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How the Subject can enhance the Programme.

The Department of Educations records show that 459 schools delivered a Transition Year Programme to 21,500 students during school year 1994/95. By 1995/96 the figures had risen to 25,000 students in 500 schools and for the coming year the increase is expected to continue. Schools devise their own Transition Year Programmes. With so many schools participating it is not surprising to find variations in the quality of programmes being delivered. The Department of Education offers guidelines in its "Transition Year Programme: Guidelines for Schools". These guidelines show that the choice of subject and how it is taught can contribute to an overall "Mission". This dissertation proposes that art is the subject which is best suited to singularly reach the Transition Year "Mission". The first chapter traces the origins and development of the Transition Year and looks at why the year should be an integral part of secondary education. It further explores the implications for schools, principals and teachers, and highlights the changes required ~~from~~ when dealing with examination oriented programmes. Chapter 2 looks at different Transition Year programmes and how subjects combine to reach the overall "Mission". Arts role at secondary level and the examination format for art to Junior and Leaving Certificate are examined. This paves the way for exploring how the subject should best be utilised during Transition Year. The practical application is covered in Chapter 3. By looking at two distinctive ways of teaching art to Transition Year students the best way to utilise the opportunities and meet the challenges available are explored. The conclusion and recommendations reflect on the research carried out for the dissertation and the findings of a years teaching to Transition Year students in Chanel College, Coolock.

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Transition Year and Art

How the Subject can enhance the programme.

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TRANSITION YEAR AND ART

HOW THE SUBJECT CAN

ENHANCE THE PROGRAMME

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CHAPTER 1

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSITION YEAR

BEGINNINGS OF THE OPTION

In 1974 the then Minister for Education Mr. Richard Burke put forward the idea of a year within the secondary school cycle which would:

*“ . . stop the academic treadmill and
release the student from competitive
educational pressure for one year.” (1)*

Burke's idea would then appear to be keeping a momentum going which began in the 1960's with the advent of documents such as "Investment in Education " (1965) and the Report on "Regional and Technical Colleges" (1967). These documents looked at inequality of opportunity in secondary level. The introduction of free second level education helped to address the balance. Within the schools students who wanted to, would proceed straight to the senior cycle on completion of the Intermediate or Group Certificate. For low achievers this could prove to be a daunting task. Burke's Transition Year option would then give these students an opportunity to develop skills for the senior cycle while resting from the 'pressures' of the hitherto purely exam oriented curriculum.

Initially only three schools participated in offering the Transition Year - Holy Child Comprehensive, Sallynoggin, Co. Dublin, Garbally College, Ballinasloe, and the Model Technical Institute, in Limerick. A total of 66 *students*. (2) By the year 1976/77, 16 schools with a total of 434 pupils had taken up the option (3). The increased enrolment over the three years was not a clear indication of continuous development for the programme. Despite the portfolio of the Minister for Education becoming more prolific with politicians such as Lynch, Hillery, Colley and O'Malley using it as a stepping stone towards a higher political profile, (4) initiative was lacking in terms of curricular development. When the Department of Education asked the Education Research Centre in Drumcondra to carry out an evaluation of the Transition Year, it is noted by Crooks and McKiernan that,

"The report recommended that the present pilot stage of Transition Year be terminated without delay so that work can commence on the dissemination of the programme in whole, or in part to other interested schools." (5)

This report was not acted upon. Those schools which had offered the Transition Year were deprived of the small financial help previously

given. (6) Not only was there a political refusal to expand the option but there was also a tendency to stifle any progress already made.

It was not only people like Burke and those involved at the Educational Research Centre in Drumcondra who looked favourably at the Transition Year, others viewed it not only as a good option but rather as a necessity. Lola Heffernan, principal of Sallynoggin Comprehensive, examining the Transition Year in 1976 writes that when students reach school leaving age they are *"quite young, immature, and inadequately prepared for career, third level education or indeed life."* (7) An extra year would therefore mean that these students could become more mature in the physical sense, before moving on to a career or further education. She also notes that *"many of the ills in society are the result of an imbalance in the individuals development"* and points out that *"educationalists must accept some responsibility for this."* The Transition Year would then serve as a period when the emphasis is on the maturity and moralistic and personal development of participating students. As stated earlier these points were not enough to influence Department of Education policy to disseminate the Transition Year. It was only with the accession to the Ministerial post of Gemma Hussey that the year again became a focal point. In 1984 she listed the year as one of three options in a six year post-primary cycle, the others being Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, (V.P.T.P.) and a Repeat Leaving Certificate.

As with all things which involve change there are those who prefer the status quo and have reservations about adapting to a new system. Such was the case with the new school cycle. The Transition Year programme was to commence and participating schools including those already offering the Transition Year option, were to apply for formal permission from the Department of Education. A total of 115 schools were allowed to participate but of these 20 did not take up the option.(8) However, the Department of Education was starting to take a more active interest in the curriculum. This was the beginning of a real expansion of the Transition Year option.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN TRANSITION YEAR

Last year (1994/95) saw the advent of a new Government initiative which augurs for significant curricular development in the Transition Year option. All schools may now have a six year post-primary cycle. For the extra year there are available the three options as instigated by Gemma Hussey, the Transition Year, Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, (V.P.T.P.) or Repeat Leaving Certificate but the former would be seen by people like Eileen Doyle as "*the most secure option*" because virtually all participants, who wanted to, could then continue to the senior cycle. (9) Programmes for the year are devised within schools by teachers who are familiar with the needs of their students. This can then contribute towards a smoother continuity from junior cycle to senior cycle.

The Department of Educational does offer curriculum guidelines in its Transition Year Programmes: Guidelines for Schools which not only deals with educational needs but also promotes an educational mission. Interestingly this "Mission" reflects the thinking of people like Lola Heffernan some 19 years ago.

*"To promote the personal, social,
educational and vocational development
of pupils to prepare them for their role as
autonomous, participate and responsive
members of society "(10)*

Findings in individual schools are that students do indeed mature during the year and sometimes find themselves making career choices and/or subject choices at the Leaving Certificate stage which they probably would not have made. However, on a national level there are huge variations from school to school in the quality of the Transition Year Programme. (11) To address this problem the National Educational Convention Secretariat recommended that,

*"It was considered that provision during
the transition year would be likely to
improve if schools had to submit a
programme annually, if schools were
inspected, and if information on good
practice was more widely disseminated . .
. (12)*

The Transition Year Programme was evaluated by the inspectorate of the Department of Education during March of 1995. Among findings were

that 89% of schools evaluated were following the Transition Year Programme Guidelines in a satisfactory manner and consensus among principals, teachers, and pupils that the Transition Year Programme was a very worthwhile initiative. Recommendations from the inspectorate include support for local networking, assessment and evaluation procedures and a requirement for a 'whole school approach' in planning and delivery of the programme.

This is because the programme is being presented much better in some schools than it is in others.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOLS

The Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (A.S.T.I.) writes that,

*"Detailed planning is absolutely central
to the success of the Transition Year
Programme." (13)*

In order to be successful this has to work from the top level right down to the students' part in carrying out tasks. With the Department of Education stating that the Transition Year is not part of the Leaving Certificate Programme and recommending that not more than 40% of the school week be devoted to mainstream Leaving Certificate course content, there is scope to develop modules or short courses which can be based on the schools own resources. Detrimental to this is the realisation that a school, if inadequately prepared to accept the responsibility of working outside of the mainstream syllabus, may not stick to the recommendations, and instead give a three year Leaving Certificate course. The inspectorate of the Department of Education evaluation of March 1995 recommended that schools should be reminded that they are not permitted to offer a three year Leaving Certificate programme. Therefore a huge responsibility is thrust on principals to ensure that the curriculum is well structured, balanced, embodies the 'Mission' as laid down by the Department of Education.

A.S.T.I. recommends that the principal should appoint a Co-ordinator to be responsible for all aspects of the Transition Year Programme. This co-ordinator would accept total responsibility, answering only to the principal, for the running of the programme, from its inception to the final evaluation of how the course worked. To this end s/he would work organising the mundane day to day tasks as well as ensuring the smooth running of modules, work experience programmes, practical work, educational school trips etc. It is essential that the principal appoints a person with the expertise and enthusiasm that the post requires.

There are financial implications peculiar to Transition Year. With school subsidising educational trips and offering a wide range of non-academic modules such as video production, sports events, and cookery classes amongst others, expenses can mount and the inclination to jeopardise or undermine the programme because of cost can arise. The principal has to deal with this while also justifying the added expenses to parents who often believe that *"more time should be spent on exam courses"* (14) such as the repeat Leaving Certificate, rather than having more expenditure on a course which is not part of mainstream education and offers no guarantees of a satisfactory end product.

With so much pressure on schools to provide a good Transition Year programme there is also the possibility of the mainstream subjects suffering. Eileen Doyle writes,

"The challenge to school principals to motivate, maintain and deliver an effective education service for all pupils while planning for a Transition Year Programme is perhaps unfair and certainly educationally unsound." (15)

The principal should then ensure that the Transition Year is an integral part of the whole school cycle. The hope of the Department of Education is that a well developed Transition Year Programme will affect teaching and learning throughout the school.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

The Department of Education's Guidelines for the Transition Year states that,

"A key feature of the Transition Year should be the use of a wide range of teaching/learning methodologies and situations" (16)

Consequently many teachers are having to change from a traditionally teacher centred methodology to a more student centred approach where the emphasis is on, 'negotiated learning', students 'personal responsibility in learning' and '*Activity based learning*'. (17)

For many teachers much changes are daunting and they need support. The work of the Teachers Centres in Blackrock and Drumcondra is significant in offering professional development for Transition Year teachers.

In 1986 Pat Diggins, the Director of the Drumcondra Teachers Centre, asked Dermot Quish to produce inservice plans for the Transition Year in Dublin schools. Quish established a support network where Transition Year Programme co-ordinators could come together to address curricular

issues and, problems. The focus of the discussions was on curriculum, assessment and organisations. In 1987 a subject/module network was also established whereby teachers/lecturers were hired to speak on specific subjects and modules. The subject/module network then developed in tandem with the co-ordinator support group so that up to eighteen subject/module workshops and five co-ordinator workshops were organised annually. Both subject teachers and co-ordinator groups drew up established contact lists to interlink. Thus the concept of 'networking', drawing on professional talent within the educational system, was begun. Following on this success Chris Connolly, senior inspector with the Department of Education, contacted Dermot Quish in 1993 to discuss the idea of national support for Transition Year programmes. A meeting was held between Connolly, Quish, Pat Diggins and Eileen Doyle where it was decided to set up a support group to study issues involved. This group became known as the "Action Team" and consisted of Eileen Doyle, Mary Ann Halton, Mary Keane, Gerry Jeffers and Dermot Quish. Chris Connolly was the Departmental official responsible for the group and other inspectors with an interest in the scheme were Maura Chancy, Richard Coughlan, John McGinty, Helen Riordan and Helen Ingram.

In December 1993, 63 teachers/co-ordinators with track records of 'extended professionalism' were released from schools to follow a four

day in-career development programme. Training was devised and delivered by the 'Action Team' in Drumcondra. This training of trainers (TOT) model was followed by a six week period in 1994 when the 63 teachers/co-ordinators gave seminars in over 400 schools and brought a number of schools (between 10 and 20) together on 'cluster days'. A possible criticism was that schools new to the Transition Year were given the same programme as those doing it for years.

The process was evaluated internally by the action team and the response of the participants was very positive. The school principals and the cluster groups also evaluated the process very favourably. The Research Centre in Drumcondra did an external evaluation but the findings of this have not been made known yet (January 1996). By 1995 Chris Connolly had become converted to the idea of continuous support and his vision is accepted by the Department of Education. No doubt the availability of European Social Funds to assist the process was also relevant. The Action Team were invited by the Department of Education to work full-time from September 1995 as a 'Transition Year Support Team'. Three members were available - Mary Ann Halton, Gerry Jeffers, Dermot Quish and a new addition, Eilis Humphreys was added. The main task of this 'Support Team' is

*"to provide on-going support for the
design, implementation and evaluation of*

*Transition Year Programmes in order to
improve the learning experiences for all
participants". (18)*

Among the documentation at the Teachers Centre Blackrock, is a response to a questionnaire given to the 63 Teachers/Co-ordinators who represented a variety of Transition Year Programmes. The questions posed were based on the essential requirements involved in delivering a good Transition Year Programme. Among answers to a question on recommended aspects to improve the Programme' in their own particular school were;

- Teacher training in Methodologies
- More time for T.Y.P. (Transition Year Programme) staff to plan, monitor and evaluate the Programme.
- More interest, advice and help from non T.Y.P. staff.
- Better teacher motivation (19)

This clearly points to teachers having to take a totally new approach to teaching, throughout the school, when delivering the programme. This is

even more evident from answers to a question on what single piece of advice would be passed on to a school planning its first programme.

Responses included:-

- T.Y.P. can work: the enthusiasm of teachers can transfer to students
- It has to have experienced, competent, child-centred teachers to staff it and give it status. (20)

From the experiences of people involved with the programme over a number of years it is evident that even the good teacher should become more enthusiastic, motivated, and adopt a policy for catering to the needs of the student, and not the requirements of an examination oriented course. To that end teachers should then look on the opportunity available to accept the challenges, and be active and creative in developing an understanding of the potential programme, which will help teacher and students, in future ventures.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 1

1. T. Crooks and J. McKernan, *The Challenge of Change: Curriculum Development in Irish Post-Primary Schools 1970-1984*. Institute of Public Administration, Dublin, 1984) p.26.
2. Eileen Doyle, "Transition Year" in *Achievements and Aspiration: curricular initiatives in Irish Post-Primary Education in the 1980s*, ed. Kevin Williams, Gerry MacNamara and Don Herron, (Dublin: Drumcondra Teachers Centre, 1990) p.19.
3. *Ibid.*, p.19.
4. Séamus Ó Buachalla *Educational Policy in 20th Century Ireland* (Dublin Wolfhound Press, 1988) p.71.
5. Crooks and McKernan, "*The Challenge of Change*". p.26.
6. *Ibid.*, p.26.
7. Lola Heffernan, "The Transition Year: Transition in Holy Child Community School, Sallynoggin" in *The Secondary Teacher* ed.

Sean O Riain (Dublin: Mount Salus Press Ltd for the A.S.T.I.
1976) p.5.

8. Doyle, "Transition Year", p.21.
9. *Ibid*, p.20.
10. Department of Education, *Transition Year Programmes: Guidelines for Schools*, (Dublin: Department of Education 1993), p.4.
11. The Convention Secretariat, *Report on the National Education Convention*, ed. John Coolahan, (Dublin: The National Education Convention Secretariat 1994), p.75.
12. *Ibid.*, p.75.
13. A.S.T.I., *The Transition Year*, Ed Moira Leydon, (Dublin: A.S.T.I. 1993), p.5.
14. Doyle, "Transition Year", p.24.
15. *Ibid.*, p.24.

16. Department of Education, *"Transition Year Programmes"* p.8.

17. *Ibid.*, p.8.

CHAPTER 2

ART IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

TRANSITION YEAR PROGRAMMES

As schools develop individual programmes to satisfy the criteria as laid down by the Department of Education in its Transition Year Programmes: Guidelines for schools, there are variations in the choice of subjects being offered. All schools include academic studies such as Maths, English, History, Business Studies, a language, Irish etc., but there are also other subjects offered which are not part of the conventional curriculum. Belvedere College offers computer studies and keyboard skills, a mini-company, physical education, swimming and a social action programme. (1) The Christian Brothers Secondary School in Kilkenny includes Environmental Studies and Home Economics (2) while Clongowes Wood College in Co. Kildare offers Technology, Career and Health Education, and Heritage Studies.(3) The list can go on but a key point is not only schools finding adequate subjects for Transition Year students, but that each subject is an integral part of a clear programme with overall aims and objectives. Each subject acts as a single entity while also depending on others in order to fulfil the mission of,

*"Promoting of personal, social,
educational and vocational development
of pupils." (4)*

TRANSITION YEAR PROGRAMMES AND ART

Elliot Eisner writes that,

"The prime value of the arts in education lies, from my point of view, in the unique contributions it makes to the individual's experience with and understanding of the world." (5).

This could justify the inclusion of art as a part of any Transition Year programme but Dermot Quish of the Transition Year Support Team says that of all subjects currently being studied during the Transition Year, art is best suited to cater for students development. At first this statement seems to be a little 'brash' but on closer examination it does carry some obvious truths. By art, or more precisely "The Arts", is meant all the disciplines as recognised by the Curriculum and Examinations Board. Their Discussions Paper titled "The Arts in Education" stated

"That Arts is a generic term for the human activities of dance, drama, film, literature, music and the visual arts . . . "
(6)

Although each discipline can be distinctive and require different methods and materials to reach different goals, each can also clearly unite under the name 'Art'. Taken further to include not only the practical application of fine art, craft, design etc., but also the development of an appreciation of aesthetics, drama, music, film etc., the subject becomes more complex and challenging. This could enhance the subjects stature as a part of any Transition Year Programme. Art is accessible to all ability levels. There are no limitations to the level of achievement those participating can reach. Other subjects are restricted in that students are often compelled to study subject matter with limited scope. For example in Maths, $2x + 2x = 4x$ regardless of the value of x . Could the Geometric forms of Mondrian be so easily deciphered? In English the interpretation of the works of Shakespeare, no matter how vast and open to interpretation, will always involve studying Shakespeare. Could one even begin to understand Cubism, Surrealism and/or other modern artistic developments without relating to movements of an earlier era?

The extra curricular activities of Transition Year Programmes to practical approach as in the development of social education. For example in Belvedere College the mini-company aim is as follows:

"The programme gives the students an invaluable insight into the world of business where they have to deal with

*real money, real products/services and
real customers." (17).*

Here is an obvious difference between what academic studies can offer and what the development of new social skills may offer, but both are, and should be, linked so as to fulfil the Transition Year's mission.

Quish sees art as the subject which is probably more capable of catering for all aspects of the mission without having to rely heavily on others. How then can art achieve such goals? To answer this we must firstly examine the study of the subject at other levels of secondary education i.e. Junior and Leaving Certificate.

ART IN JUNIOR CYCLE

Besides the dissemination of the Transition Year option the other major change at secondary level in the 1990's was the advent of the new Junior Certificate with the dramatic change from the old Intermediate and Group Certificate. Art in particular received a major boost as the format for examination changed from a system whereby students sat on a particular day, and basically regurgitated learned information, to a new system which involves a process of ongoing tasks, linked by selected themes, which are carried out throughout the third year of study.

In its publication for the Junior Certificate syllabus the Department of Education states that

"Art, Craft and Design are three inter-dependent disciplines. They are fundamental to human existence, predating written language. They play a major role in human evolution and development". (8)

Consequently the subject during Junior Cycle involves more than the development of skills or creativity in the students . At the very core is

the development of an understanding of life. Further evidence is found in the publication under the heading "starting points" where it states that,

*"The students direct experience real or
imagined, of the natural and man-made
environment should be the starting point
for Art, Craft and Design work." (9)*

As the tasks involve ongoing weekly observations and activities, there is little pressure and tremendous freedom to explore various aspects of themselves and their lives while also learning more about aesthetics, craftwork and aspects of design which hitherto, may have been taken for granted by a vast majority of participants. Students can now learn about things like ergonomics, and find out why objects like chairs, teapots or handles on doors are formed the way that they are. On completion of the art discipline in the Junior Certificate, the students may now encounter a world from a totally different perspective.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment offers Guidelines for teachers of Junior Certificate art, craft and design. These point out areas of emphasis, such as drawing, and include not only guidelines on all aspects of exam modules, but also offer exemplars of work with clear objectives, starting points, learning emphasis, approaches, resources and accessible support studies. (10) As these areas need to be covered during

each of the exams required subjects, whether it be graphic design, three dimensional work, print or painting, there is obvious scope for developing on appreciation of the arts. The guidelines require that teachers be flexible in their delivery of the programme:

*"The teaching of art, craft and design
must be made applicable to a wide
variety of situations involving students
from different backgrounds, abilities and
developmental capacities". (11)*

This strengthens the value of the Junior Certificate art, craft and design programme as it recognises that there are vast differences in student ability levels, and that these differences must be catered for, in order to ensure that the subject does not become either elitist, or decline to being a subject taught only to low achievers or students with little interest in school.

The Junior Certificate is therefore a vehicle whereby students can gain a knowledge of some of the arts, (limited only by the exams criteria) and, potentially, a curiosity about, while studying for, and carrying out, the requirements of the exam.

ART AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE

When students complete the Junior Cycle and move on to the senior cycle, they are confronted by a totally different approach in study for the examination. Whereas the Junior Cycle involves a series of activities over a period of time, the senior cycle relies on students' carrying out activities such as design work, life drawing, and imaginative composition or still-life, at a single sitting. There is also the requirement from those studying the subject to the exam stage, to sit and answer a paper on the history and appreciation of art. This paper is devised so that there are three distinctive sections under the headings of 1) Art in Ireland, 2) European Art and 3) General Appreciation. As there are no clear guidelines from the Department of Education on what should be taught, teachers rely on books such as Henry Sharpe, Art History and Appreciation, or Jimmy Burns, Irish and European Art History and Appreciation. Furthermore teachers tend to look at publications such as Folen's past exam papers or the History of Art Revision from the same publishers and written by Ursula O'Meara and Theresa Hegarty. This somewhat clarifies the teaching content to be delivered during the two years of study and the past exam papers help in deciding what to focus on in the practical sense.

There are however other factors to consider such as why students are studying art during the senior cycle, and the value they are getting from the teachings involved. Regarding the value they get John Portchmouth notes on students between the ages of 14 and 18 that,

*"What absorbed him/her once is not
obsorbing anymore: ideas he/she held
until quite recently are going overboard:
he/she sees what he/she is doing in the
light of new, dimly-forming attitudes".*

(12)

Clearly there are differences between how a student at junior level sees himself/herself and the world, to how the student at senior level does. Whereas juniors can be curious and receptive of ideas, seniors can be cynical and opinionated.

This leads to "why they study the subject". All students are required by law to stay in school until they reach the age of fifteen, which is when most complete the junior cycle. After this they, (or more often their parents) insist on continuing education to either gain the maximum possible points for college and a career, or to obtain a Leaving Certificate with the best possible grades in order to enter the labour market. Art can then become just another means to an end. How the student has

developed a new mental outlook on life, can also create problems when it comes to educating for a lasting sensitivity to the arts. Portsmouth recognises the potential dilemma for students and points out that,

*"The teacher has to help him/her value
his/her vision, whatever it is, and sustain
him/her in it - not easy for either of them,
but the only way if the work is to continue
to mean anything " (13)*

He further adds

*"For this reason the teacher must
promote work on all fronts openly
encouraging the student to create
emotionally from what emotion creates in
him/her ". (14)*

Art then at Leaving Certificate level has a lot to contend with in that the ends do not necessarily lead to students learning more about aesthetics outside of the course syllabus. The motivation for study tends to come from wanting a high grade or better quality Leaving Certificate, and with the students still developing mentally, they may often have insecurities about themselves which augur for problems for teachers when it comes to trying to develop skills which the students do not have.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 2

1. A.S.T.I. *The Transition Year*, Ed Moira Leydon, (Dublin: A.S.T.I. 1993 p.p. 38-39.
2. *Ibid.*, p.40.
3. *Ibid.*, p.42.
4. Department of Education: *Transition Year Programmes: Guidelines for Schools* (Dublin: Department of Education, 1993) p.4.
5. Elliot Eisner; *Educating Artistic Vision*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co, 1972) p.9.
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7. A.S.T.I. *The Transition Year*. p. 38.
8. Department of Education: *The Junior Certificate: Art Craft and Design*. (Dublin: Department of Education) p.1.

9. *Ibid.*, p.6.
10. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment: *The Junior Certificate, Art, Craft, Design. Guidelines for Teachers* (Dublin: Department of Education) p.p.18-24.
11. *Ibid.*, p.15.
12. John Portchmouth: *Secondary School Art* (London: Studio Vista, 1971) p.66.
13. *Ibid.*, p.67.
14. *Ibid.*, p.67

CHAPTER 3

TRANSITION YEAR IN CHANEL COLLEGE

DEVELOPING A PROGRAMME

Chanel College is an all boys school, run by the Marist Fathers, located on the Northside of Dublin in Coolock, Celebrating 40 years in existence this year the school constantly draws students from various social classes in the surroundings communities. The ability level of the boys is extremely mixed which proves that streaming is not evident. To enter the school students must apply a year in advance and these applicants are then asked to sit a test. This test is more of an introduction to the school than an ability requirement as most of the boys who sit this test are then permitted to commence their secondary education in Chanel.

Last year, 1994/95, was the first time that the College offered a Transition Year Programme. To participate students had to go through an interview process whereby, accompanied by their parents, they met with two teachers, (one was either the course co-ordinator, Mr Michael McDunphy or the school principal Fr. John Hand,) to assess the students "suitably" for the Transition Year. From a total of 484 school students', 48 participated in the initial programme. These were divided into two

classes, 4.1 and 4.2, which worked together in tandem on course modules and subjects during the programme. The contents of the programme included the study of conventional academic subjects such as Irish, Maths, English, History, Geography, Business Studies and Science. There was also the inclusion of less conventional or "extra curricular" subjects such as Multi-Think (logic), which included consumer awareness, Multi-Fine arts, Music, careers and Media Studies, Multi-Activities, such as woodwork, Video Production and computer studies, and Physical Education (P.E.) which included modules on football, coaching and swimming. Teachers of Transition Year students were given on "Assessment Pack". The contents of this were,

1. A monthly Report Sheet
2. Project Assessment Sheet
3. End of Year Assessment Sheet
4. Key of presentation and Marking Scheme
5. Visiting Speaker Report Card
6. Problem Cards

This pack was to assess the running of the programme and to identify and address any problems as they arose.

This year, 1995/96, there are a total of 461 students in the school and the number of Transition Year Participants has been reduced to 36 (Two classes of 18).

To participate students had to go through the same interview process as before although it is understood from some participating students, that a recommendation to consider the option was made to some students, before proceeding to the senior cycle.

The year programme content is similar to that of year one in that the conventional subjects remain but the activities of the "extra" subjects have changed due to last year's final assessment. This year "swimming" to includes a module in sailing. Physical Education now includes a kickboxing module and media studies now includes a module on the use of photography. Quite clear from these changes is the notion that the boys in the College require more activity based modules and the assessment process clearly identified this. The Transition Year Programme in Chanel is therefore developing as the principal and staff move forward through a "teething phase".

ART FOR TRANSITION YEAR 1994/95

The resident art teacher in Chanel College, (Patsy Bookin), feels that "Art" was not a success for the schools pioneering Transition Year students. The reasons for this are two factors, the timetable and the content of art modules.

The timetable shows that art was studied on Tuesdays and Thursday between 2.25 and 3.45, the last two periods of the school day. On Tuesdays while 4.1 studied art, 4.2 participated in modules in physical education e.g. football, playing or coaching. On Thursday 4.2 studied art while 4.1 had physical education. Subsequently it was found that students had more interest in the physical activities and often missed art class under the pretence of continuing a physical education module.

The allocation of only 80 minutes a week for Transition year students to study art also proved to be detrimental to the development of any momentum or continuity with projects. This was further aggravated because of days being missed due to students going on educational trips, so that two or three weeks could pass between art classes.

The content of these classes also proved to be somewhat problematic. A cross curricular module was tried whereby students were involved in

screen printing T-shirts and posters based on a logo they had designed for a mini-company which had been established during business studies.

Some students had little or no interest in the mini-company and a lack of enthusiasm about activities relating to it meant that a lack of interest in the art project ensued. Other activities followed such as batik and tie-dyeing but as interest began to wane and students lost motivation, the subject lost all impetus.

ART FOR TRANSITION YEAR STUDENTS IN CHANEL 95/96

This school year (1995/96) the timetable schedule was rearranged to enable transition year students to have art on Thursday mornings. The class time has been extended from 80 minutes to 120 minutes and both classes, 4.1 and 4.2, have art the same time. With no other subjects scheduled for Thursday mornings while art is being studied, and school trips scheduled for days when modules are completed, the problems with the timetable last year (1994/95) have clearly been addressed.

To deal with content problems projects would need to be motivating and challenging but with realistically attainable aims and objectives which would cater for all student ability levels.

PROJECT 1 CROSS -CURRICULAR

To acquire more knowledge on a correct approach which would fully utilise the programme's potential, and indeed the potential which art has in helping the programme, I decided to opt for a comparative study using two distinctive methods of teaching art, cross-curricular and a painting bloc which would only involve the study of art elements. (Although the cross-curricular approach failed last year I felt that by "coupling" with a more interesting subject that it could work).

Before beginning I discussed the previous year's course content and more importantly students participation, with the resident art teachers. I needed an insight into the students artistic experience. From the discussion it emerged that of the 36 students participating only 8 had taken art to Junior Certificate. However all had, with some degree of success, taken History. This suggested that History would be an ideal subject to link with on a cross-curriculum approach. I therefore organised a project which would utilise the students' experience of historical study while getting them to understand and appreciate the aesthetics of a bygone era. The sources for their initial research were to be buildings with a historical background in the locality of Coolock. After extensive research a list of potential sites was formulated. These were

1) Chanel College
purchased by the
Marxist Fathers 40 years
ago the house was
originally the Home of a
prominent psychiatrist.

2) Coolock Village
including St.Brendan's
Church and Cadburys
factory, (the grounds
have a bronze
age Tumulus).

3) Coolock House Former
Home of Sister
Catherine McAuley,
founder of the Sisters of
Mercy, in the early 19th
Century.

4) St. John's Church and
Brendan's well. Site

where the community
gathered for political
discussion in the 19th
Century

5) Beaumont House

Former Home of the
Guinness family

6) Woodlands One of the

most unusually
constructed state homes
during the Georgian
period

7) Belcamp House and

College including the
Washington Tower, the
only monument built to
honour the former
American President,
George Washington,
while he was alive.

The overall aim of the project was to develop an understanding and appreciation of buildings and sites in the Coolock area through working on and towards a final display which would be both visually and historically informative. The first days objective was to develop an interest and motivate the students so that they would become actively involved in the project. In order to do this I spent my first minutes with the students in open discussion, where do they live? what do they like? etc. After the class were relaxed and confident in their relationship with the teacher the discussion was switched to "areas of interest" in Coolock. A video on "Hidden Treasures" a history of Coolock narrated by Leo Swan, which highlighted the interest of the pre-selected sites was shown. A follow up discussion which included anecdotes relating to several locations then served to develop an enthusiasm in the students.

The class was divided into groups (to help address the "mixed ability") and each group was to have at least one student with art experience to Junior Certificate level. They were then allocated sites in relation to where they live, i.e. students from Beaumont were to study Beaumont House. Throughout the day students were made conscious of the words "Responsibility" and "Maturity" in relation to my art-room expectations but it was still with some apprehension that I designated the tasks for the coming weeks. Students were to be at the selected site at 9 o'clock on

Thursday mornings. There they would draw, (quick rough sketches), photograph and gather any written information on their chosen site. Both myself and the resident art teacher would visit sites to assist but no specific locations or times were stated.

Students were also to use their own time by visiting the local library or talk to people with a knowledge of the location, so that a full knowledge of the chosen site was obtained.

Apprehensions were soon dismissed as students were always at the locations on time and doing the required work. On returning to the classroom students then proceeded to develop their work further. Those with art experience helped those without and drawings were enhanced, written work was edited and a general overhaul of collected information was evident.

In week 5 a craft phase was introduced whereby students were to make a cardboard relief, based on a prominent feature of a building visited. It was at this time that I began to reflect on my criteria of student participation (intensity of activity), attendance and individual involvement in the group, to try and gauge the success or failure of the project. It soon became obvious that all students were "involved" if not always in artistic endeavours. Some insisted on rewriting text or

researching from books. Students with previous art experience did most of the drawings but the majority of those without experience, became intensively involved during the craft phase. Indeed for these students the work become a thing of pride as they "showed off" their efforts to other members of the group. Camaraderie within the groups developed and leaders began to emerge as decisions on "what to paint" or "what to write" or "what to draw" had to be made.

Absenteeism was practically nil the exceptions being students on suspension or genuine sickness (proven with a Doctor's Certificate).

As the weeks progressed student participation never waned and through weekly evaluations and discussions it was clear that the group project was a success. Evaluations showed that students with little or no artistic experience could understand and answer questions on art elements such as line, shape, tone, relief and compositional balance, even if they did not have the full technical expertise.

Evaluation at the end of the project reinforced earlier beliefs of success as students showed on appreciation of the efforts made by other groups. In discussing their own work a knowledge of their studied sites, hitherto unnoticed, was made evident, and it was strikingly obvious, through responses to questions, that all the learning objectives had been attained.

PROJECT 2: PAINTING

To make a contrast with the first project I decided to deliver a sequence with an emphasis on "pure art". Unlike the previous project this would involve the efforts of the individual as an individual. The theme "expressions" was selected and students were to learn about facial expressions, then move on to figurative gesticulation and finally to understand how painting techniques can enhance these expressions. The aim of the project was to show an understanding of how human emotions can be conveyed through working on, and towards, a painted self portrait.

The initial stages involved line drawings of faces and the figure, looking more at proportions than expressions. As the project developed the expressive content came more to the fore.

The source for exploring how paint can enhance the desired expressive mode, came from a class trip to the Municipal Gallery. The emphasis of this trip was to develop an understanding of the conventions artists use to depict human emotion. This was achieved through giving the students a worksheet which was divided into two parts. The first part was a questionnaire on five paintings in the Gallery by Irish Artists. They were

1. "The Bird Market" by John B. Yeats
2. "There is no Night" by Jack B. Yeats
3. "Girl with Tinsel Scarf" by William Leech
4. "Exiles" by Patrick Hennessy
5. "Ire/Land III by Patrick Graham

The questions were devised so that students had to look closely at the paintings. They were to try to understand both the content and the expressions the artists sought while also forming opinions about the paintings. A question on which was their preferred work and why, helped to develop this opinion. On examining the responses to these questions it was clear to see that students had valid and constructive criticisms on the pieces on show. It was also obvious that they had looked closely at the works and understood what was entailed in giving a painting expressive qualities.

The second part of the worksheet involved students drawing using lead and coloured pencils, trying to imitate the colour scheme the artists used by copying from the paintings.

On returning to the classroom students were to put acquired knowledge into practice. They did small scale paintings, based on photographs of themselves in expressive mode, using various painting techniques. To complete the project they then selected one of the smaller test pieces and enlarged it to gain maximum impact.

As in the first project my criteria for measuring the success or failure of this project was student participation (Intensity of activity) and attendance. From the beginning it became apparent that this project would have totally different results. The variations in the ability levels became more obvious. Weaker students began to feel frustrated with their efforts at drawing and the stronger students wanted to "get on with it". To compensate for the weaker students I devised lessons so that the tasks were more accessible. When drawing the figure the entire class would work from a model but the weaker students could focus on a series of "sausage" shapes while stronger students included more detail. This got them involved but when the painting began again they showed signs of frustration. Through getting them to focus on painting styles they began to become more expressive and this compensated for their lack of

technique. However, there was not the same pride evident in their efforts as during the craft phase of project one, and work was often left in areas where it could easily be destroyed by paint or water. It was also noticeable that only the very best work was signed unlike in the previous project when all craft work was signed.

Attendance was similar to the first project with students abstaining themselves only on genuine excuses. Later I learned that the school imposes suspension when a student misses too many days.

Daily evaluations showed that art elements were clearly understood and that students were indeed involved in the project but not to the same extent as the cross-curricular module. Although the ability level problem was adequately dealt with, there seemed to be an inner frustration which was made manifest towards the end of the project. Students then said they were "bored" and wanted to do something exciting. When asked what would excite them and given options they democratically decided on another craft project.

Although both projects proved valuable as learning exercises and both offered challenges for all ability levels, the initial project with its physical activities proved to be more exciting and rewarding for the students.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation of the Transition Year Programme by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education during March 1995, shows a positive reaction from those involved with the programme. The leading point in the evaluation summary of the findings states:

‘‘The consensus among principals, teachers and pupils is that the Transition Year Programme is a very worthwhile initiative, allowing the school to engage in genuine in-school curriculum development, affording teachers the opportunity to break free of overly compartmentalised subject teaching, and giving pupils the space and time to grow in maturity and to develop in self-confidence.’’(1)

However of the schools evaluated, 11% did not follow the Transition Year Programme guidelines. (2) The recommendations from the inspectorate to help schools comply include:

- In planning and reviewing programmes more attention should be given by schools to an interdisciplinary cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning. This is perhaps the aspect of Transition Year which requires greatest development.
- Opportunities for compensatory teaching could be utilised more fully in Transition Year to meet the needs of individual pupils as appropriate. (3)

Art can help achieve these and other objectives. The cross-curricular approach leads to a better utilisation of subject potential. During the cross-curricular project with the Transition Year students of Chanel College, it emerged that art was in a prime position to deal with this in a positive way while compensating for the diverse interest and ability levels of students. By linking “art” with “history” students with an interest in art were challenged and encouraged to show an awareness of the historical significance of sites in their immediate environment. Students who had shown no previous interest in art were challenged to use the history of local areas to promote a visual interpretation of “interesting” historical sites. Art therefore helped to develop interests in

history and the local environment, while history helped students become more visually sensitive. The combination of both helped students to become aware of how educational subjects do not need to be isolated in classrooms. Subjects can inter-link and the knowledge acquired can help students to appreciate various aspects of life outside school. By definition, appreciation encourages responsibility, which in turn promotes social and moralistic maturity.

Bertrand Russell writes

“More important than the curriculum is the question of the methods of teaching is given. As to this, the main problem is to make the work interesting without making it too easy” (4)

This quote was particularly relevant when dealing with the diverse ability levels in the Transition Year class of Chanel College. An awareness of students limitations and a flexibility in project delivery was required. By creating a situation and atmosphere whereby students relied on each others experience, the cross-curricular group project offered a challenge to all. The painting project which involved students working individually and not as part of a group, was more of a challenge to the teacher. How to maintain motivation when students were aware of their limitations, and

how to further motivate and encourage those with artistic flair were questions which had to be addressed. These were simultaneous problems and had to be solved simultaneously. It would be unfair and educationally unsound to segregate students. Adjusting the daily learning objectives would also cause obvious divisions. The solution came through subtly adjusting the daily tasks. While some students learned figurative proportions by drawing directly from observing a model others concentrated on breaking the figure down to its simplest series of shapes. While some included detail in their work others focused on outline. For all the project became challenging as all simultaneously learned about art elements. Both projects proved successful in that, (a) art elements were explored and understood, (b) students showed this understanding in their work and (c) began to discuss openly about aesthetic appreciations. The museum visit during the painting project helped to enhance visual perception and the cross-curricular project promoted a historical curiosity. The craft phase of the cross-curricular project gave personal pride in achievement to the majority of students and for all this was the most enjoyable of the disciplines encountered during art.

Kieran Meagher wrote in 1990 on the rationale for art in the new Junior.. Certificate programme, that until then art had suffered from “inaccurate interpretations” of its educational role. Often thought of as a subject

interpretations” of its educational role. Often thought of as a subject “only for the talented few” or for “slow learners” and “difficult pupils” as a “form of therapy”. (5) The change from the Intermediate and Group Certificate to the new Junior Certificate helped in education. The Junior Certificate programme therefore helped the subject.

The Transition Year Programme: Guidelines for Schools states

“ A Transition Year offers pupils a broad educational experience with a view to the attainment of increased maturity, before proceeding to further study and/or vocational preparation. ”

(6)

The art projects which the Transition Year Students of Chanel College completed during 1995/96 gave a good broad educational experience. Tasks involving work outside the school grounds introduced them to their environment from a cultural perspective. They showed responsibility on these excursions, in both their behaviour had how they conducted themselves in carrying out tasks. Art for these students proved to be interesting and stimulating and certainly fulfilled its role in

promoting the "Mission" as laid down by the Department of Education.

The subject therefore helped the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the Transition Year became available over 20 years ago it is only now beginning to realise its potential. There are opportunities for all quarters of the community to utilise life's experiences to broaden participating students' educational horizons. Parents and family can assist and co-operate to give students support in finding themselves at this stress free time, while employers, through offering work experience placement, can offer an insight to the realities of adult and working life.

Within the school it is generally accepted that a "whole-school approach is needed" (7). The skills and knowledge of various teachers should unite to formulate and deliver a programme which is broad, exciting and challenging. The programme content should be self motivating and contain aspects of contemporary youth culture.

Teachers should meet at least once a term to discuss ways to develop the programme further. A Transition Year parent/teacher meeting should be included so that other interested parties can discuss educational and social progress. Transition Year Students are active in their own education and should be included at one of these meetings.

The method of teaching should reflect the Transition Year guidelines as laid down by the Department of Education, and cater for diverse ability levels. "Compensatory teaching" requires flexibility in subject delivery. Teachers should learn from their experience of students the best method to use in teaching.

The White Paper on Education lists the development of the Transition Year as a priority for an in-career development programme. (8) This should help teachers in their approach to teaching Transition Year students.

As art has so many properties which can contribute to the department of Education's Transition Year "mission", art, in some format, should be included as a part of every schools Transition Year Programme.

Art teachers should be encouraged to develop a subject network so that ideas and method on teaching Transition Year art are discussed. Art teachers should be encouraged to explore other specialised areas of the "the arts". They should use their own expertise to help each other meet the challenge which Transition Year offers.

Art is the subject which can help the programme and teachers of art most ensure that it does.

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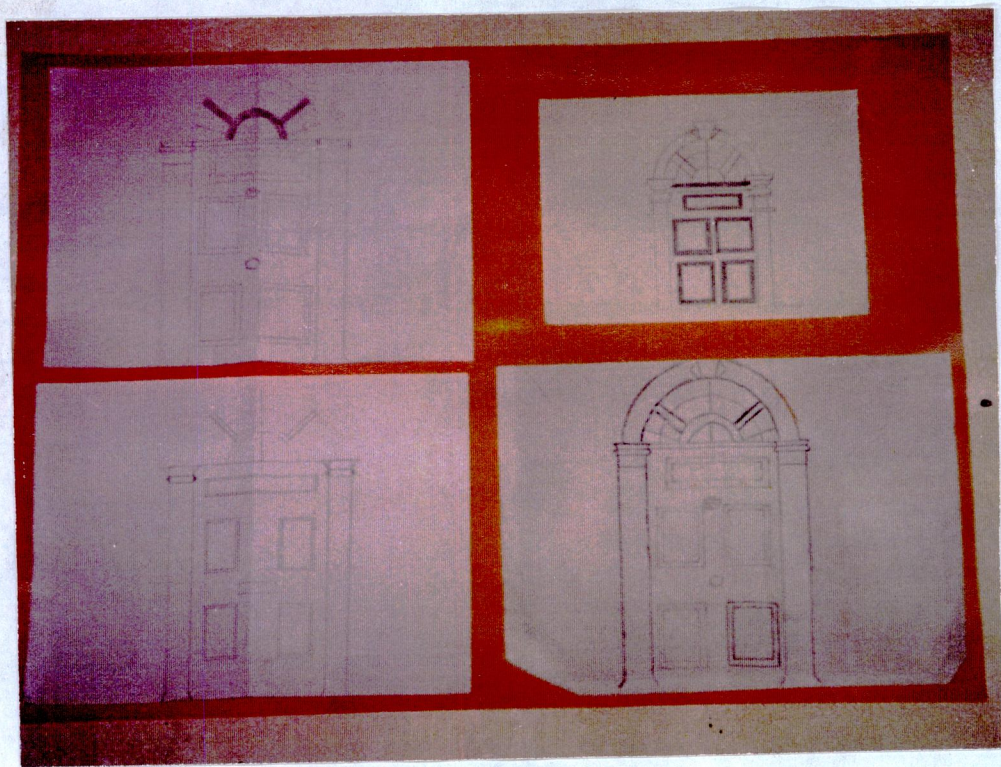
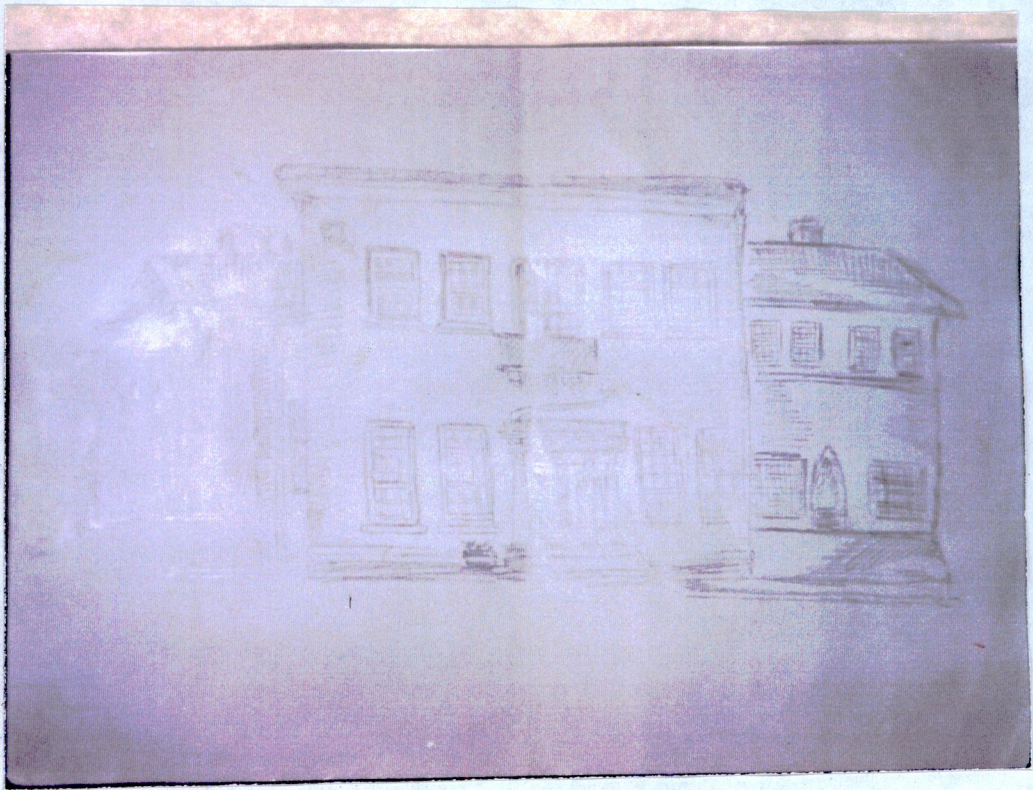
FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 4

1. Transition Year Programme 1994-95.
An Evaluation by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education
(Dublin: Department of Education, 1995) p.1.
2. Transition Year Support Team, *Transition News* (Dublin: Transition Year Support Team, 1996) p.1.
3. *An Evaluation by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education*
p.3.
4. Bertrand Russell, *On Education* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1974) p.151.
5. Kieran Meagher, "The art, craft and design syllabus" in *The Changing Curriculum: perspectives on the Junior Certificate*
(Dublin: O'Brien Educational Ltd, 1990) p.p. 20-21.
6. Department of Education, Transition Year Programmes:
Guidelines for Schools (Dublin: Department of Education, 1993)
p.1.

7. *Transition News* p.1.

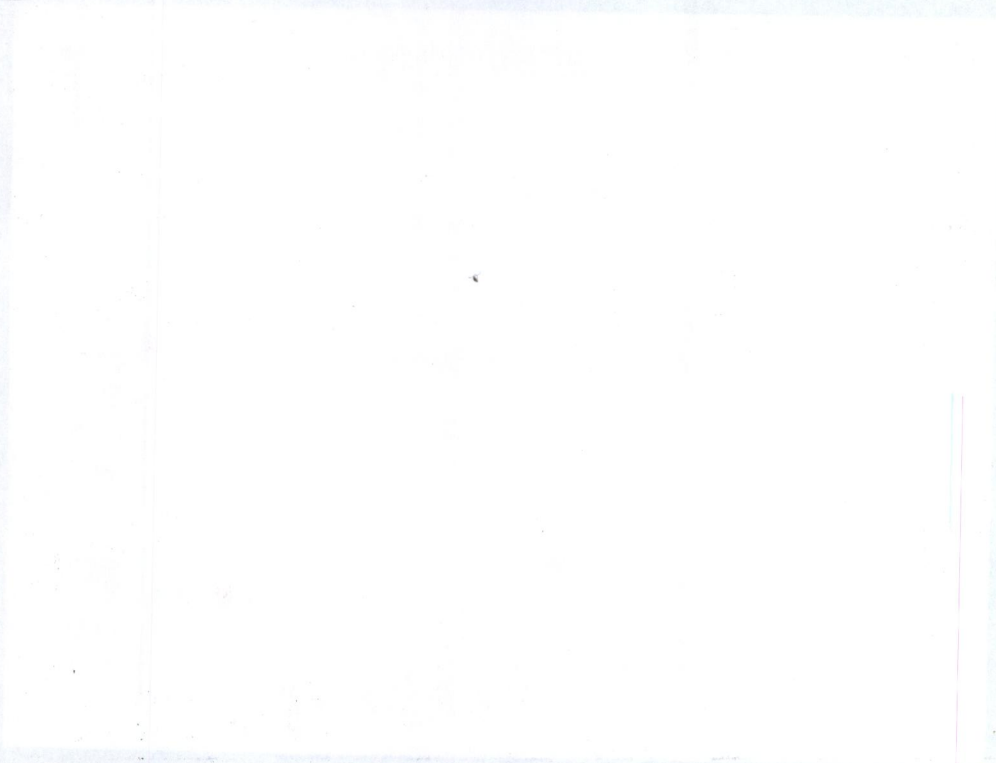
8. Department of Education, *Charting our Educational Future: White Paper on Education* (Dublin: The Stationary Office, 1995) p.129.

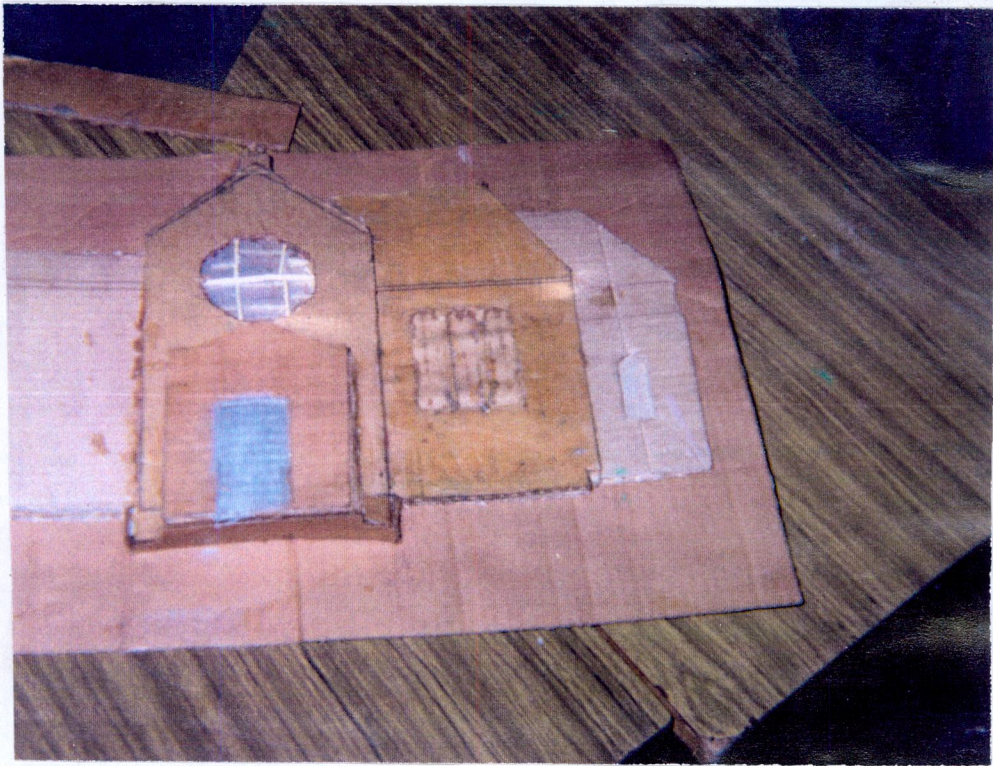
Illustration of Class Room Work



Cross Curricular Project

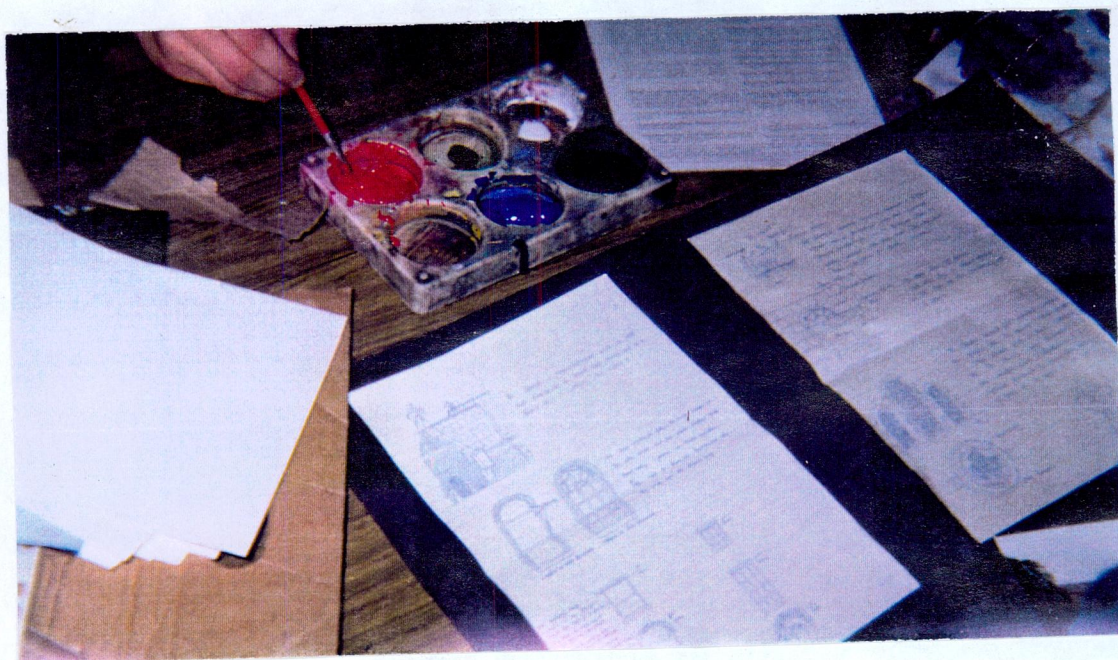
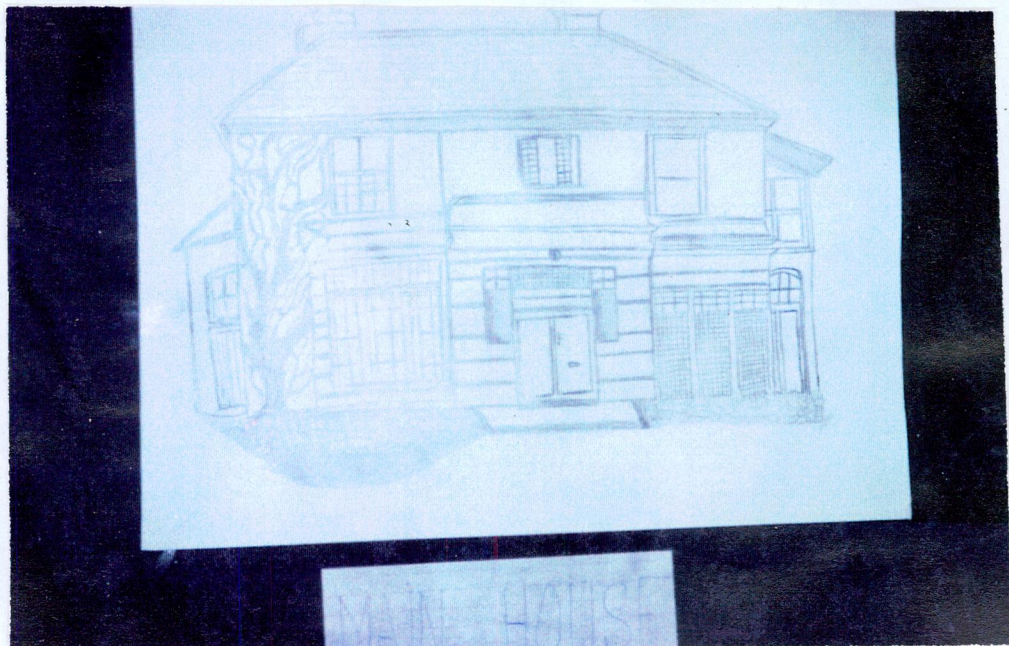
Preliminary Work





Cross Curricular Project

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Cross Circular Project

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Cross Circular Project

Complete Pieces



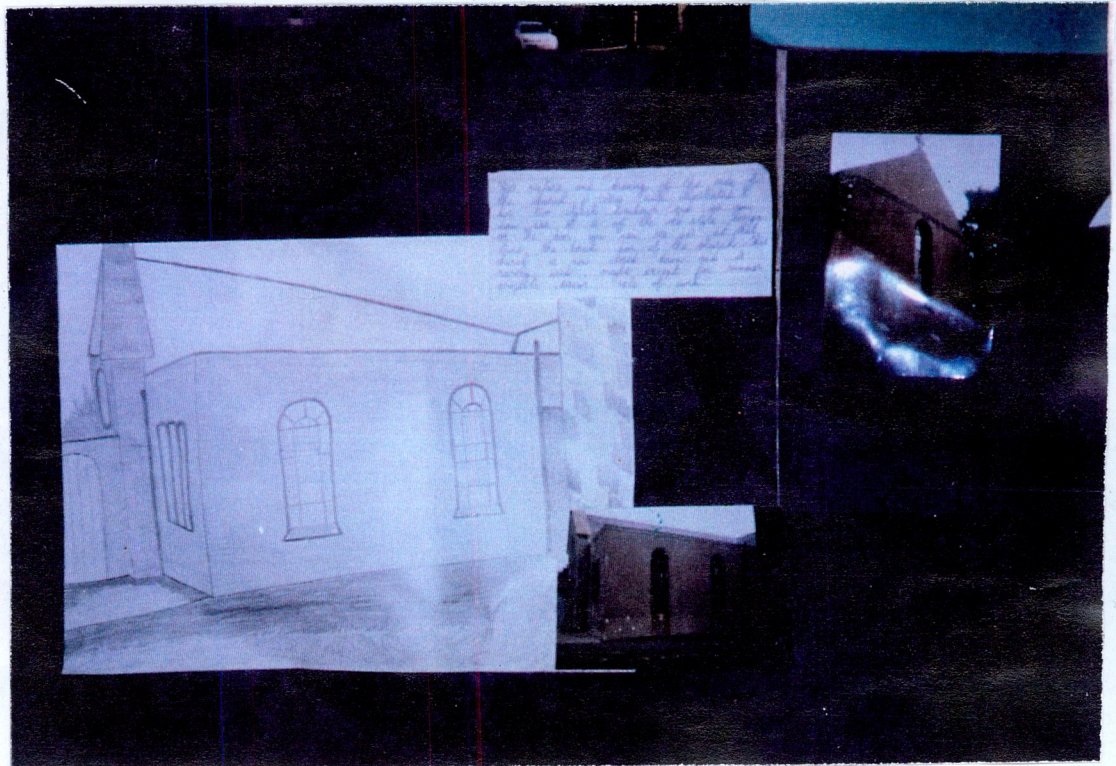


Cross Circular Project

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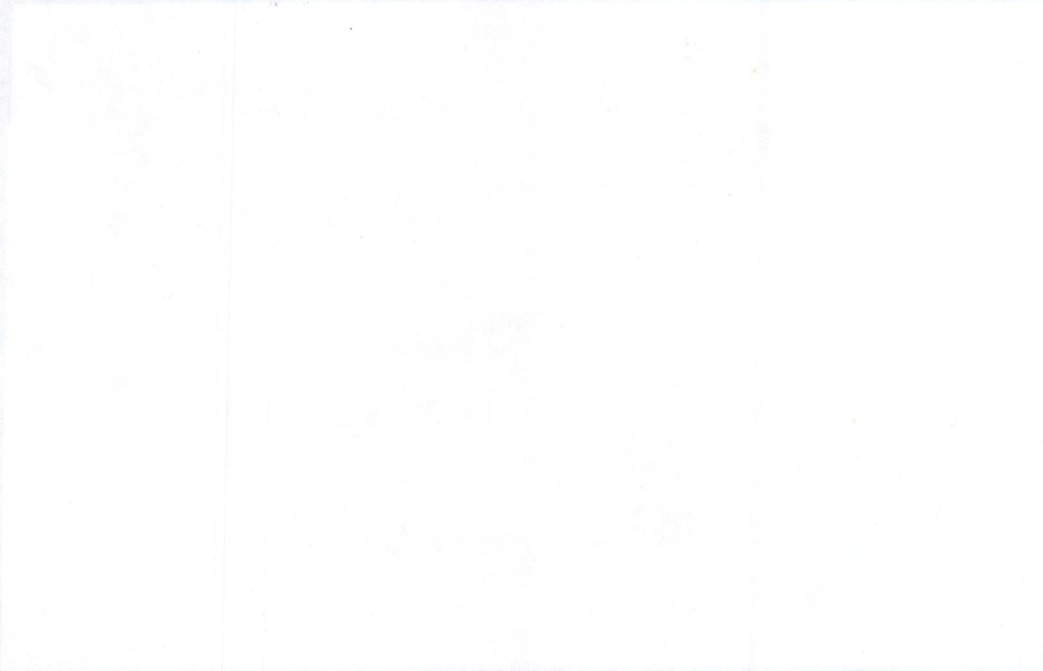


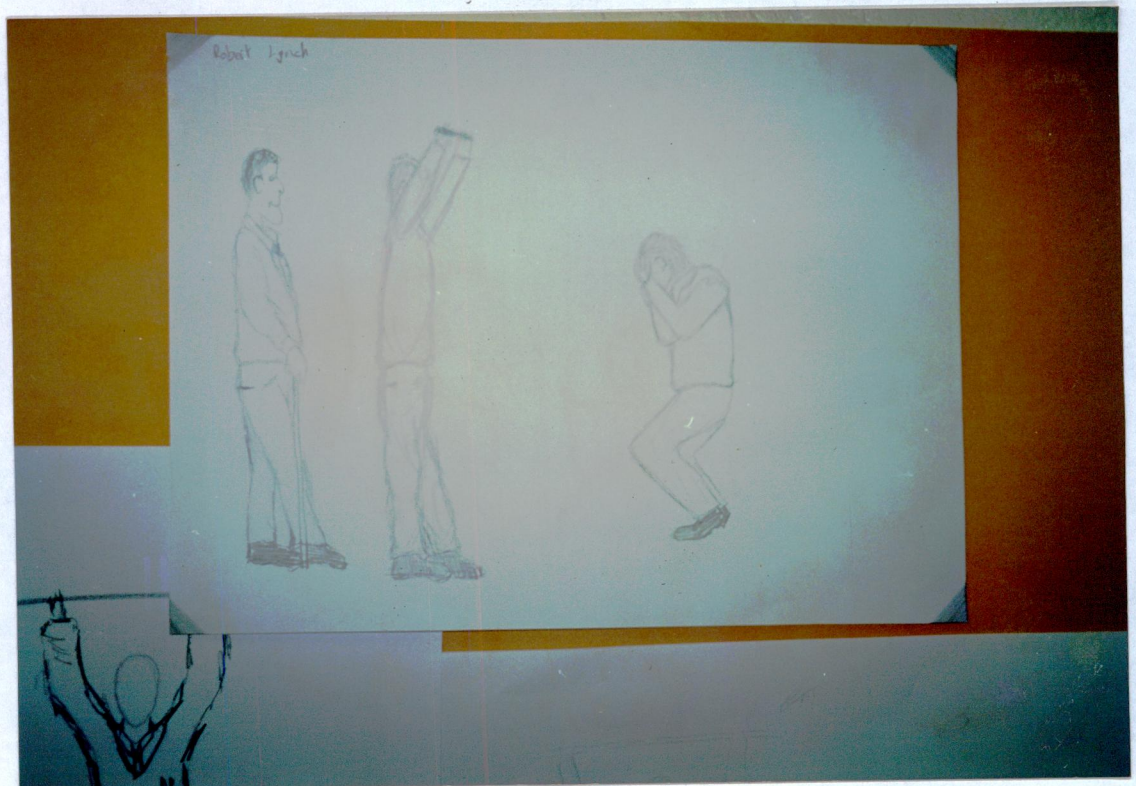
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Cross Circular Project

Complete Pieces

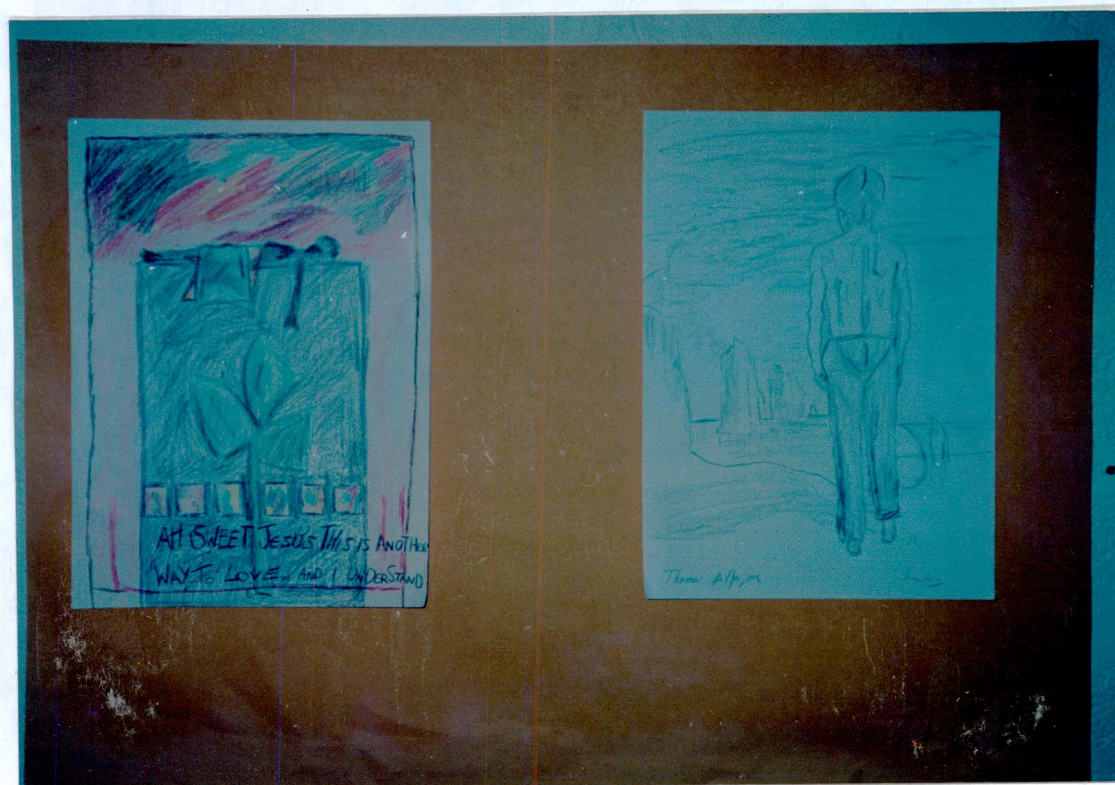




Painting Project

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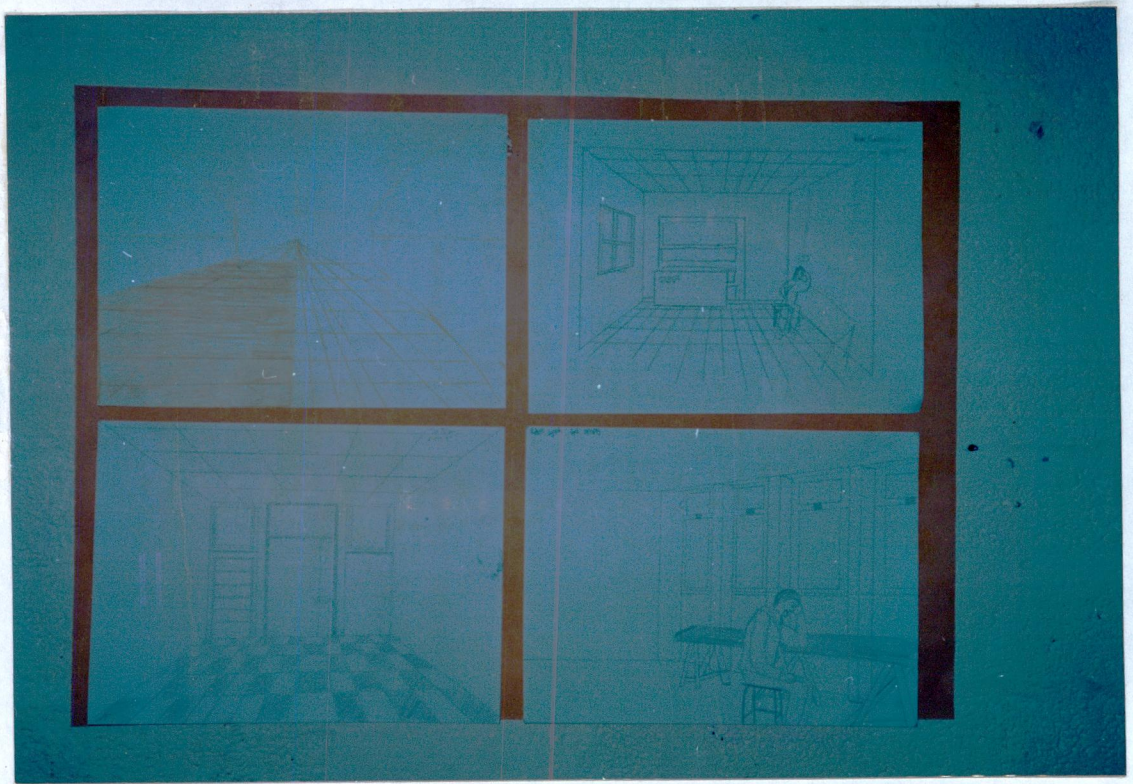




Painting Project

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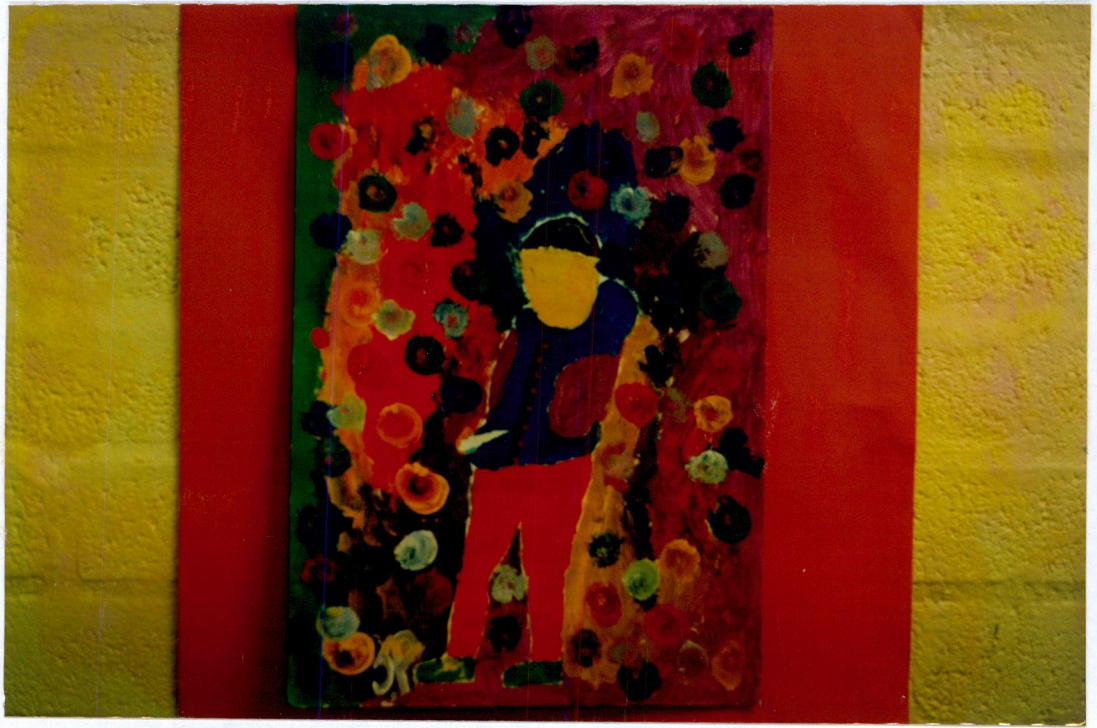
Preliminary Work





Painting Project
Completed Work





Painting Project

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