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**COLÁISTE NÁISIÚNTA EALAINÉ IS DEARTHÁ  
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
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**EXPLORATION OF SELF IDENTITY IN THE ART ROOM**

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education**

**in**

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**HIGHER DIPLOMA FOR ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION**

**by**

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## INTRODUCTION

This study is primarily concerned with the adolescent exploration of self identity in art at post-primary level. Very often the true value of the educational process is lost when curriculum aims are determined by grades and results. It is the intention of this paper to demonstrate that real educational development can be achieved through involvement in art and design activities.

In my first chapter, I discuss the concepts of human development. I have chosen to concentrate on the developmental stage of adolescents, and their exploration of the self concept and search for self identity.

In chapter two, I discuss the social and cultural issues that have affected art and design within the Irish educational system. It was not until recently, that any significant changes have been made regarding the recognition of art within the curriculum. I have examined the valuable contributions which art and design make to the personal and intellectual development of the pupil.

Finally in chapter three, I have presented two research projects, based on the exploration of self identity through art and design.

There are numerous reasons, as to why I choose to research adolescents and their search for self identity. Having already experienced, quote Erikson "the storm and stress of adolescents". I now realise the importance of art as an avenue and outlet



for the exploration of the self. As a pupil we spend approximately 90% of our school day learning, answering and conforming to other people's ideas. Art, however, is one of the very few subjects on offer, which allows freedom to the pupil to express their individuality of emotions and ideas.

Art for many adolescents may just be an enjoyable and relaxed experience during the school day. But for some pupils it will be a key contributor to the forming of a solid and strong self identity.



## CHAPTER ONE

### A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Concepts in Human Development

Developmental psychology looks at changes that occur between conception and death. It describes human characteristics at varying stages and tries to identify predictable differences among all ages and sexes and to explain the process that account for these developmental changes. This information is important to us as teachers as we must always be aware of and concerned with students readiness, interests and capabilities. There are many influences and theories based on human development. It is an extremely complex field of study. Influences such as Nature and Nurture, whereby nature, our genes and biological makeup, coincide and work with or against our nurture that is our environmental surroundings. This is just one of the factors which influence our self development. However it is believed to be the key, the core influence, as it is a combination of our genetic make up, and our environment, which exposes us to all our experiences. (1)

#### The Self Concept

In order to explore the concept of self identity, we must first look at the Self. What is the Self? and how can we define it? One of the most interesting questions we can ask anyone is to write an essay entitled "Myself". It is the most obvious way of finding out about someone apart from having a verbal conversation on the topic. However, individuals find it one of the most difficult tasks to undertake. Is it that people do not know themselves, or that they cannot articulate in words a picture of themselves.(2)



According to David Fontanna, an education psychologist, individuals get stuck on the very word 'me', "Who is this me?" Is it my body, my thoughts? Is it my emotions, or is it a combination of all these things? However, it is not a simple combination of three things, as our body, thoughts and emotions keep changing. Our body cells are completely renewed over an eight year period, our thoughts and emotions, change from moment to moment. As a result people describe memories, which they believe give them a feeling of who they are. However memory does not always last forever. We may suffer from amnesia or simply not retain information, so if we cannot remember, does that mean we do not know ourselves?

"Our picture of ourselves is not derived by sitting in isolation but is generated by our engagement with other" (3).

As a result our self concept (myself) is based on perceptions, descriptions provided by others. However this learnt self picture, may not be a fair one. Other people have taken over, and are providing your self-definition. Children may grow up in an environment where they are continually told they are bold, and they come to see themselves as bold. Thus the same child brought up in two very different households, could end up with two very different self concepts. (4)

Carl Rogers and George Kelly were two leading psychologists on the *theory of the self*.



Carl Rogers (1902-1987)

Roger's theory of the self (1977) is regarded as an extensive *phenomenological* one that is concerned with the individuals, experience, and personal view of the world. He was purely interested in the healthy psychological development of each person as an individual. He classified the total person as an *organism*. He believed that there are three key elements in developing a healthy self, A, *empathy*, B, *unconditional positive regard*, C, *congruence*. (5)

**Empathy:** allows us to communicate to others that we understand the emotions they are experiencing.

**Unconditional positive regard:** allows us to accept others for what they are without passing judgement.

**Congruence:** being honest with others.

Rogers did not believe in categorising children, as this easily became negative labelling. Rather he believed that by treating the organism (self) with *positive regard*, that is the basic need for acceptance and approval from others. If a child could receive this approval from an early age, they would learn to love, accept themselves, and develop strong, positive personal self concepts (pictures).

Rogers was also a firm believer in the prevention of cruelty to children and the prevention of personal problems. This confirms his theory in surrounding the organism with positivity rather than negativity, which would result in psychological damaging, and in the long run would need to be repaired. (6) Rogers was not completely an Idealist, he realised that a child's environment was not going to be a



completely positive one, but by nurturing the child at an early age, they could help change and form compromises, which would create better environments and thus become a better environment to live in.

### **George Kelly (1905-1966)**

Like Rogers, Kelly was considered a phenomenologist, concerned with the individuals, experience, and personal view of the world. His key interest and belief was that humans are *inmately curious*. (7) They wish to make sense of the world and of their own existence. The term Kelly uses to cover the units of meaning we develop in order to make sense of the world are called *personal constructs*. According to Kelly we have personal constructs about every aspect of our lives, including ourselves. These constructs are essentially the means by which we define and understand existence, and once formed they influence the way in which we interpret future events. (Carl Rogers terms personal constructs as self pictures) Kelly by carrying out extensive tests, concluded that, no two people ever share an identical construct. (8)

Since we have these constructs about every aspect of life and since it is in and through them that we interpret and respond to reality, it is therefore essential that we think positively in order to develop a healthy psychological profile.

Kelly was concerned that children develop as many positive personal constructs as possible when they are young. If we take into account that the average child who



starts primary school at the age of 4 and continues to post primary school and sits the traditional public exams and leaves school at the age of 17. They in their young adult life have spent approximately 13-14 years in a school, educational environment. (9)

Taking this into account one can see just how important is for a child to develop positive construct about school. As it will undoubtedly influence their educational progress. Students form constructs about everything to do with school, all the subjects in the curriculum, about teachers, about their own abilities, other children etc. For a teacher it is very important that they retain enthusiasm about their subject and project positive constructs to their students.

Kelly recognises the existence of a range of different kinds of personal construct. The most important one as regarding my key interest in the self is the *core constructs*, which refer to the self and are vitally important in maintaining our identity. (10).



The work of Rogers and Kelly helps to explain how we build up knowledge of ourselves, and how dependent this knowledge is, upon what other people's perceptions are of ourselves. A major factor involved with the growth of self concepts is the development of *self esteem*.

The development of self esteem (or positive self regard, as Rogers calls it) is concerned with the value we place upon ourselves. Although the word esteem carries the connotations of high worth or value, the combined form, self esteem refers to the full dimension and the degree (high and low). A degree of low self esteem will result in non-achievement in contrast to this, a high level of self esteem will result in higher achievements, as there is natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. Also a child with high self esteem is found to take risks and aims at realistic goals a child with low self esteem is afraid of failure and aims at unrealistic goals. (11). Wherever possible children should be encouraged to value themselves, their abilities and opinions, which in turn will make a more confident child with a better sense of self esteem.

Having looked at the work of Rogers and Kelly on the development of the self concept. I am particularly interested in the adolescent stage of exploration of the self concept, that is searching and investigating a self identity.



### Adolescence

The term adolescence is used to describe, young people between the ages 12-18. It is a period of rapid physical growth (puberty) for both male and female. Adolescence is also a Western, twentieth century concept, for previous generations this concept was non existent, many children worked 14 hours a day and moved from childhood to the responsibilities of adulthood with little time for transition.

According to the developmental psychologists, in particular the work of Eric Erikson, they believe adolescence, is a developmental stage where most experimentation occurs in trying out a number of different personal identities. (11)

### Self Identity

Self identity is the sum total of all the concepts individuals have about themselves. These self-concepts should bond together in a coherent way and give individuals some reasonably complete picture of the kind of person they are and the kind of person they are to become. The developmental psychologists are not saying that the personality becomes fixed at adolescence. Growth, change and development continues and is desirable throughout life, but adolescence marks the transition from the personality of the child to the more constant one of the adult. (12)

Adolescence also marks the emergence of more mature life goals. Up to this time individual children will have normally had clear life goals, not only in terms of the future vocations but in terms of their ideal selves, the kind of people they would like to become. A person's life goals are closely linked to the sense of identity, to the



sense that is 'this is the person I am, these are my abilities and my values, and this is what I want to do with my life'. (13)

The search for self identity in adolescence is often accompanied by a great deal of experimentation. The adolescent, as it were, tries out a number of different forms of behaviour, as if continually questioning 'which of these different kinds of people is really me?' As part of this experimental process, the adolescent often adopts role models: older people, which may consist of friends, pop stars, teachers, anyone

whose life styles and whose values are deemed worthy of imitation. Also identity is often expressed through the groups to which one belongs, an interest in sport, academics, music etc. At this point a very influential factor is the peer group, this may cause major behavioural changes in clothes, speech, habits as well as values and opinions, in order for the adolescent to be accepted by one's peer group.

Acceptance by the opposite sex is also extremely important, behaviour considered to make one sexually attractive, may also be adopted.

### Understanding the Adolescent

This period of exploration of identity is a combination of happiness and unhappiness for both the adolescent and their family, who must deal with all kinds of radical emotions and changes. We must learn to understand what the adolescent is experiencing. (14) At this point of development, the stage according to Jean Piaget as *formal operations* the adolescent is therefore able to think and reason in abstract



terms. As a result of this the adolescent begins to think and question concepts associated with religion, politics, environmental and moral issues etc. on a much deeper level. At this point adolescence is often described as a period of idealism. Often this idealism, brings one closer to finding one's life goals and ambitions.

### **Erik Erikson**

A German developmental psychologist, who following an introduction to Sigmund Freud, became interested in psychoanalysis. Erikson devised a theory of personality development. His theory was based on a series of turning points or psychological crises. Each stage has a balance of desirable qualities and dangers. It is important to note that Erikson did not intend to imply that by his scheme only the positive qualities should emerge and that any manifestation of potentially dangerous traits is undesirable. He emphasises that people are best able to adapt to their world when they possess both the positive and negative qualities of a particular stage, provided the positive quality is significantly stronger than the negative quality. (15)

It is intended that each individual makes a positive resolution of each stage in order to move successfully on to the next. For example, the adolescent who at the end of stage 4, industry vs. inferiority doubts their own capabilities and devalues the quality of their work, are likely to have a difficult time in stage 5 i.e., making an occupational commitment required for identity development.



Erikson devised an eight stage theory based on *psychosocial development*. His stages cover birth to death.

Erikson's eight developmental stages:

1. Early infancy: trust versus mistrust.
2. Late infancy: autonomy versus shame and doubt.
3. Early childhood: initiative versus guilt.
4. Middle childhood: industry versus inferiority.
5. Adolescence: identity versus role confusion.
6. Early adulthood: intimacy versus isolation.
7. Middle adulthood: generativity versus stagnation.
8. Late adulthood: self acceptance versus despair.

I am particularly interested in stage 5: Adolescence: Identity versus Role Confusion.

Erikson, singled out one critical issue as the major task of this stage, that is, resolving the crisis of personal identity. Our definition of self. How we see ourselves and how others see us, this forms the foundation of our adult personality. If that foundation is firm and strong, a solid personal identity results, and if not, the result is a diffused identity. Erikson refers to identity diffusion as "like perpetually wandering over a landscape, trying to find a selfhood". (16) This sense of personal



alienation prevents the establishment of a stable core for the development of a strong self identity.

In the following chapter, I discuss the Irish education system, and how art functions within this system, and adolescence within art.



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER1

1. Robert Biehler & Jack Snowman, *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, Seventh Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993). p. 41.
2. David Fontana, *Psychology for Teachers*, Third Edition (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995), p. 251
3. Ibid., pg. 252.
4. Ibid., p. 254.
5. Ibid., p. 257.
6. Norman A. Sprinthal, Richard C. Sprinthal, Sharon N. Oja, *Educational Psychology* Sixth Edition (McGran Hill, 1994), p. 340.
7. Fontana, *Psychology for Teachers*, p. 258.
8. Ibid., p. 258.
9. Ciarán Benson, *The Place of Arts in Irish Education* (Dublin: The Arts Council, 1979) p. 45.
10. Fontana, *Psychology for Teachers*, p. 259.
11. Robert B. Burns, *Child Development* (Croom Helm Ltd., 1986), p. 220.
12. Biehler & Snowman, *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, p. 45.
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14. Burns, *Child Development*, p. 225.
15. Sprinthal, *Educational Psychology*, p. 152.
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## CHAPTER TWO

### A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### The Historical Place of the Arts in Irish Education

In recent centuries the arts have not occupied a central position in Irish school curricula. In the era of mass-education during the nineteenth century, the thrust of the policy for the national school system was towards the development of literacy in the English language and the attainment of a certain level of numeracy. With the introduction of payment by results policy in 1872, considerable improvements in these areas were recorded but on the basis of a narrow 3R type curriculum, reading, writing and arithmetic. The teaching and inspection procedures were rigid, formal and uninspiring. The provision of a basic minimum education for everyone was the aim, and it was quantity rather than quality that was the uppermost in the minds of the policy makers (1).

The year 1900 saw a radically different programme introduced for national schools, based on a more child centred approach. This was a wide ranging programme which made singing, drawing and physical education obligatory subjects in the national school. Many factors, however, impeded this full implementation of this program. With the establishment of the Irish free state a radical change again occurred, which resulted in a narrowing of the programme, including the dropping of drawing and physical education as obligatory subjects. The main concern of curricular policy following independence was the restoration of the Irish language and great emphasis was placed on the schools role in bringing this about. One of



the beneficial results of the new state policy was that literature in the Irish language got a level of attention which had not been facilitated or encouraged under the previous administration. Outside the school curriculum, there have been numerous people who have encouraged and promoted arts and culture, such as J.B. Yeats, W.B. Yeats, Harry Clarke, Rodoric O'Connor, Sir William Orpen, Sir John Lavery, Walter Osborne, Sean Keating. These people and many others not mentioned, have greatly contributed to the establishment of art education in our country today.

Ireland had a very large number of national schools catering for a declining population, many of these schools were small and suffering from inadequate funding, resources and maintenance. The tradition of school attendance was poor however improvements followed after legislation in 1926 on compulsory school attendance. (2).

The situation of post primary level, was equally as neglectful of the arts as was the primary level. In 1924 a new program was introduced, the intermediate and leaving certificate examinations. This system operated by 'payment of results' the 3Rs and science subjects continued to benefit, while the arts continued to be underemphasised and undermined.

Educational systems are closely interlocked with wider political, economic, social and moral elements of society and thus reflect society. Many circumstances conspired to keep artistic subjects off the centre stage in Irish education, an



important one, being the harsh economic conditions of a country trying to survive. The majority of Irish post-primary schools were very small. In a survey of secondary schools which admitted day pupils, the *Investment in Education report* show that 63% of them had under 150 pupils while 73% of vocational day schools had less than 150 pupils. (3) Thus the size, equipment, facilities and staff qualifications of many schools were a further severe hindrance to the introduction of a balanced post-primary curriculum in which the arts might play a significant role. Our educational system is best considered as one more typical of a developing post-colonial nation than of a wealthy western European nation. (4). However, many changes have occurred within the educational system which would now seem to allow a much more favourable environment in which the arts might flourish.

The turning point for arts in the Irish curriculum, came about in the late 1970s. One of the probable reasons for this change was due to a number of reports.

Professor Bodkin in his 1949 report on the arts in Ireland wrote,

“In Irish schools, the subject of art, in either the historical or the practical aspect, is neglected. Few of the principal schools and colleges, for either boys or girls, employ trained teachers to deal with it, or possess the requisite accommodation and equipment for the purpose”.(5)

Again in 1961 a report by the Scandinavian group on Design in Ireland, noted that “...the Irish schoolchild is visually and artistically among the most under-educated in Europe”.(6)

With regard to these reports, the education system had to be realistically assessed and it's strengths and weaknesses taken into account. Ciarán Benson's report in conjunction with the Arts Council, states



“...the report recognises the complexity surrounding change in education but is nonetheless clear that positive change with regard to the arts is long over due”.(7)

### Importance of Art in the School Curriculum

It is quite evident that art in Irish education has been pushed to the periphery of the curriculum. One of the most common misconceptions about art education is that it does not involve an intellectual dimension. Eisner recognised this when he spoke of the dichotomies that have been established between the work of the Head

and the work of the Hand. Why should the work of the hand exclude any mental activity? Few art processes are purely manual. Some of the most complex are concerned with design, and the skills involved in research, planning and analysis.

Hardimar and Zernich refer to the ‘value of drawing for normal neurological development (8). Between the initial plan and final product the learning is non passive and extremely dynamic. The pupil must possess a variety of skills for full participation in any art exercise. This includes an understanding of ideas and working with methods, analytical and judgmental abilities. The ability to follow ideas through to a conclusion.

### Self Expression

Self expression is giving vent in constructive forms to the feelings, emotions, and thoughts of an individual at his own level of development. What matters is the mode of expression, not the content. (9). No art expression is possible without self-



identification with the experience expressed as well as the art material by which it is expressed. It is essential to use our senses and experiences, freely and creatively to develop positive attitudes towards ourselves and our environment. Because our experiences change with growth and age, so does our self-identification. It develops and embraces and expresses social, intellectual and emotional changes. It is only through self-identification that we can begin to learn to identify with others. As a pupil identifies him or herself within their own work, and learns to appreciate and understand their environment by becoming involved in it. They develop the spirit that helps understand the needs of other pupils. Technical perfection bears little relationship to self-expression. Even the very child who knows nothing about the technical difficulties in pencil rendering, or the various grades of graphite hardness, can get great satisfaction from making a scribble with a self pencil. The child is expressing his own importance through his own means, the satisfaction he derives from his achievement is self-evident. The self-confidence that can develop from self expression is important in developing the self identity. Since nearly every emotional or mental disturbance is connected with lack of self-confidence, it is easy to see how the proper stimulation of the child's creative abilities can provide a safeguard against such disturbance (10).

It would be wrong to think that art and self-expression, only aid the development of self confidence. Art and self-expression are among the functions of the right hemisphere of the brain. The pupil is simultaneously developing their visual, spatial, perceptual, imaginative, subjective and sensitive functions. The adolescent in



particular benefits from artistic experiences as they are exploring as many behavioural patterns as possible, and can only gain from exploration of both right and left hemisphere functions. (11).

### The Adolescent and Art

The majority of adults in the western world do not progress in art skills much beyond the level of development they reached at nine or ten. In most mental and physical activities individuals skills change and develop as they grow to adulthood. For example, the development of speech and handwriting. The development of

drawing skills, however, seems to halt unaccountable at an early age for most people. In our culture, children draw like children, but adults also draw like children, no matter what level they may have reached in other areas of their life. If we were to attach a label to this disability, as educators have attached the label dyslexia to reading problems, Betty Edwards suggests we call the problem dyspictoria or dysartistica. (12). No one has done so because drawing is not a vital skill for survival.

We are aware that adolescence is a time of self doubt and inconsistent behaviour. The transition from childhood to adulthood is agonising, prolonged and bordless. While art offers no panacea for the many and varied problems of growing up, it is however one of the few subjects in which pupils can be actively encouraged to clarify and express their own feelings, thoughts and perceptions. Adolescents have



a keen interest in creating representational art based on direct observation drawing and memory. The appeal of any subject will depend on the adolescents ability to identify it. It is important when selecting themes that they challenge their intellect and raise questions about unfamiliar forms of life (13). For the adolescent who finds little personal satisfaction in creating art, by simply studying art, it will heighten their visual awareness. Adolescents in today's society are bombarded by visual information, from graphic design in magazines, advertisements, television, and computers. It is important to note that adolescence, have at this period in their life, reached the cognitive developmental stage of formal operations. According to psychologist Jean Piaget, this enables them to think and reason in abstract terms

(14). One can determine from this and from experience with adolescents, that they are curious and interested in probing, optical phenomena and abstract thought. (15). They are also interested in how and what problems other artists are faced with in working with various media. This is an ideal situation to broaden the pupils knowledge and introduce them to various contemporary and historical artists. To gain an understanding that art is not only decorative, but that it acts as a visual record and tells us about the artist and the society he lived in. Visiting galleries, watching videos etc. can leave students spellbound, when they find out the meaning and stories that lie beneath the canvas.

Pupils can leave the art room with multipurpose knowledge, how to master the technicalities of art materials, and source alternatives from the surroundings. They



also gain a rich knowledge on visual awareness, which in turn aids them in communicating with the environment, which is ever changing and continually demanding.



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER TWO

1. Ciarán Benson, *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education* (Dublin: The Arts Council 1976), p.16.
2. Ibid., p.17.
3. *Investment in Education Report* (Dublin, Stationery Office, 1965), p.280, par. 10.26 quoted by Ciarán Benson, *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education*. (Dublin, the Arts Council, 1979), p.18.
4. Ibid., p.26
5. Ibid., p.7
6. Ibid., p.7
7. Ibid., p.9
8. David Fontana: *Psychology for Teachers*, (London: Macmillan: 1995), p.253.
9. Viktor Lowenfeld: *Creative & Mental Growth*, Fifth Edition (New York: Macmillan: 1976), p.15.
10. Ibid., p.16.
11. Betty Edwards: *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, (London: Harper & Collins: 1993), p.xi
12. Ibid., p.62.
13. Laura H. Chapman: *Approaches to Art in Education*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich: 1978); p.204.
14. Ibid., p.208.
15. Ibid., p.209.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Method of Instruction Applied to Projects

The type of educational instruction I would give to the adolescents, is of extreme importance as taking an inappropriate method may prove damaging in the pupils' development of art, self confidence, and in turn would affect their self identity.

I was particularly influenced by the humanistic educators approach, which is a philosophical and psychological approach primarily concerned with our worth as individuals and with the processes that are considered to make us more human. Important elements were taken from Rogers theory, on child centered education, Kelly's theory, that no two people ever share an identical construct and Eric Erikson's theory on development, and the necessity for self exploration.

### Individual Instruction Programs

There are fundamentals to which this form of instruction is based. It takes into account that there are faster learners and slower learners. So the speed at which the pupil acquires information, concepts and skills, will differ. So long as all students receive identical instruction, the correlation between aptitude and achievement will be high. As a result of identical instruction, faster students will achieve better, and slower students will achieve at a lower level. Also as each student is being presented with optimal learning conditions, the relationship between aptitude and



achievement will be very slight, and most learners will reach the same level. (1)

Aims:

- The research projects in this study are concerned principally with the exploration of self identity, in adolescents through art. In the review of relevant literature, the positive outcomes of self expression through art were examined.
- The validity of affirmations such as Rogers and Kelly's theory, of a child centred education, Eric Erikson's view of adolescence as a period of 'storm and stress' marked by much behavioural exploration.
- Also the necessity for art in the school curriculum for self expression and maximum development of pupils.

#### Research Projects on Exploration of the Self Identity in Art

Project 1:

I devised a camouflage project for the first year students. There are various reasons as to why I choose camouflage. Camouflage, means to disguise, and can be used in deceiving an enemy. Many animals, birds and plants, use camouflage to protect themselves from other wide life and man. It provides a safety net and acts as a necessary means for survival. If we close our eyes, and think back to when we were first year students. Entering a new school, was a combination of emotions, we were simultaneously terrified and excited by the thought of meeting new students, being in a class where we may not know another person, experiencing new subjects, and possible having ten different teachers! Also some of the students may never



have really experienced art before. So it was important to me as a teacher, to introduce art, as an interesting subject, create a learning environment, and through self expression, create a 'feel good factor' within each individual student. It is important to note there are three main developmental stages within the project.

#### Stage 1: Photography

The students were introduced to camouflage, each one individually had her photograph taken, camouflaged within an artists piece of work. The student felt safe and was in hiding.

#### Stage 2: Painting

This is the period termed 'work in progress', where by the student was working to the aid of grided reference, from photo to paper, and learning various painting techniques. The students were gradually growing in confidence in their own artistic abilities, and becoming more aware and comfortable with me, as a teacher and vice versa.

#### Stage 3: Transparency

At this point in the project, the students were if you like, set free, they were no longer working according to strict guidelines of interpreting an image directly. They were now creating a paper and plastic stainglass panel, they choose what colours, and textures to use. They had the chance to break away from their camouflage, and create an individual panel which would stand out on its own.

It is an eight week project aimed at developing a scene of self confidence, of becoming, secure and comfortable within a new environment.



## **Project One:** Outline

**Group:** First Year, Loreto High School, Beaufort

**No. of Lessons in Sequence:** Eight

**Ability:** Mixed

**Class Duration:** 80 minutes

**Theme:**

Self Portrait in Camouflage

**Aim of Sequence:**

To explore camouflage by a process of photography, painting, and transparency (paper and plastic staining glass)

**Class Objectives:**

### **Week 1**

- To develop an understanding and explore the visual effects of enlargement from A5 to A3 using a grid.
- To develop an appreciation on the subject of camouflage.
- *Support Studies:* F. Hundertwasser, A. Warhol.

### **Week 2**

- To develop an understanding and investigate the tonal qualities of colour.
- To explore techniques in applying paint (flat)
- *Support Studies:* Piet Mondrian,  
Graffiti (Street Art)

### **Week 3**

- To develop an understanding of perspective in the pictorial composition.
- To create an awareness and appreciation on the importance of line (leading) for the process of staining glass
- *Support Studies:* Roy Lichtenstein.

### **Week 4**

- To develop an understanding and to explore non-tactile textures (painting) and tactile textures (transparency)
- *Support Studies:* Jackson Pollock

### **Week 5**

- To develop an appreciation and to investigate non-tactile textures and tactile textures suitable for transparency (paper and plastic staining glass)
- *Support Studies:* Jan Vermeer (non-tactile)  
Marc Chagall (tactile)



### Week 6

- To create an awareness and appreciation for pattern in our environment and the work of Fritz Hundertwasser.
- To explore pattern throughout rubbing techniques.
- *Support Studies:* F. Hundertwasser

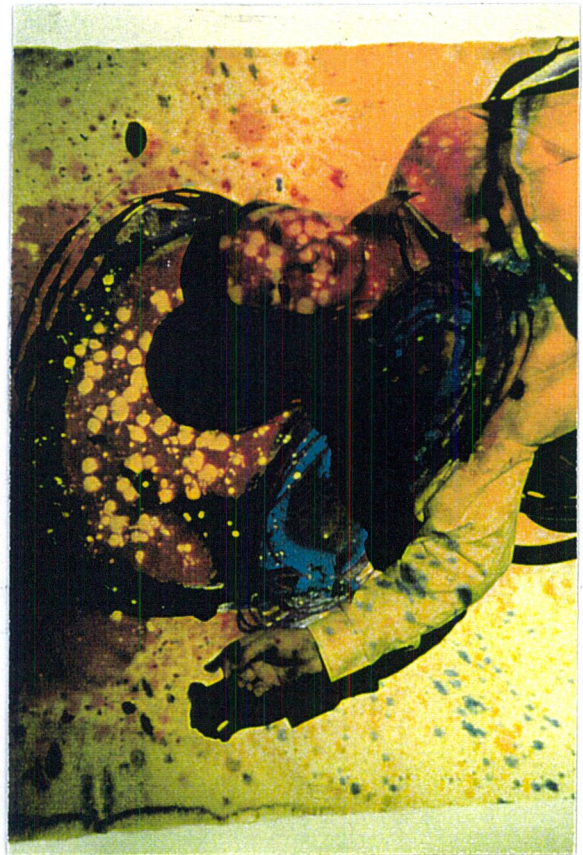
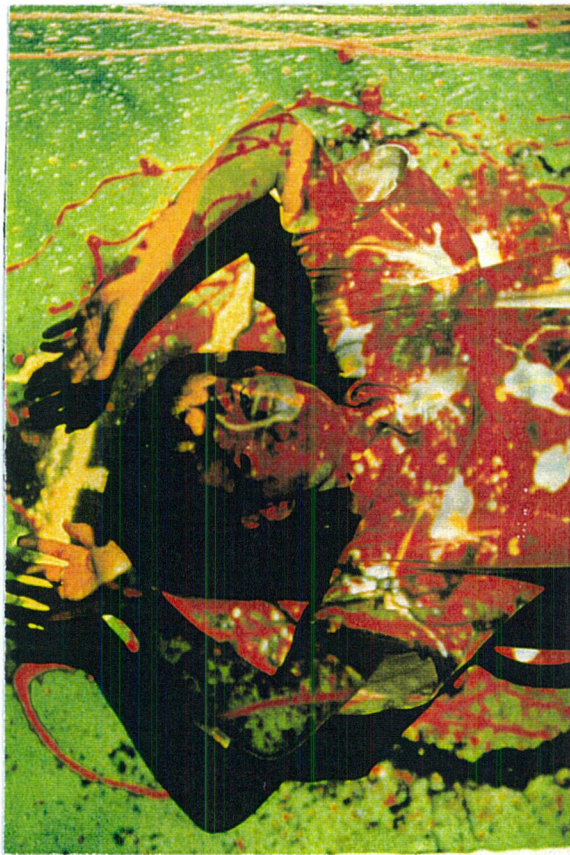
### Week 7

- To create an awareness and appreciation of the visual impact of creating group work.
- *Support Studies:* Gilbert and George

### Week 8

- To develop an appreciation and explore good presentation by assembling transparent window.
- Evaluate the window: aesthetically, technically
- *Support Studies:* Henry Matisse

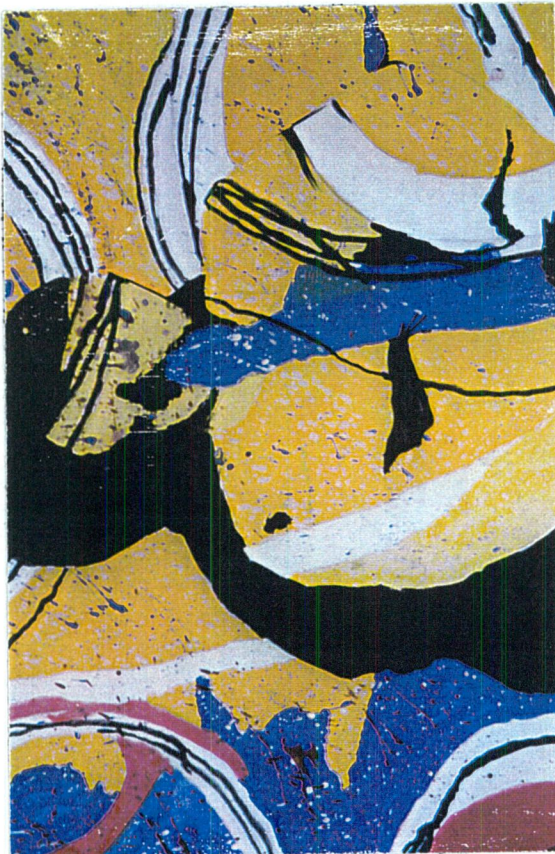
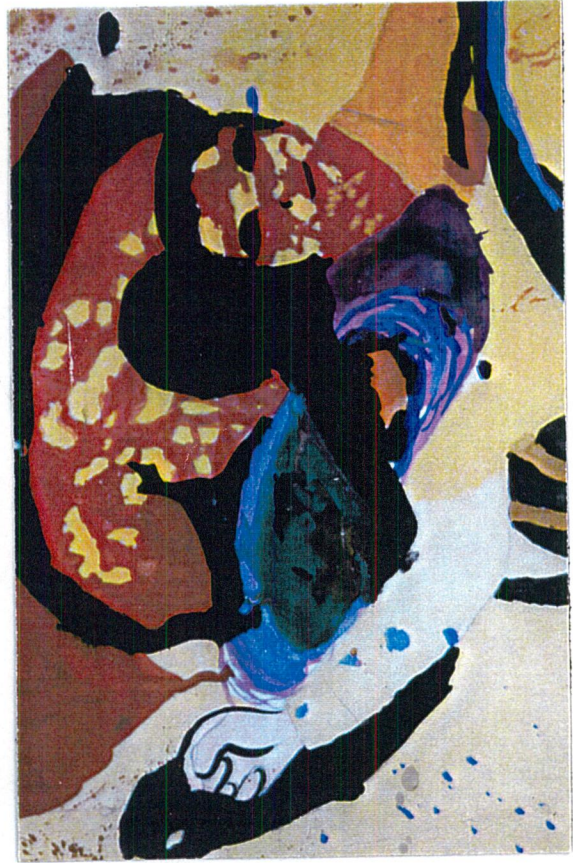




Stage 1: Photography

Students camouflaged in Artist's work





Stage 2: Painting

Students transferred photographic image into painting.

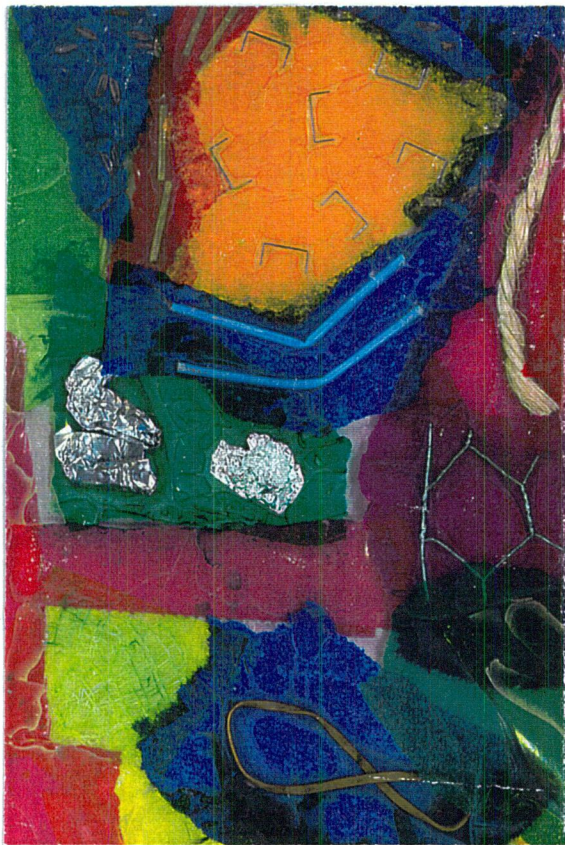




Developmental Stages of Painting

Example of 1 student's work.





Stage 3: Transparency - texture panel  
Based on an enlarged section from the painting to create an abstract panel.



## Project 2

The second year students in comparison to the first years, were more self-confident. This may be due to the fact they were more settled within the school's environment, having spent a year with one another, they were on more familiar terms. I devised a scheme of work based on the distorted self image, they had to look into curved reflective surface, e.g. spoons, saucepans, kettles, metal lampshades, etc. Having worked throughout a series of drawings, students had to create a visual story, based on a distorted self image and exploration of identity. The story lines, ranged from characters who experienced the evils of drugs, popularity, day dreaming, obsessions with food, combating violence etc. These social issues were important to the individual. The students enjoyed the exploration and the idea of being free to assume a new identity, they too could feel safe as their identity lay disguised within a self distorted character. The task was also a technical learning experience as students had to construct their chosen book format.



## **Project Two: Outline**

**Group:** Second Year, Loreto High School, Beaufort.

**No. of Lessons in Sequence:** Eleven

**Ability:** Good

**Class Duration:** 80 minutes

**Theme:** The Distorted Self

**Aim of Sequence:** To explore facial expression by distortion and to design and make a 2D or 3D, 4 page book, based on this distorted character

**Class Objectives:**

### **Week 1**

- To explore line and shape, through observation drawing in a curved surface, leading to an understanding of distortion.
- *Support Studies:* MC. Esher,  
F. Bacon.

### **Week 2**

- To develop an understanding of the classifications of primary and secondary colours, and to explore our perceptions of colour, warm and cold.
- *Support Studies:* Andy Warhol, (Prints of Marilyn Monroe).

### **Week 3**

- To develop an appreciation and to explore the visual impact of enlarging by zooming in.
- *Support Studies:* Roy Lichenstein's comic strips, The Frog Prince.

### **Week 4**

- *Design Process:* To develop an appreciation and to explore a number of different page layouts.
- *Support Studies:* The Red Cat by R. Thompson  
Calvin & Hobbes by Bill Watterson

### **Week 5**

- Students have a choice of 3 formats; A, Comic Strip, B, Rectangular box, C, Book within a drawer.  
Student must select a format suitable to their style of designing.
- *Support Studies:* The true story of the Three Little Pigs.



### Week 6

- To develop an understanding and investigate the possibilities of simple papers folding.
- *Support Studies:* Fuzzy Yellow Ducklings  
Origami Japanese Paper Art

### Week 7

- To develop an understanding and investigate the elements of surprise and movement on the page by simple paper manipulation of pop up and folding.
- *Support Studies:* Pop-up Centipede  
Pop-up Beetle  
Pop-up Caterpillar

### Week 8

- For students to continue exploring the elements of surprise and movement on the page.
- *Support Studies:* The Little Monster  
Haunted House

### Week 9

- To create an awareness and understanding of the importance of good presentation
- *Support Studies:* Distorted figurative photography.

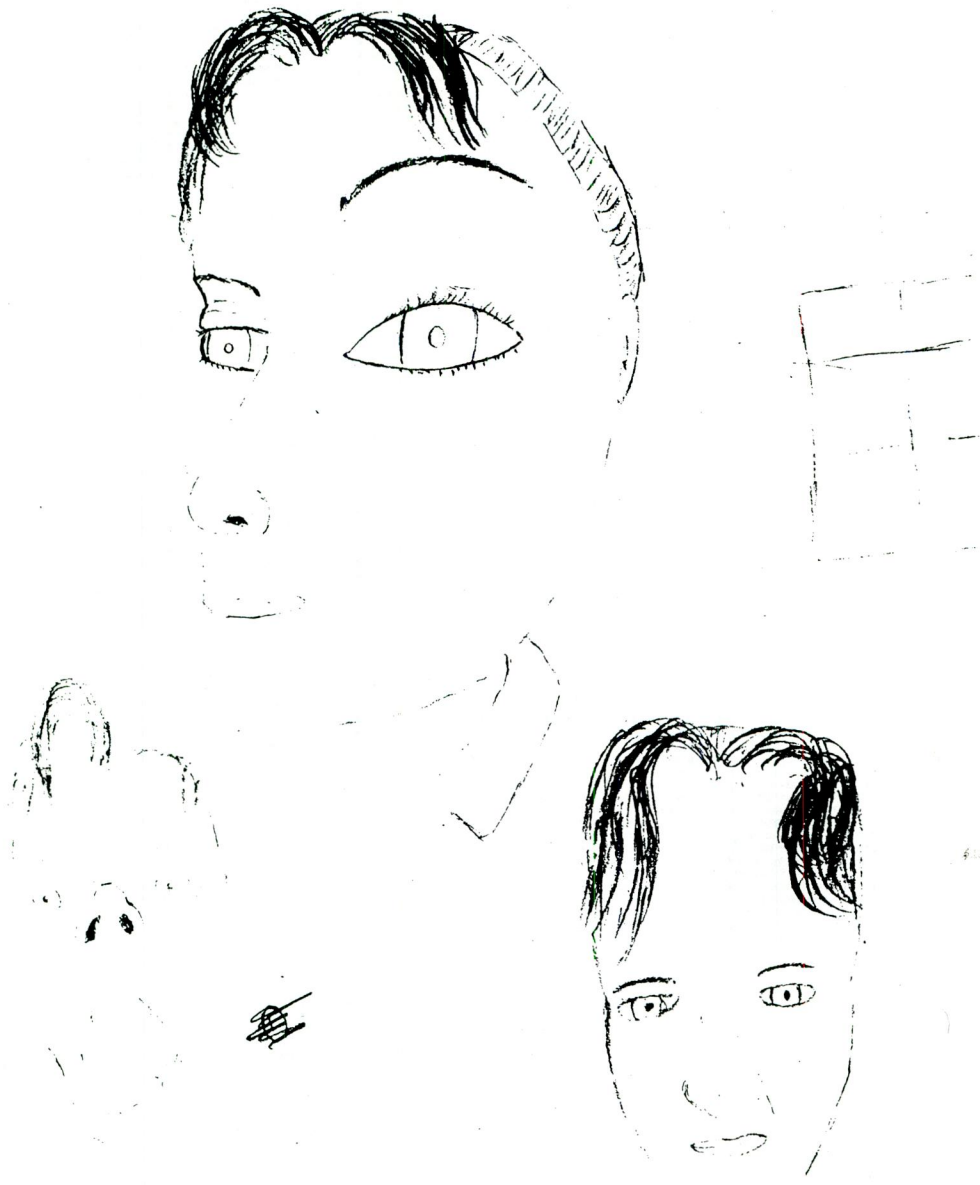
### Week 10

- *Part 2:* On presentation, to create an awareness and understanding of the importance of good presentation.
- *Support Studies:* Distorted portraits of Vincent Van Gogh by Ralph Steadman.

### Week 11

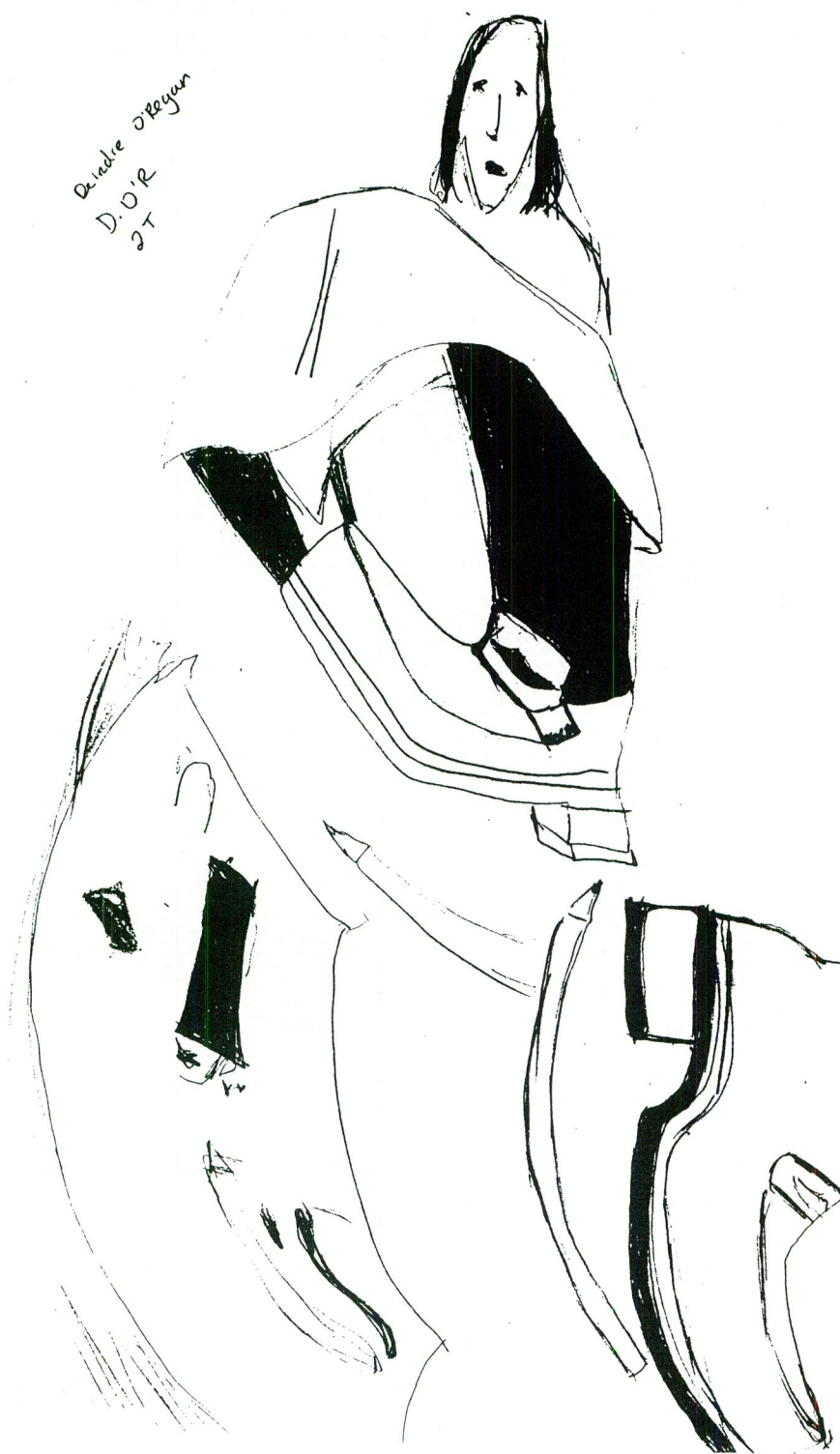
- To develop an appreciation and understanding of the content of one another's work both technically and visually through group evaluation and presentation.
- *Support Studies:* F. Bacon





Student Initial Drawings of the Distorted Self Image



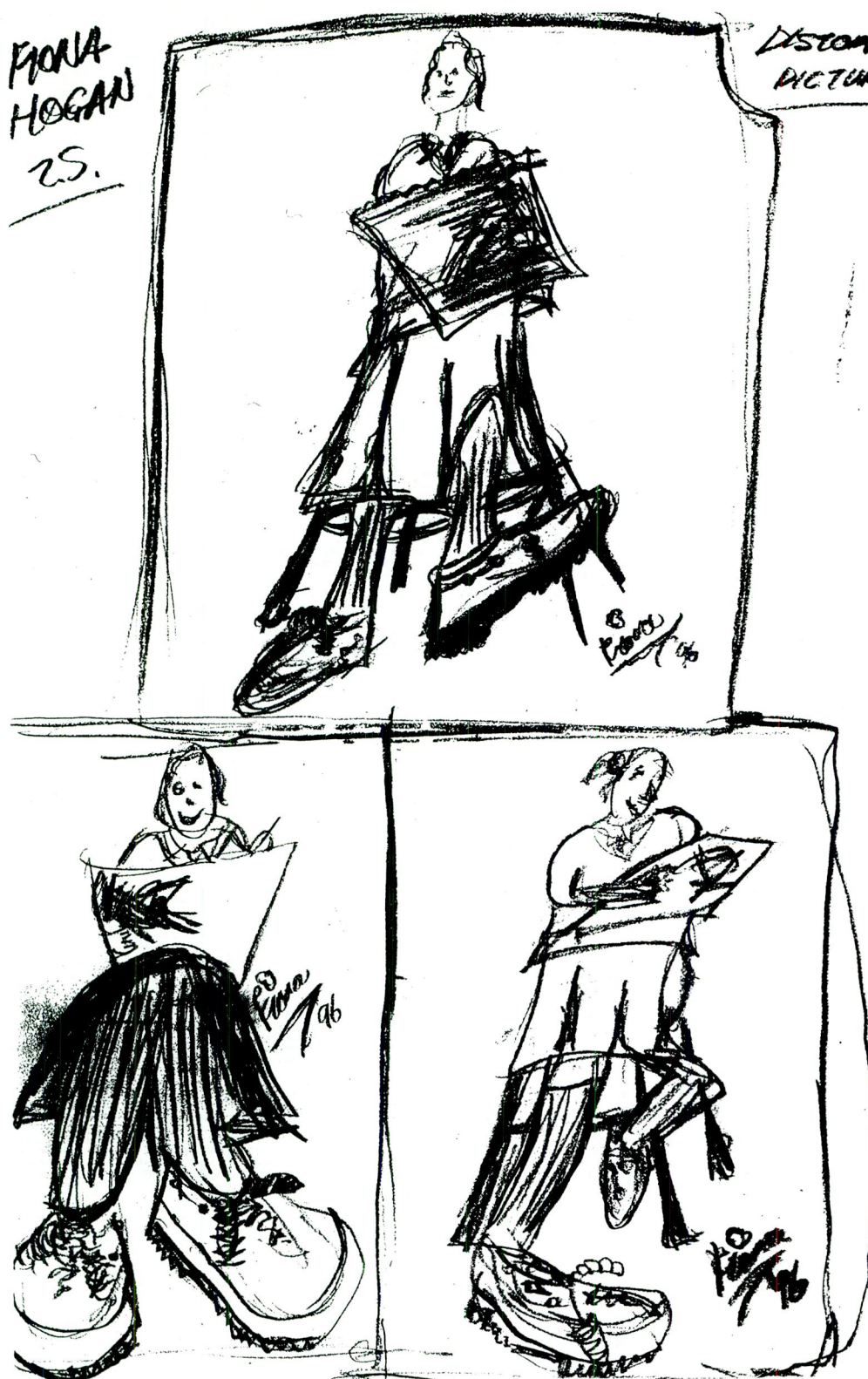


Student Initial Drawings of the Distorted Self Image



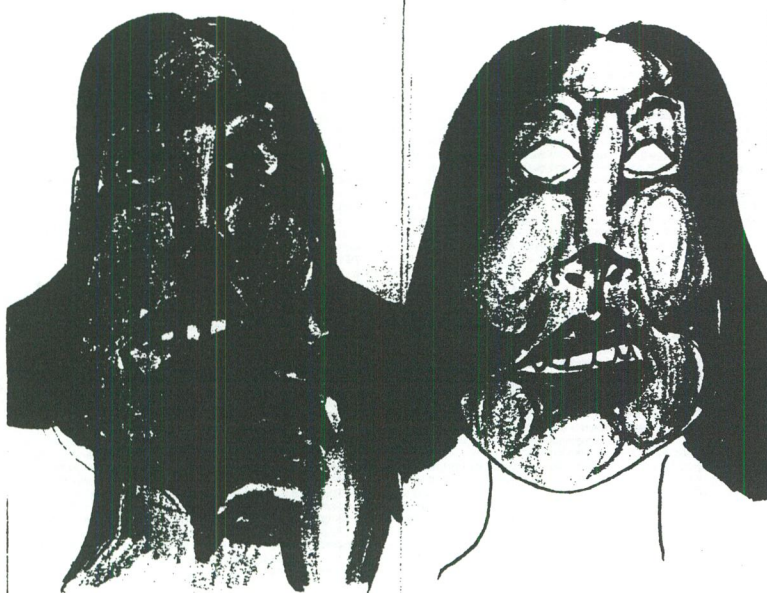
FIORA  
HOGAN  
25.

DISTORTED  
PICTURES.

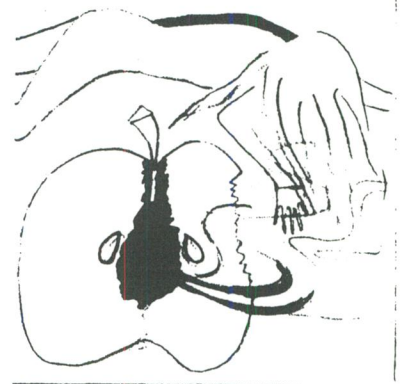
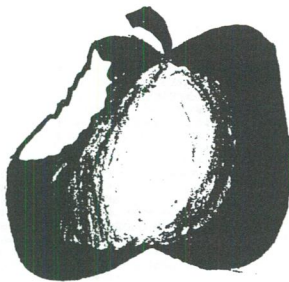


Student Initial Drawings of the Distorted Self Image



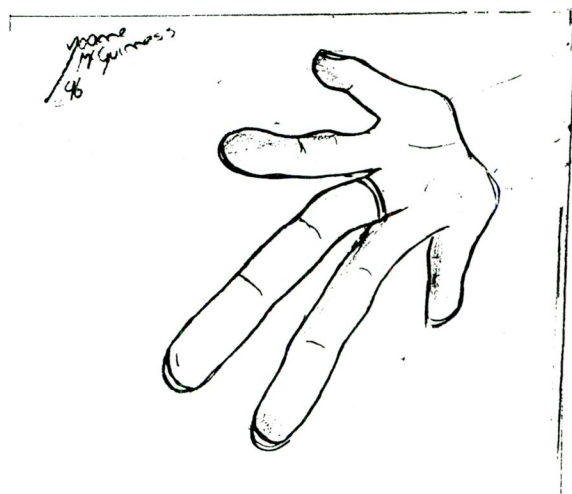
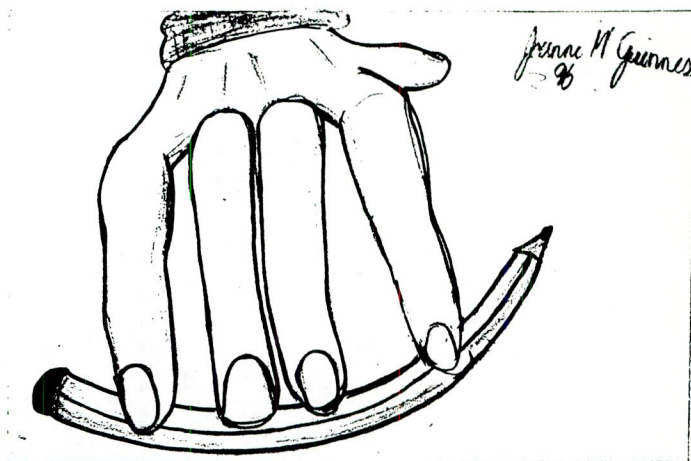


Deirdre O'Regan  
2T.



Student Initial Drawings of the Distorted Self Image





Student Initial Drawings of the Distorted Self Image





Week 2: Refer to project outline: George Kelly's theory of constructs - "No two people share an identical construct".





Final Product: Range of students books



### Results from Projects

#### Project 1: First Year Pupils

It is evident from reading the the project outline, that each pupil was given the same instruction, they worked according to the same class objective, which changed on a weekly basis. There was continual evaluation of the learning, and instruction process. All pupils were mastering the same objectives, posing in camouflage, translating, photographic image in to a painting, by the aid of a grid, and handling the same materials for the transparency. It is quite clear from looking at the pupils work, pages ..... to ..... That the pupils, mastered the same materials, and the difference among them is quite minimal. Each of the twenty pupils explored individualized expression, mastered the project objectives, and as a result their self-confidence and sense of self identity was boosted.

#### Project 2: Second Year Pupils

Again project two covers the same instructional values. The process of the project is different to that of project one. The pupils, were not starting with the aid of a photograph, rather they were working their own drawings. The pupils worked to the same instruction and objectives on a weekly basis. With this project I wanted to test Kelly's theory of constructs, that is, "no two people share an identical construct". The visuals from week two, clearly demonstrate this theory to be correct, on this small but, significant scale. A sense of individuality is more evident in this project. This is due to a number of reasons. The pupils were given more choice, in the visual (character) that they would create, and in the way in which they



would represent the final work. Throughout the weekly evaluations and examination of the work, I believe that all the students mastered the project objectives. The difference in the final product is not quite as minimal as the work from project 1, but I believe this is due to reasons already mentioned.

I would consider both projects to be very successful in terms of students achievements.



### FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER THREE

1. Guy R. Le Francois, *Psychology for Teaching*, Eighth Edition (California: Wadsworth: 1994), p.338.



## CONCLUSION

I consider myself to be very fortunate, to have been able to research and explore an area of interest with such co-operative and experimental adolescences. My research projects are merely an indication of how art and design can contribute to a pupil's feeling of self worth, self confidence and in turn the healthy formation of a self identity.

Often pupils and parents are under the illusion that the function of art in a school is to make an artist out of the pupil. Art should not be seen as a separate entity in their everyday life, but should become integrated into their life as a whole. Pupils must learn to be aware that they are surrounded by art and design. Through my inclusion of support studies on a weekly basis, I have tried to create a visual awareness. I have introduced students to 'throw away' art and design, for example, to comic strips in daily newspapers, which people place little value on. In comparison to this, the high valued, fine art approach to comic strips by American artist, Roy Lichtenstein, art can provide the opportunity for growth in ways that other subject areas cannot.

Art allows and provides the impetus for constructive action and the opportunity for each individual to see him or herself as an acceptable being, searching for new and harmonious achievements, developing confidence in one's own means of expression. The most essential ingredient in an art programme is the pupil and art education has a vital role to play in his/her growth.



Throughout my research findings, I have come to acquire greater knowledge on the social and political issues which have surrounded Irish education. As a result of these consequences, art has been a neglected area within the curriculum ever since. It is vital that we as teachers, about to embark on an educational career, are aware of just how important our role is. We must first promote art and design within our school to our pupils and teachers, and in turn extend, and create an awareness among the parents. People need to be re-educated on the importance and beneficial affects of studying art.

I believe that students self development in art is established throughout exercises, which include the functions of both sides of their brain. By a fusion of the left brain sides abilities of mathematical, linguistic and scientific and the right sides abilities of creative, physical and emotional energies. For many pupils verbal thinking in isolation is inadequate and frustrating, as their creative and sensitive energies need to be expressed in a concrete form, through visual, tactile and spatial images.

Through such expression of their feelings and ideas, pupils grow inwardly, in personal awareness and sensitivity, and outwardly in confidence and in their ability to communicate with others and adapt to an ever changing environment.

One of our most famous and tormented heroes of art, Vincent Van Gogh, wrote in a letter to his brother Theo,

“It is said, and I strongly believe that it is difficult to know yourself, but it is also difficult to paint yourself”.

Who ever said Art was easy!



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