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TALLAGHT COMMUNITY ART CENTRE IN ITS CONTEXT.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	p.1
INTRODUCTION	p. 2
CHAPTER 1 Community Art in Ireland.	p.4
CHAPTER 2 Tallaght Community Art Center	p. 17 r.

CONCLUSION	p. 45
BIBLIOGRAPHY	p. 46

p.**46**

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

Pg. Nos.

1. Brickformations, details of carved bricks.	21	
2. Brickformations, seat.	21	
3. Brickformations, seat.	22	
4. Brickformations, centre piece.	22	
5. Pavement Art, summer festival.	25	
6. Face painting, summer festival.	26	
7. Drama performances, summer festival.	26	
8. Art on the Railings, summer festival.	27	
9. Three boards on the outside wall of TCAC.	30	
10. Detail of the boards.	31	
11 & 12. Edel and Paul Smyth with their clay work from TCAC. 33		
13. Collecting willow branches.	38	
14. Patrick Dotherty.	39	
15. Construction of the tower.	40	
16. Working on the tower.	41	
17. The finished tower.	42	

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Introduction

I have chosen community art as the topic for my thesis. Community art has developed over the last twenty years and today is something present in almost every city and town in Ireland. I feel community art plays a very big part in helping society to develop and help break down barriers with in communities. I will include some of the benefits groups and individuals have gained from becoming involved in community art.

This thesis is based on my firsthand experience in working in the Tallaght Community Art Centre in the summer of 1997, together with interviews and material supplied by TCAC, C.A.F.E., The City Arts Centre, and The Arts Council as well as news paper and journal articles.

I have chosen to look at Tallaght Community Art Centre as my case study not only because I have experience in working there but also because of the many problems that Tallaght has as a community. Tallaght has become very highly populated in the last 30 years because of a massive relocation scheme decided upon by Dublin Corporation, moving families to the suburbs from the inner city. Many families from the south side of the inner city were moved to houses in Crumlin, Clondalkin, Ballyfermot and Tallaght, Tallaght now being the most densely populated one of all with a population of between 80,000 to 100,000 people. Situated seven miles out side the city centre means many people rely on local employment. More than half of Tallaght's population is unemployed and has been for years, which contributes to a very big drug abuse problem and high

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level of crime. One major and much needed addition to the town was The Square Towncentre built just over seven years ago. This has helped the situation for many people with large families and young children meaning they don't have to travel as far as before to buy groceries and has helped in the area of local employment.

There is a high level of single parents living in Tallaght and TCAC also helps them get involved in the community and provides classes for the children during the summer. Not only can the centre be a starting ground for friend ships but it can also provide an encouraging environment for those in the community with artistic ambitions. It can introduce children to visual culture and can be a form of teaching for them in addition to the more traditional methods of teaching. TCAC has made a great difference to the town since it opened its doors to Tallaght eighteen months ago and has found ways to help the community and adapt to their needs.

I will also include an account of work carried out in art centres with in Dublin city and in rural areas of Ireland, giving examples of how they have a common **a** challenge of trying to break down the segregation present among groups in their community.

3



CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY ART IN IRELAND.







"It's a tall order to be a community arts centre – you have to decide which community you're talking about. You can't be all things to all people. The City Arts Centre has made great effort to provide employment, entertainment and art to people in the inner city".

(Sealy, 1992, p. 10.)

"A means by which wasted emotional energy can be harnessed to purposeful expression."

(Lindsay, 1967, p. 110.)

I feel that both of these quotes help explain why Community Art is successful in Dublin and throughout the country. I think Community Art plays a huge part in providing entertainment for people and an education in many social issues.

In his article for Circa, Tom Duddy argues that behind the community arts movement is a romantic idea that art is for people of all classes, when in fact this is not the reality.

(Duddy, Circa 69, p.28, 30.)

He claims that out side the 'art world' people have the odds stacked against them that they may make any impact with their artwork. He talks about the 'class struggle' and how the history of the fine arts has always been associated with the upper class and the well educated. He believes that community art is not trying to a and a second sec

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He states that projects that bring about a sense of achievement to 'ordinary people' are only misleading them because they then find they are artists in the unofficial sense of the term. He also believes that art activists will say that the art world failed to connect with society's communities.

I agree with this to a certain extent but I feel that community art is something that a community, especially a community such as Tallaght, can relate to and gain from. I found with my experience working in TCAC that people do not expect to gain great knowledge of the 'art world' but often just want an environment that allows them to be creative. I agree that in areas of the country where there is less money the community may be less familiar with the 'art world' but I don't think that is why people turn to an art centre. An art centre does not promise an education in the arts or elevation in to the 'art world'. In my experience peoples expectations of the centre was that it would give them an opportunity to try something they have had an interest in and the room to make a mess of things surrounded by inexperienced people just like them. It appears to me that people look on art centres as a stepping stone in to the understanding of the arts. Many people have inhibitions of what exists in the 'art world' and this is as far as they feel comfortable in going.

6

Art can no longer be looked on as just another part of the school curriculum, over the last few years more people are starting to see how important it can be that a child, or an adult is allowed freedom to explore and express them_selves through art. Lack of money for education in the arts is a big problem, but in recent years people are starting to see art as more than just a hobby or interest and as a source of employment. The skills that people can obtain through the arts are valuable in other job areas also. Art gives people an easier way of understanding and a way of developing their ideas.

The whole concept of community art is based on the idea of using art to bring the community together and to get groups of people from the one area to communicate with each other and form friendships. Various community centres work with groups with special needs or with groups that are discriminated against within a community, such as travellers. They design projects to help specific groups over_come problems in their environment. The centres are also a place where local amateur artists can develop their skills and find encouragement.

An interest in art and in cultural education also leads to a greater appreciation of the environment and national heritage.

7



In one project carried out in Dublin city and the surrounding suburbs the Wet Paint Arts group worked together with the Community and Environment Department of Dublin Corporation to involve upwards of 2,000 children gain a greater knowledge of tribal and nomadic ways of life. The project lasted from the summer of 1993 until the summer of 1996. The children were introduced to dance, music and film. They then created images and objects related to the knowledge they gained from learning about Native American culture. (C.A.F.E., July/August 1993.)

This was valuable as Dublin has become a home for many refugees in the last few years whereas previously Ireland was a very homogenous society. This has led to a lot of prejudiced attitudes from adults and children alike. Teaching children about other ways of life and about other cultures using art, is an attempt to break down barriers like this. The concept of community art is based on this, that it will bring people together in an environment where they gain knowledge of art on some level. The idea that people will be more receptive of other cultures if they have an understanding of them filters down to the local community. If people understand for instance, the ways of travelling people then perhaps prejudices will be dropped and communities will grow together. In the case of the Limerick Travellers Training Project set up in 1993 the Travelling community found a way of opening up to the fact that in some cases they have a disadvantage as far as education goes. They decided on a performance using both speech and dance, to bring across the primary issues concerning travellers. Each individual traveller involved in the performance had his or her own personal experience portrayed on stage. Words were used as back drops on the stage to put across the

main point in each act. The Limerick School of Art and Design helped to facilitate the group's needs in producing a video and book to accompany the play. The play video and book were all produced with in one month with very limited resources.

(C.A.F.E., May / June 1994.)

The Wet Paint Arts group is also known for its touring plays, around community venues in the Dublin area. They have performed plays concerning issues such as the lack of educational opportunities for young women in inner city areas of Dublin, and issues that concern the unemployed and uneducated sections in society. They have run summer arts projects in places around Dublin where these issues are prominent, such as Ballyfermot, Ballymun, Cabra, Coolock and the inner city.

Art is a very enjoyable way in which to teach children and it has an added advantage that children can work together as well as individually. In 1994 a project was run in Drogheda over a period of four days where a group of people from Ireland along with some from Scotland and France got together and spray painted the underneath of the townbridge. Projects like this are ways of encouraging the local youths to use their talents and interests in a useful way and possibly help them to finding a future in what interests them.



Another beneficial side to working with groups using art is art therapy. This is a process of working with people using various artists' media such as paint or clay, and it is derived from two main areas, art and psychology.

(Caroline Devine, Thesis no. T1766.)

A fully trained art therapist can read from a patient's art work signs of stress or depression. People can express their feelings, fears, dreams, and inner experiences through art. Sometimes, even unknown to the person them_selves it is possible for art work to contain representation to their emotions. Although the artists involved in community art are not qualified as art therapists, it can be argued that they play some part in helping people find a way to express themselves through art. In a way it can be like the first step to some people.

The community not only benefits by new comers finding an interest or an education within the art centre, but the local artists of the community can also become involved in teaching workshops. In addition to this they can get involved in the art scene on a wider scale using the centre as a branching out point.

The Travellers Resources Warehouse located at Pavee Point, 46 North Great Charles St. Dublin 1, is a group that collects old materials that are thought to be of some use to art groups. It collects non-toxic industrial waste for reuse. Not only does this help the environment but it also calls for imagination and artistic skill to find good use for waste materials. The group produced a book illustrating ways of making good use from waste, in an attempt to get community groups and schools to take advantage of their collections.

(C.A.F.E., March / April 1994.)

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This is also an educational way for children to source their materials, and learn something about the environment at the same time. In addition to learning about the making of art and the co-operation involved in working with others, children have schemes open to them such as the one run by the Douglas Hyde Gallery in Dublin City. They operate a system where school groups or community groups can book a tour around the gallery and they can also ask an artist to visit them in their community and give a demonstration or an informative talk. I think working like this gives children a sense that art can be more than just an interest and that they have the potential to develop any interest they may have in the field. Art and co-operation are the two main factors that have made cross border projects like the WheelWorks successful. This project was an education not only in artistic skills but in communication skills also. Run by the Department of Voluntary Services in Belfast it operated from a van that travelled to six different communities around the Belfast area, spending a week in each one. Experiences of many different art forms were opened to the children including visual art, music, performance art and mixed media drawing skills. At the end of the project the children involved were asked to fill out questionnaires concerning the advantages and disadvantages of the programme. It proved to be a success, only highlighting the need for more projects like it and that preferably they would be an ongoing thing and not just summer projects.

11



The City Arts Centre situated in Moss Street in Dublin City is the base of many community art projects for the city centre. The Centre started its life in a room in Mary Street, in 1974 and it was then known as the Grapevine Art Centre. After this as the workload and the interest grew there was a room in North Great George's Street and then an entire building in North Frederick Street. The move was necessary because of Dublin Corporation refused permission to change the use of the building after the Stardust fire. Permission was denied for public events to be held on the premises, which were becoming too small for the increasing interest in the centre, anyway. In recent years the building it is situated in now has been adapted and renovated many times to adapt to the needs of the centre. The centre has been described by its organisers as "Servicing a need for facilities and expertise to be made available to the community, which will enable people to express themselves creatively, and to develop their skills and concepts."

(Irish Times, 30th of May 1989.) Author not given.

One of the bigger additions made to the centre in the first phase of development was the four rehearsal studios in the basement which have four and eight track recording facilities. U2 were one of the first groups to offer financial assistance, once the money went to providing facilities for young bands as put in the words of their manager Paul McGuinness " A focus for the enormous amount of creativity that there is in this city". Yamaha sponsored the centre with the equipment needed for the studio and it is thought that their contribution alone is worth at least £120,000.

(Flaherty / O'Connell, June 1989.)

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Rehearsal rooms were made available to any one interested at a rate based on what you could afford to pay, which is one factor that seems to be pretty much standard in relation to facilities in art centres. The building since 1989 has housed the offices for Creative Activity for Everyone, and at the time had five artists studios in the building. In July of 1990 the centre held an exhibition of African Art, called Art from the Frontline. The works involved were a collection from six states in South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The main common factor between the members of the group was their opposition to apartheid. Stated in the exhibition catalogue is the amazing estimated human and financial cost of this opposition, a staggering 1.5 million deaths and an estimated 60 billion American dollars in economic losses. (Dunne, July 1990.)

(Woodworth, June 1990.)

The exhibition started in Glasgow before coming to Dublin and was supported by Strathclyde District Council. It had been an amazing success and the community there took a great interest in it. Included in the programme were photography, theatre, music, workshops, and poetry as well as the exhibition of artwork. The photography included work from Mozambique and consisted of a selection of 49 photographs chosen by Ricardo Rangel. The pictures were looked on as a direct representation of life in Mozambique with the added advantage of not needing to be literate in order to understand them. The theatre contribution was made by Soweto Youth Drama Society and called 'Where is my son?' The performance needed little costume or set and depicts life in the community of Soweto as seen by the children in the town. The story tells of a family in the town

whose son is taken from them with no explanation or reason. The performance uses a lot of song and dance, which I can imagine brought in the strong influence of their cultural history. The music section of the exhibition included work from the Kafala brothers who came from Angola. In their songs they portrayed the pain and aspirations of a country effected so dramatically by war. The show had a great diversity of art and the mediums used, despite critics labelling it as 'Airport' art. This is the term given to art people would buy on holiday, a reminder of the trip and a boost to the tourist economy of the country. It brings to mind visions of very poor quality leather goods or woodcarvings that clutter your mantelpiece. This is not a term suited to this display of work, keeping in mind the background that the artists have come from and that immense poverty is a problem for all. The argument arose as to the artistic value of the exhibition. The artists have a very distinct cultural influence and have had a very prominent situation in their lives in the last number of years. I feel that bringing an exhibition such as this to Dublin has many factors to it that are more important than the artistic value of the work on display. The main advantage is that we become that much more educated in the way of life in a country such as South Africa, it has always been known as a country that has a strong cultural influence in the art it produces. It not only educates us in terms of an insight into the life they lead now but it also leads to an interest in many people to find out more about what the country has been through and brings every thing a little closer to home. It can also be looked on as a lesson to us to see just how these people look to the future and strive to believe in something that has cost them immensely. The City Arts Centre aimed to show Dublin's community an insight in to life in South Africa with out portraying it as patronising or superficial but to show that there is

14

more to it than what is shown in news reports. Also I believe people will see that community art is something present all over the world and that its aims and out comes are very similar in every country. With in the workshops in the Frontline project children saw artists from another country and learn that what goes on in their own community goes on in other communities too. These artists gave talks and demonstrations of the work they do, which is bound to be a more interesting way for a child to learn than from a textbook. It is first hand experience and most likely something they will always remember. Community Art projects deal with many issues some of which I have mentioned already but one issue it deals with on a large scale is physical disability. The City Art Centre has stated that it is "... dedicated to providing opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in the arts through promoting world-wide awareness of the educational and cultural benefits of the arts for all people."

(City Art Centre, Celebrating Difference leaflet.)

The Young Playwrights Programme is a group dedicated to increasing awareness of disability and to encourage play writing between groups of able bodied people and disabled. It deals mainly with people between the ages of 12 and 18. The group was encouraged to research a play with the theme of disability. The winning play in 1996 received professional help in its production and played a part in the Dublin Theatre Festival.

Along the same lines as this is a group called Counterbalance. They are a dance group also consisting of both people with and without disabilities. They meet once a week in a studio in Sandymount in Dublin and work on dance routines



aiming towards public performances. The specific type of dance they concentrate on is called contact improvisation and with in this they deal with the current every day issues of the ignorance able-bodied people have towards disabled people. In addition to dealing with physical disability there have been projects dealing with disabilities that society often does not even recognise. A production of 'Along Came A Spider' by Scoil Mhuire in Co Cork dealt with the issue of dyslexia. Written by four of the students the play was performed in the City Arts Centre in 1996. It tells the tale of a young girl called Roisin who suffers from dyslexia and it is revealed to all by Albert Einstein and Julius Caesar. The production was part of the 1996 Dublin Fringe Festival.

. The Home-Made Child is a fairy tale that is based around the story of BlueBeard's castle. It involves feelings of shame curiosity desire and innocence in an uncaring world and is the making of a tale of tragedy. It was not dealing with the issue of physical disability but performed by people with disabilities. The Theatre Company involved in this case is a company striving to break down barriers and illustrate the talent of people with learning disabilities in society through the plays they produce and perform though they also have an experienced production team working with them. The group was formed in 1984 to provide opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to become actively involved in the performance arts.

(City Arts Centre Broadsheet winter 1996.)

CHAPTER 2

TALLAGHT COMMUNITY ART CENTRE.







Tallaght Community Arts Centre was set up in July 1996. The building itself dates back to 1837, and is one of the oldest farmhouses remaining in Tallaght. The house itself has been renovated to include studio spaces, a community workshop and exhibition space, administrative space, a coffee shop and something that makes it that bit different to many art centres in Ireland, facilities to keep an artist in residence. This has been a great advantage to the centre to have artists live on the premises and conduct their work on an ongoing basis. Mary Grehan was appointed as director of the centre through open competition. She studied ceramics at the National College of Art and Design, completed the post graduate Arts Administration course at University College Dublin, worked in the Arts Council and then worked in the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork before taking charge of the Holles Street arts programme. FAS employ the majority of the staff members at TCAC. This Community Employment Scheme provides the centre with eleven part time workers, who between them operate the administration, security and maintenance of the centre. In March of 1997 the centre employed Paul Lee as Community Arts Outreach worker under a contract for one year, funded by a once off Global Grant from Tallaght Partnership. The centre is now trying to find a way to keep this arrangement on a more permanent basis. St. Basil's Training Centre for Travelling Women, Youthstart, and Cheeverstown are just three examples of the groups that Paul Lee has worked with. In facilitating the group's needs either by giving advice on art projects or by organising classes for them, his work is a very important way of establishing the various ways the centre can be of benefit to people. The centre has also availed of the Department of Social Welfare Student Summer Job Placement Scheme to employ staff during the summer months. This arrangement has allowed students

18

interested in the running of the centre and also students interested in the practical side of things to get some experience of how things work. It has also provided work experience for students from Jobstown Community College and Tallaght Community School, from FAS Community Development Course, Youthreach, and the Arts and Social Context Course at the University of the West of England.

This is also how I became involved in the centre. During the summer of 1997 I applied for the Department of Social Welfare's Student Summer Job Scheme and having being accepted on the programme I was offered a place in the Art centre.

In the first month of my time at the centre they opened The West Bank Café. The café also caters for out side orders from neighbouring business. The West Bank Café is seen as a way of attracting people in from the street and increasing the interest in the centre. This along with providing refreshments for the various activities with in the centre, makes the café a very valuable part of the centres make up. Another of the various ways the centre generates money for itself is through its studio spaces. Three studio spaces are available to rent for periods of six to twelve months each. This practice started in June of 1996 and local artists and crafts people are encouraged to avail of the facility. In October 1996 the very first artist in residence at TCAC moved in. Mark Maguire lived in Virginia House from October until the following May. During this time he worked towards an exhibition in April last. A project called On the Edge was launched between Mark and the centre which involved Mark working with eight adults from Tallaght based on the theme of



Tallaght and the fact that Tallaght is situated on the edge of the countryside but also on the edge of town. The outcome of artwork from this project was exhibited in Jobstown Community Centre and is now kept in TCAC and available for exhibition In Community Centres, Libraries and schools around the area. TCAC has maintained contact with the people involved in Mark Maguire's project and allows them use of a studio twice weekly free of charge to encourage them with their art interest. Another example of the Centre's methods of generating money is the Artist on CD exhibition that opened in July of 1997.

Artists from around the country took a plastic CD cover and made from it an individual piece of work which went on exhibition at Tipperary Arts Centre and then in Tallaght Community Art Centre. The artwork was raffled in December 1997 in order to raise money for both of the art centres involved. In July of 1997 a project called Brickformations was launched at the centre. The project was very much designed to bring together groups of kids between the ages of 7 and 15. Ceramic Artist Una Keeley was commissioned to work with the groups, with the aim behind the project being to create a site specific ceramic sculpture.

I was given the opportunity to work along side Una in this project. I found that I learned a lot not only about working with clay but I found working with other people and introducing to them, something new and interesting a very rewarding experience.

see fig 1 2 3 4.

The theme decided upon was the streetscape of Tallaght and the general impact that Tallaght has on new comers to its streets with the busy roads and heavy traffic. The interest in the project was much greater than had been anticipated.





Fig. 1



'Brickformations' Seat and close up detail.







Fig. **4**

'Brickformations'

Seat and centre piece.



The classes ran from the beginning to the end of July, with one class each day and each class lasting for 2 ½ hours. The students involved in each class were introduced to the centre from many different areas, the Tallaght Youth Service Summer Breakaway Programme, and the National Training Development Institute, as well as those who called in to Virginia House or heard about it through word of mouth. Each class consisted of between 8 and 12 students, and as mentioned before, the ages ranged from 7 to 15. Many of the students had had no previous experience with clay, and at first almost every one doubted their ability to produce something good enough to be included in the final piece. Having said this most students attended up to four classes, but because of the demand for places, priority had to be given to new students at the beginning of each week.

The basic aim of the project was to bring together groups from different back grounds and introduce them to working with the clay in an attempt to encourage them to learn more about it and perhaps keep in touch with the centre and develop their talent. The actual work done by the students included carving from clay bricks, carving anything such as their name or an image or a pattern. Enough of these bricks were carved to enable Una to cover benches made from large cement bricks. They were fired first and then attached on to the benches. Along side the benches is the main piece of work contributed to by both the students and by Una her self. The main standing piece is an abstract map of Tallaght, dictated by Una after she had seen Tallaght for the first time and found it to be some what confusing with it's many roads and junctions. The students made each of the vehicles on this piece from moulding clay as opposed to the

carving clay used in the seats. Sponsorship by companies is vital to community art projects because they have limited funding. In the case of this project all the materials and use of a kiln for firing the bricks, were provided by Kingscourt Bricks of Cavan.

To celebrate the first birthday of the centre in the summer of 1997 a weekend festival was decided upon.

See fig 567

This included clowns, face painting and plays, discos, and various art activities for children and in the evening's poetry nights took place in the exhibition area and community workshops and musicians from around the area were invited to play outdoors.

In addition to all of this the centre allowed some of its regular visitors to sell their paintings along the railings surrounding the area, much like what you would see at St. Stephens Green or Merrion Square.

see fig. 8

A fee was charged by the centre to cover insurance and a percentage of the money made went to the centre also. This was very successful and a lot of work sold, and a lot of money was made. One year previous to this when the centre first opened, pavement art was launched. This involved children drawing on the pathway of the centre in coloured chalks, and proved to be such a success with them, and also brightened up the area so much that it was brought back again for the festival.

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'Pavement art' Part of the summer festival.







Fig. **7**

Face painting and drama performances at the summer festival.





'Art on the Railings' Part of the summer festival.



Various groups in the Tallaght area are called upon to work with the centre in order to make a success of events like this. In the case of this festival the Tallaght Artsquad contributed by designing and producing costumes for chess pieces worn by the children on a huge chessboard constructed by the children under supervision from the centre. Over the three days the centre managed to include performances from many groups such as the Linn Oir Theatre, and the Tallaght Youth Theatre.

see fig 7

Both of these groups run along the same lines as the centre itself. They provide an interest for the children and in this instance the children come in contact with the Tallaght Community Arts Centre, which will hope fully encourage them to take part in more activities and classes provided by them.

In a bid to promote the centre's festival a Saturday class was devoted to coming up with an idea to inform people in the local area of what was planned. The class consisted of about 12 children from ages 7 to 13. Almost all of the children had been selected from a list of names that were too late to enrol in the other Saturday work shops and so this class was designed to deal with those that would other wise have been disappointed. The class ran for 4 weeks, and for 2 hours each week. It was decided that a clown constructed from plywood and decorated by the children would be the best way of advertising the events because not only would it be bright and colourful but also each child could decorate their own section of it.

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Permission was given for the finished clown to be displayed in Clerys department store in the Square Towncentre, just across the road from the centre. The design was planned out in the first week of the class and the second and third weeks were spent working on the clown and on the juggling balls. For the final week of the class the children helped staff of the centre to assemble the clown in the shop window. The children involved in this project were very keen to continue with their interest and so morning classes were arranged for some weeks to follow. Projects such as Brickformations were designed to be out door site- specific not just to encourage people to come in to the centre but also to utilise the area the centre has, due to lack of a purpose built exhibition centre.

It was because of this that the morning classes were planned to create wall pieces for the centre. The first few classes were spent introducing the children to using plaster, sand, and paint, the media chosen for the project. It was thought that this would stand up to the weather all year round if kept outdoors.

see fig 9 10

The children each got small boards to begin their work on and were introduced to tools like piping tubes used to ice cakes, forks, scrapers and any other objects to hand that could be used to make marks with the media.

One of the three final boards is made up of the small boards the children worked on. The other two boards take their influence from the surrounding area and it was left up to the children to decide on an image for them. One board is made up with the image of a horse, because of all the stray horses found all around

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The three boards made for the outside wall of the centre.





Fig. **10**

Close up detail of the work made with sand, plaster and paint.



Tallaght, and the other has an image of a paintbrush, which represents the art centre.

Art and Drama workshops are held for periods of up to six weeks in the summer months and run on Saturday mornings. The age groups catered for are six to eight year olds, nine to twelve year olds, thirteen to sixteen year olds, and adults. Each workshop lasted about two hours and sometimes a little longer. The centre employs community artists with experience to teach the classes and the centre also subsidised the cost of the classes. The mixed media needed to facilitate the work is kept to a low cost and paid for by the fee the students pay which is usually £12.00for the six weeks and this is added to by the centre.

Paula Jane Shooter, a fine art painter and life drawing tutor in Ballyfermot Senior Art College was employed by the centre to give workshops like this for a period of eight weeks. Each class had about 15 children aged between nine and twelve. The children used a huge range of techniques from clay and plaster to paint and charcoal. At the end of the classes the children got to keep the pieces they made. see fig. **11** 12

Generally the children that take part in the workshops have heard about it through friends that have been involved in the centre or their parents, but a lot of people drop through the gates curious as to what the place has to offer. The administration staff keeps a file of names of those interested in the up coming classes. The community has reacted very favourably to the classes that have been on offer so far, and many people have benefited greatly by the fact that there are regular affordable classes for them and their children. They have also been a great (1) A transformed to the second seco second sec

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Fig.**11**



Fig. **12**

Edel and Paul Smyth aged ten and nine with work they produced in Paula Jane Shooter's class at TCAC.



Edel and P.au. Singth aged ten and time with work that produced in Paula Ante

way of introducing people to the other activities the centre has. Many people have first encountered the centre through a workshop but through this they then learn about various other activities. The workshops have also introduced many of the community artists to one another as well as many children to one another.

The funding for the centre comes from South Dublin County Council and from The Arts Council on more or less an even level. The criteria for an arts centre to be awarded money from the Arts Council are listed in their funding booklet as being "The centre should provide a point of access to local, national and international arts. It should offer support for the development of local arts and artists. It should provide opportunities for participation in arts practice and education in the arts." "The organisation should show a full identified and understood social and cultural context for its work. It should provide opportunities for collaboration between professional and non- professional artists. It should provide opportunities for non-artists to participate in making art. It should have a developed artistic policy. It should have a track record of process led work."

(Arts Council grants to organisations. 1998. P.17)

(Arts Council bursaries, awards and schemes. 1998. P.17.)

All of the above need apply to the centre before it will qualify for the funding it needs to operate. It does however state below the criteria for new art centres that they do not normally qualify for a grant. Once the centre has proved it has local backing such as that from its local authority, in this case South Dublin

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County Council, it is often looked on as being eligible for a grant. FAS contribute by supplying the centre with its eleven part time workers and with the out reach worker Paul Lee. Once off grants for the centre have been given from Tallaght Partnership, FAS, The Community Enterprise Programme, The Combat Poverty Agency and the Irish Writers Centre. In addition to this the centre makes some money from the various workshops and classes it holds through the year. Jam nights and nights of poetry reading where there is a small fee charged on the door are also a means of income, though they don't amount to very much. Each time a project is decided upon funding has to be found to facilitate it and this can be very labour intensive.

TCAC set up in July of 1996 is a very new and very much needed addition to the town. Tallaght has become over the last few years a very densely populated town, with a population of 80,000 it is comparable in size to an Irish city. Naturally a town this big has many problems concerning local employment and this has in the case of Tallaght contributed to a very high drug abuse problem and a very high level of crime.

In TCAC they run a workshop twice a week where Travellers from the local community get together and take part in classes such as yoga and drama. In addition to this they take part in the art classes and various other events open to all in the Tallaght community. Having two groups of very different backgrounds working together in a creative environment is proof that the centre is working well as a community art centre.



Every thing concerning the Tallaght Arts Centre from renovating the building it is situated in (work carried out through FAS) and the staff it employs through to the artists it works in conjunction with and the people it tries to reach, is all directed at helping the people affected by these circumstances. The centre provides classes for children and for adults from art to performing art. In addition to encouraging an interest in art the art centre provides a place for people to meet one another. The classes are kept at a low price in an attempt to make them affordable to the majority of Tallaght's unemployed families. Although the centre is only in operation a short time, the work carried out between it and the local community has led to the beginnings of some very valuable work programmes.

An example of this is the work carried out between American artist Patrick Dotherty and a resident of one of the local neighbourhoods who is involved in a drug rehabilitation programme. The project started from a programme run by the Arts Council where by two artists from the north of Ireland and two from the South went on an exchange with two artists from the north and two from the South of America.

Mary Grehan explained to me in my interview with her that the brief concerning this project was very broad and stated that the artists in question were to be of any discipline, for example dance, music or visual art. (Interview at TCAC December 1st 1997.)

The art centre compiled a request for one of the visiting artists



to reside with them at the centre and their proposal was matched with Dotherty's. Dotherty is a sculpture artist and much of his work is very large scale and constructed with willow branches. After meetings between the centres staff and Dotherty they decided a large site-specific sculpture for the out doors of the centre was the best way to work, because that way they were creating something you could see from the street out side.

See fig. 13 14 15 16 17

In a similar way to the Brickformations project the influence for this project also came from Tallaght and the built up town it has become. Dotherty came up with the concept of a large round tower to be sited on the grounds of the centre around an existing tree. The main reason for this being that the centre has no purpose built exhibition space so they have a greater need to use the space they do have. To source the funding for this project was a big task, the scaffolding alone including insurance costs totalled £1400 (sponsorship of £1100 and £300 from the centre). As you can see from the photograph you can actually step inside the tower and see right to the top of the tree inside.

The project ran for the summer, but unlike the Brickformations project it did not have a huge community involvement, only one person from the local community involved. This project is one example of how the centre helps the community in Tallaght, where it's dealing with something not every community around the country has, that being a high level of drug abuse. The centre has adapted its self very rapidly to the special needs of Tallaght. This project has helped one individual by trying to create an interest for him within the art centre that will





Collecting the willow branches.





Patrick Dotherty.





Construction of the tower.



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Construction of the tower.



Construction of the tower





The 40ft round tower finished.



hopefully lead to something in the future and help him stay with the drug rehabilitation programme.

The Tallaght Youth Theatre is made up of the Tallaght Artsquad and St. Kevin's Drama Workshop and formed in 1994. In their second year they produced a play titled 'Stepping Stones', based on the local history of Tallaght stretching over the last 4,000 years. The play was made up of a series of sketches portraying the plague, the coming of the monastery, the Fenian battle, the Black and Tan war and finally the building of the new town. The play looks at things from the point of view of the people of Tallaght that survived them. Performances like this are very educational for both the people involved in them, who in this case had little or no experience in acting, and to the people who watch them. I feel people will come away with a better understanding of the history and heritage of their town through watching a performance like this than if they read an account of it in a book, provided it is depicted well. It is information such as this that helps to lead to a better understanding of a town if people know and understand the story behind Tallaght becoming what it is today, then there is more of a chance people will learn to respect their environment. This is an example of a project that has benefits in more than just the performing. Also in 1995 the Tallaght based group Alternative entertainments produced a short film called 'Five Years Among the D'Pliphe'. It was based on the idea of the huge local housing estates around Dublin's inner city and the attitudes of the people living in them and comparing their attitudes to that of what is known of the colonising powers towards Indians and Aborigines a hundred years ago.

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There are many organisations around Tallaght set up to help young people get involved in training programmes and various classes that are designed to teach them skills. One of these places is The Tallaght Youth Service. TYS has worked on programmes with the centre such as the summer festival and they often join forces with various groups to create programmes to give groups of young people an interest. They work much like the centre by setting up classes in various activities, the main difference being that the TYS deal mainly with people from the age of 10 to 21. The other difference being that they deal with many different areas and not just art and drama. They work in conjunction with other groups to provide classes in computer skills, language courses, health and fitness, and out door pursuits to name only a few. They also provide help and information on substance abuse for young people at risk to it and also to parents and families of drug abusers. It is through working with groups like this that has helped the art centre cater for the needs of Tallaght and has helped them to understand the needs of the community. Developing programmes to bring together groups that otherwise have little understanding of one another is part of the task for a community art centre.



Conclusion

My aim in writing this thesis was to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of topics dealt with, and services provided by, Community Art Centres.

In today's society children gain more from art centres than freedom of creative expression, they are also given a chance to develop in a less prejudiced environment and this helps encourage them to think with an open mind. In Tallaght and areas that are as badly affected by similar social issues, the presence of a centre like TCAC is very important to the development of the community. An education in the arts is not feasible to most people living in Tallaght. Further education is not some thing a lot of people in areas like Tallaght can consider and that's where places such as art centres come in. I am not suggesting that the art centre have the responsibility of educating the community to the degree that an art college would, but it provides a place where such activities can be conducted.

Not only has TCAC introduced to the community of Tallaght, culture and an understanding of how an individual already has what is needed to improve the quality of their life, but has also provided the community with the ability to do so.







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