

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS USED.

- 1. Bliss. \*
  - 2. Junky. \*
  - 3. Rockscape. \*
  - 4. Churchscape. \*
  - 5. Brian Bourke life drawing.
  - 6. African Sculpture.
  - 7. Life painting. \*
  - 8. Abstract. \*
  - 9. Seperation. \*
  - 10a Jealousy. - Munch.
  - 10b Jealousy. (Passion) "
  - 11. The Sick Child 1896 "
  - 11a The Sick Child 1927 "
  - 12 Meloncholy ( The yellow Boat.) "
  - 13. Dead Mother & Child. "
  - 14. Dance Of Life. "
  - 15. The Voice. "
  - 16. Dance By The Shore. "
  - 17. Life Drawing. \*
- My own work.\*

## INTRODUCTION.

This paper was written over a period of almost two and a half months. The real value of it unfortunately, is not here on paper for the reader to avail of but lies in the fact that in the effort of writing this paper I have had to do some very serious thinking and I feel I have benefitted thereby.

I have chosen 'originality' as a theme to work on because it interests me but I have not discussed it as if it were some object of great beauty or interest, of which I wished to relate as much as I possibly could to the reader. By discussing and explaining how I have been affected and may be affected by other people, places, things, both adversely and beneficially, evokes the question of originality - is there or isn't there such a thing at all. What I have written does not necessarily give answers but merely evokes or draws the questions from the line of thought.

I sincerely hope that what I have written may be of as much value to the reader, who is interested as it has been for me to write this paper.

Brian Kavanaugh.

O R I G I N A L I T Y .

Before I ever thought of entering a College of Art, I sketched and painted. I painted only when the urge took me and when I was particularly moved by some image that flashed in my head, which was so strong that I felt something had to be done in paint on paper. I enjoyed painting and drawing very much and took extra delight in the fact that, because I could draw "photographically realistically" in comparison to the way my friends and family did, they thought I was brilliant and said I should be an artist. I began to agree. I fancied that I was reasonably good; that if I entered College and had a good training; I could possibly base a career on something that I was enjoying immensely as a hobby. In retrospect I am not too sure that I wasn't more of an artist then, than I am now. That may sound ridiculous with ME spending four years studying in the College of Art, but I shall discuss that presently.

During the time, mentioned above, I painted as the urge took me. This meant that I painted only when, whatever it is that urges us to draw and paint got a hold of me to such a degree that I wanted to do something with paint or pencil on paper. I have always enjoyed painting under such an influence.

I experienced these urges even when I was at primary school level. I drew horses ( I was mad about horses) , and soldiers, panoramic cowboy scenes with bullets frozen in flight. I did the usual things that all or most kids do but by heaven I enjoyed it. I suffered with the wounded and celebrated with the victorious. I helped direct 'Dracula', limb for limb in the shadow of a crucifix and enjoyed to the utmost the act of revealing Supermans true identity on the wall of some back alley. In short I was living my pictures, I was emotionally and physically involved in what I was drawing - imitating sounds of horses hooves as I drew the legs - almost smelling their droppings when they were tied to the stable door. It was my world and my language.

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The important thing about this language was it was totally my own. I did not draw realistic horses until I was nearly ten or twelve years of age, but to hell! it did not matter, this was by me for me, and (like all the kids) I loved it. I felt totally free, uninhibited by any laws of perspective or composition; total disregard for trueness of colour and proportion was rampant. I used all kinds of tricks, like a dotted line to indicate the "vapour trail" of a bullet and when one of my horses or men looked like he wasn't properly on the ground I drew a rock under him to support his seeming floating body. I cannot emphasize too much the freedom, the lack of inhibition and joyous involvement I experienced in executing these works.

I can remember how I first began to lose this magic attachment; when I was embarrassed if caught drawing cowboys etc. These "growing up" experiences and the fact that my Art Teacher in school took an interest in me and influenced me very much, were the first major incidents where people were now beginning to interfere with and influence what and how I drew and painted. Up to then (twelve or thirteen) I was very much my own Boss. This was the start of a very important phase of my art education because at this stage I was no longer painting for myself. I did however carry on painting but looking back I realize that the stuff I was churning out meant very little to me other than it seemed to keep my teacher satisfied if he said "I think you need something here to balance this" five minutes later I would have executed a brilliant tree or a man walking a dog; solely to balance the composition and hear teacher say "now that's much better" Half of the time I really didn't believe it made any difference or couldn't understand how one side of the page could be "heavier" than the other. But always I obeyed and I can honestly say that I began to get less and less pleasure out of drawing and painting as I went along.

### In The College.

I remember hearing or reading of some one who said that Art students were probably the least creative people around. I can now see how they came to such a conclusion. Particularly when I am off form myself and am not working. It can happen and does that once one enters the institution or college and has the name of 'Art Student' it can and does happen that in acquiring that name i.e. of producing art work, one takes for granted that he

or she is artistic and creative and "lives off the fat" so to speak of such a title without ever producing the goods. This is something of a disease that I have always been aware of in other people of my own class or group but never suspected I might be suffering from myself. Yet I have never done a years work, at the end of which I could say that I was pleased with the quantity and quality of it. There are very few pieces that I have executed that I feel any real attachment to. But there are some, see fig 1. Bliss, Fig 2 Junky, Fig 3 Rock - Scape. Fig. 4 Churchscape. I can only speak for myself and I have no hesitation in saying that I have not been producing anything on paper or canvas for nearly six weeks, ever since I began to think in terms of this paper I am writing. I've been asking the questions - soul searching and painful as they are, yet purging in a very valuable way. Now I see a lot that I had missed out on before and am able to see a pattern (vague at the moment) emerge for my work in the future - I've been trying to "bake cakes" without "flour".

One major factor which has bothered me is the fact that I have only one place to work and that is in the College itself. Being a working class lad in a corporation house with no less than ten other members in the Family doesn't leave an awful lot of studio space for the likes of me, who by the way only barely earns enough money to keep his own feet covered etc. And who has to mind what he says lest he is told to shut up or cough up. Recently I hinted at converting the attic into a room (I avoided the word studio) but I was enthusiastically bowled over by my father, who took extra delight in raising the money topic. The disadvantage of not having studio space of my own is that I work or did work constantly under the watchful eye of a teacher or tutor. I am not criticising teachers because I know they have been very helpful to me but the problem arises when I see it, the teacher feels he or she has to 'teach' If the situation is such (and I feel that it was like this with me) that there are three or even four tutors in on the one day, (each tutor raring to go at the job) and there are only seven or eight students present out of a group of forty or more - By God those seven students will be well "taught". I find that too much discussion about anything I am painting kills a lot of the drive I have for that particular piece; explained away is the phrase most apt to describe it and having to tell

the same faces day after day just isn't healthy - in my opinion. I think, for that reason, I get a lot from visiting lectures and the 'one day a week' teachers. They drop in for one day, say what they think and are gone, leaving one to sort things out for oneself after that. I know that some students have coped with this teacher situation effeciently and taken it in their stride. - but I can't. I find that my work and workrate are greatly affected by a type of <sup>over</sup>intuition. I long to see the outcome of the work I produce when I leave college and have nobody save a friend or two in the same life as myself to criticize my work at any time - during or after execution of that work. I suspect and certainly hope that I will get myself together soon and that my work can be or that I can make it, a lot more relevent to me and my needs.

### Professional Artists.

Speaking of work being affected by things other than the urge to create reminds me of my assessment of the Gallery situation for Artists today. In a way I doubt if I could ever let myself be caught up in competing for a place in a gallery - that may change later but unless I can get a place of my own where I can exhibit as often as I like and what I like with perhaps a few friends in the same line - I don't think so. I may sound like a puritan but I shall air my opinions regardless ( without making crude and general accusations, I hope). I sense that a great deal of work that I see nowadays in exhibitions lacks something which, as a spectator and student I feel is vital and that is - honesty. My impression of the work is that there are factors govering the works which are foreign to what painting and art should be about. How many of todays exhibitions are money-orientated. I know exhibitions are staged to exhibit and sell, but at what stage of the game is this applied. Is it while the artist is working, thinking, creating or maybe before he even does that much he can see his pictures neatly mounted on a wall with red dots at the base of each one. I would be stupid to think that everyone who exhibits today is a money - spinner. I quite like the work of Contemporaries like Charles Brady and Charles Cullen who both have exhibited around Dublin. Brian Bourke is a man who had "strong effect" on me when he stayed in the college for a week or two. I don't mean to rant off names. Those that I've chosen, I have chosen carefully because the one thing I admire about them is that when I look

at the work they produce I can see a lot of themselves being put into it. The content or subject matter of the work is brought to life with an honest dash of the artists own personality. Their work also appeals to me because it is fresh and energetic a quality I long to change my own efforts with. (see fig. 5)

I personally do not see the role of the 'ARTIST' as an exhibition manufacturer! (Very idealistic - I don't know), but yet I cannot fully understand or begin to suggest what his role should be other than to paint because he feels he wants to or needs to when he wants, however suits his needs etc. etc. If painting becomes a nine to five thing where the 'artist' must have thirty pieces of work before April 5th - I'm worried, and art galleries are merely 'art shoppes'. To read this paper one may think that I do not appreciate the fact that bread and butter helps to keep a body alive, and so work must be done to win that much needed commodity. I have thought a lot about this because it's looming over me now as I shall be leaving the College this year presumably and I will have to earn my keep and work. Do I combine painting with a nine to five job? Do I go on for a teachers diploma? Do I paint and paint and nothing else or should I carry on illustrating (as I am doing on a part time basis) and maybe try and go full time. Could that be what my art is about - the illustration of childrens school books. These questions and many more like them have tormented me for a good while now - I like to think that I will sort these problems out when the crunch comes.

I've always wanted to teach art but am beginning to feel now that it really can't be taught. Techniques and maybe analytical drawing etc. can be metered out by a teacher but for some reason I hesitate whenever the words "Art Teacher" are on the tip of my tongue. Something which bothers me about teaching is that if one is to teach well and give something of himself which means something to the students involved one can become absorbed completely by this involvement and ones own painting is neglected, I've seen it happen. I've also seen a man survive this only by getting out of second level education and into third level where he claims (and I quite agree and understand it) - " it's a completely different game". I know my parents would be highly offened, even insulted if I told them that I no longer wanted to be an Art Teacher, this

is not the case however, but if I were to seek work elsewhere or do any other money earning task outside of the Art world I would not consider that I had waisted or lost five years of my life. ( My parents would unfortuneatly). I know I would still be using what I've learned.

I know that I will paint or make objects of only two dimensions no matter what situation I find myself in. There is something within me that I feel or sense or imagine w hich draws me to pencil and paper and makes me work. This has always been with me and as far as I can recall I've had no problems there at all. This urge must be in all of us, some to a lesser and some to a greater degree, but it is there just the same. It is there ( as we all know but I must state) in all of the 'uncivilized' tribes of Africa, South America, and elsewhere as well as the Eskimos and Nomads similar to them. They each and everyone have carved, coloured, tattood, woven, etc. ( in total ignorance of Art Galleries I might add) out of both practical necessity and the other things which could be pleasure, spiritual reasons, identity or who knows what, But that it's a driving force to create or make objections. fig 6.

Speaking of the purity and honesty of the tribes work, of its being totally relevent to them brings me to the next point. Much of my College days have been spent trying to think of good ideas to paint. The result more often than not has been a heap of paintings that really meant little or nothing to me. Abstract, still lives, life paintings they all meant nought to me except that I could include them in my end of term assessment where someone on the team of assessers was bound to be pleased with them (fig 7 & 8) now that I was not and rarely have used what Kurt Rowland ( In ways of seeing, series the shapes wenead) calls our Visual Language. My Visual language should not be a a contrived one ( as in the still life painting etc.) I believe it exits and that I have to come to terms with it and find out which parts of my life will supply my symbols for my own Visual Language. For instance such things as the fact that I am slight of build, dependant on antibiotics, working class, concerned about people and peace, basicly christian, I own things play music, dislike argurment. Should all be obivous in one way or another and in varying degrees, if I am being honest and putting myself into my work. That's what I want my work to do at present, and more if possible but I am not concerned with making spectacular decoration pieces.

Spectacular



Another fault in my work has been my vain attempts at communicating a specific message to would be spectators of my work. That is a mistake, I believe, because again if I am honest in my work, I will communicate a lot of myself without thinking about it. The pieces themselves became tormentingly illustrative as a result of the effort to communicate (fig. 9) I personally do not see anything wrong with illustrative work but I feel that I had overstated a lot of it. I saw a lot of Edward Munch's work and believe that this could have influenced me in this respect, not that I feel he overstates a lot, but that I do find a lot of his work to be very illustrative. What I mean by illustrative can be seen in his 'jealousy' pictures where he has a man and woman (forming a couple) with someone looking like Munch himself in the foreground who is absolutely wild with envy and jealousy, of what's going on behind. But in his pieces there is a certain vagueness achieved possibly by course brushwork which leaves room for the on lookers mind to work on. fig 10 A. & B. The feeling I have of my pieces similar in theme to his is that my pieces do not allow this room for thought. They have stated everything! I also feel that Munch's works are loaded with feeling and understanding (on his behalf) of what goes through the human mind during times of stress. fig. 11 (1896 & 1927) both versions. (the yellow boat 1891/93 fig 12) also dead mother and child fig. 13, they are just samples of this line of his work. Another side of his work which appeals to me (just as much as those aforementioned) is the work he did whilst working on what critics call the Freize of life. I like the spirituality and calmness of his Dance of Life fig. 14 and yet I sense some form of evil or fear in the same picture.

THE  
SICK  
CHILD.

The voice fig. 15 is another strikingly calm and spiritual piece in my opinion. There is something quiet about the blues in the picture and the vagueness of the figure which makes it more of a whisper or an echo for me. But I really like it. Another piece, similar in style and technique is his Dance by the Shore, from around the same period. In this piece however we (as spectators) are pushed back away from the event taking place and can only see through gaps in the trees. The ladies (Fig-16) are dancing away on the beach and one can imagine hearing faint sounds of laughter floating up to one on the soft mind but again mystery is brewed into it. The shapes and varying textures of this picture have always appealed to me as does that 'moon and

reflection on water' image which Munch used over and over again in this period of his work.. I also see some affinity to Munchs work in my own, where I also have been interested in the simple and sometimes intricate division of the canvas into clearly defined shapes creating patterns which convey feelings or ideas fig. 1. I am impressed by these pieces of work because I feel that Munch was working out of a need and he was working honestly, giving us almost full account of what was going on inside his head, I am convinced that he worked for himself and his own desire to express his thoughts and emotions. I know also that Munch did see the work of Van Gough around the year 1890 whilst in Paris at Leon Bonnats Art School and I must say that it has come to my notice that both of these people, who in my opinion ~~also~~ painted honestly and sincerely as I know it to be spent a spell in mental institutions. I do not draw the conclusion that one must be slightly "over the top" in order to do what they did in their work although time may change that also. 5074

6 2570 Speaking now of the influences of other people such as Munch have had on my way of thinking and seeing I think I should remark that my contemporaries have affected me for more. As already mentioned, when Brian Bourke was in the College he organised life drawing classes. He has his own ideas and means of executy this activity but I soon found myself drawing with the same ~~curts~~ and energy that he did. This was good in that I was experiencing something really worthwhile and enjoyable but dangerous in as far as I was 'ripping off' (to some degree) the Dynamic Mr. Bourke. Fig. 17. <sup>A</sup><sub>B</sub> This is me. I find that I am very susceptible to being influenced by other peoples ways of doing things and even their Reasoning for doing them and it probably explains why too much tuition for me could be my own ruination. It is for me to take from others what I feel will be helpful to me in my work ; unfortunately to say it like that makes that task sound very easy, which it really isnt.

Another problem I have had is one of discipline - of being at my desk working at least my eight hour day. I do not suggest that one should shackle himself to a bench for eight hours but it may not be such a bad practice if he plans ahead so as to enable himself to be kept busy for such a duration of time. Unfortunately I have not. A good hard look tells me that my 'inspirations' have come from within the walls of the college, which goes on to explain why I feel stale or

stagnant at present as far as painting is concerned. This is where I see justification in not being tethered to the bench. The more we experience the more we are and in my case, the more I can paint about. For this reason a very free timetable is much to be desired. This allows the individual to do what he wants when he wants etc. ensuring that he paints only when he wants or needs. Unfortunately I have always felt slightly guilty if I have not been at my desk for two days, always felt that I should be able to give an excuse to the tutor or maybe dreaded the fact that the tutor wanted an excuse either way there was or should not have been any need. It has been said to me that one should work through rather than crawl around periods of nonproduction or off periods; but I wonder how many actually practice this beautiful idea I certainly haven't mastered the craft yet. I find that work done during off peak times is not in the least bit rewarding and seems to serve no purpose other than to occupy an already bothered mind.

I do not think that one must be a 'full time' artist to be an artist, since when is real art a profession? and if one paints one picture per annum and makes a beautiful piece of work, is he any less an artist than the man who paints twenty and holds an exhibition - I think not. So much of my disappointing experiences with art have been caught up in the act of trying to be the accepted and appreciated good student, or thinking of how I am going to live up to what society and my friends think an artist should be. Am I more of an artist now than I was during my childhood? I see it like this now I have more technical knowledge, now I am aware of bad art, good art, I've been instructed in some form, of how to appreciate a picture, of how to read a picture etc. but I am not at present really involved in, as we call it 'the scene'. I don't think I want to be in the scene as I know it.

I never realized that writing a paper such as this could be so fruitful a practice. Since I've started I have had to think over almost every aspect of my involvement with painting. Perhaps my sorting of ideas may spur some line of thought within the reader and <sup>in</sup> my way educate them in some small way - I hope so. I have given a truthfull and I hope fruitfull account of some of the things that make me who I am. That after all is what my painting should be about.