

# **THE SEARCH FOR SELF - IDENTITY: EXPLORING THE SELF THROUGH THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE IN THE CLASSROOM**

This dissertation focuses on the hypothesis that a valid aspect of art education is to bring students to a heightened awareness of the intrinsic elements of themselves ; through the creative experience.

The characteristics of the developmental phase of adolescence are focused on in Chapters One and Two. The concerns of young people, such as the search for self - identity, role confusion and the formulation of the persona, are examined.

Chapter Three investigates the possibility that the creative experience, as a means of self - exploration can transcend the defence mechanisms of the persona (the prototype 'false self' ), and enable the young person to accept their innate characteristics and emotions. The meaning and value of creativity in the classroom is discussed and recognised, and the role of the art teacher, as promoter of sensitivity and self - expression among adolescents is established.

Chapter Four is devoted to the documentation of empirical research - the application of the hypothesis to a sequence of lessons on self - portraiture, with particular reference to the reactions and responses of the students involved.

This study concludes with a summary of its investigative procedure, and an ascertainment of the validity of the creative experience in art and design as a tool for the acquisition of an acceptable sense of self.







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THE SEARCH FOR SELF - IDENTITY:  
EXPLORING THE SELF THROUGH THE  
CREATIVE EXPERIENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Education

in

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DIPLOMA FOR ART AND DESIGN TEACHERS

by

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF:

#### Adolescence and the Persona

The concept of adolescence favoured by most people is that of a developmental phase occurring between the ages of twelve and eighteen which culminates in the achievement of maturity. Adolescence means 'growing up'.

Growth and development takes place at all stages of life and are essential to the healthy individual. However, it is invariably in adolescence that people experience strong physical and emotional changes which mark the transition from the fluid, inconstant personality of childhood to the more coherent one of the adult.

For many, early adolescence is an exciting experimental time with opportunities to test out strategies and procedures for dealing with the challenges and possibilities of coming adulthood. Others, however, find that the passing from childhood to adolescence is fraught with difficulties and insecurities.





One fundamental aspect of early adolescence is the search for self - identity. In the protected phase of childhood the individual is primarily concerned with other peoples' responses to how he/she looks, feels and acts. (1). The adolescent becomes more involved with introspection - beginning to reflect on the innate distinctive characteristics which contribute to his/her personality - as well as other peoples' perceptions of him/her. (2).

In an attempt to establish a sense of self, adolescents claim the right to make independent decisions about the clothes they wear, their social behaviour, values and opinions. Social roles and activities of the adult generation may be initiated or opposed. Young adolescents often select role models, either from family, school or popular culture and attempt to emulate their lifestyles and habits, having judged these to be acceptable and desirable.

These behaviour patterns are part of a process where the ultimate goal is an autonomous, adult self. In some cases, adults may regard the activities and judgements of young people in this formative stage as irritating or tiresome. It must be remembered, however, that despite their apparent confidence, certain adolescents are in a state of extreme vulnerability and insecurity. They have no idea whether the identity which they are so painstakingly formulating will be successful, and suitable for adult life. The poise and independence they adopt may work against them, leaving them



One fundamental aspect of a young adolescent is the search for self-identity. In the protected world of childhood the individual is primarily concerned with their parents' responses to his or her behavior (Larson, 1990). The adolescent becomes more involved with interaction, beginning to reflect on the family lifestyle characteristics which contribute to his or her personality, as well as other people's perceptions of himself (Larson, 1990).

In an attempt to establish a sense of self, adolescents claim the right to make independent decisions about the activities they want, their social behavior, values and opinions. Social roles and activities of the adult generation may be utilized or opposed. Young adolescents often select role models either from family, school or popular culture and attempt to emulate their lifestyles and values, having judged them to be acceptable and desirable.

These behavioral patterns are part of a process where the ultimate goal is to become an adult. In some cases, adults may regard the activities and judgments of young people in this formative stage as irritating or irrelevant. It must be remembered, however, that despite their apparent confidence, certain adolescents are in states of extreme vulnerability and uncertainty. They have no idea whether the identity which they are so positively formulating will be successful and suitable for adult life. The peers and independence they adopt may work against them, leaving them

with a feeling of isolation from adults, and unable to communicate, or even verbalise their fears.

It is the responsibility of parents and teachers, in cases such as these to provide tolerance and sympathy and to make themselves available and approachable to young people experiencing difficulties. Apparently detached independent young individuals still seem to need approval and interest from the adult generation which they ostensibly disregard. If adults express appreciation for the achievements and goals of the adolescent, the latter are assured that they are valued and approved of and this is an incentive for communication. The role of the teachers in providing guidelines within which the young person can work towards a valid sense of self - identity is an invaluable one .

One problematic feature of adolescent self - development which may be encountered by teachers is that of 'feigned individuality' the identification of the self with the persona. (3). The term 'persona' is a Jungian one, and is identified as :

*the ' mask' .... the defensive structure of the ego complex. The persona protects the coherence of individual being, through denial, or identification with a role. The persona is a defence, especially against threats from others ..... caused by lowered self esteem or other threats (emotional or physical). (4).*



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The problematic feature of adolescent self-development which may be encountered by teachers is that of 'reigned individuality' the identification of the self with the person. (3) The term 'person' is a Jungian one, and is identified as:

the 'mask' ... the definite structure of the ego complex. The person provides the coherence of individual being through detail or identification with a role. The person is a defense, especially against threats from others ... caused by feared self-revelation or other threats (emotions or attitudes). (4)



The persona could be described as the best possible face which the adolescent adopts to serve as an identity. This comes about (as previously described) by the adoption of role models, values and ideas without really being aware of the motives for appreciating these things. This is acceptable so long as it exists merely as an experimental stage in the process for discovering the self. However, many adolescents do not go beyond this stage and instead concentrate on developing the persona - which is, in fact, not the true self at all, but only an aspect of the personality to be perceived by others. So, while the young person imagines that they are establishing a sense of self - identity ; they are merely presenting a ' face ' to the out side world without really understanding the intrinsic aspects of their psychological individuality. The reason that the persona emerges so forcefully in adolescence is partially because of the need for a defence mechanism.

Young people often feel very threatened by others' expectations of them - expectations which may be apparent in their families, peers - and teachers. Adolescents are governed by the need to appear mature and 'together'. This state of assured maturity can often seem elusive to them, when, in moments of self - doubt or genuine self - reflection - they become aware of the discrepancy between their ideal selves and what they believe themselves to be.

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 in, which the adolescent adapts to some of his identity. This  
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 aspect of the person that is presented by others. But while the  
 young person imagines that they are establishing a sense of self-  
 identity, they are merely presenting a 'face' to the outside  
 world, without really understanding the intrinsic aspects of their  
 psychological individuality. The reason that two persons  
 may be so different in adolescence is primarily because of the  
 need for a different relationship.

Young people of a few years separated by others  
 experience of them - expectations which may be different in  
 their families, peers - and outside. Adolescents are known to  
 be seen to appear mature and competent. This is because they  
 are often seen closer to their own self, in a way that  
 is different from the way in which they are seen by others.  
 The difference between their own sense and what is perceived  
 themselves to be.



Their consequent sense of inadequacy drives them, then to construct a persona - a defensive presentation of a false self - to meet their ideal of a unique identity. This also serves as a mask for flaws and weaknesses - real or imagined. Hence the persona fulfils the demand to be a cohesive individual, with a social and cultural identity BEFORE the fundamental aspects of the self are understood or explored by the developing young person. (5).

The frightening element of the constructed persona is that very aspect which characterises it - falsehood. While the persona allows the young person to successfully knit in to their society it is still essentially detrimental because it is a false self. It doesn't accommodate aspects of the identity which may have been rejected in childhood by families or peers. From infancy onwards, traits such as aggression, boastfulness and selfishness meet with disapproval. (6). This should not be condemned, however, since we'd have an anarchistic society if these traits were indulged.

The danger here is that adolescents may completely disclaim these aspects of themselves, in order to achieve their ideal identity. This is the way in which the persona is shaped and developed - by identification with and only with - the positive aspects of the self.

There are those who may feel that this is the right way to conduct oneself. However, if a young person completely

Their argument arose in connection with their  
 own to construct a person - a definite person - a self  
 self - to make their idea of a self-identity. This also means a  
 a kind of law and necessity - not to be changed. These two  
 persons fulfil the demand to be a coherent individual with a  
 self and call it identity. But the fundamental aspects of  
 the self are understood or explained by the following way:

person (2)

The following is part of the content of person  
 is that very aspect which is not identical with the  
 person as shown the young person is identical with the self  
 identity. The self is not identical with the self. It is a self  
 it is not identical with the self. It is a self  
 is identical in itself and the family - or person. It is not  
 given to them as a self. It is not identical with the self  
 present in the person. (2) The self is not identical with  
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 person's aspect of the self.

There are those who may feel that this is a right  
 way to conduct one's life. However, if a young person cannot



disassociates themselves from negative ideas and images of their personality, these traits become repressed. And if integral parts of the self are split from persons' conscious identity, they can erupt with frightening force in later life, leading to a variety of neuroses and the widely discussed 'mid-life crisis'.

It is crucial, therefore that the adolescent breaks away from the 'feigned individuality' of the persona, and empathises with and takes responsibility for the negative aspects of the personality. The young person can only become capable of insight into their true self by differentiating between what they WANT to be and what they fundamentally ARE.

Many people reach adulthood without taking this developmental stage - few even contemplate it. (7). The result is an over developed persona which may be potentially damaging to the individual.

This is why the importance of reaching a valid sense of self - identity in adolescence must not be underestimated. Good teaching strategies and a positive, communicative teacher - pupil relationship can be instrumental in the young person's acceptance of the variety of qualities and characteristics which contribute to their wholeness as an individual. In the following chapters, the role and relevance of art in the classroom as an approach to self - exploration will be introduced. There will be a focus on the hypothesis that the creative experience can be a tool for discovering the self, and communicating one's inner

It is a common theme in many of the papers that the young people are not taking responsibility for their own actions. This is a common theme in many of the papers that the young people are not taking responsibility for their own actions. This is a common theme in many of the papers that the young people are not taking responsibility for their own actions.

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experiences, responses and conflicts to others by visual means. To quote a valid remark made by a tutor in the National College of Art; " A drawing is like a page in an intimate diary".

This in itself outlines the relevance of art and design for a young person's personal growth. The desire for perfection in oneself is understandable but that state is unattainable. It is hoped that through creative self - exploration, adolescents will come to realise that both positive and negative aspects of character are vital components in that which is the fascinating and beautiful, healthy human being.



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themselves and the world around them. It is the responsibility  
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## FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER 1

1. J.A. Hadfield, Childhood and Adolescence. (Middlesex, England, Penguin Books Ltd., 1962) page 180.
2. James Marcia, "Becoming a Personality Theorist" in Personality and Abnormal Processes and Development, (Macmillan, New York, 1971) page 431.
3. C.G. Jung, "Individuation as Ordering Principle of the Self", in Jung's Self Psychology : A Constructivist Perspective, ed. Polly Young-Eisendrath (The Guildford Press, New York, 1991), page 28.
4. Ibid, page 28.
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6. Ibid, page 29.
7. Ibid, page 29.

# FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER I

1. J.A. Marshall, *Childhood and Adolescence* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1962) page 130.
2. James Marcia, 'Becoming a Personality Identity in Personality and Adolescent Processes and Development' (New York: New York 1971) page 411.
3. C.G. Jung, 'Introduction to the Psychology of the Self' in *The Psychology of the Self*, ed. by C.G. Jung (New York: The Guildford Press, New York, 1957) page 28.
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6. *Ibid.* page 28.
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## CHAPTER 2

### ROLE CONFUSION

In this chapter, I propose to examine the hypothesis that the development of and adherence to a false self can be transgressed, with the aid of art and design (the creative process) as a medium for self exploration. It is important to embark upon this process of establishing self - identity at the stage when the young adolescent is struggling with a variety of role models derived from the adult generation and society in general. The young person is selecting roles from the culture which surrounds them, and emulating or disregarding them in an attempt to create a prototype identity for themselves. Their fundamental concern is that the ' self ' they are formulating will appear impressive to their peers and autonomous to adults.

Erik H. Erikson refers to this behaviour as the stage of 'role confusion' ..... one which is frequently upsetting and debilitating for adolescents. He says that :

*it is the inability to settle on an occupational identity which disturbs individual young people. To keep themselves together they temporarily overidentify to the point of apparent complete loss of identity, with the heroes of cliques and crowds. (1).*

## CHAPTER 2

## ROLE CONFLUENCE

In this chapter, I propose to examine the hypothesis

that the development of self-identity is a process that is

transmitted with the aid of role and identity (the hypothesis

proposed) as a means for self-identity. It is important to

emphasize upon this process of establishing self-identity at the

stage when the young adolescent is struggling with a variety of

role models derived from the adult generation and society in

general. The young person is receiving cues from the culture

which surrounds them and evaluating or rejecting them as

an effort to create a self-identity. It is important to note

that the process of self-identity is a process that is

appearing in response to their past and future experiences.

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It is easy for a teacher to recognise the behaviour patterns of young people in thrall to that state of role confusion.

With the apparent absence of continuity in themselves and their surroundings, they fix doggedly onto icons of popular culture as mentors and symbols of their ideal selves, only to swing to another role model in remarkably short space of time. Most adolescents appear to have an inherent horror of seeming nondescript or overly conformist. Casually glancing around my classroom last week, I took note of a fair number of deviations from the school's idea of correct uniform. Students employed badges, elaborate hairstyles, rolled-up sleeves and (presumably illegal) nail polish to proclaim their individuality. This behaviour is echoed outside the school, where the clothing, social habits and ideas of adolescents almost make an overt and deliberately calculated statement about the individual. Fashion, make up and even tattoos are experimented with, seeming to suggest a desire to physically impress some form of permanent, tangible identity on the young person. (2). Yet, these aspects of dress and appearance will fluctuate and alter at the same rate as the role models they select.

Adolescents experiencing role confusion can also vary in their treatment of others. The young person often appoints even the most well meaning of teachers to play the role of adversary, the totalitarian enemy. (3). This stereotyping is comforting to the adolescent, as it fits in with their ideology - which is that the



It is easy for a teacher to recognize the behavior patterns of young people in their own state of life. However, with the apparent absence of continuity in themselves and their surroundings, they do suddenly find themselves in a new culture or situation and symbol of their ideal selves. They are trying to fit their role model in remarkably short space of time. Most adults seem to have an inherent habit of seeing themselves as overly confident. Occasionally, during a school my classroom for a week I took note of a behavior of students from the school's list of correct uniform. Students engaged in badgering behavior, rolled up sleeves and (possibly) illegal and public to practice their individuality. The behavior is evident outside the school where the clothing and habits and ideas of adolescents almost make an effort to deliberately cultivated statement about the individual. It is not up and even to those who experiment with wearing a desire to physically impress others form of permanent graphic identity on the young person. (2) For those who do not dress and experiment well, it is not after all the school as the role models they seek.

Adolescents' extraordinary role confusion can also be seen in their treatment of others. The young person often appears even the most well meaning of people to play the role of a person, the role of a person. (3) The young person is looking to the school as a role in their life. It is not the school is that the

adult world is largely comprised of those who would stifle and oppress a young person.

This notion exists primarily because of the conflict which occurs between the young person and adult authority figures, when, in the quest for identity, the adolescent grasps at responsibilities and autonomous decisions which they may not have the maturity to deal with properly.

An innate desire to appear (and to perceive themselves) as in control of their lifestyle and behaviour, causes the adolescent to disregard the influences and advice of many parents and teachers. To the young person, it is imperative that they alone are responsible for the choices they make - even if those choices result in isolation from parents and, possibly a sense of abandonment.

The alternative is to accept guidance from those in authority and hence to perceive themselves as 'children' ..... incapable of achieving status and approval except by complying with the rules of the adult generation. To the adolescent, this course of action would seem to incur a state of debilitation: dependence on adults, and, ultimately, a loss of the mature, autonomous identity which they are attempting to establish for themselves.

Paradoxically, however, many adolescents have a deep fear of acting inappropriately, making the wrong decisions



It is a very large body of water and it is very deep. It is a very large body of water and it is very deep.

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and failing to meet the expectations of their peers, or their adult advisers. (4).

The sense of failure is all the more acute and destructive because it has been brought about solely by the young person - responsibility and blame is focused entirely on themselves. This leads to self - appraisals which are unrealistically negative and over-critical since the adolescents' idealistic outlook causes them to be as intolerant of their own defects as of other people's.

The occurrence of such crises can result in many adolescents, in an act of defiance, adopting what Erik Erikson terms as a 'negative identity'. (5).

The emergence of this role is, for the adolescent, a last-ditch attempt at attaining independence, and a sense of a coherent self. It is a potentially destructive role, however, in that it entails consistent and complete rejection of the ethical, political and moral values which are upheld by the adolescent's parents and teachers.

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parents and teachers.



Erikson refers to it as :

*..... a combination of socially unacceptable and yet stubbornly affirmed identity elements. If the social setting fails to offer any viable alternatives, all this can lead to a sudden regression to the conflicts of the earliest experiences of the sense of 'I', almost as a desperate attempt at self-rebirth. (6).*

Hence, the young person who, at first glance, appears to be unprincipled, sullen and even somewhat nihilistic, must not be taken at face value. Adolescents caught up in these negative behaviour patterns are often experiencing serious self-doubt about their capabilities in handling the role they have imposed upon themselves. They feel isolated and alienated from the adult world. Any sense of autonomy that they have achieved, has been brought about by conflict with, and, rejection of those adults who, in the adolescent's heart of hearts, are most valued and esteemed.

Many psychologists maintain that this experience is a necessary and significant stage in the discovery of self. (7). It enables the young person to identify the roles which they must repudiate in order to successfully adapt to and become part of the societies they live in, and in this way; having made the choice to integrate with the adult world which surrounds them, to develop a cohesive, mature self-identity. (8).



Enrichment refers to it as

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 to integrate with the adult world which surrounds them, to  
 develop a cohesive, mature self-identity. (4)

Yet, this is the process which, as discussed in Chapter One, is essentially destructive. In rejecting the more negative and reactionary role, to embrace that which their society deems to be acceptable, the adolescent has not truly resolved the search for self - identity. They have merely assumed 'the best possible face' to present to the outside world, as a defence mechanism against the threats and hostilities they have experienced in the midst of their rebellious roles.

This defensive presentation of a false self, which masks weaknesses, insecurities and uncertainties is described by C.G. Jung as the 'mask', the constructed PERSONA.

As established in the previous chapter, the persona fulfils the demands of the society and culture surrounding the young person, yet fundamentally neglects the intrinsic aspects of the personality - the positive AND negative traits which make up the true individual.

Jung responds to the problem of the persona by encouraging the individual to attempt some insight and reflection on inner conflicts - addressing and dealing with negative thoughts and emotions, rather than suppressing them. This involves taking responsibility for and accepting all aspects of the personality, rather than denying those that may be deemed unsavoury. (9).



Yet this is the process which is discussed in Chapter

One is essentially destructive in rejecting the same negative and reactionary role to ensure that which their society deems to be acceptable. The whole point now not only resolved the current for self-interest. They have merely assumed the basic possible fact to present in the outside world as a defense mechanism against the facts and feelings that they have experienced in the nature of their rebellious acts.

This defensive presentation of a false way which makes weakness, inferiority and uncertainties is attributed to the young as the ideal, the constant PERSONA.

As established in the previous chapter, the persona fulfills the demands of the society and culture surrounding the young person, yet fundamentally rejects the internal aspects of the personality - the positive and negative traits which make up the true individual.

Young responds to the problem of the persona by encouraging the individual to attempt some insight and action on inner conflict - acknowledging a dealing with negative thoughts and emotions rather than suppressing them. This involves taking responsibility for and working all aspects of the personality rather than denying those that may be deemed dangerous. (2)



This valid and significant philosophy should, one imagines, be adhered to by everyone. Yet, oddly, Jung maintains that it should only come about with the onset of middle age .....  
*"..... the ability to reflect on the totality of one's being is not guaranteed; it is the product of striving in the middle and second half of life." (10).*

It is my opinion that self - awareness and responsibility for oneself can come about at a much earlier stage in the life cycle. Surely, the optimum time for exploration and acceptance of the true self is at the point BEFORE the destructive persona is constructed.

It is not my business to challenge Jung. No teacher would (or should) ever claim to have greater understanding of the diverse components of human beings than one of the most distinguished psychologists of our time. However, it must be possible to promote self acceptance, inner confidence and unity with all aspects of the self, as soon as self - identity and the pursuit of this becomes an issue. How can this be done, though, with bashful, uncertain adolescents who may not wish to rely on their abilities to verbalise or even address their confused, tumultuous feelings ?

There is an approach which, though regarded by some as lateral or unorthodox, seems to me to be the most valid and workable. Art and design is accepted by everyone as an activity directed towards developing the whole person. What better medium of communication, what more powerful personal

This view and spiritual philosophy should not  
 be regarded as a mere slogan. Yet, why just slogans  
 but it should only mean a way of life or attitude  
 the ability to rise above the material world and  
 to the world of spirit and to the world of the soul.

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It is not my business to change Jung, no teacher  
 would (or should) ever claim to have greater understanding of  
 the diverse components of human beings than one of the most  
 distinguished psychologists of our time. However, it must be  
 possible to promote self-acceptance, inner confidence and unity  
 with all aspects of the self as soon as self - identity and the  
 pursuit of this becomes an issue. How can this be done, though,  
 with painful, uncertain adolescents who may not wish to rely on  
 their abilities to verbalize or even address their confused  
 emotional feelings?

There is an approach which, though regarded by  
 some as lateral or circumlocution, seems to me to be the most valid  
 and workable. Art and design is accepted by its devotees as an  
 activity directed towards developing the whole person, what  
 better medium of communication, what more powerful personal



language exists ? Creativity transgresses culture and social classes. There are no inhibitions or boundaries which are to be found in the usual form of communication, that is; speech. The very act of experiencing and making art can promote insights and realisations about the self which may otherwise remain unencountered.

language family. I strongly recommend that you  
check the list of languages in the appendix to see if  
there is the possibility of a connection. The  
list of languages and words of the present family  
and a list of the words of the family are given  
below.



## FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER 2

1. Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society, (Vintage, Random House, London, 1995), page 235.
2. Sue Jennings, Creative Therapy, (Pitman Publishing, London, 1975), page 158.
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4. James Marcia, Personality and Abnormal Processes and Development, page 432.
5. Erik H. Erikson, The Life Cycle Completed, (W.W. Norton Inc., New York, 1985), page 73.
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8. Erik H. Erikson, The Life Cycle Completed, page 74.
9. C.G. Jung, Self Psychology : A Constructivist Perspective, page 29.
10. Ibid, page 31.

# FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER 2

1. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (Vintage, Random House, London, 1959), page 232.
2. See *Freudian Psychology* (Penguin Publishing, London, 1957), page 152.
3. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, page 232.
4. James H. Thompson, *Personality and Developmental Processes and Development*, page 432.
5. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, page 232.
6. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, page 232.
7. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, page 232.
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9. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, page 232.
10. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, page 232.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE :

#### Its role and relevance for the adolescent

*..... Even in the most extreme cases of compliance and the establishment of a false personality ; hidden away somewhere, there exists a secret life that is satisfactory because of its being creative or original to that human being. (1).*

It is universally accepted among art educators and psychologists that every individual has the potential for creativity. It is this characteristic that constitutes the difference between human beings and animals. The creative impulse exists in all of us - yet many people believe that they can not create. They are almost fearful of the possibility of self - expression, particularly in the visual arts.

Despite a comparatively limited experience in art education (having only recently embarked upon teaching), I have encountered this attitude in quite a large number of students. When faced with a proposal for a new project, or when beginning a piece, certain students will hesitate and self - deprecatingly maintain that they can't attempt it, they can't

## CHAPTER 3

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Even in the most intense state of concentration and the establishment of a false personality, children may sometimes have a sense of freedom and independence because of its being outside or beyond the usual human being (1).

It is universally accepted among all educators and psychologists that every individual has the potential for creativity. It is this characteristic that constitutes the difference between human beings and animals. The creative impulse exists in all of us, yet many people believe that they can not create. They are almost fearful of the possibility of self-expression, particularly in the visual arts.

Despite a comparatively limited experience in art education (having only recently embarked upon teaching), I have encountered this attitude in quite a large number of students. When faced with a proposal for a new project, or when being asked to place certain students with positive and self-deprecating, maintain that they can't attempt it, they can't



draw or that they're "not artistic". It is only adolescents, however, who react in this way to the possibilities of their own creativity. Younger children have a marked tendency to regard art and design as exciting and enjoyable. This was clearly emphasised to me when I recently took a class of primary school children for one afternoon. I introduced myself and announced that we would be doing art for the remainder of the day - and their reaction was astonishing. The entire class actually cheered ! They then worked on their task with great enthusiasm, manipulating their paintbrushes and gluing their coloured tissue-paper into a collage, with what can only be described as unrestrained gusto.

The most striking difference in the responses these two groups to the prospect of creative expression is the utter lack of inhibition displayed by the seven-year olds, in direct contrast to the uncertainty and restraint of the adolescents. It must be concluded, then, that at some stage between childhood and adolescence, an awareness occurs in children of the expectations of society for them to 'perform' and to work towards an impressive end product. The young children felt free to express themselves creatively because they were focused on the actual process of their creativity (drawing, painting and making) - and the enjoyment they derived from it, rather than the end result of their exploration.

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 showed. They then worked on their task with great  
 enthusiasm, repeating their own principles and giving their  
 colour and shape into a whole, without any of the  
 details as mentioned in the

The most striking difference in the response of the  
 two groups to the group of twelve was seen in the first  
 act of inhibition imposed by the teacher. The first group  
 did not in the workshop and reacted in a way which was  
 more as expected than that of the second group. The first  
 group's behaviour was more in line with the idea of the  
 importance of today for them to be there and to work  
 towards an objective and product. The young children felt free  
 to express themselves creatively because they were treated on  
 the basis of their own creativity, freedom, balance and  
 energy - and the object and they derived from it what they  
 the end result of their exploration.



Viktor Lowenfield maintains that the disappearance of this unfettered confidence occurs around the time of puberty. (2). *"Probably imposed upon by foreign standards, you were asked to perform rather than to create ; and in this striving for exactness, you lost the feeling that what you create is important to yourself."* (3).

This loss of belief in the validity of the young person's creative power, is all the more disillusioning because the distinctive value of art and design itself is not the end result, but the process by which it came about. *"The Arts are a form of knowing and communicating, whose value lies, not in any objective, quantifiable end product, but in the subjective experience of creating and expressing ideas, which are themselves intrinsically aesthetic."* (4).

### SOCIETY VERSUS THE CREATIVE INDIVIDUAL

The shift from emphasising the working process to emphasising the final product happens primarily because of the adolescent's innate idealism and drive for perfection as discussed in Chapter Two. It also comes about, however, as a consequence of the world we live in today. These are times of mass production, mass education and what Lowenfield describes as *"the drive for conformity"*. (5). The shallowness and superficiality of modern life ; the pressure to assume an acceptable role (that is, the persona) can have an extraordinary desensitising effect on the young person. *"Youth after youth, bewildered by his assumed role, a role forced on him by the inexorable standardisation of American*







*adolescence, runs away in one form or another ..... or withdraws into bizarre and inaccessible moods" (6).*

It is evident, from this, that the persona is damaging the individual, even as it is being formed. Young people who are suppressing their inner selves are thereby suppressing their ability for creative expression - since it is impossible to be simultaneously conformist and original. These two traits cancel each other out.

However, adolescents are characterised by their paradoxical nature : " ..... *the adolescent is a very peculiar species, a mixture of the highest degree of individuality ..... and conformity.*" (7).

Hence, adolescents attempt to express their individuality by assuming a role which is chosen for them by the society in which they live. This idea is self - contradictory, even as a statement it is contradictory ! Yet this is what adolescents endeavour to do.

The stereotyping of the self, and consequent repression of the intrinsic aspects of the personality results in an accumulation of bitterness, aggression and defeat within the young person. In the drive for conformity, other emotions - such as joy and elation are also withheld. In this way, the adolescent is deprived of the opportunity "*to embrace others in their joy, in their sadness, or in their excitedness*". (8).





This is extremely unhealthy, particularly in the formative years. Yet, it is widely known that most young people, in this state of isolation, will rarely attempt to verbalise or even confront their inner feelings. The lives of many adolescents do not lend themselves to contemplation and communing with oneself. Studies have shown that most adolescents today, work far harder than the average adult. School and homework takes up a considerable part of each day, and many young people have part-time jobs (which may entail working late into the evening) to obtain some sort of income for themselves. Other activities, such as sports, music and social clubs are encouraged by parents and peers. It is unsurprising that the adolescent then relentlessly fills up their remaining free time with successive partygoing, films, and (often banal) pop music in an effort to enjoy their precious leisure, in a regimented existence. There is nothing wrong with any of the aforementioned activities - provided they are not used as a means of diversion from more pertinent issues - which, for the adolescent, are to embrace meaning and creativity and not to blunt their sensitivities on meaningless pastimes. This may sound rather pedantic, but it is utterly necessary for the young person to experience meaning (that is, anything that is deep and genuine), to create; and to accept the inner reality of themselves. If this doesn't happen, they become the product of a society concerned primarily with materialistic values and industrial commodities ..... and, in my belief, the only thing which will remain intact in the young person is their insidious, constructed persona.



This is extremely unhealthy participation in the formative years. Yet it is widely known that most young people in this state of education will rarely attempt to establish or even confront their inner feelings. The lives of many adolescents do not lead themselves to contemplation and communion with oneself. Studies have shown that most adolescents today work far harder than the average adult, school and homework takes up a considerable part of each day, and many young people have part-time jobs (which may entail working late into the evening) to obtain some sort of income for themselves. Other activities such as sports, music and social clubs are encouraged by parents and peers. This is to encourage that the adolescent then actively fill up their remaining free time with successive part-time jobs and (often dull) hobbies in an effort to enjoy their precious leisure in a relaxed existence. There is nothing wrong with any of the aforementioned activities provided they are not used as a means of diversion from more pertinent issues - which for the adolescent are to embrace maturity and creativity and not to blunt their sensitivities on meaningless pastimes. This may sound rather pedantic, but it is actually necessary for the young person to experience meaning (that is, anything that is deep and genuine) to create, and to transcend the inner world of themselves. If this doesn't happen, they become the product of a society consumed primarily with materialistic values and industrial commodities ... and in my belief, the only thing which will remain intact in the young person is their belief as constructed persons.



## THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE IN ART EDUCATION

The role of the art teacher in today's society is a challenging one, as it is particularly focused on promoting the sensitivities of young people. As mentioned previously, these very sensitivities are the ones which may have become buried as the persona is adopted; and the adolescent is surrounded by utilitarian work, and insignificant leisure pursuits. In the Lowenfield Lectures on Art and Education and Therapy, Viktor Lowenfield states that - "*art education has a special mission to bring out of the individual his own creative potentialities and combine in him the experiences which otherwise remain separated.*" (9).

It was suggested at the beginning of this chapter, that certain adolescents are hesitant in embarking upon creative exploration through art media. This attitude stems partly from the adolescent's inherent drive for perfection, and fear of 'failure' - due to their concern with literal representation, and the final product. There is a possibility, however that the adolescent is also subliminally aware that the creative process is a powerful nonverbal mode of expression, "*..... drawing and painting are supposed to provide direct access to the unconscious and preconscious processes because they tend to by-pass many of the defence mechanisms employed in controlling more cognitive processes.*" (10).

# THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE IN ART EDUCATION

The role of the art teacher in today's society is a challenging one, as it is particularly focused on promoting the sensitivities of young people. As mentioned previously, these very sensitivities are the ones which may have become buried as the person is adopted and the adolescent is surrounded by utilitarian work and insignificant leisure pursuits. In the Crawford Lecture on Art and Education and Therapy, Victor Crawford states that - "we should not see a great teacher as being out of the subject, in some remote position and merely as the dispenser of knowledge which should be assimilated" (9).

It was suggested at the beginning of this chapter that certain adolescents are hesitant in embarking upon creative exploration through art media. This attitude stems partly from the adolescent's inherent drive for perfection and fear of failure - due to their conflict with literal representation and the final product. There is a possibility, however, that the adolescent is also subliminally aware that the creative process is a powerful non-verbal mode of expression, "... drawing and painting are supposed to provide direct access to the imagination and preverbal processes because they tend to bypass many of the defense mechanisms employed in controlling more cognitive processes" (10).



For this reason, the adolescent may feel daunted by the prospect of creativity, feeling that they may inadvertently express something which they do not wish to express - which is perhaps not in keeping with the persona they have built up. They may also worry that the product of their creativity will be too naive or 'childlike' - and in this way, unacceptable to the adult self which they are attempting to formulate.

The art teacher's role is to motivate students to draw from their experiences, express these experiences and their reactions to them and thereby enhance their sensitivities to their environment and themselves. To do this we must attempt to dispel the sense of inadequacy which may trouble the adolescent. We must promote in them the desire to express themselves, the desire to communicate nonverbally and creatively.

It is imperative to instil in the young person the value of the creative process, over that of the end product. To do this, the art teacher must be as approving and accepting of the students' work as possible, emphasising the importance of what the student has derived from the experience of creativity, rather than what has been produced. The product of the students' work means very little unless the students themselves have learnt something from it.

It must be admitted that it is rather difficult to approach art education in this way. The art teacher is always aware that; in the current educational climate, it is expected that

For the teacher, the student's role is to provide the student with the product of creative thinking and to help the student to express something which they do not know how to express - which is not only not in keeping with the person's role, but also not in keeping with the role of the product of the student's role. The student's role is to provide the student with the product of creative thinking and to help the student to express something which they do not know how to express - which is not only not in keeping with the person's role, but also not in keeping with the role of the product of the student's role.

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a good education in art should result in a high standard of aesthetic products, a knowledge of the various art media and the ability to use them competently; and an awareness of the art elements and their application. Unarguably, these aspects of art education are valuable and desirable. But they are incidental to the real focus of art education; which is the experience of expressing and creating ideas and in this way, learning more about one's reactions, sensitivities and essential nature.

There is a constant temptation to instruct students in a step-by-step manner, ensuring that their final piece will closely resemble the accepted, standardised norm. This method of teaching, however, does not embrace creativity. The student is deprived of the opportunity for exploration and problem solving - and therefore learns very little about either the task they have completed, or their interpretation of that task. They are not documenting themselves through creativity, but simply following a set pattern. Because of this, an individual emotional response to their task will not occur - as they are dealing with it not in their own way, but in someone else's way. Hence, the experience has not been meaningful to them, and they have not discovered anything about themselves.

*The self is not really to be found in what is made of products of body or mind - however valuable these constructs may be in terms of beauty, skill and impact. The finished creation never heals the underlying lack of sense of self. (11).*





The responsibility of the art teacher is to allow students the opportunity to have what Viktor Lowenfield terms as, a "basic experience".

*A basic experience is any experience in which the whole individual participates. That means his thinking, in which he discovers something; his feelings, in which he feels what he has discovered; and his perceiving, in which he has become sensitively aware through his senses so that what he has discovered has meaning to him. (12).*

The value of a basic experience in creativity is that it prompts the student to open themselves up for enquiry into their thinking, feeling and sensory reactions to an idea - and, in this way, to learn more about their intrinsic selves.

### OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF NONVERBAL EXPRESSION

As previously alluded to, in this chapter, the adolescent may have a fear of expressing him/herself creatively and thus disclosing or encountering aspects of him/herself which have been buried by the persona. It is imperative that this hesitancy must be overcome, since it is in creative expression that the adolescent may come to encounter, accept and identify with his/her innate characteristics - a process which is essential to the healthy individual.

The crux of the young person's uneasiness may be his/her awareness of the possibility that his/her creative work

The responsibility of the art teacher is to provide students the opportunity to have their individualized needs met as a basic experience.

It is the responsibility of the art teacher to provide students with a variety of experiences. The teacher should be able to provide students with a variety of experiences. The teacher should be able to provide students with a variety of experiences. The teacher should be able to provide students with a variety of experiences.

The role of a basic experience in creativity is that it provides the student with a variety of experiences. The teacher should be able to provide students with a variety of experiences. The teacher should be able to provide students with a variety of experiences.

## OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS TO CREATIVITY

As previously stated in the chapter, the student may have a fear of expressing their own creativity and thus blocking or inhibiting the process of learning. This fear may be due to the fact that it is important that the student be able to express their own creativity. The student may be afraid to express their own creativity. The student may be afraid to express their own creativity.

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could have a childishness or naivety which reminds him/her too much of the qualities of his/her childhood drawings - and he/she cannot accept the primitive, intimate quality of these any longer. Because of this, it is necessary to provide him/her with a technical process - such as printmaking, paint-techniques or construction - which will remove the intimate feeling from his/her art work, and "*transfigure it into a finished piece*". (13).

Hence, the adolescent's concern with the final product is catered for, without depriving him/her of the basic creative experience advocated by Lowenfield. Though the adolescent has dealt with the subject matter by means of a technical process; he/she has still dealt with it, defined it and expressed it in their own way. Therefore he/she have explored his/her individuality while still satisfying the need for a finished product.

The attitude and evaluative methods of the art teacher are also instrumental in encouraging the adolescent to discover him/herself through creativity.

Our end is to promote the young person's sensitivities to the outer world which surrounds him/her and his/her inner world whereby he/she can gain a deeper understanding of him/herself. A teacher's job, however, is most emphatically not to be confused with that of an art therapist's. It is not up to the art teacher to make deductions about the

could have a childlike sense of novelty which would be much to the credit of his/her childhood drawings - and helps cannot account for the primitive, intuitive quality of these early forms.

Because of this it is necessary to provide, either with a technical process - such as printmaking, papermaking or conservation - which will remove the intuitive feeling from either art work and transfer it into a technical process (1).

Inside the adolescent's concern with this final product is entered for without denying himself of the basic creative experience suggested by Lowenthal. Though the adolescent has dealt with the subject matter by means of a technical process he/she has still dealt with it in terms of an expressed (or latent) way. Therefore he/she has explored his/her individuality while still respecting the social or finished product.

The attitude and evaluative methods of the art teacher are also fundamental in encouraging the adolescent to discover his/her own through creativity.

One aim is to promote the young person's sensitivity to the outer world which surrounds him/her and his/her inner world which he/she can gain a better understanding of himself. A teacher's job, however, is most importantly not to be confused with that of an artist. It is not up to the art teacher to make decisions about the



young person's inner life on the basis of his/her creative work or to "engage in any diagnosis of childrens' drawings which is drawn from inferences." (14).

There is undisputedly a place for art therapy in our society and it is possible that a situation such as this can - within certain limits - extend into the classroom. The art teacher should have the ability to make sensitive, informed appraisals of students' work, and to discuss - with discrimination, and on a one-to-one basis - elements which may have evolved in students' work. However, teachers should not attempt to emulate a therapist's role, or draw conclusions about young people from symbol inferences in their artwork. Such behaviour on the teacher's part could easily result in the adolescent becoming wary of the creative experience and as an attempt at self - protection, becoming a reticent in their creativity. This end is diametrically opposed to that which a good art education could achieve - that is, freedom of creative expression, the opportunity to participate in the 'basic experience' and thereby bringing about the autonomous discovery of the true inner self.

*"Whatever we discover for ourselves is the thing that is most meaningful to us". (15).*

young person's inner life on the basis of his/her creative work or to "engage in our diagnosis of children's inner world is done from experience" (19).

There is undoubtedly a place for art therapy in our society and it is possible that a situation such as this can - within certain limits - extend into the classroom. The art teacher should have the ability to make sensitive, informed appraisals of students' work and to discuss - with discrimination and on a one-to-one basis - comments which may have caused in students' work. However, teachers should not attempt to emulate a therapist's role, or draw conclusions about young people from symbols inherent in their artwork. Such behaviour on the teacher's part could easily result in the student becoming wary of the creative experience and as an attempt at self-protection, becoming a reflector in their creativity. This and is diametrically opposed to that which a good art education could achieve - that is, freedom of creative expression, the opportunity to participate in the "basic experience" and thereby bringing about the spontaneous discovery of the true inner self.

"I believe we discover the answers to the things that we most want to know" (20).



### FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER 3

1. D.W. Winnicott, Playing and Reality, (New York, Tavistock Publications 1971), page 68.
2. Viktor Lowenfield, The Lowenfield Lectures on Art Education and Therapy, (The Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 1982), page 1.
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4. Jennie McCarthy, "Evaluating the Arts" Education Today - Volume 4, (Spring 1996), page 6.
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10. Elliott Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, (New York, Macmillan, 1972), page 85.

# FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER 3

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6. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, page 178.

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(Continued)

11. Winnicott, Playing and Reality, page 54 - 55.
12. Lowenfield, The Lowenfield Lectures, page 5.
13. Ibid, page 339.
14. Ibid, page 13.
15. Ibid, page 335.

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(Continued)

11. Whitcomb, Mary, and Rudy, page 37 - 38.

12. Lowenthal, The Invention of Solitude, page 3.

13. Ibid, page 332.

14. Ibid, page 13.

15. Ibid, page 332.



## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY :

#### Introduction to the creative exploration of the self

It was decided that this study should be conducted on the basis of a sequence of lessons focused on self - portraiture. Since the very process of creation involves incorporating the self into the activity, it was surmised that this approach afforded " *the best opportunity for personal identification.*" (1).

The investigation was carried out in a secondary school in Dublin 6, with a catchment area comprised of comparatively affluent communities. The school is a fee-paying one, catering for boarders and day pupils ..... all of whom are girls. Art and design has a very high profile within the school. There are three art rooms and three art teachers, two of whom are full-time. The facilities available here include a darkroom, printing equipment, and a kiln for firing clay pieces - as well as all the standard materials, such as paint, pastels and supplies of paper.

The sequence of lessons was undertaken with a first year group of nineteen students. These girls displayed various

## CHAPTER 4

## METHODOLOGY

Introduction to the creative exploration  
of the self

It was intended that this study should be conducted

on the basis of a number of factors related to self-

motivation. These factors were of various kinds and

included by the self in the activity. It was intended that the

approach adopted "be both guiding and liberating".

(2)

The investigation was carried out in a secondary

school in Dublin. It was a voluntary school and comprised of

approximately fifteen classes. The school is a voluntary

school catering for boys and girls. All of whom are

of the Catholic religion. The school is a voluntary

school and has a very high level of achievement. There are

three art rooms and three art teachers, two of whom

are full-time. The facilities available here include a

printing equipment, and a film for film clay, paper, as well as

all the standard materials, such as paint, pencils and supplies of

paper.

The response of persons was undertaken with a view

to the group of persons who were involved. These persons were



levels of ability - yet all of them had a very positive and exploratory attitude to the creative process. They appeared to be quite responsive to the idea of self - portraiture as a means of self - exploration ..... once it had been established that their work would not be evaluated by the teacher in a diagnostic way.

### REASONS FOR THE SELECTION OF SELF - PORTRAITURE AS AN INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH TO SELF - IDENTITY

The search for self - identity, as discussed in previous chapters, is a major concern of the adolescent, and if they are struggling with role confusion and the development of a persona; the opportunity to become directly involved in creatively exploring the characteristics of the self through portraiture may be a pertinent one. At this point, the adolescent may have a confused picture of him/herself - primarily learnt from the reactions of others to his/her role-playing and moods. If this picture is essentially a negative one, there is a distinct possibility that the young person is entering the stage of constructing a 'false self' to meet the needs of the society in which they live. The young person may be aware that the persona does not embrace every aspect of their essential selves, nor is it " *an expression of that elusive awareness of experience which underpins 'my' life.....* " (2).



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 Creativity is not the reaction of others to his/her role-  
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 the stage of constructing a false self to meet the needs of the  
 society in which they live. The young person may be aware that  
 the person does not embrace every aspect of their identity  
 values, but is it "an expression of low value awareness" or  
 self-identity? (2)



Despite this, the adolescent may still adopt the persona, in an effort to curb the feelings of confusion and vulnerability with which they are afflicted, and to conform to a standardised society. Because of this, self - portraiture could be a valid, cathartic exercise, where the adolescent becomes intensely involved in expressing and interpreting their hidden emotions and characteristics - and "*facing their own selves creatively in the visual arts.*" (3).

### METHODS OF SELF EXPRESSION

Within the scheme of lessons, the students were first introduced to the concept of self - portraiture by studying the work of artists such as Van Gogh and Edvard Munch. From this, the students discovered that the organisation of colour, forms and texture - rather than the literal representation - in each piece is a powerful indicator of the uniqueness of the individual. (*Figs. 1 and 2*).

Facial expressions, textural qualities and colour were discussed with reference to their significance in self - expression. Some students pointed out that both of the aforementioned artists portrayed a strong sense of dissatisfaction with themselves, through their work. The idea was then introduced that creative self - expression need not always feed from the positive aspects of oneself or one's experiences. Munch's 'The Scream', (*Fig. 3*) was referred to as a great work of art which was generated by suffering.







Fig. 1 : Self - Portrait by Vincent Van Gogh





Fig. 1 : Self-portrait by Vincent van Gogh



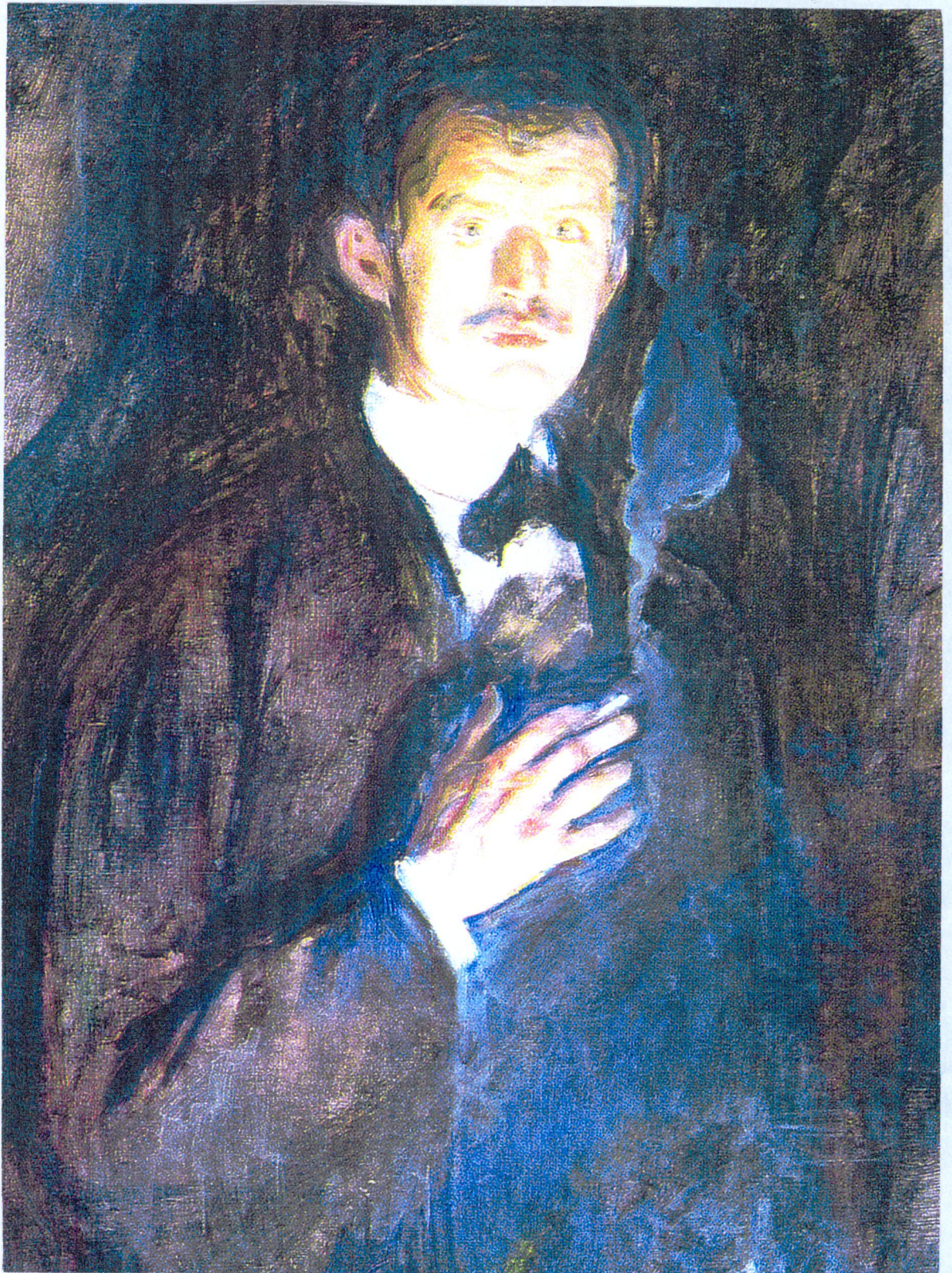


Fig. 2 : Self - Portrait by Edvard Munch





Fig. 2. Self-portrait by Edward Munch.



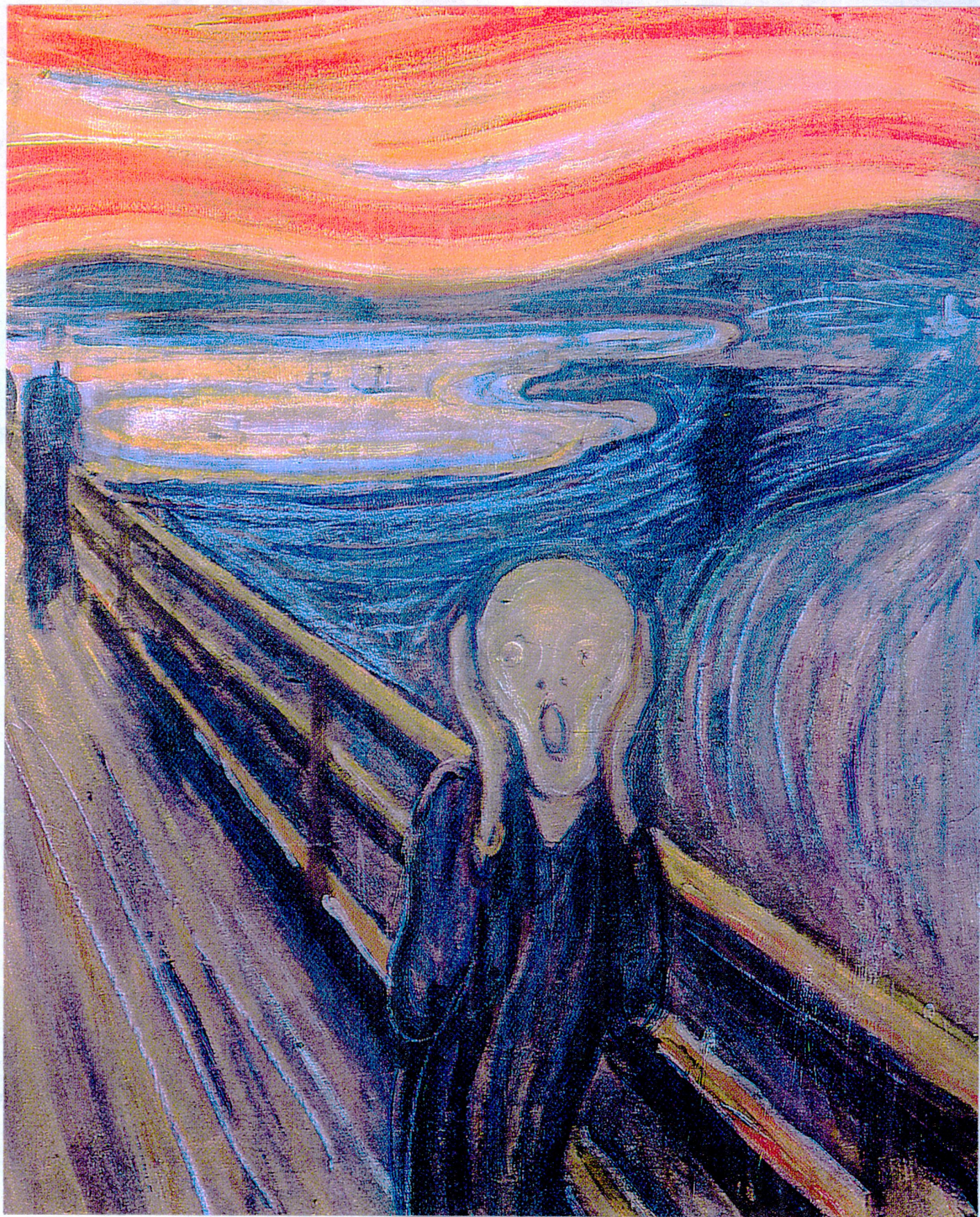
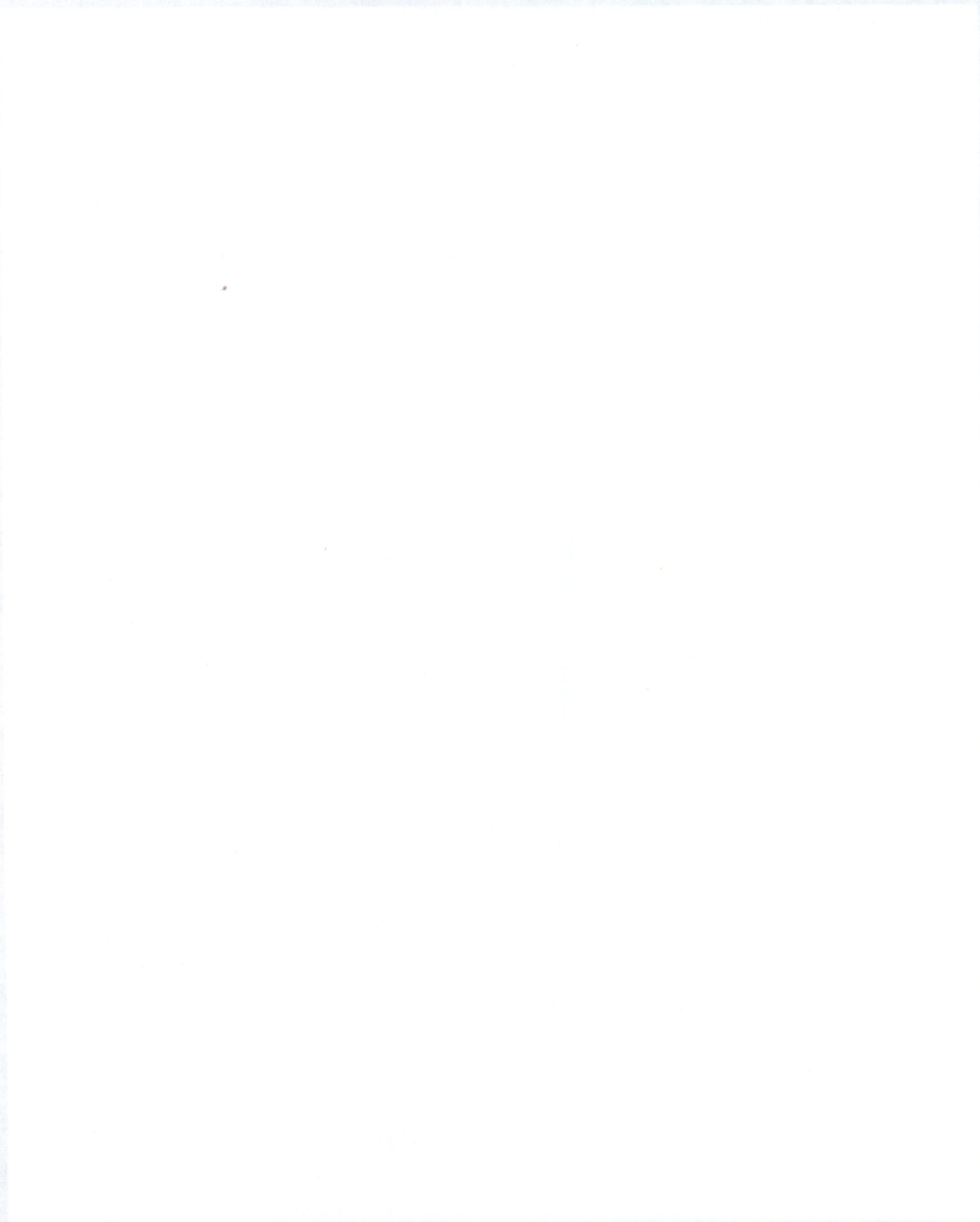


Fig. 3 : 'The Scream' by Edvard Munch







In this way, students were made aware of the possibility of addressing negative emotions and fears through creative activity and thereby, perhaps confronting repressed individuality and breaking free of the persona. *"Self-expression seems to me to be the reaction of any individual to any situation that excites his sensibilities."* (4).

'Colour to express mood' was the next theme introduced to students and, rather than giving students a didactic, formal account of colour symbolism and the accepted associations with colour, they were shown prepared colour charts and asked to express their reactions to these. The first two charts (*Figs. 4 and 5*) were contrasting displays of sombre, depressing colours and vivid, cheerful colours. These were followed by charts of cool and warm, harmonious colours (*Figs. 6 and 7*). The reactions to these charts varied with each individual - which was in keeping with the objective of the lesson. With this simple exercise, students gained an insight into themselves which was followed through in their use of colour in the self-portraits. *"Emotional reactions to colour are highly personal, and the nonvisually minded child may use colour in contradiction to nature. Colour can be highly subjective."* (5).

The tasks which followed on from this were a series of abstract exploration into the expressive use of colour - incorporating application techniques with wet and dry media, such as sponging, working with resists and building up 'layers' of



In this way, students were made aware of the possibility of releasing negative emotions and fears through creative activity and thereby, perhaps confronting repressed hostility and breaking free of the purges. "Yes - expression was to be the theme of the workshop and the workshop was to be a workshop."

There is a special mood, was the first to be introduced to students and rather than giving students a detailed formal account of color symbolism and the accepted associations with colors, they were shown prepared color charts and asked to express their reactions to them. The first two charts (Fig. 1 and 2) were contrasting displays of positive and negative colors and white, neutral colors. There were followed by charts of cool and warm, harmonious colors (Fig. 3 and 4). The reactions to these charts varied with each individual - which was in keeping with the objective of the lesson with this simple exercise, students gained an insight into themselves which was followed through in their use of color in the self-portraits. "Colorful reactions to color are highly personal and the workshop aimed to help any use color in combination in self-portraits. Color can be light and dark." (1)

The data which followed on from this were a series of abstract explorations into the expressive use of color incorporating application techniques with wet and dry media, such as spraying, working with resist and building up layers of





Fig. 4 : Colour Chart; evoking a sober, gloomy mood.









Fig. 5 : Colour Chart; evoking a cheerful mood.



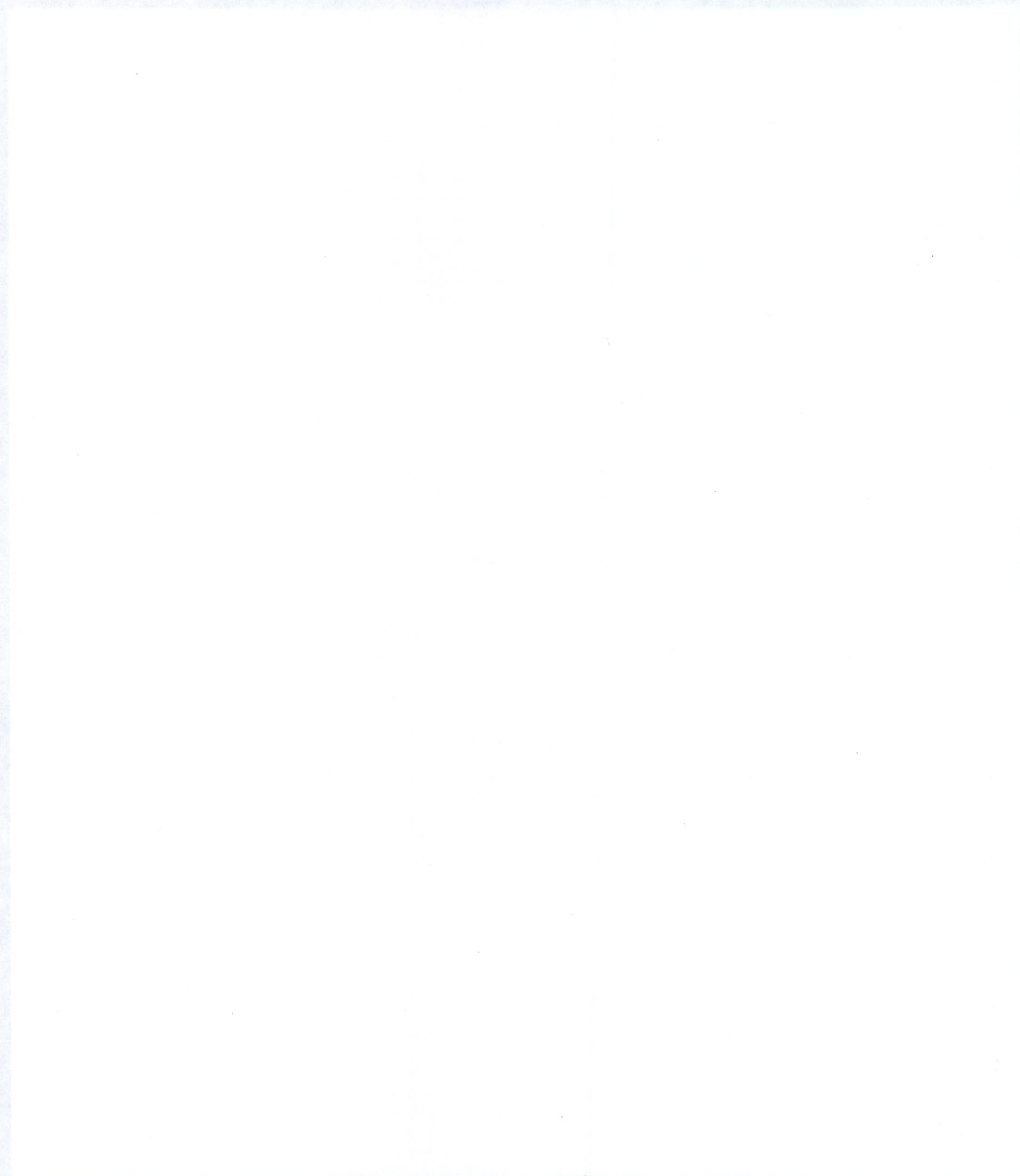






Fig. 6 : Warm Colour Chart



Fig. 2. 1957-1958. Color. Chart.





Fig. 7 : Cool Colour Chart





Fig. 8: Cool Colour Chart



colour. These experiences were empowering for the students, as they allowed for spontaneous expression while simultaneously acquiring the knowledge of technical processes. (*Figs. 8 and 9*). The technical processes, as discussed in Chapter Three dispensed with the adolescents' fear of their work appearing too 'childish' or primitive, while still lending themselves to exploration and creativity.

The next stage in the sequence involved students examining aspects of their inner lives and environment which had a significance for them, and subsequently gathering objects which were meaningful to them, or representational of their concerns. A handout was distributed to them to prompt an exploratory, reflective attitude about themselves. The task generated by this preparation was an abstraction of these significant objects into the features of the self - portraits, so that the finished pieces would appear to be " *a visual inventory of (the young person's) life.*" (6).

The portraiture of Robert Ballagh was employed as a reference point for this exercise. (*Figs. 11 and 12*). Ballagh's approach to portraiture allowed his subjects " *reveal themselves ..... through the surface detail of their lives.*" (7). This end was achieved by surrounding the subject with representational aspects of themselves - whereas the approach which was taken for this sequence was to actually incorporate the representational objects into the features of the face - resulting in a powerful, immediate message about the self.

colour. These experiences were empowering for the students as they allowed for spontaneous expression whilst simultaneously acquiring the knowledge of technical processes. (Fig 4 and 5)

The technical processes, as discussed in Chapter Three, dispensed with the adolescent's fear of their work appearing too 'childish' or 'primitive' whilst still leaving themselves a exploration and

The next stage in the sequence involved students examining aspects of their own faces and environmental objects and a significance for their, and subsequently, everyday objects which were meaningful to them, or representative of their concerns. A handset was distributed to them to print an exploring, reflective attitude about themselves. The task required for this preparation was an observation of their significant objects into the features of the self - portrait, so that the finished piece would appear to be a 'self-portrait' (Fig 6 and 7)

The portrait of Robert Bellamy was assigned as a reference point for this exercise. (Fig 7 and 8) Bellamy's approach to portraiture allowed his subjects 'room to breathe' towards the subject of the work. (9) This end was achieved by surrounding the subject with representational aspects of themselves - whereas the approach which was taken for this sequence was to actually incorporate the representational objects into the features of the face - resulting in a powerful, immediate message about the self.





Fig. 8 : Oil pastel techniques.



Fig. 9 : Resist and layering techniques.





Fig. 8 : Oil tested techniques

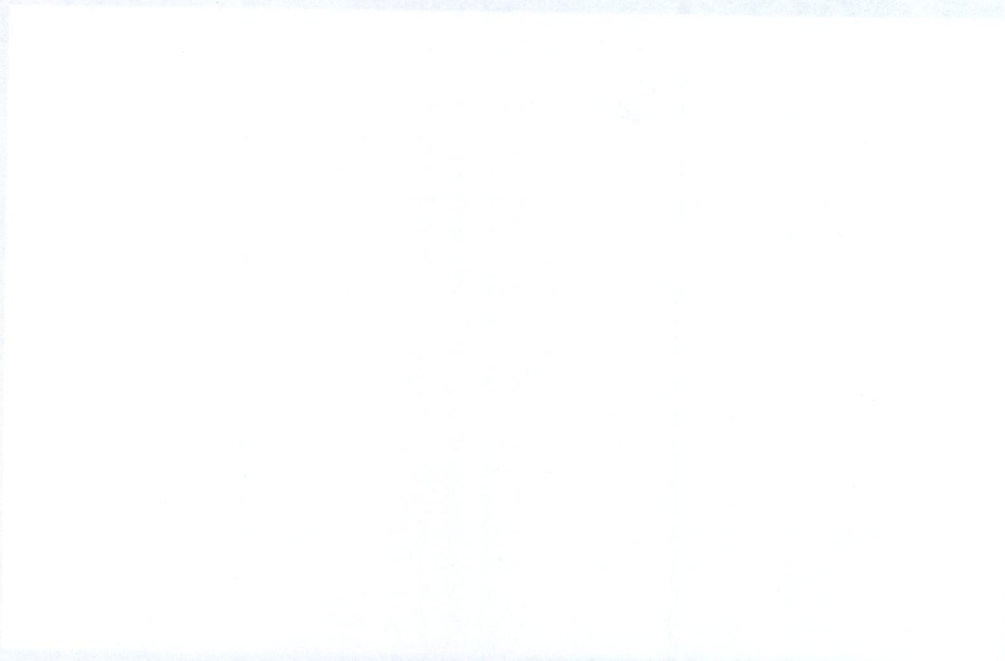


Fig. 9 : Resist and layering techniques



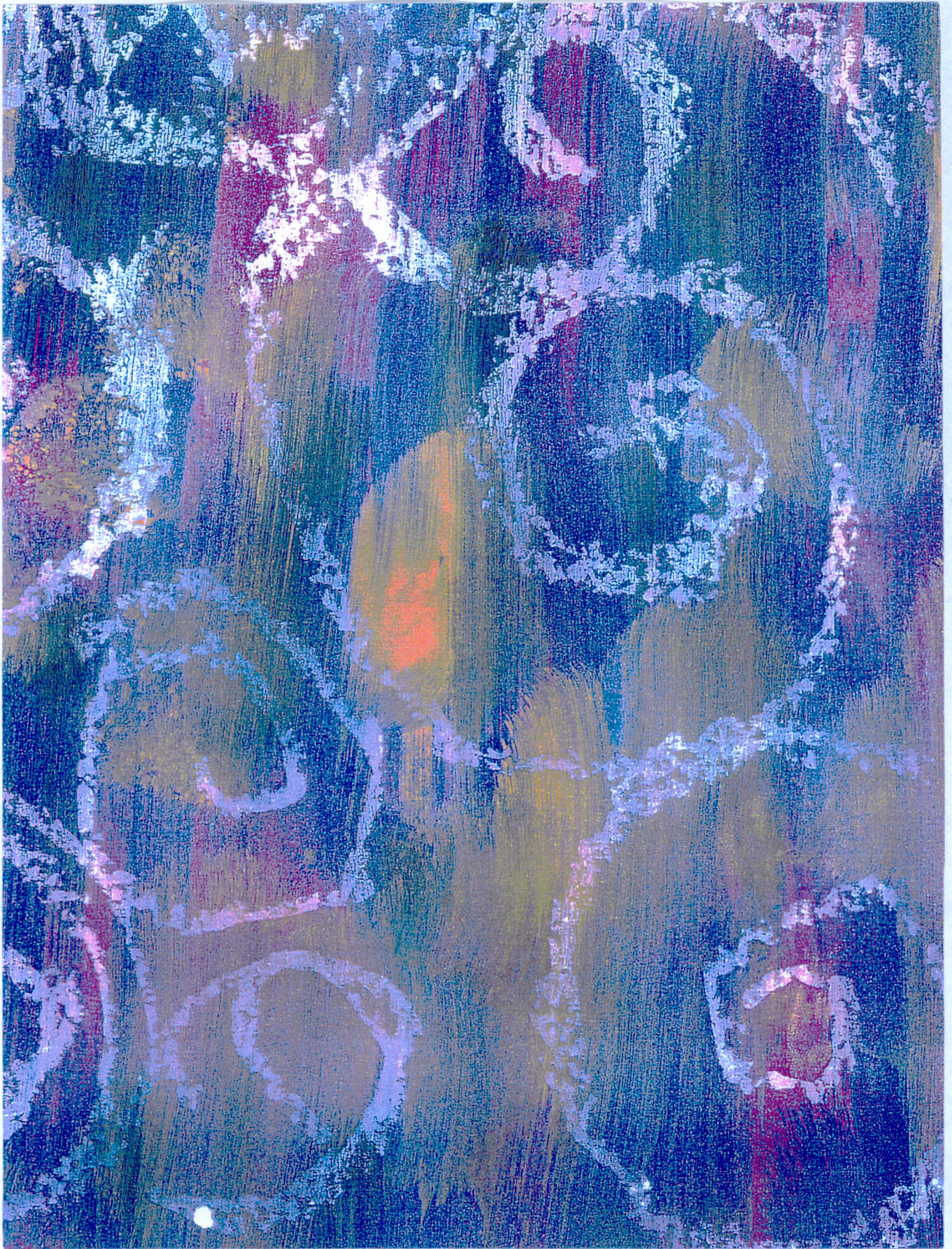


Fig. 10 : Wax resist techniques.





Fig. 10 : Wax twist technique.





*Portrait of Bernadette Greevy.* A continuous loop tape of Greevy singing Brahms is triggered by the viewer's presence. Oil on canvas, 48 x 48.

Fig. 11 : Portrait of Bernadette Greevy





Fig. 11. Portrait of Remondino Grevy



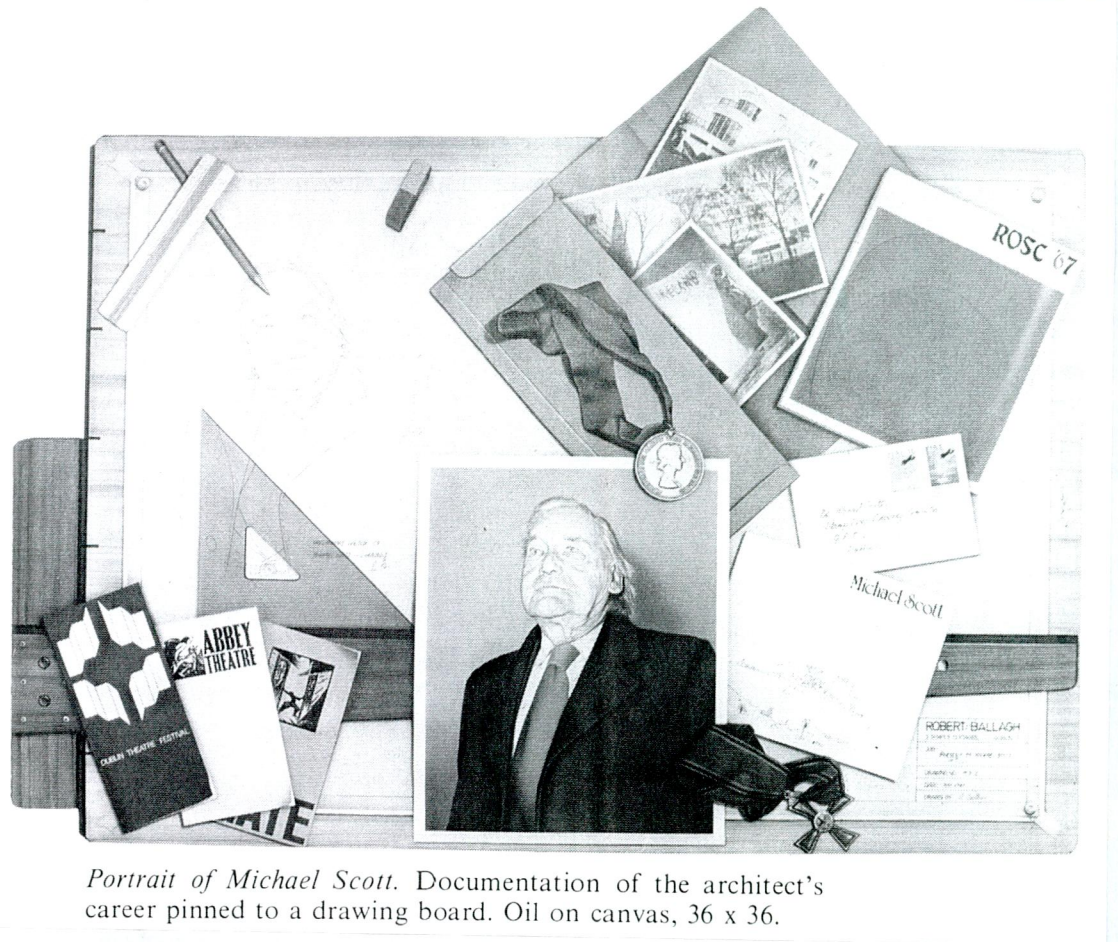


Fig. 12 : Portrait of Michael Scott





Fig. 12. Portrait of Michael Scott



The final pieces of work were an amalgamation of the exploratory tasks which were undertaken throughout the series of lessons. Colour was used expressly to reflect emotion, within the face itself, and in the background of the piece. The intense, emotive portraiture of the Fauves (*Figs. 13 and 14*) was used as a support study to enhance students' comprehension of this exercise. The students applied the technical processes they had become familiar with throughout the sequence to their use of media - using textural marks, resists and sponging in a very tactile way, so that the end result seemed to be reflective of their inner experiences.

### ACHIEVEMENT OF AIMS - EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

This study of self - exploration was carried out by means of a series of lessons where students were introduced to all the nuances of self - portraiture. While the students were given guidance, in order to fulfil the objective of lesson - their actual interpretation of the task : the use of colour to express mood, and the abstraction of meaningful objects into the features of the face, for example ..... was entirely autonomous.

For many of the students, it was their first attempt at self - exploration through creativity and, for the most part, they became fascinated by the shades of meaning they discovered in themselves as they created their self - portraits.

The final stage of work was an evaluation of the exploratory trials which were undertaken throughout the study. A 17-item questionnaire was used expressly to record opinion within the faculty and in the department of the place. The internal, external, construct and content validity of the questionnaire was established by a group of experienced teachers and was used as a support study to enhance students' understanding of the exercise. The students applied the technical processes they had become familiar with throughout the course to their use of media - using technical media, video and editing in a very technical way so that the final result seemed to be evidence of their own experiences.

## EVALUATION OF AIMS - EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

This study of self-exploration was carried out by means of a series of lessons where students were introduced to the concept of self-exploration. While the student was given guidance in order to fulfil the objectives of the lesson, the actual introduction of the task, the use of video to explore mood and the extraction of meaningful objects into the features of the final film was left to the student.

For many of the students it was their first experience of self-exploration through creativity and for the first time they became fascinated by the idea of meaning. It was shown in the survey as they created their self-exploration





Fig. 13 : The Fauves





Fig. 13. The Figure



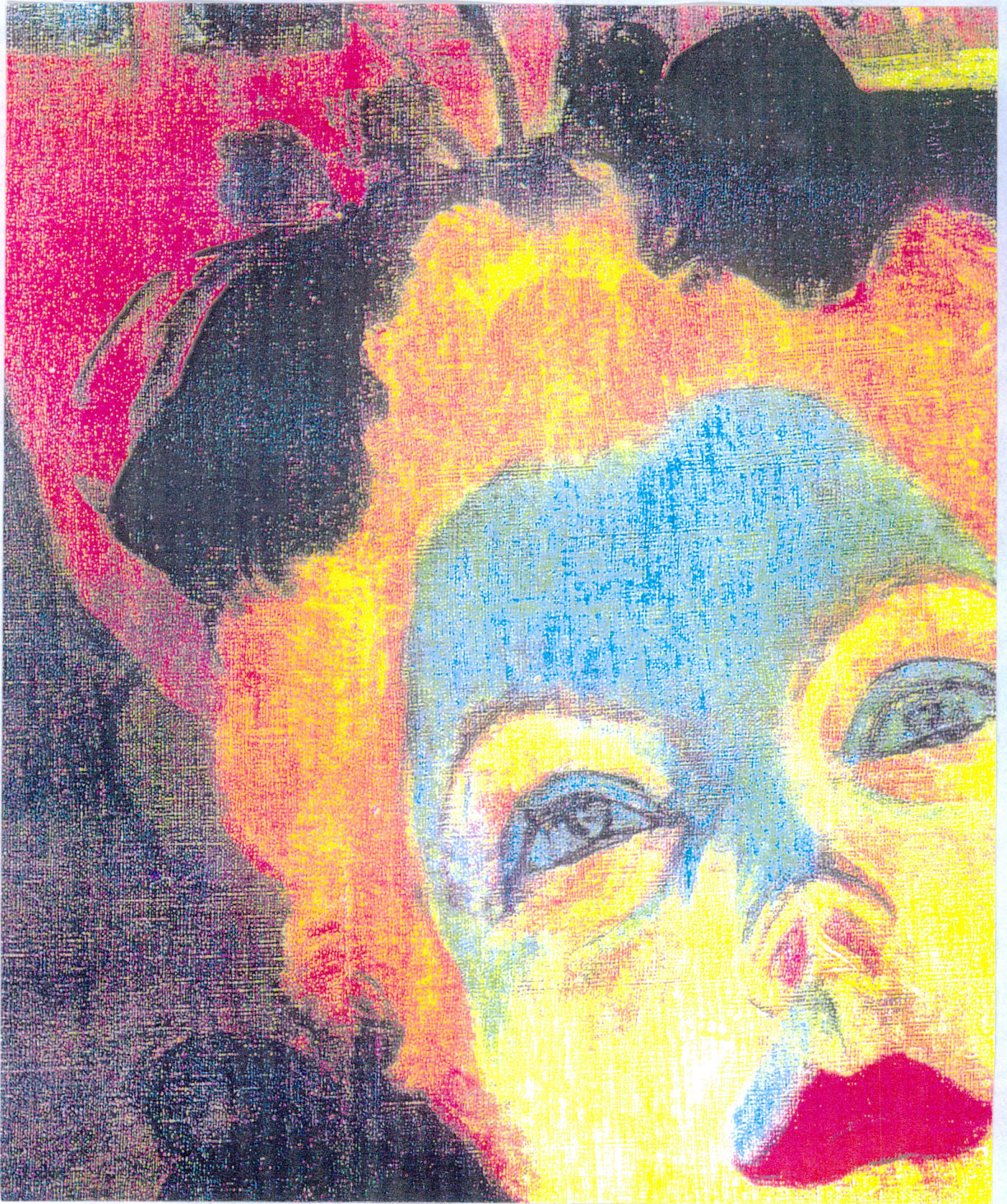


Fig. 14 : The Fauves





THE END OF THE WORLD



Some students, however, appeared hesitant at the prospect of confronting themselves creatively in the visual arts. They repeatedly asked for reassurance about whether their use of colour was 'right' - and on hearing that their personal preferences for certain colours would not be controlled, or evaluated, they became even more uncertain. One girl, Zoe, began her portrait and destroyed it three times before finally completing the piece. Each attempt she made was encouraged by me - yet it seemed that the absence of restrictions unsettled her. Zoe's behaviour seemed to indicate that she was experiencing some degree of role confusion, and consequently was unable to immediately create an image of herself which was genuine. However, Zoe appeared to be very happy with her finished work - which suggests that the experience may have been quite therapeutic for her.

The reactions of the students also varied when it was suggested to them that representational objects which had meaning for them could be abstracted into the features in their self - portrait. The students were evidently worried that the result of their endeavours in this matter would look 'childish'. I responded to this assertion by showing them visual aids and support studies which illustrated the potential of the exercise and its very achievable aims. Most of the students were reassured by the visual aids, and continued working, without anxiety.

Some students, however, appeared hesitant at the prospect of confronting themselves creatively in the visual arts. They repeatedly asked for reassurance about whether their artistic ideas were 'right' - and on stating that their personal preferences for certain colours would not be considered or evaluated, they became even more uncertain. One girl, Lisa, of year 10, said and described it that she 'before finally' completing the piece. Each attempt she made was encouraged by me - yet it seemed that the absence of restrictions inhibited her. Lisa, however, seemed to indicate that she was experiencing some degree of role conflict, and consequently was unable to immediately create an image of herself which was genuine. Nevertheless, she appeared to be very happy with the final work, and it suggests that the experience may have been quite therapeutic for her.

The reaction of the students was varied when it was suggested to them that representative and colour work had meaning for them could be associated with the features in their self-portraits. The students were initially worried that the result of their endeavours in this area would look childish. I explained to this group by showing them visual aids and explained that the students who illustrated the potential of the exercise and its significance as a 'test' of the students' own creativity by the visual arts and indicated why it was a 'test'.



The aforementioned reactions are quite typical of adolescents who are struggling with the acquisition of a persona and all its attendant evils. Their hesitancies about identifying their emotions and nuances through colour, and their fear of their finished work looking unacceptable to the adults they are attempting to emulate, are characteristic of young people attempting to conceal vulnerability and confusion beneath a 'false self'.

### THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ART TEACHER : SELF - EVALUATION

The aforementioned problems and reactions on the part of the students were addressed by means of employing technical processes to dispel the sense of immediacy and naivety which students feared would be apparent in their work. I communicated with the students in a non-didactic way throughout the project - aiming to create an atmosphere which would lend itself to self - exploration and sensitivity. I learnt a great deal, empirically, from the project, about motivating students through demonstration and discussion - but what I consider to be most valuable - was my realisation that creativity will flourish under teachers who make sensitive, encouraging suggestions, rather than intrusive criticisms.

On completion of the sequence, the finished pieces were mounted and displayed on the classroom walls. Students from other groups enquired about the work and admired it. The

The effectiveness of the program was evaluated by comparing the scores of the students who participated in the program with the scores of the students who did not participate in the program. The results of the evaluation showed that the students who participated in the program had significantly higher scores than the students who did not participate in the program. This suggests that the program was effective in improving the students' scores.

## THE EFFECTS OF THE PROGRAM ON THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES

The effectiveness of the program was evaluated by comparing the scores of the students who participated in the program with the scores of the students who did not participate in the program. The results of the evaluation showed that the students who participated in the program had significantly higher scores than the students who did not participate in the program. This suggests that the program was effective in improving the students' scores.

On completion of the program, the students' attitudes were evaluated and compared with the attitudes of the students who did not participate in the program. The results of the evaluation showed that the students who participated in the program had significantly more positive attitudes than the students who did not participate in the program. This suggests that the program was effective in improving the students' attitudes.



general feeling among the girls who had undertaken the project seemed to be one of satisfaction at their achievements. It is to be hoped, however, that the predominant outcome of the sequence was one of a heightened awareness among the adolescents of the validity of their intrinsic selves.

general feeling among the girls who had undertaken the project seemed to be one of satisfaction at their achievement. It is to be hoped, however, that the predominant outcome of the exercise was one of a heightened awareness among the adolescents of the validity of their individual values.





Lisa (Fig. 15) : " I worry about whether people like me or not. That is why I divided my face into two colours. The yellow part is my bright, happy face that everyone sees, and the dark part is the inside of me that no-one sees."

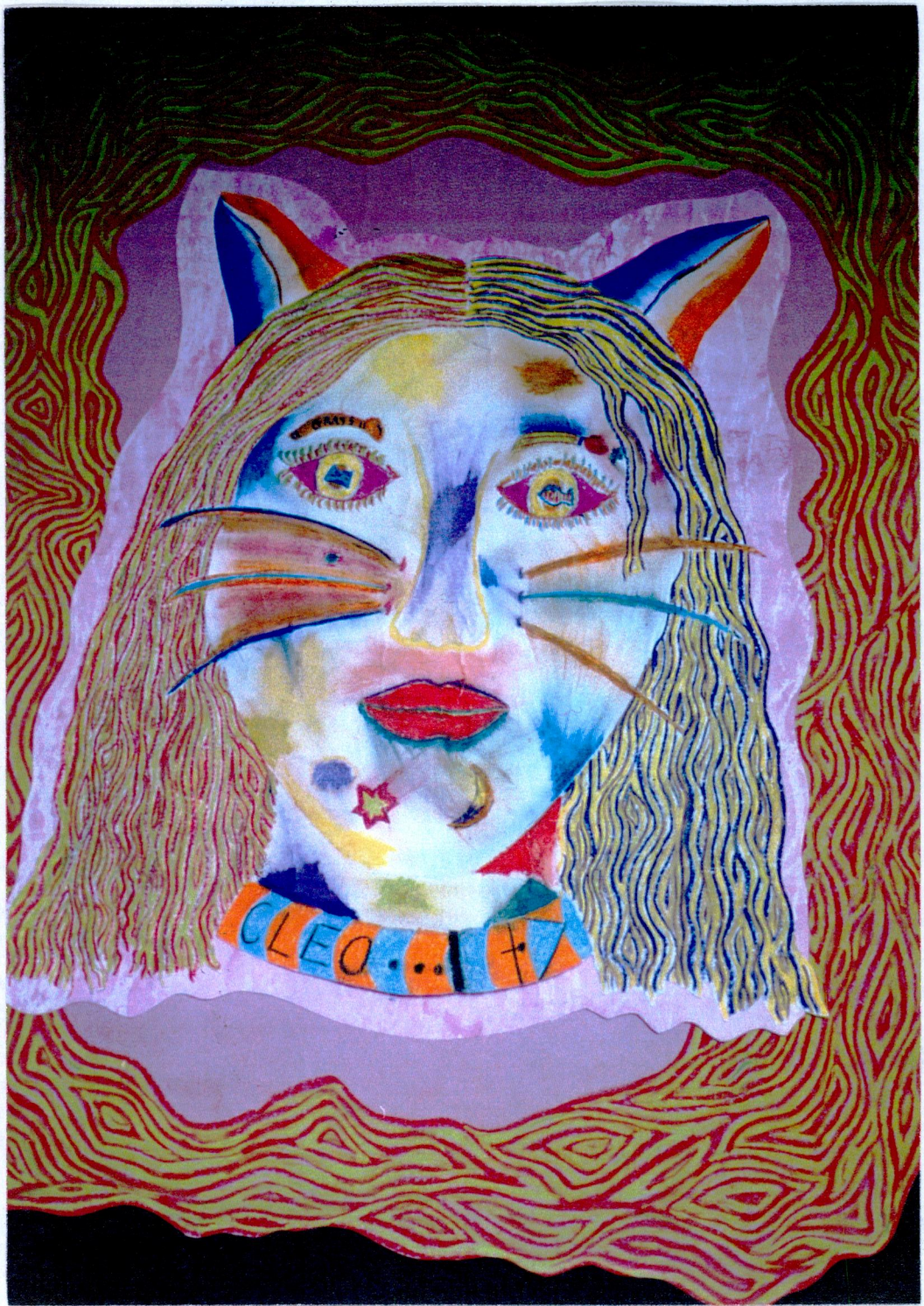
Indeed, Lisa's portrait is full of contrasts - her background, done in wax resists, is composed of soft, curving whorls; which is strikingly different to the rigid vertical stripes of her outfit.





...I worry about whether people are not...  
...I divided my face into two halves...  
...my bright, happy face that everyone sees, and the dark part...  
...the inside of me that no one sees...  
...indeed, this portrait is full of secrets...  
...in wax, it is composed of soft, curving lines...  
...strangely different to the rigid vertical stripes of the outside...





Susanna (Fig. 16) : " I drew myself with cat's ears, whiskers and a cat collar because my cat means a lot to me ..... I didn't realise I was doing it at the time, but when I did my hair and the border around my face, I made it look kind of like a lion's mane. Maybe I was a cat in another life ! "





I was a cat in another life.  
around my face I made it look kind of like a lion's mane. Maybe  
was happy at the time, but when I did my hair and the boy  
cat collar because my cat means a lot to me. I didn't realize I  
meanings (p. 12) I drew myself with cat ears, whiskers and a





Tara (Fig. 17) : " I don't like my drawing ..... it makes me look too angry. I look like a punk or an Indian going to war.

However, when Tara was asked if she would do her self - portrait differently, given another opportunity, she was most emphatic in her reply : " No way; the colours I made are definitely right.

They show that when you're angry and you can't say it, you get boiling hot inside."





fact (fig. 17). I don't like the drawing, it makes the face too  
my. I think it's more or less like going to war.  
However, when I was asked if she would do her self - portrait  
to be given another opportunity, she was most emphatic in  
her reply: "No way, the colour I made are really right."  
They show that when you're angry and you can't say it, you get  
nothing out of it.



## FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER 4

1. Viktor Lowenfield / W. Lambert Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, (Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, 1987), page 59.
2. David Fontana, Psychology for Teachers - Third Edition, Macmilan Press Ltd., London, 1995), page 252.
3. Viktor Lowenfield, The Lowenfield Lectures, page 2.
4. Ibid, page 19.
5. Lowenfield / Lambert, Creative and Mental Growth, page 404.
6. Ciaran Carthy, Robert Ballagh, (Magill, Merrion Row, Dublin 2, 1986), page 87.
7. Ibid, page 155.



ROBOTICS: CHAPTER 4

1. The first robot was created in 1929 by the American inventor and

inventor of the first robot, William Grey Walter, in 1929.

1929, page 10

2. The first robot was created in 1929 by the American inventor and

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3. The first robot was created in 1929 by the American inventor and

1929, page 10

4. The first robot was created in 1929 by the American inventor and

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5. The first robot was created in 1929 by the American inventor and

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1929, page 10



## CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to investigate the hypothesis that a valid sense of self - identity can be discovered through the creative experience in the classroom,

In Chapter One, the fundamental aspects of early adolescence are outlined. Young peoples' search for self - identity, the difficulties encountered in this pursuit and the formulation of what C.G. Jung terms as the 'persona' (the false self) were discussed. It was concluded that the acquisition of a persona is essentially an act which is detrimental to the intrinsic self - and that the young person, at this stage, is very vulnerable and in need of sensitive guidance from the adult generation which they ostensibly disregard.

Chapter Two dealt primarily with the problem of role confusion, whereby the adolescent selects roles from the culture which surrounds them, and attempts to emulate these roles in order to create a prototype identity for him/herself. The inconstancy of this behaviour can often result in the adolescent experiencing feelings of irresolution and debilitation. The young person fears acting inappropriately, and as an act of defiance, often adopts a 'negative identity' - rejecting all the ethical and moral values which are upheld by society.

## CONCLUSION

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Chapter Two deals primarily with the problem of role confusion, whereby the adolescent relates roles from the culture which surrounds them, and attempts to establish these roles in order to create a prototype identity for himself. The tendency of this behaviour can often result in the adolescent experiencing feelings of frustration and debilitation. The young person (as a young person) and as an act of defiance often adopts a 'negative identity' - rejecting all the ethical and moral values which are upheld by society.



Chapter Three focused on the possibility that the creative experience utilised as a means for self - exploration, could significantly transcend the defence mechanisms of the persona and lead the young person to a heightened awareness of him/herself. The role of art education was discussed, with reference to the promotion of sensitivity and self - confidence in adolescents who may fear the immediacy of nonverbal expression - that is, its potential to bypass the defences of the constructed persona.

Chapter Four described the application of the hypothesis to a sequence of lessons on self - portraiture, with a first year group. The methodology was documented and the reactions and responses of the students were evaluated and discussed.

The general outcome of the completed sequence was a sense, among the students, that they had documented the innate aspects of themselves in a creative, enjoyable and genuine way. Hence, the hypothesis that the creative experience in art and design is advantageous for personal growth and the acquisition of a valid sense of self - identity was investigated and found to be acceptable.

Chapter Three focused on the possibility that the creative experience utilized as a means for self-exploration could significantly transcend the defense mechanisms of the person and lead the young person to a heightened awareness of himself. The role of art education was discussed with reference to the promotion of sensitivity and self-confidence in adolescents who may fear the immediacy of personal expression - that is, the potential to bypass the defenses of the constructed person.

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