

NC 0021644 5



**COLAISTE NAISIUNTA EALAINÉ IS DEARTHA
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**CROSS CURRICULAR TEACHING
TO IMPROVE STUDENT PARTICIPATION
IN TRANSITION YEAR**

**A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Education
in
Candidacy for the
B.A. DEGREE IN ART & DESIGN EDUCATION**

by

Amy McElroy

June 1997

CONTENTS

	List of Tables	I
	List of Illustrations	II
	Acknowledgements	III
	Introduction	IV
Chapter		Page
1	A Review of the Literature.	1
	Footnotes.	8
2	Towards a definition of cross curricular teaching.	9
	Student Participation.	10
	Inspectors' Report on Transition Year.	12
	Footnotes.	14
3	The High School Rathgar - Transition Year	15
	Aims and Objectives of Transition Year in High School.	16
	Timetable.	16
	Transition Year Art Group 1.	24
	Description of Scheme.	25
	Masks of Knowledge.	28
4	Conclusions and Recommendations.	34
	Bibliography.	38

List of Tables

		Page
Figure One	Did you enjoy working with the Music and English Teachers ?	34
Figure Two	Do you feel that the collaboration between the Music, English and Art Departments helped give you a greater all round understanding or how subjects link together ?	35
Figure Three	Would you consider doing ARt again or maybe even for your Leaving Certificate ?	35
Figure Four	Have you gained a greater understanding of masks in different culture through the support studies we have looked at ?	35
Figure Five	Do you feel you have a greater understanding of film production and the importance of art within this medium ?	35

List of Illustrations

		Page
Illustration 1	Portrait expressing emotion by transition year student.	18
Illustration 2	Students Portraits.	19
Illustration 3	Characters expressing emotions.	20
Illustration 4	Paper manipulation of characters.	20
Illustration 5	Design for mask.	22
Illustration 6	Design for mask.	23
Illustration 7	Papier Maché over clay mould.	27
Illustration 8	Masks in stills from film.	30
Illustration 9	Masks in stills from film.	31
Illustration 10	Masks in stills from film.	32
Illustration 11	Masks in stills from film.	33

Acknowledgements

With Thanks to

Professor Iseult McCarthy

Eileen Doyle

The Staff and Pupils of the High School Rathgar for their co-operation

My Family and Friends, especially Philip

for all their support throughout my Degree

Introduction

This dissertation will be dealing with the importance of cross-curricular teaching to improve student participation in transition year. Cross-curricular teaching is encouraged as an important aspect of teaching methodology in this course. Teacher co-operation and timetabling conducive to cross-curricular work will be a focus of this study.

The aim of cross-curricular teaching in school is to improve the participation of students in the given areas. Its strengths or weaknesses will be examined through the aims and objectives as stated by the Art, Music and English Departments in a school. Did students learn more as a result of this type of teaching ? Did students become more involved in the particular subject area ?

I have always been interested in this type of collaboration in schools. I began the study of this topic in the belief that the planning and development of schemes by teachers in specialised areas could lead to exciting work for both students and teachers.

Chapter One is an explanation of literature related to cross curricular teaching and its relevance to transition year.

Definitions of cross-curricular teaching, the transition year as a relatively new course in the post-primary system. The aims and objectives of this year and how it might benefit students will be examined in Chapter Two.

The Third Chapter will focus on my own teaching which was developed within the framework of the aims and objectives of transition year. This chapter also presents the school context where the scheme was carried out.

The work produced and some tentative conclusions will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter 1

A Review of the Literature

Cross curricular teaching is a relatively new concept although it has been suggested in previous years as a way of bringing the curriculum in line with the needs of contemporary society and its students. It involves the collaboration between subject and teachers to enhance lesson content and learning.

"Cross-Curricular teaching can increase students motivation for learning and their level of engagement. In contrast to learning skills in isolation, when students participate in interdisciplinary experiences they see the value of what they are learning and become more actively engaged." [1]

Transition year is a perfect time to implement such a concept and prove its worthiness as an important part of teaching methodology. This has also been recognised by the Department of Education and has been stressed as an integral part of the teaching of the transition year curriculum. A cross-curricular approach to teaching particularly on the Art, Crafts and Design Course is a means of continuity from the Junior Certificate and development of the student and their work before doing the Leaving Certificate or in the case of collaborative teaching the Leaving Certificate Applied.

Collaborative teaching cultivates creativity for both students and teachers, reinforcing common knowledge and relating it to the outside world. For example if two different subjects came together by linking the students and their work this would reinforce subjects and learning for both teachers and students. Another possibility for collaborative teaching is when the teachers come together and plan their work where subject areas interlink teachers would contribute to the specific area of interest in the classroom.

A continuation from the Junior Certificate is very important for the development of students creativity in ways which would not be possible when doing the Leaving Certificate. This Transition Year should be used to the full in asserting students powers

of perception and creativity that will be of use to them even when they leave school. For example, in previous years students in transition year did not fully benefit from an emphasis stressed on the outside world, which is one of the main aims of transition year.

"Students felt while schools catered very well for intellectual and cognitive development, they felt it did not prepare them for work and adult life. Transition Year was set up to deal with this shortfall and also to bring the Irish Education System in line with the rest of Europe easing the problem of students entering 3rd level education too young." [2]

Transition Year was introduced as a pilot programme in 1974 in 3 schools. In a report of the programme in these schools the Educational Research Centre found that:-

- Teachers felt it gave valuable preparation in terms of general orientation towards work.
- Improved attitudes in the work place towards early school leavers.
- Some of the barriers between school and the outside world were removed.
- Parental involvement increased.
- Schools were introduced to the experience of education innovation. [3]

Even with these positive findings it was not implemented further until 1986 and then in 1994 when 460 schools availed of it. The ideologies of transition year were drawn up in this report.

These ideologies are discussed in phases:-

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Phase One | Emphasised link with world and work. Students would leave school after completing Transition Year. For example, students would be prepared for the workplace after transition year as there was an emphasised link between school and the workplace thus preparing them for life outside of the school environment. |
| Phase Two | Less likely to leave → V.P.T. Programme has greater emphasis on vocational development and was running concurrently with Transition Year. Schools could choose which programme reflected their Ethos. For example, in the High School Rathgar their ethos in transition year is that students would be given the opportunity to develop their own talents, aptitudes and abilities and to develop skills and competency with a broad general education. |
| Phase Three | This phase has no distinction it caters for all students wishing to participate in a three year cycle so in some schools it would be used as an additional year in the Leaving Certificate Course. |

The aims and objectives of Transition Year are as follows:-

Transition Year programmes aim to provide a broad, holistic education which should promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of pupils and prepare them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society." [4]

From these aims it is hoped that transition year will:-

- Enhance general education.
- Facilitate transition from education to life and work.
- Allow for remediation and foundation studies and activities.
- Promote greater diversity by providing an optional additional year for all students. [5]

"The programme offers opportunities and challenges for students which they may not otherwise have within an education system that is exam led." [6]

Collaborative teaching is one of the main ways of implementing exciting new schemes in transition year.

"The collaborative culture exists when teachers share, trust and support each other. Joint work will be a common feature." [7]

For some teachers this collaboration will help them support each other in a curriculum that is very broad and quite daunting to implement as teachers previously felt they were ill-equipped. For example, some teachers felt the course was too broad and they were afraid of omitting important aspects of this very large course thus:

"Working together in a collaborative manner to plan and implement a programme that is based on sound educational principals, with an awareness of the underlying rational, will help to alleviate feelings of uncertainty. Teachers can then teach confidently within their own classrooms." [8]

An on-going support team has been set up by the Department of Education to help subjects and "Collaborative Cultures" in schools. As is said by Eilis Humphreys:-

"A collaborative school culture will facilitate the successful introduction and implementation of other curricular or organisation change." [9]

Barrett in his book "The Changing Curriculum" says that there are different strategies in the area of 'Art, Craft and design which develop different areas of the individual. An educational environment for self-expression through a combination of art, music, drama, dance and literature.

The art and craft element of the syllabus teaches specific skills, techniques and processes on manipulation of traditional materials such as clay, wool and fabric. This is the development of the 'full intelligence' that takes place when participating in art, craft and design education.

The teacher has an important role in the cultivation of the creative and expressive work that can be developed in the art class. Teachers in general have the role of caring about the personal growth of the pupil by cultivating an educational relationship with them. Improving their social attitude and behaviour which is of an acceptable level for society as well as teaching them new knowledge.

It is possible for pupils to go to school for years and learn nothing - amounting to an introduction to taking their places in adult society. Hence, the work in personal and group learning is not a dispensable luxury." [10]

Until the last few years the technocratic tradition of teaching has been in place (this is exam led and quite different to the aims and objectives of transition year) with very little attention being paid to enhancing student creativity. This is an important factor because when students left school, they felt they were ill-equipped for working life. This in turn has necessitated a change in the curriculum to benefit those who needed an education that is more in line with the work environment.

Through group learning and interaction students should improve socialisation skills, and relate better to their learning environment. Group work prepares students for the work place and third level education. When students learn to support and work together in the work place and college, they will have learnt one of the most important and basic skills of life.

With students having an experience of working in a group situation, as an individual they will grow and become aware of what aspects of Art, Craft and Design are important to them as is said here:

"Art education for Meagher 'provides an opportunity for individual to ask fundamental questions about their environment as visually perceived, about the nature of art, craft and design activity and about the nature and essential identity of individuals themselves.' [11]

In the book "Rosegarden and labyrinth" Seonaid Robertson suggests innovative ways of improving student creativity. She also states that this creativity relies on the skill and work of the teachers and their communication skills as:

"Its success relies on the teacher's permissiveness and a confidence in the theme to carry the children along on its tide, as it were." [12]

Poetry was used by Seonaid as a way of helping the children relate verbally what they had produced in their pictures. The poems they produced seemed to be of an intellectual and sensitive nature with a real feeling for the theme and picture they were portraying. The theme they were given was water. The Drama and English teachers used this theme in each of their classes. This worked to great effect improving the creativity of these children. In drama their body movements were used to portray water, then they used these movements to express water in painting. The theme being used at the same time had a great influence in each class bringing different areas of knowledge from one into the other. It also helped their area of focus - Their minds could act creatively because the theme was being developed in different ways instead of in the normal run of school classes where students spend forty minutes on one subject before swapping to a different subject, this can happen up to eight or nine times a day. It only seems common sense to overlap themes where possible with groups of students, for as well as helping the teachers with their schemes and curriculum it helps develop the students learning to a much more heightened degree.

"The genius of poetry must look at its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself." [13]

There have been a number of new reports published calling for the further development of the curriculum based around the arts in education. With these reports there are great possibilities for improving participation and motivation among students with particular interest for those taking part in transition year projects. In a report written by David Martin of the A.S.T.I. he says:-

"The volume of communications is now too large to be continued within the curriculum of the English syllabus. Advertising, for example has as much to do with art as with English. This highlights the nature of the changes taking place which now require the A.S. T.I. to formulate policy for cross-curricular education." [14]

The way the curriculum is experienced by students is a reflection on the type of lives we would like them to lead.

"The materials of the curriculum, where they are presented in such a way as to invite real participation." [15]

By these statements the importance of a scheme chosen affect the type of reaction the teachers will receive from the students in their class.

"To teach something successfully requires that the subject matter to evoke a response in the learner, bringing the learner into active participation in the event." [16]

From the timetable of schools it seems that students should separate knowledge taught in one subject from another. In order for a student to be actively involved in linking the knowledge their curriculum needs to be 'child centred' by this I mean that the students thoughts, feelings, personal interests and achievements must all be taken into consideration when developing a relevant educational programme.

The teaching of arts in schools is an ideal way of enhancing learning in all subject areas.

"Media studies (including film education) are almost totally neglected in Irish schools but could easily and fruitfully find a place in the Transition Year." [17]

The transition year programme is interdisciplinary and student centred. By freeing students to take responsibility for their own learning, the programme helps them to learn skills and to evaluate life in ways and in situations which arise outside the boundaries of the certificate programmes. Within the challenging framework of the transition year programme, teachers gain greater flexibility and professional opportunities to design curricular, modules and short courses which are specially tailored to the specific needs of their students. The school is enriched by a range of active learning methods. Parents, the community and local enterprise can bring to the transition year a sense of the world and so contribute to an education which faces the demands and pleasures of life, work, sport and leisure.

The transition year offers a special opportunity to enjoyably underpin, in a non-examination environment, the importance of the Irish language and culture, the prospects of our European and World end, the wealth of creative and performing art activity.

""Students today are talking from within themselves and that they are trying to understand who and what they are as human beings. This is where we so often fail them educationally." [17]

The Minister for Education Ms Breathnach, said that a report on Transition Year showed that it is a "major success" involving more than 20,000 pupils in 1994 and 1995. Department Inspectors of 14 schools offering the Transition Year showed teachers and parents agreed it was worthwhile. The value of work experience and the widespread encouragement of enterprise was also made evident.

"The new curriculum of 1971 said that "The inclusion of imaginative programmes in music, art and craft, drama and mime activities, physical education and dance, as integral parts of the curriculum, heralding a new era in Irish Education" - The potential for great advance is here." [18]

Footnotes

1. Crooks, Tony. "The Changing Curriculum." Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1990.
2. Hogan, Pádraig. "Issues in Education." Dublin: ASTI, 1996.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Crooks, Tony. "The Changing Curriculum." O'Brien Press, 1990.
11. Ibid.
12. Robertson, Seonaid. "Rosegarden & Labyrinth." A study in Art Education. Dallas: Second Spring, 1989.
13. Ibid. (Keats).
14. Martin, David. "Report of Convenor Media Studies." Dublin: A.S.T.I., 1996.
15. O'Neill, Cecilly. "Active Understanding: The Power of Drama in the Curriculum." Ohio: State University.
16. Ibid.
17. Robertson, Seonaid. "Rosegarden & Labyrinth." A study in Art Education. Dallas: Second Spring, 1989.
18. The Arts in Post-Primary Education - Report.

Chapter Two

Towards a definition of cross-curricular teaching

Cross-Curricular teaching is the collaboration between subject areas on one given project to achieve learning objectives relevant to their own specific need. Many subjects overlap in their curriculum or can help to give a greater understanding of a subject area when used in conjunction with one another. Until recently subject areas were taught in a compartmentalised fashion but now courses such as transition year and the Leaving Certificate Applied are being developed to cater for specific needs for the students of today. The importance of interdisciplinary learning in terms of teaching methodology and improvement of the needs of students have been taken into consideration and are evident in these areas.

The other way that interdisciplinary teaching can enhance learning is where subjects by linking can compliment one another, for example if students were on a geography field trip

an understanding of research drawing and recording of information can help in the work produced and findings while on that trip.

Many subjects have similar aims and objectives for example science and home economics both include biology. English, Art and Music are all linked through the terminology used to determine the period and history that a particular work is connected to. With these types of similarities learning can be reinforced and made easier for students, as they can get an all round picture of a subject.

Before subjects were designedly linked, it was not until students left school that they came to the realization of the natural links between subjects that they learnt in school, and so were able to put this knowledge into a relevant, practical use.

In studying the school curriculum, it is important to keep in mind that what teachers plan for their pupils to learn, only has effect when it is enacted or realised by the pupils themselves." [1]

Knowledge as we know can not be compartmentalised but the school timetable in many ways expects the human brain to achieve this. Students are expected to work for a 40 or 80 minute period on a given subject and then switch to something totally different this can happen for some students up to nine times a day so it makes sense that subjects should be linked where ever possible as this can only but improve learning as students will be able to focus more on particular topics and subconsciously link knowledge.

Student Participation

The key to learning is through the amount of participation achieved within a class. Where there is good participation within a class means that students are involved in the learning, and more than likely are enjoying a class or scheme of work. Improving participation is what all teachers strive for with their students, to achieve this they need to develop a suitable scheme of work.

"The educational use of short-term goals to enable young people to develop motivation will require close examination by teachers planning the Transition Year Curriculum Content." [2]

"The emphasis should be on participation and on collaboration: a part-antidote to the self-centredness that appears to be part of the more formal years of the post-primary system." [3]

Content of class, support studies, visual aids, subject, attitude of teacher and classroom management are all important factors that contribute to participation within a class.

Within an art class visual aids are used to show students what is expected from them and also to motivate and stimulate them. Support studies put works of art in historical context particularly styles and movements. This is also used as a motivational aid as well as an important part of art history.

If a topic is introduced and presented in an exciting and interesting way it will immediately induce involvement on the subject with the students. For a topic to be introduced in this way means that appropriate support studies and visual aids should excite and interest the

class and so increase participation levels. Art being a visual subject means that there are many sources from which to inspire students and if teachers of other subjects were to take this approach they would probably find that their topic immediately becomes more interesting and relevant to the students.

Teachers when developing a scheme must take into consideration the culture in which their students are living.

At the moment this means using teaching material that is relevant to the lifestyles of their students. We live in a generation of audio and visual imagery. This is in itself a new art form so for students to be able to appreciate art on a high level means that they must be taught to appreciate the art around them from films to advertising so as to keep a high standard of art appreciation. Using topics which are immediately relevant to students everyday lives and their interests is a good start in heightening participation.

Materials that are used in a class are also important for participation. Different students react to various mediums in different ways. Weaker students in art will usually react better to clay modelling where as, strong students can react better to the challenge of drawing. If the wrong approach is taken with students if the medium and task are not suitable to their ability or interests then they will probably not actively participate in a class.

Classroom management is also an integral aspect of Art, Craft and Design. Students have to respect the environment and material they are using. If work is not handled with care or the classroom and materials are not respected and looked after the students may lose interest in their work and its value. Hence the meaning of art as a subject is affected.

Inspectors Report on Transition Year

The Transition Year Programme was reported on by the Department of Education Inspector in the academic year 1994-1995. More than 20,000 pupils in 459 schools participated in the transition year programme. Of these 115 schools were selected as samples for the report. This was based on a study of schools offering Transition Year with varying socio economic backgrounds so as to get an overall view of development and implications of Transition Year in all schools. A number of similar conclusions were found from this report in all schools, with particular reference to interdisciplinary learning.

The mission of Transition Year is:-

"To promote the personal, social, education and vocational development of pupils and to prepare them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society." [4]

This involves the parents and local community in the development of the "whole-school" approach to learning.

In devising their programmes, schools are to emphasise personal development, adopt an interdisciplinary approach to learning and provide alternative learning environment for those participating. Modes and techniques of assessment were to reflect the variety of teaching/learning approaches and the programme itself was to be evaluated internally on a regular basis.

In order to implement Transition Year in a successful way involves clear planning and goals. On evaluation the report shows that Inspectors felt that:-

" The failure to adopt a whole staff approach, for whatever reason, was considered undesirable by the Inspectors and not conducive to providing the Transition Year Team and their pupils with a favourable and supportive environment ?" [5]

It was found that some schools ignored the interdisciplinary approach. This was noted by the students who felt disappointed with the course. It was felt that the traditionalism

of teachers involved caused lack of innovation, structured co-operation between teachers and not a clear mission added to the problem.

The conclusions in relation to interdisciplinary learning were as follows:-

- 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.
- Principals are actively supporting the Transition Year Programme by encouraging the co-ordinating teams in their schools and by providing resources.
- Most schools saw work experience as a vital element in the Transition Year Programme, providing pupils with alternative learning environments, acquainting them with the world of work and offering positive opportunities for personal growth and development. An interdisciplinary approach to learning was not a prominent feature of most Transition Year Programmes, in accordance with these the recommendations are as follows:-
- "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.
- Many schools could further develop their links with the wider community particularly in the area of community service.

In developing the scheme of work for Transition Year the three areas of interdisciplinary learning, student participation and the mission of Transition Year were all taken into consideration.

Before deciding exactly how this would work a meeting took place between the English/ Music and Art Department to discuss their aims and objectives respectively. From this meeting came the basis for the scheme and its relevance to the year group.

Footnotes

1. Sammons, Pamela. "School Matters - The Junior Years." Somerset: Open Books, 1988.
2. Humphreys, Tony. "A Different Kind of Teacher." Cork: Carraig Print, 1993.
3. Ibid.
4. Kelleghan, Thomas. "Transition Education in Irish Schools." Dublin: Greencastle Press, 1991.
5. Department of Education "Transition Year Programme 1994-1995. "An Evaluation by the Inspectorate of The Department of Education." Dublin: Department of Education, 1996.

Chapter Three

The High School Rathgar

The High School Dublin is a co-educational, voluntary secondary school with approximately 750 pupils. The school was founded by the Erasmus Smith Trust in 1870 as a day school for boys. The school was originally located on Harcourt Street and moved to a 23 acre site in Rathgar in 1971. In 1974 the Diocesan School for Girl amalgamated with the High School making it co-educational. It provides education mainly for pupils from Church of Ireland families but also takes in students from other denominations.

The High School is managed by a Board of Governors of the Erasmus Smith Trust. There is a Management Committee of the Board where parents and staff are represented. The school has about 50 qualified staff. The High School gives its pupils the opportunity to explore the humanities, sciences, arts, business studies and technical subjects. It also provides religious, moral and physical education so as to meet its objectives of preparation for life as well as attaining high academic standards.

The motto of the High School:-

"We are faithful to our trust."

The school has a 6-year educational cycle comprising of a three-year junior cycle and a three-year senior cycle which includes a transition year.

In transition year pupils follow a school designed course of core subjects as well as opportunities to commence new subjects which may then be taken to Leaving Certificate level, develop computer keyboarding and application skills and gain experience of the world or work through periods of work experience. In addition, a wide range of short courses allow pupils to develop foundation skills in areas as diverse as pottery and judo, drama and woodwork. The transition year is organised by a social team of teachers which includes the transition year co-ordinator and the Guidance Counsellor.

"Students will also be expected to participate fully in various activities."

The Aims and Objectives of Transition Year in The High School

The Transition Year Programme is designed to provide students with the opportunity to discover their own talents, aptitudes and abilities and to develop skills and competency with a broad general education.

It will challenge students to accept responsibility for their own learning, to improve their performance in many core areas, explore new subjects, develop their own interest and to evaluate their progress.

Transition Year gives an opportunity to develop other skills. Apart from academic achievement, qualities such as personal organisation, application and initiative and the ability to participate in a team and relate well with others will be important.

TIMETABLE

Irish, English, Science	4 periods each
Maths	4 periods
History, Geography	3 periods each
P.E. Games	2 periods each
Form Period & Careers	2 periods

Revolving Modules

Creative Writing/Education Skills	
Education for Future	6 weeks each
Keyboarding	4 periods
Media Studies	
Religious/Personal Studies	

Option Group A

Accounting	
French	3 periods each
German for Beginners	Choose one
Spanish	subject for
Technical Drawing	whole year
European Studies	

Option Group B

Business Studies	3 period each
French	Choose one
German	subject for
Construction Studies	whole year

Option Group C

Art	
Computer Aided Design	
Dance	2 period block
First Aid	15 weeks each
Home Economics	Choose two
Horticulture	subjects
Judo	
Photography	

Option Group D

Orienteering	
Make a Play (all year)	2 period block
Crafts	15 weeks each
Drama	Choose two
Home Economics	subjects
Music	
Woodwork	

The ethos of the school with regard to discipline is based on "respect." This is implied to human relationships, care of property, safety and the environment in order to create a warm and caring atmosphere. The emphasis is on positive discipline and building of self-esteem.

The classes are all mixed ability and have been since 1996. To ensure this all students must sit a diagnostic test in the Spring before entering the school.

A scheme was devised by the Art Department in collaboration with the Music and English Departments. This scheme had two phases and are based on the making of masks and the other on the production of a short film incorporating the masks. Both these schemes took into consideration the aims and objectives of transition year in the high school.

The aim of the mask making scheme was to introduce students to a wide range of art elements and teach them different skills. As the class had never done art before is secondary school and they only had a 15 week block it was important for students to get a good basic grasp of the art elements while achieving good results fast thus enhancing student confidence.

Transition Year is ideal for trying out unusual schemes which students might not otherwise experience. It was important that the scheme should relate to the outside world and enable students to get a better grasp at a process that could be used in the work place or as an appreciation for an art form. In the case of this transition year the use of masks in different cultures, Music and English in relation to art and the more contemporary form of performance art in relation to film making.

Transition year being based on a strong cross-curricular approach to teaching would be a good basis to compose a relevant scheme using the music and english department as a strong teaching resource as well as enhancing student knowledge of the subjects and how they interlink in everyday life. Unfortunately, timetabling and class structure means that this is almost impossible to carry out unless teachers are willing to co-operate in their



Illustration 1

Portrait expressing emotion



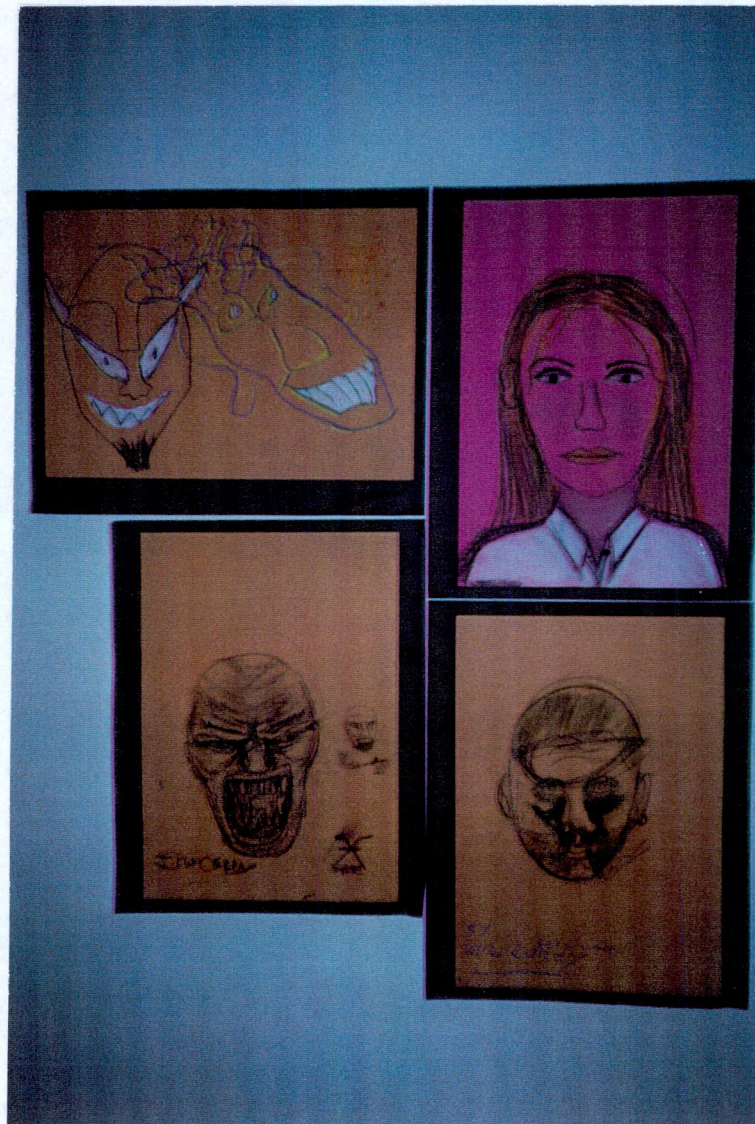


Illustration 2

Students Portraits



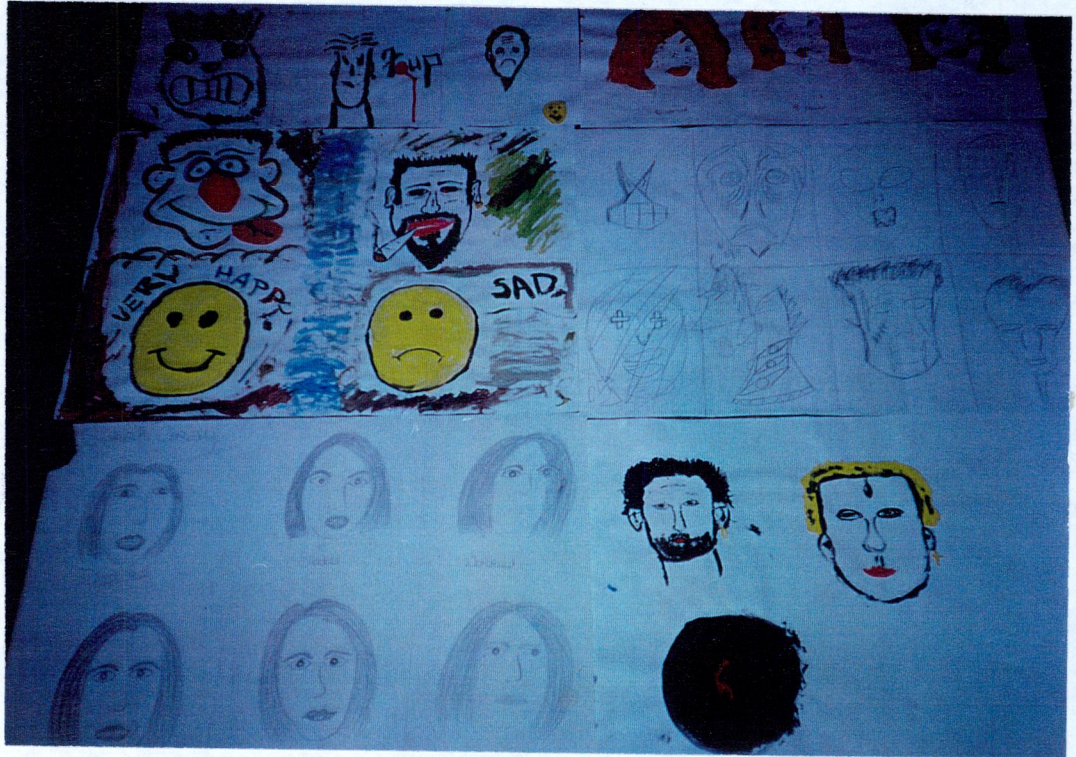


Illustration 3

Characters expressing emotions



Illustration 4

Paper manipulation of characters



sparetime with a particular department. Student participation in the scheme was important as the cross-curriculum approach had to be something which they were interested in personally pursuing as it was not a compulsory part of their actual classes in the rest of the school.

Mask making itself is a good exercise in manipulation of various materials. The support studies role of the use of masks in different cultures the materials and colours used and they were chosen. Colour associations in different cultures, expression to show emotion and character, as well as giving a basic understanding of the structure of the head and face.

The interlink between the English, Music and Art Departments did not take place till the second scheme. Here students were introduced to the use of Music in Art and as Art in their support studies. The cross-curricular teaching with the Music Department took place in the music room where students were played different types of music and asked to choose one that suited the character of the mask best. Music and its association - loud/soft etc.

Before this the English teacher joined us in the art room and discussed poetry in art. Students beforehand were asked to build up a profile of the character or their mask on a specially designed worksheet - from this the English teacher helped them to write a poem which described the character of their mask using sound and word association.

After this part of the scheme was completed we set about making a storyboard for the film. This entailed discussing lighting/camera shots/locations and movements to show character.

Performance artists such as Nigel Rolfe were introduced to the students and Mr Rolfe gave them a talk on the history of performance art and his own work in relation to masks and performance Art.



Illustration 5

Design for Mask



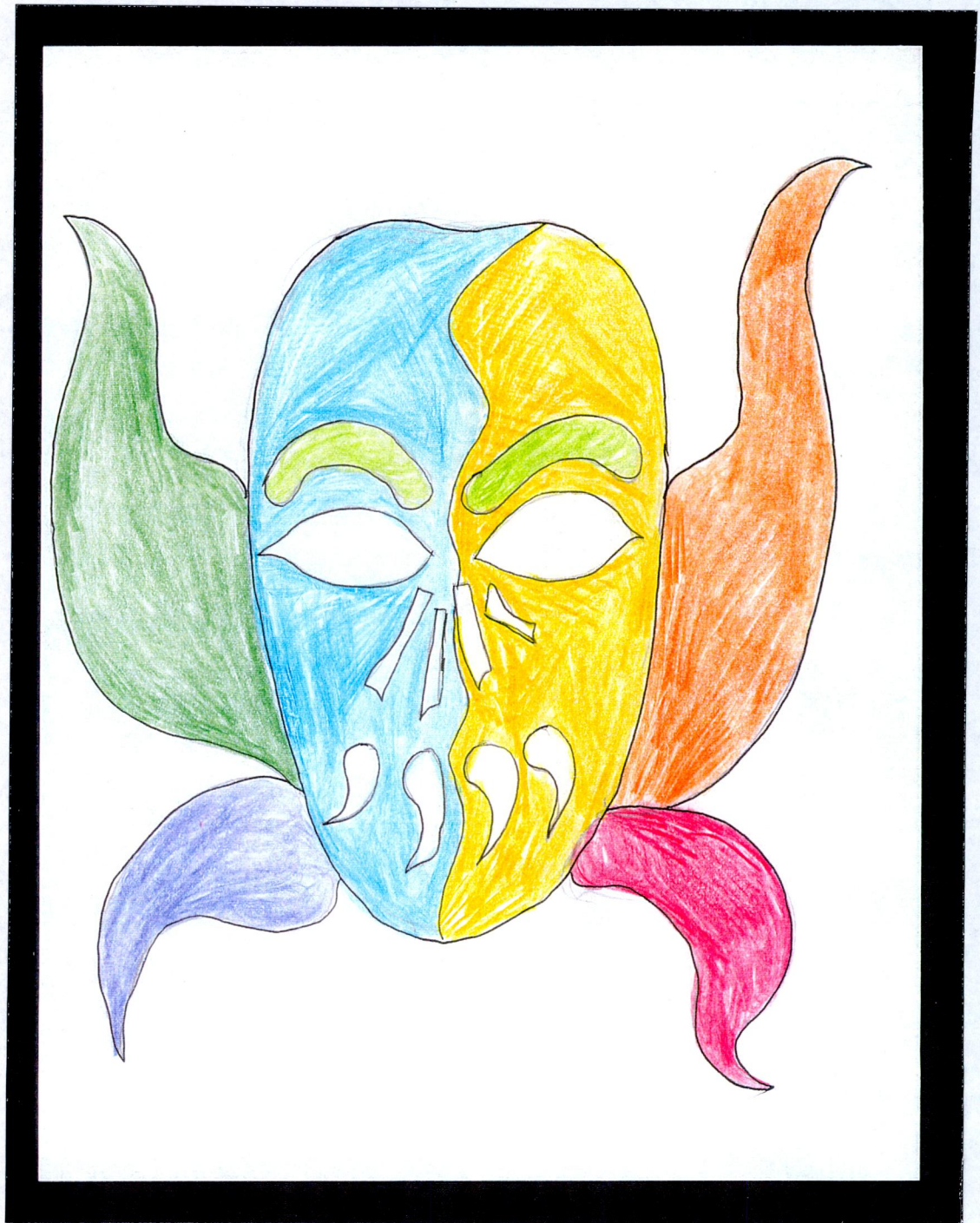


Illustration 6

Design for Mask



The making of the film involved bringing all the elements at the cross-curricular teaching together. This was exciting for all students involved. They worked their story board around a poem which they composed. The poem was based around the life and character of their mask.

This was a good lesson in film making and the work involved. They learnt a great deal about technical aspects of film such as lighting and composition of shots. The importance of responsibility was foremost in the making of this film.

Transition Year Art Group 1

The class was of mixed ability in general but enthusiastic, there were eight boys and four girls. Unfortunately, many of the students had a misconception about art as a subject and felt that it would be an easy option. Because of this lack of understanding for the subject the students were difficult to motivate to achieve good participation within the class. The students that chose this subject usually would not be placed together in a classroom situation as they did not work well together as a group. While it was noted that the class did not work well together the scheme helped to improve active participation and improve student confidence and change their preconceived ideas about art as a subject.

Other factors involved in the creation of a suitable scheme were the aims and objectives of the English and Music Departments in conjunction with Art. These were discussed at length and the outcome being for the students to achieve a realisation of what art is and what it can be. In that English literature and Art have long been related with many sources for Art taken directly from poetry and Shakespearean plays. This was the approach we decided to take for support studies work between art and literature. Through literature they would discuss imagery evoked different types of poetry and word association. Shakespeare's Ophelia from Hamlet and the depiction of her drowning by John Everett Millet's also 'Isabella and the pot of Basil' by William Holman Hunt are all paintings that depict poetry.

The students discussed poetry and plays in paintings with the English teacher and the Art teacher. There was a positive response to these paintings with much questioning about attention to detail and the reading of a poem. An understanding that a painting can communicate just as well as a poem. The English teacher developed from these poems to looking at different types of poetry from Sonnets to more contemporary word associations. Tone of voice and speed to depict a feeling. The students from the profile they had made up of their character then were asked to write a poem depicting their character. From then the students had to work together to come up with one single poem that could depict a story bringing together all their characters. This was hard work but they were successful in working together to achieve this.

Description of Scheme

Using cross-curricular structure as a basis for the scheme. In starting off with some basic drawing skills with the class as they had never done art before, they moved into expression in the face. Paper manipulation as a basis for building up features of the face and then into a clay mould for the mask.

The first few classes of basic drawing skills even though I used sugar paper and pastel which would be less inhibiting were not as successful as the following classes particularly those on paper manipulation and clay mound. This type of work was found to be best suited to the level of ability in the class. Working with the clay as the structure gave the students the best understanding of the head and face. They enjoyed working and manipulating the clay and achieved good results quickly and effectively. Papier Maché was used on top of the clay mould to make the mask.

With the decoration of the masks it was found that students were very imaginative in their approach, they tended to stick to a similar theme to the one in their support studies. It was noted that masks were over painted many times with many colours constantly changing.

The original design was changed many times. Students became disappointed when the materials they had manipulated did not work as they had expected, maybe some felt their masks were babyish. When materials such as spray paints and pipe cleaners were introduced this heightened interest as students felt the masks were looking presentable. With the male students a structured type process worked best as they could achieve short term goals quickly and effectively. Some of the stronger students work was held back, due to my attention being given to the weaker students although this worthwhile in the end.



Illustration 7

Papier Maché over Clay Mould



Poem by Transition Year

Masks of Knowledge

Lost ancient, alien masks the humans did find.
They laid them down to see - there weren't two of a kind.
Curiosity took over and the masks were soon in place.
They were strange, peculiar and stuck on the face.
Overwhelming, mystical powers moved their bodies in dance.
They jerked and jived and glided and flowed: all in a trance.
Unknown to the humans it had all been a big plan,
they ere now filled with knowledge previously unknown to man.
A black magic clan from a now destroyed world created this ritual
- like dance, in which they twirled.
Time was running out, the dancing could not last.
The energy was drained out - the knowledge was passed.
The humans awoke to find their faces were free.
One precious head was left for all humans to see.
It contained vital knowledge of the future of the universe.
The humans now had the power - this could be a curse.

Written by 4th Year Students
in conjunction with
Miss McElroy and Miss Lawlor

This poem was the basis of a short film. The class then worked in conjunction with the Music teacher. Focusing on sound association, different types of music from classical to contemporary. They had to close their eyes and listen to music and decide how it made them feel or what they associated with a particular piece. From this they each chose a piece that they felt fitted the story they were trying to portray.

The class then looked at movement in art, dance, ballet and performance art, recapping on their drawing of emotions they had to try out expressing these through body movements. From then the class went about creating a story board for their film incorporating their poem and chosen music, discussion of stage shots, etc. There were a number of rehearsals with the music and locations for the piece to be shot before the final filming. The final piece was filmed by one of the students. After the class had all been introduced to the use of a camera in terms of light and various types of shots.

Many different types of support studies were introduced into the class to see their effects on the participation of the class from the use of masks in different cultures, the pre-Raphaelites, Klee and Kandinsky for music and art as well as ballets, films and finally the best of all being a talk from the renowned performance artist and parent in the school: Nigel Rolfe who gave a talk to the students on the history of performing arts. The support studies were made as varied and interesting as possible in order to excite the class about the scheme. Some worked and some didn't but all worked on a personal level at various times in a small way and many without realising.

Due to the ability of the class I found manipulative exercises such as working with clay, construction and decoration of the mask was very successful. So too were the classes working with the English teachers which the students found enjoyable. Even though all did respond at different times in the class, some students became disruptive and uninterested when their work did not progress as they felt it might. This was overcome by placing them in groups of 3 and 4 of mixed ability, their work improved greatly as group, interaction overcame individual frustration.



Illustration 8

Masks in stills from film





Illustration 9

Masks in stills from film





Illustration 10

Masks in stills from film





Illustration 11

Masks in stills from film



The female students in the class worked separately from the male students in order to achieve good results which they did while decorating and filming. The girls took a much more mature approach to their work and participated fully in every aspect of this scheme. Where as the male's although they did not reach the same level of participation in the class were more creative in other areas such as the manipulation of materials. There were some great improvements with particular students who were felt to be low achievers in other subject areas. After much work and co-operation between myself and these students good work was achieved.

Conclusions

Cross-Curricular teaching is an exciting way of presenting a lesson and valuable to students as an important part of teaching methodology. It is very suitable for Transition Year Groups. As well as being an exciting and fun way of presenting knowledge to students it can usually be very enjoyable for the teachers involved giving them a chance to exchange ideas and give the school more of a co-operative atmosphere. Students can gain a greater understanding of how subjects interlink and help in their acquisition of knowledge.

While working with this particular transition year group I used the results of a questionnaire which I gave out to the students as well as my self evaluations from the classes within this scheme as the basis for my conclusions. The results of the questionnaire are illustrated in the pie charts below.

Question One

Did you enjoy working with the Music and English teachers ?

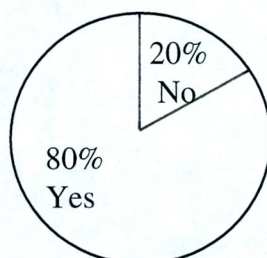


Fig.1

Question Two

Do you feel that the collaboration between the Music, English and Art Departments helped give you a greater all round understanding of how subjects link together ?

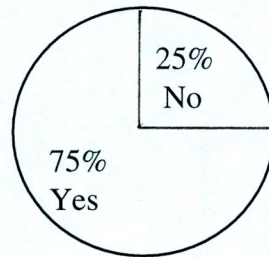


Fig.2.

Question Three

Would you consider doing Art again or maybe even for your Leaving Certificate ?

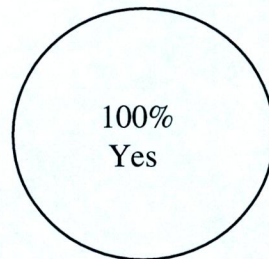


Fig.3.

Question Four

Have you gained a greater understanding of masks in different cultures through the support studies we have looked at ?

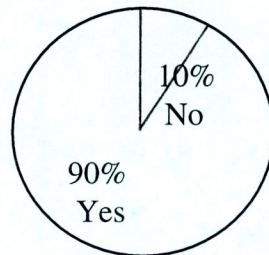


Fig.4.

Question Five

Do you feel you have a greater understanding of film production and the importance of art within this medium ?

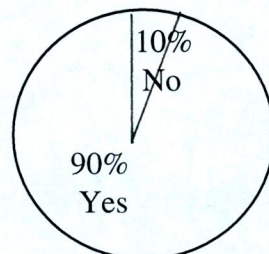


Fig.5.

The aims and objectives of transition year were achieved through this scheme. Because of the preconceived ideas this class had about art it made the scheme more challenging for me to accomplish the goals I had set out to achieve with this class.

The Music and Art Departments also found this collaboration successful and will be implementing it where ever possible. It was an enjoyable experience for both students and teachers.

The self esteem of the students was revised from the good results they achieved and they gained a lot from understanding that if they had co-operated more they could have achieved an even greater standard in their work.

Their understanding of art as a subject has been heightened through this experience and as you can see from the results of the questionnaire all students said they would consider doing art again, this to me reflects the satisfaction achieved by the students during this scheme. Short term goals helped students, to improve their skills in art, craft and design giving them a good basic understanding of the art elements.

Choosing a scheme which related to the students helped to improve participation and gave them a greater understanding and appreciation of film and advertising as an art form.

The use of support studies during this scheme was important in stimulating students for as well as looking at masks in different cultures it also helped introduce them to a new concept such as performance art.

There were also many other factors as well as discipline which could have attributed to a better overall scheme. With reference to cross-curricular teaching the timetable that a school creates for this year group could attribute to achieving a well throughout scheme. With this group the timetabling was an important element in achieving goals of cross curricular teaching. This is an important factor which must be taken in to consideration

in order for this type of work to be implemented successfully within a school framework.

This type of scheme I would definitely do again. Working with film and performance art gave me an interaction with the students on their own level. Film is now such an important part of their culture and must be appreciated as an art form of today.

I thoroughly enjoyed working with this group although there were some discipline problems at the start of the scheme which were overcome. I was happy with the work produced and I feel it gave the students something to feel proud of, raised their expectations and appreciation of art in school.

I was surprised to learn that many of the students wanted to take on another module of art other than this one because of the work achieved.

Bibliography

1. Lynch, Drudy, Sheelagh. "School & Society in Ireland."
Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1993.
2. Bell, Robert. "Education in Great Britain & Ireland."
London: Open University, 1973.
3. Rowntree, Derek. "Assessing Students - How shall we know them."
London: Hamper & Row, 1977.
4. Crooks, Tony. "The Changing Curriculum."
Dublin: O'Brien Education, 1990.
5. Hargreaves, David H. "Social relations in a secondary school."
London: Routledge & Keagan, 1967.
6. Hoggal, Paul. "Issues in Education."
Dublin: A.S.T.I., 1996.
7. Robertson, Seonaid, M. "Rosegarden & Labyrinth" - A study in Art Education.
Dallas: Second Spring, 1989.
8. Hoard, Majorie. "Relationships in Learning."
London: Heinmann, 1972.
9. Coolahan, John. "Irish Education" - History & Structure.
Dublin: Institute Public Administration, 1981.
10. Chivers, Judith. "Team-building with Teachers."
London: Kogan Press, 1995.
11. Humphreys, Tony. "A different kind of teacher."
Cork: Carraig Print, 1993.
12. Department of Education.
"Transition Year Programme" - An evaluation by the Inspectors of the Department of Education.
Dublin: 1996.
13. Kelleghan, Thomas. "Transition Education in Irish Schools."
Dublin: Greencastle Press, 1991.
14. Coolahan, John. "Achievement and Aspiration." Curricular initiatives in Irish Post-Primary Education in the 1980's.
Dublin: Tobar na tíre, 1990.
15. McLaughlin, J.T. "Towards a new era in Arts Education."
New York: American Council for the Arts, 1988.
16. Department of Education. "The Arts in Education" - A Curriculum and Examination Board Discussion Paper.
Dublin: 1985.

17. National Association for Youth Drama. "Placing Drama in the Curriculum" - Report of conference on drama and education for primary and post-primary teachers.
18. St. Patricks College, Drumcondra, Dublin, Nov.26-28, 1993.
19. Martin, David, "Report of Convenor of Media Studies."
Dublin: A.S.T.I., 1996.
- Sammons, Pamela. "School Matters" - The Junior Years.
Somerset: Open Books, 1988.
20. Duffy, Brian. "In Touch 2" - Magazine on The High School."
Dublin: 1996.
21. Hertz Lazavaivitz, Rachel. "Interaction in co-operative Groups."
U.S.A.: Cambridge University, 1992.

serves simple questions as soon as they turned their attention to space, time, and matter, Professor Baez concluded: "A sense of wonder is typical of many artists and men of science. A climate of wonder is the right climate in which to start studying physics."

It is an opinion shared by more than one scientist in our day, though it was not as yet evident to Magritte. The American physicist Fritjof Capra is at odds with some of his colleagues on this issue, but it is significant that he should have written these lines (which might have delighted Magritte, at least in part): "There is only one world, unique, indivisible, changing as I will it to, impervious to the idea of laws, equations, and different levels." (*The Tao of Physics*,



