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**A Critical Evaluation Of The National Maternity Hospital's
Arts Programme 1994-1995
And Its Contribution To Artistic Discourse On Maternity**

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Fine Art Painting
1995**

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INTRODUCTION

The subjects of birth, pregnancy and motherhood are relatively new and untouched within the realms of visual expression. The innovation therefore for an arts programme within a maternity hospital reveals an exciting challenge and a chance to broach the subject within appropriate surroundings.

My aim is to evaluate the project in all its aspects, from its conception and consultation, to structure, implementation and outcome. I wish to locate the arts Programme within artistic discourse on maternity. The continuous discourse on maternity in feminist criticism informs the evaluation from a theoretical perspective. Relevant texts include Mary Kelly's 'Post Partum Document', Julia Kristeva's 'Stabat Mater' and Susan Gubar's 'The Blank Page' amongst others.

An aspect of the study which I found intriguing was the interactional dynamic between a challenging and ambitious arts programme and an institution which is the epitome of efficiency, order and tradition. The two perspectives appear oppositional but are powerfully and associatively linked by the moment of birth. *'We are in the business of creativity...new life every day. It is a very rich and fertile area for anybody who is creative.'* (Matron Maeve Dwyer)

Health care institutions are usually highly bureaucratic, a quality which is not necessarily conducive to artistic expression. *'It is a diverse collaboration as each profession is attempting to do what is perhaps least natural to them'*. ('Helping to Heal' Senior and Croal, 1993 7) However there are benefits. Health care staff can avail of an opportunity to communicate with their patients in an artistic way. It also gives staff exposure to art forms often considered to appeal to certain social groups and offers them an alternative perspective on their work. Similarly it also benefits artists in their interaction with other professions in an environment both stimulating and restrictive.

This thesis is an attempt to critically evaluate The Arts Programme 94 -95 which is currently running in The National Maternity Hospital, Dublin, Ireland. As it is the first

of its kind within Ireland it is a valuable opportunity to evaluate a project of this type. My aim is to outline the variety of projects and activities undertaken by the hospital, highlighting the organisational, social, financial and artistic problems that can arise where innovation and change are taking place. As there is a limited wordage within this thesis certain elements of the programme will be discussed in greater detail in comparison with others. As a visual artist my interest obviously lies with the visual aspect of the programme. In doing so I am by no means eliminating the importance of the other areas.

The initial idea for an arts programme was forwarded by the Matron of the hospital, Maeve Dwyer. Her interest in the interaction between the arts and health care flourished after receiving a copy of a catalogue by The Birthright Trust in England. Initially the Matron believed that an exhibition would be an appropriate and interesting part of the Centenary celebrations. However on reading The Birthright Trust catalogue she decided that the visual arts were not enough and that other art forms needed to be incorporated. At this point Brian Maguire (artist) and Peter Sheridan (theatre director) were asked to contribute their opinions. Both agreed that community involvement was essential. It was also decided at this stage that a larger body of people were needed to invest their time in the project and it was decided that FAS should be approached. FAS agreed on a community CE scheme that would operate within the hospital, where a body of artists and administrators could be appointed and paid. Consequently FAS advertised the post of arts administrator which Mary Grehan currently holds. Following this an arts committee was formed which consisted of a variety of people with various professions. This general arts committee subsequently divided into sub committees for each aspect of the programme;

1. Drama and Literary Committee
2. Site Specific Committee
3. Visual Arts Committee.

The Drama and Literary Committee consists of Eavan Boland (poet and writer) and Marina Carr (playwright). The Site Specific Committee consists of Nigel Rolfe (artist), Mary Grehan (arts administrator), Matron Maeve Dwyer (Head Matron) and Helen O'Donaghue (Education Officer, The Irish Museum of Modern Art). Site Specific is a term used for works which are sited within the hospital, the aim of the Site Specific

Committee being to select proposals from a number of male/female artists. The Visual Arts Committee consists of Mary Grehan (Visual Arts Administrator), Helen O'Donaghue (IMMA), Barbara Cullen (Artist), Carmel Benson (Artist), Jackie Ryan (Educational assistant, The National Gallery), Maeve Dwyer (Matron) and Carey Clarke (Chairman). The purpose of the Visual Arts Committee being the organisation of the exhibition staged in RHA. Gallagher Gallery in the latter part of 1994.

The politics of the selection process for both site specific work and exhibition pieces has a crucial part in this evaluation. At this preliminary stage however a full discussion of the process is inappropriate. I will therefore outline the process and in conclusion comment further on the politics of the decision making.

Rather than having both site specific and the exhibition open entry, the General Arts Committee decided that artists whom they thought would have a valid contribution to make would be invited to submit work. *"It was decided that a chance should be given to professional artists as opposed to students who were working."* (Arts Committee member). The Arts Committee obtained a list of names through the N.C.A.D. decade catalogue. *"In doing so a selection of artists would be chosen who were clearly recognised inside their own sphere of influence."* (Arts Committee member) Therefore two hundred relevant names were selected and invited to take part in both site specific and the exhibition.

In order to strengthen links between the hospital and the local community a community based arts programme developed out of the Visual Arts Committee. The programme invited the participation of local women to explore issues such as child birth, motherhood and women's' health through the mediums of visual art and drama. Community artists were employed by the FAS scheme who then implemented and designed the programme. Another aspect of the Community Arts Programme is a series of ongoing children's workshops led by three in-house artists. The term in-house was used as they are held within the hospital. the workshops involve the siblings of babies born in the hospital. Staff workshops have been a more recent aspect of the programme

as they were not a part of the initial agenda. However as the original concept broadened the need for staff involvement became evident.

This has been a brief prelude to a more in depth analysis of the Arts Programme. The theoretical backdrop to this discussion is essential in analysing a programme of this nature. In the chapters which follow my intention is to outline and evaluate particular aspects of the project which in my opinion evoke praise and criticism. The layout of chapters therefore is as follows;

Chapter One: Site Specific Work

Chapter Two: Siolru

Chapter Three: Community Arts.

CHAPTER ONE - SITE SPECIFIC WORKS

As part of the Arts Programme 94 95 it was agreed that a section be allocated for artists to create work for various sites around the hospital throughout the year. In October 93 200 invitations were posted to male and female artists inviting them to submit work for both the forthcoming exhibition and a proposal for Site Specific work. The guideline themes for both projects centred around birth, regeneration, reproduction, maternity, paternity and childhood. 80 artists subsequently replied who were interested in the Site Specific work and these were asked to attend a tour of the hospital. 44 of the 80 then submitted proposals. In order to select a final eight artists, an adjudication panel was formed which included people from both inside and outside the medical profession. The panel consisted of Maeve Dwyer (Matron), Mary Grehan (Visual Arts Officer), Helen O'Donaghue (Irish Museum of Modern Art), and Nigel Rolfe (Artist). The aim of the panel was to select a final eight proposals that were thought to have encompassed the artist's feeling for the proposed site. The proposals were to be financially viable and in keeping with the bureaucratic structure of the hospital, the latter point being emphasised throughout the selection.

'We had wonderful proposals that we couldn't select as they involved knocking half of the hospital down, although they were beautiful projects but they had to fit in.'

(Maeve Dwyer, Matron)

Obvious constraints therefore were placed on the project before it began.

The final eight artists selected to create Site Specific work were Pauline Cummins, Dorothy Anne Daly, Angela Forte, Rita Duffy, Sharon Kelly, Aine Ni Giolla Coda, Kate Malone and Aileen Mac Keogh. *'Sadly no man was chosen'* (Victoria White, Irish Times, Wednesday 20 January, 1995)

Aine Ni Giolla Coda

Aine Ni Giolla Coda's '100 Names and Dates' project was the first proposal to be realised (Fig 1). Aine Ni Giolla Coda's work commenced in July 94 whilst living in the

hospital. Her proposal was to place throughout the hospital 100 names and dates of births spanning the last century in Holles Street. Initially names were to be selected at random from medical records, one from each year since 1884. The names would acknowledge and celebrate the ongoing passage of life through the hospital while working in harmony with what already existed. The names were to be painted in unobtrusive lettering in a variety of spaces, which would include underneath window sills, high on stairwells, low on skirting boards and around corners. Sandblasted glass, enamelled and cast brass lettering were to be used.

Aine NiGiolla Coda's proposal was chosen as it *'...embodies the sense of history present in the hospital. It maximises the use of space incorporating the whole hospital as a canvas to work on'* (Matron Maeve Dwyer)

The initial intention of the artist was to select names and dates from hospital records, however due to government legislation this was not possible. This initial disappointment however led to new development within the project. The Irish Times sponsored the artist and placed advertisements asking people to come forward who had been born in the hospital. The response was pleasantly unexpected as an influx of letters, birth certificates and stories filled the arts office at Holles Street. Due to this individual stories were highlighted. The initial idea of random name picking was sustained to some degree, however particular names that were thought to have a significant relationship with the hospital were included. The nursing staff of the hospital participated in the project by suggesting specific locations for particular names. As a result of this names began to belong to certain parts of the hospital. This raised questions as to the ownership of spaces within the hospital.

'There would be a notion that perhaps the hospital should value its staff more than its patients and if their were names to be written up then why should it not be people who had worked here for thirty years.'

(Member of Staff, Anonymous)

This question of importance arose again when the artist selected one of the submitted birth certificates unknowingly and withdrew Mervyn Taylor, Minister of Equality and Law Reform.

'People usually have their names up on plaques as a tribute to them for doing something special, I saw this as 100 babies who were born in this hospital and not about something wonderful they may have done. Most are ordinary people and were chosen at random.'

(Aine Ni Giolla Coda, artist)

A variety of scripts, colour and sizes were used in order to add to the character of certain names and their visual effect, each name having its own colour. The names are not contained in any way and appear throughout the hospital.

A challenging aspect of the work is that it questions the viewer's original concept of visual art. *'The transient nature of the work questions peoples' views of what they would originally have considered as art.'*

(Matron Maeve Dwyer)

Some staff, visitors and patients felt uncomfortable with the lack of presentational prestige accorded to the names. Again this says much about public perceptions of art works as removed or set apart from everyday surroundings. There was also the suggestion that the project should be contained as it is seen as something disorderly within an orderly environment. *"Wouldn't it be nicer if they were contained in a box in the hall?"*

(Staff Member)

Simplicity combined with subtlety has proved to be the success of this project. *'Aine Ni Giolla Coda's '100 Names' is an exercise in democracy and subtlety so brilliantly simple you wonder why no one did it before'*

(Medbh Ruane, The Sunday Times 8 January 1995)

"Aine Ni Giolla Coda's '100 Names and Dates' installation is perhaps the simplest and most powerful in the building"

(Luke Clancy, Irish Times, Wednesday 25 January 1995)

Contained within an exterior simplicity this project excels in both achieving its aims within the proposal and in successfully challenging issues central to the arts programme, for example

1. The issue of ownership of space within the hospital e.g. staff versus community / patient
2. The Public concept of art and what is categorised as legitimate artwork
3. The challenge to a highly bureaucratic environment - order versus disorder.

"The work restores a sense of community and of purpose that fascinates even the most preoccupied passerby."

(Medbh Ruane The Sunday Times, 8 January 1995)

Kate Malone

Kate Malone's proposal was to create images of premature and full term babies. (Fig 2). Within these images she planned to focus on those objects and machinery first encountered by infants, from high tech scanners to sheets and cots. Images of nurses, parents and doctors would also be incorporated as the first people encountered by the newborn. Kate Malone's medium is transparent laser printed photographs which are to be projected by lightboxes and installed along the corridors of the hospital. It is planned that images will change and rotate throughout the year. Kate's proposal was chosen for its *'...sensitivity of approach and the artist's demonstrated ability to produce memorable and thought provoking images.'* (Site Specific Committee)

The use of transparencies in Kate Malone's work is evocative of delicacy, fragility and vulnerability. Her eyes seem trained to search for pleasant images with the subtlety aesthetic pinkness of her images enforcing this. The light boxes create an aura of simultaneous luminosity and stillness. Some images evoke the connection of mother and child through the bonds of touch and nurturing. One image is of a mother cradling her small new born's head whilst another is of a child at the breast. Another aspect of Kate Malone's work parallels dependency and independency, in particular focusing on babies born in intensive care. She achieves this by making the array of machinery the predominant feature against the small fragility of the fighting baby.

This project is almost completely reliant on the aesthetic beauty of its images. However when evaluated against the reasons for the project selection, '*The artist demonstrated ability to produce memorable and thought provoking images*', it appears that the project did not meet with initial aims.

Kate Malone's work is a collection of unattached images containing unrelated thoughts which failed to come together to form a solid body of work. The work therefore has an air of understatement that does not grasp at any particular concept but simply touches on an array of subjects. '*Kate Malone's series of light boxes, "Viewer", in which a desire for intimate impact has resulted in a work that is merely detached.*'

(Luke Clancy, Irish Times, 25 January 1995)

Kate Malone uses the type of imagery that in terms of feminist art practise could be seen as problematic.

'It seemed crucial, not in the sense of a moral imperative but as an historical strategy to avoid the literal figuration of mother and child, to avoid any means of representation which risked recuperation as a slice of life? To use the body of woman, her image or person is not impossible but problematic for feminism.'

(Mary Kelly on Post Partum Document)

Therefore the project as a whole did not meet its initial aims fully but fluctuated between what is visually pleasing and presenting a coherent theme, the images of dependence / independence being the most effective realisation of the concept. However one level which Kate Malone's work succeeded in was challenging patients / staff reactions when she displayed an image of a bare abdomen in the foetal assessment unit, and an empty cot in the Merrion wing. However in discussion within a meeting 'The Role of The Arts In Holles Street' on 8th December 94, Doctor Mc Donald pointed out that the images are stimulating and thought provoking, and an artist's work should not be censored. While the Master of the hospital pointed out that the hospital is an involuntary audience and as such the patients did not choose to see certain images.

Kate Malone's work therefore has opened fresh discussion surrounding the important aspect of curtailing art works within an institution questioning whether in doing this the underlying concepts are lost.

Aileen Mac Keogh

Aileen Mac Keogh's proposal involves the installation of six large colour photographs which explore the culture of flowers (Fig 3). These will be accompanied by an installation of live flowers which will be changed each week, alternating the types of flowers used over a twelve week period. Text will be used in the photographs to explain the historical symbolism of the flowers. Aileen Mac Keogh feels the gesture of giving flowers has a universal meaning which the photographs and text will explore. Within the language of flowers meanings can differ from culture to culture, for example in France the chrysanthemum is associated with death, whilst in China it is associated with fertility and longevity. Aileen Mac Keogh's proposal was chosen because of *'its visually stunning images'* (Site Specific Committee).

This project adds new meaning to the daily practise of giving flowers within a hospital environment.

'Neatly boxed images of individual flowers, each labelled with its word association, innocently greet you in the entrance hall but treat you to a tongue in cheek aftershock as you notice blooms placed by others throughout the hospital, sending secret messages about sincerity (fern) fecundity (hollyhock) and for the intellectually minded a very clever sub-text on the fleeting nature of life and the banal nature of most hospital art.'

(Medbh Ruane, The Sunday Times 8 January 1995)

The artist uses flowers in this project as they are a familiar medium having used them in earlier work related to the themes of death, pain and mortality. Initially she had planned to show the photographs of the 'live' flowers contrasted against photographs of the same flowers dead. However within the maternity hospital she feels the image of death to be inappropriate.

'I am finding it difficult how to handle it whether to let it go with live flowers rather than confrontation. Though life and death are part of everything I am hyper-sensitive to the fact that it is a hospital.'
(Aileen Mac Keogh)

Although the images of dead flowers have not been used some have questioned the reading of the project.

'Aileen Mac Keogh's disorientatingly ambivalent "Say it with Flowers" has attempted to re-activate a language of flowers in a series of wall-mounted photographs of bouquets. In the images various flowers have been battered down with a nameplate suggesting some quality that the blooms might represent. Whether the flowers are more appropriate to a celebration or to offering condolences remains in question.'
(Luke Clancy, Irish Times, 25 January 95)

Aileen MacKeogh returned to using flowers as she was interested in their symbolic nature and their use in different contexts around the world. She has now focussed her work on the Victorian language of flowers. She sees the act of giving bouquets a communication, an unspoken language, which can mean 'congratulations', 'I love you', or 'I'm sorry'. The Arts Programme provided her with the opportunity to put her amalgamation of ideas together. She chose the site of the foyer as it was the most appropriate place for her work being the passageway where thousands and thousands of pounds of flowers pass through each year.

Aileen Mac Keogh sees her work using flowers as a vehicle for her creation of art. Her passionate love of gardening has attributed to her work as she treats it as a therapeutic release. The art of nurturing and tending plants and flowers aided Aileen during a time of personal tragedy when her child died, and gardening acted as a mechanism for emotional release.

Aileen Mac Keogh's work is obviously concerned with her own personal associations with life and death. This adds a new dimension to her work which isn't apparent to the usual viewer.

This project succeeds in achieving its proposed aims yet there is a flaw concerning the meanings attributed to each flower, the range of meanings and possible ambiguities. The question also arises as to whether the exclusion of the photographs of the dead flowers renders the project incomplete. The appropriateness of the siting of the installation has benefited the project as it acts as a well needed distraction at the bridging point between domestic and hospital life on entrance and exit.

Pauline Cummins

Pauline Cummins' proposal was to make a video work for Unit 8 Intensive Care. The aim of Cummins' work is to show positive images towards the future of the babies needing intensive care. The intention of the artist was that it be viewed privately, or collectively by parents and staff. The main image for the video was to use a very young baby swimming underwater. Interwoven with this image would be images of two dancers, their movements emphasising those of the swimming baby's. These are to be interpreted as positive images as the baby makes strides to control its environment while being at ease in the water. Pauline Cummins sees this video as a visual equivalent to the striving of the premature babies to live, and the water as a reflective element which has a soothing effect on the viewer. *'A baby swimming under water a baby curled inside the womb. Images of strength and autonomy, images of fragility and dependence'* (Pauline Cummins, artist)

Pauline Cummins intended to commission an original composition for the video using the musician Michael Sever. Her intention was also to collaborate with parents and staff from Unit 8 to explore the effects of visual images on the attitudes and moods.

Ten years ago Pauline Cummins was commissioned to paint a mural in the National Maternity Hospital's grounds. 'Celebration The Beginning of Labour' was the result, a witty image of naked women running with a baby above their heads. Due to complaints made by the authorities over the women's nakedness, it was whitewashed over. Therefore it is surprising to see this artist willing to work within the same bureaucracy that held so much contempt for her previous work. This time again Pauline Cummins has met with

criticism from both staff and patients, the main body of criticism being directed at the situation of the work as the video is placed next to the door of the morgue, not Unit 8. Another internal complaint concerns how the video is presented as it is surrounded by a wooden panelled long box. Some have said it is not dissimilar to a coffin.

'From the end of a corridor , a video monitor, mounted in a severe black obelisk spills blue, submarine light as images of slow fluid movement, showing both a child in the womb and a small baby moving through the waters of a swimming pool, drift across the tube, perhaps towards life perhaps away from it'

(Luke Clancy)

The uncertainty of the concept of life or death is most definitely questionable in 'Becoming Beloved'. The siting of the piece is indeed confusing considering the initial intention for positive feedback and encouragement for distraught parents.

The content of the video combines images of swimming babies, women and men, all angled from beneath the surface. Interludes from this combine images of a seahorse (Japanese symbol of fertility) and a goldfish. The overall effect does generate an element of calmness and the association with amnionic fluid is also apparent.

The initial aims for this project have not been met in terms of content and siting of the piece. The content has diverted from the original initial idea as the image of the dancer has not materialised but the images of the pregnant woman, men and the seahorse have introduced new metaphors for discussion. The initial aim of the video was the depiction of positive images specifically designed for Unit 8 and Intensive Care. The result was consistent in its positive imagery however as it was not sited within Unit 8, but next to the morgue, it changed its contextual meaning from positive images within the appropriate surrounding to an ironic display of life and birth next to real life death.

Dorothy Ann Daly, Angela Ann Forte, Rita Duffy and Sharon Kelly

The above named artists have yet to display their Site Specific work. At this stage it is difficult to evaluate works as the aim cannot be discussed against the project. However I will give my perception of the works at the proposed stage.

Dorothy Ann Daly's proposal is to make baby quilts that celebrate various aspects of a baby's early life in the maternity hospital., including those who need special care in Unit 8, babies who have lived for only a few hours or days, and babies who were still born or miscarried (Fig 4). The finished quilts will be made from silk, cotton, organza, and hand made paper. These will hang alongside quilts and drawings made during the research phase. Dorothy Daly's proposal was chosen for '*its sensitivity of approach*'. (Site Specific Committee.) Quilts were traditionally made with someone in mind. These quilts are intended to reflect the feeling of expectancy attached to pregnancy.

The creating of an item in expectation for a baby to fill it is something which is common to many pregnant women, the act of sewing, crocheting, knitting acting as a therapy, a way of expelling fears for the forthcoming birth. It is also interesting to note that particularly in the United States, feminists, artists and activists have begun to reclaim traditional female domestic activities, for example quilting, stitchcraft by recreating and politicising them. The Aids Quilt is a notable example.

Angela Forte also uses a traditional feminine domestic task - weaving. Her work is a direct response to the birth of her own child two years ago. '*It seemed fate was at hand. At last, an opportunity to make a very direct statement in tapestry, about my experiences of giving birth two years ago*'. (Angela Forte, artist)

Angela Forte's proposal was to create a tapestry to be installed in the Parent's room Unit 8 Intensive Care (Fig 5). The function of the Parent's room is to comfortably facilitate parents to sleep in close contact with their premature babies, the aim being to create an air of normality in a time of family trauma. The artist intends that the tapestry

will visually represent the explosion of emotions that giving birth brings. Both the tapestry and room are therefore intended to complement each other. The tapestry is to be woven from cotton, linen and wool and will depict a pool of fish representing a symbol of the search for peace of mind. This proposal was selected for *'its strong personal appeal and emotional input'* (Site Specific Committee). This proposal succeeds at this stage as a creative channelling of personal emotions surrounding her own experience.

Rita Duffy proposes to link the National Maternity Hospital in a visual way with the Jubile Maternity hospital in Belfast. She proposes to do this through the use of Integrated Services Digital Network. High resolution images of newly born babies will then be sent by a telephone line from Belfast to Dublin and vice versa. Computers and monitors linked to each end of the line will transmit the images for one week. The new infants will take part in a visual celebration of their birth and the new parents will be invited to make a short statement. It is the artist's intention to *'create a project that goes beyond outdated notions of nationality, creed, colour and gender.'* (Rita Duffy, artist)

This project was proposed pre-ceasefire, therefore it assumes a different context in the light of what has happened since. This is a political project quite different from the previous work discussed which dealt with the personal creating the work using traditional feminine mediums, for example quilting, weaving. Rita Duffy's proposal is challenging in that her discourse is within the traditionally male realms of politics and technology. The outcome of this project will be important in terms of the questioning of borders, boundaries, nationality and citizenship.

Sharon Kelly's proposal was to create a series of charcoal drawings to be sited along the corridor leading to the gynaecological clinic. The drawings are to be figurative in nature and will explore the experiences of motherhood / fatherhood, and pregnancy from a female / male perspective, looking at the joy of birth and the loss of miscarriage. Sharon Kelly's proposal was chosen *'for its simplicity of approach'*. (Site Specific Committee).

Since Sharon Kelly's proposal her work has changed as she is now dealing solely with miscarriage and infant loss. Her pieces will now be sited in the Miscarriage Unit. Her drawings, although not now displayed in the hospital, are connected with previous work exploring attitudes to death, in particular infant death (Fig 6).

This is the only project of the site Specific which deals solely with death. The quality of empathetic detachment in her work is reflected in compelling images of men and women whose inner emotions are externalised in gesture, and where absence and loss is given shape.

CHAPTER TWO SIOLRU

The National Maternity Hospital's Centenary Exhibition "Siolru" was the most public face of the Arts Programme in 1994. The initial aim of the exhibition was an artistic celebration of one hundred years of childbirth in Holles Street. The exhibition featured the work of 142 artists who were invited to consider themes such as birth, regeneration, maternity, paternity and childhood. "Siolru" originated from an idea that Peggy Maguire (Development Officer) and Maeve Dwyer (Matron) put forward for the arts involvement in celebratory aspect of the centenary. The idea was in part inspired by the Sunday Times Mother and Child exhibition at the Lefevre Gallery London.

The potential for an exhibition of this scope and status and the possible range of response to the themes is expansive. The subject matter of maternity and the representation of biological and gynaecological aspects of the female body is still relatively new territory for a major exhibition. The objectified image of woman as model or muse, as inspiration rather than creator has over centuries been central to artistic practice.

"Woman is not simply an object however. If we think in terms of the production¹ of culture, she is an art object: she is the ivory carving or mud replica, an icon or doll, but she is not the sculptor. Lest this seem fanciful we should remember that until very recently women have been barred from art schools as students yet they have always been acceptable as models."

Gubar 1982 293

Until the 1970's, areas of female experience had remained virtually unexplored within the realms of visual art. Menstruation, childbirth and child care had not been addressed as valid areas of discourse. The image of the pen / brush / penis marking the virgin page particioates in a long tradition identifying the artist as male who is primary subject and the female as his passive creation. The challenge for the woman artist has been to convey those areas of experience which are exclusively feminine into creative expression.

"...First, many women experience their own bodies as the only available medium for their art with the result that distance between the woman artist and her art is often radically diminished; second, one of the primary and most resonant metaphors provided by the female body is blood... for the woman artist who

¹ The Irish 'Siolru' can be translated as seed, germination, sperm and regeneration

experiences herself as killed into art may also experience herself as bleeding into print." (Gubar 1982 296)

Here we see the female liberated from its position as objectified and static muse into active creator through the metaphor of biological fertility. For some, artistic creativity and biological generativity can be experienced as a conflict and the representation of maternity problematic.

"It seemed crucial not in the sense of a moral imperative but as a historical strategy to avoid the literal figuration of mother and child, to avoid any means of representation which risked recuperation as a slice of life? To use the body of a woman, her image or person is not impossible but problematic for feminism."

(Kelly 1983 17)

Mary Kelly's Post Partum document created in 1978 confronts established concepts of art. The body of her work consisted of stained nappy liners, personal documents, a child's drawings documenting the development of her own child. Alongside these she makes use of Lacanian Theory in the form of text constructing an alternative meaning. In doing so, the artist presents motherhood as a socially formed construct drawn from patriarchal culture rather than a biological function.

The association of artistic creativity and biological generativity was regarded as regressive by some women artists.

"Many feminist artists from the 70's also reacted strongly to the idea of womb centred imagery as just another reworking of biological determinism and a restrictive attempt to define femaleness."

(Chadwick 1990 323)

The work of Alice Neel' also challenges this assumption in her series of paintings of pregnant women which dwell on the "unnaturalness" of pregnancy for modern urban women.

In the 1990's maternity and its surrounding themes is still a relatively new inspirational resource. The attitude of political feminism towards maternity has changed with an emphasis on reclaiming areas of traditional feminine experience and this is to some extent reflected in art practice e.g. the reclaiming of quilting and needlecraft as valid art forms.

"Traditionally, the ability to produce children and the emotional relationship that ensues has been held up as the woman's lack of creativity. Now with the Women's Movement

it is beginning to be possible to bring motherhood with all the deeply traumatic emotion and unrecognised elements involved, into the kind of examination it desperately needs.

(Mulvey 1987 100)

The Sunday Times Mother and Child Exhibition held in the Lefevre Gallery London in May 1988 was a successful predecessor of Siolru and a major influence. All forty artists exhibiting had responded to the given theme creating a diverse but coherent exhibition. Underlying themes such as gender interpreted parenthood were covered with several couples presenting their own separate versions of the theme.

In my discussion of Siolru I have chosen four themes in particular. These are as follows

1. Images of pregnancy
2. Images of Religion and Spirituality
3. Images of landscape
4. Images of labour.

Images of Pregnancy

Those works which I have chosen to discuss are: Grainne Dowling's "Waiting" ; Natalie Connolly's "Life Drawing" and Jacqueline Stanley's "Jane full term".

Grainne Dowling's "Waiting" is a series of two conte drawings framing the large clothed abdomen of a pregnant woman (Fig 7). The framing while emphasising the enlarged abdomen cuts the drawing off just above the breasts and just below the crotch emphasising the sexualised area of the female body. This type of framing is problematic, the title reinforcing the emphasis on the unborn child with the maternal body as dormant receptacle. The absence of head, face and mouth denies individuality and freedom of speech to the subject. This objectification renders her vulnerable, open to the gaze of the viewer. Her identity will only be validated when the waiting is over.

Natalie Connolly's use of framing in "Life Drawing" in contrast gives greatest emphasis and detail to the facial area defining the subject's identity (Fig 8). The directed gaze of the viewer is reminiscent of Paula Modersohn-Becher's archetypal fertility images which highlight lowered viewpoint unlike the downward gaze traditionally favoured by the artist. Although the

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study and the objectives of the research. It also provides a brief overview of the methodology used in the study.

The second part of the paper presents the results of the study. It discusses the findings of the research and compares them with the existing literature. The results show that there is a significant difference between the two groups.

The third part of the paper discusses the implications of the study. It highlights the practical applications of the findings and suggests areas for further research. The study has important implications for the field of research.

The fourth part of the paper concludes the study. It summarizes the main findings and reiterates the importance of the research. The study has provided valuable insights into the research topic.

The fifth part of the paper provides a detailed analysis of the data. It includes tables and figures to illustrate the results. The data shows a clear trend in the research findings.

The sixth part of the paper discusses the limitations of the study. It acknowledges the constraints of the research and suggests ways to overcome them. The study has some limitations, but the findings are still valid.

woman's eyes are closed the position of the hand on the stomach suggests not sleep but a private and powerful contemplation.

In Jacqueline Stanley's "Jane full term", again the pregnant belly predominates (Fig 9). The head is reduced and almost pushed out of the picture and the legs and bare feet are emphasised, grounding the lower body. The image recalls the popular phrase depicting the traditional picture of Irish womanhood "pregnant barefoot and in the kitchen". Illiterate is sometimes added to the list and there is certainly nothing in the image that suggests a speaking subject. Like many of the exhibits the mood is one of muted waiting. The identity of the woman is diminished by the double focus of the piece. She appears as a body to be examined by the artist/doctor.

Images of Religion and Spirituality

In discussing images relating to religion I will refer to the work of Carey Clarke, Janet Mullarney and Tom Molloy, and in the discussion of spirituality the work of Anya Fitschen and Amelia Stein.

As a theoretical backdrop to this section I have used Julia Kristeva's 'Stabat Mater', first published as "Herethique de l'amour", an essay on the cult of the Virgin Mary and its implications for an understanding of the Christian perception of motherhood.

"We live in a society where the consecrated (religious or secular) representation of femininity is absorbed by motherhood." (Kristeva, 1977)

Throughout Christian tradition the most powerful image of femininity is that of the virgin mother, the female icon depicted by artists across the centuries. Carey Clarke's 'Still Life with Madonna and Child by Desiderio di Settignano' is a photo realist style painting of a variety of vessels and flowers set against a 15th Century relief by Florentine painter Di Settignano (Fig 10). Although skillfully executed the female image is objectified and static. This quality is reinforced by the juxtaposition of the female image with other still life, she is literally part of the domestic furniture. The unchallenged depiction of the virgin mother as icon in an altar like setting is problematic given its denial of woman's sexuality. The vessels in the painting suggest the virgin as vessel or carrier of male divinity. The whiteness and durability of the carnation evokes the promise of eternal life as the result of the immaculate conception. Purity and the virgin was associated with life, in contrast with Eve representing sexuality and death. This dualism was expressed by church Father John Chrysostom

"For where there is death there is also sexual copulation, and where there is no death there is no sexual copulation either"

In Carey Clarke's piece the woman is twice objectified in the artist's choice of another art work as subject. she is contained and rendered static by this twice remove.

Janet Mullarney's "Waiting for illumination" is reminiscent of Kiki Smith's "Virgin" (Fig 11). The small figure in this piece is presented in an off balanced shrine style construction reminiscent of those found in country crossroads in Ireland. There is an awkwardness in the figure's stance propped against an imaginary leaning post. Her eyes are directed away from the viewer yet she does not expect illumination to come from above. The title is ironic and the piece reminiscent of Angela Martin's feminist cartoon "Virgin in a niche". She is the virgin without the adornments of religion; bald and naked. More importantly she is the virgin without child, sole occupier of the space. Although the space is boxed in the ironic title suggests that freedom is possible.

Tom Molloy's "Medea and the Virgin" juxtaposes two female archetypes, the good and bad mother (Fig 12). The figure of Medea holds the position of power in the upper section of the painting, the statue is placed on top of the image of the virgin which appears to be of 15th Century origin in its depiction of the Madonna of Humility. The figure of Medea is a three dimensional image and is located beside a globe. The virgin in contrast is a flat two dimensional image partially covering a map, perhaps contrasting a holistic and rounded with a limited world view. The mythological figure of Medea, wife of Jason, killed her two children to punish Jason's infidelity. Her hands of destruction are absent from the image in contrast to the Madonna who has multiple hands. The tilted gilt mirror and all but extinguished candles suggest an overturning of icons possibly the decline of the power of the virgin. The centre of power in the image is Medea, a figure reclaimed as an image of female autonomy by women artists, most notably the poet Sylvia Plath.

It is interesting to note that religious symbolism is more frequently used by the male artists within Siolru. In the seventies female artists argued that

"...Religions and symbolic systems focused around male images of divinity affirming the inferiority of female power."
(Chadwick 1990 324)

As a result many women artists chose to work with the archetypal image of the Great Goddess integrating female divinity and power with the earth opposing the dualistic division of nature and culture. The Goddess movement is concerned with reinventing ritual and symbolic practice and looks forward to the revival of a matriarchal tradition. The influence of the spirituality of the Great Goddess is apparent in some women's work in Siolru. Una Walker's "Cerridwen's Cauldron" is an oil pastel drawing of a sterile basin containing blood like fluid (Fig 13). The cauldron in goddess imagery is a symbol of transformation. The mother goddess is Cerridwen, whose totem animal the pig was associated with fertility, plenty, food and multiple birth. Red is the colour of the otherworld in Celtic tradition and the image of Cerridwen's Cauldron encapsulates the cycle of birth, death and transformation. The story of the myth of Cerridwen's Cauldron signifies not only physical birth but the birth of the artist. the poet Taliesin born of the union of Cerridwen and Gwion. The magic of the cauldron was of inspiration and science. Here we have the union of darkness and light, knowledge and instinct, culture and ritual. The image is also suggestive of the traditionally female art of midwifery. Like Medea, Cerridwen represents the terrible mother with strong associations with death, and the dark side of the maternal.

Anya Fitschen's work "Chakra-Vyuha" again draws on new spirituality as a source of images (Fig 14). The chakras are the spiralling energy points in the body. Fitschen uses red, indicative of the abdominal chakra controlling sexuality and physical creativity, and located over the reproductive organs. The spiral has associations with the goddess and the image suggests the foetus in the womb enclosed in warmth and energy. Amelia Stein's "Womb/Tomb" again uses the association of the goddess with the earth, fertility and death. Her work is reminiscent of Ann Mendieta (1948 - 85) a Cuban artist who imposed imprints of her body on the landscape. Not only is there a connection between the woman and the land in terms of fertility, but the land is often sexualised as female in national image of a country, e.g. Caitlin Ni Houlihan, where military conquest is given a sexual metaphor.

Landscape

"Motherhood is the fantasy that is nurtured by the adult man or woman of a lost territory"

(Kristeva 1977 p161)

The use of landscape within Siolru has constituted a major section of the exhibition. As I have suggested the landscape is often sexualised in discourse and as such relates to the themes of birth and maternity. The works that I have chosen to discuss are Andrew Folan's "A Living Landscape", Eileen Mc Donagh's "Paps" and Una Sealy's "End of Summer".

Andrew Folan's "Living Landscape" is an etching combining two superimposed images, an upturned palm and a mountain range. There is an association of male divinity, the god who holds the world in the palm of his hand, the male who holds the power of creation and birth, biologically the domain of the woman. The hold is gentle but dominant with the reverse proportion of the hand appearing larger than the landscape.

"Paps" by Eileen Mc Donagh is a small sculpture in limestone which makes humorous play on the well known mountains "the paps" and the word derived from the Irish meaning breasts. Again there is the association of the land with the feminine, particularly in an Irish context, and of the triple spiral of the goddess. The piece is particularly effective in its archetypal simplicity.

Una Sealy's "End of Summer", oil on canvas, is a landscape invaded by the presence of a figure in the foreground (Fig 15). The landscape behind is a field of wheat, its height and abundance sufficient to conceal anything beneath its surface. The male figure is gazing directly outwards with aggressive unease. The image unsettles the viewer with the crossed arms of the figure heightening the air of concealment, and the aggressive stance of the subject.

Labour

The subject of labour and the act of giving birth, particularly its association with pain was scarcely addressed within Siolru. The few artists whom did approach the subject were Sarah Durcan, Ursula Retzlaff O'Carroll, Alice Maher, Siobhan Cuffe and Rita Duffy.

Sarah Durcan's "Delivery Bed" is a bleak minimal oil painting exuding an atmosphere of clinical coldness. The image is disorientating and there is a death like stillness in the white

sheet and the empty bed. Absence is significant in the piece, and the white sheet unmarked by the blood of delivery is reminiscent of Susan Gubar's "Blank Page", symbolic of woman's creativity under patriarchy.

Alice Maher's "midwife" is again a minimalist painting, yet it captures a moment of activity. Its energy is kinetic rather than static. The midwife's hands symbolise female expertise and power somewhat overwhelmed by the tide of amniotic fluid. The viewer's eye is led towards the top of the painting in expectation of what is to follow.

Siobhan Cuffe's "Floating on an Anaesthetic" is a quirky satirical vision of the influence of pain relieving drugs during labour (Fig 16). Similarly, Rita Duffy's "Birth Dreams" draws on the intense vivid dreaming that accompanies pregnancy for many women (Fig 17). Both these paintings encapsulate the almost hallucinogenic unreality which accompanies an experience all too real in its physical trauma.

Ursula Retzlaff O'Carroll's "Heredity" is one of the few paintings to effectively communicate the trauma and pain of birthing (Fig 18).

"One does not give birth in pain, one gives birth to pain: the child represents it and henceforth it settles in, it is continuous."

(Kisteva 1977 p167)

In O'Carroll's work we are reminded of the dark side of birth. The embrace which greets the infant is claw like, the blood of the delivery reddens the fingers. The infant wears an expression not unlike a death mask, the contours of the face highlighting the similarity between infancy and old age. O'Carroll's work reminds us that the dark side of childbirth - pain, trauma, death, has been largely absent from Siolru. This could of course be explained by the exhibition's celebratory function. O'Carroll's painting however, testifies to the powerful appeal of an image that confronts the awesome range of the experience of childbirth rather than its most acceptable face.

The initial idea for Siolru had the potential for a highly evocative and challenging examination of the themes of birth within a contemporary context. The exhibition could have contributed to the developing body of expression in this area while engaging with current

discourse on creativity and generativity. The exhibition which resulted, however, was lacking in substance and depth of exploration and in many cases displayed a superficial engagement with the theme. There were some outstanding individual contributions such as Sharon Kelly's "Hand to Mouth", Ursula Retzlaff O'Carroll's "Heredity" and Una Walker's "Cerridwen's Cauldron", all of which demonstrated an intense engagement with the theme. Few artists addressed social or political issues surrounding maternity in an Irish context. The issue of poverty and child rearing on a low income, the issues of lone parenthood, of unplanned or unwanted pregnancy, are notable omissions. The issue of abortion, central to political discourse in this country was unaddressed. Paternity, a subject of prominence in the 1990's, where men are increasingly involved in child rearing is not discussed. The immediate explanation for these omissions which comes to mind is the committee's desire for a celebratory emphasis. Does celebrating then mean denying the totality of the experience with its attendant pain and trauma, in favour of the tranquil tableau of mother and child which cannot fail to be aesthetically pleasing.

It must also be said that a proportion of the work exhibited could be considered irrelevant to the themes considered. Works such as Catherine Mc William's "Studio Interior", Brett Mac Entaggart's "Corn Fields in France", Pamela Leonard's "Trees Howth", or Alice Hanratty's "Still Life with Pat Hickey's Jug can be at best considered to have a tenuous connection with the theme through image or title. This failure to address the theme is in part an outcome of the selection process. It is evident that some artists had little enthusiasm for the subject, nor was it reflected in previous work. This contradicts the original aim of the Visual Arts Committee.

"We sought to invite artists who we thought would have a valid contribution to make"

(Arts Committee member)

It is also questionable as to whether insistence on closing the exhibition to all but the professional artist who were *"Clearly recognised within their own sphere of influence"* rendered the exhibition respectable but sedentary.

"It was decided that a chance should be given to professional artists as opposed to students who were working"

(Arts Committee member)

Clearly the group selected did not produce an exhibition which was energising or challenging, nor does the exhibition contribute significantly to to artistic discourse on maternity. This begs the question that if the exhibition had been open submission, the result may have had some of the energy and in depth exploration of the site Specific work.

CHAPTER THREE - COMMUNITY BASED ARTS

The Community Arts Programme was initially developed in order to strengthen links between the maternity hospital and the local community. The initial plan was to work with local women, who had given birth in Holles Street Hospital, through the themes of maternity, birth and parenthood, using the mediums of visual arts and drama. Four community artists, Edel Robinson, Vonne Tobin, Maeve Connolly and Sarah Thornton, were appointed to posts and consequently implemented and designed the programme. Rachel Millotte was appointed facilitator.

This section of the Arts Programme is interesting in its distinctiveness from the rest of the Programme. The physical removal outside the hospital site expands the perspective to one which includes the life of the community outside the hospital.

Giving birth is a powerful and exhilarating experience, one which is not easily forgotten. In the overall Programme it is this experience which is highlighted most. However the reality of motherhood is perhaps most evident on leaving the hospital. It is this aspect of maternity that this section hopes to contend address.

In July '94 the community arts workshops commenced. These consisted of one weekly workshop of two and a half hours duration. No selection process was involved, instead the artists advertised in DHSS offices, health centres and libraries as well as targeting the existing women's groups in Dublin. The participants came from the Coolock, Tallaght and Sandycove areas of the city. The Arts Programme did not require that the participants have previous experience of visual arts and drama, and no fee was charged for participation. The first group to evolve from the community arts was "The Dolebusters", the name derived from the centre they used (Fig 19). Due to lack of funding and resources the community artists were forced to

find a rent free venue to work from. Mornings were the preferred working time for the participants, however the only available venue was free for only one morning and one afternoon session. Consequently the afternoon sessions were badly attended and ended unsuccessfully. The artists attempted to gauge the interest of the women in another morning session in a hired venue, however the women were content with the one session per week arrangement.

It materialised very early on in the workshops that the theme of maternity was not a particularly important issue in the lives and opinions of the participants. A high percentage of the women had grown up families and felt they had moved through the stage of their lives where maternity was a pressing issue. Due to this the workshops progressed from the theme of maternity in the direction of identity, sexuality and other vaguely related issues. The facilitators believe that this has been beneficial and have allowed the project to be directed by the participants.

At this point the facilitators decided to commence "Outreach" workshops. The participants of Outreach are aged between 15 and 25 depending on the individual centre. As with Dolebusters there was no selection process. The facilitators believe that "*if it seems that the workshops can be beneficial to the centre that approaches us, we work with the young women they cater for.*" Outreach workshops usually consist of one half or full day workshops, at other times they are planned as a block of two or three continuing sessions. these take place in schools, young women's hostels and other centres. Whilst some workshops revolve around the broad subject of sexuality, they are mainly issue based and are specifically geared towards the needs of each individual group. For each group the exploration of issues relevant seems to be of prime importance.

Initially the facilitation techniques of the Dolebusters workshops tended towards the therapeutic, and whilst some participants enjoyed and benefited from this, others felt it was not quite what they wanted from the project and found it

stressful. As a result the focus changed and both facilitators and participants were content. Consequently the feed back is positive and the women enjoy the opportunity that the sessions bring to engage with each other and take part in artistic expression and exploration.

The process of evaluation has been ongoing throughout this programme and has obviously aided the broadening of the original concept. There is the realisation in community arts that initial aims are not usually met as initial aims can be directed at an imagined or stereotypical group of people. In this case the acceptance of this and the broadening of the scope of the theme, has been extremely beneficial. However at this point I would add that the facilitators failed to target an appropriate group.

Within this project careful planning was made as is highlighted in a recent facilitators report.

“At early stages, the artists set about establishing short term goals, approaching target groups and individuals and seeking a venue. a great deal of time was taken with this as finance limited the scope of venues.

There was a series of meetings with the artists and facilitators which set up core values relating to the theme of the project and the artists’ individual and effective approach to this theme.

There was training on the process of running successful workshops looking at sequencing, timing, flexibility and evaluations as an ongoing process.

After a staggered holiday in August, a meeting was held for interested females to start in September in a free church hall in Adelaide Road. It was agreed to run two sessions a week on the only available times of Thursday morning and Tuesday afternoons.

A planning day was held for artists and facilitators on content and process from workshops. This followed a problem solving session where certain difficulties were expressed by artists about working together, about the use of CE schemes for arts projects and dissatisfaction with provision for funding the project. This was not resolved but there was agreement reached on work practices. It was

also agreed to extend the target group to younger females and schools and youth groups were approached.

The Thursday group was consistent and enthusiastic and work is going well. The women have been approached individually about their hopes and aspirations for the course and all have expressed a wish to develop skills - some with the view to further training, some just wanting to explore their own creativity which most said they never had a chance to do before. The fact that the sessions were free was important and while most knew of the hospital involvement it did not feature in the women's response. The aspiration to marry drama and the visual arts proved difficult in view of the fact that the one drama specialist had to commit herself to spending comparatively more time on the project. The Tuesday afternoon sessions were very poorly attended and it was decided to abandon these and concentrate on the Thursday morning group - with the hope of an extra morning session after Christmas.

The young women's groups were successful and the artists felt more and more drawn to them and I observed a very exciting session in Mount Temple with a group of 18 - 20 8th year students.

The problems between the artists which had emerged before surfaced again and this time the personal and political problems around CE schemes could not be resolved. As a result, two artists have left the project.

The future of the project is I feel is optimistic in view of the remaining artists and the various groups. there has been a request for more back-up administrative help which would free the artists to run the sessions. I feel there will be a large and growing demand from the artists to work with young women's groups throughout the city.

The evaluation of the project is ongoing and will be undertaken by both the artist and the facilitator.
(Rachel Millotte, Facilitator)

The layout of the facilitator's report articulates clearly the aims, process, problems and outcomes of the Community Arts Programme. On-going evaluation has been a valuable feature of this programme and has contributed to a successful outcome. The realisation that the Dolebusters group was not thriving on the initial aims, and the transition into other related themes has proved an important

breakthrough issue for all new projects in that facilitators do not get blocked in initial aims and the belief in fulfilling them while the participants' needs are not catered for. This has not been the case here, as facilitators have gained a learning experience in broadening their notion of specific themes. The expanded scope from their initial target group to the "Outreach" groups have proved successful. In doing this they are fulfilling the initial aims of the programme whilst paralleling the Dolebusters group as a continuation of these aims into a broader context.

The problems that have arisen could be treated as teething problems apparent in any new project. The discrepancies between artists and administration is common within community art. Administration, which is often seen as of secondary importance, is a major backbone in enabling community art to evolve.

Problems also arise when the artist's job description is not outlined clearly from the beginning. The outcome of this is the artist's involvement with funding applications, and other administrative jobs. Inevitably this leads to frustration as the artist is in fact juggling both jobs.

"Experience has shown how important it is to at an early stage to appoint one person to co-ordinate / administrate the work with smaller projects. This has sometimes been the part time responsibility of an existing member of staff within the hospital health centre or health authority. Once an administrator has been appointed he or she needs to be sure of gaining the support of the steering group and the hospital management for all aspects of the Arts Programme.
(Helping to Heal)

In the National Maternity Hospital's Community Arts Programme, due to discrepancies between artists and administrators, two artists have resigned. According to the document "Helping to Heal" Arts Administrators should possess the following qualities:

- *A wide experience of the arts, combined with organisational skills*
- *Vision, creative ideas, flair and aesthetic sensibility*

- *The ability to match artists, projects and people, recognising the suitability or otherwise of art-forms and arts activities for different health care settings*
- *The flexibility to accommodate other peoples' ideas*
- *The ability to communicate, explain, and deal sensitively and diplomatically with people from all walks of life*
- *Enough courage, tenacity and standing to overcome ignorance, prejudice, disappointments and setbacks*

Another problem which has arisen from the community Arts Programme is the severe lack of funding. This problem is not only apparent in this section but is an ongoing problem for all aspects of the arts programme. Initially the entire Programme was to be funded by the E.S.B. (hence the appointment of Paddy Moriarty as chairman of the General arts Committee), however funding has now come from individual businesses, each section of the Programme having its own sponsor. Past research has shown that the bulk of fund-raising for arts within healthcare has been undertaken by Arts Administration. It has also been shown that the health care profession is beginning to recognise the benefits of money raised for and invested in a good arts programme, and that this in time may lead to fund-raising within health care. This has become an important factor within this particular programme in terms of future plans for the integration of the arts within the hospital on a continuous basis. It is hoped that as a continuation of the Programme, that an arts advisory service will be established within the hospital. The aim is to establish a service which will administer similar arts programmes to other hospitals within Ireland, giving advice on site Specific Works etc. The establishment of an arts advisory body does not include any provision for ongoing creative work. This gives rise to the possibility of a situation arising where the arts within health care becomes a business transaction where artists are assigned and creativity is side stepped.

In the UK it has become policy that external bodies will not provide funding unless the health authority or hospital has contributed, or will gradually take over funding after an initial period. In Ireland in 1978 Charles Haughey instructed

architects at Tralee and Dublin to “incorporate major works of art” into their designs of new hospitals. The following week The Irish Times was flooded with letters opposing Mr. Haughey’s statement.

“It is a misuse because public moneys committed to Mr. Haughey are to be spent for health purposes and not for fine arts.”

The question therefore inevitably arises: Do the fine arts have a financially justifiable role in health care? The answer is simple yet the surrounding issues are complex. Not much has changed in Ireland since 1978, and the struggle for recognition for art as therapy continues. However some individuals in health care professions are convinced.

“I have plenty to do in that I have a staff of 250 nurses and a budget of six million pounds, not a penny of which is for the arts. But I do believe passionately that a woman is not a mechanism consisting of parts which come here to be fixed.”

(Matron Maeve

Dwyer)

To conclude this chapter on Community Arts a comparison of aims and objectives needs to be made. The preliminary intention of the facilitators was to forge links between the National Maternity Hospital and the community by providing an environment where women could engage in an exploration of their experiences of maternity. The inevitable outcome could have been foreseen as the target group consisted of a high percentage of women who were past child bearing age and whose focus had shifted onto other areas. In establishing this group and its needs the artists / facilitators found that

“...the imposition of a theme i.e. maternity was a major hindrance”

“If an issue is imposed by an institution it will always lack the necessity and relevance of the genuine community arts.”

“The term community arts is not really appropriate to our project. These perhaps negative comments do not negate the work we undertake, it is simply different to community arts.”

(Sarah Thornton - community artist)

The outcome therefore could be said to “have” negated the whole notion of establishing links between the hospital and the community. The problem obviously lay in the incorrect target group and insufficient planning. However within the realms of community art it is difficult to be objective if the group in question are thriving yet transgressing away from the initial aims.

As for the future, workshops have been planned until March when an exhibition will be culminated from the two groups. The idea of the exhibition is of celebration, giving the participants the opportunity to be publicly proud of the process they have been engaged in and the work they have produced. Disappointingly, the facilitators feel that the project will be unlikely to continue after March.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude this evaluation I will present a brief conclusive synopsis of each chapter following through from initial aims to process outcome and evaluation. I will then comment on major aspects and persistent features of the overall programme which have come to light in the process of the evaluation, highlighting successes as well as addressing shortcomings and failings which have contributed to minor and major discrepancies within the programme. Finally I will outline possibilities for the future of this programme and its influence beyond the scope of the centenary year.

In Chapter One the Site Specific Committee aimed at selecting work that would convey the artist's sensitivity towards the subject of birth, display the artist's sense of creativity in designing for a busy working environment, and initiate a level of interaction between artist and staff, patients and visitors. Eight artists were selected who displayed an awareness of these initiatives within their proposals. Four of the eight artists have displayed their work: Pauline Cummins, Aileen McKeogh, Kate Malone and Aine Ni Giolla Coda, all of whom could be said to have fulfilled the initial criteria. The interaction with staff and patients has been controversial within the work of Kate Malone, Aine Ni Giolla Coda and Pauline Cummins. The provocative issues were around issues of ownership, and the appropriateness of work and its siting. The Site Specific works displayed at this stage which are fully realised, and those proposed, cover a broad range of mediums, themes and approaches, from quilting to multimedia. The difficulty of producing works which combine sensitivity with challenge has been skilfully managed. The project has been celebrated for its democracy and innovation, transforming the image of mural based hospital art. Few problems have arisen from the Site Specific work, apart from the issue of staff and patient reaction, and this could be interpreted, not as a problem but as a progressive realisation of the criteria for selection.

The aim of Siolru, discussed in Chapter Two, was an exhibition of 142 professional artists' responses to the themes of birth, maternity, parenthood and childhood. The exhibition had enormous innovative potential, providing a context for a relatively untouched subject in visual art to be addressed. This potential for challenge and innovation was not realised. Certain individual exhibits were striking in their simplicity of form, such as Sonja Landweer's 'In Vitro'. Of those who addressed the theme directly, many favoured the traditional tableau of mother and child, which, while aesthetically pleasing, is ultimately dissatisfying in its failure to promote discourse. Thomas Ryan's 'Mother and Child' is an example of this. The exhibits which I feel were most effective were those which embraced the scope of the experience of birth, with its attendant pain and trauma, and through visual language engaged with artistic discourse. Ursula Retzlaff O'Carroll's 'Heredity' achieves both of these. The potential for addressing 'political' issues around the subject of childbirth was there, but few responded to this. Stephen Rothchild's 'Urban Parenthood', with its image of the street vendor, was one of these.

Some of the works exhibited had but tenuous connection or were irrelevant to the theme. This was the consequence of a selection process which validated work by artists who were 'clearly recognised within their own sphere of influence' over the work of non-professionals with a genuine interest.

In Chapter Three - Community Arts, the initial aim of this section was to invite women to participate in the exploration of the issues of childbirth, motherhood and women's health through visual arts and drama. The hope was that in doing so links would be strengthened between the hospital and the local community. It materialised in the early stages that maternity was not an area of interest for the group. Subsequently the project shifted focus onto themes of sexuality, identity and other related issues. A development from the project was the outreach workshops, also focusing on sexuality based on young women's centres around Dublin. The outcome, although certainly beneficial and satisfying to the group, diverged considerably from the initial aims.

It was strongly felt by both group and facilitator that the theme of maternity was an imposition rather than an aid to expression. It is possible that a source of this discrepancy was in the targeting of the group, who found the theme uninspiring, and their focus of interest elsewhere. The women spanned a wide age range (30-70). They had, or were in the process of raising, families, but did not have very young children. Their pronounced resistance to the theme, the feeling that they had 'passed that stage', depicts a vision of women's lives as a series of hurdles, to overcome and move on from, rather than one of persistent concerns. This outcome highlights the inaccuracy of the assumption that maternity as a theme is of universal interest to women. The theme of sexuality was felt to span the interest of the whole group, possibly reflecting the women's desire to be seen as more than just mothers. For these women, the reality of maternity can mean a hard struggle against poverty, against which a space for creative expression can provide a welcome reprieve. The central purpose of community art is to facilitate the self-expression and empowerment of the participants, and this, rather than adherence to a theme was felt to be a more important aim. Other problems that emerged within the community arts section, concerning funding, administration, FAS involvement, are also of general concern.

This evaluation does not fully cover aspect of the arts Programme, certain aspects having been omitted, such as the children's and staff workshops, literary workshops having been omitted as not central to the evaluation, and due to limited wordage. However the problems which have been highlighted within the three chapters are also evident within the Arts Programme as a whole. It is hoped that through the discussion of these that a conclusive reasoning of the downfalls within the programme may be put forward.

The prevalent problems forwarded for discussion are:

1. The relationship of health care staff and arts staff
2. Lack of funding
3. Lack of involvement of committee members

4. Public face of the programme
5. Politics of selection process

1. The Relationship of Health Care Staff and Arts Staff

The relationship of health care staff and arts staff presents a variety of difficulties stemming from varying attitudes within each profession. Health care institutions are usually highly bureaucratic, a quality which does not necessarily coincide with artistic expression. It is a diverse collaboration as each profession is attempting to do what is least natural to them. The problems in collaboration of arts and health care staff was first highlighted at a seminar for doctors in September 1994. The seminar's title was 'The arts in the Centenary Year - Bane or Blessing?' The discussion was furthered in December 1994 at a seminar entitled 'The Role of The Arts in Holles Street' with both health care staff and artists present. It became apparent at both meetings that there were problems in three main areas

- the lack of information for staff
- the question of ownership of the hospital and the feeling of intrusion experienced by staff
- the curtailing of arts works by patients and staff.

The area where staff felt there was insufficient information was around the Site Specific work. Staff felt they should have been involved in the consultation process. Particular reference was made to Aine Ni Giolla Coda's work where there were questions of ownership raised. There were strong feelings amongst staff (although not stated at these meetings) that the hospital should value its employees as well as its patients. There was the suggestion that if names were to be displayed on the walls, then those who had devoted their lives to working in the hospital should be commended.

The question of curtailing art works was also discussed in connection with Kate Malone's image of a bare abdomen in foetal assessment, and an image of an empty cot in

the Merrion Wing. Dr. Boylan (Master) pointed out that the hospital's patients are an involuntary audience and do not choose to see the images.

Some of these problems could be attributed to the unprecedented nature of the project, and both health care staff and artists deserve praise for the handling and articulation of their differences.

2. Lack of Funding

The problem of funding or lack of it has also been briefly outlined in Chapter Three. This was a problem apparent throughout the entire programme after the ESB did not meet its expected offer of financial support. In a manner typical of arts budgeting the section that was most affected was community Arts. This withdrawal of financial support by the ESB presented a major problem as the majority of funding applications had to be made while work was in progress. A possible solution to this could be to adopt a policy similar to the UK policy for funding where the health authority or hospital contribute to the scheme and gradually take responsibility for funding after an initial period.

'Money of course is one of the key constraints. The funding of arts programmes within health care is still a controversial and delicate matter. There are still plenty of people at all levels who regard arts programmes or works of art as a frivolous distraction or at best a low priority expenditure'

3. Lack of involvement by Committee Members

At committee level problems were also apparent as certain members did not uphold their positions, leaving the burden of much of the decision making to other members. Maeve O'Dwyer (Matron) also felt that in terms of staff involvement, herself and Peggy Maguire were the only representatives of the hospital staff, and that if more staff had initially been included in the committee, staff reaction to the programme may have been different.

4. The Public Face of the Programme

Within the Arts Programme certain sections have been given more public commendation than others. This is definitely the case where the Community Arts children's and staff workshops are compared with Site Specific work and the RHA exhibition. This is a source of annoyance and humiliation for the in house and community artists, where their work takes place with little public accolade in comparison with the high profile events. This imbalance though characteristic of the relationship between professional and community art, undermines the aim of forging links between hospital and community.

5. Politics of the Selection Process

The politics of the selection process referred to in Chapter Two is a crucial part of the evaluation, as the outcome led to the production of work for both the Site Specific and the RHA Gallery. The process did not affect the quality and scope of the Site Specific work as the proposals were chosen on many levels, the artists' response to the theme being of prime importance. The work exhibited by the RHA Gallery was a direct result of this process and was variable in the quality of response and analysis, resulting in an exhibition which, in spite of some work of outstanding merit, as a whole lacked coherency and challenge.

In conclusion the Arts Programme 94 has succeeded in fulfilling its basic aims as well as broadening the scope of those initial concepts. In the process certain sections of the programme have been more successful than others. The Site Specific work has been a unique innovation and a considerable step forward for hospital art throughout Ireland. The R.H.A. exhibition although disappointing in some ways also displayed work by artists who had a genuine input and challenging viewpoint. The Community Arts Programme, while not meeting their initial aims, provided a safe and encouraging space for women's creative development where it may not have happened otherwise.

Within the past two years the arts Programme 94 has evolved from an idea for a celebratory exhibition to a project of ambitious scope that broaches a subject previously unaddressed within an appropriate and novel context. The Arts Programme has taken arts outside the gallery context and presented to the community in an exciting and alternative way.

Sadly the continuation of the Arts Programme in a living and creative sense will cease after March 1995. One possible development from the programme is the establishment of an arts advisory service which would facilitate the development of other projects of this nature for other hospitals. The memory of a year of artistic gestation in the National Maternity Hospital will live on in the Site Specific work until the time comes for Anne Ni Giolla Coda's 100 names and dates to be painted over.

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fig 1



fig2



fig 3

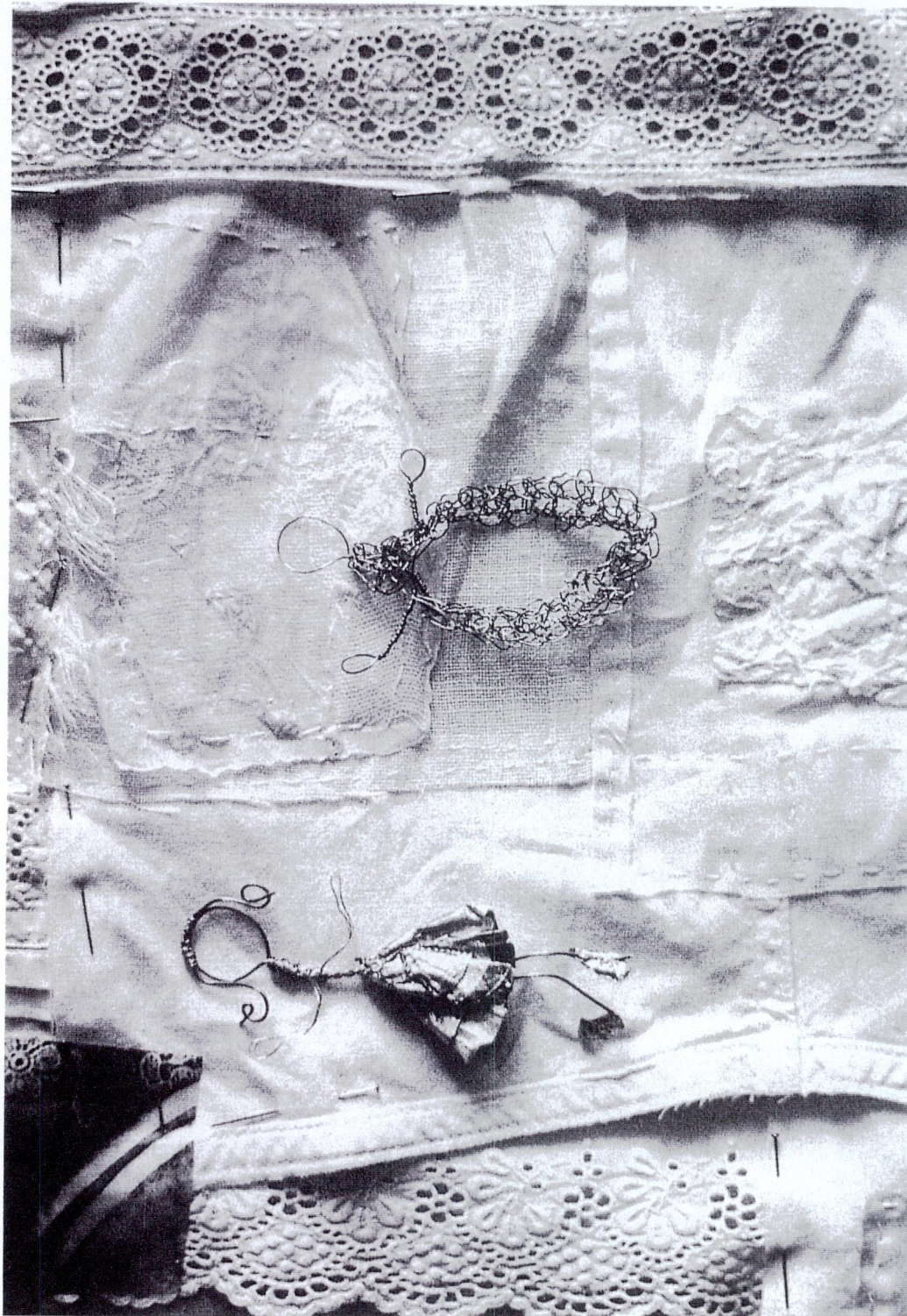


fig 4



fig 5

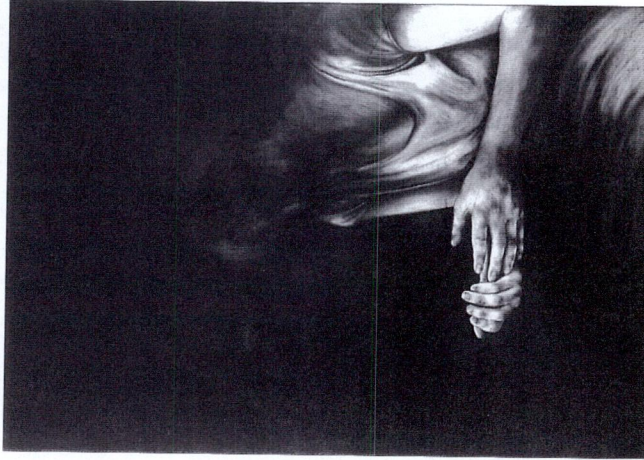


fig6

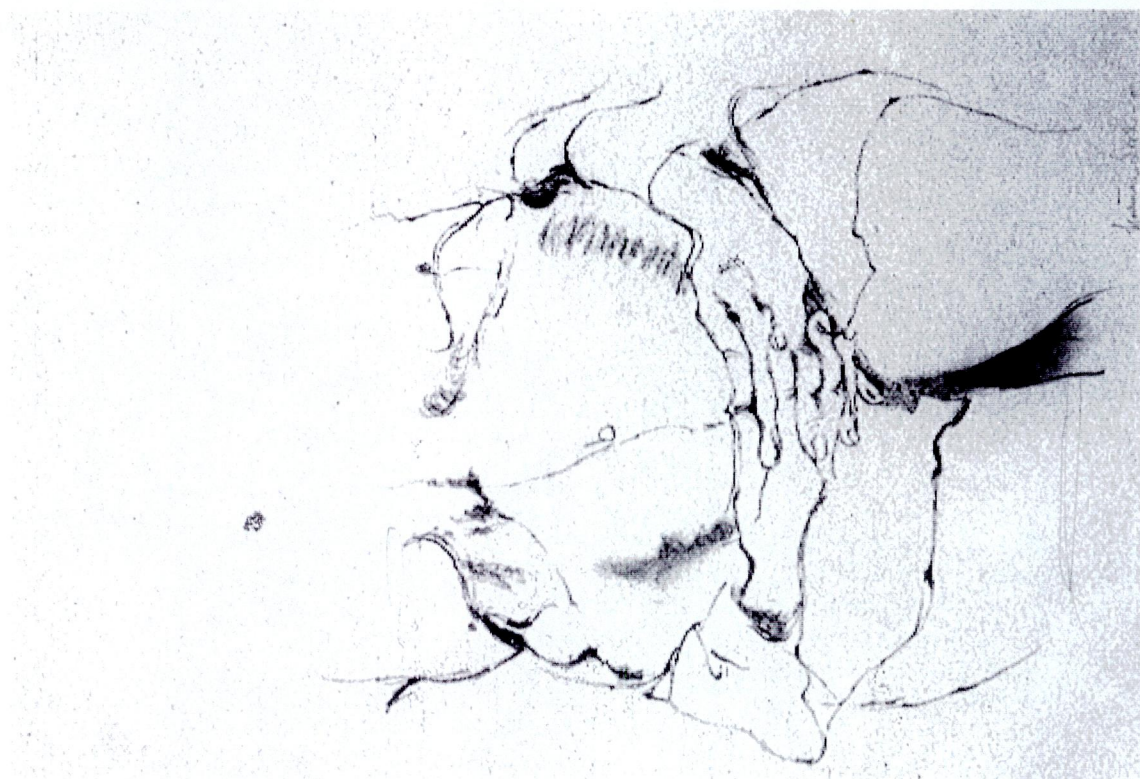


fig 7



fig 8

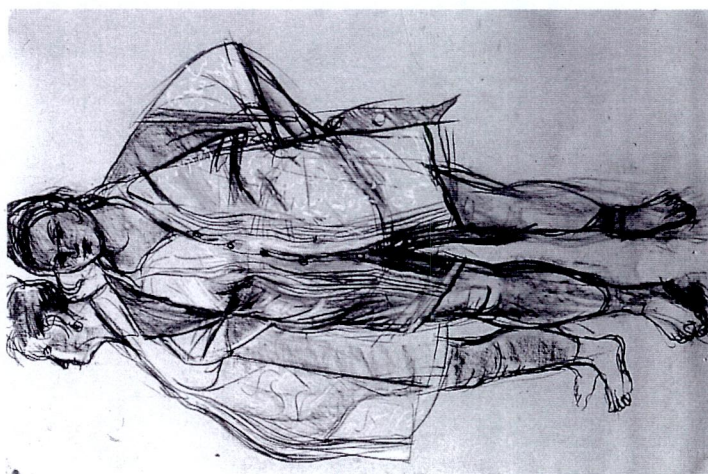


fig 9



fig 10

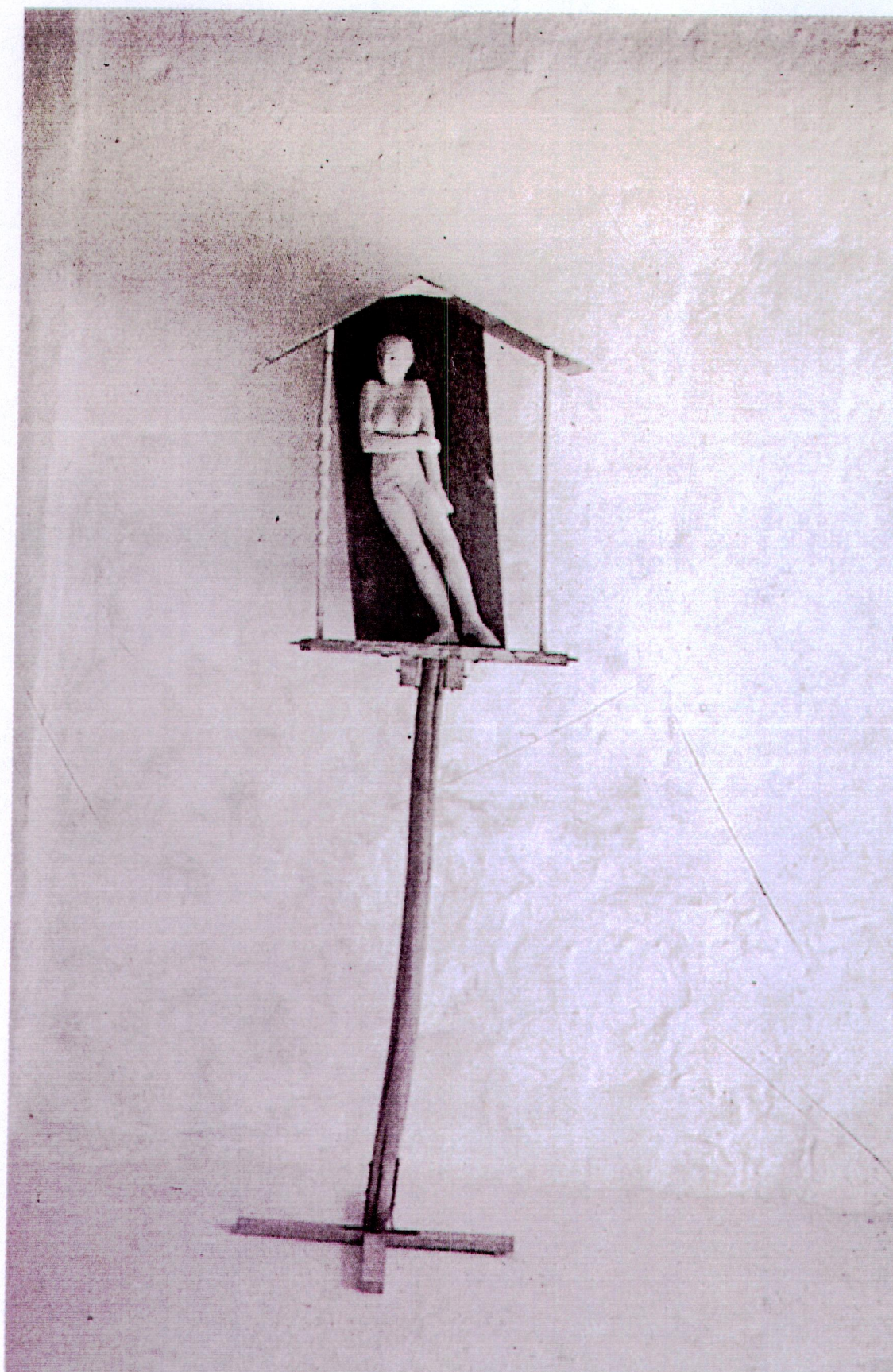


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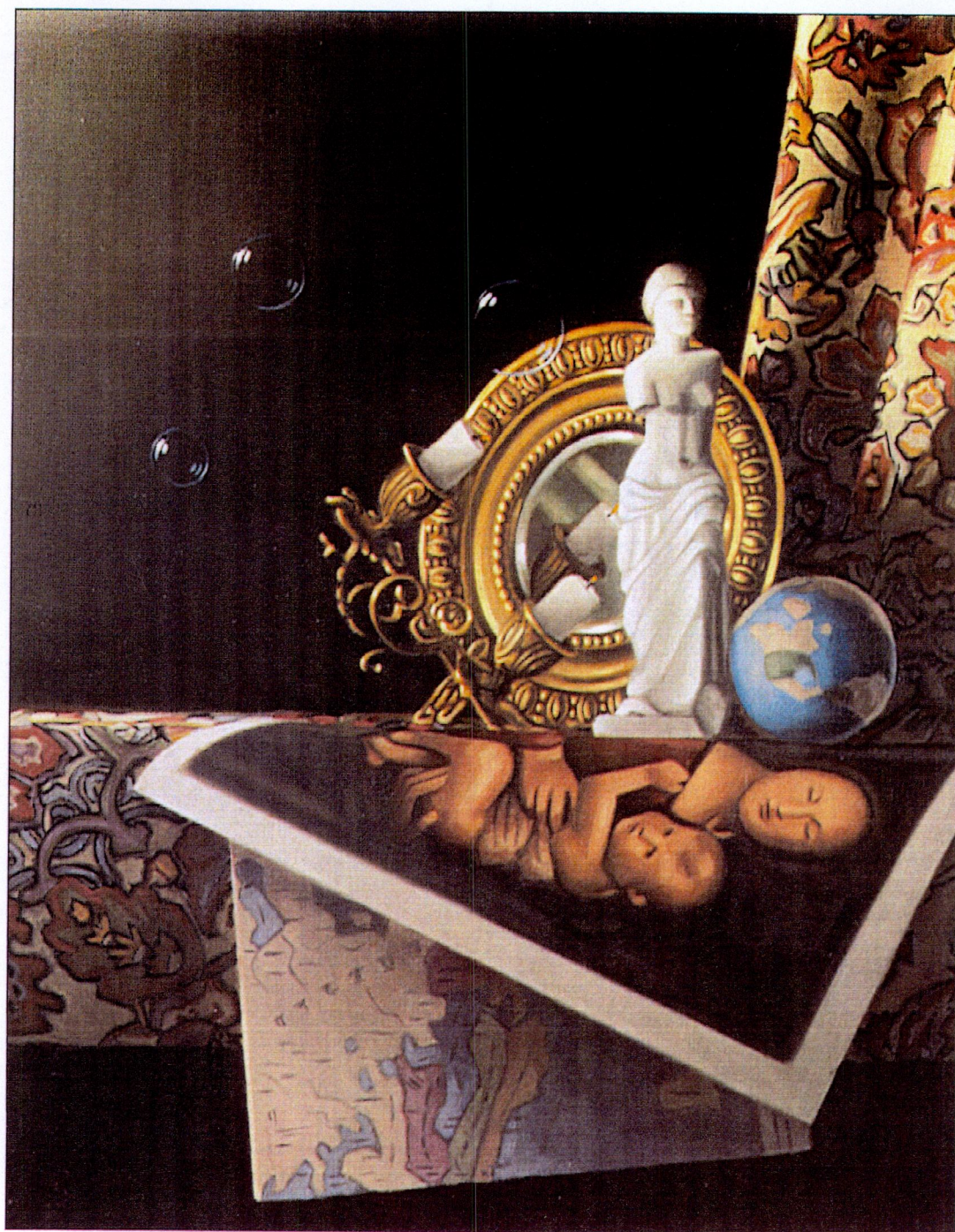


fig 12

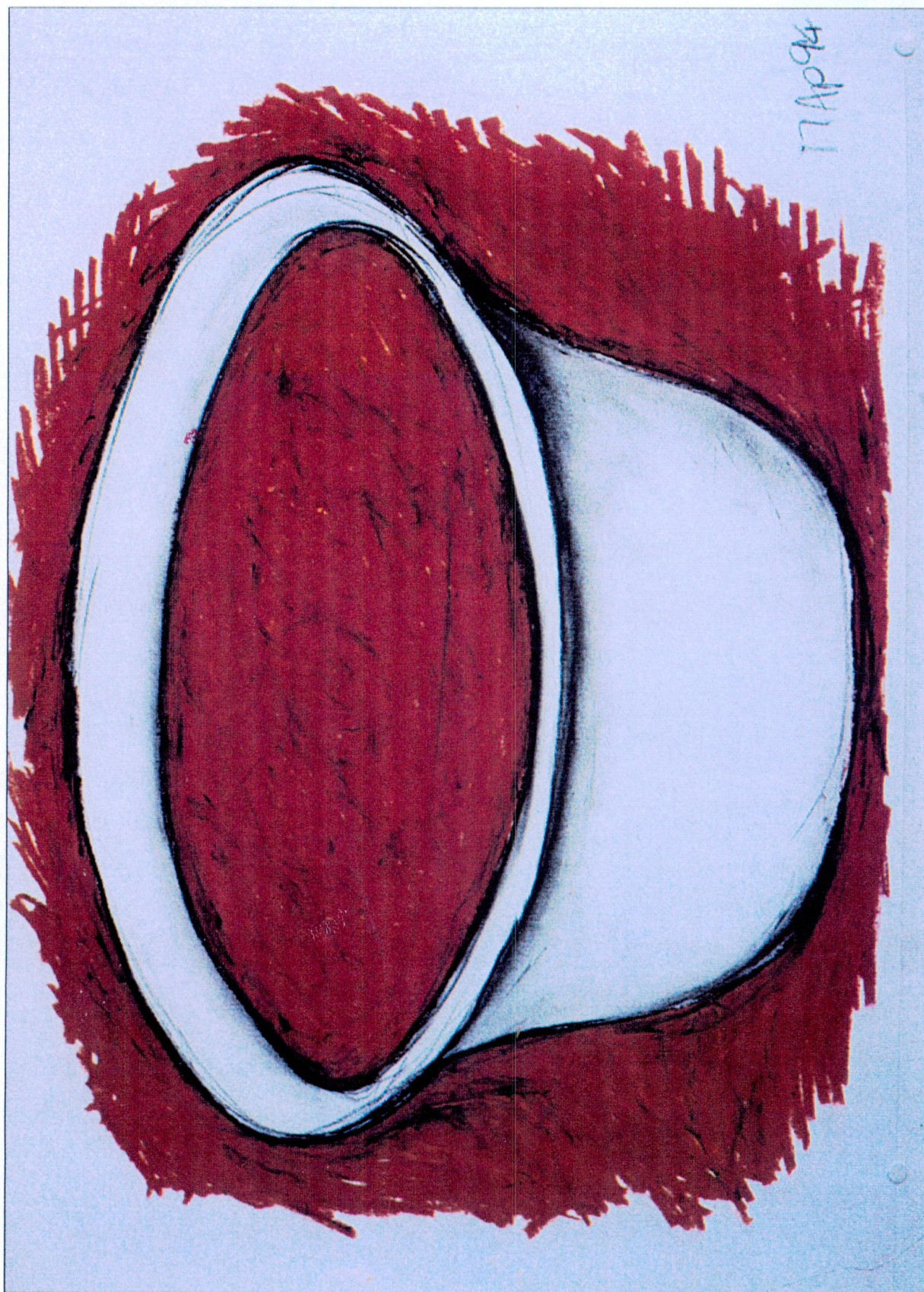


fig 13



fig 14

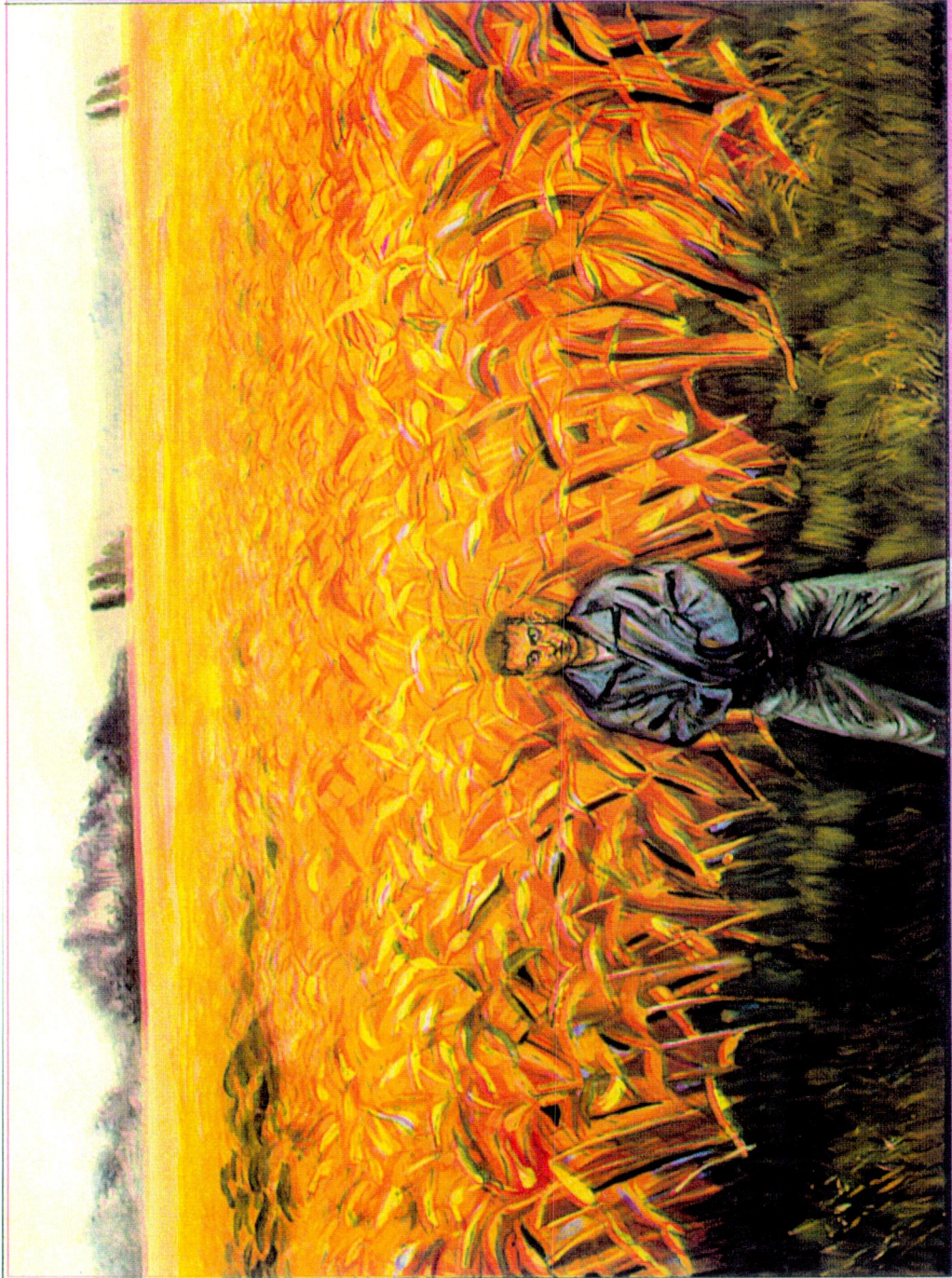


fig 15



fig 16



fig 17



fig 18

1995.



fig 19

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