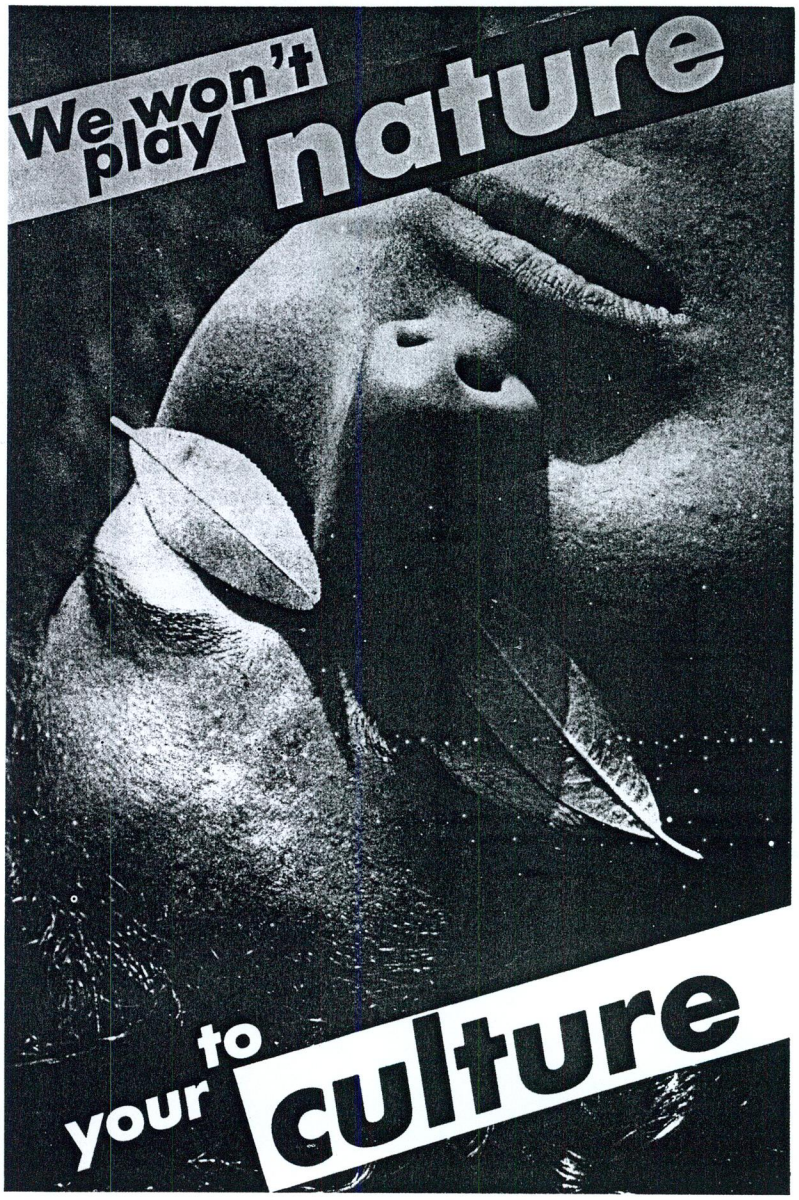
Through a conversation with the Home-School liaison officer in chapter 3, I want to give an account of the school in which I am teaching and its environment. As a result of this conversation and an evaluation of the theories discussed on education and culture, I devised two projects for my art class.

In this chapter I will out-line the form these projects took, and how they were put into practice.

FOOTNOTES INTRODUCTION

1 John Schostak, Dirty Marks, The Education of Self , Media and Popular Culture, (London: Pluto Press, 1993) p. 229

UNTITLED



Barbara Kruger, 1983

CHAPTER 1.

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the art class the teacher is engaging the students in a cultural activity. Through the processes and practices of art, connections can be made with quite a broad cultural field. He/she can introduce the students to artistic work, painting, sculpture, crafts and design. But for this art to have purpose and meaning it must have some bearing on their culture.

Culture can become one of the major stumbling blocks in how young people adapt to the school. This is particularly true of working-class children. To gain a greater insight into how this happens and what its implications are for teachers I will discuss two educational theorists Basil Bernstein and Pierre Bourdieu.

Both of these academics have done extensive studies in this area. Bernstein has conducted his research on the British School System. Bourdieu's studies have

concerned the French system. Many similarities can be found in there work, for example in their study of the relationship between 'speech codes' and social class. An area I want to draw particular attention to, is their analysis of culture and the impact this has on educatability.

Speech Codes and Social Class

Bernstein found that, "linguistic differences other than dialect occur in the normal social environment and that status groups may be distinguished by their forms of speech".[1] This difference he found is more apparent when then the gap between the socio-economic levels is very great. He suggest that,

> ...the measurable interstatus difference in language facility results from entirely different model of speech found within the middle-class and the lower working-class.[2]

Bernstein proposed that two distinct forms of language use arise because the organisation of the two social strata is such that different emphasis is placed on how language is used.

In his research he found that working-class children use language that,

> ...provides a speech form which discourages the speaker from verbally elaborating subjective intent and progressively orients the user to descriptive, rather that abstract concepts[3]

He uses the term 'public' language (or 'restricted code') to describe this form of speech. Middle-class speech however he described as 'formal' or 'elaborate', a language as he explains,

> ...where speech becomes an object of special perceptual activity and 'a theoretical attitude' is developed towards the structural possibilities of sentence organisation...[this facilitates] the verbal elaboration of subjective intent, sensitivity to the implications of separateness and difference and points to the possibilities inherent in complex conceptual hierarchy for the organisation of experience"[4]

Bernstein concluded that middle-class children through their use of speech codes are

> ...oriented towards universalistic meanings which transcended context, whereas the second child [working-class] is oriented towards particularistic meanings which are closely tied to a given context and so do not transcend it.[5]

Language of the School

This realisation Bernstein found has major implications when the child enters the school. For as he states,

> ...the school is necessarily concerned with the transmission and development of universalistic orders of meaning. It is concerned with the making explicit and elaborating through language, principles and operations, as these apply to objects (science subjects) and persons (arts subjects. One child, through his socialisation is already

> sensitive to the symbolic orders of the school, whereas the second child is much less sensitive to the universalistic orders of the school.[6]

This 'symbolic ordering' can have further implications, as Bernstein elaborates,

> ...it is also the case that the school is both implicitly and explicitly transmitting values and their attendant morality, which effects educational content, and context of education. They do this by establishing criteria for acceptable pupil and staff conduct. Further, these values and morals effect the content of educational knowledge through the selection of books, texts, films and through examples used to assist access to public knowledge (universalistic meanings). Thus the working-class child may be placed at a considerable disadvantage in relation to the total culture of the school. It is not made for him, he may not answer to it.[7]

Recent research suggests[8], working (or lower working) class children have verbal skills well in excess of their performance levels at schools and on standard tests. Bernstein shows it is the school rather than the home that has an inhibiting effect on the child's language usage.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu through his research on education and social class found also that culture can become a major factor in how the working-class child adapts to the school. Through his work he has coined the term 'cultural capital', which he explains as existing in three forms:

> ...in the embodied state, i.e. in the form of long-lasting disposition of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods, (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or criteria of these theories, problematics, etc., and in the institutionalized state, [through] educational qualifications.[9]

Bourdieu considers 'cultural capital' the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment. The accumulation of 'cultural capital', in the embodied state;

> ...in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, Bildung, presupposes a process of embodiment which insofar as it implies a labour of inculcation and assimilation, cost time, time which must be invested personally by the investor."[10]

In other words, the process of acquiring 'cultural capital' depends on the amount of time which the child's, family can invest in acquiring it, i.e. "time free from economic necessity."[11] Hence, the amount of 'cultural capital' acquired is very much dependent on the amount of economic capital at a families disposal.

Bourdieu concludes that,

> As educational qualifications, invested with the specific force of the official, becomes the condition for legitimate access to a growing number of positions, particularly the dominant ones, the educational system tends increasingly to dispossess the domestic [or working-class] group of the monopoly of the transmission of power and privilages.[12]

An educational system based on this, "...traditional type of pedagogy", he explains, "...can fulfil its function of inculcation only so long as it addresses itself to student equipped with the [necessary] linguistic and cultural capital - and the capacity to invest it profitably."[13]

Symbolic Worlds

We find then in Bourdieu's analysis a correlation with the ideas put forward by Bernstein. What impact can this research have on schooling? Can schools and educational institutions adapt to the culture and social background of their pupils? Again in both of these authors, we find a similar approach to addressing these fundamental problems.

Bourdieu has found that only by redressing the imbalance between the educational system and the social classes for which it is intended can we genuinely escape the difficulties posed by a range of problems such as, "...probability of enrolment, disposition towards school, distance from academic cultures, or degree of selection."[14]

All of these problems are linked to the social class in which pupils find themselves. They are also linked to matters, inherent in the school and in the educational system, such as, "...hierarchy of values, implied by the hierarchy of establishments, sections, disciplines, diplomas or practices."[15]

Bernstein also proposed linking social classes and their culture with the school as he explains,

> Much of the content of our schools are unwittingly drawn from aspects of the symbolic world of the middle-class, and so when a [working-class] child steps into the school he is stepping into a symbolic system which does not provide him a linkage with his life outside.[16]

We have to begin to realise, he states,

> ...the social experience the child already possesses is valid and significant and that this social experience should be reflected back to <u>him as being valid and significant</u>, ...we should work with what the child can offer; why don't we practice it?[17]

Both of these academic's work demonstrates how the culture of the pupils has a profound effect on how they adapt to the school. For education to work the schools must adapt itself to the culture of the social groups for which it is intended.

Liberation Teaching

In light of these ideas there is one other educationalist I want to introduce here. John Schostak, (a British educationalist) has also done research into the relationship between culture, social class and education. Using the terms 'empowerment' or 'liberation teaching', which is about, ".....challenging the limits of thought and feeling"[18]

Schostak states that teachers must look to the reality or environment (meaning, the language, culture, gender, class, race, etc.) of the student.

Consciousness in this context,

> ...can be formulated as extraordinary re-experiencing of the ordinary. This key rubric locates an empowering theory of knowledge in the representation of reality,[19]

As 'reality' so both interpreted and understood through language and culture, we can see in Schostak's ideas a development of the pedagogical method favoured by Bernstein and Bourdieu.

> Empowerment; Schostak continues, ...comes from being able to make shape and bring about changes in the real world that meet the agenda of interest and needs of the individual,[20] ...by redefining one's voice, drawing up the new imagery of the self and the self's relations with

> others, and representing the repressed and silenced cultural forms, the movement to re-presentation is the educational process.[21]

'Re-presentation' here is the key term, - re-presentation of culture, notions of self and identity.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 1

1 Basil Bernstein, Class, Codes and Control, Volume 1, Theoretical Studies towards a Sociology of Language, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974) p.61.

2 ibid., p.61

3 ibid., p.61-62

4 ibid., p.61

5 ibid., p.196

6 ibid., p.196

7 ibid., p.197

8 S Drudy and K Lynch, Schools and Society in Ireland. (Dublin: Gill and MacMillian, 1993) p. 154

9 Pierre Bourdieu 'The form of Capital', in J Richardson (ed.), Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of education, (New York: Greenwood, 1986) p.243

10 ibid., p. 224

11 ibid., p.246

12 ibid., p.254

13 Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, (London: Sage, 1977) p.99

14 ibid., p.102

15 ibid., p.102

16 Basil Bernstein, Class, Codes and Control, Volume 1. p. 199

17 ibid., p.199-200

18 John Schostak, Dirty Mark, the Education of Self, Media and Popular Culture. (London: Pluto Press, 1993) p.219

19 ibid., p.219

20 ibid., p.200

21 ibid., p.229

DINNER PARTY

Judy Chicago, 1979

CHAPTER 2

POPULAR EDUCATION

Inverting Culture

In the last chapter I have discussed educational theorist who have put forward ideas on how education can both 'empower' and 'disempower' through its use of language and culture.

Bernstein and Bourdieu view culture as central to the education of young people. Schostak's theories on 'empowerment' which concern, notions of "redefining one's voice, ...representing the repressed and silenced cultural forms."[1] Stress the need for education to be itself a process of re-presentation.

In discussing the relevance of this in visual culture; both popular and 'high' culture (popular culture; I would define as film, pop music, television, magazines. High culture; as what we normally consider fine arts, paintings, sculpture, photography etc.). I want to draw parallels with education and in particular art education.

Bourdieu as we have seen states that schools invest in a 'cultural capital'. As we are aware young people are generally taken by popular culture in one form or another, we need only look to our schools where it is obvious that young people are interested in pop music, popular films, etc. to confirm this.

If we are to gain a greater understanding of young people and the environment they live in, we should examine the culture they invest in.

Social Systems

An important word in this context is the word 'capital', young people buy into popular culture, the life style, fashion, sounds, etc. But who make's and controls this culture?, and for what purpose? Two academics I want to discuss in this context are John Fiske and David Tetzlaff.

Both of these theorists give interesting and quite different readings of popular culture, - readings that are essential to further our understanding of the subject. As it seems we must consider culture, popular and otherwise as one of the determining factors in how young people perceive themselves, their place in society and the school, we must consider its political implications.

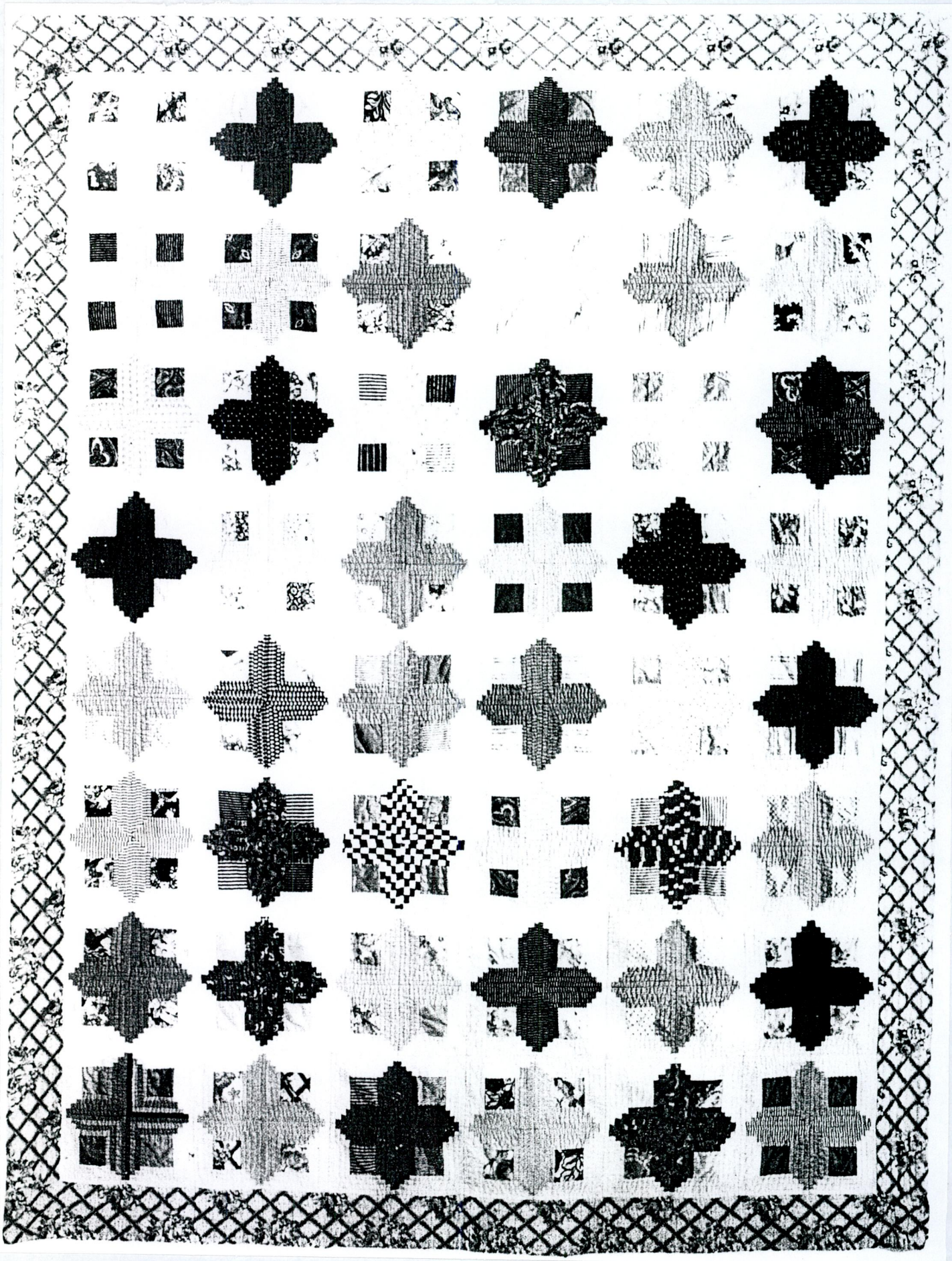
Fiske considers culture from a social perspective, its effects on our ideas of who we are, gender, sex, class, etc. Culture making then in this context.

> ...is a social process: all meanings of self, of social relations, all the discourses and text that play such important cultural roles can circulate only in relationship to the social system, in our case that of white, patriarchal capitalism: Any social system needs a cultural system of meaning that serves either to hold it in place or destablize it, to make it more or less amenable to change. Culture (and its meanings and pleasures) is a constant succession of social practices; it is therefore inherently political, it is centrally involved: the distribution and possible redistribution of various forms of social control.[2]

It is in this notion of 'social control' that Fiske develops his arguments (arguments that reiterate those put forward by Bernstein and Bourdieu). He shows that culture and society are interlinked. It is through the cultural system that the social is controlled.

What Fiske is saying here is that, in capitalist society, indeed in any society economic power(which we understand to be the dominant force) is in fact, "...both underpinned and exceeded by semiotic power; that is the power to <u>make meanings</u>."[3]

IRISH QUILT, 1870, LOG CABIN



It is through cultures power to make meanings that it controls, and it is through reinterpreting these meanings that we can gain control of culture and in turn power.

For example as women have done in the social and political arena. Through Feminism, women have challenged the traditional, patriarchal view that a women's place was in the home as 'house wife' or 'mother'.

These ideas on semiotics and society seem to reiterate Schostak's ideas on empowerment, for as Fiske explains'

> ...without some control over ones existence there can be no empowerment and no self-esteem. And with no sense of empowerment or self-esteem there can be none of the confidence needed for social action.[4]

Culture and Politics.

In a similar vein to Fiske, David Tetzlaff discusses popular culture and the mass-media from a social perspective. In Tetzlaff's study he identifies mass produced culture as a key means of reproducing from generation to generation the mechanisms of social control. In fact in Tetzlaff's view,

> The overall systemic function of popular culture within capitalism is to reconcile capital's subordinates to their position within the

> economy. It does not lead them to love their domination, or even necessarily to deny it. It merely provides enough reward in the form of pleasure, escape or identification, and enough opportunity for limited autonomy through channelled or unfocused resistance, to keep us coming back to the culture industry, for more limited relief.[5]

Politics and culture then for Tetzlaff work hand in hand (unlike Fiske who has seen the possibility to subvert or deconstruct its' meaning.). Tetzlaff views popular culture as a means of

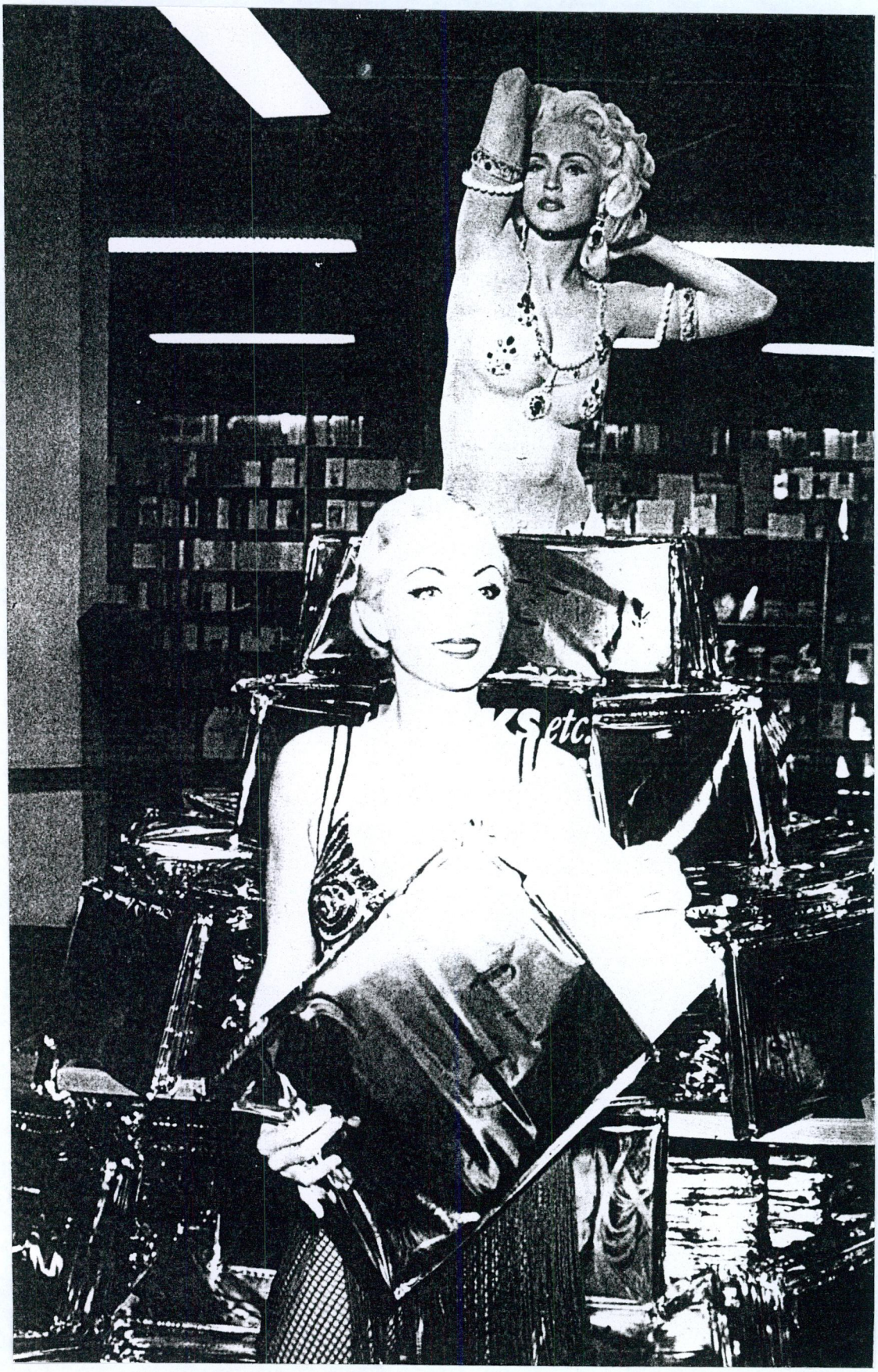
> ...channelled or unfocused resistance to make subordination bearable, [in this context] we have been active not passive in our popular culture. The question then is what has become of our action?[6]

In this question we here an echo of Schostak's ideas and Fiske's who reiterates "without empowerment or self esteem there can be none of the confidence needed for social action."[7]

In other words mass-produced popular culture is the opium which evaporates our ability to take control of our lives. Popular culture in this context is designed to distract and absorb our energies and actions, or as Tetzlaff states, to "...reconcile capital[isms] subordinates to their position within the economy"[8] Tetzlaff does not see any relief from this subordinate situation, except one;

> "Our cause", he explains, "would be at least slightly better off if we were all[that is academics like Tetzlaff] working to create and distribute films, video, records and accessible commentary instead of writing academic essays"[9]

SENDING UP THE IMAGE



The possibility of using Tetzlaff 'means' to combat the situation he outlines is very unlikely to occur, but Fiske in his ideas on the semiotic in language and empowerment could bear fruit, seen in the light of Schostak's ideas on education.

Empowering Art, Empowering Culture.

The overwhelming feeling from both Fiske and Tetzlaff's 'reading of the popular' is that popular culture disempowers, whether by creating a 'subject population', or through 'social control'. But Fiske's ideas on the semiotic suggests a form of action that maybe taken. To explain this he gives as an example the pop singer Madonna. Madonna, Fiske claims through her music, ".....encourage young girls to take control of the meanings, of feminity"[10] Madonna who can be seen in a post-feminist context plays, the role of the 'blonde sex-goddess', but she makes a conscious and obvious effort to subvert this notion of femininity, which in turn exposes this 'notion' for what it is, a construct, a male fantasy. A fantasy dreamed up by Hollywood movie moguls in the 1930's-40's. We could see Marilyn Monroe in this context, but of course as we know she was destroyed by this 'image'.

Fiske then claims that Madonna through her interpretation and control of 'these' meanings of femininity, in her music and image,

> ...produces a sense of empowerment in one of the most disempowered of social groups [young girls], that may well result in political progress in there everyday lives.[11]

Here again we find comparisons with Schostak's ideas in education. As he explains,

> In repressed societies the forms of re-presentation themselves employ the forms of the forbidden discourse, the employment of a double discourse of irony, satire embedding subversive imagery... The purpose of education is to expand and enrich human possibilities for expression and action in [the] community.[12]

Active Art

It is this notion of art or culture, which encourages political progress in everyday lives, that I want to focus on next. For this purpose I have looked mostly to the work of women artist, the ideas and issues therein could connect more readily with the students I am teaching (at present I am teaching in an all girl's school.)

LEAD LADY

Patricia Mainardi, the American Feminist maintains that women have always made art.

> But for women the arts most highly valued by male society have been closed to them for just that reason. They have put their creativity instead into needlework arts, which exists in a fantastic variety wherever there are women and which in fact are a universal female art form transcending race, class and national boarders. Needlework is the one art in which women controlled the education of their daughters and the production of art, and were also the critics and audience... it is our cultural heritage"[13]

This cultural heritage, a heritage that defined and controlled women as 'house wife' and 'home-makers' has been taken up my contemporary women artists, artists like Judy Chicago and Sue Richardson. These artists use traditional crafts and skills like embroidery, knitting and quilting and place them in a way which encapsulates their experience - into art forms; carriers of experience and meaning.

Fiske in his ideas on the semiotic has another example which I think gives context to this practice,

> "As tenants change the rented apartment and appropriate it by their transient acts and memories, so do speakers with their accent's and turn of phrase make the 'land lords' language temporarily theirs, cooking, dwelling, walking in the city, shopping can all constitute tactile utterances that appropriate the products of the strong into the service of the weak.[14]

This notion of appropriation has been employed by these women artists in such a way that the skills that have marginalised women, in the past, are now at their service, in art works that explore this marginalisation , and by doing so empower women.

Judy Chicago emulates these ideals, she,

> ...has made great strides towards a woman centred artistic vision. Her use of performance art, workshop production, useful crafts, such as embroidery challenges traditional definitions of artistic acceptability to show that women have created art under adverse circumstances. This celebrates the art, not the advesity.[15]

Chicago's monumental environmental sculpture 'The Dinner Party' demonstrates this. In this work 39 historical and mythical figures are placed around a triangular table, each women represented by a place setting consisting of custom designed ceramic plates and needle work runners, standard cups and silver ware. The names of 999, more women are inscribed on the triangular tiles of the dedication floor. This work was inspired by historical research Chicago began in the early seventies in search of achievements by artistic and intellectual fore mothers.

It is not just in an international context we find artist who work in this way. To take for example the Irish artist Dorothy Cross.

SHARK LADY IN A BALLDRESS

Cross has been making and exhibiting art in Ireland now since the early eighties. Her work has taken many forms. Generally the form in takes is not abstract, i.e. "idealistic, not practical, abstruse, free from representational qualities"[16] But full of representational qualities. For example as can be seen in her 'Spire' series. In this work, cross used the 'given' or 'found' form of the church spire through which to express formal qualities in art (i.e. line, shape, structure, etc.) and to give the work social significance. As a comment on the patriarchal structures within the church and society.

Cross's work then has the possibility to comment on the structures in society. She achieves this through appropriating the trappings and representations of that society to construct a critique of 'it'.

Re-presenting Education

This way of working or practice employed by contemporary artists does emulate (as we have seen) Fiske's ideas on the semiotic in language, and, is comparable to Schostak's ideas on education. When he states that "an empowering theory of knowledge [is located] in the representation of reality".[17]

Schostak also states that teachers must look to the reality or environment of their students. An idea that is reiterated by Bernstein and Bourdieu. As Bernstein explains "...if the context of learning, the examples, the reading books are not contexts which are triggers for the children's imagination, are not triggers on the child's curiosity and explorations in his family and community, then the child is not at home in the educational world".[18]

Contemporary artists as we have seen use the materials, symbols, signs, images, or representation of reality, - the parts and fabric of our culture that are 'triggers,' on the public's imagination, to comment on our society and as constructs through which we perceive art.

We have the possibility as educators-art teachers, to use contemporary art as a model, to draw on our students experience, - the culture of their families and environment as a means through which to educate them and make connecting links with the world of art.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 2

1 John Schostak, Dirty Marks, the Education of Self, Media and Popular Culture. (London, Pluto Press,1993) p.229

2 John Fiske, Reading Popular Culture, (London, Unwin Hyman, 1989) p.1

3 ibid., p.7

4 ibid., p.9

5 David Tetzlaff, "Popular Culture and Social Control in Late Capitalism", in P. Scannell (ed.) Culture and Power and Media Reader. (London, Sage Publications, 1992) p. 70

6 ibid., p. 70

7 John Fiske, Reading Popular Culture, p. 9

8 David Tetzlaff, in Culture and Power and Media Reader, p.70

9 ibid., p.71

10 John Schostak, Dirty Marks, the Education of Self, p.229

11 ibid., p.136

12 John Schostak, Dirty Marks, The education of Self. p. 229

13 Patricia Mainardi, Quilts; the Great American Art; Feminist Art Journal, Winter, 1973, p.1

14 John Fiske, Reading Popular Culture, p.136

15 Mara Witzling (ed.) Voicing our Visions, writings by Women Artists, (London: The Women Press, 1991), p. 373

16 The Concise Oxford Dictionary, seventh edition) (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1986)

17 John Schostak, Dirty Marks, The Education Of Self. p.229

18 Basil Bernstein, Class Codes and Control Volume 1, Theoretical Studies Towards and Sociology of language, (London, Routledge & Kegan, Paul, 1974), p.199

ECHOES OF HARLEM

CHAPTER 3

CULTURE IN THE ART CLASS.

The main issue that is reiterated again and again through our discussion on education is that for learning to happen The "analogies used to assist access to public knowledge"[1] must be drawn from the pupils own culture. In particular with the education of working-class children.

As we have seen through Fiske's analysis of popular culture there is the possibility of appropriating the signs and symbols of popular imagery to escape the oppressive cliché's that undermine certain groups, - as the women's movement have show, in education and the political arena. This form of 're-presentation' of images of the self and identity can, as Schostak has shown, be an educational process. A process comparable to the methodology out-lined by Bernstein and Bourdieu.

If we look to contemporary artists working methods we see how they use or appropriate images, symbols and signs; the language we use to represent 'reality' as a means to comment and make art that has relevance within our culture and society.

Implementing projects for the art class I wanted to look at aspects of the students culture. To find some forms or images that could be used as vehicles to educate them in art practice. In making a connection between their culture and art, I could also introduce then to contemporary artist, who have followed the some practice - bridging the gap between their world and the world of art.

Before I out-line how I under took such a venture I want to bring another issue that Bernstein has raised into the discussion, as it has relevance to the school in which I am teaching.

Bernstein states that if children are labelled 'culturally deprived' then it follows,

> ...that the parents are inadequate, the spontaneous realization of their culture, it's images and symbolic representations are of reduced value and significance,... All that informs the child, that gives meaning and purpose to him outside the school, creases to be valid and accorded significance and opportunity for enhancement with the school... A wedge is progressively driven between the child and a member of a family and community, and the child as a member of a school. Either way the child is expected, and his parents, as well, to drop their social identity, their way of life and it's symbolic representation, at the school gate.
> ...I do not mean by this that no satisfactory home-school relations can take place or do not take place; I mean rather that the parents must be brought within the educational experience of the school child by doing what they can do, and can do with confidence.
> ...This may mean that the content of learning in the school should be drawn much more from the child's experience in the family and community.[2]

FAMILIAR

11 JANUARY – 18 FEBRUARY 1995

In the school I am teaching a 'Home-School' project is in place. The 'Parents Group' was set up in conjunction with The Department of Education and the school, (it is one of a number of such groups operating in the city). I spoke to the home-school liaison officer to gain a greater insight into the school and its environment.

Parents in the School

The main purpose of the 'group' is to engender among parents more participation in the school system. "To empower parents through information and personal development programmes to take a more long term view of education, as an integral part of their children's developement."[3]

The 'group' sets out to "bridge the gap between home-life and the school", "Home life", as the liaison officer explained, "has a big impact. The school has to reach out to the home - otherwise we have no chance."[4]

In this context the 'Parents Group' have adapted to the ideas put forward by Bernstein, in his insistence that the school must look to the culture of the child and it's parents. To, as it were dislodge the 'wedge', to integrate the culture of the child with that of the school.

To this end the group runs programme to help parents with their child's homework. But in general the parents are asked what they want from the group - some ask for educational programmes. Ultimately 'it' runs as a social group that tries "to encourage a sense of community, a sharing of problems".[5] In fact, "most people in the community are isolated, through the group they meet other people[in the same situation] as themselves."[6]

Mothers/women form the core of the group, in fact in a "male dominated community, very few men take part or go to parent teachers meetings."[7]

In the last four years (in this liaison officers experience) two students have gone on to third level education. Most students leave after Junior Cert., "a situation engendered by parents lack of belief in a school system that holds any prospect for their children in the long term."[8]

The "core of the school is remedial", a situation that is precipitated by a "primary school system that needs more money, more resources and more 'special education'."[9] More emphasis, the liaison officer stated, "has to be placed on the pre-school child, if you don't get to the per-school child you have no chance."[10]

STUDENT TEXTURAL STUDIES

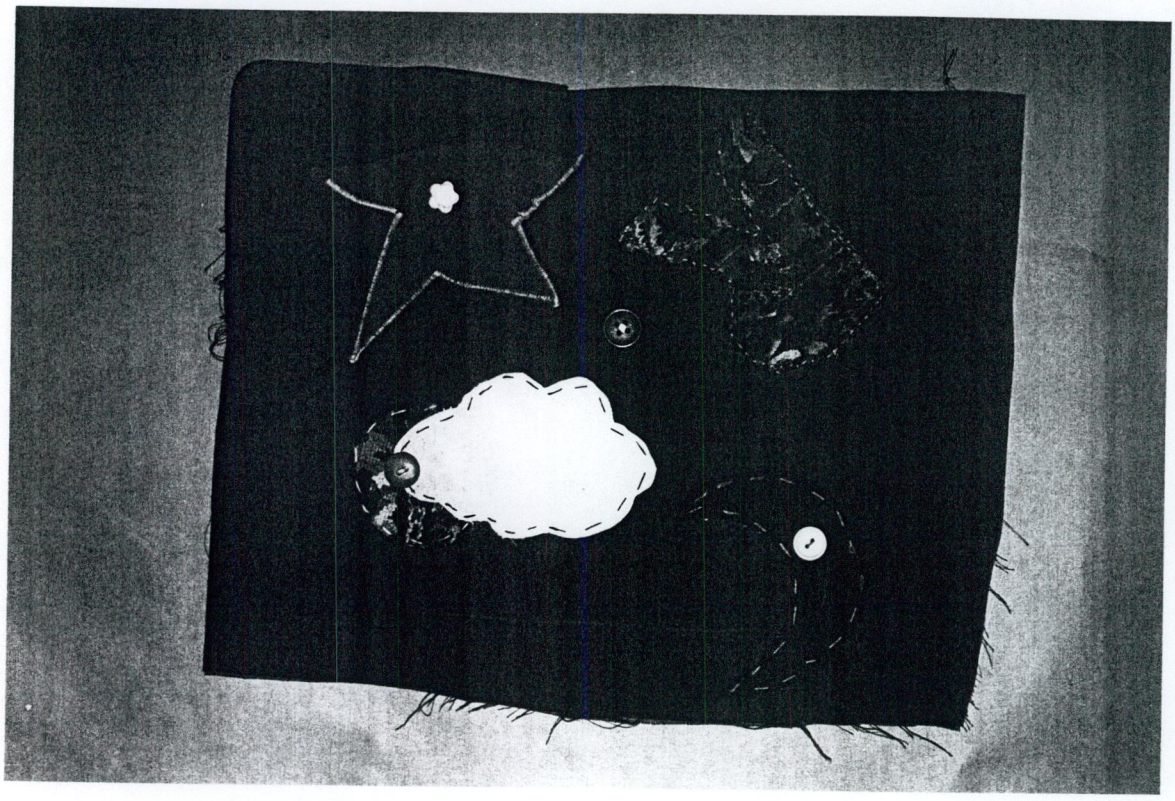
The Class Projects

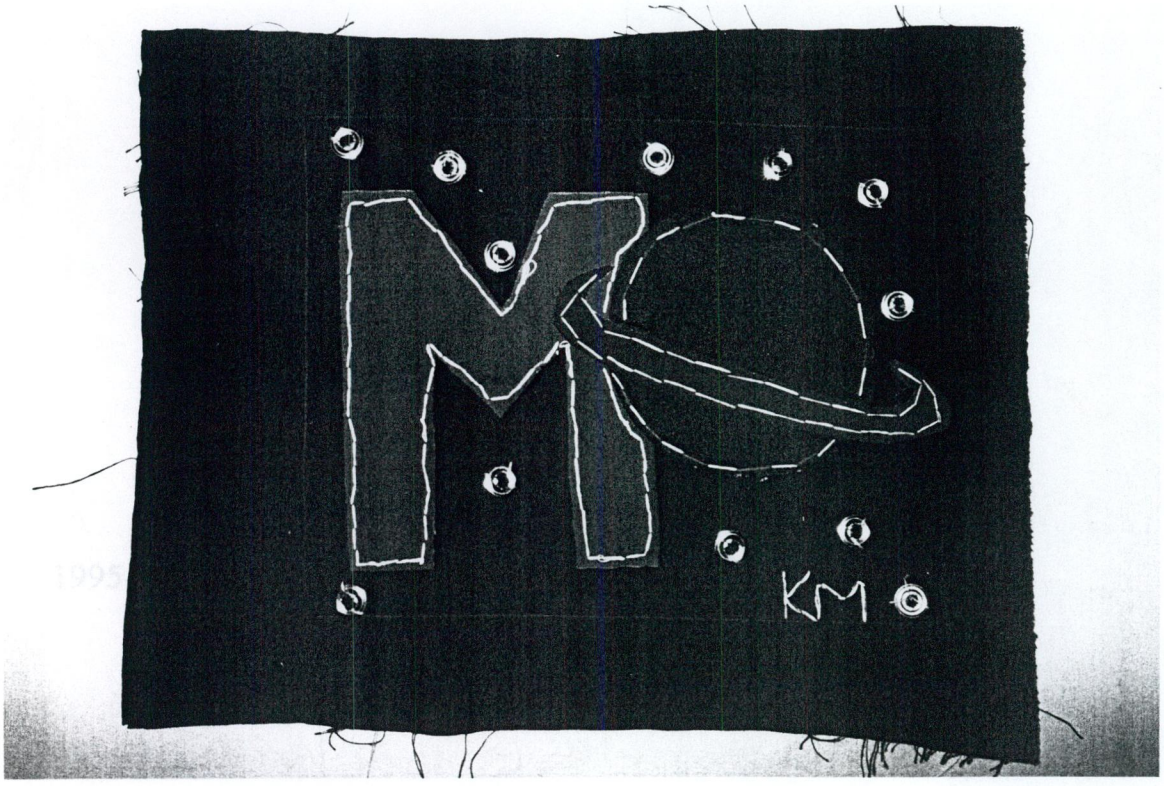
The main purpose in implementing projects for the art class, indeed in this dissertation, is to "bridge the gap(as the liaison offices explained) between home-life and the school: to draw on the students experience, - to find aspects of their culture that would become "triggers for their imagination"[11], - to appropriate and explore images and representations they are familiar with to educate them in visual art. Through this process, introduce them to contemporary artists who follow the same practice.

Fundamental Explorations.

I began work with the students as a basic means of exploring art elements: one class (group A) started with an exploration of line, looking/ exploring 'its' expressive and formal qualities. This led to out-line drawings of natural objects. Here pattern was introduced, the students selected a shape from their drawings and made a repeat patterns (colour was explored through this process). These patterns were then cut into stencils and used in screen prints, to make fabric prints.

PAPER COLLAGE AND STUDENT APPLIQUÉ





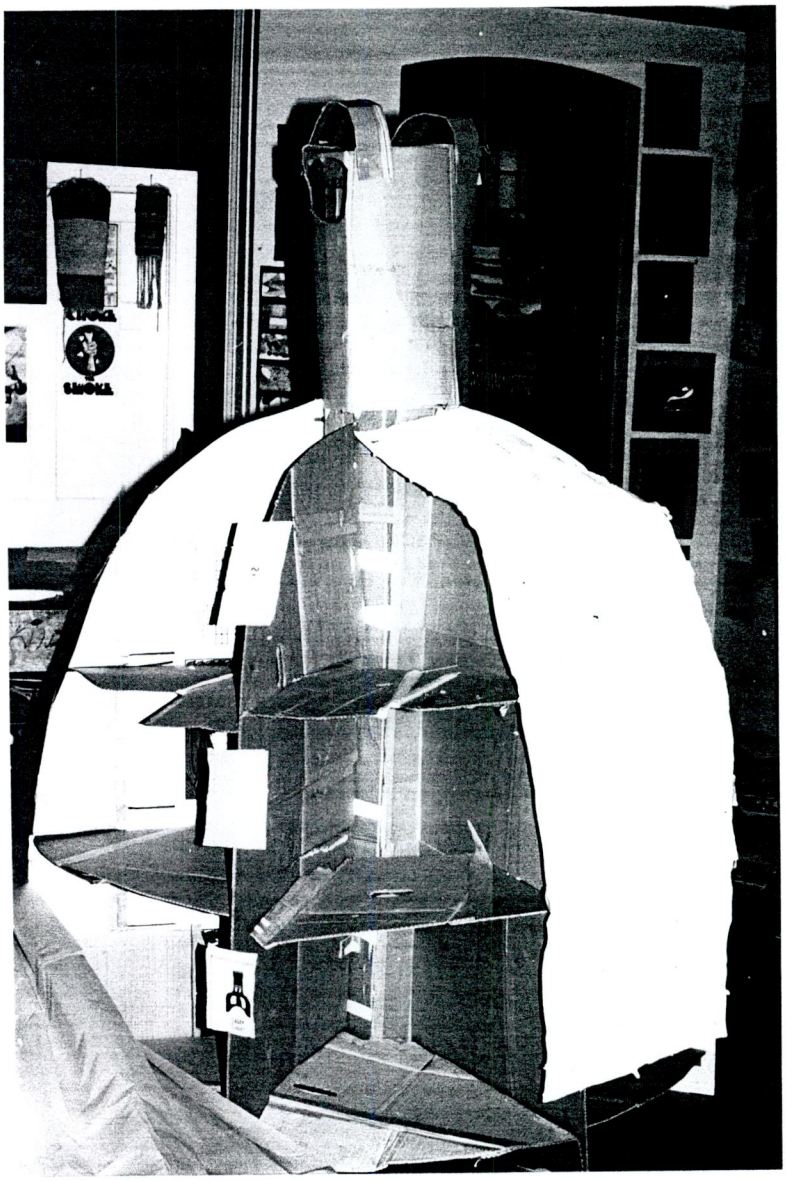
The next class (Group B) started by exploring the textural possibilities in white paper, (using cartridge, news print and grease proof papers). Cutting, tearing, ripping and twisting to create tactile textures. From here explorations of the textures on vegetables and fruits were encouraged. Looking at the structure and shapes on the surface of these objects - as a means of organising their studies, and as an introduction to these elements.

Something Old, Something New

Having established a working practice and a certain knowledge of the art elements, I set about finding aspects of the students culture that we could use as a basis for the projects.

While working with group A (on the fabric prints) I introduced them to traditional and contemporary quilt making. In doing so I suggested the possibility of making a class quilt. We/they would only make the quilt it they took to the idea, they did. Through a 'brain storming' session a theme for the quilt was suggested 'dream', the student dreams, became it's subject.

WEDDING DRESS, (Work in Progress)



1995.

With group B. (tactile texture class) the students had to come up with a means of applying the processes and the materials they had explored. Through a 'brain storming' session various ideas were suggested. One idea that struck a cord was clothes that were white and textured - communion dresses, underwear, christening gowns and finally wedding dresses. On further discussion the wedding dress was chosen.

These projects were initiated collaboratively, the students would also work this way - sharing valves, skills and experiences that would become part of the finished work..

Designing and Making

With the texture class, the students were set a brief to design a wedding dress, or an A2 paper panel for the dress. Nine dress designs were selected, on a vote one was chosen and work commenced.

The class was divided up into groups, some worked on the cardboard construction under my supervision (this construction would become the support for the paper dress) while others started designing and making texture paper panels for the dress. The design for the panels were taken from the original studies the students had made.

When near completion the panels were stuck together in groups of four to make one section - nine of these sections were needed to complete the dress.

The quilt project started as an exercise in colour paper collage, exploring shape and colour. These coloured shapes (moons, stars, suns clouds, planets) were used as templates to cut fabric shapes. The fabric shapes were used on appliqué panels each student was making. When complete these appliqué's were sewn together to make the class quilt.

The students were encouraged (during the project) to bring in old fabrics, objects like buttons, beads, old plastic jewellery to sew on to the quilt. Materials from their environment that would become part of the finished piece.

WHITE TEXTURE PANELS, 36 A2 SHEETS

THE WEDDING DRESS

Contemporary Context

Through out the projects I gave context to the students work by introducing them to contemporary art.

The 'Dress' as a form has been used by many women artists, for example, Dorothy Cross's, 'Shark Lady in a Ball Dress' (1988), Kate Malone's. 'Lead Lady' (1991), and Alice Maher's more recent dress sculptures, 'familiar' (1995). The dress the students were making became a focal point through which to introduce the students to a whole range of sculptural work.

The same practice was initiated on the quilt project. Quilt making, textiles and sewing have been used (as I have shown) by many women artist. Patricia Mainardi describes these skill as women's "cultural heritage".[12] The quilt was introduces in this context. Through traditional quilts, and contemporary artists work.

THE CLASS QUILT

Measuring Success.

The true measure of success in approaching curriculum in this way can be seen in the students work, and in their overall response to the finished pieces (see Students Response, p.58). From a teachers perspective I was continually astounded by the commitment and personal interest the students showed. One can only imagine the positive long term effects this type of methodology could have in attitude to art, and in the students lives.

Creating large works, that would be exhibited in the school improved class moral. An element of healthy competition became apparent between the classes. Through this process another issue could be raised, an issue the feminist Patricia Mainardi maintains that is fundamental to women's art.

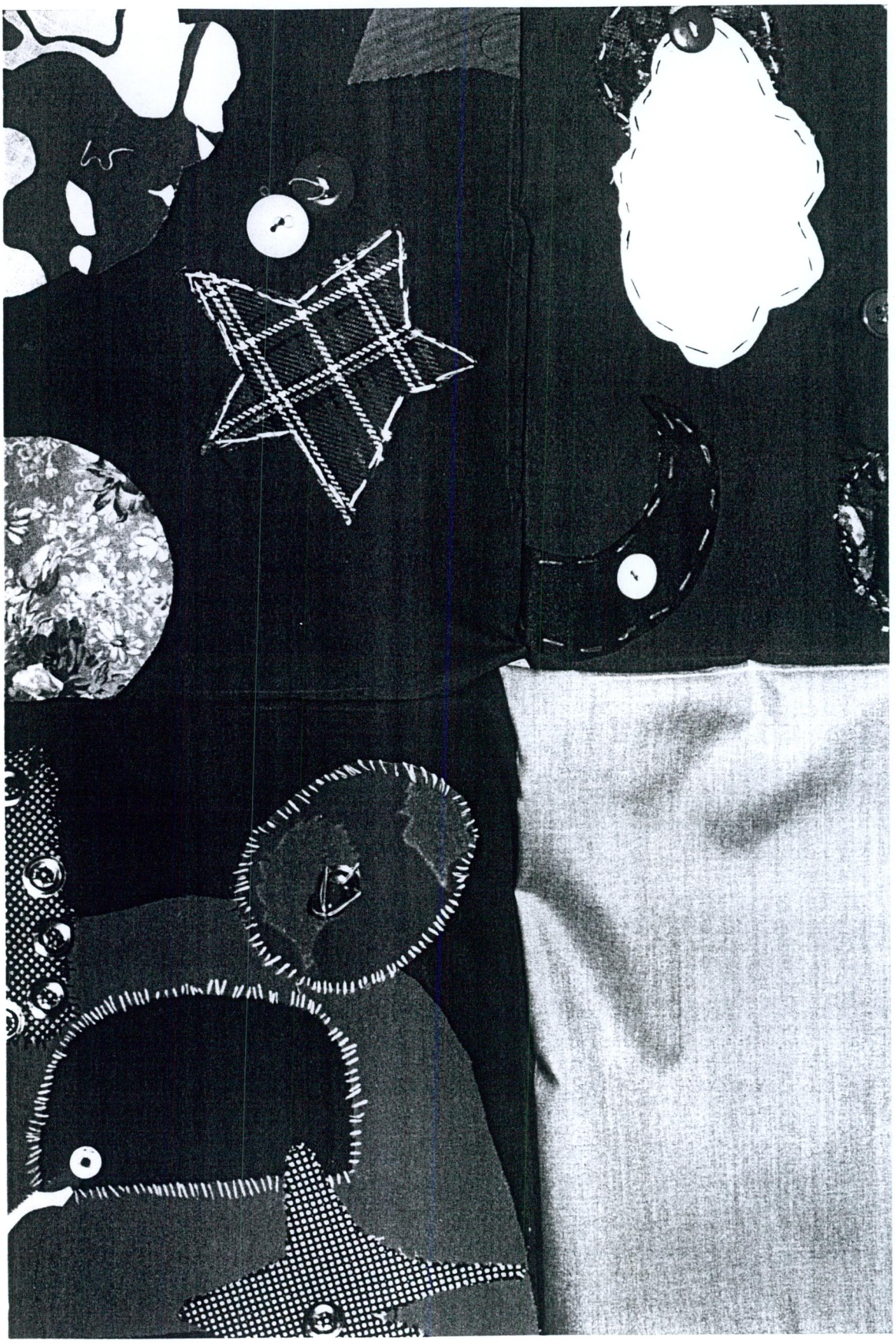
In general women's skills and creativity have been confined to the home in domestic work, cleaning, cooking and rearing children. But evidence of this work can really be seen form one generation to the next. In needlework crafts, as Mainardi has pointed

out, we can see a female artistic heritage, where women's skills and creativity is preserved for future generations.

Quilt making then or more appropriately the students class quilt and wedding dress become a means through which to raise this issue, an issue that does not directly

effect these young women at present, but it will I am sure in the future. The quilt and the dress will remain an evidence of this.

THE CLASS QUILT (Detail)



FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 3

1 Basil Bernstein, Class, Codes and Control, Volume 1, Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Langur. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1976) p. 197

2 ibid., p.192

3 Interview with, Elizabeth Gill, Home-School Liaison Officer, St. Dominic's Secondary School, Ballyfermot, February 1995.

4 ibid.,

5 ibid.,

6 ibid.,

7 ibid.,

8 ibid.,

9 ibid.,

10 ibid.,

11 ibid.,

12 Patrica Mainardi, Quilts: The Great American Art. Feminist Art Journal, Winter, 1973 p.1

CONCLUSION

I set out in this dissertation to find a relevant way of introducing contemporary art to secondary school pupils. Through an examination of Bourdieu's and Bernstein's ideas on education I discovered that culture is a major factor in how the young person adapts to the school system.

Bernstein states,

> ... the social experience the child already possess is valid and significant and that this social experience should be reflected back to him as being valid and significant, ... we should work with what the child can offer; why don't we practice it?[1]

In implementing projects for my art classes I have tried to take this on board. By encouraging my students to use images and representations from their culture I found I could draw parallels with the practice and work of contemporary artists.

FOOTNOTES CONCLUSION

1 Basil Bernstein, Class, Codes and Control Volume 1, Theoretical studies towards a Sociology of Lanague. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974) p. 199-200

APPENDICES

STUDENTS RESPONSE TO THE PROJECTS.

"We cut out shapes and put them on material and sewed around the shapes. Then we put the fabric together and the quilt was made, it looks great."

Nicola.

"A few weeks ago we were looking at slides and then we got materials and made a patch work quilt with bits of material. We sewed buttons on and made stars and put them on"

Iorna Carberry.

"I think the wedding dress is brilliant"

Emer Roch.

"The dress turned out very well, everybody likes it. Mr Yelverton helped us to do different shapes & textures.

I think we should be alowed to go to the exhibition & then go to a museum or something & a rave & no teachers alowed in."

Lisa O'Byrne

THE QUILT, (Detail)

1995

"A few weeks ago we started a quilt. We first looked at some slides and got our ideas from that. We got materials and went from there. We all made a patch, I made two and now the quilt is nearly finished and it is lovely."

Sinead.

"I made a Quilt a few weeks ago it is beautiful it has brillant designs."

Celine O'Reilly.

"I think the dress is lovely and we put a lot of effort into it and it took us ages to do it."

Linda Barron.

"I think the dress turned out better than I thought, Mr Yelverton helped us a lot we used different textures and shapes. I really enjoyed working on this dress."

Martina Dunne.

"DEADLY"

Ann-Marie Dunne.

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