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The National College of Art & Design

Faculty of Design
Department of Industrial Design

All Power to the Imagination

Student action at
The National College of Art
1967-1972.

by

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Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complementary Studies
in Candidacy for

the Degree of Bachelor of Design in Industrial Design

1995

a c k n o w l e d g m e n t s

I wish to thank the following people for making this thesis possible:

Bill Bolger

Gemma Bradley

Paul Caffrey

Charlie Cullen

Grainne Dowling

Joan Fowler

Paddy Gillan

Alice Hanratty

John Higgans

Issult McCarthy

Robert McColgan

Bernadette Madden

Pat Malloy

Edward Murphy

Claire O' Loughlann

Donal O'Sullivan

Mick O'Sullivan

John Ryan

Trevor Scott

Noel Sheridan

The staff of The Irish Times

The staff of Radio Telefis Eireann

National College of Art & Design Students Union

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G l o s s a r y o f t e r m s

Bolton Street College

College of technology in the Dublin Institute of Technology. Deals mainly with engineering based subjects.

Department of Education

Main government body responsible for the education of the citizens of the Republic of Ireland

HEA- Higher Education Authority

Main financing body for third level Colleges and Universities under the control Department of Education

NCA- National College of Art, Kildare St. Dublin.

Main National college for the education of artists and designers in the Republic of Ireland. Directly controlled by the Department of Education.

NCEA- National Council for Educational Awards

Main awarding body for a number of non-university third level Colleges.

RCA- Royal College of Art

Postgraduate College of Art & Design in London.

RHA- Royal Hibernian Academy

Academy of artists in Ireland. Associated to the Royal Academy of Britain.

SRC- Students' Representative Council

Body elected by student to represent their views and needs as students, to the relevant ends.

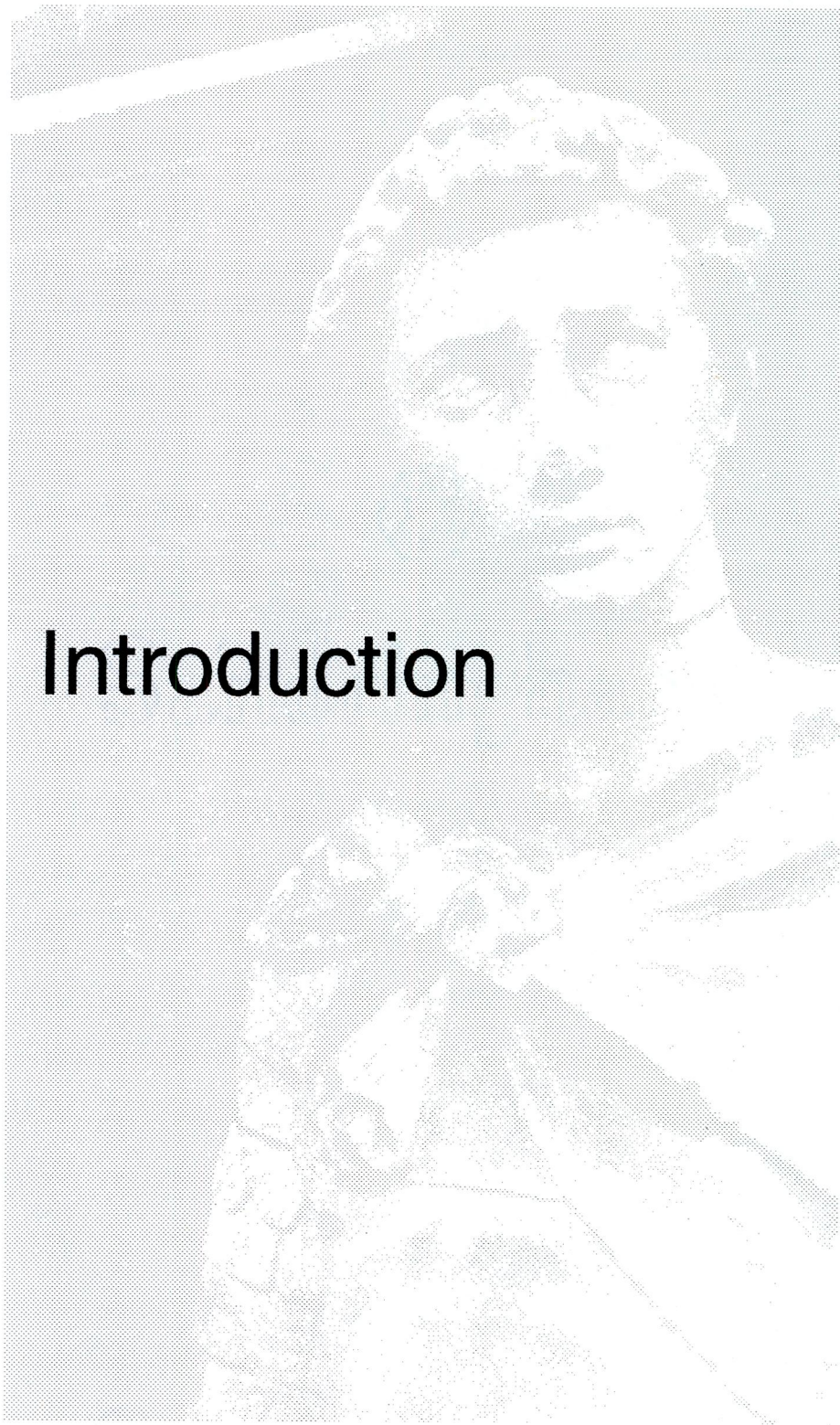
Students Union

Same as SRC.

TCD- Trinity College Dublin

Constituent College of the University of Dublin. Adjacent to NCA.





Introduction



Prior to 1967, the National College of Art was a very academic school of art, steeped in traditions borrowed from the antique, neo-classicalism and the Renaissance. In that year students found themselves frustrated with the College, its methods, teachings, and its direct Civil Service control. They rebelled against the structure in an attempt to improve their situation.

This thesis aims to examine what had led to this rebellion, what influenced it, what happened during the years from 1967 to 1972 at the College, and the effects the events of this period had on the College and the Department for Education's policy on Art & Design Education.

This thesis addresses the cultural climate in and through which the rebellion occurred. It will reflect upon the impact of the wave of student and youth action across the globe in the late 1960s, and the philosophies which are part and parcel of this wave. The aim of the discussion is to show that the events of other art Colleges and other Universities had a direct influence on the ideas, thoughts and hopes of many of the students involved with the events at the National College of Art between 1967 and 1972. It is within this discussion that I place the events of the NCA amongst those of Berkeley, Hornsey and the Sorbonne.

The events of 1968 in Paris and Hornsey and the influence of such movements as Situationalism and the plethora of political movements that arose from this period were so widely publicised, that they played an important role in the politicising of the students and staff at the NCA. While the subjects are deserving of further argument and exploration, the necessity for an awareness of their existence and how this serves to create a greater understanding of the broader implications of their influence on the rising tide of student rebellion across the world and indeed consequentially at the National College of Art

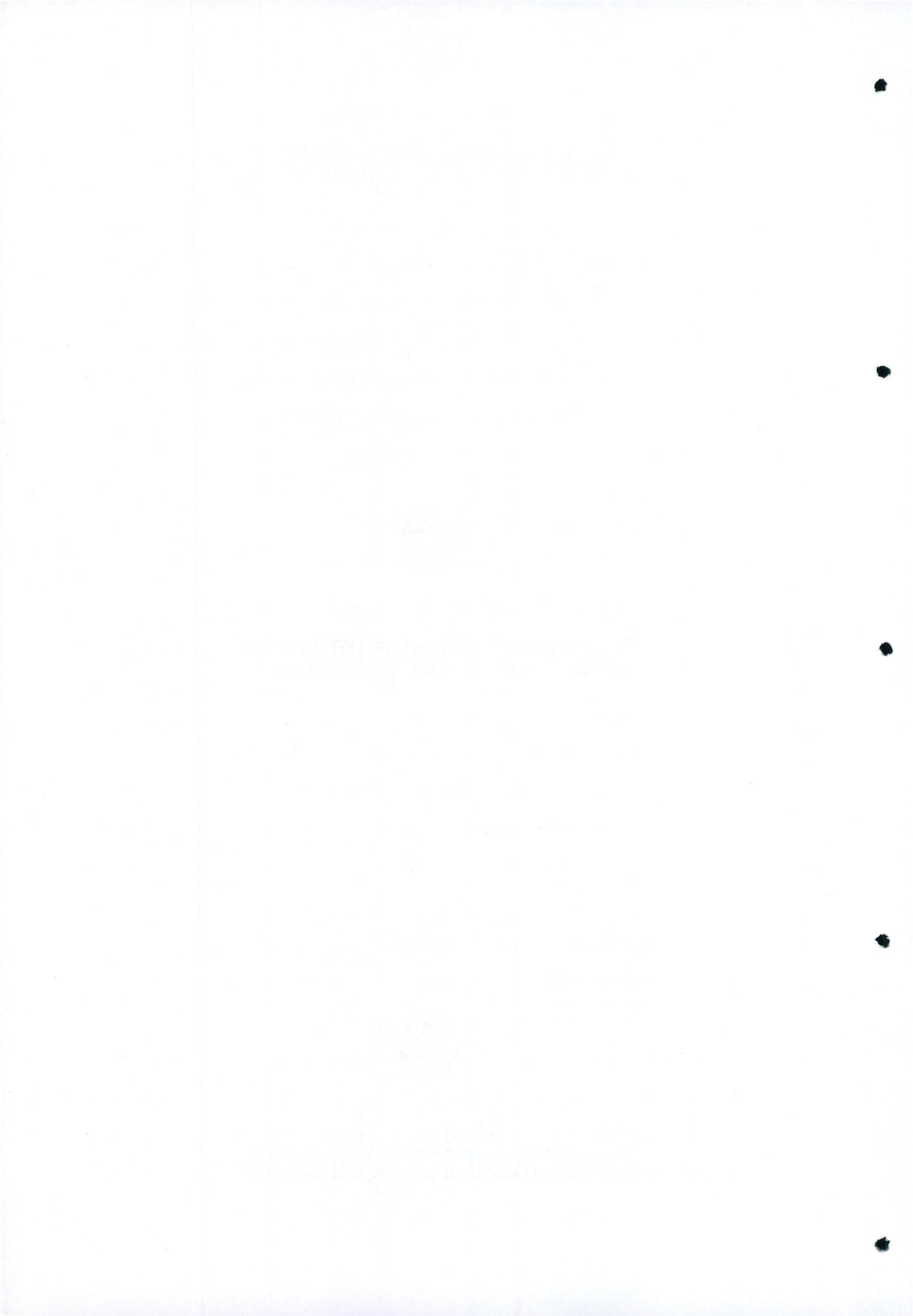


explains their inclusion in the course of this discussion.

When addressing the student led movement at the NCA, the role of the Department for Education in the day to day running of the College is examined. The complete ignorance by the Civil Service administration of the world of Art & Design and the role it played within the community had led the College into a third world status in the third level education system. The Department of Education regarded Art & Design education as of little value to the country, its culture or its economy. It is the outcome of the Department of Education consistently ignoring the problems of Art & Design that I explore .

This thesis also explores the influence of the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) on the NCA. The theoretical inheritance of the College combined with the ideologies of the RHA are examined in their combined influence on the educational content of the NCA. It is the Neo-Classical education that had survived in the College that made it an ideal candidate for the surrogate school to RHA philosophies. The years that followed the beginning of World War II, witnessed the closure of the RHA school. It was this combination of educational theories of the NCA and the practicing philosophies of the RHA that minimised the influence of Modernism on both the Fine Art and Design faculties in the College.

The influences of Design development in Industry, as Ireland moved towards a Common Market (1974), are examined as important foundations for student action at the NCA. The commissioning of constructive texts on the role of Design in Industry by Coras Tractala, such as the Scandinavian Report (1961) and Council for Design Report (1965) offer valuable insight into understanding how seriously industry had adopted design as an integral part of the production process. This in turn focused on the education of designers in Ireland to serve this new role, and the reports supported the potential for a reformation of the

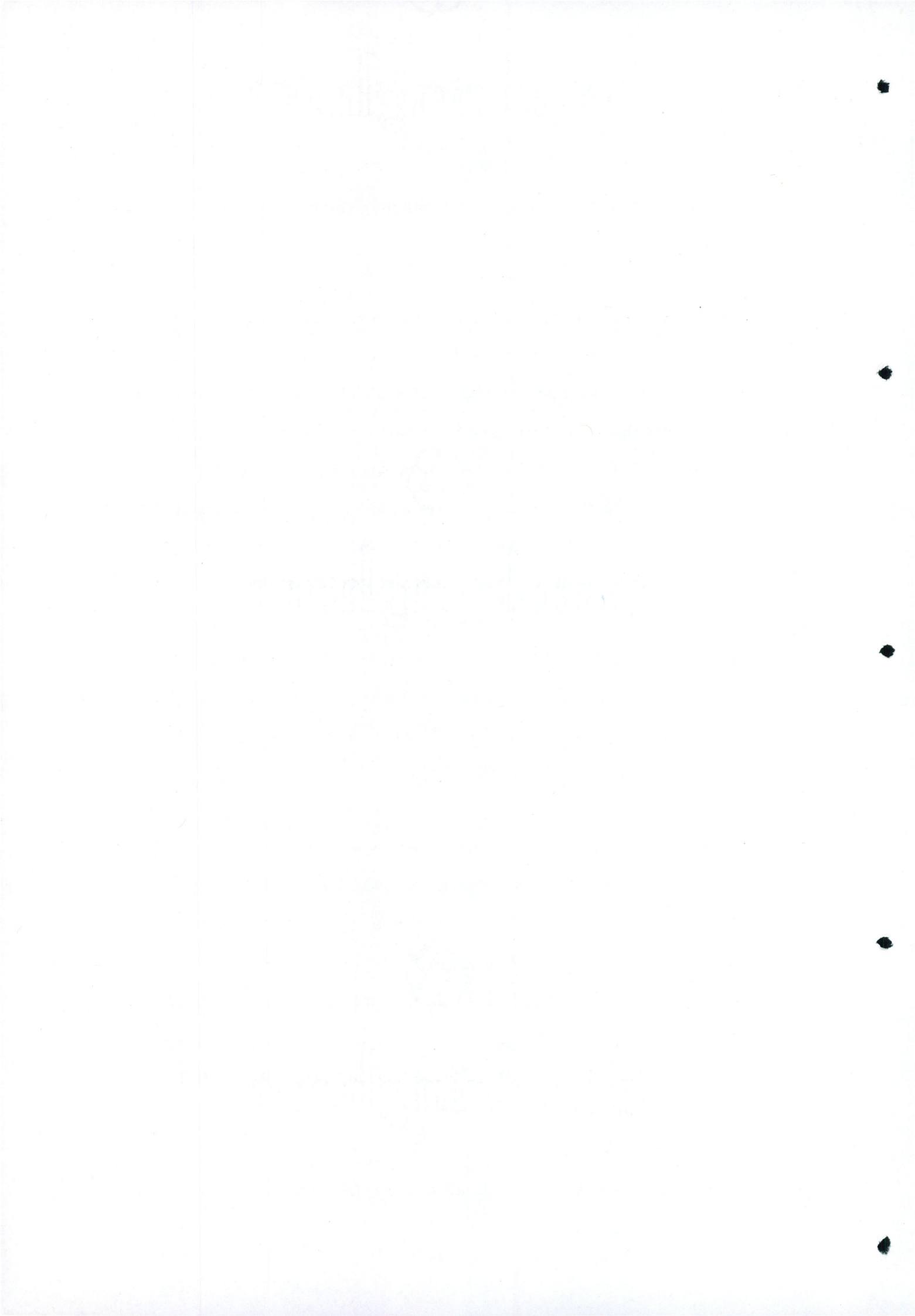


NCA to a new National College of Art, Architecture and Design. This thesis discusses the platform that had been created by these Reports and their importance to the genesis of the student movement and in setting its aims and objectives.

The final chapter charts the events between 1967 and 1972 at the National College of Art. This account offers an interpretation of how the events of this time were influenced by a number of different factors, while giving a fuller understanding of the reasons and the implications of these events. At the end of this period the College had irreversibly changed, and a structure had been put in place that developed into the National College of Art & Design that we see today. The Government had changed their views on Art & Design Education on a National level and had also instigated a reformation of the primary level art education system. The lack of a comprehensive primary and secondary level education in Art & Design was central to the problems that were arising at the NCA. Thus the reformation of the primary curriculum in 1971 showed an awareness by the Department of Education of the problems that were central to visual education.

My personal interest in the subject is derived from my participation within the Students' Union as it's President during 1993-94 and as a student of the College. I see the late 1960s at the N.C.A. as a rare example of united student action which sought to bring about positive change in their situation and they succeeded against the odds. This however was a difficult struggle and it took many casualties and much sacrifice on all sides. I pay tribute to those who made the sacrifice to make the College a place where the education of art & design is possible.

The aim of this thesis is to realistically discuss the issues that have not up to



now been addressed with regards to the NCA during this period by considering the causes, the actions and their effects on the College between 1967 and 1972, by discussing their value as an agent of change. It concludes by showing us a realistic interpretation of the events by which we can gain a fuller understanding of a period in the history of this College which proved to be a major turning point in its 250 year existence, and in a sense contextualises the situation we find ourselves in today.

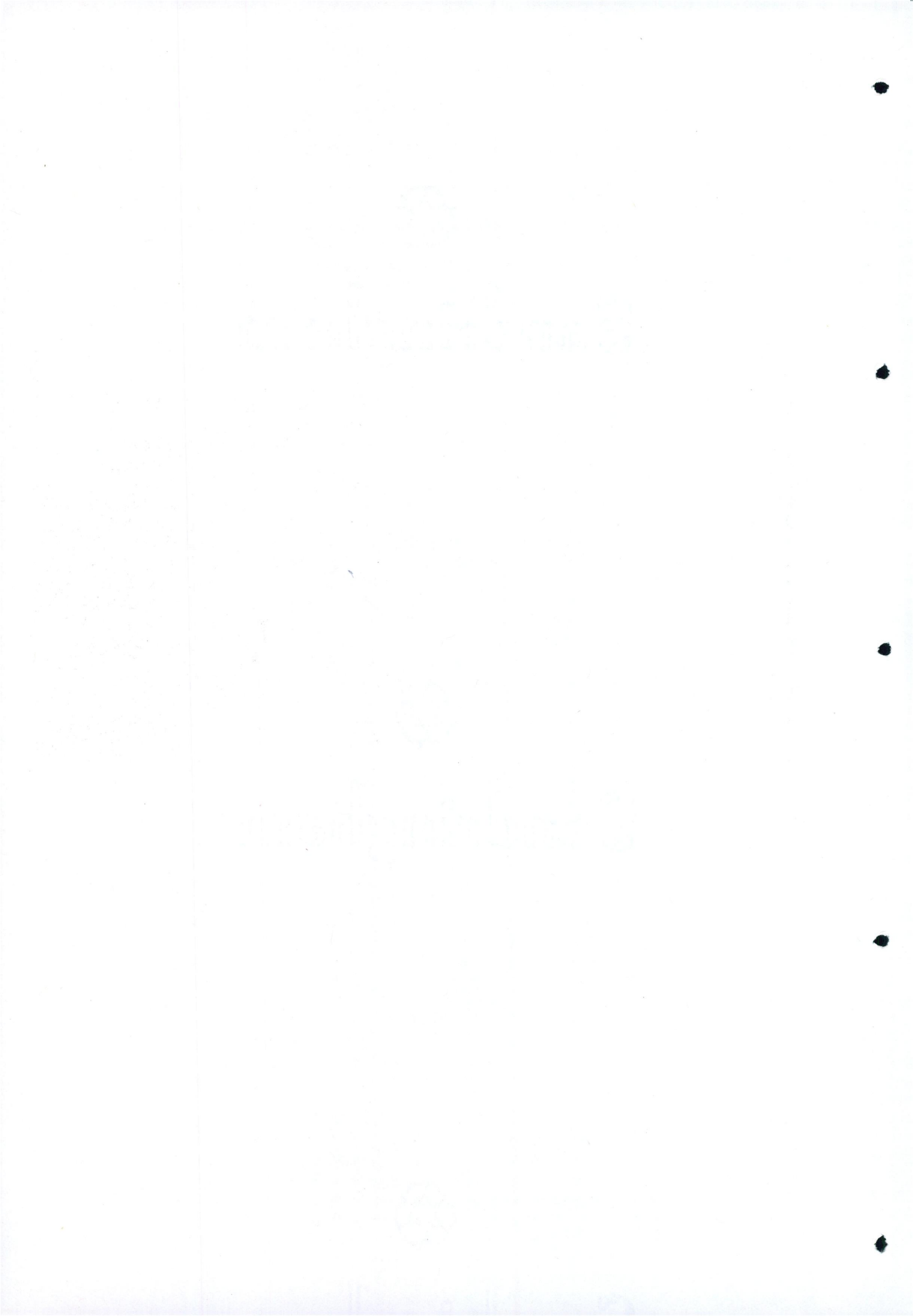
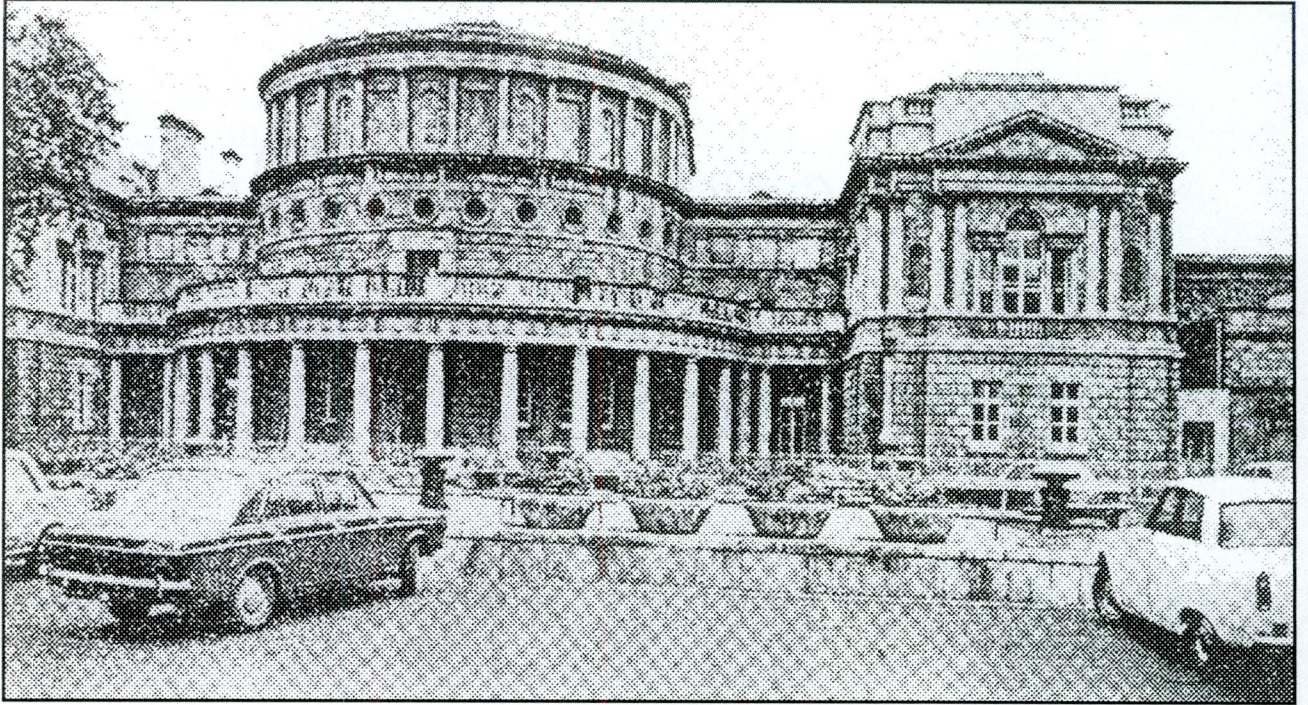


Plate 1



The National College of Art, Kildare St. Dublin. (1971)

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Chapter 1

The ways of the
past and the paralysis of
Art & Design Education

BUREAUCRACY
MAKES
PARASITES
OF
US
ALL



A little academy or school for drawing and painting, was an accurate if overused description of the origins of the College. Established by the Royal Hibernian Society in 1746 and opened in 1749 in a small premises provided by the society in Shaws Court, off Dame St. It provided training in drawing and painting for the young ladies and gentlemen of Society, giving them the much sought after social knowledge to function in within the Neo-Classical fashion of the time. *Dublin Society*

It passed from premises to premises, settling in Leinster House on Kildare St. In 1849, the school came under the aegis of the British Board of Trade and after a short honeymoon period passed over to the South Kensington Department of Science & Art and the institution became the Metropolitan School of Art in 1877. It was taken over in 1900 by the newly formed Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland. After the formation of the new Irish State the College passed over to the Department of Education in 1924, under which the institution was raised in status to The National College of Art (Colaiste Naisiunta Ealaíona na hÉireann) in 1936.

From its' origins it developed as a finishing school for those young ladies and gentlemen who were expected to have a good knowledge of the antique. The year 1848 brought the discovery of the ruins of Pompeii and Herculanium, and as Vesuvius had engulfed the two cities, in the same manner high society embraced the antiquities and the interest and fascination that it came with it. So the youth of Irish Aristocracy studied the calmness, simplicity and correct proportion of all that was Neo- Classical. It was this impetus that laid the philosophies and ideals that guided the teaching of Art at the College for over 200 years.



Design education of the mid 19th Century was intensely based on the application of pattern and decoration in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. The lessons set out by William Morris and the Arts & Crafts movement had been heavily emphasised especially with the advent of the Great Exhibition in 1851. The basis of this type of Arts & Crafts Design remained with the National College of Art until the late 1960s, almost unchanged in its format and practice.

The object of the College was to promote and facilitate the advancement of art in Ireland, and to enhance the value of Industrial output through an alliance of artistic design with practical skill and to maintain the highest standards of artistic achievement in National Culture. To many of the students at the College in the late 1960s however this was a fallacy. The students felt that the College was failing to provide its students with the adequate education and skills that would equip them for a career in Art & Design or a relevant foundation conducive to their development as informed teachers of Art.

The vast majority of the Art teachers have qualified through a system which no Art Educationalist could possibly defend. This qualification arises from a series of single subject Art & Craft examinations which are not tied to courses and have little or no relevance to the present day requirements of teachers or Art Students. (Art & Design Education, p.8)

The relevance of the courses being provided at the NCA seemed to be far removed from that which was required by the contemporary Fine Art community and the professional Design field from the graduates of the National College of Art. The origins of this particular problem arose mainly from the RHA.

It was in 1943 when the Royal Hibernian Academy truly took the political power reins of the college. The RHA was incorporated by Charter in 1823 and is modelled on the Royal Academy, London (Founded 1768). Academies of Art first started to appear in the mid 15th Century and were based on the



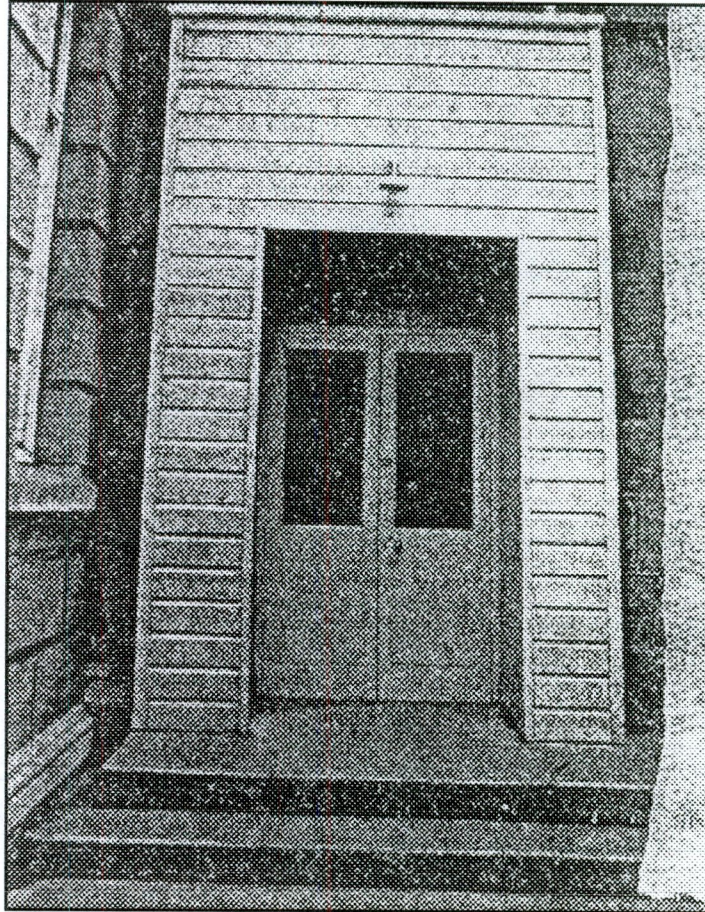
"humanism" of the Renaissance. The Academic movement spread and became so powerful that it almost completely controlled the content, direction and development of the Visual Arts; it also monopolised the distribution of individual art objects. The London Royal Academy acquired its gallery and school and became the most powerful and influential visual arts body in the British Empire. By 1943 the Royal Hibernian Academy (Dublin) was without premises of its own to house a school or gallery adequate for its needs. The NCA then became the un-official headquarters of the RHA, with the annual exhibition of RHA members held in the College every summer. The NCA provided an opportunity for the RHA to pass their ideas and artistic philosophies down to another generation of young artists.

The early 1940s was an important time for the RHA, as the Government had withdrawn its funding for the RHA school in response to the National emergency of the World War 2. This led to the closure of the RHA school in 1939. The true power and influence of the RHA over the College was never so strong as it was during the years from 1943 to 1967. The brainchild of this was Mr. Micheal De Burcha who was appointed Director of the National College of Art in 1943 after a short spell as an Art Inspector. This placed him in the unique position to appoint his own staff. Soon after his appointment, key positions in the College hierarchy were to be filled by RHA members.¹

This gave the RHA both a "job for the boys" and a venue for their annual exhibition and all but in name an academy school. The thoughts and beliefs of the education of art was described by Trevor Scott (Student Representative Council President , NCA 1967-68) as a Dickensian dusty old procedure: "The student body felt that the College had been chugging along at the same pace for many years and there was no innovation in terms of education". It was the syllabus that had, in artistic terms, stifled the progress of the students, and in Design terms was antiquated.



Plate 2



The front door of the NCA, Kildare St.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PHYSICS DEPARTMENT
5712 S. UNIVERSITY AVE.
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637
TEL: 773-936-3700
WWW.PHYSICS.UCHICAGO.EDU

The attitude of the RHA towards design in my view, had not changed since they adopted the ideas of William Morris in the mid 19th Century. Elsewhere design had advanced in leaps and bounds towards the end of the 1960s. Design had become an inherent part of the industrial process and demanded designers to perform at a professional level (similar to that of an engineer). The students who were graduating from the National College of Art had nothing to offer industry, except perhaps potential. The system of education they were forced to follow was of no practical relevance to professional design in all of it's areas.

Their syllabus was based largely on that formulated by Zuccari, it was a soul destroying affair. All students were put through the same dreary old routine. The pencil was their only tool. They would begin by copying from line engravings of say ears, eyes and noses taken from paintings of accepted masters such as Poussin and Raphael. After these had been mastered, they would progress onto executing limbs before going onto draw from plaster casts. Some such dismal article as a plaster ball or bunch of grapes, would initiate them into the properties of light and shade. Next followed copying from casts from the antique, such as the Laocoon. Finally students would be allowed to enter the inner sanctum, the life class. Here the model would be nobly posed by one of the visiting professors.

The beliefs and academicism of the RHA had little or no place for Design in the contemporary sense, their ideas remained solely within their accepted form of Art. The students had had enough of this attitude.

It is hard to visualise what it was like beforehand (1967), it was something out of Victorian times. The attitude towards any applied arts was atrocious....the attitudes towards industry or commercial work or advertising or anything like that was not clued in, it was a joke! It generated quite a lot of unrest, hence when the emanant tutors of the time were approached about a change of attitude-- we want to learn this, or this is what we want to know about, or can you teach me this, some people felt



it was an affront--and they eventually walked out....it was devastating for a number of the staff who had been there for years going along with the backwater flow of the College.

(Pat Malone, Head of Graphics, DLSAD, in conversation with author 28/10/94).

"I am almost forced to the conclusion when I come to consider the problem of education...that on the whole we should benefit from the total abolition of all academic instruction in art." (Herbert Read quoted in Arthur J. Pulos "Stop the World- We Want To Get On," Journal of the Industrial Designers Society of America, September 1969.).

It became the view of many of the students that a certain amount of elbow room was needed for their education, a view presided that art could not be taught, and therefore the best that anyone could do would be to provide the facilities and possibilities for talented people to develop themselves. However, the NCA could not provide these facilities, either in contemporary art and design knowledge or in physical facilities. The College had been starved of funding and requesting anything had to go through a plethora of Civil Service Departments.

The record of the Department of Education in its dealings with Art & Design Education has been disgraceful. Visual Education has long been treated as the poor relation to its academic family. Even today the National College of Art & Design is looked upon as a monotext College, whose graduates are the non-employable, and thus the college is non market driven. In many respects this has been the unchanged view of the Department of Education since its inception in 1924. I believe that this constant neglect was one, if not the primary reason, for the student unrest of '67-'72.

In the early 1960s two reports were commissioned on Design in Ireland as a response to the booming economies of the European States; these were the



Report of the Scandinavian Group in Ireland (1961) and the Council for Design Report (1965). Both of these Reports looked at the general state of Design in Ireland, within industry and education. The former gave a very general overview of differing industries, both craft and industrial production, and looked at some of the traditional talents and skills within these industries. The latter paid much attention to education and the setting up of structures to support design awareness. The recommendations of these Reports became the foundation for the students demands in 1967 and gave the students direction, a clearly defined goal and a platform for their argument.

The Scandinavian Report recommended to Coras Tractala that special attention needed to be paid to the education of Designers to feed Industrial production.

We encountered in Ireland the extraordinary situation of a multiplicity of art, architectural and craft schools, not one of which appeared to us capable of adequately satisfying the needs of the country in regard to Design.

(Scandinavian Design Report, 1961, p. 8)

The Scandinavian group were not impressed at all by any of the industries and schools they visited, with only a couple of exceptions. They thus went back to the source of the problem, the education of designers for industry and found the ideas of the National College of Art sadly lacking in its ability to turnout anyone who could be useful to industry.²

The final impression we took away from the School was that its methods of education were completely out of date and it is our opinion that the National College of Art as presently constituted cannot be the starting point for the education of people in the different crafts or indeed for the education of painters, sculptors or designers.

(Scandinavian Design Report, 1961, p. 45)

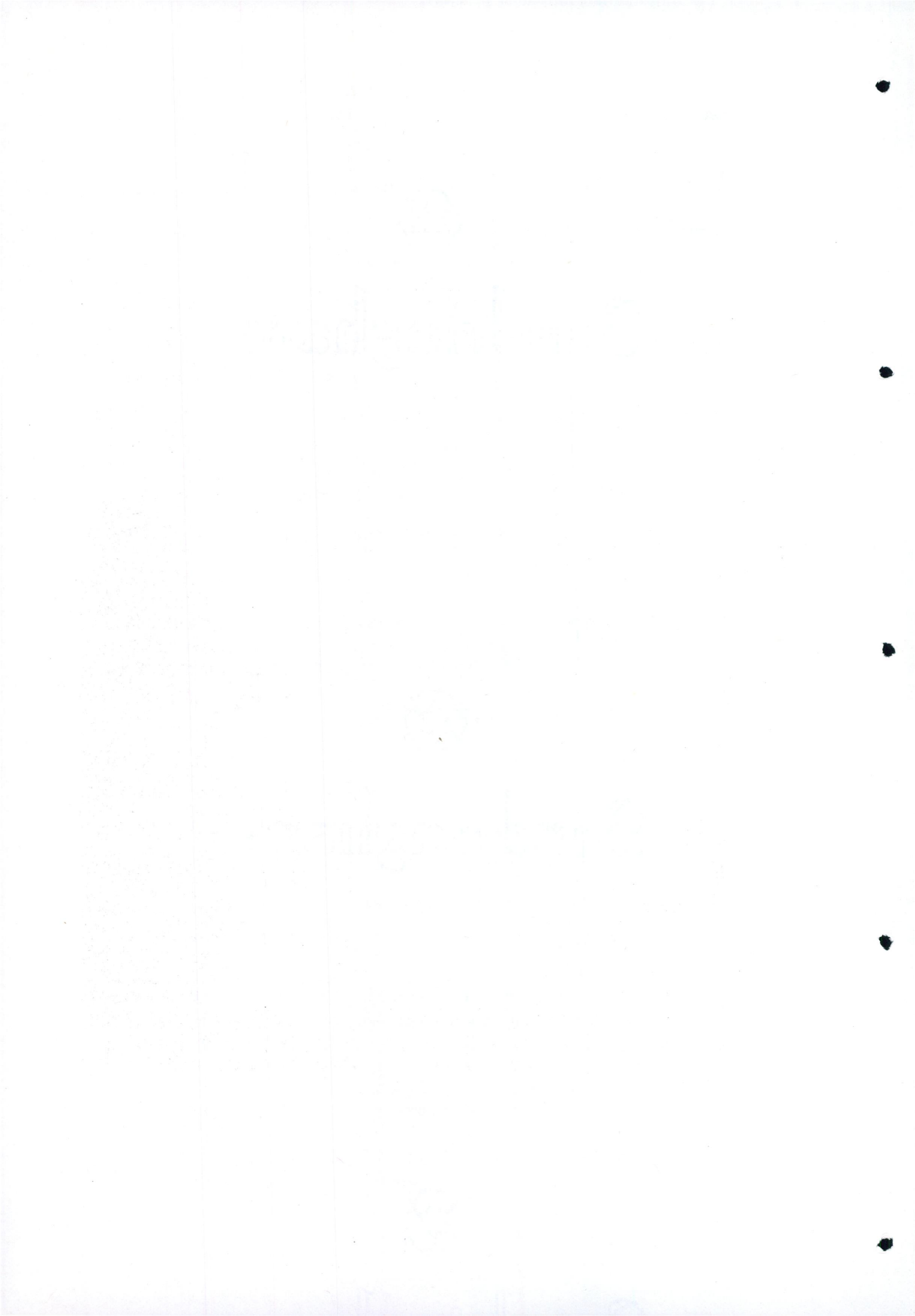


Plate 3



NCA Students protesting outside the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art.



Unfortunately the recommendations fell on deaf ears and much of the reactions to the Report within the College and Department for Education was along the lines of disgust at these foreigners coming in and telling us what to do with centuries of tradition behind us. Indeed the response of the Director of the College was that: "It can only lead to a Neo-Nazi style purge in the National College of Art" (NCA Student Prospectus, 1971, p. 7). Thus nothing was done, not one recommendation was put into place. This Report was binned.

One of the main reasons here was that the Report had been commissioned by Coras Tractala in the run up to membership of the EEC and much of the blame was laid at the footsteps of the Department of Education who didn't want to hear about it, much to the frustration of those in the Design field.

The Council for Design with some restraint said that, "the premises at Kildare St. are totally inadequate for a National College of Art. The council members added : "The existing space for additional building is negligible and in our opinion the present premises cannot be adapted. Even at the moment the accommodation for administration, staff rooms and student rooms, library, reading rooms canteen and cloakrooms are obsolete or non-existent."

The Council for Design recommended that a new National College of Art, Architecture and Design be set up.³ "The College should be built in the Bolton Street area of Dublin and be associated with, but not part of, the College of Technology. The National College should have the maximum of academic independence compatible with integration into a national programme of design education and promotion."

Again the findings of this Report were for the most part ignored by George Colley (Minister for Education) in 1965, and again nothing was done about the



state of the National College of Art. The students of the time had taken to heart the findings of the Council for Design Report, they could not believe that nothing was going to be done about it. The lack of action by the Department of Education on the recommendations and comments of these reports frustrated the students of the College.

A Commission on Higher Education Report in 1967 said of the College structure:

It is controlled, administered and staffed on civil service lines; it has none of the usual forms of government found in institutions of higher education....and it has no academic authority to make appointments. The academic work of the college is carried out by professors and other teachers, but its general administration is under the control of a government department. In such an arrangement, there is a duality of responsibility and a clear focus of authority cannot be discerned...."(Irish Times, 18-06-69, p.12)

The findings of these Reports had been filed away and forgotten about by the various Ministers. This had frustrated both the professional Design community and the students of the NCA. It was on the basis of these findings that many of the student manifestoes, reports, and demands were to be based. It is for this reason that the Department of Education can be linked to propagating the student actions; it had not heeded the very loud warnings, preferring to bury it's head in the sand over the matter.



Footnotes to Chapter 1

1 RHA Hierarchy at the NCA (1969):

Mr. Micheal De Burcha (RHA Secretary) Director of NCA
Maurice MacGonigal (RHA President) Assistant Director of NCA
Sean Keating (RHA President) Professor of Painting of NCA
John F Kelly (RHA) Professor of Painting at NCA
Carey Clarke (RHA) Painting Department at NCA
Fergus O' Ryan (RHA) Painting Department at NCA
James Nolan (RHA) Part time at NCA
Tom Ryan (RHA) Part time at NCA

2 CTT estimate on Irish Design in Industry

"Industry also needs designers. All discussions with industry on the subject have revealed massive if undefined discontent with the design situation in Ireland both as regards the availability of Designers and education and training facilities. The C.I.O. of ten years ago and the recent C.I.O.P. surveys together with the various statements of the Confederation of Irish Industry on the subject confirm this. There is widespread recognition in Industry that Design is a key factor in Industrial Development but no clear idea regarding the numbers and kinds of Designers required or types of institutions in which they should be trained. It is stated by Industry that they cannot locate the designers they need in Ireland and have to employ people from outside the country. It is estimated that over 100 foreign designers undertook work for Irish firms over the five years 1966-70." CTT estimate (1973).

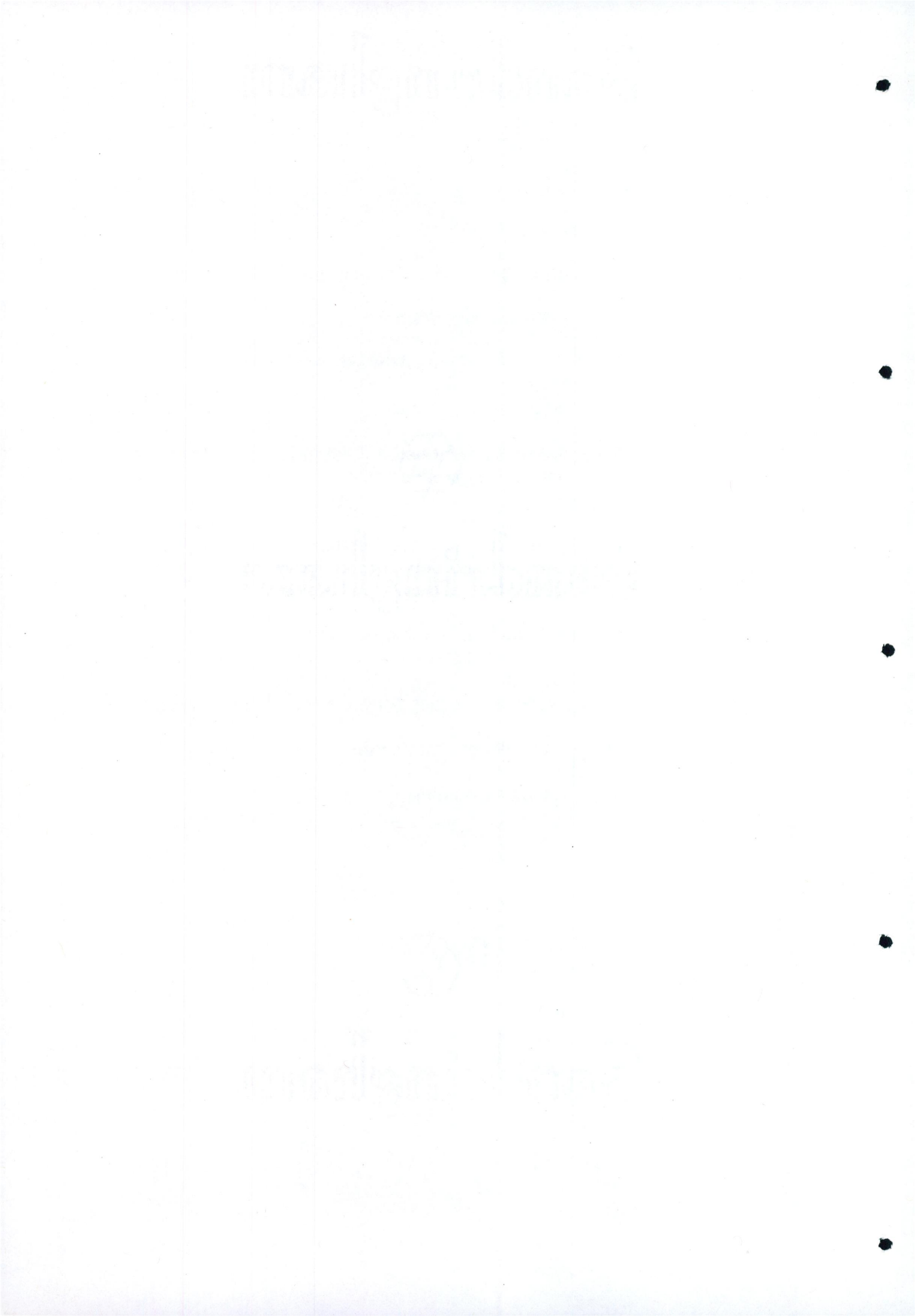


Footnotes to Chapter 1

3 Proposed Structure of a new National College of Art, Architecture and Design by the Council for Design.

It is suggested that the college might be organised into:

- 1) **A Preliminary School**
- 2) **A Faculty of Fine Arts** with Departments of
Painting
Sculpture
- 3) **A Faculty of Industrial Design** with departments of
Interior Design & Furniture
Fashion
Textile Design
Glass, Stained Glass, Ceramics and mosaic
Silversmithing, Jewellery and Metalwork
Design for theatre, film and television
- 4) **A Faculty of Graphic Design** to include
Commercial Art
Illustration
Typography, Lithography, Etching and photography
- 5) **A Faculty of Architecture**
- 6) **A teacher training course**





Chapter2

Where there is fire there
is smoke!

The influence of Student Movements
of the 1960s on the National College
of Art between '67 and '72.



The years of the 1960s witnessed the outbreak of youth rebellion which quickly spread from country to country, shaking old traditions (academic, cultural, moral, political) and brought all traditional forms of authority into question; it convulsed governments, toppling some. All over the world it was the young people who were rebelling, led by students, perhaps the most privileged of all at that time, and mainly by those from well to do families. They had nothing but scorn and contempt for the older generation's achievements, and they heaped accusations upon their elders who had expected praise or at least a little understanding. As in the case of the NCA, most of these elders were nonplussed and hardly believed their ears. But the shrill voices became louder, more numerous, more urgent until no longer could the tumult be overlooked or made light of.

One thus must look at the climate of the late 1960s in Ireland and beyond, within the NCA, the Department of Education, and the Government and their counterparts across the Globe, to the Art World and its influences. One of the key and most obvious parallels we can draw from the late 1960s must be the entry of politics to the academic training grounds of many countries, such as the student actions at Berkeley, Berlin and Paris.

The Universities had traditionally been a peaceful institution whose smooth running depended on the acceptance of the supreme power of the Authorities and the rejection of violence. But it was the entry of politics into the Universities, sometimes by the minority militant groups, that led to the extensive student revolt that was covered meticulously by the media and thus served as a blueprint for the latent confusion and intense embitterment about a system that stifled the real development of talent at the NCA amongst the students of the College.





Poster from students at the Hornsey College of Art, 1968.



The students of Berkeley, Berlin and Strasbourg rose up against what appeared to be the heavy hand of authority. These events became part of the rising tide of student and youth demonstration worldwide which led to the student actions at the Sorbonne in 1968.¹

The real seed to the hotbed of protests in France emerged from the reaction to the war in Vietnam when in Tokyo workers in the Zengakuren went out in pitch battles with the police which prevented Tokyo ports from becoming major US bases. In Colombia and New York the students were demonstrating against the war. In Madrid the students were fighting Franco's Fascism in the Universities. In Milan the Italian student's group the "Black Hand" showed their contempt for the capitalistic society by burning down part of the polytechnic and occupying one of the lecture halls (Aula Quatro). In Rome there were violent clashes with the police and university authorities, the result being the complete paralysis of the University system. In Warsaw the students banded with the intellectuals in a challenge to the political dictatorship of the Bureaucratic Party.

Many of these incidents were the main course of the daily newspapers and television media. By 1968 the Irish media had become interested in student action in Ireland. Indeed when the events at the National College of Art first came to light, they received wide coverage in the Irish Media. Individuals like Jack Dowling (RTE) and Lelia Doolin (Irish Press) became personally interested in the struggle. The other significance of the widespread coverage of these events would have been to raise awareness amongst the apolitical students of their educational institution and the politics of their situation.

On Friday 22nd March 1968 in Paris six militants from the National Vietnam committee were arrested. That evening about 150 students occupied the Administration offices of the Sorbonne in solidarity with the arrested militants, and a heated debate carried on there until about 2 a.m. The results of the



discussion were published in a pamphlet distributed the next day which called for an end to the Capitalistic structure in France.

On 28th March the Dean announced the closure of the Sorbonne until the following Monday. The next day over 500 students gathered on the lawns outside the University and split into discussion groups to debate the above issues. On Monday 21st April the 2nd year Sociology class voted to boycott their examinations on the grounds that their studies were a capitalist fraud. The next day 1,200 students took over the large lecture hall attended also by Karl Deitric Wolff of the German SDS (Students Union).

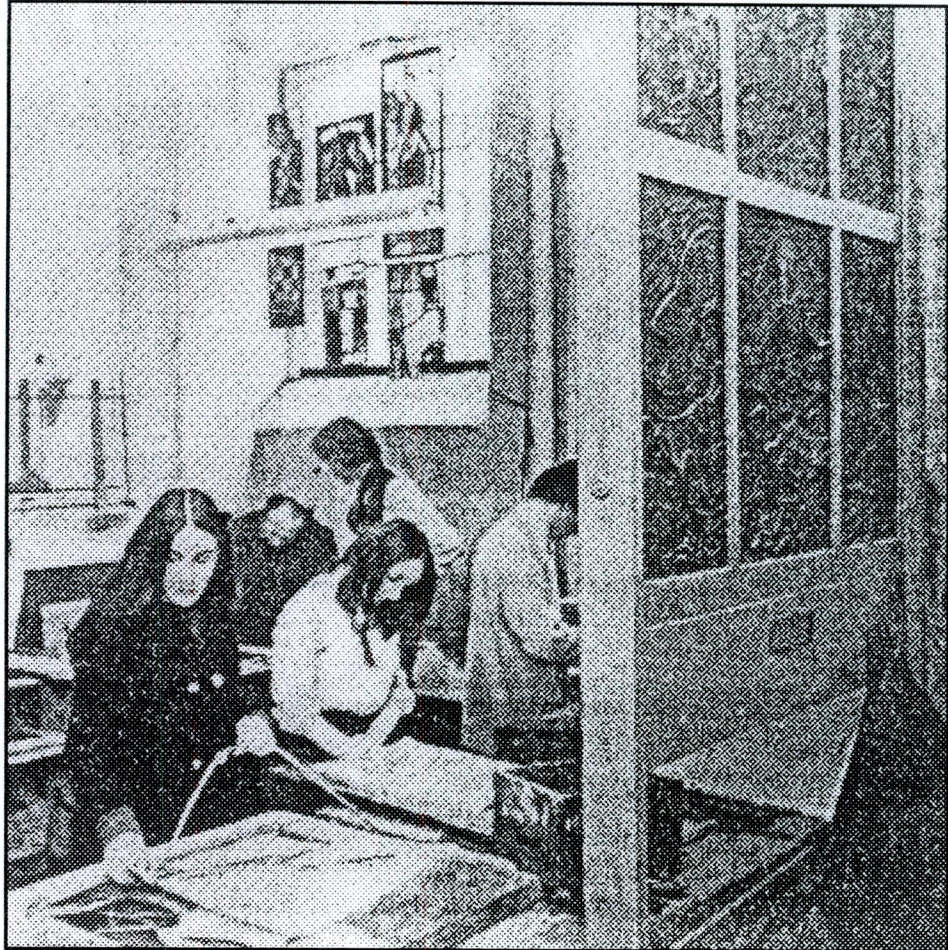
On 22 March, when there were only 142 of them, they symbolically took power by occupying the lecture hall. After this event, which caused quite a stir, the authorities took a "liberal" decision: they officially allocated a lecture hall with 400 seats to the students. But meanwhile the original 142 had swelled to more than a thousand and their ranks were still increasing. The situation became explosive when the students continued to be barred from using the larger lecture theatre. Thus, while pretending to be liberal, the authorities tried to constrict the movement, and merely succeeded in accelerating its growth....

(Guy Michaud, Professor of French Literature at the Faculty of Nanterre in *Nouvel Observateur*, 15th May 1968)

The events of the Sorbonne spiralled as more and more students became politically aware of their situation through student led lectures. After the Easter break the Dean again ordered the Sorbonne closed and seven militant students were called before a disciplinary board of the Sorbonne. This was to prove a fatal decision. On the day of the hearing thousands of students gathered *en masse* outside the Sorbonne and the College was put under police protection, and then started to arrest students inside and outside the College.



Plate 5



Students at work in the NCA (1969)

1962

All hell broke loose and violent clashes with the police poured out of the College down into the Latin Quarter. This was to be the night of the barricades, as the police battled with students and young workers all night. The next day the world media was ablaze with stories of Student Riots in Paris. As the newspapers hit the streets of Dublin, the Champs Elysees was a sea of 35, 000 demonstrators who marched on the Sorbonne in order to take it. The days that followed saw the students of Paris on a 'teach out', gathering on the main streets of Paris. Violence erupted again as the police forced the students back into the Latin Quarter and the second night of the barricades and the 'communards'.

On May 13th the workers of France called a general strike in solidarity with the students, and less than a week later the country was on the verge of a revolution as the stock exchange was burnt to the ground by a sea of workers and students who were marching through the streets of Paris. Most of the manufacturing industries had been overtaken by the workers, such as the Renault factories at Cleon, Flins, Boulogne and Rhodiaceta. On 22nd May the Government in a last ditch attempt to save the country voted a general amnesty.

At this point it must be noted that behind the 22nd of March movement at Nanterre in Paris lay strong political and theoretical influences. A Group called *Enrages* were specifically inspired by the Situationalist International. The previous winter in Strasbourg had witnessed another of the student revolutions that was specifically influenced by De Bord's Situationalists. Yet it was at the Sorbonne where the Situationalists played an active role in the events, seeking to encourage and promote workers councils, and a revolutionary line within them, without exercising positive powers of decision and execution or political control of any kind.

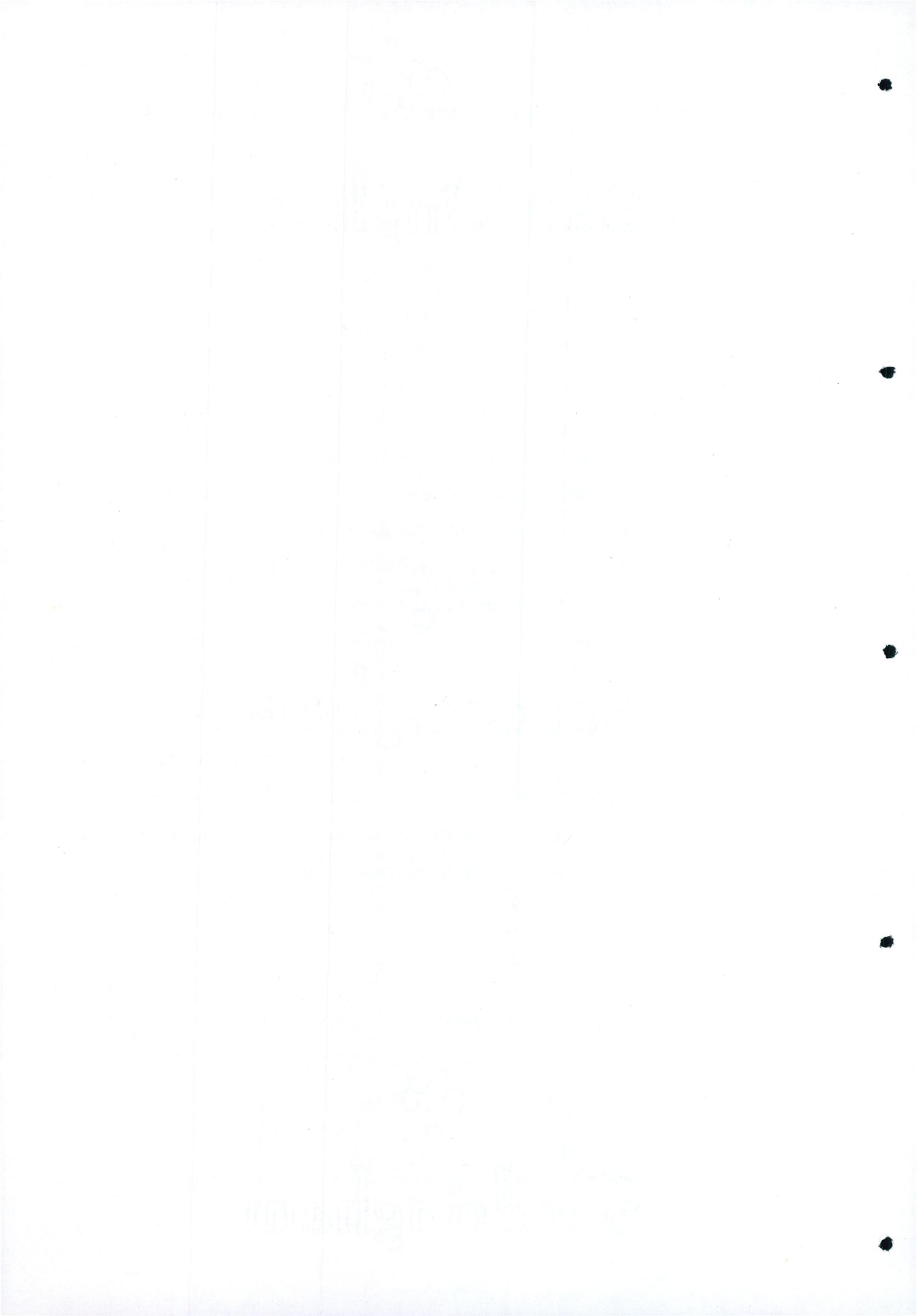


The influence of the Situationists on the events of the late 1960s, and especially in the student uprisings is often unrecognised. Although it cannot be shown that they had direct links to the NCA dispute, it can be argued that their influence as a movement was indirect, both in their involvement in the events at the Sorbonne, throughout France, and through their influence as a movement with an artistic base.

A similar creative explosion became the grounds for a revolution at the Hornsey Art College in London in 1968. The students and staff took over the College in a working educational experiment that tried to break out of the dead social structure that had been created in the aftermath of the Coldstream Report. The Art Colleges in England were being rationalised and placed in polytechnics. Many of these Art Colleges did not survive the move. It was this attempt to move Hornsey Art College that sparked the revolt by the students and tutors. It became a working case study that was to be referred to by student of the NCA in 1969.

The seminars that were held in Hornsey during the occupation became its lifeblood. Intense debate on the system of education, the gallery system that existed, the examinations and theories on Art became a manifesto for any Art College Revolution. The influence of Hornsey Art College on the students who visited it from the NCA in 1969, such as Claire O' Loughlann, is an important consideration.²

It was the optimism and awareness created by Paris 1968 and some of the ideas of Hornsey that made it possible for the SRC at the National College of Art to educate their fellow students as to the problems of the College and their role in changing the situation. "The excitement of what was happening in Paris and in the States would have highlighted the lack of activity, the inactivity and sameness of the situation here" (Trevor Scott, SRC President 1967). The



feeling for the first time in many of these young people's minds of being able to voice their own opinions about what was going on in the College was thrilling. The sense of optimism created by all the events of the late sixties and in particular the success of their counterparts in the Sorbonne who nearly brought the whole country down, all contributed to a need in the minds of individual students to take the College to task about the issues therein.

It would be unfair and indeed untrue to suggest that all the students involved with the student movement at the NCA in the 1967-72 period were all politically aware, but certainly its leaders seemed to be, and none more than Donal O' Sullivan who, according to one, was "a strategist and a good thinker" (Pat Molloy, former Student 1967), and who in many of his letters gives detailed accounts of the politics of his time with great interest. This is important in linking the influence of the events in Hornsey and the Sorbonne on the events at the NCA.

Other students such as Claire O Loughlann, Grainne Dowling, Alice Hanratty, Trevor Scott, Robert McColgan and Paddy Gillan (all student activists) were all very aware of their contemporary politics. They all claim that the importance of Paris 1968 on the movement in the NCA could not be calculated, but its effects were tangible in the students' response to their leaders call. It was in this context that the global events of the sixties effected the events of the NCA, through the ideas thoughts and actions of a few, who led the many to revolt.



Footnotes on Chapter 2

- 1 The global wave of rebellion of the 1960s.
At Berkley in 1964, the Students defended their rights to participate in politics, in response to activists like Martin Luther King and Malcom X and the Vietnam war. Again in Berlin the students stood up against the American atrocities in the Vietnam war. The actions that probably had most influence on some of the activists of the NCA must surely have been the rising of the students of the Sorbonne and Nanterre in Paris, when the student actions in 1968 lead to a workers action which combined to bring France to the brink of a Civil War. These actions must be looked at more deeply in order to examine the possible links between the institutional revolts in Paris and Dublin.

The development of the movement that was to eventually shut down the NCA in February 1969 was born from a step taken by the SRC in October 1967 to compile a report for submission to the Minister for Education on the problems in the College. This report was submitted to the Brian Lenihan by Donal O' Sullivan in April 1968, at the same time as the disturbances and occupations at Nanterre in France. It set out two main grievances to which all the other problems were related, the first quoted the Council for Designs report stating that the Kildare St. premises were completely inadequate for the NCA. Secondly it stated that the NCA was the sole college directly under the control of the Civil Service in Higher Education and that this was unacceptable, they demanded an independent Governing Body.

In France the Genesis of the Student movement is as blurred as its aims seemed to have been, much of the ideology that inspired the French movement had indeed been taken from the Student demands for free speech at Berkley in 1964, the Situationalists of Strasbourg in October of 1966, possibly also by the Dutch Provos and the "Blouson Noir" (contemporary antichrist groups) and on a further plane the "Zengakuren" (Union of Japanese Revolutionary people) and the Japanese League of Young Marxist Workers, these were groups of young Students and workers who fought against western capitalism and Eastern Bureaucracy alike.

One specific point at which could be seen as the genesis for the Student Movement in France was at Clermont Ferrand and Nantes in December 1967 when the restrictive monastic like hostel rules of the University were repealed after clashes between the authorities and the Students. These actions manifested themselves when the Students called in family planning experts to compile a manifesto based on the revolutionary theories of Wilhelm Reich and then launched a sexual Education Campaign on Campus and the Male Students forcibly occupied the women's' hostels. 29 Students were arrested in an attempt to discredit the Campaign, it was later disclosed that two of the people arrested were actually out of the country at the time of the occupation. These actions by



Footnotes on Chapter 2

the Students subsequently led to the repeal of rules in most other Universities in France by February 1968.

This was followed by the boycott at Nantes when a minority of Students assembled outside the Rectors office, he had them arrested, which led to an outright boycott of all psychology lectures on the basis that they were a "systematic subordination of individual behaviour to false social norms" (Cohn Bendit 1969 ,p.30). The agitation in Strasbourg ended in the occupation of the Rectors office, which was copied in France, and a parallel can be drawn the NCA as the first direct action taken by the disgruntled students was to occupy the College in a "Work In".

2 Donal O'Sullivan's, Letter to Grainne Dowling on the visit to Hornsey by NCA students:

"A number of the key students have arrived back from London (a weeks visit to Hornsey, Central School , Royal College etc) today. Their ideas are a little on the innocent side but at least they have ideas. Some of them have already begun to plan for the next year." (letters to Grainne by Donal O' Sullivan june 1969).

A number of students were sponsored to travel to London to examine the state of the Art Colleges there, in order to assess the national College of Art in the context of other institutions of its' kind. This was sponsored by the Government and the Department of Education under the auspices of the Advisory Council.

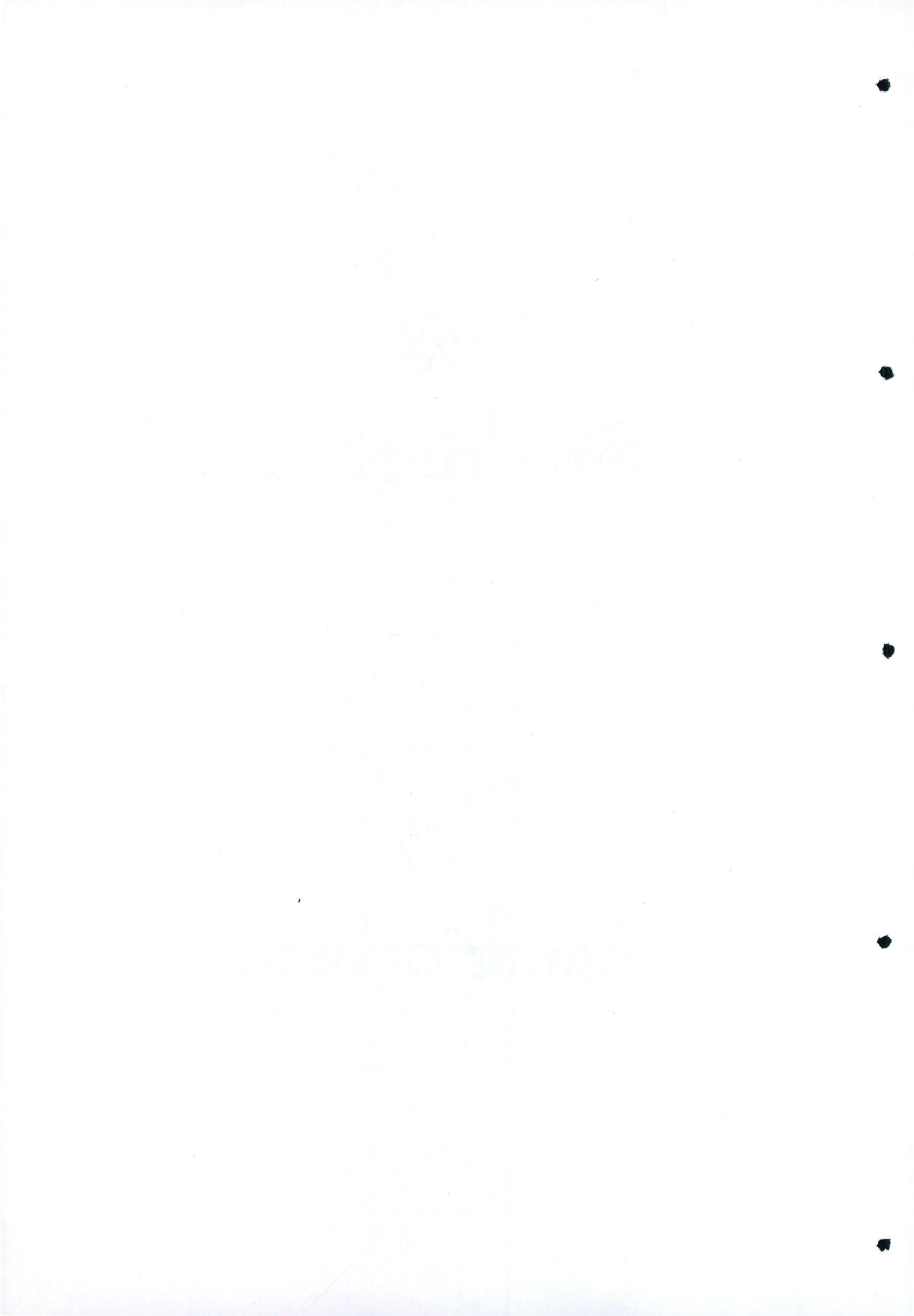




Chapter 3

What's wrong with the
College of art?
These are the days
of revolution.

SMASH
THE
SYSTEM



1 The Initial Exploration

In 1967 Donogh O' Malley (Minister for Education) wandered into the NCA unannounced and asked for the students' views on the College. Here he met the Students Representative Council President, Trevor Scott. The Students Representative Council (SRC) then started an investigation into the problems of the College. The details, complaints and recommendations were collected from students, staff, art educationalists, painters, sculptors, and designers. This was the beginning of the student unrest that was to come to its peak in 1969. The SRC had rejected its primary role at that time, which was to organise the Arts Ball, and pay off the previous year's debt. It had chosen to tackle the problems that had been highlighted by the Scandinavian and Council for Design Reports. It is most important to note that the initial push came from the Minister for Education.

I believe that Donogh O' Malley had actually taken heed of the Reports and was going to try and do something with the College, as walking into the college and talking directly with the students would indicate in a sense, that he had undermined the position of the Director. Unfortunately Donogh O' Malley died suddenly and was replaced by Brian Lenihan. The meeting scheduled with Mr. O' Malley was thus transferred to Brian Lenihan. The students met Lenihan soon after the submission of their twenty seven page report, which was quite mild in its content, in April 1968. At this meeting Mr. Lenihan said that he was impressed with the report, and while he did not know anything about Art, he promised them a governing body with student representation within one month and a new building within five years. This was the students' first lesson in politics: they believed that if the Minister said he would do something, then it would be done. Brian Lenihan, however, is very good at making promises, and not fulfilling them. Lenihan thought that this would be enough to quieten down these students.

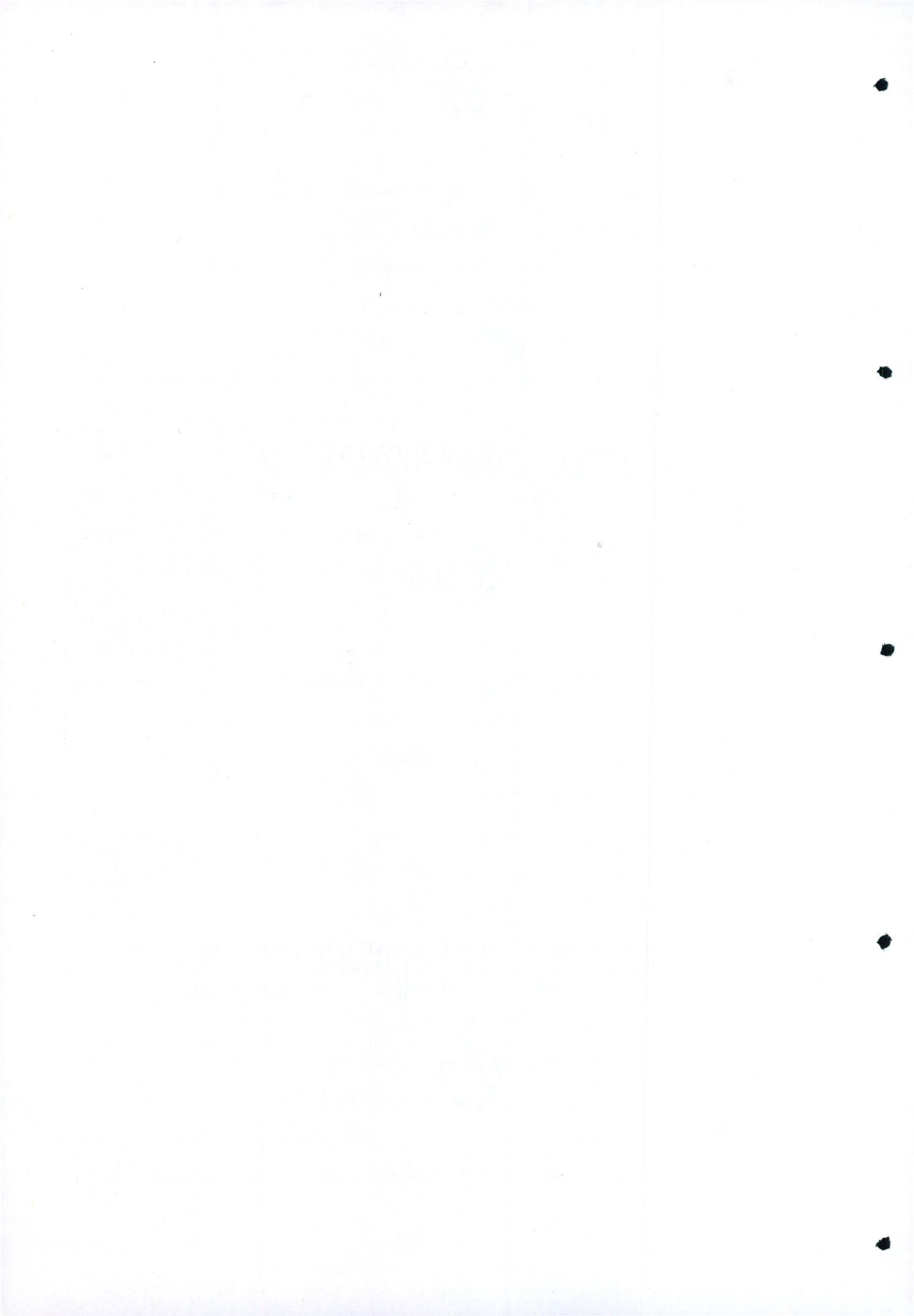
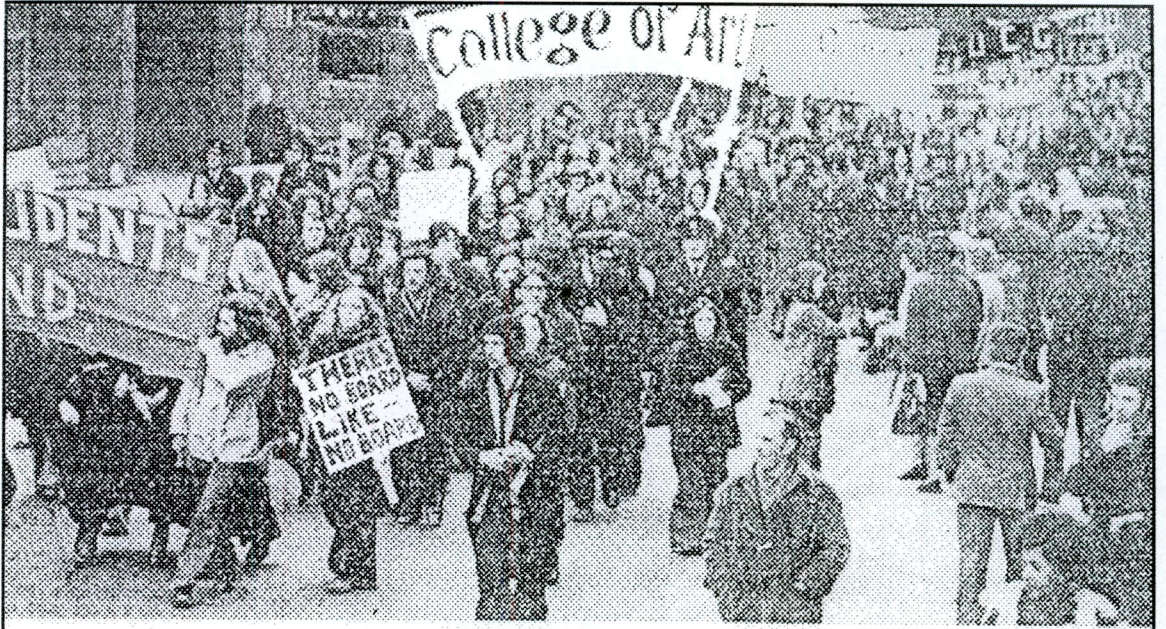


Plate 6



**1,000 students protest against dismissal
of four art teachers**

Students protesting against the sacking of the foundation course teachers who had criticised the authorities of the College and the Department.



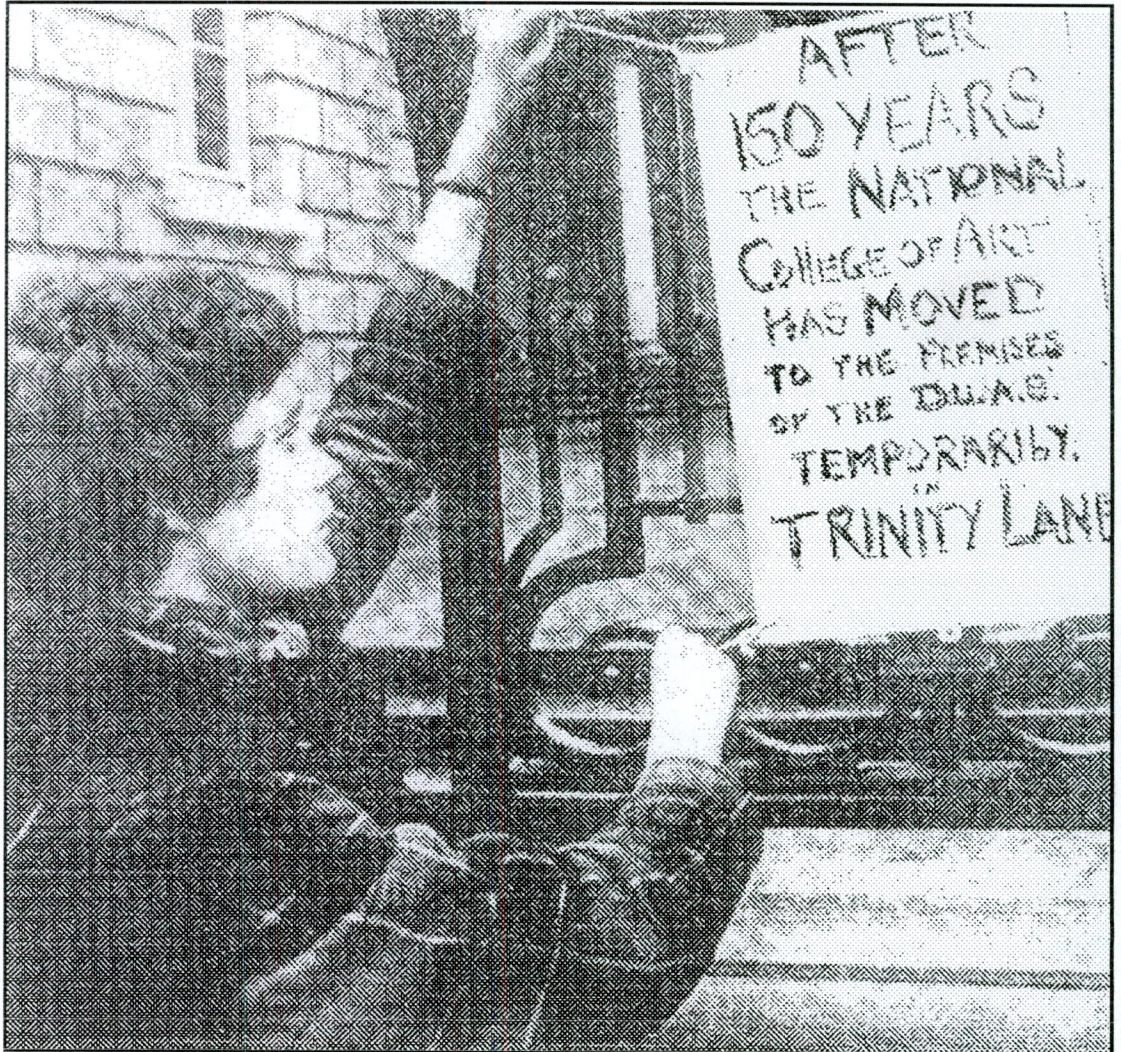
During the summer Lenihan ran into difficulty with a subsection of the 1924 Act, which implied that, pending legislation, he could not divest himself the responsibility of the NCA. Therefore in August 1968 he met with the students again, and introduced Mr. Sean O' Connor, Assistant Secretary to the Minister, who was to investigate the situation in the College and make recommendations by Christmas. This was a stalling factor, the Minister had a lot on his plate at the time. The Commission for Higher Education (1967) had recommended the setting up of Regional Technical Colleges all over the Country, and as this was a huge task, the Minister had decided to put the NCA on the backburner and let a subordinate take care of it.

Mr. Sean O' Connor proposed an Interim Advisory Council with student representation to advise the College Director, Mr Micheal De Burca, with particular reference to entrance examination standards and the restructuring of courses. This was not what the students wanted; it was not an autonomous Governing Body. The Minister claimed that a Governing Body would need legislation, so the students reluctantly accepted this. This Council was to be composed of two Government appointees, three staff members, three students, Mr. O' Connor and the Director. The SRC felt that the Council by its very structure could not fulfil its Terms of Reference.

After three meetings Mr. O' Connor said, "it became clear that it was not competent to deal with the the re-structuring of courses and the reform of teaching methods-members of the council said they were neither willing nor able to discuss these matters". So as a result of this the students rejected the Council at a General Meeting. They then met to propose that an executive educational committee of art educationalists to be set up, to restructure the courses and review the teaching methods and staff qualification. The Advisory Council agreed to recommend this to the Minister.



Plate 7



Gillian Healy hanging a sign outside the NCA after the Minister of Education had closed the College down in February 1969.



The Minister however was taken by surprise and on Wednesday 19th February 1969, he rejected the Council's recommendations. This was the key turning point in the whole sequence of events. The Minister had set up this Council to give him a recommendation on what to do next, his rejection of their recommendations was a clear sign that he didn't want to do anything about the NCA, and that he was playing a stalling game.

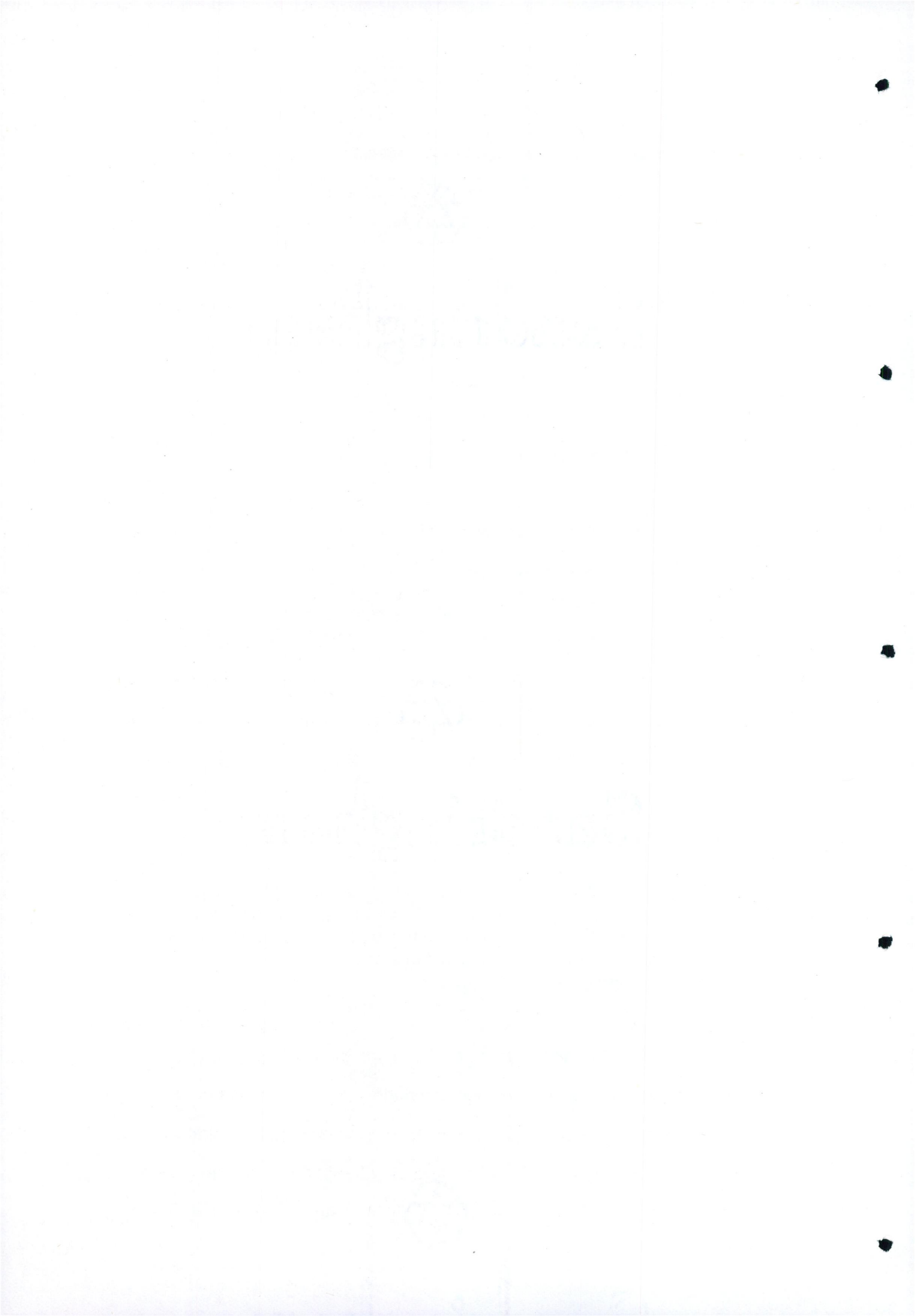
2 A time for action

At a meeting of students called at 4 pm, the SRC gained a unanimous vote for action the next morning at 10 pm. On Thursday morning the Students of the NCA started a work in at the College, boycotting classes and doing self-motivated work. During this work in, Maurice MacGonigal (R.H.A. and Professor of Painting, NCA) walked out and resigned in protest at the turning over of power to students. The Minister acted hastily on the advise from his department and closed the College until further notice. This came as a complete surprise, and indeed, seemed in retrospect an over-reaction to the situation.

Because of the refusal of the majority of students to attend the regular classes and conform with the ordinary regulations of the National College of Art, the Minister for Education has decided with regret to close the college from Monday next until further notice.

(Irish Times, 20-02-1969, p.3)

The position of Sean O' Connor, as Advisor to the Minister at the NCA had always been a bone of contention among the staff. He was felt to have been undermining their position. It was devastating for a number of staff who had been there for a number of years, going along with the backwater flow of the College, that students were upsetting the status quo. Thus the walk out of



MacGonigal was seen as the gauntlet to the Minister, who had the authority in the College. Possibly it was directly the reaction to this, that prompted the Minister into his decision to close the College.

For the Minister, the most embarrassing moment of his career came with the Wednesday following the "lock out". Whilst addressing a debate in Trinity College, a student in the audience shouted a question at the Minister "Why did you shut the College of Art?". Students still arriving into the hall, shouted for him to answer the question, another branded him a "tool of imperialism". The Minister refused to answer the question but said that he would see the students and parents on Thursday or Friday. After some moments a scuffle developed at the doorway and there was an explosion of some kind outside, the students blocked the doorway and locked the Minister in.

The Minister fled the hall to a toilet and escaped through a toilet window. The attack outside was led by the "United Front" a group of politically active Trinity students who belonged to the Socialist Society, the Irish Student Movement, the Republican Club and the Academic Freedom Committee. This caused the Minister considerable embarrassment and the seriousness of the situation came home to those in Government. It was this action that led the Department of Education to look at the events of the National College of Art more seriously. The Government now realised that the students in Ireland were fully capable of achieving what had been achieved by their counterparts in Paris a year earlier.

The aftermath of the "lock out" was regarded as both a victory and a loss to the students. The students at the NCA had lost their College to the authorities, but had gained huge publicity and public sympathy in their plight. The Institute for Creative Advertising and Design condemned the Minister and pledged their support to the students. The same reaction came from "The Living Art" and "Independent Artists" (prominent groups of contemporary artists who were



in opposition to the policies of the Royal Hibernian Academy). This was a blow to the Department as these groups quoted the findings of the Reports on the College in the National News media, in favour of the students actions.

Over the coming weeks the students occupied the National Gallery of Art and were eventually offered accommodation by the Arts Society in Trinity, in College Lane. This was the first time the students could effectively function again as a group and work together on their own self motivated projects. At this stage the students were visited and addressed by many interested individuals such as Jack Dowling from RTE, who expressed the importance and significance of the students' actions. There was the threat at this time that the students might attempt to set up an independent Art College severing all links with the National College of Art. The students , however, were not that organised .

On 3rd April, six weeks into the lock-out, a delegation of three met the Minister. Student leaders come to a settlement for a return to class after Easter. The agreements included legislation that would provide for a twelve strong College Board, two students, two staff, the Director, and seven outside people nominated by students. The Minister gave written guarantees that the recommendations of the advisory board would be implemented. It was decided that the the council would come up with recommendations for the general direction of the College with particular reference to the courses and the teaching methods.

The Minister agreed that the draft legislation for the setting up of the fully autonomous governing body for the College would be made available as soon as the preliminary framework was devised and that then he would again meet the students for discussion on the form of the new governing body. This is what they had being fighting for and realistically the best they could have hoped for. This, they thought, was a victory.

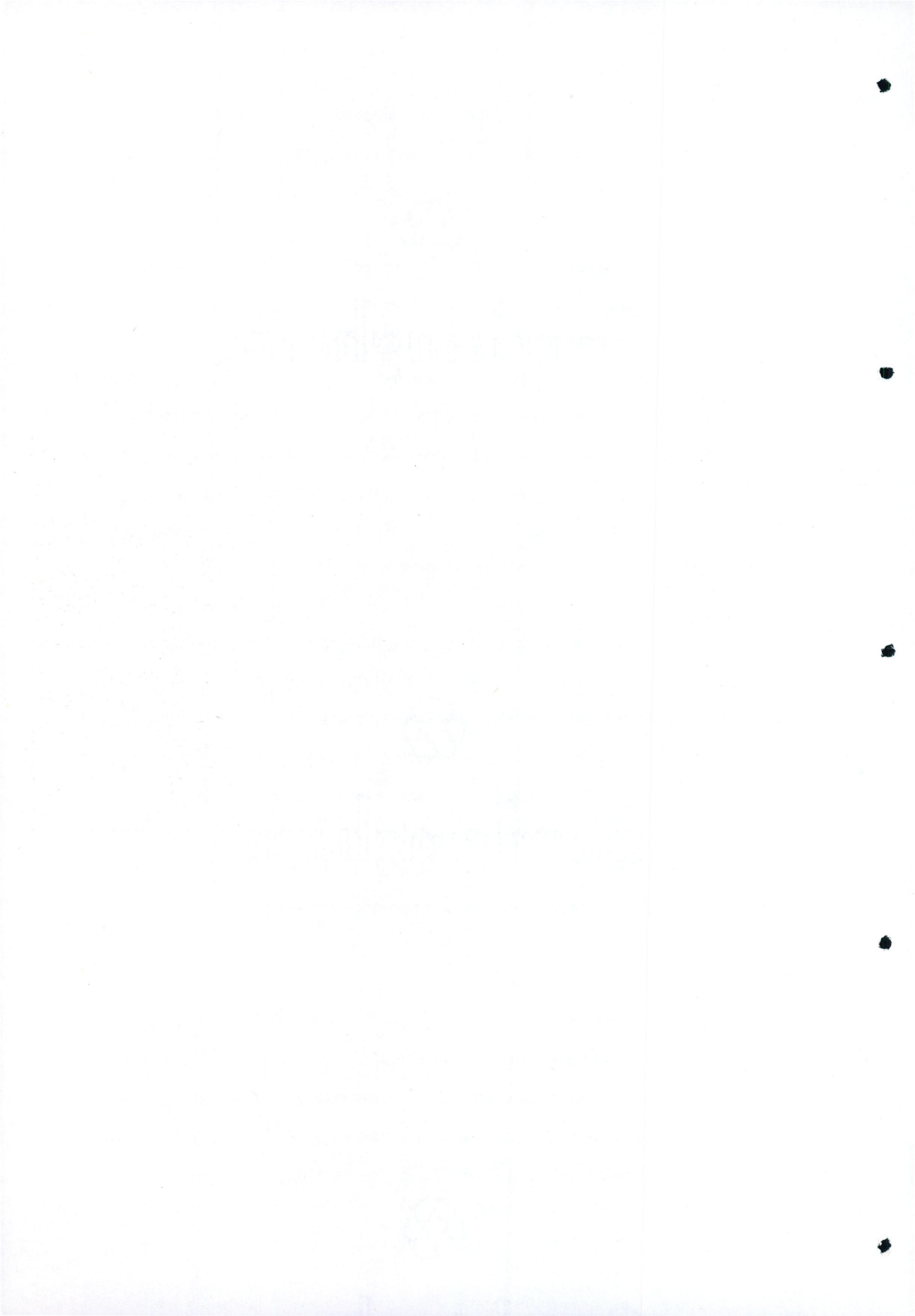
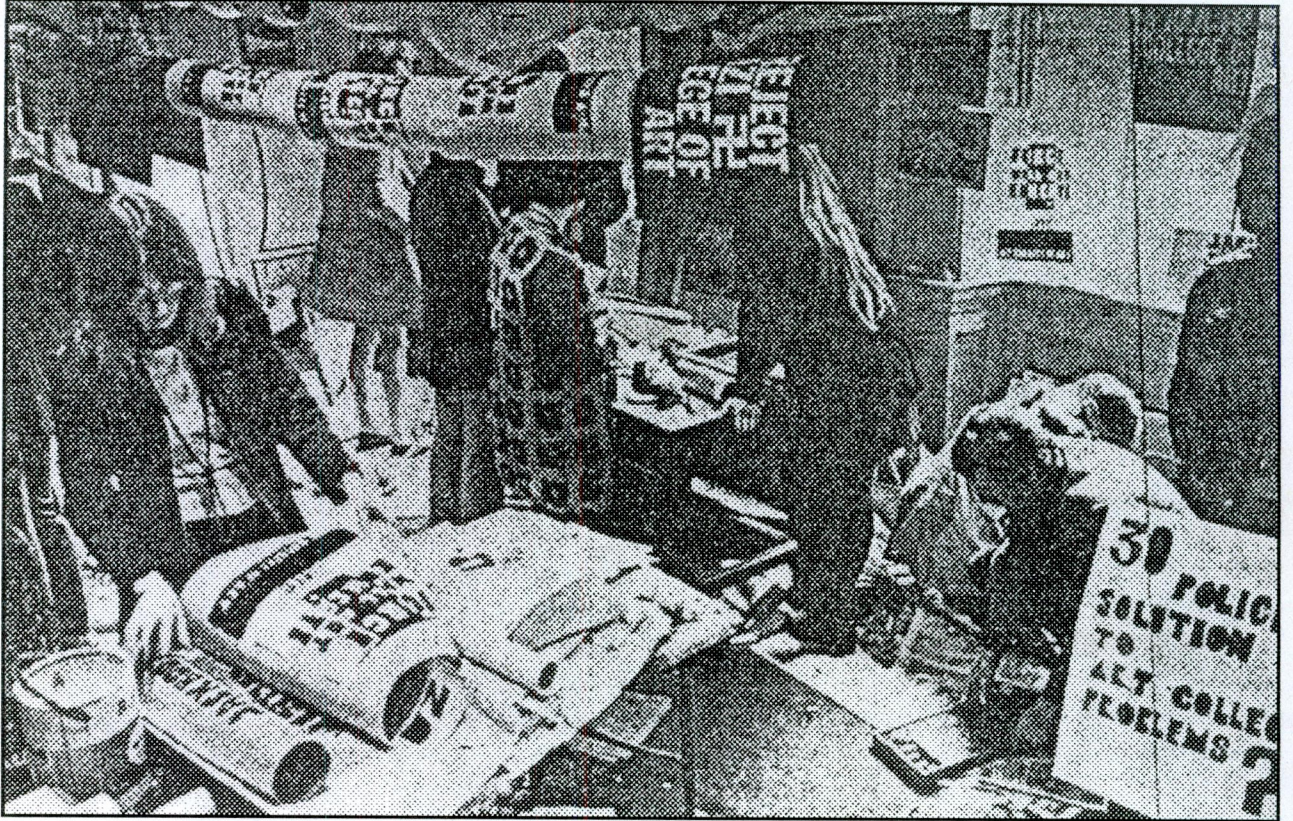


Plate 8



The Student Printing Workshop during the occupation.

Handwritten scribble in the top right corner.

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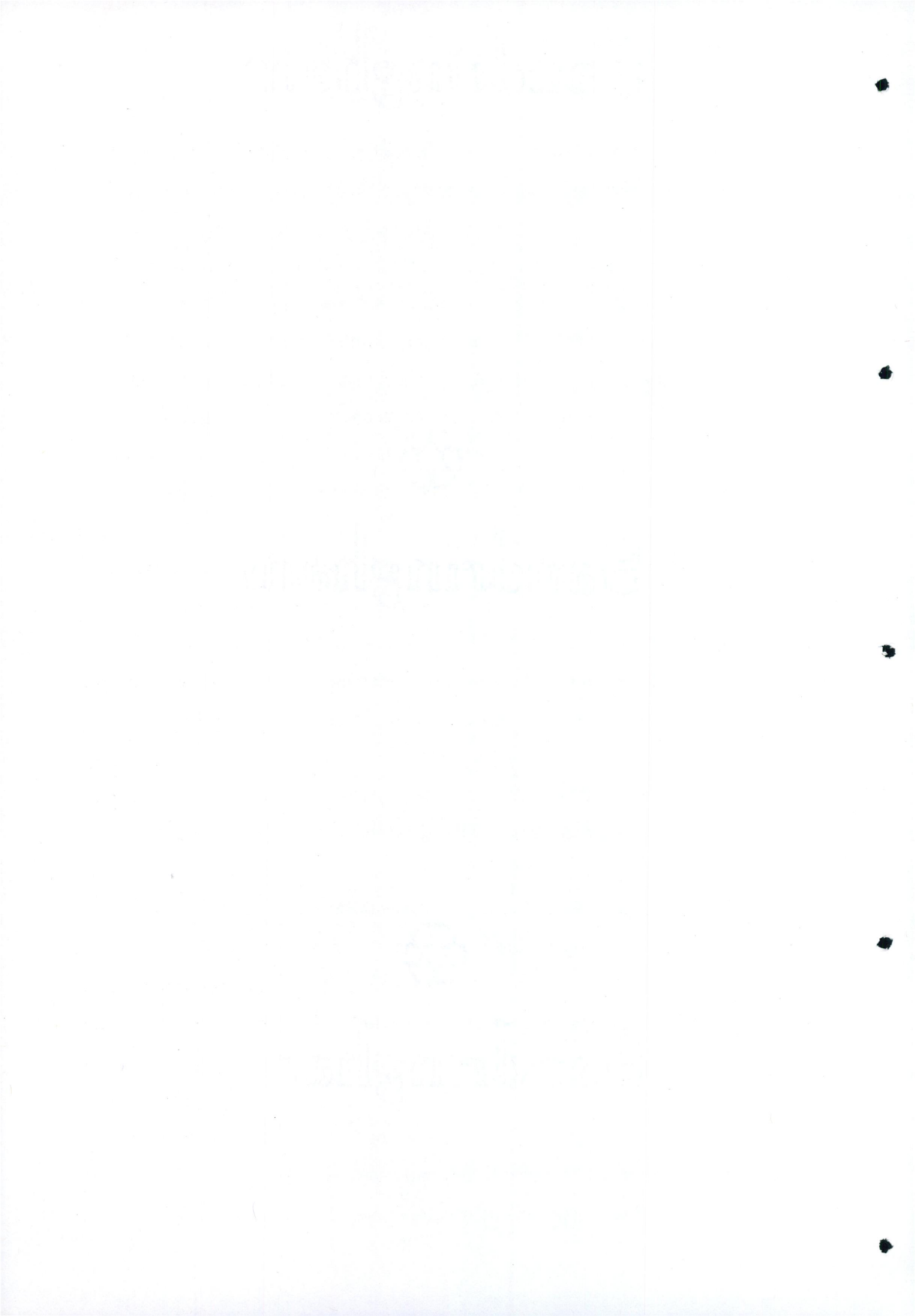
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Thus the Advisory Board drew up a 26 point memorandum for the Minister to sign. The Minister amended some of the points and sent it back to the Advisory Board. A final draft was compiled, but the Minister, having the students back at College refused to sign the document. Donal O' Sullivan claimed that the Minister had already broken a number of promises, the most important of which were that John F. Kelly (RHA) and Donal Murphy had been appointed Professors of Painting and Sculpture without any consultation or notification to the students. Then in reaction to this the students, on 22nd April, "in order to avoid being locked out, the Sculpture School wing as far as the men's jacks was occupied." (Donal O' Sullivan, 1969 letters).¹

This was the first occupation of the School and was a turning point in the students' actions. It was one thing to work outside the college in the "Lock Out", but to be locked in, and to hold the College against police attack was another story altogether. The students settled in and designated "Room 17" for debate and discussion. It was at this point that the students stopped making statements to the Press. They were not sure whether the press coverage was doing more harm than good, or if it was working to their advantage. It was time for reflection and assessment of the situation.

The occupation of the NCA by the students lasted seven weeks, and during this time most of the students ate, worked, debated and slept in the College. Food was smuggled in through windows by the armed guards that protected the Dail, who felt sorry for the occupants in their fight.

During their occupation there was little or no coverage of their plight in the media, in this they found little hope, for in the 'lock out' the morale was high due to the huge amount of publicity they had been getting. Then, they felt as if they were achieving something. The occupation was a stalemate, the Minister was



doing nothing and the students were not discussing anything with him until he made an initiative. This led inevitably to the morale of the occupants spiralling down; they no longer felt that they were achieving anything positive.

Donal O' Sullivan and Robert McColgan became more and more frustrated with the situation and their students' reactions, "the protest had stopped and continued as a convenience"(Donal O' Sullivan, President of the Students Representative Council. June 5 /1969). In late May 1969, the two students, suffering "from too generous absorption of Arthur Guinness", took their frustrations out on the casts from the antique in Room 3. They smashed them. This was not a cold blooded act, it was an action of a drunken stupor. To many, the words of Robin Darwin, Vice Provost of the Royal College of Art speaking at a conference on Irish Art & Design Education in 1967 (in Trinity College) rang clearly in their ears, when he had said of the casts, "if you can't burn them, break them". This looked like the ultimate rejection of the old system. The breaking of the statues became the burning of the bridges. There was now, no turning back.

The breaking of the statues was however against the wishes of the majority of the students. This was a breach of trust by their leaders. The students had been brought down the road of revolution for 4 months, only to feel betrayed by their own. This was an initial feeling, as the students were shocked and appaled at the sight of the broken statues, and they immediately ended the occupation. The two students who broke the casts were never named to the authorities by their colleagues. The dust settled over the remains of an old way Art & Design education, not to be seen again after this day. (5-6-1969)



Plate 9



The Broken Casts in the Sculpture yard at the N.C.A. (June, 1969)



This resulted in possibly the end of student agitation at the College. The students were dazed and confused, and the events of the year needed to be reviewed in their own minds. The students were as far away from achieving their objective as they ever were. The occupation had backfired on the movement, and could possibly have brought it to an end. It was two events that were to give them the motivation to keep going.

3 Dazed and Confused

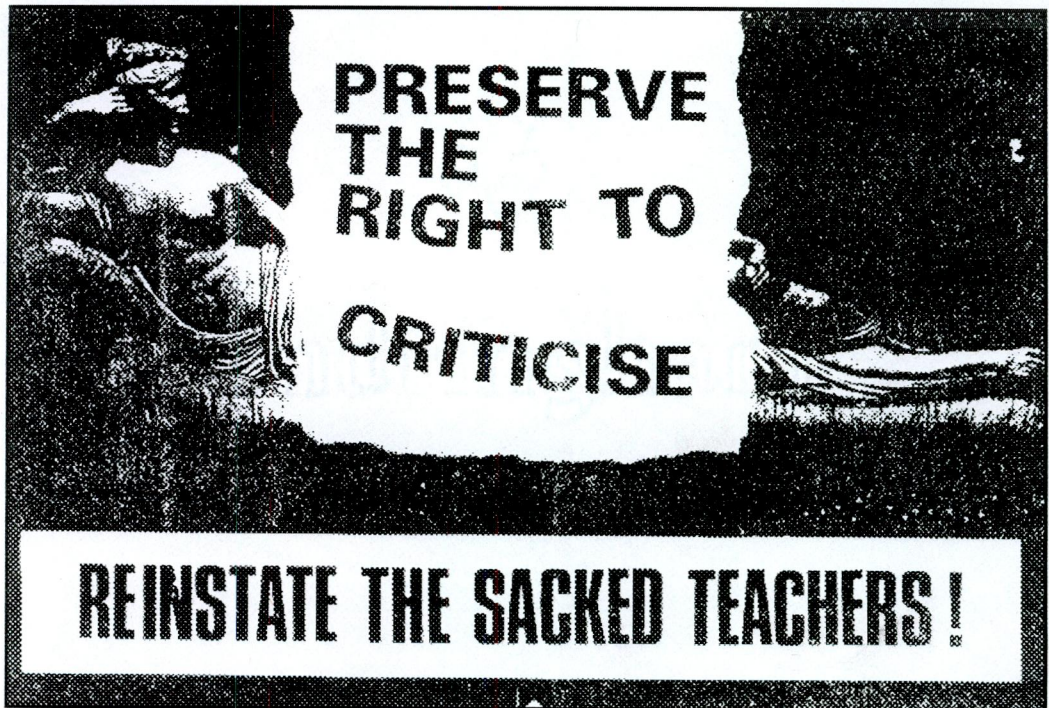
Before the Advisory Board made its recommendations to the Minister that summer some students were sent to London to report on the state of education in these Colleges. One of the Colleges they went to was Hornsey College of Art. "A number of the key students have arrived back from London (a week's visit to Hornsey, Central School, Royal College etc) today. Their ideas are a little on the innocent side but at least they have ideas. Some of them have already begun to plan for the next year," (Donal O' Sullivan). The students returned to the College with the stories of the communal education theories of the Hornsey Affair and with the words of Misha Black (Professor of Industrial Design, Royal College of Art) ringing in their ears.

The Advisory Board finally made their recommendations to the Minister Mr Faulkner (the new Minister for Education due to the General election the previous summer).

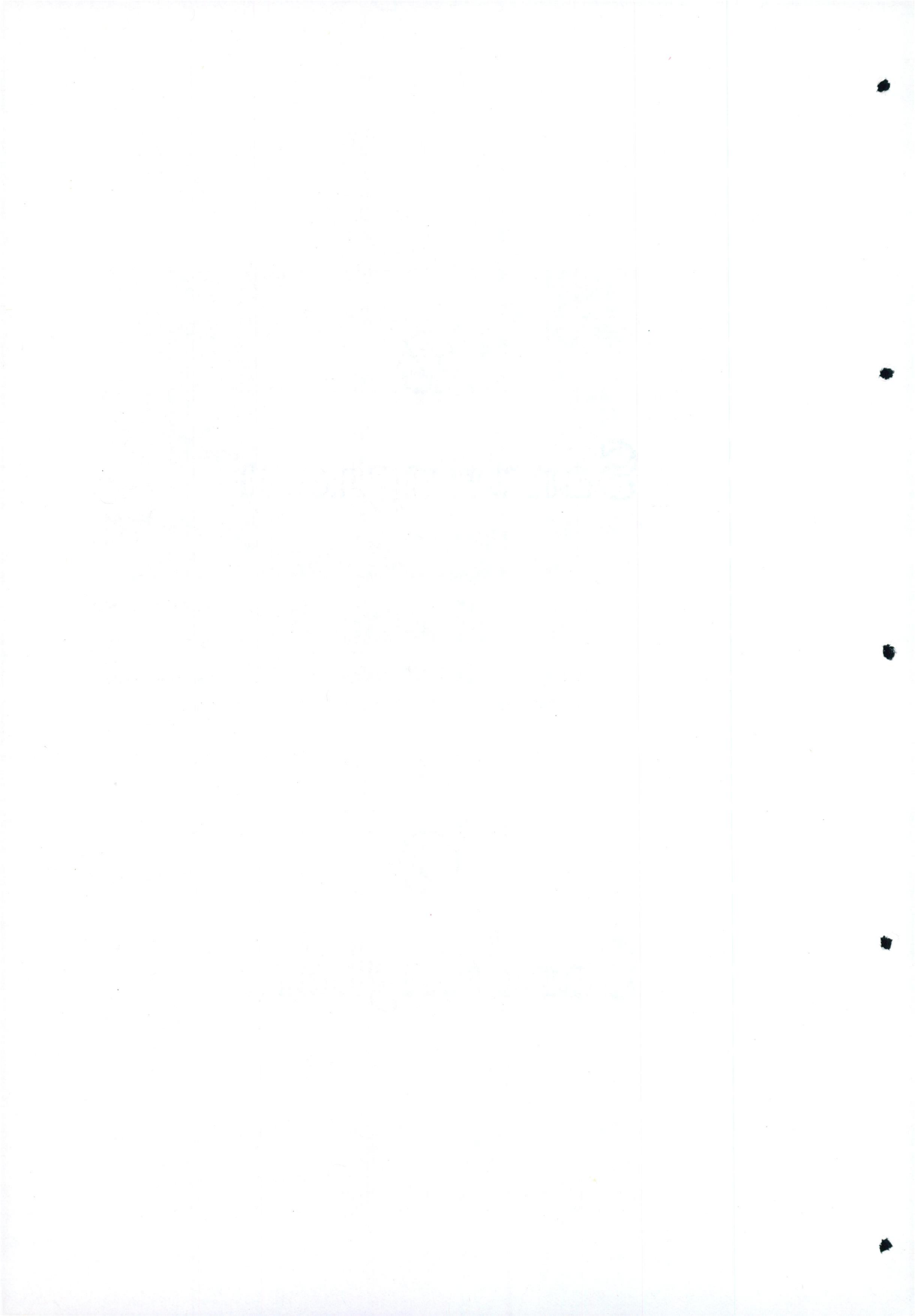
It is generally felt at the moment that the College is dangerously out of control and we strongly advise the dissolution of the College as it stands and that work should be got under way in preparation for the setting up of a new establishment...furthermore it is felt that every possible break should be made from the National College of Art and that the new establishment should be called the Dublin College of Art.
(Irish Times, 22-10-1969 p.10)



Plate 13



Poster seeking the re-instatement of the sacked teachers.



The Report was implicitly critical of the staff, who demanded a chance to refute some of the allegations against them. Two of its authors refused to meet the staff, these authors were Mr. Dermot Larkin and Professor Christopher Ryan. A month after presenting the Report three of its authors (Professor Ryan, Mr. Larkin and Professor Geoffrey Hewitt, resigned in protest against the Ministers failure to act.

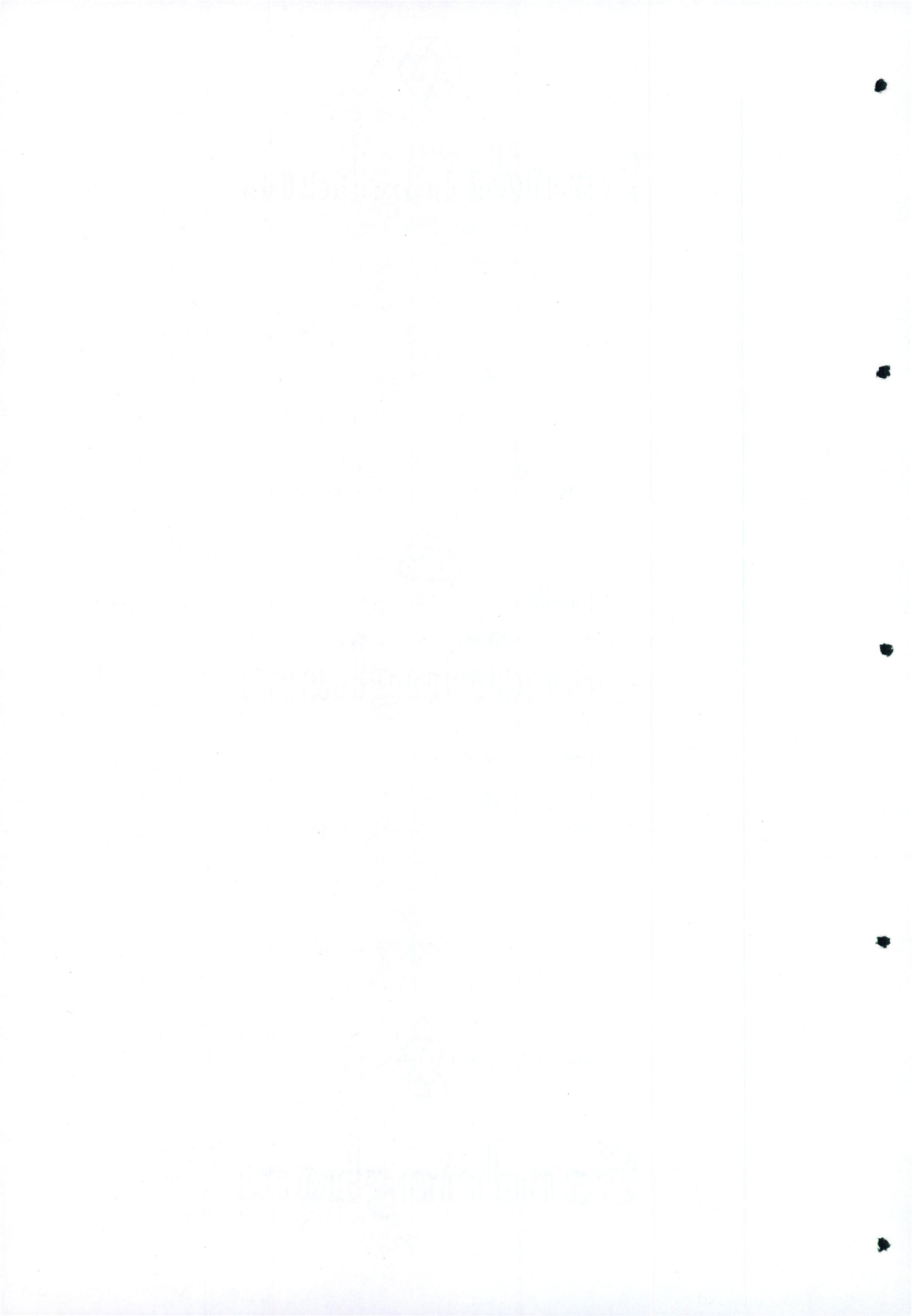
I was not prepared to be associated with a council which was acting as a stop-gap for the Minister's failure to solve the problems of Irish Art Education

(Professor Geoffrey Hewitt, Principle of Cork School of Art, Irish Times, 8-08-1969, p.11)

This led to a renewed interest in the case of the NCA. Here, an Academic and independent member of the Advisory Council had been outrightly critical of the NCA establishment and of the Minister for Education in their involvement with the continuing state of disarray of the College, this was seen as a very serious blow to the authorities and the Department. This criticism was to ensure that that the struggle did not die away from the pages of the newspapers over the summer period, and continued the interest in the College well into the new academic year.

This was, however, the end of the second stage in the student actions. The honeymoon with Direct Action was definitely over and the lessons had been learned and learned well. The news to hit the presses was the Minister's intention to re-house the College in a new £1 million pound building in Morehampton Rd.

On 27th October the headlines in the papers read, "Students who staged a successful work-in, lock-out and picket of the National College of Art last



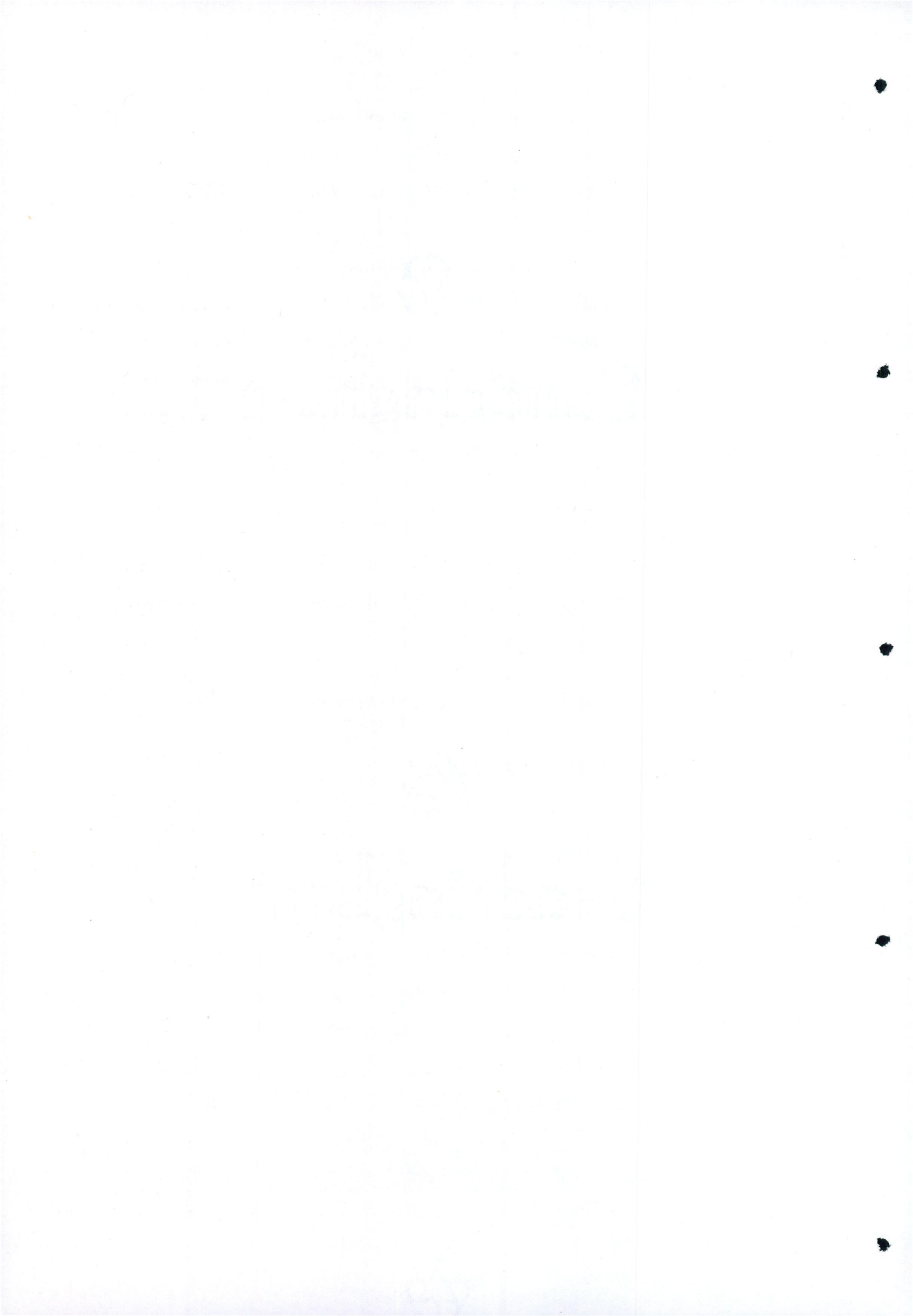
January in support of a claim for better facilities have now had victory formally conceded with the news of the establishment of a new National College of Art and Industrial Design in Dublin." (Irish Independent, 27/10/1969, p. 2)

This was the first concession by the Department in an effort to get the students back to College and the first serious move made towards reform. Although this was a serious move by the Department, the students didn't believe it. Too many times had they been promised the sun, moon and the stars by the previous Minister, and come up with nothing. For the students the battle was to go on until they achieved legislation or an Independent College.

Everything had quietened down until April 1970 when the students organised a symposium at the College during Easter. De Burcha tried to stop it and the students responded with their first press statements in about a year. A general meeting of students passed the following resolutions:-

- 1 That an association of members of the National College of Art be formed, comprising of all students and staff, to control the NCA.
- 2 The the association control the appointment and decide the terms of reference of a college director.
- 3 The three school diploma system be abandoned and that all students be allowed to share all facilities and take common diploma majoring in the subject of their choice.

Twenty five students occupied the College in support of these proposals. The next day a notice reading "College of Art for Students and Teachers, not civil servants", was displayed outside the College. The staff refused to enter the College. College diplomas were distributed to students and staff outside the building. A meeting of sixty students endorsed the occupation. That evening a force of thirty gardai stormed the College and removed the students one by one. The students left the building and were told the College was closed



indefinitely.

The Department of Education were not prepared to endure another round of student led occupations. They decided to crack down on the student rebels. Students were called before a Board of Enquiry, convened in the College, on which the students were denied legal representation. A parallel can be drawn at this stage with the events in Claremont Ferrand and Nantes in December 1969, and in the Sorbonne exactly two years before hand. The authorities were trying to be discredited by the students of the College in order to stem the tide of student action. The College was later re-opened and the charges against the students were dropped as a gesture of goodwill.

The next November the Director had had enough of the College and resigned. At a staff meeting, Mr. Sean O' Connor announced that Miss. Lucy Charles, Professor of Design, had been appointed acting-director; she was also to retain her Professorship of Design. Students immediately circulated a petition demanding the resignation of Ms. Charles. They objected that neither the students nor the staff were consulted, that the post was not advertised and the terms of reference or qualifications and powers of the Director were not made known to the students. The students felt that the appointment only maintained the status quo, while the department continued its policy of procrastination on the immediate and long term future of the College.

It was at this stage of the students actions that there was a distinctive shift in views of the students. Attention had been drawn away from the Design Reports that much of the manifestoes and demands had been based upon earlier in 1969. The students views had shifted to the social aspects of a Fine Art education. Much of this can be attributed to the ideas and debates that emerged from Hornsey Art College. To this end, the students organised a seminar in the College titled *Art & Society*, which was hosted by the students



for students and staff. The Director banned all journalists, politicians and photographers from the seminar. However Cathal Goulding (Republican), Seamus O' Tuathail (United Irishman), Eoghan Harris (RTE) and Philip Petitt (UCD Philosophy) all addressed the seminar. This was a startling change in the Student Movement. This was also at the height of tension in Northern Ireland, and republicanism in the South was rampant as a reaction to the loyalists.

It was at this seminar that students created working groups to debate the role of Art and Industrial Design in the social fabric of Irish society. The students had adopted a very social based theory of Art, and they saw the role of Industrial Design solely as fabricating needs in consumer society to the benefit of Industrialists. They could not see the innovative or progressive side of Design or its role in an Irish Society. This is again an example of how the views of students had shifted from Design to Fine Art.

The students then engaged themselves in securing adequate student representation at the upcoming seminar on the Future of Design Education in Ireland from 26th to 28th November, organised by Coras Tractala in Killarney. Seven NCA staff members attended the Seminar, selected by Lucy Charles. One of the speakers questioned the ability of the students to meet the criteria of the market place as designers, over their need for artistic expression. The attitudes of the industrialists and the students were now poles apart.

Yet this was an ideal opportunity for the students to press top designers and industrialists to put pressure on the government to seriously reform the College. In my view, they lost this chance in approaching the seminar without an open mind, of how best to win over the support of these art educationalists, such as Misha Black, the Industrialists, such as Mr. Micheal Sweetman and designers, such as Bill Bolger. These were the very people whom the students wanted on

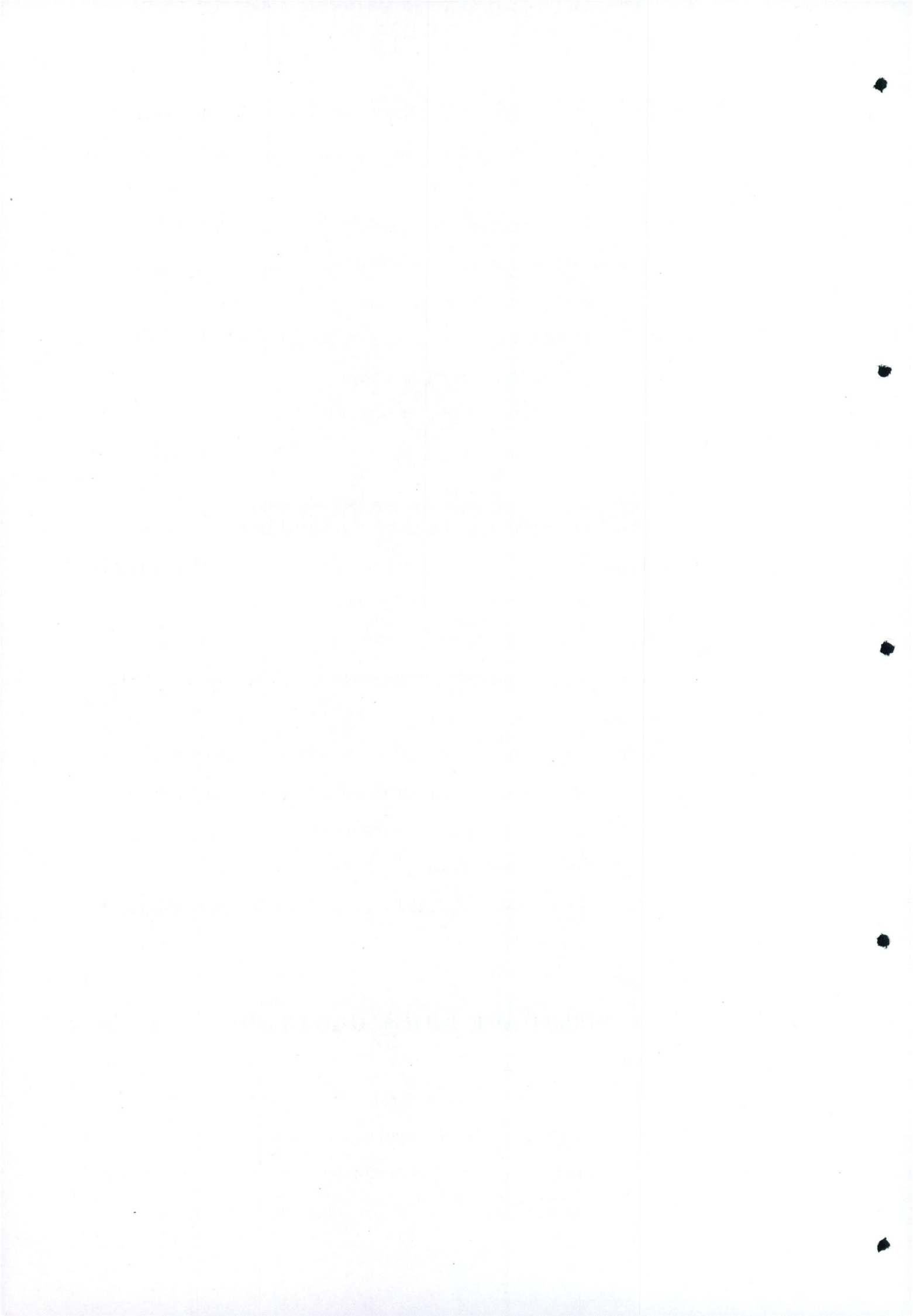


a Board to revise the college in 1969. These people were however not impressed by the students attitudes towards Design.

Sean Mac Gearailt (The Minister's representative) tried to explain the Department's failure to reform the NCA. He refused however to answer specific questions. The two student delegates and twenty other students walked out. The students felt that the seminar was a failure, because it didn't leave room for such discussion as would be brought about by working groups. This in essence is true, much more would have been achieved if there were working groups set up to look at specific case studies.

January brought a new year and in a sense of a more constructive approach by the students and staff. This was important move on the part of some of the staff, as they became interested in the plight of the College in a progressive manner. It was at this stage that many on the staff involved with the foundation course began to liaise closely with the students' union. The students and staff placed one hour pickets on Marlborough St. Department of Education Buildings in protest over the Departments' failure to act constructively on the problems of the College in early January. February produced a survey on the financial status of the students, in order to achieve the establishment of an NCA grants scheme. March saw the students take over two unused rooms and the ex-directors office and converted them into Library facilities. This was a sign of the students working constructively within the limitations of their range of abilities.

March also brought the appointment to the College authorities, of Mr. Micheal O' Neill (Accounts Branch, Department. of Education) as administrator of the NCA, a new position in the College. The students resented the fact that his appointment was unannounced and his duties unexplained to them. This led to an occupation of the College that Easter in support of the following resolutions: the statement accused the Department of letting the College fall into a state of



a "an educational slum". It also demanded the resignation of Lucy Charles and her replacement with a democratically elected candidate by staff and students. At 10.30 p.m. a force of about forty gardai stormed the College and forcefully removed the students.

4 The Sacked Teachers

This led to the final episode in the NCA dispute, when in June 1971 over half of the students from the foundation course were failed their final assessment. This provoked a reaction from their tutors Alice Hanratty and Paul Funge who wrote to the parents of the students expressing their amazement at the results. Apparently the Department or the College had deliberately failed the students who had been politically active.

Mr. Paul Funge said that, "some of us were incensed with the results of the June assessments, in which our collective opinions were rejected...in many cases our decisions were completely reversed. We have demanded an explanation and we have made it clear to the Department of Education that we cannot go ahead with our work if we do not receive it".

On return to College in October both of the tutors were dismissed. This led to the most prolonged and bitter episode in the struggle to date, with both students and teachers unions protesting at the sacking of the teachers. They were joined by Charlie Cullen , Charlie Harper and Peter Mew (all NCA teachers) who were not re-instated until February 1975. This was indeed a tragedy in the dispute, which took four years of these tutors lives, all in the name of a decrepit outdated College of Art.

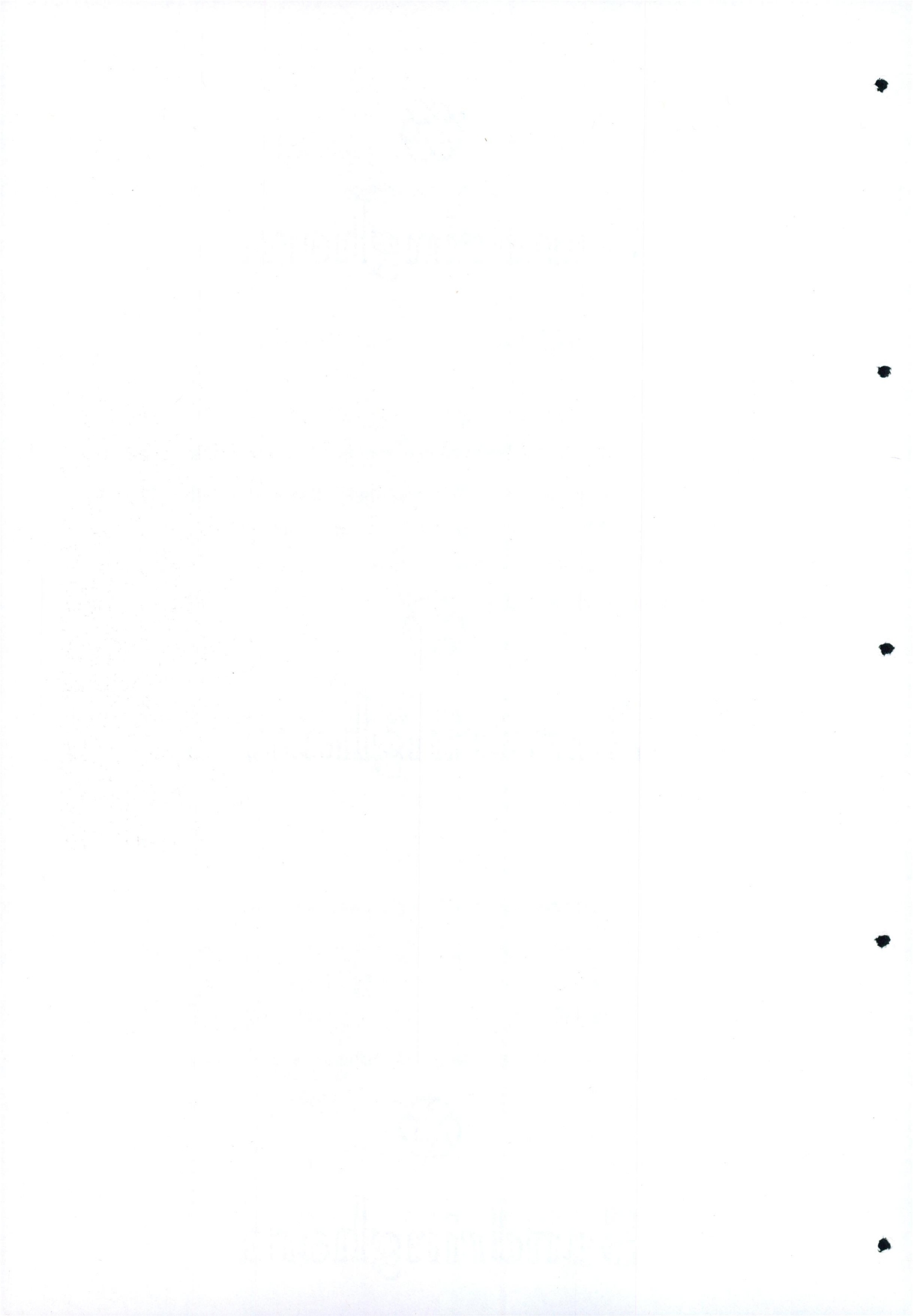


Plate10



Students dancing outside the College during the lock out.



The effect of all of these events eventually pushed the Minister to put a Bill through the House ("National College of Art & Design Bill 1971"), which was passed in late 1971 and the College was re-opened in early 1972. The Minister also put through a new Bill on Primary Education, which included a raise in status of Art in the Curriculum. This Primary Bill, taken in conjunction with the NCAD Bill, shows that the Department were taking from the recommendations of many previous reports, in reforming the Visual Education of the student at all levels of the educational curriculum.

The new curriculum of 1971, accompanied by other developments, has changed considerably the philosophy, approach and atmosphere of primary education. The inclusion of imaginative programmes in Music, Art & Craft, and Drama activities, Physical Education and Dance, as integral parts of the curriculum, heralded a new era in Irish National education. It was Brian Lenihan in 1968 who suggested this at the Art & Design Education in Ireland symposium (supported by the Arts Council). I believe the actions in the College directly led to these improvements in the primary education curriculum, which had not changed since 1924.

The Education of a community's future artists and designers in modern society needs the protection and resources of the state or at least of local government. The State, the Department of Education, has the duty to provide the means and to see that they are economically used. It has no right to use them or direct them or disapprove their use by those who are competent to teach or be taught. This is a first principle of social philosophy; the State may have the right to say who shall teach our children that two and two make four. The State has no right to decide **that** two and two make four. This is a matter for mathematicians. Art is for Artists and Design is for Designers.



Plate 11

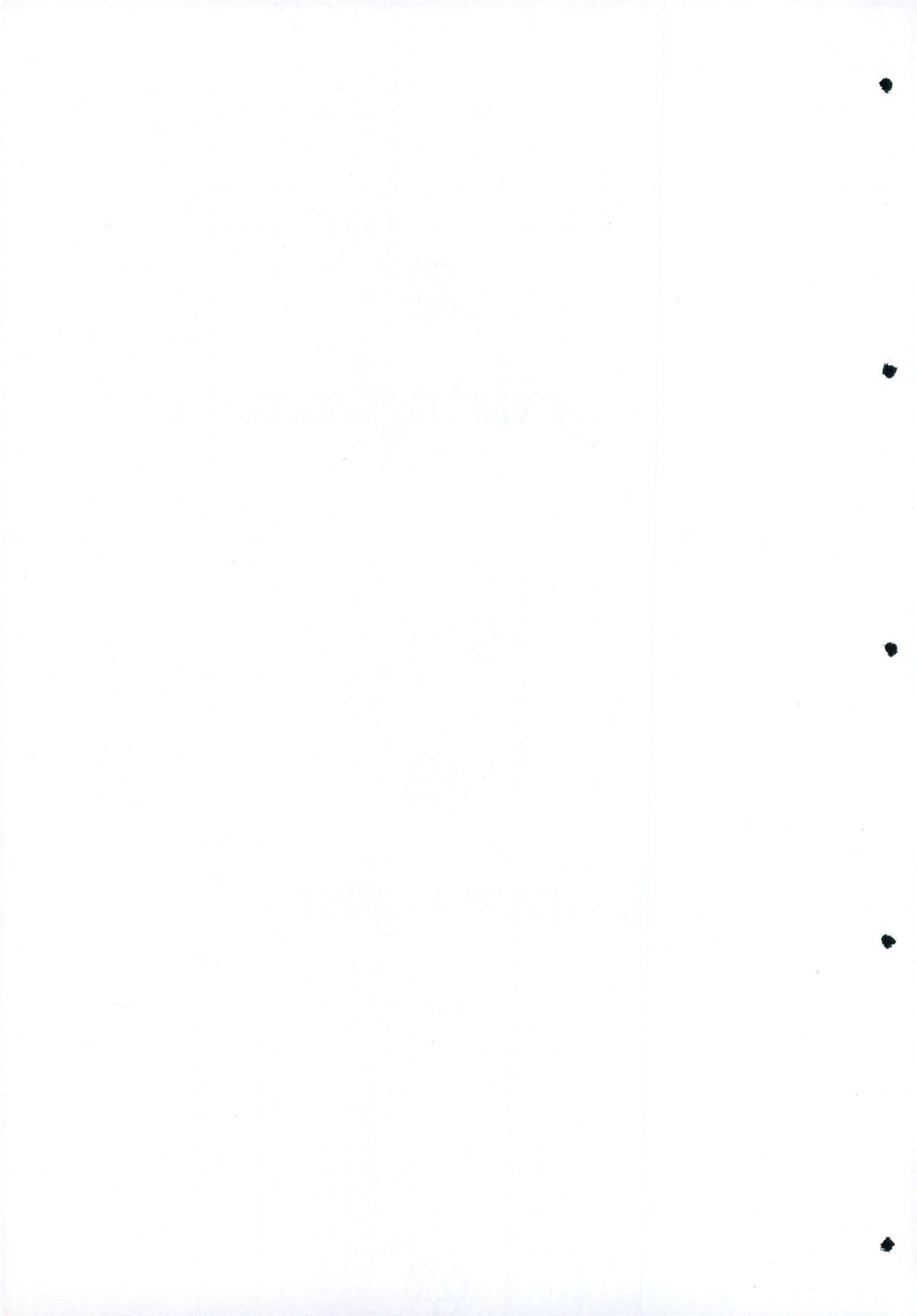


Students gathering for a meeting during the February, 1969 lock out.



The Department had finally bowed to the pressures that the demonstrations at the National College of Art had brought upon them and set up the new "National College of Art & Design". I believe I have shown that these changes had come about directly from what had happened in the College. The turmoil that surrounded the College for those three years had paralysed it, caused the resignation of many of the tutors, and the embarrassment of the two Ministers on a number of occasions.

"Student unrest in the National College of Art in 1968, and accompanying public focus on the College, subsequently led to a restructure of the college in 1971. The last decade (1970s) saw more development in Art & Design education in Ireland than did the previous half century. "
(The place of Arts in Irish Education, P. 20)



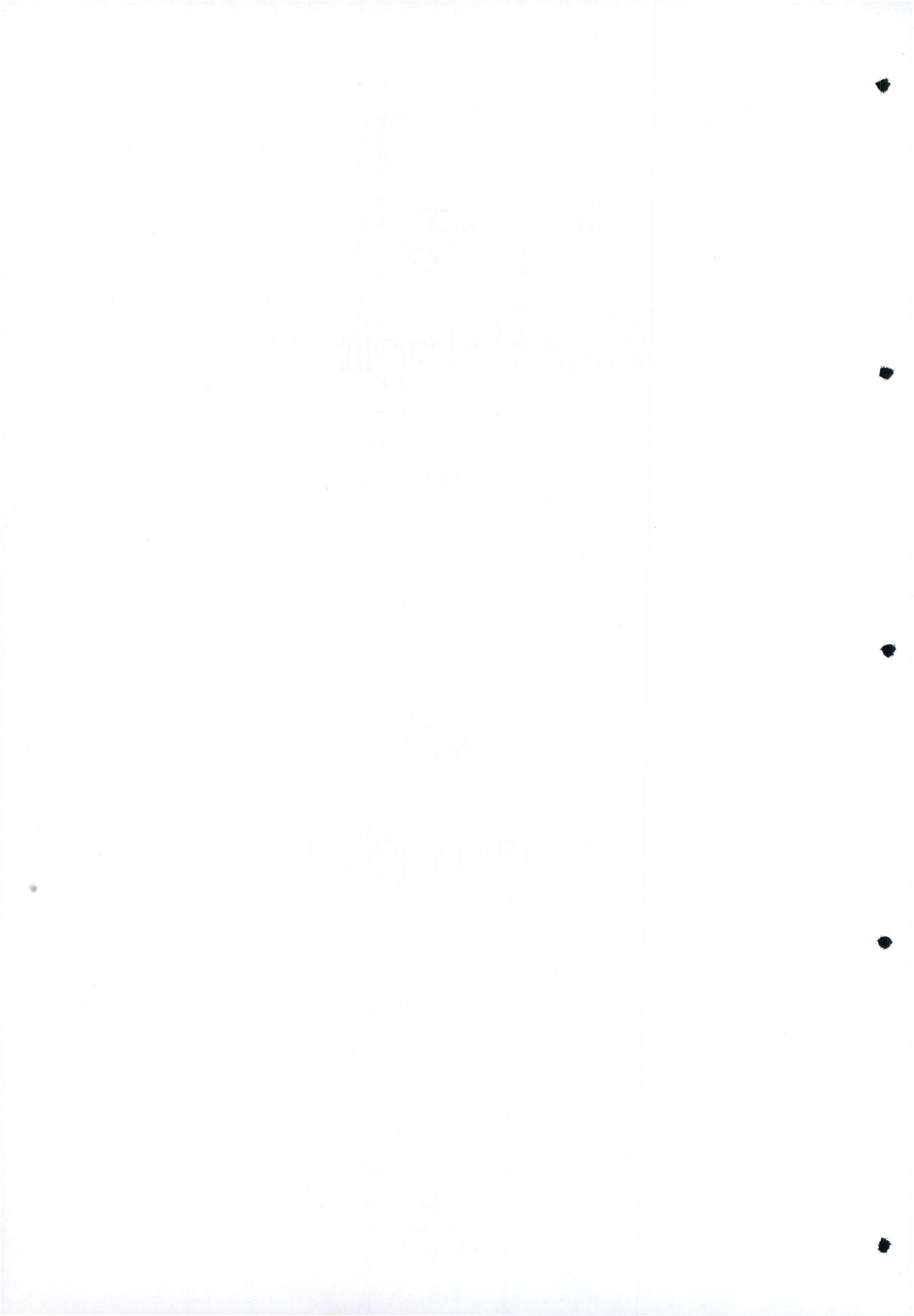
Footnotes on Chapter 3

- 1 Letter from Donal O' Sullivan to Grainne Dowling on the Occupation

"Eventually quite a number of students objected to being left 'flapping' in the wind, and started comparing the relative value of a diploma and classes to an open ended living argument in room 17. The result was a proposal to begin negotiations with the teachers and attempt to reorganise the college from the inside. On the surface, not a bad move but in reality several rapid steps backward, back to where you and I came in, in fact. Next step will be a report to the Minister for Education , the sheer acrobatics of it all.

By the way, what really knackered many of the students towards the end of the occupation was the possibility of Lenihan closing the College for good."

Donal O' Sullivan President Of The Students Representative Council.

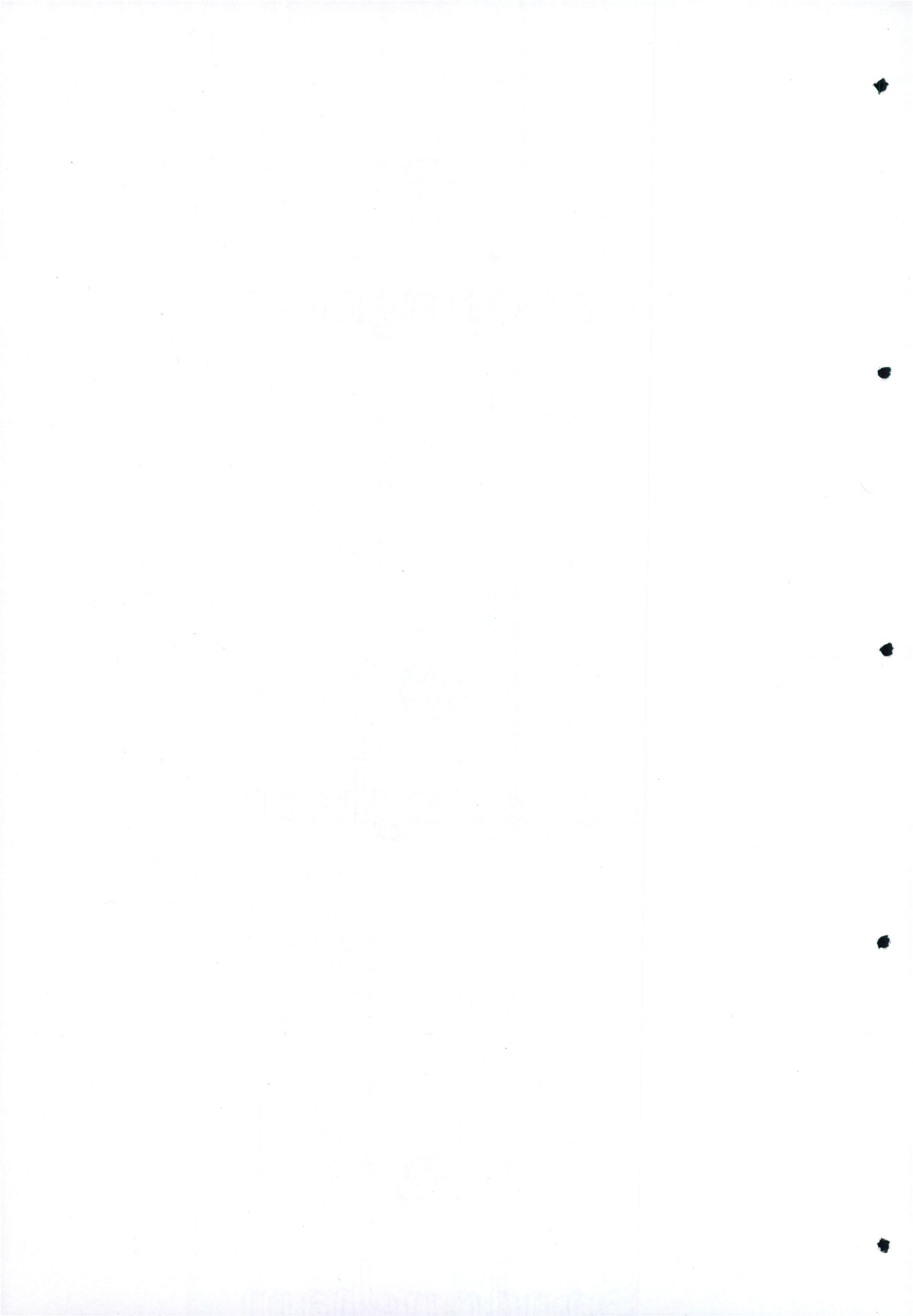


BEWARE

Conclusion

POWER

PEOPLE



The strong emphasis on the political potential of the arts which is a feature of this radicalism is first of all expressive of the need for an effective communication of the indictment of the established reality and of the goals of liberation. It is the effort to find forms of communication that may break the oppressive rule of the established language and images over the mind and body of man ----- language and images which have long since become the means of domination, indoctrination, and deception. Communication of the radically non-conformist, new historical goals of the revolution requires equally non conformist language (in the widest sense)....In the domain of the Arts, the tradition of protest, the negation of that which is "given", persists in its own universe and in its own right. Here, the other language, the other images continue to be communicated, to be heard and seen; and it is this art which, in subverted form, is now being used as a weapon in the political fight against the established....

(Marcuse, p.80)

The ideas, thoughts and philosophies that surrounded the 1960s were steeped in the need to overturn the heavy hand of authority. In the realm of Art & Design Education the aristocratic concept of Fine Arts had been disturbed by the emergence of such revolutionary ideology amongst the youth sub-cultures of the day. The development of *Pop Art* in the early 1960s freed Art from the self appointed elite of aesthetes and gave it back to a society of young artists.

Industries based on craft techniques, such as textiles, ceramics and furniture became progressively automated and demanded technical knowledge and skills from their designers which were not satisfied by the craftsman's personal inventiveness and manual dexterity. This in effect led to the introduction of industrial design in Colleges like the RCA in London as a new element of Design Education. There was an effort made by Uthe College system in England to introduce an education based on audio/visual insight and sensibility that could prepare men and women for a role in society which was largely neglected up to that time.

The society that has been propagated by capitalism is one of constant change.



The theories of capitalism are based on an ability to have constant manufacturing of a product and a market for that product. Thus to create this market the ideas and tastes of the consumer must be conditioned to desire what is new and what is different. Thus the product can be replaced with a new product in ever increasing frequency. It is this need that has become an inherent part of our society today.

In the changing face of the Global Village, one's view of life gets stretched like an elastic band. To exist one must always be able to change, disposed to be flexible in one's habits and in one's work. This is what the late twentieth century has brought with it, a model of a world that will be replaced by the new model in the series in ever decreasing circles. Nothing remains a constant except for change itself. What we may conceive as a free school may be as elusive as a free society and prone to as many internal contradictions

Today we are still faced with educational institutions that have become seriously over-structured for the tasks that they must perform. In Art & Design education, as elsewhere, the grip of the old outworn forms may discourage new energies beyond the toleration threshold within which differences are normally met and resolved. Parties find themselves sitting across the tables from each other speaking different languages--in the same tongue, but with radically different outlooks and conflicting views and opinions. Such new energies may be quite informed, supported less by argument than by an exploratory behaviour that might reach towards new insights along unfamiliar paths. It was specifically this type of situation that arose at the National College of Art in the late 1960s, when the passion for change swept away the debris of the old traditional forms of education and indeed is the situation that continues to arise today.

To argue that what happened in the late 1960s and early '70s in the NCA



solved all the problems that the College had would be misleading . This is simply not true. For the College then, radical change was needed in order to rectify the situation and provide future artists and designers with an education. At the end of the disputes at the College in the early 1970s, all that was part of the old regime was discarded whether good or bad for the student or tutor. A new regime and a new government was established in the College. With this new Regime there soon developed a custom and routine that held abiding sway over things, that itself became unable and unwilling to change. It is this regime that we inherit today at the National College of Art and Design.

In twenty five years much has changed in the world of Art and Design. For the students of the Fine Arts we see the barriers between their traditional divisions of Painting, Printing and Sculpture collapsing, their forms and practices merging, and departing from the accepted academic format. As Fine Art painting often leaves the canvas behind and becomes more three dimensional, both in the physical and the cybernetic sense, the educational structure has failed to progress and develop. As Design becomes more conceptual and embraces the technological dividends of the cybernetic revolution of the last 10 years, the authorities are slow to respond and slow to change in their attitudes towards skills based design.

The College establishment today has become embroiled in its own petty internal politics. It is paralysed by the control of the Departments of Finance and Education through the N.C.E.A. course control, the Higher Education Authority funding, and by the direct control over the day to day running of the College by accountants. This leaves the College and its Departments resistant to change of any kind, and many become violently defensive when approached by the activators of change. This only creates a deeper sense of disillusion in those who put their ideas forward.

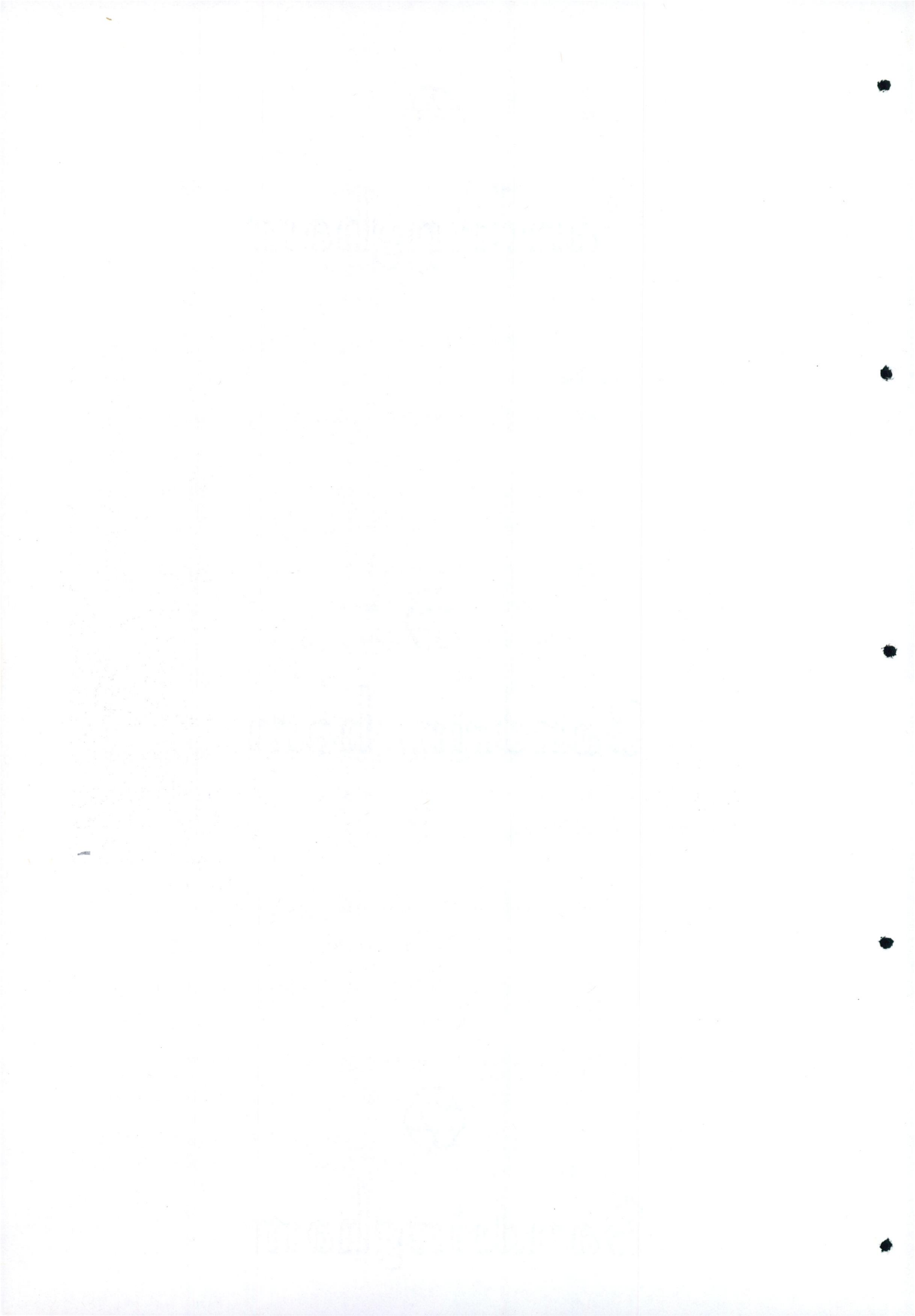
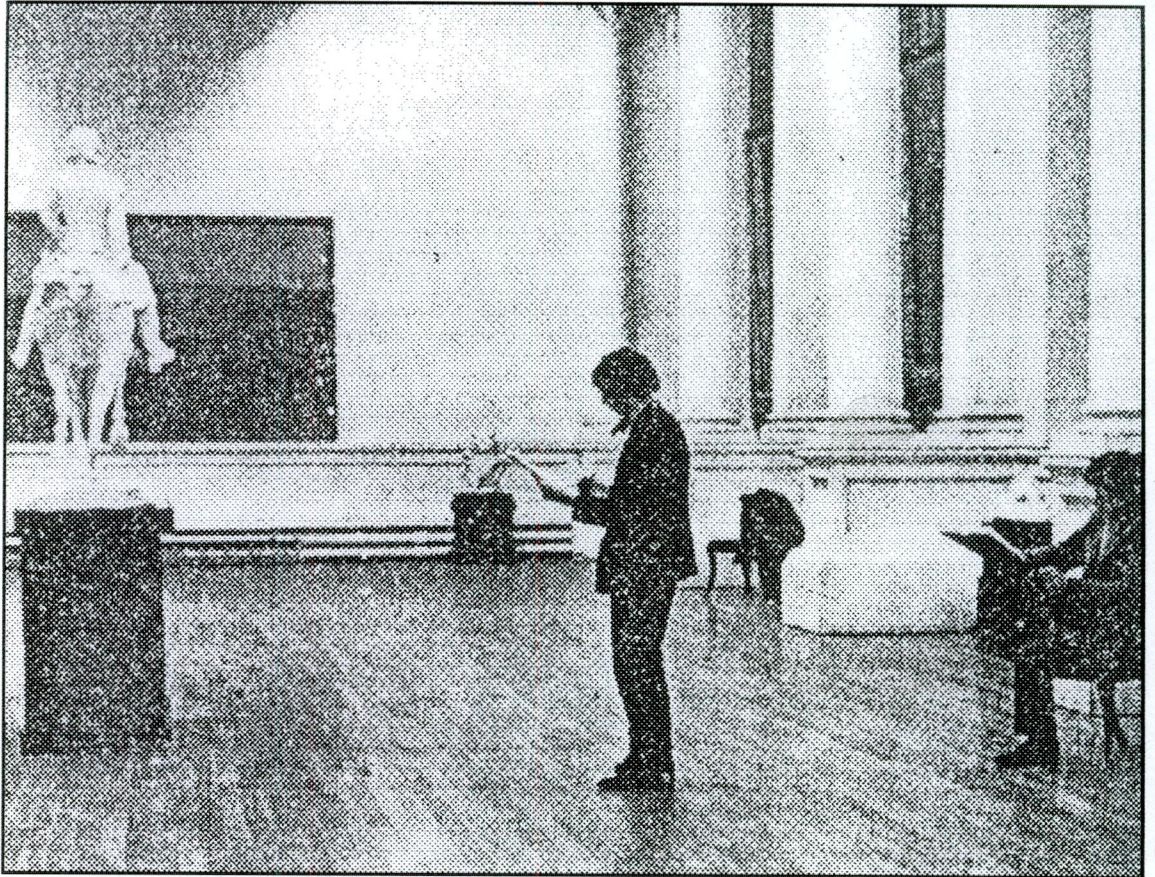
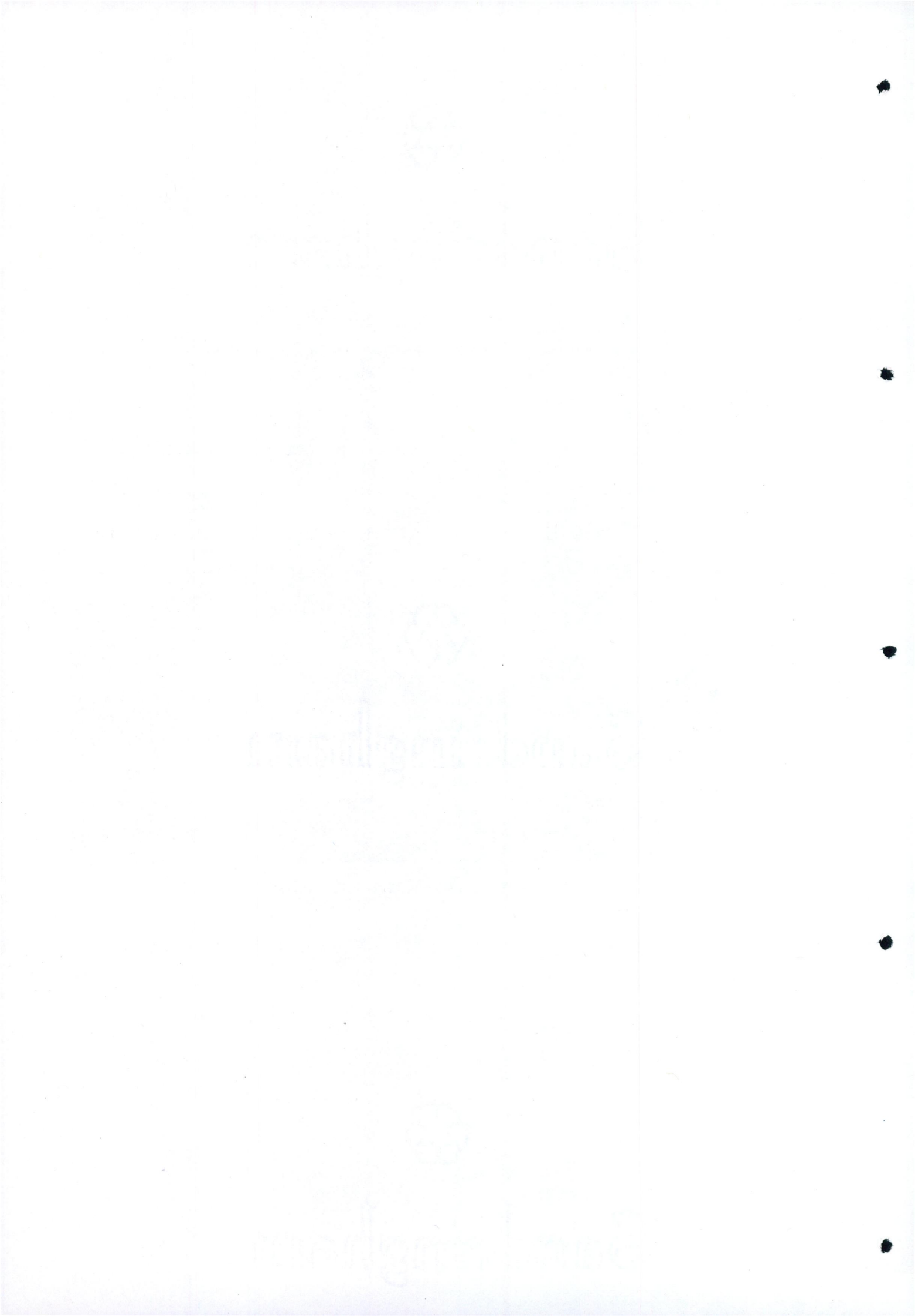


Plate 12



Students drawing from the Masters at the National Gallery



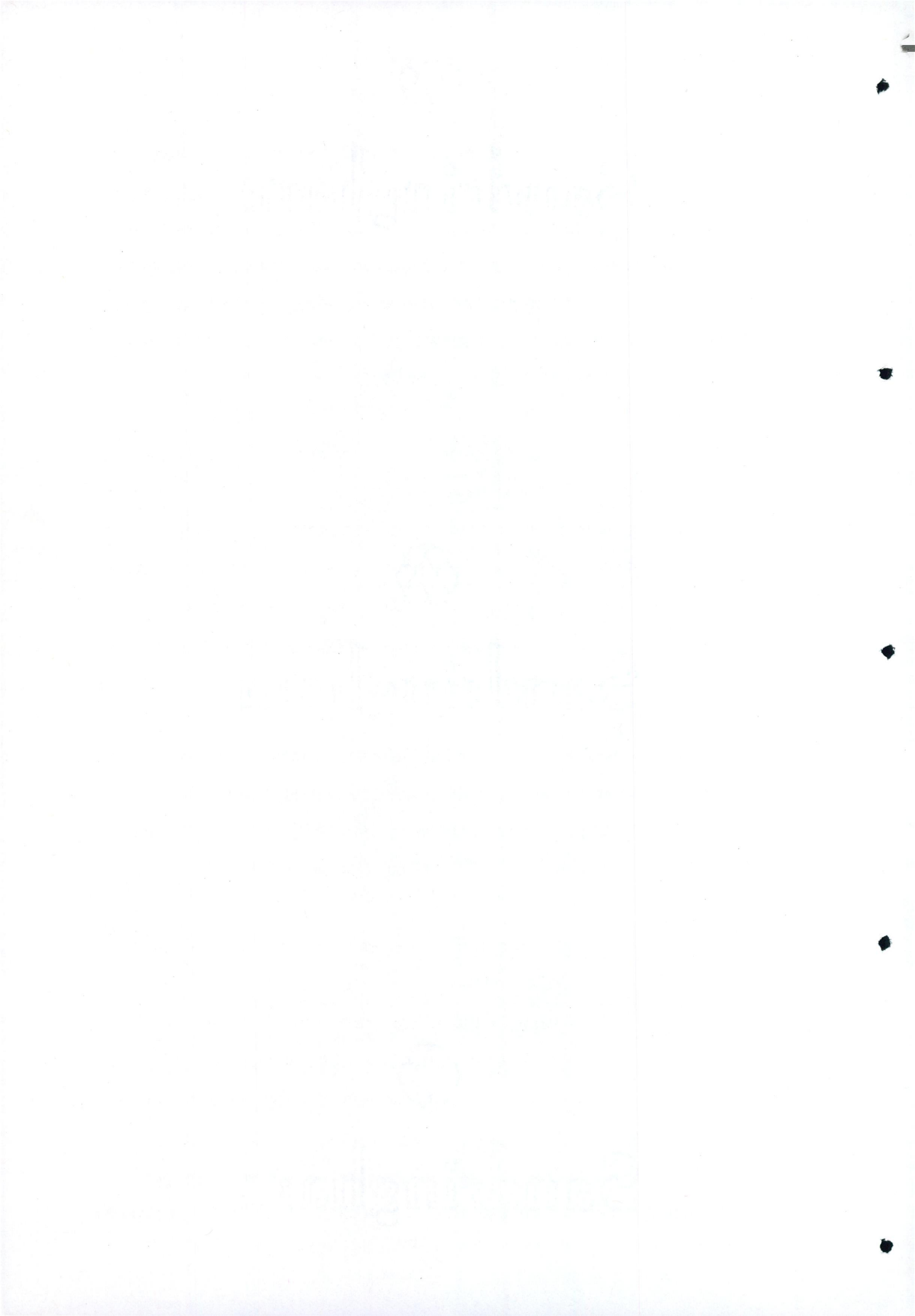
It is for these reasons that we should learn from the past. In education all we can do is make good work possible, whatever the theory or medium behind it, and be alert to its coming. Given favourable conditions, the benefits of new ideas are usually swift to manifest themselves. It is however entrenched that in practice the official educational attitudes are so deeply resistant to change, that in many cases the waters have settled placidly over the disturbances on the late 1960s, as if they had never happened.

If the College is to succeed in being truly a place of education for future Artist and Designers, then it should have a working position that is open to scrutiny and challenge from any source. The College should also have a clearly defined direction that can be argued and defended and be open to change or review. The College, as it was in the past, should be open to and exposed to criticism, influences and even pressures, although its autonomy to make its own decisions should be respected at all times.

Critical analysis of the situation at the College is important. Whereas the dissident is looked upon by the authorities as a source of annoyance, rather should the dissident be looked upon as the agent of change that should be listened to, in order to ensure that the College is serving its purpose well.

In a society where within twenty five years we have shed the Cold War, the Northern 'Troubles' and the arm's race, where the computer revolution has totally reshaped how we work and play, where multimedia dominates our cultures and where the virtual dimension promises to completely change this, how can we still be educated under a philosophy that remains unchanged through all of this?

The thoughts behind the education of human concepts and skills are difficult to



articulate because the goalposts keep moving. Education in Art & Design is not like mathematics, the latter is constant and follows strict rules, the former is fluid, conceiving that which is absent as if it were present, always constantly moving, modifying itself, as there cannot be a simple definition of Art or Design. There is no way of quantifying what is art, only as a result of human creative skill. As for Design the daily repositioning of its borders and its principles creates a non-quantifiable imagination industry. Thus one poses the question; What is good art? What is good Design? Is it the amount of creativity involved? What is right and what is wrong? Do we believe that a creative piece can be assessed to be correct, as a sum, or incorrect? Thus we must always approach the areas of Art & Design with an open mind.

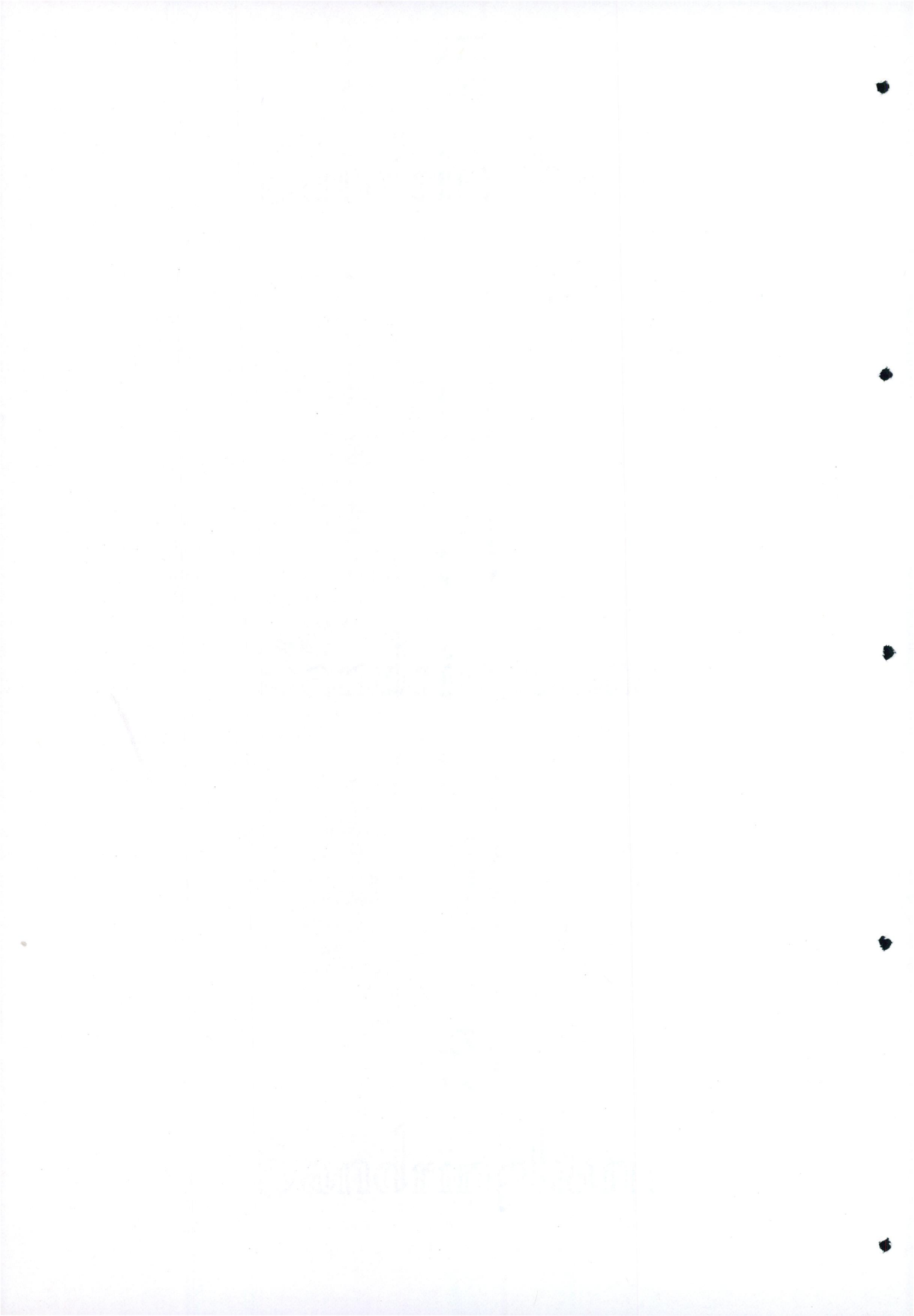
The fluidity of both Art & Design should be reflected in the fluidity of those who attempt to teach it, or those who provide facilities for Art & Design development. The National College of Art & Design is in the business of educating people for futures in Art and Design, it must teach people to be able to change and react to situations as they arise. The College must thus first learn how to change itself. For it is change itself that is the only constant in our futures.

Ultimately, the real meaning of Revolution is not a change in management, but a change in humankind. This change we must make in our own lifetime and not for our children's sake, for the revolution must be born out of joy and not sacrifice.



Appendix



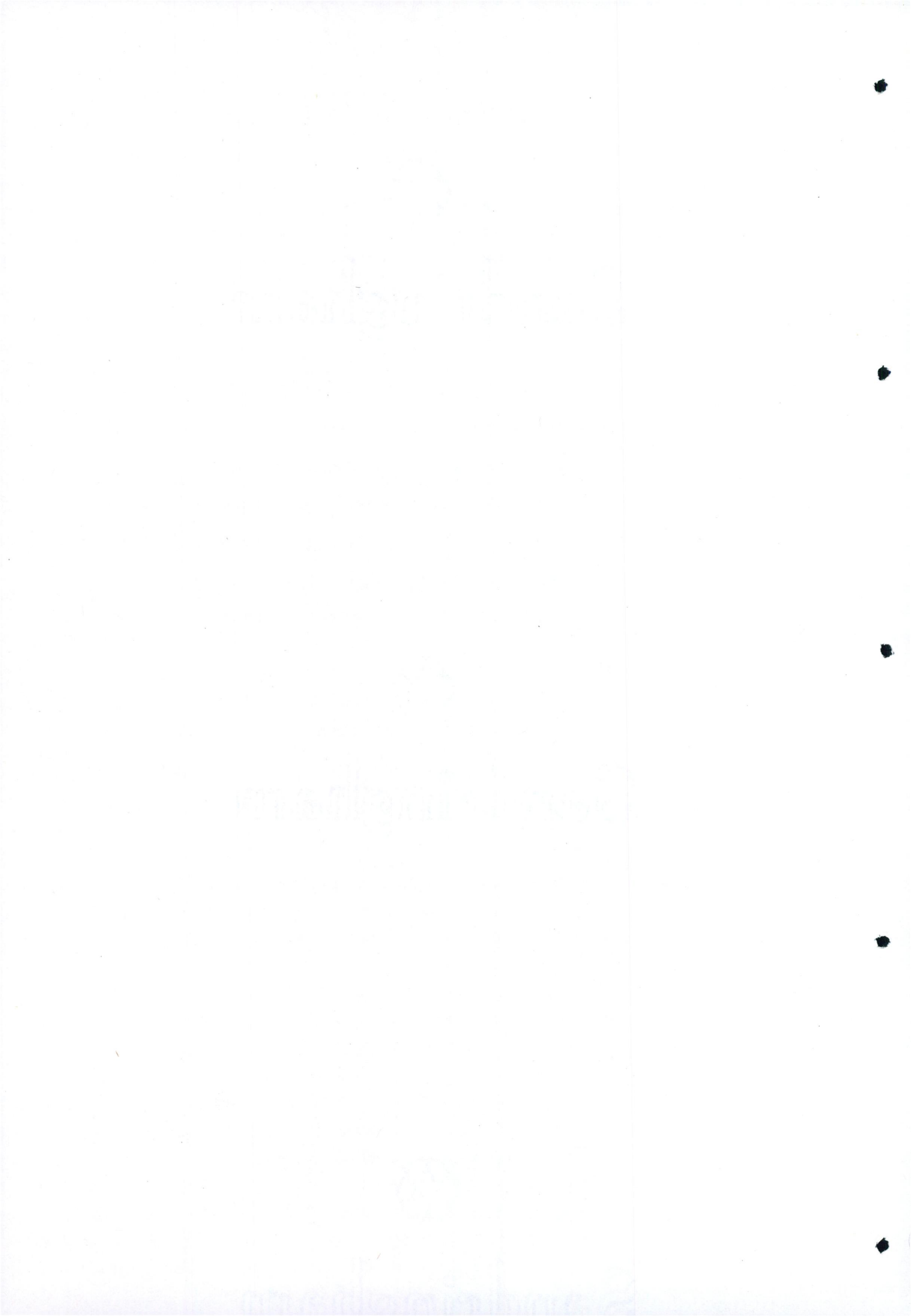


Student Action in The National College of Art & Design from 1967 to 1972

"It (World History) would be of very mystical nature if "accidents" played no part in it. These accidents themselves fall naturally into the general course of development and are compensated again by other accidents" (Karl Marx ,letter to Kugelmann, 17 April 1871)

The following is simply a chronology of events at the National College of Art between , in the most part, 1967 and 1972. This chronology is as accurate as could be compiled within the time allocated. There may be and possibly are some incorrect dates, but the bulk of the information is sequential and accurately shows the events as they happened. Much of the information has been gleaned from different sources, such as letters , interviews , printed media and documentation available. Information attained from media has not been interpreted in this section, thus this must be taken into account when reading press information.

In this , I hope to provide a starting point for others, a diary of events that will never be complete. There have been so many people involved in this story over the years that each persons memories and recollections would fill a thesis, so therefore I hope that on reading this , if you were involved that you add to it, and it will become a greater picture of the events in time to come.



The Origins

The college began its history as a little academy or school for drawing and painting which the Royal Dublin Society decided to establish in 1746 for the promotion of drawing and designing.

1749 The School was given a house in Shaws court off Dame Street.

1815 The College was moved to Leinster House into the servants quarters.

1849 The College is taken control of by the Board of Trade.

1854 The College was taken over by the Department of Science & Art.

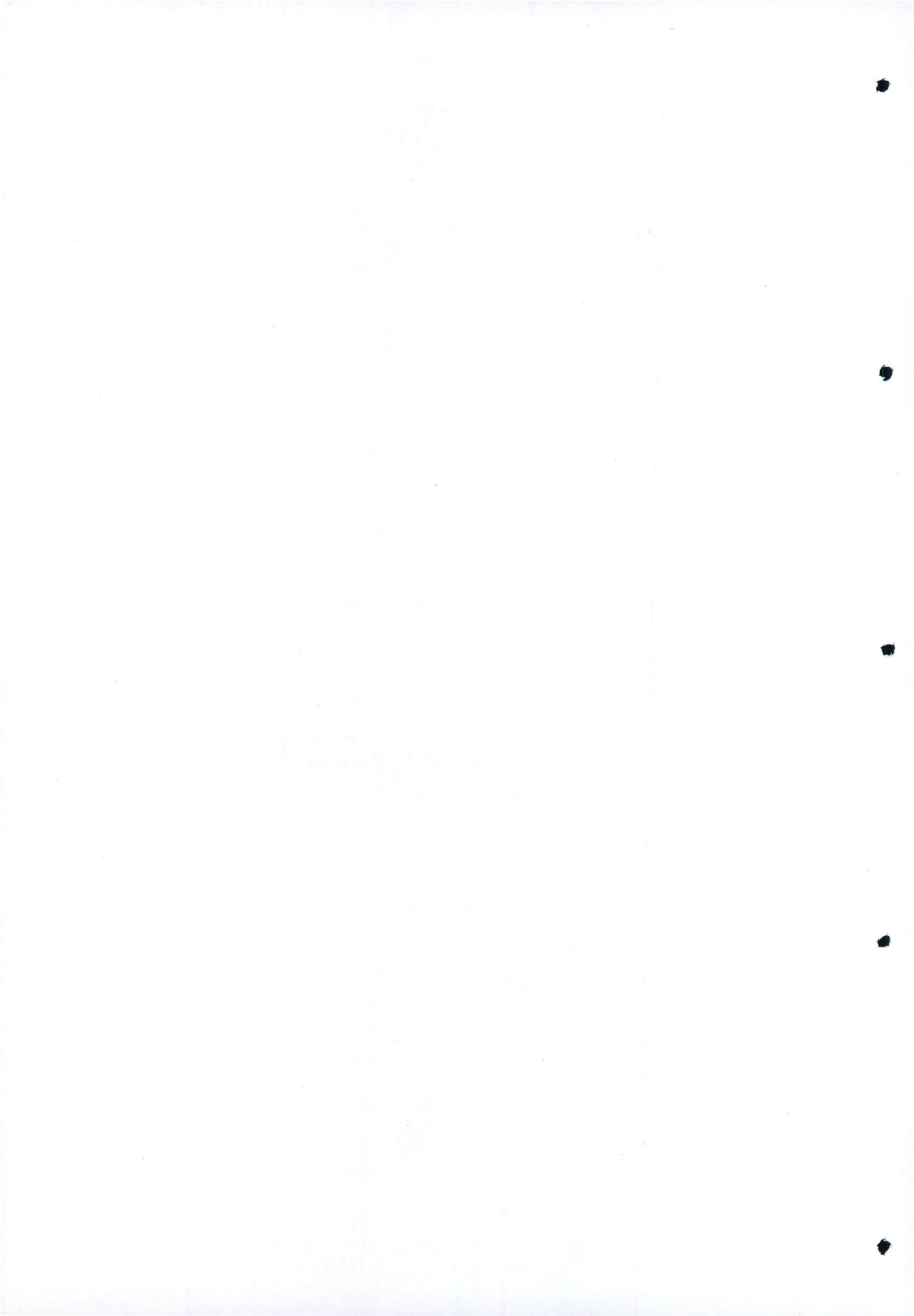
1877 The College was made into the Metropolitan School of Art.

1900 The school was taken over by the newly created Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland.

1924 The Department ceased to exist in 1924 and control passed to the Department of Education.

1936 The Department raised the school to the dignity of a National College of Art in 1936 and then just forgot about it. The College was placed under the technical Instruction Branch.

1937 Maurice McGonagle was made assistant Professor of Painting . The tutors were given the title of professors, a raise in salaries, but with no responsibility. A tutor often worked between five rooms with seventy two students at a time.



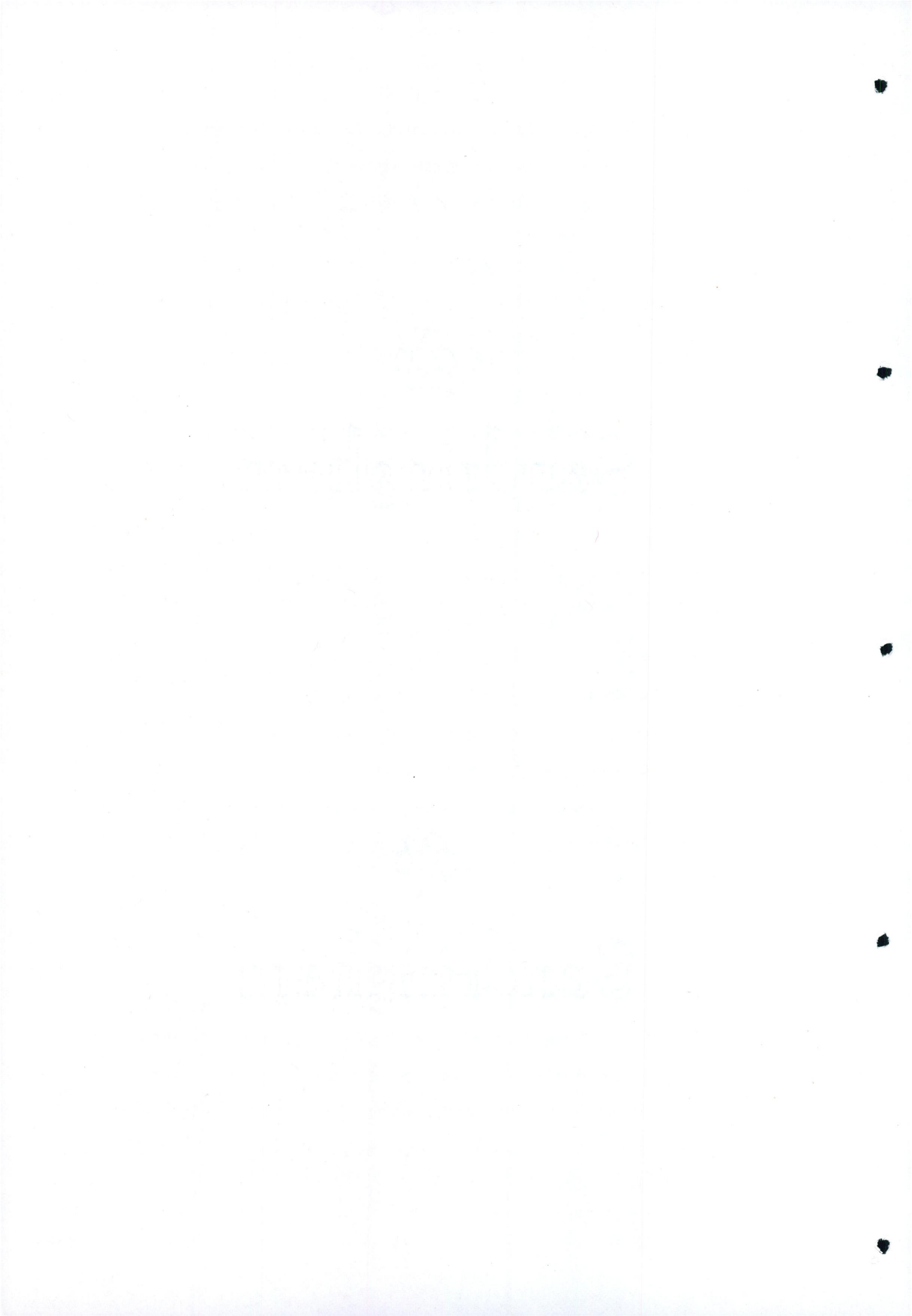
1945 Mr Michael De Burcha was appointed Director of the National College of Art after three years as an Art inspector. Under the aegis of the Department the Royal Hibernian Society held its annual exhibition in the College Gallery for many years.

1961 A Scandinavian report said " Design in Ireland":
"The final impression we took away from this school was that the methods of education were completely out of date and it is our opinion that the National College of Art as presently constituted cannot be the starting point for the education of people in the different crafts or indeed for the education of painters, sculptures or designers " (IT weds 18-06-69 Pg 12)

1963 A council for design was set up by the Minister for Education, Jack Lynch , it reported with some restraint that "the premises at Kildare St. are totally inadequate for a National College of Art. The buildings contain a preliminary school, three diploma schools- of painting, sculpture and design & crafts-and a teacher training course". The council members added "The existing space for additional building is negligible and in our opinion the present premises cannot be adapted. Even at the moment the accommodation for administration, staff rooms and student rooms, library ,reading rooms canteen and cloakrooms obsolete or non-existent."

1965

The Council for Design submitted its report to the Minister, it outlined the colleges rapid development of their design courses but noted that they could never be adequate in the existing conditions of staff, equipment money and space. It recommended an entirely new National College of Art, Architecture and Design, to be operated by an autonomous National Design Board.(IT weds 18-06-69)



1967 A Commission on Higher Education reported in 1967 , on the college structure " It is controlled ,administered and staffed on civil service lines; it has none of the usual forms of government found in institutions of higher education.....and it has no academic authority to make appointments. The academic work of the College is carried out by professors and other teachers, but its general administration is under the control of a Government Department. In such an arrangement, there is a duality of responsibility and a clear focus of authority cannot be discerned....."(IT weds 18-06-69) page12

October 1967 The Students Representative Council (SRC)started an investigation into the problems at the NCA. The composed details, complaints and recommendations were collected from students, staff, art educationalists, painters, sculptors, and designers, and sought an interview with O' Malley.

In the Department of Educations' annual report in 1967-68 thirty lines were dedicated to the College of Art out of one hundred and fifty eight pages, and this only to note that 2 scholarships had been awarded.

Behind these sentences lies a story of government apathy towards the then College of Art.

The conditions the Department had let the National College slip into, paved the way for the students to reach a boiling point, and a textbook situation for a student protest arose.

Donogh O' Malley died in early 1968 and Brian Lenihan was appointed Minister for Education. If anyone was going to restructure the College voluntarily, I believe that O' Malley was the one chance.



April 1968 The SRC had compiled a twenty seven page report for submission to the Minister for Education. It set out two main grievances to which all other problems were related. The first quoted the Council for designs statement that the Kildare st. premises were completely inadequate. Secondly, was the fact that the NCA was the only institute in higher education controlled by the civil service.

In April 1968 Donal O' Sullivan spokesperson for the SRC met with Brian Lenihan, then Minister for Education. The Minister for Education promised a new building within five years and an independent governing body with student representation within one month.

On April 18th 1968 there was an Art & Design Education in Ireland symposium in Trinity College Dublin with Sir Robin Darwin Vice provost of the RCA, who said of Classical Greek Sculptures, "If you can't burn them break them"

August 1968 In a meeting with Brian Lenihan they were introduced to Mr. Sean O' Connor , assistant secretary to the department, who was to investigate the situation and make recommendations by Christmas. This was the superior officer who was to become upsetting to Maurice McGonagle.

November 1968 Sean O' Connor starts his investigations. He spent approximately two mornings a week in the College. In December he withdrew the Ministers' promise of an Independent Governing body.

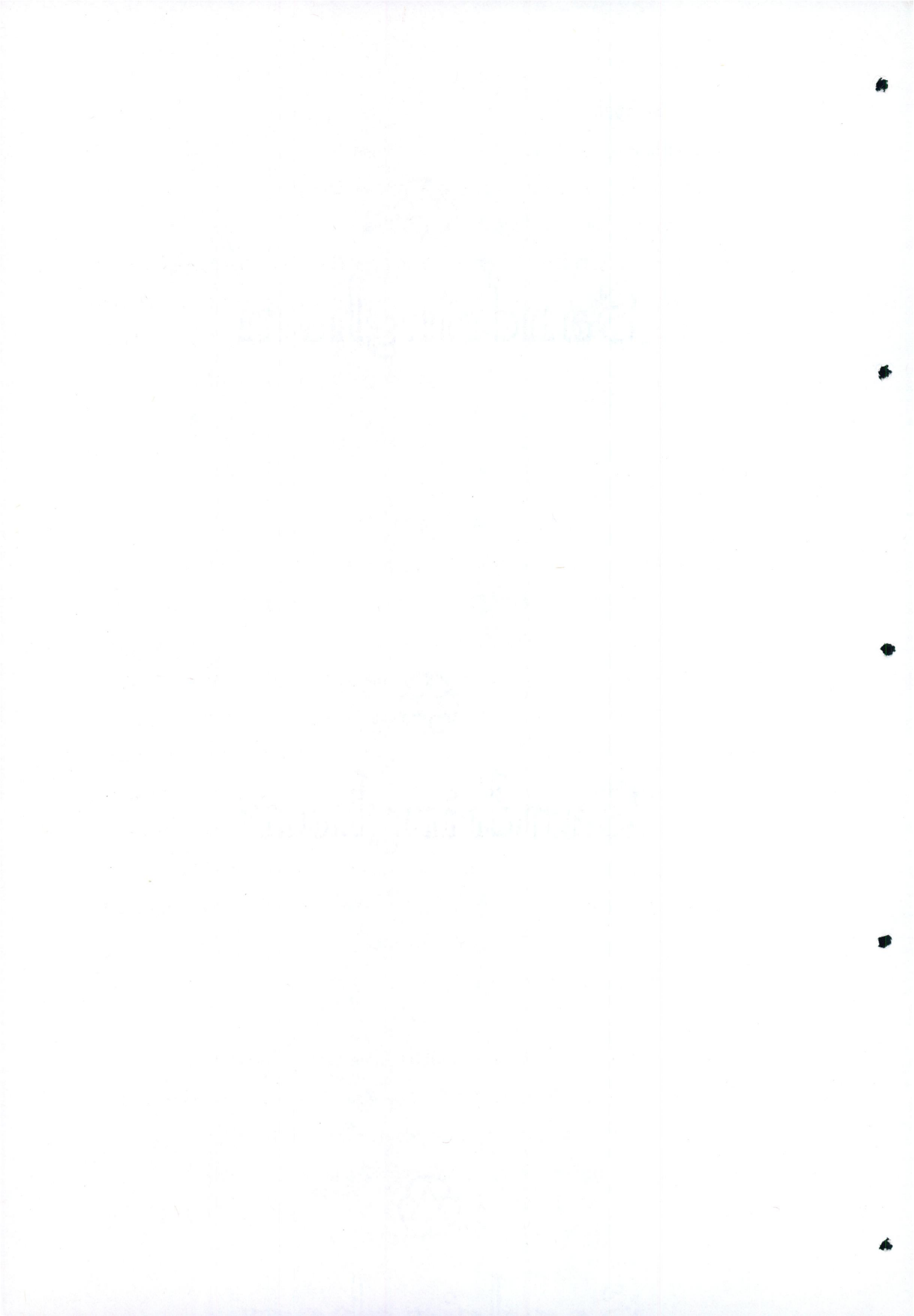
7th December 1968 A meeting was organised by the SRC of staff and students from Bolton St., UCD and the NCA, where Art and Architecture got a very emotive airing. This meeting called for the setting up of a new college of Art , Architecture and Design.



December 1968 Mr. Sean O' Connor proposed an **Interim Advisory Council** with student representation to advise the College Director, Mr Michael De Burca, of entrance examination standards and the restructuring of courses. This was not what the students wanted, this was not an autonomous Governing Body, but the Minister claimed that that would need legislation, so the students reluctantly accepted this. This council was to be composed of two Government appointees, three staff members, three students, Mr. O' Connor and the Director. The SRC felt that the Council by its very structure could not fulfil its terms of reference.

After three meetings, Mr. O' Sullivan said, "it became clear that it was not competent to deal with the the re-structuring of courses and the reform of teaching methods members of the council said they were neither willing nor able to discuss these matters". As an effect of this the students rejected the Council at a General meeting. They then met to propose that an executive educational committee of art educationalists, be set up, to restructure the courses and review the teaching methods and staff qualifications. The Advisory Council agreed to recommend this to the Minister. Students met the Advisory Council and discussed their dissatisfaction with the Council. At this meeting students explained that they had made detailed complaints to the staff regarding the restructuring of courses. After these complaints had been made it became clear that as stated by the Commission on Higher Education Report, the staff of the College had no control over the courses in the College.

The Commission has pointed out that because of the structure of the College, i.e. being directly controlled by the Civil Service there was no locus of responsibility and neither the teachers nor the Department of Education were responsible for the form or development of courses in the College.



19th February 1969

-Brian Lenihan rejects the Council's recommendations.

-At a meeting of students called at 4 pm the Student Representative Council gains full and unanimous support for student action the next morning at 10am after the ministers refusal to accept the Advisory Council's recommendations

Feb 20th 1969

-**Work-in** begins, students conduct their own classes.

-Maurice McGonagle walks out.

-Fees at £25 a year.

-The SRC hold talks with the Staff in order to hold a joint protest against the conditions of the College and the administration.

-A Delegation which included Mr de Burca, Mr O' Connor and Mr. Flannigan called some students into a room in the College and asked them if they were willing to come back under the old system on Monday. The answers were strictly a yes no basis, no opportunity for discussion was allowed.

-The SRC condemned the tactics as intimidating and as having seriously set back negotiations

21st February 1969

-Work in continues, they are preparing to squat for the weekend

Minister for Education Brian Lenihan announces that he will close the College from Monday.

The following is the Ministers Press release in the Irish Times Friday 21st



February 1969.

Because of the refusal of the majority of students to attend the regular classes and conform with the ordinary regulations of the of the National College of Art the Minister for Education has decided with regret to close the College from Monday next until further notice.

The Minister wishes to inform the public that over the past few months the students were given every opportunity to state what were their problems and what facilities, equipment, etc., they felt were required in the college. A number of their requests have already been met.....

The minister wishes to point out that he has already established an interim Council to assist the Director in the general direction of the College. The Council is composed of the Director of the College as chairman, three staff representatives and three persons nominated by the minister. Moreover the Director has already established an academic council within the college.

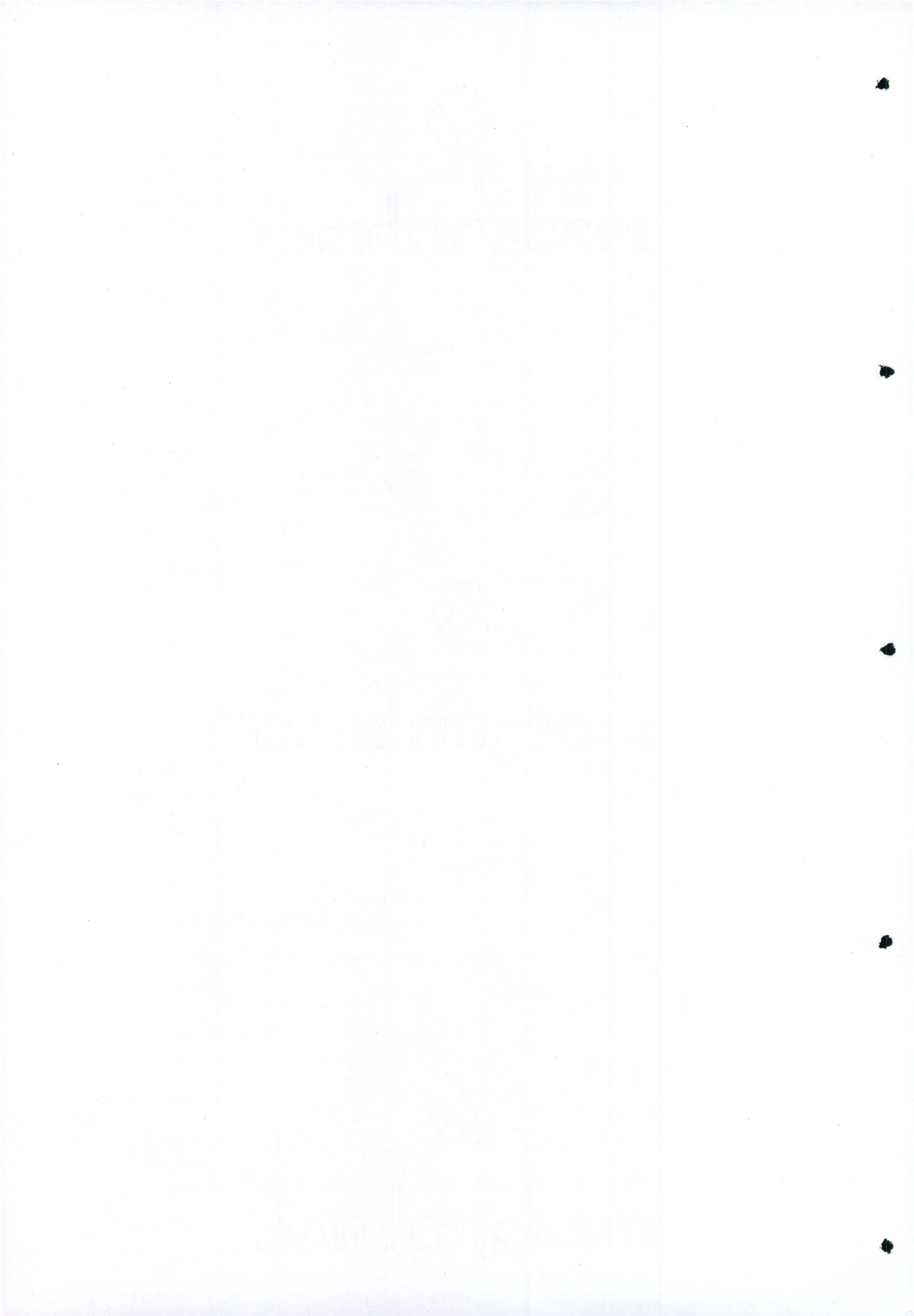
The Minister is satisfied that the two Councils are adequate to deal with the present problems of the College. In the long term the Minister is having plans prepared for a new College of Art and is at present considering the Constitution of this new College. He is satisfied furthermore that to accede to the students' present proposal would undermine all authority in the college

The Minister also wishes to express his sincere regret to the evening students who will be deprived of their lectures as a result of the closing of the college.

The Students' proposal was as follows:-

The appointment of a Student /teacher approved Ombudsman (or Artistic Director) who would set up an autonomous Executive Education Committee to investigate the changing and setting of courses in the college and to investigate the staff situation and qualifications.

"The Union Of Students in Ireland (USI) supports the Art Students in their efforts" to achieve the necessary reforms". The statement "condemns the



Department of Education for its delaying attitude and failure to live up to its promise on the issues raised by the students"

UCD students visit college and show their solidarity.

22nd February 1969

No-sit in - students left last night (Evening Press 22-2-69)

23rd Feb

One hundred and twenty students arrive to College to deliver two letters, one to the Director seeking entry and the other to the head attendant seeking entry one at a time to take equipment out. They were addressed by Robert McColgan of the SRC.

Students march to National Gallery of Art in single file behind Claire O' Loughlann to work there. The SRC cancelled a picket after pleas from the Parents Association to " maintain their good image" EH & EP "Students working in Art Gallery"

One hundred and fifty students marched from the College of Art to the Aula Maxima in UCD carrying placards. They considered a work in there.

24th Feb

Student (Ann Delap) deliver another letter to the Director asking entry and one to the Minister pleading that he change his decision "until further notice."

There was a meeting of the parents of the students who " expressed their solidarity with peaceful aims of the students and are anxious to have a speedy settlement to this dispute" They also wrote a letter to the minister-IT 24-02-1969" Art Students demand entry to College"



Mr George Wynne Jones , President of the Dublin University Art Society offers the Students working room in College Lane. Irish Press 24-02-1969 "bid to re-enter College of Art".

25th Feb

TCD & Bolton St Students Union pass motion of solidarity

25-2-1969

Students decide not to picket on legal grounds.

"If students materials are not released from the school within 14 days the SRC will take legal action against the College and the Department" Irish Times 25/2/1969.

Students believe they can set up an Independent College of Art from the offers they have received from associations in Dublin.

The Minister said that he would not open the College until the students involved in the work in agreed to return to normal class.

The Institute for Creative Advertising and Design " wishes to record its wholehearted support for the students of the national College of Art, in their fight for an establishment worthy of the name."

ICAD states

successive reports by independent groups have outlined the shortcomings of the college just as the experience of past & present students underline them...the need for an autonomous body to administer the college has gone beyond the need for debate. The Minister must act to revitalise the National College of Art in line with the requirement of the times. Vested interests must not be allowed to delay any longer the provision of first class art and design training in Ireland".Ep 25-02 1969

USI consider a National one day strike

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Handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.

Handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.

Mr De Burca wrote a letter to each student saying that they could come back if they agreed to keep the rules and go to normal class, enclosed was a form that they must sign, no-one signed

26th Feb

Teachers Association claimed a large part of the present trouble was due to the insecurity of their employment. Thirty out of the thirty six staff were part-time.

Minister of Education , Brian Lenihan, was to reply to the Auditors paper, from the Business and Economic society, "the economics of Higher education in Ireland". A Student in the Audience shouted a question at the minister "Why did you shut the College of Art?". Students still arriving into the hall shout for him to answer the question, another branded him a "Tool of Imperialism"

The Minister refused to answer the question but said that he would see the students and parents on the following Thursday. After some moments a scuffle developed at the doorway and there was an explosion of some kind outside. The students blocked the doorway and locked the Minister in. The Minister fled the hall to the toilet and through a toilet window.

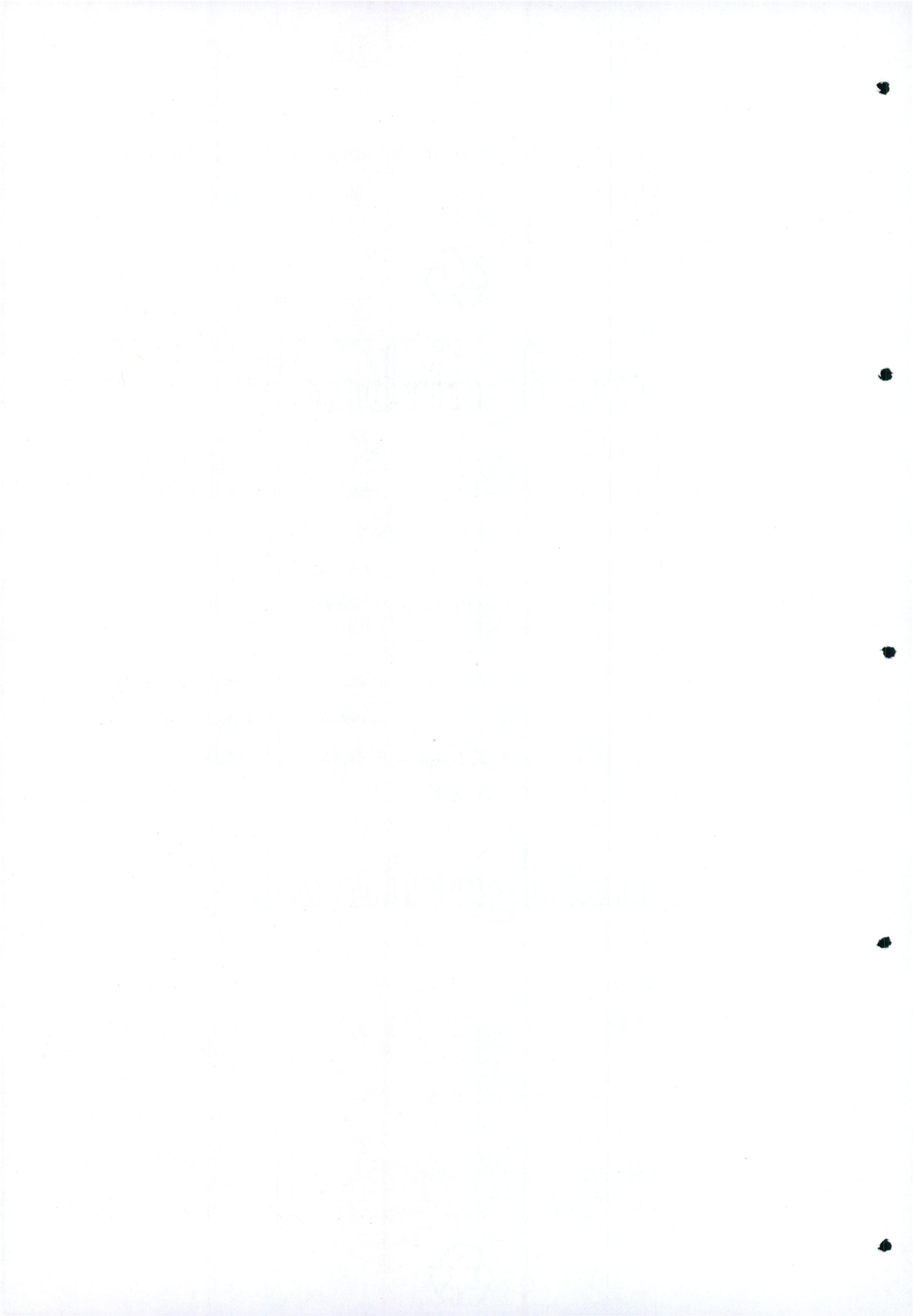
26th February 1969

One student of the SRC received notification of suspension

Michael Farrell (artist) proposed that the students cease negotiations with the Minister and set up their own college. He pledged his support.

Robert Mc Colgan was suspended for asking students to leave Mr.McGonagle's class the previous Friday.

26th Parent delegation meet minister, including Fergus O' Farrell, Mrs



Catherine Haughton, Mrs Patrica O' Loughlin and Mr. Frank Ryan, they urged that a commission be set up to revise the curriculum and make more relevant courses available.

Lenihan Says "there will be no recriminations" of the move.

more than sixty students marched from the Art Hall in Westland Row to the Dail in single file in rush hour traffic and spent 5 minutes of silence outside the Dail for the Minister.

Kevin St. S.U. offered its common room to the Art Students.

UCC and UCD SRCs voiced their support of Art students.

27th Feb 1969

The SRC of the College dissociates themselves from the Trinity incident that occurred on Tuesday night with Trinity's "United Front" and Brian Lenihan. IT 27-2-69.

Mr. lenihan was questioned in the Dail by Mr. Michael O' Leary who said that there had been a lot of problems with the curriculum for some time. He also was critical of the capability of civil servants to run the College of Art.

Mr. Lenihan said that he hoped the College would re-open soon and that an Interim Council was re-constructing the Curriculum of the Three Schools and hopes to have a greater flexibility of courses. Independant. 27-2-1969

28th february 1969

Minister Brian Lenihan said, "the recent demands of the students of the NCA



take away all authority from the director and teachers", in the Dail today.

"Religion and culture have become static and therefore there was a rebellion against them. We were dominated by economics. The way to prevent rebellion was to remain in a state of flux all the time and be open to progress. Artists must ask with Gauguin : Where are we going, where do we come from and who are we." IT 28-2

Mr. Robert McColgan said at a debate

" that the artists role was of a contemplative nature. He searched deeply into the real man while others get on with everyday living." but everyday living is very badly handled and art is going further and further away from it. The practical man and the contemplative man have reached a state of frustration in their own spheres and need to come together. As well as being an engineer a man should have the right to be a contemplative. There is an obligation on every human being to be a bloody genius"

There was supposed to be a meeting between the students and the Department of Education. The students refused to meet unless the Minister was there.

Donal O' Sullivan (Student leader) announces that they would not go back until the government set up a committee to examine their grievances and bring in legislation which gave the college an independent governing body EP 28-02-1969

The meeting has been postponed until the following Monday.

The staff of the College met to discuss whether the rebel art students should be disciplined or not.

The Teachers Association have issued a statement that they were concerned over the situation in the College and said that, in their opinion there was no serious rift between themselves and the student body.



28th February 1969

An editorial in the Irish Times completely condemns the rise of student power and said that they should not flout the "lawfully constituted authority " and that they should have been grateful for the privilege that they were getting, and not to be complaining about it.

1st March 1969

letter to the Irish Times criticises the minister for appointing Mr. O'Connor to look at the NCA, D.Kennedy recommends Kaj Franck, Erik Herlow, Ake Huldt, Gunnar Billmann Peterson to do this job.

3rd March 1969

Students meet with Brian Lenihan Parents and teachers. There is grounds for optimism.

In Kyoto there were forty arrests of Students following violent clashes between police and two hundred students trying to prevent entrance to examinations.

At Geneva University two hundred militant students end a five day sit in in Rectors office (IT 4-3-69)

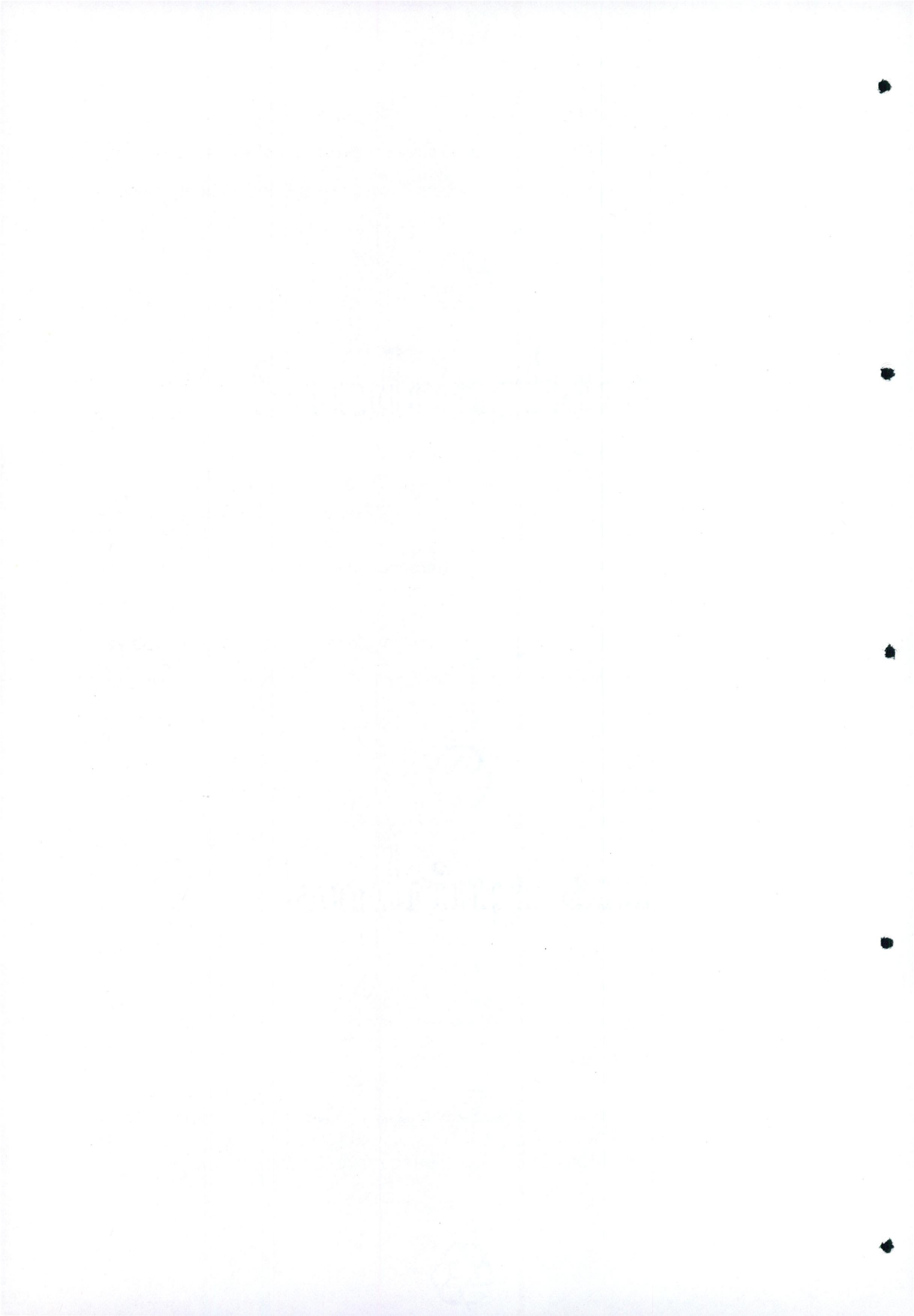
Independent Artists " condemn in the strongest possible manner" the ministers closure of the National College of Art.

4 March 1969

Students reject Mr. Lenihans proposals almost unanimously.

The Ministers proposals were:

an enlargement of the advisory council to have a definite advisory power for the restructuring of the courses and the creation of new committees to advise professors in each of the three schools.



The students demand a body with executive powers rather than advisory powers "Over the setting of courses and the examination of courses and staff qualifications and teaching methods". They also want it staffed with outside experts.

There was a sit in of one hundred Art & Architectural students in Cork School of Art

Kevin St. suspended classes for 90 minutes and picketed the College.

4th March 1969 day 10

Fifty students from Bolton St. march to Trinity in a USI work-in

There were no strikes at UCC or UCG

5th March 1969 day 11

Students again have meeting with the Department, Mr. Lenihan is unable to attend due to illness

The students were satisfied with the long term goals. It was the short term goals where the problems lay.

Sean Macgearailt secretary to the Department met Donal O' Sullivan , Claire O'Loughlann and Robert McColgan SRC to discuss progress.

7th March 1969 day 13

Some students have been allowed access to their lockers, the others threaten legal action.

10th march 1969 day 16

At a meeting with Mr. Sean MacGerrailt Secretary of the Department of Education



they had been offered

- (a) A promise that legislation would be in effect by September, earlier than planned;
- (b) An Advisory Board in the meantime comprising of strong representation of outside persons staff and students
- (c) Certain guarantees on the implementation of the Advisory Boards recommendations

11th March 1969 day 17

The students met under the SRC to consider the Ministers latest offer, the main stumbling block seemed to be part (c) of the proposals. The Students did not believe that legislation is necessary and do not trust ministerial promises. The question was "how much real power " would this board have. Ms. Claire O'Loughlann said that "Ideally we wanted a body entirely composed of outside interests...this is because we want a fresh re-examination of the courses" IT.

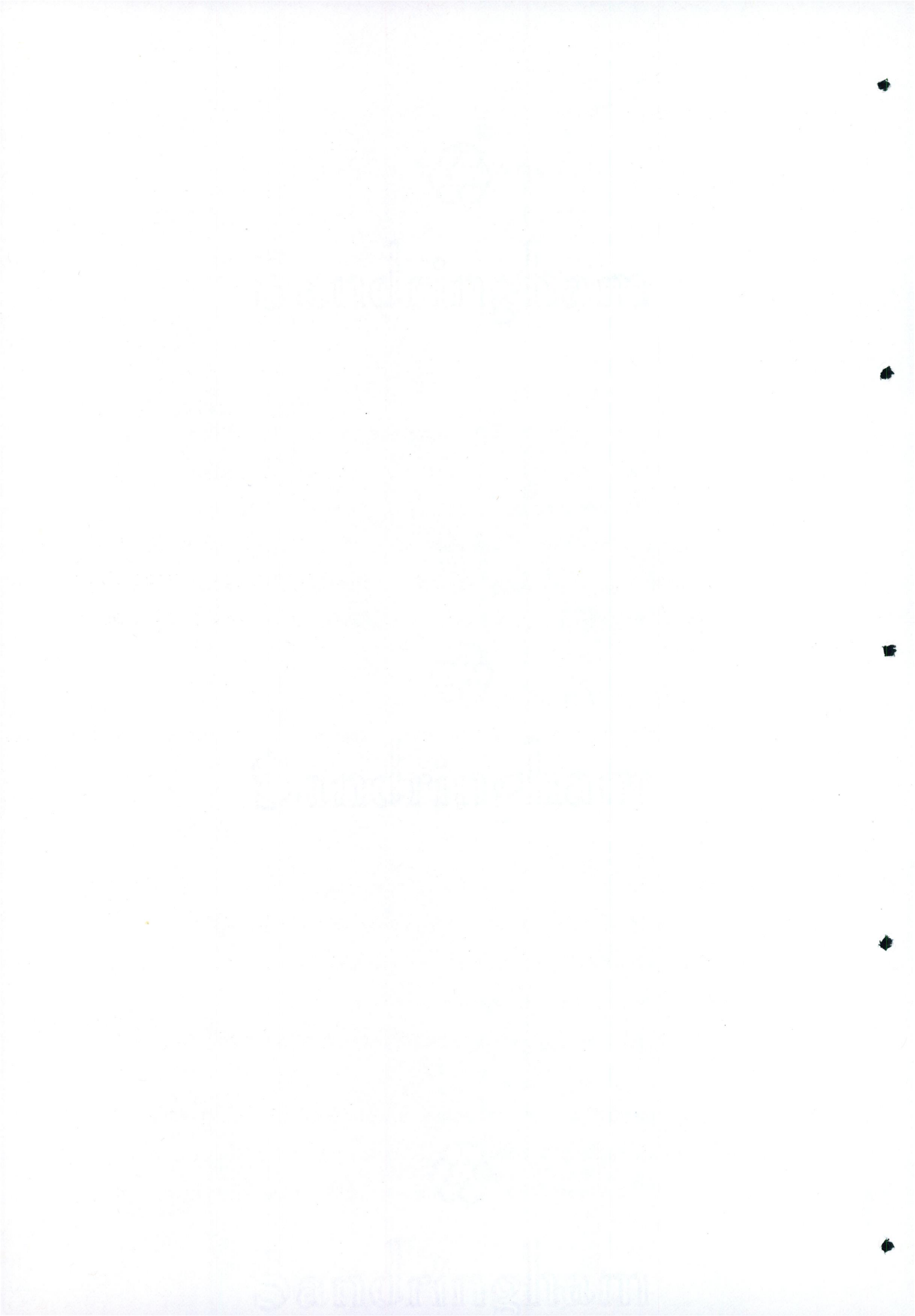
15th March 1969 day 21

Thirty students have had their scholarships suspended for the duration of the closure

18th March 1969 day 24

Students unanimously oppose Brian Lenihans latest proposals. Donal O' Sullivan said "We've been out for three weeks and we are prepared to stay out for another three". The suspension of scholarships hardened the students attitude to Mr. Lenihan. The Minister asked them to accept his proposals in good faith, but they saw the suspensions as an act of bad faith.

The arrangement was to have been covered by a written guarantee that all reasonable recommendations be implemented from the advisory board. As soon as practicable, but the student meeting of fifty of the one hundred and



twenty students in the College felt that the assurance was too weak.

The minister claimed that he could not set up an executive board without legislation as he was bound by the Ministers and secretaries act 1924 although he had promised legislation within six to eight months.

The relevant subsection of the 1924 act is section 1 The Department of Education....shall include in particular the business, powers, duties and functions of the branches and officers of the Public Service specified in the fourth part of the act.

The National College of Art (then known as the metropolitan School of Art) was listed in the fourth part of the Act.

The act also states" powers, duties and functions"of each department 'shall be assigned to and administered by the minister"

In reply to a query the Government Information Bureau stated:"The Minister who is in overall charge of the department, could not, pending legislation, divest himself the responsibility for the National College of Art." This begs the question -Who has had the responsibility since 1924?

20th March 1969 day 26

USI -plan Art & Design seminar for Easter Week

Students hold demonstration outside the Municipal Gallery where Mr.Lenihan was attending. The students occupied the entrance hall . David Lyons handed him a letter saying that Mr. Lenihan was a man of integrity and he would meet or talk to the students before he left.

They were offered coffee by the Minister they refused, when the sponsors of the exhibition Irish Mist offered them coffee they accepted.The Minister met with 6 of the students after the exhibition. The Gallery closed and the protesters went outside until the Minister left. IRISH PRESS-20-03-1969



21 March 1969 day 27

As a gesture of goodwill the students whose scholarships were suspended had them re-instated by the Minister. This was achieved through a meeting with the USI, Ciaran McKeown and Brian Lenihan.

3rd April 1969 day 40

Delegation of three met the MINISTER. Student leaders seemed optimistic about a return to class after Easter on the 14th. One of the agreements include legislation that will provide for a 12 strong College Board 2 students, 2 staff, the Director, and 7 outside people nominated by the students from outside the College. The Minister gave written guarantees that the recommendations of the Advisory Board would be implemented. It was decided that the terms of the council would be the general direction of the College with particular reference to the courses and the teaching methods. The Minister agreed that the draft legislation for the setting up of the fully autonomous governing body for the College will be made available as soon as the preliminary framework was devised and that then he would again meet the students for discussion on the form of the new governing body. The teacher is also to be re-instated.

14th April 1969 College Re-opens

Advisory Board draws up twenty six point memorandum.

The Minister amended some of the points and sent it back to the Advisory Board. Donal O' Sullivan claims that four of the points had already been broken, the most important of which were that John F. Kelly (RHA) and Donal Murphy had been appointed Professors of Painting and Sculpture. Apparently Lenihan did not want to sign the document even before seeing its final draft.



22nd April 1969-Irish Times

A directive from the department instructed staff not to admit newsmen to obtain information.

Fifty Students occupy the College overnight and were locked in. This came about after the Minister refused to sign the full 26 point memorandum.

Apparently the ministers secretary said that he had no intention of signing the the document. The Minister said " In order to avoid misunderstanding, the Minister has asked the students for their interpretation of the points agreed between him and them. Until he has received this, he cannot comment on the suggestion that he has departed in any way from the general proposals agreed on with the students' representatives."

From a letter by Donal O' Sullivan to Grainne Dowling at that time

About ten days after you left the students brought the College to a halt again. In order to avoid being locked out . The Sculpture School wing as far as the mens jacks was occupied.

An ideal opportunity for a re-think of the problems. For the first three days of the occupation this happened to a startling degree. The crowded conditions, shared food, fear of police attack, the heightened emotional state which seems to follow action of this kind inevitably, ambulance being called to take away ill student, unsuspected talents for lock picking and electrical jobs (we had a phone connected to the outside on the 2nd day) television installed, all the trappings

There were definite changes in the students who stayed in before the relapse began. All sorts of barriers and inhibitions were broken down (partly because of exhaustion). Anne Delap put it very well , she says she's been left 'flapping' in the wind' with all her values and opinions desecrated. That's exactly the way one feels when you stop an institution in its tracks and attempt to put it together again by trial and error (mostly error)

Eventually quite a number of students objected to being left 'flapping' in the wind, and started comparing the relative value of a diploma and classes to an open ended living argument in room 17. The result was a proposal to begin negotiations with the teachers and attempt to reorganise the college from the inside. On the surface, not a bad

move but in reality several rapid steps backward, back to where you and I came in, in fact. Next step will be a report to the Minister for Education , the sheer acrobatics of it all.

By the way, what really knackered many of the students towards the end of the occupation was the possibility of Lenihan closing the College for good. They couldn't face next year with no College. To risk a gigantic generalisation, you can't reform an institution effectively unless you are prepared to question its very existence. They were attempting an argument which began with half a dozen presuppositions.

First, about the impression of sprawling art students; this was due to a lack of policy on our part. For the first couple of days there was complete confusion as to whether we wanted publicity and why, and even whether we wanted public pressure on Lenihan.

Six weeks of well meaning (self) interested bodies and concerned parties; unending squabbles between the different art cliques until at the end of it all it was hard to tell which the most depressing , the civil service machinations or the cultural elite. The net result was a withdrawal on our part.

-Donal O Sullivan

24th April 1969

The occupation continues Day 2

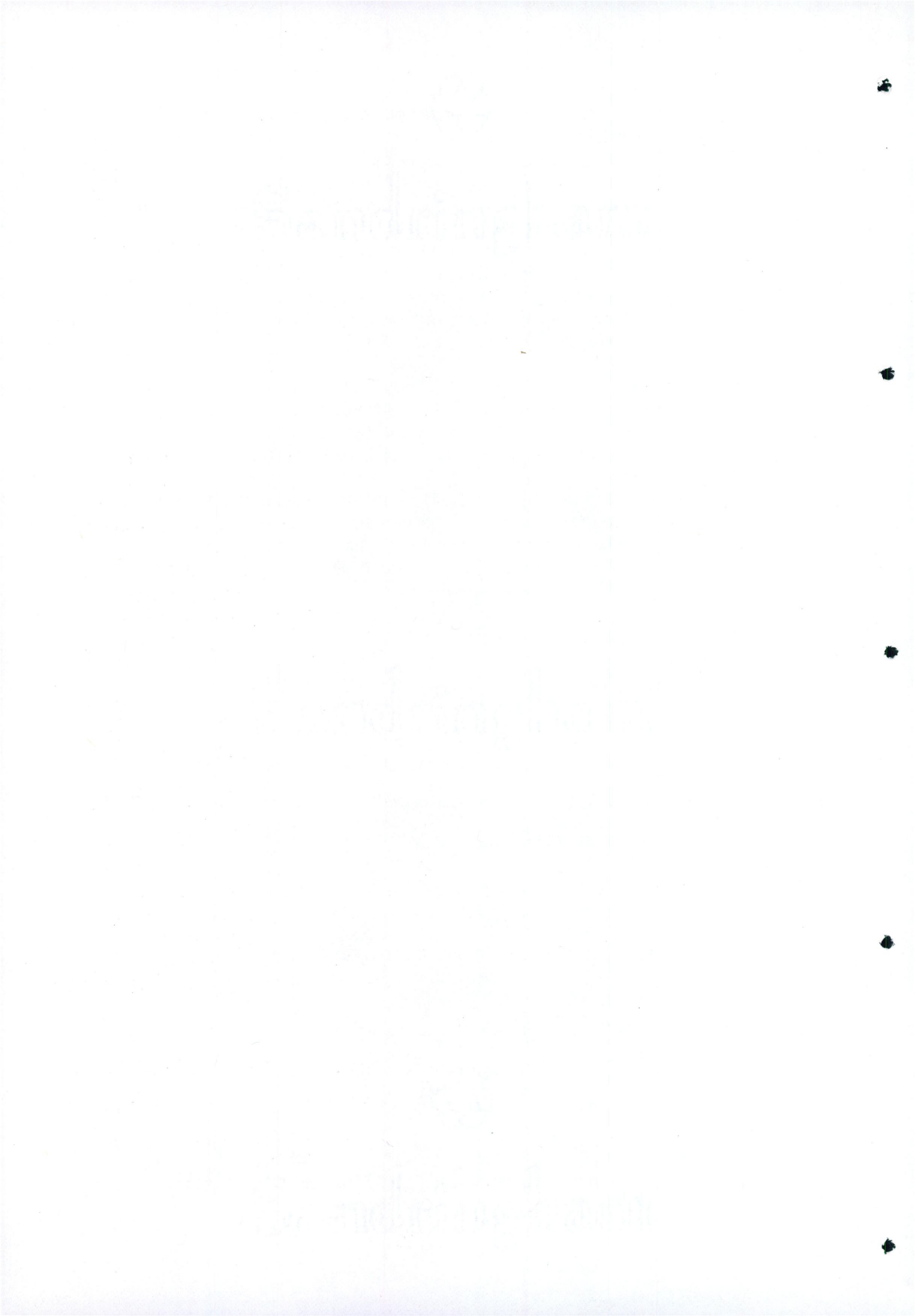
Irish Independent "We are all Lancoons (sic)...we are being slowly choked by the Department. But Laocoons sin was pride. All we want is for the Minister to honour the agreement he made with us"

NCA student

The students reject the amendments made by the Minister.

UCD SRC said "this is ample evidence of the incompetence of the present Minister and of the inefficiency of the department of education in dealing with the problems of higher Education in Ireland today"

Government Information Bureau (GIB) said, "The revised memorandum sets out fully, as far as the Department is concerned, everything that was agreed



upon in the discussions with the students and does not leave any room for misapprehension"

May 28th 1969

Occupation ends with the smashing of the classical casts which had symbolised what they were fighting against

June 4th 1969

Evening Herald "Vandals stop college of art sit-in"

The six week old occupation of the National College of Art has been abandoned because of a rampage by vandals last week which resulted in the destruction of nearly £5000 worth of plaster casts "Bacchus day and night" by Michelangelo which stands in the College today as a reminder of these turbulent days.

The students said that the offending two students had been punished by fears that the law may have to run its course. "If there is any threat of expulsions, there will certainly be trouble"

The occupation force was disbanded after the rampage. In a letter sent to the College authorities on Thursday June 2nd, the students indicated that they were withdrawing from the occupied sculpture halls and expressed regret that the damage had been inflicted.

"The casts were broken out of frustration, most likely.....these were symbols of the Department of Education which has been treating us very badly of late. Destroying them was destroying the Department.....We were in the sculpture halls on Thursday night when we heard the crashing sounds coming from the antique room. When we got there we were confronted with a pile of debris. Most of us broke into tears when we saw what happened."

Research has revealed that Donal O'Sullivan was one of the Culprits, unfortunately he died last year at the age of 46, the other I cannot confirm yet but there is a strong possibility that he is a tutor in the NCAD at the moment.

1943-1944

1943

1943-1944

1943

1943-1944

june 7th 1969

The students were split over the incident of the breaking of the statues, they did not know whether to let the identity of the individuals involved in the breaking of the casts.

" We genuinely fear that this senseless act may give the Department of Education an excuse to close down the College," said one of the student leaders, "We could all be deprived of all Art Education in Ireland for several years if this desperate situation existed."

From a letter from Donal O'Sullivan to Grainne Dowling at that time:

The protest died quietly, because (mainly) some of the students felt the College would be closed if the anarchy went on. It was decided to negotiate with the staff with a view to reorganising the College from the inside. This was done partly out of innocence partly in order to prevent the closure by providing a semblance of normal routine. I decided to give them a week or two of experiment to wise up to the reality and then had arranged a general meeting to survey the wreckage.

Naturally the move had collapsed and a gentle pressure put on the Council by the students concerning the form of assessment etc was rebuffed. So with about a month of term to go it looked as if the students might be encouraged to pressure the Council staff and Department into a satisfactory tie up to the year. The main difficulty at the time was the emotional and mental exhaustion of the students. It was gradually gaining momentum when the casts were damaged, the rest you know. A number of the key students have arrived back from London (a weeks visit to Hornsey, Central School , Royal College etc) today. Their ideas are a little on the innocent side but at least they have ideas. Some of them have already begun to plan for the next year.

June 19th 1969 Irish Times

Michael Viney reported in an article that Donal O' Sullivan does not seem to be a " Dublin Danial Cohn Bendit". " I was looking for a system where I could participate in setting my own course together with someone who knew what I



was trying to do, instead of trying to fit me into a course set forty years ago. I was looking for a combination of freedom and guidance. I would have valued a teacher who would have taken real interest in my work-I did want guidance not isolation. I wanted a course to suit my own development, not something set, year in year out, regardless of the individual student, "Donal O' Sullivan

June 1969

This summer there were assessments instead of the usual examinations. A number of students travelled to London to study the state of the Art Colleges there on the bequest of the Advisory Council .

June 26th

The College was closed for the Summer to the students.

July 28th

The Minister , Padraig Falkner, told the Dail that the NCA would open at the end of September, as usual.

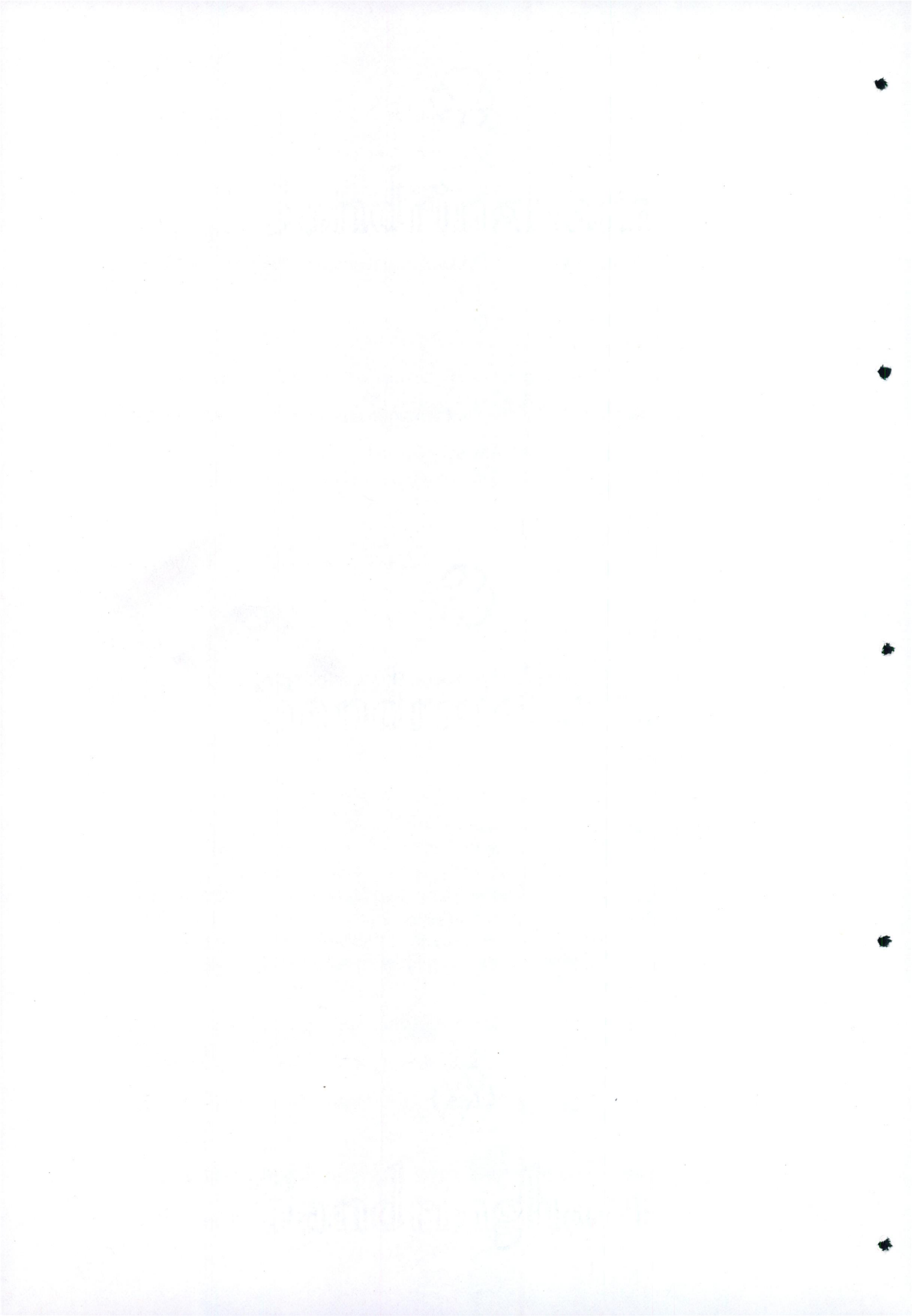
The report of the Advisory Council was also presented to Mr. Faulkner. The report stated:

" It is generally felt at the moment that the College is dangerously out of control and we strongly advise the dissolution of the College as it stands and that work should be got under way in preparation for the setting up of a new establishment.....furthermore it is felt that every possible break should be made from the National College of Art and that the new establishment should be called the Dublin College of Art".

The report was implicitly critical of the staff, who demanded a chance to refute some of the allegations against them, two of its authors refused to meet them, Mr. Dermot Larkin and Professor Christopher Ryan.

August 1969

A month after presenting the report three of its authors resigned in protest



against the ministers failure to do anything about it, Professor Ryan, Mr. Larkin and Professor Geoffrey Hewitt (Principle of Cork School of Art)

"I was not prepared to be associated with a Council which was acting as a stop-gap for the Ministers failure to solve the problems of Irish Art Education"

Professor Geoffrey Hewitt (Principle of Cork School of Art)

A total of sixteen students were informed that they had either" failed outright in their yearly assessment of work or were advised not to return to the College.

Summer 1969

In June there was a General Election, Donal O' Sullivan seemed to feel that Fianna Fail were trying to lose it because of the bleak economic outlook.

Lenihan said that they would be better off in opposition. Labour seemed to be going on a christian socialism ticket with a star spangled line up.

De Gaulle visits Aras an Uctaran

The Advisory Council collapses, there has been no legislation yet.

This was the end of the troubles for now.

October 20th 1969

Mr. Faulkner reads the Advisory Report in the Dail.

October 15th 1969

Sixteen students are given the second chance to sit examinations that they boycotted in the previous month. The Students Union expressed no confidence in the examinations organised by the college authorities. It demanded that the examiners be competent people appointed by the foundation course tutors.



October 27th 1969 "Pay off for sit in "

Brian Lenihan announces plans for a new £1m College of Art & Industrial Design

November 3rd 1969

The college re-opened for the new academic year five weeks late.

November 14th

Ten final year students were offered Erasmus type scholarships to Loughborough College of Art & Design. All expenses were to be paid by the Department of Education. These scholarships were withdrawn the following March, the majority of NCA teachers spent on average two weeks all expenses paid at the College in that academic year.

December 1969

A student organised petition resulted in one student being awarded his diploma and another being allowed to complete his studies in the College.

January 1970

The teaching staff refused to meet the student body to discuss the problems of the College.

February 1970

A demand for materials required by students and supported by some teachers was sent to the Department of Education. This demand was never acknowledged.

May 5th

A general meeting of students passed the following resolutions:-

- 1 That an association of members of the National College of Art be



formed, comprising of all students and staff, to control the NCA.

2 The the association control the appointment and decide the terms of reference of a College Director.

3 The three school Diploma System be abandoned and that all students be allowed to share all facilities and take common Diploma majoring in the subject of their choice.

Mr. O' Connor replied to these saying "not likely to (1) and (2) and possibly to (3), that depending on the new governing body, when it was formed.

Twenty five students occupy the college in support of these resolutions

May 6th

A notice reading "College of Art for Student and teachers, not Civil Servants was displayed outside the College. The staff refused to enter the College.

College diplomas were distributed to students and staff outside the the building

A meeting of sixty students endorse the occupation.

That evening a force of thirty gardai, stormed the college and removed the students one by one. The students left the building and were told the college was closed indefinitely.

May 7th

A meeting of staff and Department of Education devoted itself to deciding which students should be expelled. Thirty students were considered for expulsion.

These expulsions threatened to reduce the number of students in the School of sculpture to less than the number of staff.



May 18th

The College reopens but nine students were refused entry as they were suspended. The majority of NCA students refused to enter. The students were to appear before a board of enquiry, which the minister had set up to investigate "recent events" in the College.

May 20th

Speaking at question time in the Dail, Mr. Faulkner said that there was £500 worth of damage done and £700 worth of materials missing. The Students Union refuted this. Students were called before the board of Enquiry, convened in the College, the students were denied legal representation.

May 25th

A student delegation and officers tried to meet Mr. Faulkner, who refused, because some of the delegation consisted of suspended students

May 29th

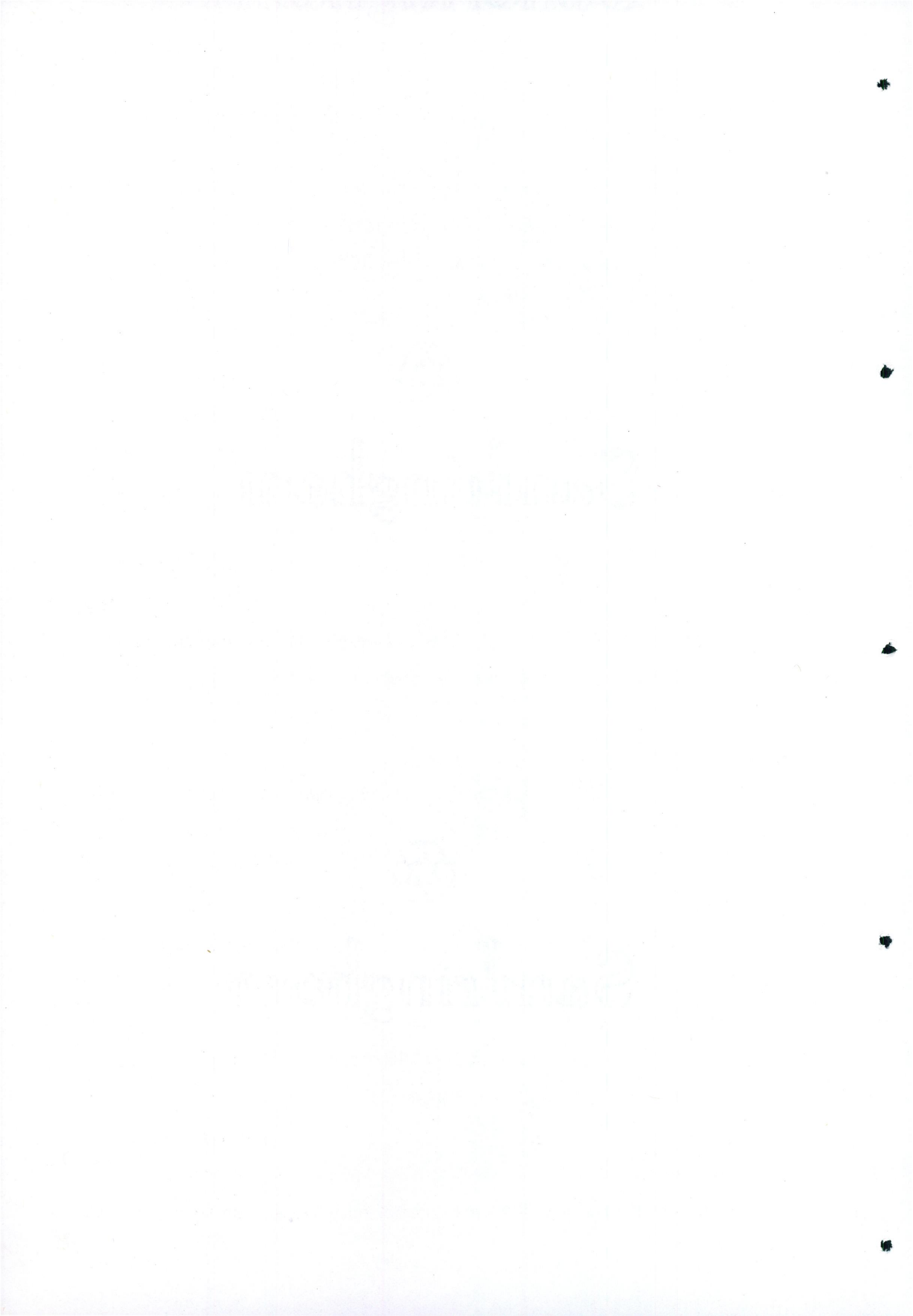
Faulkner informed USI President that the nine suspended students would be re-instated as a "gesture of goodwill"

June

Press release: "Freedom of speech, community involvement, debate and a resulting broadly based policy on Art Education are what we want- not imposed, undemocratic Governing Bodies, unjustified expulsions or threats of expulsions, narrow courses, hostile staff/student relations and shrieks of "Communist plots" whenever people open their mouths."

June 9th

Mr. De Burcha sent a letter Mr. Faulkner, naming five teachers whose staff



loyalty was "questionable", who disassociated themselves from the move to expel students.

June 26th

The College closed to students for the summer.

August

Three of the students who had been suspended in May were failed in their yearly assessment, they were asked to pursue other careers. Re-assessment was not allowed.

September 28th

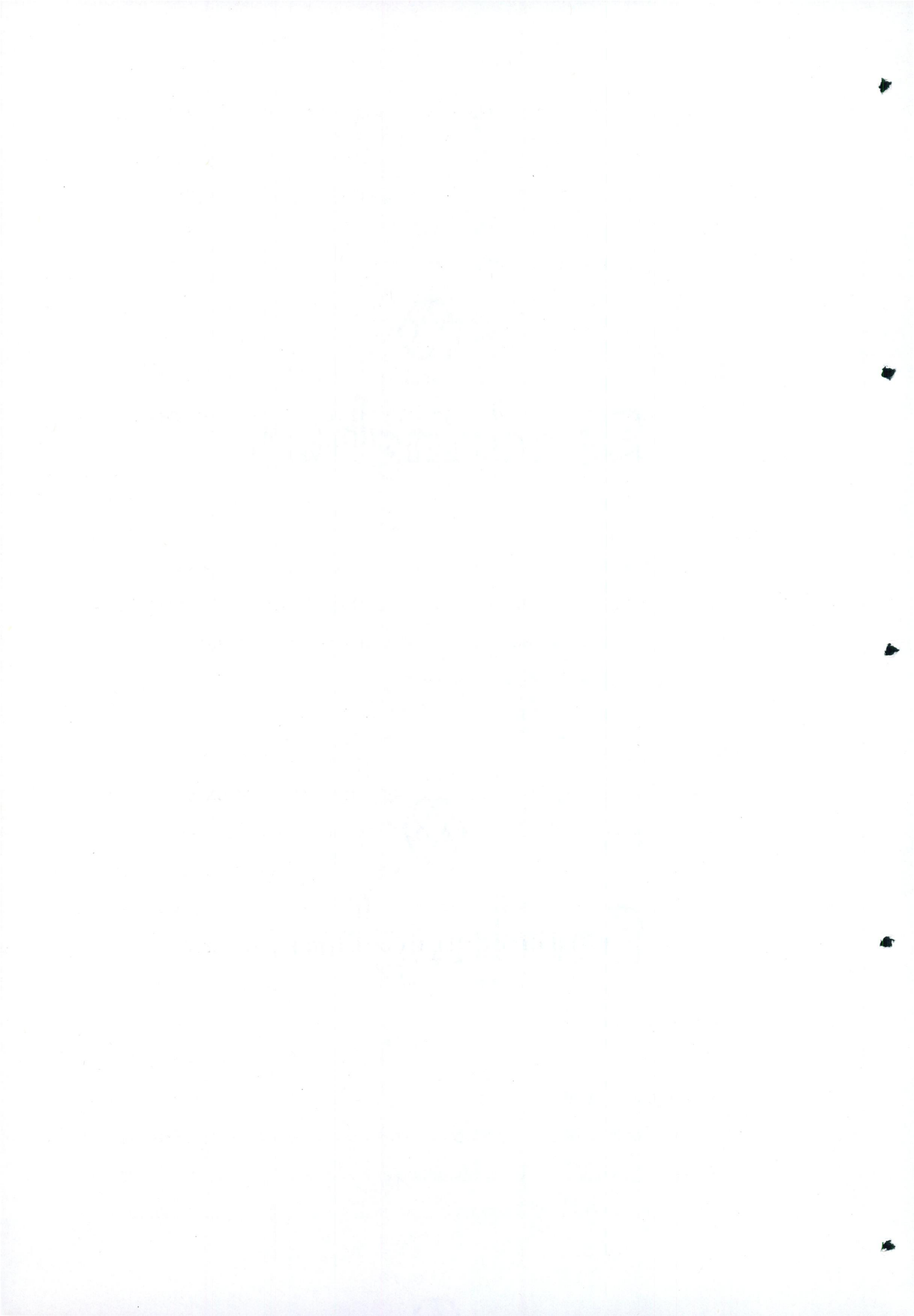
The College re-opened for a new academic year and the Students Union produced a Partly Satirical Prospectus, describing the conditions of the College. Miss Evelyn McCarthy was replaced as registrar by Mr. George Somerville (Formerly of the reformatory division)

October 16th

Gardai enter the College at the behest of the new registrar to remove a student who was unregistered. This student had been suspended in May, and was officially failed. The Gardai left, viewed by a meeting of students. The meeting issued a statement expressing the students lack in confidence in the competence of the Department of Education to restructure Art Education in Ireland. The student in question was later awarded a diploma in Painting by nominal assessment.

November 3rd 1970

At a staff meeting, Mr. Sean O' Connor announced that Miss. Lucy Charles, Professor of Design, had been appointed acting-director; She was to retain her professorship of Design. Students immediately circulated a petition demanding



the resignation of Ms. Charles. They objected that neither the Students nor the Staff were consulted., and that the post was not advertised and the terms of reference or qualifications and powers of the director were not made known to the students; the students felt that the appointment, only maintained the status quo, while the department continued its policy of procrastination on the immediate and long term future of the College.

November 11th

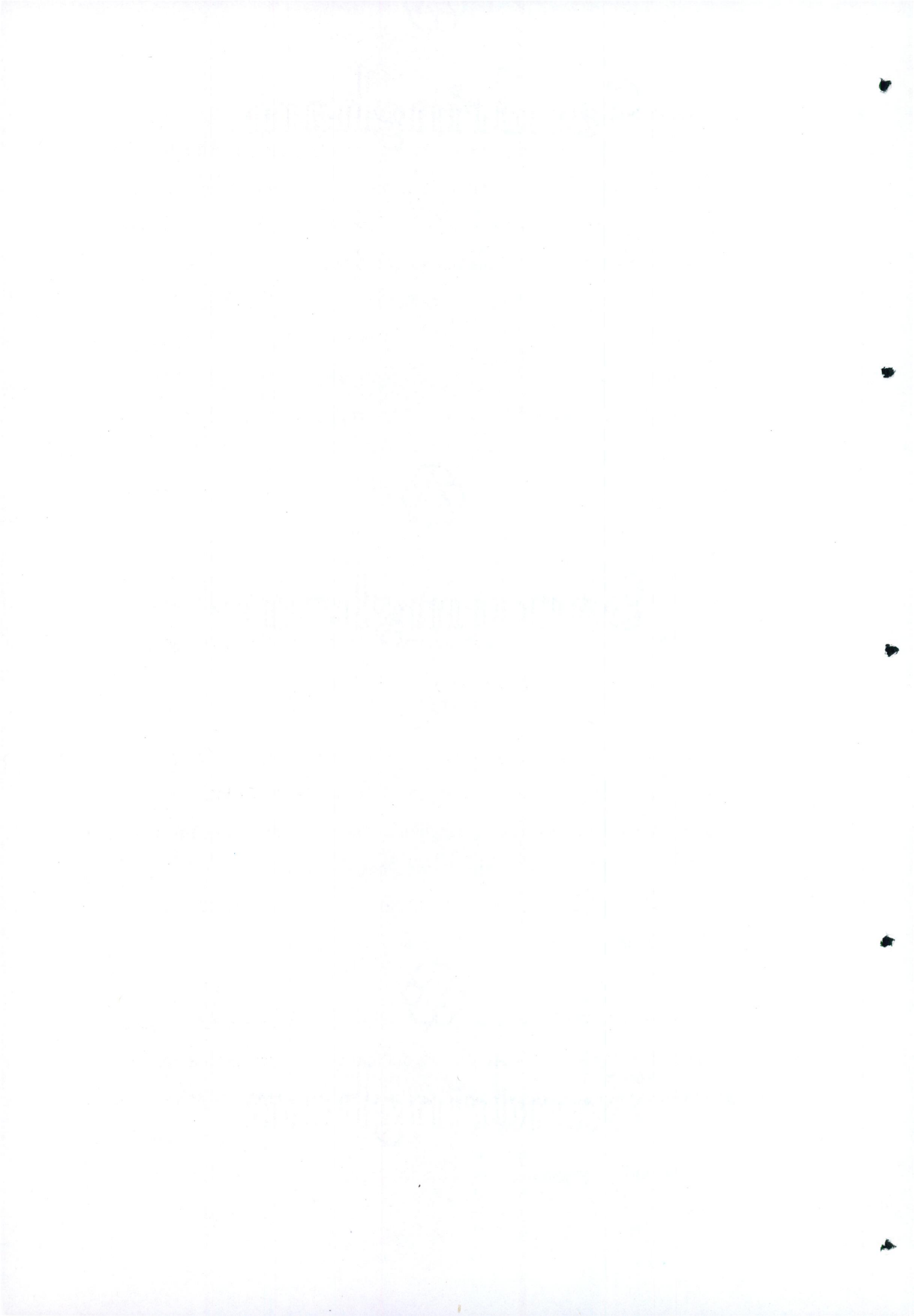
Sixty students visit Marlborough street and express their dissatisfaction with the directors appointment.

November 19th - 21st

Four teachers and forty students attended the symposium. The Director banned politicians, photographers and journalists. Cathal Goulding (Leading Republican) was described as a creative artist.

The students then engaged themselves in securing adequate student representation at the upcoming Seminar on the future of Design Education in Ireland from the 26th to the 28th November, organised by Coras Tractala. Seven NCA staff members attended the Seminar, selected by Lucy Charles. One of the speakers questioned the ability of the students to meet the criteria of the market place as designers, over their need for artistic expression.

Sean Mac Gearailt tried to explain the Departments' failure to reform the NCA, he refused however to answer specific questions. The two student delegates and twenty other students walked out. The students felt that the seminar was a failure, because it didn't leave room for such discussion , that would be brought about by working groups.



December 1970

NCA students took part in the Anti- Internment protest and produced hundreds of posters for it.

January 4 th 1971

Daily one hour protests were put on the Department of Educations' Marlborough offices by both staff and students over the Departments failure to do anything about the College.

February 1971

A survey showed that over one third of the students in the College were in financial need, and that five were living in squalor or on charity.

March 1971

The students took control of two rooms and De Burcha's old office and converted them into the Colleges first Library.

March 25th 1971

A female model was dismissed by the department. Eight students and five teachers signed a petition stating that they had never found any problems with the model.

March 29th 1971

Lucy Charles returns to office after a two week absence. Michael O' Neill (Accounts Branch of the Department of Education) was appointed to the all new position of Administrator of the College. The appointment was unannounced and his duties unexplained.

April 2nd 1971

Twenty one students occupy the College after it was supposed to close for the



Easter. The following were the immediate reasons for the occupation;

- 1 The interference in academic matters by the registrar and the newly appointed Administrator
- 2 Stated implications that certain staff, felt by NCA administration, to be over sympathetic to students would not be re-appointed for the next academic year.
- 3 The arbitrary dismissal of Miss Jany Jermyn as a model in the NCA.
- 4 The refusal by the Department to allow a Seminar go ahead in the College during the Easter holidays.
- 5 The refusal by the Department to honour obligations to a student who obtained a diploma in 1970. All students in 1970 were awarded £100 with their diploma. However one student was denied that award. Mr. Michael O' Neill has accepted responsibility for this action.
- 6 The neglect by staff members who continued to be paid for their duties

The statement accused the Department of letting the College fall into a state of a "an educational slum". It also demanded the resignation of Lucy Charles and to be democratically elected by staff and students.

At 10.30 p.m. a force of about forty Gardai stormed the college and forcefully removed the students.

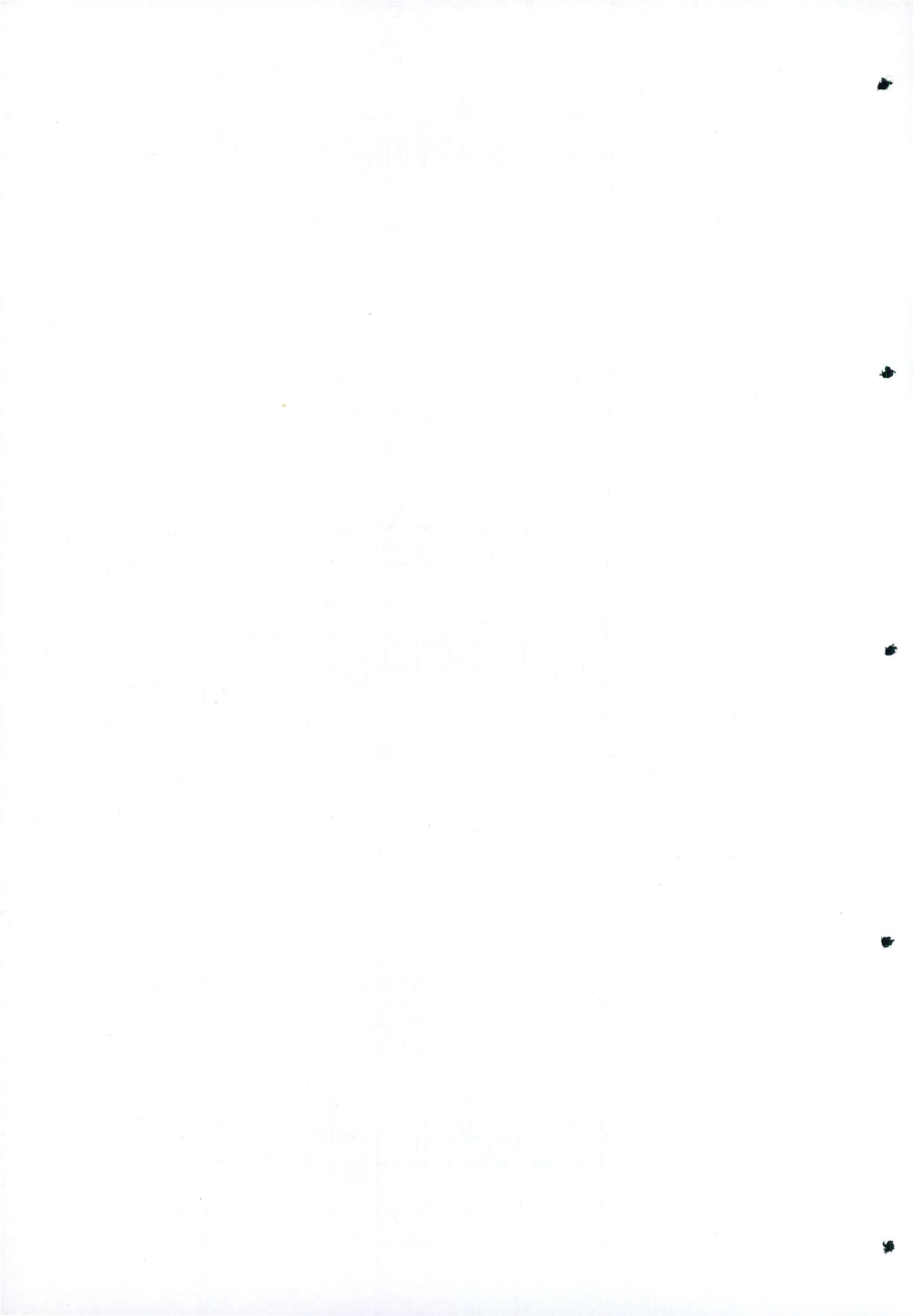
June 1971

Half of the foundation course students failed their end of year assessments.

August 1971

Alice Hanratty said that "almost all of those who were failed attended political meetings, and almost all those who didn't passed".

Mr. Paul Funge said that, " Some of us were incensed with the results of the



June assessments, in which our collective opinions were rejected.....in many cases our decisions were completely reversed. We have demanded an explanation and that we have made it clear to the Department of Education that we cannot go ahead with our work if we do not receive it"

The two tutors sent letters to the parents of the students expressing "amazement" at the results, included in these letters were the original reports by the teachers.

One of the students later won a prize at the Living Art Exhibition

September 1971

The students were offered a supplementary examination, but the Students Union boycotted it. The union claimed that the students had been failed in June because of their political activity.

A few days later, the Union accused the College authorities of offering places in the Departments of Painting, Sculpture, and Design to students who would not involve themselves in politics, and claimed that it was in breach of NCA procedure. The Irish Times claims to have been informed from an independent source that these allegations were true.

October 1971

The College offered seven of the twenty one students who boycotted the exams, places in the College. The fourteen students who were not offered places were all first year students. The Union criticised this move by the College, and said that they were trying to split the students. Both Alice Hanratty and Paul Funge asked the the College Authorities to explain why the students were failed in the first place." We have made it clear to the Acting Director of the College that we feel that we are being employed in false pretenses. Not only are the students being ill-treated but our professional



reputations are being insulted. In many cases our own assessment of our students were utterly reversed by the authorities." Alice Hanratty in the Irish Times.

The College then offered a second supplementary examination, which the students Union boycotted as well. Charles Harper then sought signatures to a petition criticising the Department.

October 18th

The college re-opens for a new academic year. Twenty five students occupy the College, and stage a sit in. Their names were taken by a Garda Inspector.

At a meeting of first year students, Department Officials warned them about the high failure rate the year before.

Alice Hanratty and Paul Funge refuse to teach any classes until they received an explanation for the high failure rate.

October 20th 1971

Mr. Paul Funge and Alice Hanratty were dismissed from their duties for failing to carry them out.

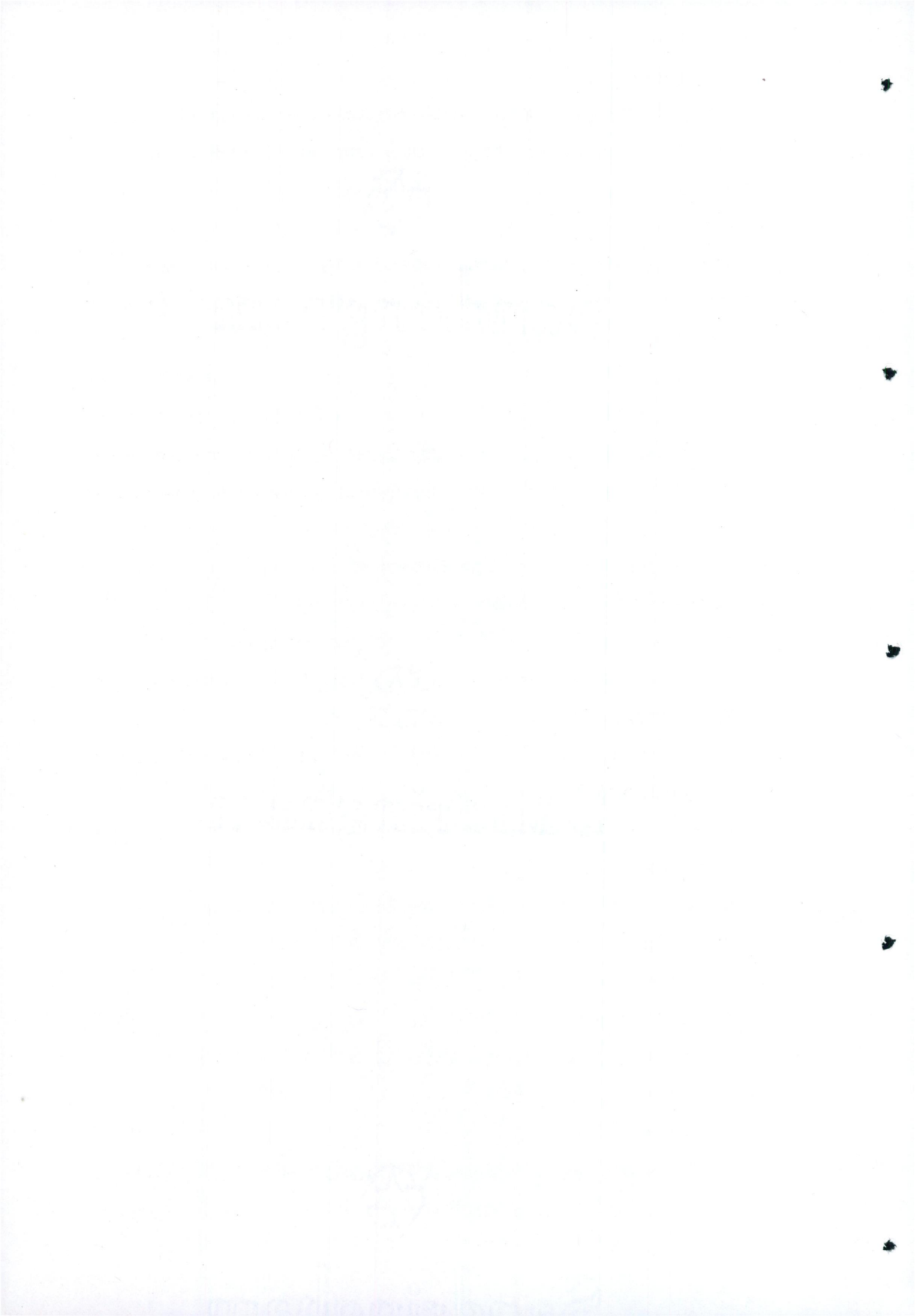
The Students union called for an immediate boycott of classes and a picket on Marlborough St.

October 23rd 1971

The College had come to a complete standstill.

October 25th

At a staff meeting, the College called for the withdrawal of the dismissal notices. Over five hundred students from Trinity, UCD, Bolton St , Kevin St. and NCAD



protested " until justice is done and the art teachers re-instated"

The Students occupy the college.

October 26th

The Government decided to close the College, until a governing Body was appointed under the New Act. The students immediately called off their demonstration.

An interim College was set up by the Students Union with the help of four former teachers. The USI provided premises on Harcourt St. Subsequently the students were offered temporary accommodation in Galerie Langlois on Crow Street.

November 1971

The National College of Art & Design Bill 1971 was passed.

Summer 1972

The new National College of Art & Design opens in the premises of the old NCA with a new Board of Directors.

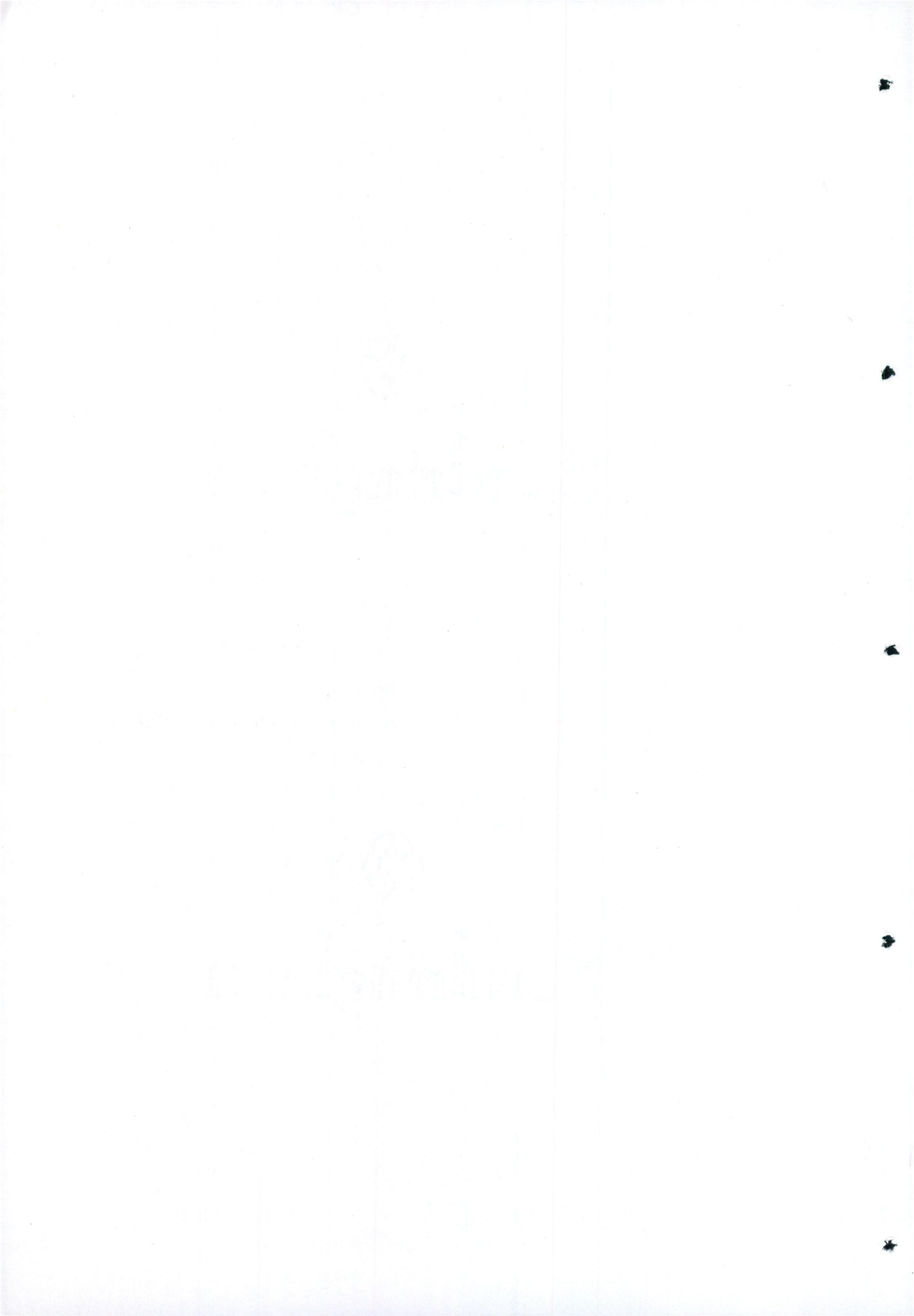
Students return to College.

The fight goes on to re-instate the sacked teachers until 1974.



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