THE ADOLESCENT GIRL: CAN POSITIVE SELF-IMAGES BE VISUALISED THROUGH THE ART ROOM?

SUMMARY

This dissertation deals with visualisation of the adolescent girl and how art could be used as a medium to explore the possibility of positive self-imagery. Negative views of the female in society are investigated in Chapter One and this leads onto how modern feminist educators are trying to redress the balance using reinterpretation of stories as a medium. Story telling together with visual illustration is used as a medium to explore positive self-images in Chapter Two. Holistic education in the form of cross-curricular ties and relevant contemporary approaches to education are investigated in Chapter Three.

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in

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INTRODUCTION

The core of this dissertation is based around concerns for the adolescent girl, are her needs being met in society and in particular can Art Education have any positive impact in exploring questions of gender equality related to her?

We live in a media driven age and its' presence is a "component part of our existence", (1) none more so than the adolescent, for all adolescents engage some way or other with T.V., radio, film, video, magazines and newspapers. Through investigation of influences and attitudes to the adolescent girl and an art room based project, drawing on aspects of adolescent popular culture, it is hoped to explore the possibility of visualising positive self-images in conjunction with the art room.

Laid out in three Chapters, Chapter One looks at the influences and attitudes of society to the female and how the mass media can reinforce stereotypes damaging to a young girl's full development. Chapter Two looks at reinterpretation, how this can be used to challenge established attitudes and depictions of women. In a Practical Project, the investigation of autonomy in relation to a fairy tale heroine is used as the basis for the visualisation of a collaged illustration. Chapter Three reflects on the outcomes of this project and the importance of making the educational process relevant to young people by placing it squarely in the context of their experience. (1)

FOOTNOTES – INTRODUCTION

1.   Robert Ferguson, "Race, Gender and a Touch of Class" in <u>Teaching Art and Design</u>, Roy Prentice ed. (London: Cassell 1995.) p. 50.

CHAPTER 1

THE ADOLESCENT GIRL : INFLUENCES AND ATTITUDES

In a society where the rights and potential
of women are curtailed no man can be free. (1)

In line with this statement by Mary Robinson (1992) is it possible that society has curtailed a young adolescent girl's ability to create a positive self-image? To examine this question it is necessary to look at the areas of influence on the developing girl. How does she learn about her place in society, what are the social institutions that might feed her negative attitudes regarding femininity in the form of sexism and stereotyping?

In the Department of Education's study Gender Matters (1996) stereotypes are defined as:

> A commonly held view of the characteristics
> of groups, beliefs and institutions often
> simplified and rigid. No allowance is made
> for individual differences. (2)

It goes on to state that in most cases sex stereotyping appears to relate to women and sexism is perceived as being against the female sex, portraying too restrictive a view of their roles and rights. (3) Powerful social institutions such as the family, school and the workplace have been identified as reinforcing sexism in society. (4) The first two institutions are vital in the development of the child, whereas the attitudes to women in the workplace affect

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her potential and actual development as an adult. As a girl reaches adolescence and begins to spread her wings the influence of the mass media comes into play. The rebellion of youth that coincides with physical and psychological impact of hormonal change can obscure the ability of the girl to perceive that the mass media is basically the mouthpiece for society's attitudes to women, however ambiguously it tries to prevent these attitudes.

In this chapter it is useful to look at these institutions and examine their influences.

(i) The Family

The roots of female conditioning start in early childhood. Girls are daily conditioned to be feminine (i.e. passive, powerless and gentle). In her book The Second Sex (1972) Simone de Bouvoir refers to this passivity as a state chosen for a girl by others in society:

> The young girl will be a wife, a grandmother;
> she will keep house just as her mother did,
> she will give her children the same care as
> she received when she was young – she is
> twelve years old and already her story is
> written in the heavens. She will discover it
> day after day without ever making it. (5)

Girls learn from their mothers who in turn have received the same stereotypical messages down through the ages.

(ii) Toys

Toys deemed suitable for girls reinforce stereotypes, the doll, and the pram, toy cookers and domestic equipment particularly instil the expectation of marriage and motherhood but not an independent career. Boys' toys by comparison deal with the potential prowess of the child in sport, construction and motor skills.

In a summary of findings from the Gender Equality Action Research (G.E.A.R.) (1993) it states that "...fewer girls' schools provide material for boy preferred activities (cars, lego, etc.)". (6)

Whilst the baby doll reinforces the mothering role, the Barbie Doll presents girls with an ideal of adult beauty reinforcing society's icon of the "Busty Blond Bimbo". Girls play with this doll from an early age, three years and upwards. It is interesting to note that the Spice Girls receive their most support from seven-year-old girls.

It would be very easy to blame families for the injustice of these stereotypes but the family is intertwined with and dependent upon the rest of society. (7)

(iii) Education

Current educational provision for girls allows them in theory if not always in practice access to more or less the same subjects as boys. But the core of the stereotype and the essential nature of the differences in educational experience of the two sexes have undergone little change. (8)

The stereotype of women is based on a narrow functionalist definition of women's nature, i.e. that of a wife and mother. In the education of the girl, society's perception of her most appropriate role thus takes precedence over the primary role of education itself which is the drawing out of the full potential of the individual human person.

Gender inequality has been recognised in education and studies have been made. The E.S.R.I. Report Co-education and Gender Equality (1996) found that co-education had a clear negative effect on girls performance in mathematics, (9) whilst the Gender and Equality Action Research project (G.E.A.R.) (1993) found:

> Provision for extra curricular activities in girls' schools are more likely to provide cookery, nature study, sex education, dance, drama and needlework. (10)

They could be describing 19th Century female education and aspiration.

(iv) Workplace

Psychologists Judith Bardwick and Elizabeth Douvan (1971) emphasise the incompatibility between feminine personality and the characteristics needed to succeed in the workplace. Although women are now allowed to work and are encouraged to work, they are often not prepared for work. (11)

During the 1970's and early 1980's in Ireland legislation helped to put in place to improve the participation of women in the Irish labour force. The following laws were passed:

- The Anti Discrimination Pay Act 1974 – introduced in 1976.

- Removal of the Marriage Bar 1973.

- The Employer Equality Act 1977.

. The Maternity Protection of Employees Act 1981. (12)

Society's attitudes and a woman's very nature are deemed incompatible with traditional male dominated careers.

(v) Adolescence

Erikson (1971) "....recognises self identity as a particular development stage associated with adolescence." (13)

Peter Blos (1994) states that one of the essential preconditions for character formation during adolescence is that the ego must loosen infantile object bonds. "…. Stimulated by pubertal change" adolescents gradually draw away from their parents and seek out alternative role models (pop, film stars, friends, sportsmen and women, etc.) (14). They are vulnerable and potentially ripe for exploitation.

In acknowledging the vulnerability of both sexes in adolescence, the focus from now on will be on the young girl because her vulnerability it two fold. Not only does she have to deal

with the traumas of adolescent development but she must also deal with society's warped and confusing view of positive female role models. Mary Pipher (1995) describes how girls in psychologist I.K. Broverman's (N.D.) classic study document find it impossible to be both feminine and adult. In the study male and female tick off adjectives describing healthy men, healthy women and healthy adults. The results show healthy men and healthy adults as having the same qualities but healthy women as having qualities incompatible with being a healthy adult. They are described as passive, dependent and illogical as opposed to the adult description as defined by being active, independent and logical, concluding that it was impossible to be thus, a healthy adult and a healthy woman. (15)

Girls are caught in this stereotypical femininity trap. Stereotypes of femininity have undergone change. The world no longer believes in the moral and intellectual inferiority of women typical of the models of femininity portrayed by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas but neither is she perceived to have total equality as John Berger states "...men act and women appear". (16)

(vi) Mass Media

Media as we can see is tied hand and glove with communication. A look at the history of communication shows how man's desire to exchange thoughts and ideas with his fellow man

was built into the fabric of society. In <u>Media Knowledge and Power</u>

(1987) Raymond Williams quotes Sophocles' <u>Antigone</u>:

> Language and thought like the wind
> and the feelings that make the town
> Man has taught himself,
> and shelter against the cold
> Refuge from rain. (17)

Commonly known as the Hymn of Man these verses show how "...

men have taught themselves language, thought, the sense of

society and the means of material shelter as the basis of human

life."(18) The survival of these words through oral tradition and

eventual inscription of Sophocles' Plays by Scribes is a wonder of

human communication. The survival of the message, the strong

social values it contains evokes a confidence in the responsibility for

good in communications between Mankind.

Advances in the growth in the mass media in the last few

decades have been huge. We are confronted by advertising at

every turn, in the street, in newspapers, magazines, it even

interrupts films and T.V. programmes. It invades our homes through

T.V., radio and video. (19)

Mass Media plays a large part in communicating ideas

between people, yet the communication is one-way. In telling us

what to think, and also in the messages sent through the media, it is

difficult to question the accuracy of the information given, especially

as it imparts its' information by stressing certain issues and ignoring

others.

Quoting Denise Kelly (N.D.):

> By constantly ignoring issues they
> (the Media) manage to make them
> seem unimportant and consequently
> we begin to believe they are unimportant. (20)

We live in a technological age, the machine is part of our household and culture, none more so than for the adolescent who has grown up in this age. They are prime receivers of any messages filtered through their electronic accessories. Therefore, communication is taken for granted, the power and potential for propaganda through the media is acceptable in our society because of our complacency with its' role.

After the Second World War commerce began to replace traditional culture as a source of values in society:

> Meaning no longer confined to Art and
> Literature was transferred to patterns
> of consumption. (21)

The teenager was invented as a category of market research. In The Teenage Consumer (1959), Mark Abrams not so much identified the niche a teenage consumer could fill but rather gouged out the niche and created consumers to fill it. The media were quick to exploit the possibilities of youthful depravity as Helen Rees (1986) says:

> Power and money does not distinguish
> between normality and delinquency. (22)

Power and money fuelled by a patriarchal view of the world has exploited teenage rebellion and burgeoning sexuality. Its'

neutral and benign veneer promotes and condemns the excesses of teenage culture, for example the advertising of Alco Pop drinks. The media is very attuned to progressive changes in society and has the ability to incorporate and distort these changes to their own ends. Mary Flanagan (1985) refers to this when she describes how the Media has co-opted the Women's Movement, emphasising sexuality as an element of liberation; "sexual freedom" is substituted for economic and social liberation. She describes how it is conceived in male terms and is both destructive and a distortion of reality. Flanagan goes on to state that this kind of liberation "… threatens no one, indeed it validates the *status quo*." (23)

Nowhere is this more apparent in 1998 than in the construction by males of the "Spice Girls" phenonomen as powerful role models for girls.

The reinforcement of stereotypes in the family, school and workplace has been looked at but these stereotypes are also filtered down through the media. We have talked about the one-way messages received through the media and how society has accepted them as our reality:

> Children after watching many hours of T.V.
> can come away … with this very lopsided
> view of women firmly in place. (24)

Adolescents in particular accept images of themselves processed through the media as part of the wallpaper of their lives.

In adolescence the girl moves from an unconscious awareness of the world and her place in it to a self-conscious and critical view of her place and role in society. (25)

She at once wants to rebel and conform. Rebel against adult parental controls and conform to her peers. The media i.e. teenage magazines, pop videos, film and T.V. all appear to comply with her turmoil. Unfortunately it is not easy for her to identify media messages that support her passage to adulthood from those that exploit her vulnerability.

In this chapter the influence of family, school and potential workplace have proved to have a huge influence on the psyche of the developing girl in the reinforcement of sexism and stereotyping.

The media have been shown in this chapter to have huge power, its influence on society nearly subliminal because of how it is taken for granted. The modern adolescent born into a strong media culture is seen as being susceptible to its messages.

The media has reinforced examples of stereotypes in this chapter and the media has circumvented advances in attitudes to women as it manipulates any new development to its own end. Adolescence has been identified as a market commodity and money and power, society's main value system, does not behave responsibly towards the vulnerability of the teenager, especially the girl caught up in the maelstrom of adolescence.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 1

1. <u>Gender Matters</u>, (Dublin: Department of Education, 1996). p. 11.

2. Ibid., p. 12.

3. Ibid.

4. Michael Cohen and Tina Reid, eds. <u>Ourselves and Our Children</u>, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1981) p. 318.

5. Simone de Bouvoir, <u>The Second Sex</u>, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972) p. 325.

6. <u>Gender</u>, p. 6.

7. Cohen, (*et al*) <u>Ourselves</u>, p. 321.

8. Mary Cullen, <u>Girls Don't Do Honours, Irish Women in Education 19th and 20th Century</u>, (Dublin: Women's Education Bureau 1987) p. 136.

9. Damien Hannon," Co-Education and Gender Equality Report" in <u>Gender</u>, p. 8.

10. <u>Gender</u>, p. 6.

11. Jeanne Bunker,"Rohrbaugh", <u>Woman: Psychology's Puzzle</u> , (London: Abacus, Sphere Books, 1981) p.168 -169.

12. "Women and Development, Equality, Participation, Education" in <u>World University Service</u> (N.D.), Dublin, p. 36.

13. David Fontana, <u>Psychology for Teachers</u> 2nd ed. (London: B.P.S. in association MacMillan, 1991) p. 248.

14. See Adams, Gullotta and Adams <u>Adolescent Life Experiences</u> 3rd ed. (Calif.: Brooks Cole Publishing, 1994) p. 227.

15. Mary Pipher, <u>Reviving Ophelia</u>, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995) p. 39.

16. John Berger, <u>Ways of Seeing</u>, (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1977) p. 47.

17. Boyd-Barrett, Braham <u>Media Knowledge and Power</u>, (London: Longwood Publishing in ass. Open Univ., 1987) p. 47.

18. Ibid., p. 49.

19. Mary Flanagan,in <u>Personally Speaking</u>, Liz Steiner,-Scott, ed., (Dublin: Attic Press, 1985) p. 238.

20. Denise Kelly, <u>Media Matters</u>, (Dublin: Exempler Publishing, N.D.) p. (ii).

21. Helen Rees, <u>British Youth Culture</u>, (London: Conran Foundation, 1986) Introduction.

22. Ibid.

23. Flanagan, <u>Personally Speaking</u>, p. 240.

24. Viktor Lowenfeld, <u>The Lowenfeld Lectures</u>, (Penn State: Univ. Press, 1982) p. 310-313.

CHAPTER 2

REINTERPRETING THE FEMALE ROLE:
AN ART ROOM BASED PROJECT

In the first chapter the influence of society's attitude to women as expressed through the media has been established. One important influence was not mentioned and that is the fairy tale. This chapter looks at how the fairy tale has been used to reinforce a stereotype and how modern feminists and educators have tried to use it as a tool to re-evaluate society along non-sexist lines:

> It has been demonstrated by psychologists
> And educators time and time again that stories
> And fairy tales do influence the manner in
> Which children conceive the world and their
> place in it, even before they begin to read. (1)

What are the messages to young girls contained in the standard stories of Cinderella, Snow White, Beauty and the Beast, Little Red Riding Hood? Jack Zipes maintains that in these stories the female is either poor or a beautiful princess who will win her award if she demonstrates her passivity, obedience and submissiveness. The stepmothers are always evil and the best woman is the housewife. Beauty is the highest value for the female, and males are expected to be aggressive and shrewd. Often these stories equate beauty and virtue with the colour white and evil and ugliness with the colour black. (2)

These stereotypes again are in line with stereotypes looked at in Chapter One.

Folk tales have been an important part of cultural life since ancient times. In early Irish literature, Madhbh the warrior Queen of the Tain Bo Cuailnge and Deirdre and Grainne heroines of the Ulster Cycle are all strong characters exercising autonomy over their own destinies. (3) These heroines not surprisingly are products of the richly matriarchal society of the time. Jane Yolen (1986) has studied different European Folk versions of Cinderella and establishes that the original heroine was an active persuer of justice and truth. (4)

It has only been since the end of the 17th Century that Perrault began to transform Cinderella into a passive and obedient young woman. He paved the way for the Brothers Grimm and various other American authors to produce dainty and prudish Cinderella *en masse* in the 19th Century. In the 20th Century Walt Disney has compounded this trait further, producing heroines that are totally sanitised:

> ...according to the sexual preferences of
> males and the conservative norms of the
> dominant classes in England and America. (5)

The insidious propaganda of this image is all the more powerful because of its interpretation through the visual media of film and T.V. Children are especially susceptible to this medium as shown in Chapter One.

In her book From The Beast To The Blond Marina Warner

(1994) concurs with this opinion:

> A certain view of fairy tales is being
> naturalised by companies like Disney
> and then domesticated by publishers
> like Ladybird Books, who have now
> struck a deal with Disney so that all the
> illustrations are based on the films'
> graphics and storyline. (6)

She goes on to maintain that the "corporate reach" is

immense in the "global village" and that "the imagination of children

reared on Ladybird fairy tales will be saturated with the Disney

version, graphic and verbal". (7)

Male and female writers have explicitly tried to alter the

aesthetic constructs and social content of these stories to try and

create modern fairy tales that reflect feminist viewpoints. These are

indications of how society is seeking to redress the balance against

women and as Mary Robinson's quote in Chapter One suggests,

seek a more inclusive society.

In the Practical Project the fairy tale is used as a device in

conjunction with visual media to explore an autonomous image of a

young girl.

PRACTICAL PROJECT

The practical project was based in Presentation Convent, Terenure. This school participates in the Free Education Scheme. It has an enrolment of 550 pupils and these pupils would be generally drawn from both lower and middle class families. The scheme of work was designed around six lessons of 80 minutes duration. The participants were 5th Year girls aged between 16 and 18. The class consisted of 20 girls with very mixed ability and poor motivation. The overall aim of the project was that through re-interpretation of a traditional fairy tale a collaged illustration would be designed using mixed media to examine the image of the adolescent girl.

Project

Lesson 1:	Re-interpretation of fairy tales and potential of tonal contrast.
Lesson 2:	Visualisation of character.
Lesson 3:	Proportion in self-portraiture.
Lesson 4:	Manipulation of photographic and drawn imagery.
Lesson 5:	Spacial considerations in coloured photomontage.
Lesson 6:	The figure in space.

Lesson 1:

The objective of the first lesson was to develop the concept of reinterpretation and updating of stories, the practical element dealt with developing an awareness of tonal contrast in mixed media.

In seeking a story that would help determine a positive active role for a heroine it was important to choose a tale that dealt with autonomy, the right to self-govern. Grimm's fairy tale The Goose Girl (8) was chosen as the traditional story for the basis of their own tale and a comparison with a modern equivalent The Princess Who Stood On Her Own Two Feet (9) by Joanne Desy (1986) was also selected.

Bruno Bethelheim (1975) identifies The Goose Girl as a universal story dealing with a young girl gaining autonomy from her parents and the story's other main theme is the usurption of the heroines rightful place by a pretender. (10)

Through Support Studies (posters of films such as Emma, Clueless and Romeo and Juliet) reinterpretation and updating was teased out. The girls understood the connection between Emma and Clueless and they all came up with the example of the film Pretty Woman being an updating of Cinderella.

Illustrations of Madonna from the book I Dream Of Madonna (11) were shown as examples of the use of mixed media in illustration. Extracts were read from the two stories to establish connections between both. The theme of a young girl leaving home, travelling to another country to wed or seek her fortune was set in place. Her usurption by a pretender and how she overcomes adversity and regains her rightful place was also established as a major theme in the story they had to write. This story would be the source for their mixed media collaged illustration.

How their collaged illustration would be visualised was dealt with in the demonstration section of this lesson. By limiting the exploration of tonal contrast to black, white and grey it was hoped to simplify their understanding of tone. Support Studies of collage by Picasso and Braque placed this art form in a historical context. Modern black and white advertising illustrations were looked at and emphasis placed on the wittiness of the images. Paula Rego's black and white etchings of nursery rhymes were examined to show how she blocked in shapes of tone.

The task the girls had to complete was a tonal chart using combinations of paper, pencils and marker. Three degrees of tone per row of a seven row chart were asked to be completed. The maximum rows completed in this lesson were four. (fig. 2.1.)
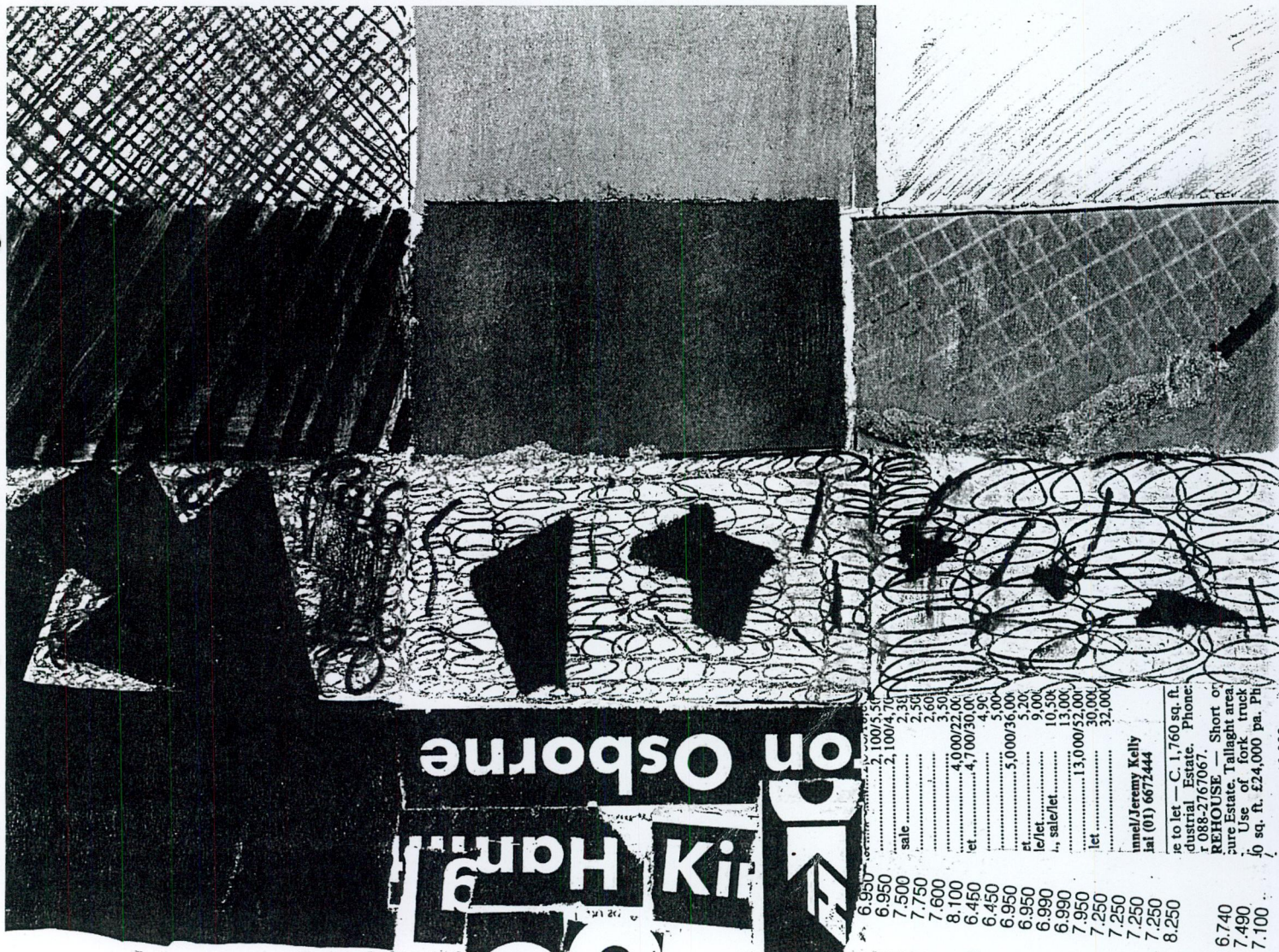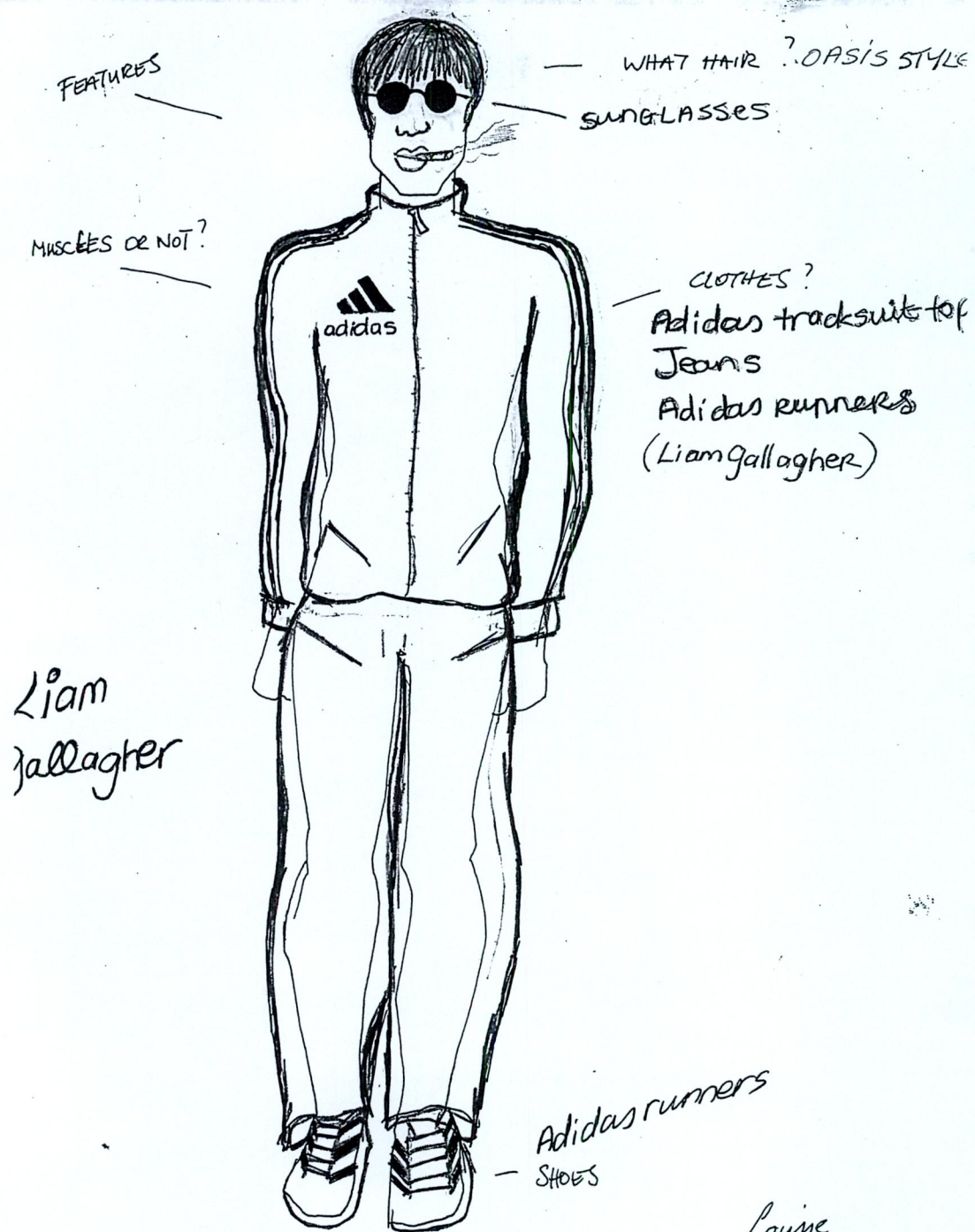
Fig. 2.1: SARAH'S COLLAGED TONAL CHART.

Fig 2.2: SARAH'S COLLAGED TONAL CHART.

Lesson 2:

The objective of this lesson was to give the girls an understanding of visualisation using visual notes to help create an image of the characters in their stories. Using the stories written after Lesson 1, (see appendices 1,2,3) they were required to draw over worksheets of male and female figures noting dress and hairstyle. (fig. 2.2,2.3) From these notes it was hoped to move on to a strong tonal drawing emphasising shape as a basis for black and white collage.

There was some confusion about what the girls were designing, i.e. characters of their stories, therefore the whole lesson was taken up with the visual notes. A re-evaluation of the girls' experience and ability was needed after this lesson and an easily identifiable source for their artwork needed to be established.

Lesson 3:

The use of their own features in the form of a linear portrait and photographs taken of each girl set up a strong primary source for the girls to explore the manipulation of photomontage for their illustration. The basic lesson was in proportion and linear drawing. The work of Suzanne Valedon and Juan Gris was looked at in support of shape and line drawing. A chart on proportion was given as a handout and in demonstration they watched as I drew a linear

FEATURES

WHAT HAIR ?. OASIS STYLE

SUNGLASSES

MUSCLES OR NOT?

CLOTHES?
Adidas tracksuit top
Jeans
Adidas runners
(Liam Gallagher)

Liam
Gallagher

adidas

Adidas runners
SHOES

Louise
Barnes 5.0

DO ATONAL DRAWING OF YOUR CHARACTER
AGAIN CONCENTRATE ON SHAPE AND TONE.

Fig. 2.2: LOUISE'S HERO, VISUAL NOTES.

Roisín Quinn.

WHAT FEATURES

WHAT SIZE LARGE OR THIN?

WHAT HAIR

WHAT CLOTHES

fancy dress wings

* Influence is Romeo & Juli

elegant dress

WHAT SHOES
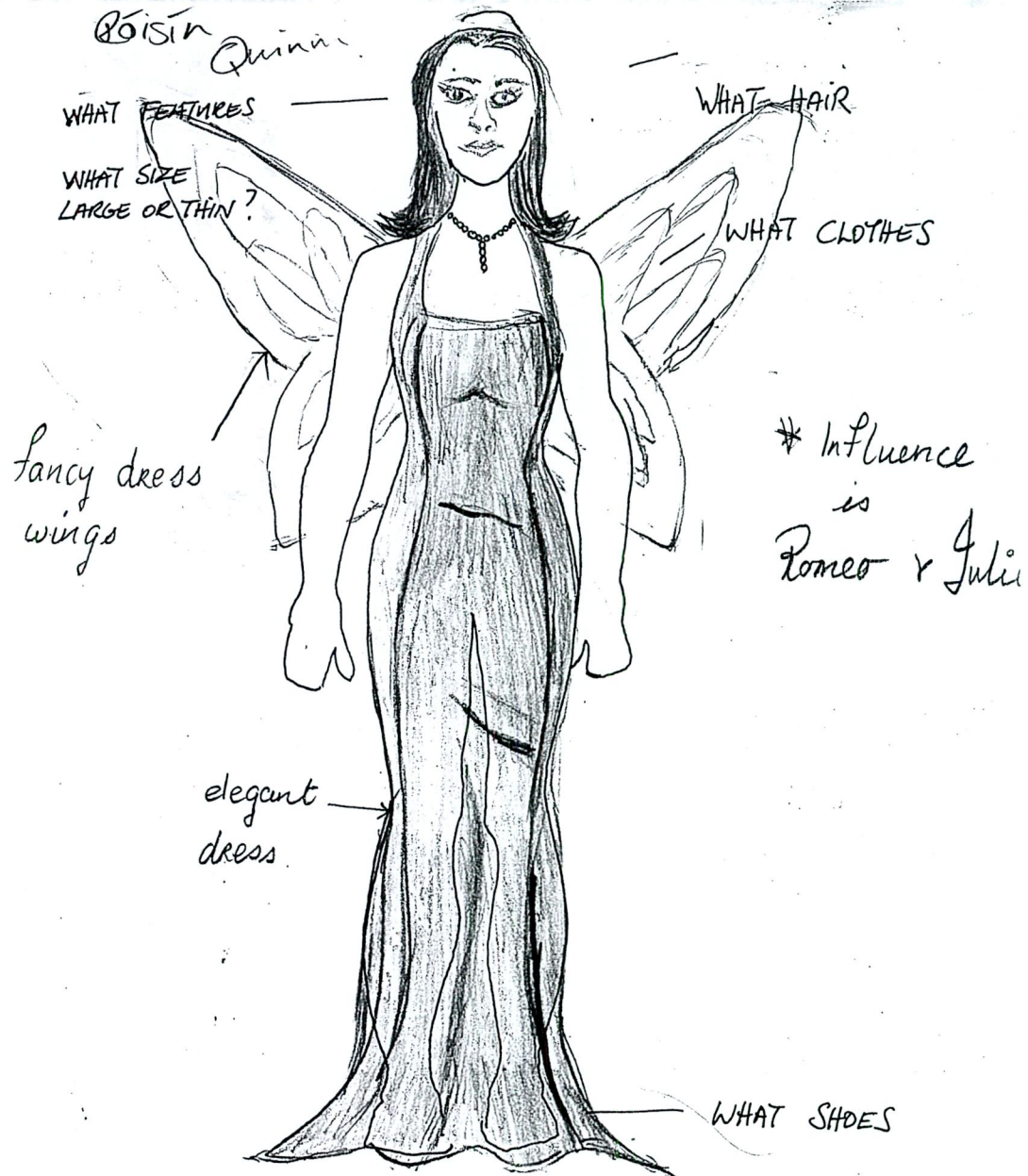
DO A TONAL DRAWING OF YOUR CHARACTER
CONCENTRATE ON SHAPE AND TONE
THEN CONVERT IT INTO A COLLAGE

Fig. 2.3: ROISIN'S HEROINE, VISUAL NOTES.

self-portrait whilst looking in a mirror. The task was straightforward and though the skills of the girls varied considerably a self-portrait was achieved by each girl at the end of the lesson. They each posed for a photograph to be used in conjunction with their linear self-portrait.

Lesson 4:

The objective of this lesson was to develop the understanding of how the manipulation of photographs and drawings can reduce the features in the face to basic shapes suitable for collage. Each girl was given four photocopies of their linear portraits plus four copies of their photographs to manipulate into different images of themselves. Andy Warhol's images of Marylyn Monroe and Liz Taylor were used as support studies in this lesson to establish how he had reduced features to basic shapes. Warhol had been looked already with this group in Art History lessons based on the history of the Pop Movement run concurrently with this project. The task required them to manipulate photos and drawings. Each girl produced at least one or two different images of themselves. (figs. 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7)

Fig. 2.4: JILL'S PORTRAIT AND PHOTOGRAPH.

PUPILS WORK

Fig. 2.5: JILL'S COLLAGED PORTRAIT.

Fig. 2.6: EMMA'S LINEAR PORTRAIT.

Fig. 2.6: EMMA'S LINEAR PORTRAIT.

Fig. 2.7: EMMA'S COLLAGED PORTRAIT.

Fig. 2.7: EMMA'S COLLAGED PORTRAIT.

Lesson 5:

After looking at the possibilities of black and white photomontage we moved into colour in this lesson. Magazine illustration was used to establish foreground, middleground and background. Twenty-two images of girls were taken from magazines and cut out. These were used as the source for the artwork. The task was to manipulate these photographic images into the character of the heroine from their stories. They were to transform the images they received as much as possible using a variety of mixed media, markers, paint, papers, foil, nylon and acrylic fibre. An incentive in the form of a free colour photocopy of their work for the first four girls finished the task was offered at the beginning of this lesson.

Lesson 6:

This lesson was concerned with establishing the figure in space through strong contrast of colour, texture and pattern. The illustrations of Madonna from Lesson 1 were looked at again to show how contrast in colour and texture and flat shape were used successfully in the creation of these images. The girls as in the previous week responded well to the use of colour and variety of materials. Their illustrations reflected the autonomy and humour of their heroines. As can be seen in Christina's "Mad Yoke", Louise's "Oasis Fan" and Sarah's "Socialist Princess" (figs. 2.8, 2.9, 2.10).
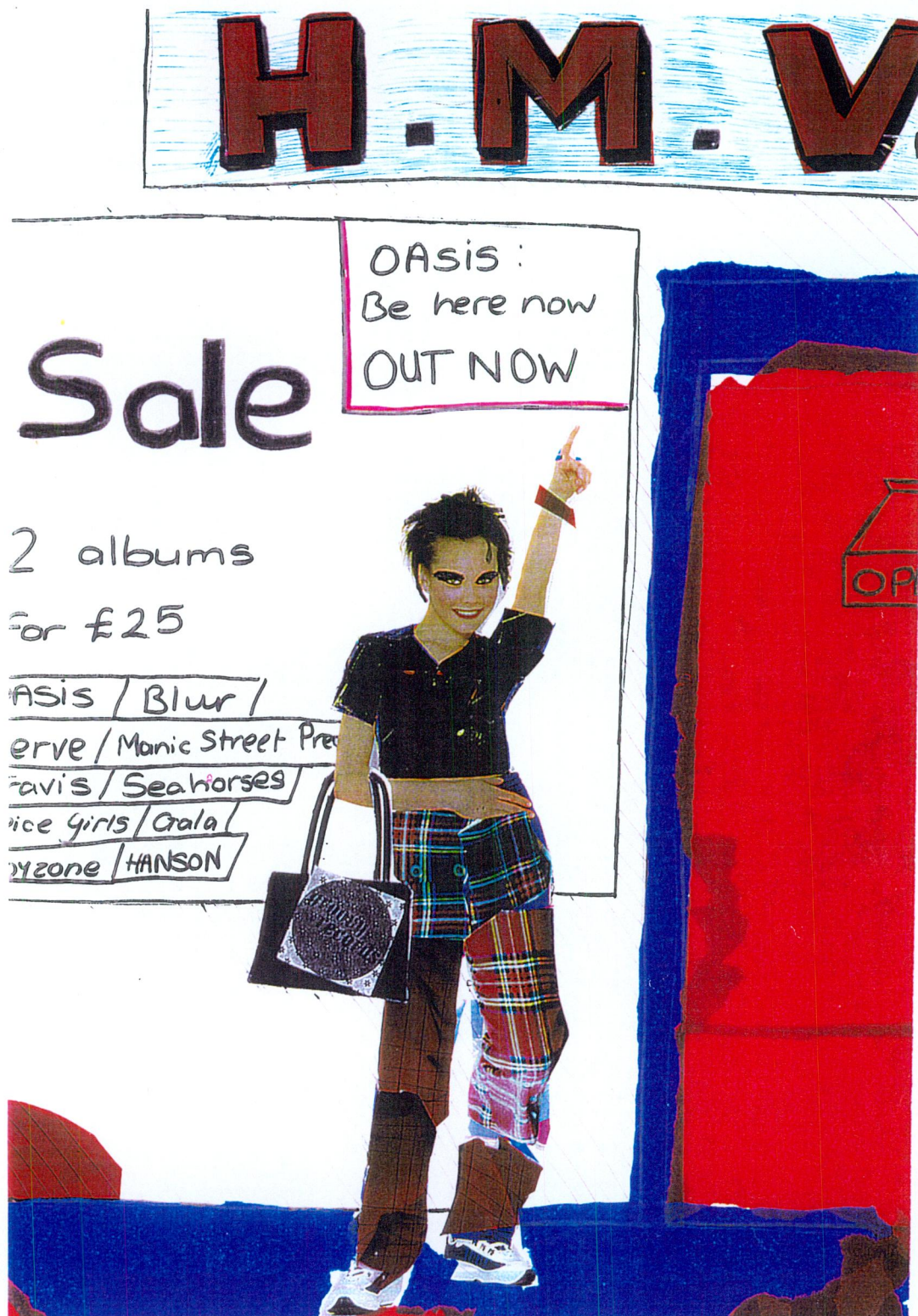
Fig. 2.8: CHRISTINA'S "MAD YOKE".

Fig. 2.8. CHRISTINA'S 'MAD YOKE'.

Fig. 2.9: LOUISE'S "OASIS FAN".

Fig. 2.10: SARAH'S "SOCIALIST PRINCESS".

FIG. 2.10. SARAH'S 'SOCIALIST PRINCESS'.

The manipulation of material was both creative and inventive by all the girls.

Evaluation of the Project:

The first lesson established successfully the concept of re-interpretation and the girls' stories reflected their understanding of the nature of the three main characters, the autonomous heroine, the handsome prince and the talking "faithful friend" object or animal. It was floundering though in the practical section of Lesson 1 and Lesson 2 because of the lack of a strong visual primary source. The mixed ability of the class also was a large factor in the inability to move forward significantly at this stage. At least half the class had not sat art for Junior Cert. and their skills were fairly limited. There was a need for the introduction of some contingent teaching as defined by Wood:

> …involves pacing the amount of help children
> are given on the basis of their moment-to-moment
> understanding. If they do not understand an
> instruction given at one level then more help is
> forthcoming. When they do understand, the
> teacher steps back and gives the child more
> room for initiative. (12)

Through the use of a lesson on self-portraiture the girls were able to construct an image of themselves in a step by step format.

Through the use of this image and photographs of themselves they were able to play around with the deconstruction and reconstruction

of an image in a more easily understandable way. They were then able to move on with more confidence to the last two lessons dealing with colour and material. As in Wood's quote, once the single instruction was given their initiative and creativity asserted itself and the final illustration took off.

This project enabled the girls to look at the nature of autonomy and at how the role of a heroine is portrayed in traditional fairy tales. The use of collage as a medium for their illustration levelled the playing field and enabled girls whose drawing skills were not well developed to produce a successful and pleasing solution as seen in the work of Carol . Her drawing skills are weak but her ideas are inventive and creative. (figs. 2.11, 2.12, 2.13) Her story reflected the preoccupations of an adolescent girl in a witty and perceptive way. (Appendix A)

Lucy Dawe Lane (1995) discusses this very point:

> The issue of skill and talent is one which
> affects everyone, and the current openness
> with which artists use any method and
> explore any material at their disposal to
> put across ideas, rather than rely on innate
> or cultivated practical skills, is surely a
> welcome environment in which to encourage
> pupils to negotiate as well as to develop their
> own manual abilities. (13)

By using a fairy tale to re-examine a stereotype and collage as a means of expressing their images visually it allowed girls to find alternative solutions to the *status quo* i.e. commonly perceived

Fig. 2.11: CAROL'S DRAWING.

Fig. 2.11: CAROL'S DRAWING

Fig. 2.12: CAROL'S COLLAGED PORTRAIT.

Fig. 2.12: CAROL'S COLLAGED PORTRAIT.

Fig. 2.13: CAROL'S "QUEEN OF BRIT POP".

nature of a heroine looked at in the beginning of this chapter and also an alternative to traditional drawing skill based illustration.

Teachers must find a balance in the teaching of technical and expressive skills because of the diverse levels of abilities that are found in the art room. Too often students may find they are struggling to fulfil expectations in terms of traditional drawing skills and this can curtail motivation. Lowenfeld observes that adolescents are very critical of their own art and can be easily discouraged when it does not comply with their concept of professional art. (14)

In the Practical Project a coloured photocopy of the finished work was offered as an incentive or motivation for the completion of the illustration. The value the girls placed on their work once it was transformed by the technology of photocopying far outweighed their initial response. That first response was a sense of achievement and pleasure in their art work but this was sited totally in the art room. The transformation of their work into images comparable to those they see in magazine illustration, T.V. and video placed their efforts squarely in the real world. The possibilities of creating images that looked professional but did not require innate traditional talent and ability are strong motivators for exploring ideas through the medium of art and design.

The balance again between technical and expressive is crucial here because as Iseult McCarthy states "a properly

conceived art education is not founded in mere enabling and facilitating." (15) The girls in this project were enabled and facilitated to achieve the objective of a collaged illustration but more importantly it was the retrospective regard they were able to place on their own raw art work that held the most educational value.

To motivate children and especially adolescents it is vital to tap into their world and experiences. Viktor Lowenfeld (1982) sums it up very well when he states:

> The still life set-up, the picture made with watercolours, the linoleum blockprint, or the small clay sculpture may be not large enough in impact to involve today's youth. There is a sense of urgency, a sense of social involvement and a desire to make change that cannot be satisfied with typical High School (Secondary School) projects which are aimed at self-improvement. Living is a challenge and art should reflect this challenge. (16)

The challenge for art teachers is to balance the best of academic style art training, the norm of the last century, with Bauhaus methods embracing creativity and invention and newer contemporary art practice. (17) Thus stimulating students to explore their lives and in the context of this project the concept of autonomy for the adolescent girl.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 2

1. Jack Zipes, <u>Don't Bet On The Prince</u>, (Hants: Gower Publishing, 1986) p. (xii).

2. Ibid., p. 6.

3. Medhbh, seen (a) as a literary incarnation of the sovreignty and Godess (b) strong forceful Queen who leads huge army against kingdom of Ulster, foreshadows Boadicea of the Iceni.
   Grainne and Deirdre chose their own husbands rather than succumb to arranged marriages.
   Peter Berresford, Ellis <u>Celtic Women. Women in Celtic Society and Literature</u>, (London: Constable, 1995) p. 42, 48 and 49.

4. Zipes, <u>Don't Bet</u>, p. 7.

5. Ibid.,p. 7.

6. Marina Warner, <u>From The Beast To The Blond</u>, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994) p. 416

7. Ibid.

8. Grimm Brothers, <u>Household Tales</u>, (Methuen, 1973) p.133 -138.

9. Jeanne Desy, in Zipes, <u>Don't Bet</u>,p. 40 - 47.

10. Bruno Bettelheim, <u>The Uses Of Enchantment</u> (1975), Reprint (London: Penguin Books, 1991) p. 138.

11. Kay Turner, <u>I Dream Of Madonna</u>, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993).

12. Wood, <u>How Children Think and Learn</u>, p 80 - 81.

13. Lucy Dawe Lane, "Using Contemporary Art" in <u>Teaching Art and Design</u>, ed. Roy Prentice (London: Cassell, 1995) p. 99.

14. Viktor Lowenfeld, W. Lambert Brittain, <u>Creativity and Mental Growth.</u> 7th ed. (New York: McMillan, 1982) p. 400 - 401. Pl. 30,31.

15. Iseult McCarthy, "Preface" in <u>Solas</u> eds. Iseult McCarthy, David Thistlewood. (Dublin: Faculty of Ed. N.C.A.D., 1996)

16. Lowenfeld, Brittain, <u>Creativity,</u>p. 401.

17. Dawe Lane, <u>Teaching Art</u>, p. 100.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS, REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> In the art room, the student should be able
> to find a sanctuary from the usual school
> pressures, a place where one has control
> over one's activities and products. (1)

Because of the less formalist atmosphere of an art room the potential to investigate the social inequalities outlined in Chapter One are very favourable. The importance of individual personal development can be seen in statements made in the discussion paper, Design in Education (1997), where:

> Within the learning society, as envisaged
> by the European Commission, individual
> human fulfilment is seen as the driving force
> of social prosperity. (2)

For the adolescent girl this potential for development could be hindered by the vision society has of the female and how the mass media projects these messages into society. How can these issues be addressed in an art room context?

Because the experience of the mass media is, for the greater part, a visual experience a greater critical awareness of media methods and manipulation needs to be addressed in the art room. Already in English, media studies have been embraced as part of Curriculum development but it also needs to have good cross

curricular exchange with the Art Department. "Design in education is essentially a cross curricular process and activity." (3)

Expanding critical awareness of what art is, is vital for the development of a strong visual aesthetic in society. Too often young people will not feel art is an essential part of their lives. They do not see how art is constantly around them, how it is an intrinsic part of youth culture and culture in general. It dictates the clothes they wear, the buildings they live in, the packaging that induces them to buy, the magazines they read but it is not part of what they consider art. The fault of this perception lies squarely with how art has been taught at Secondary level, as in Lowenfeld's (1982) quote at the end of Chapter Two. Art for the average adolescent does not have much relevance in their lives. Too often seen as a skills and talent based subject where poorer academic students were also dumped so as to fulfil the minimum required subjects deemed necessary to sit by the Department of Education at Secondary level:

> Many schools regard art as a subject more
> suitable for the less intelligent than the
> more intelligent pupils. This was confirmed
> by the results of Raven *et al*: A Survey of the
> Attitudes of Post Primary Teachers and Pupils
> Vol. 1 (1975) and by the submission from the
> Art Teachers Association which stated that:
> school timetables frequently omit art from their
> academically bright students, while ample time
> for art is given to remedial and lower grade
> students. (4)

This policy is born out by the practical lesson conducted with girls in Presentation Convent, Terenure where already stated half

the girls had not taken art at Junior Cert. level. Their expectations were purely recreational, art is seen as a "doss" subject.

The needs of the adolescent girl can be met through the development of critical awareness and self-expression under the umbrella of Art and Design Teaching. Colin Robinson (1995) defines artists and designers in this way:

> Artists make imagery in response to, and
> to comment on, human experience.
> Designers make or improve artefacts,
> environments and systems. (5)

In England there is some debate as to what type of teaching to implement, as Art and Design Teaching is viewed as different from that of Art Teaching alone. (6) The good teacher should extract what is needed from both disciplines to inform the needs of the adolescent. To counteract the inequities perpetuated by the mass media, education is vital. Anne Bridget Ryan (1997) acknowledges (Drudy & Lynch 1993) and (Lynch, Morgan 1995) when she states:

> Education is a central institution in Irish
> social life, reflecting wider social attitudes,
> including attitudes to gender equality. It plays
> important and complex roles in shaping
> identity and social relations. (7)

Feminist educators have identified gender injustices and are anxious to implement change. Ryan advocates:

> ...taking a view of communication which
> acknowledges pupils as active interpreters...
> and which trust them to rewrite what they
> receive from a teacher to suit their own
> particular circumstances. (8)

The understanding of media messages requires a visual literacy, a literacy that children have unconsciously absorbed without real understanding over many years of T.V. video and film viewing. They know more than they think they do. Teachers need to be facilitators in encouraging them to draw on these experiences in a critical an analytical way. "Media Studies is still struggling for its place on the educational stage." (9)

In Lesson 1 of the Practical Project re-interpretation of stories was looked at in the form of films such as Emma, Clueless and Romeo and Juliet. The girls themselves as already acknowledged came up with the example of Pretty Woman as an updating of Cinderella. This was interesting in the context of media influence. In this film prostitution is sanitised, money buys happiness and a man will solve all your problems. The girls had bought into this myth. Jeffers also states that:

> The media respond to the search for new
> experiences, for explanations for different
> points of view, for ideas about what is important
> and what is to be valued. (10)

In these last two lines the importance of an understanding of stereotyping, what the media is actually saying about young women and to young women becomes urgent. Messages gain validation for the adolescent especially through the medium of film. "Hooker Boots" are now part of the vocabulary of teenage girls and are seen as an assertive fashion accessory. They derive their progeny from this film Pretty Woman. The importance of a proper Film Studies

Course as part of the art education curriculum is essential.

The defining of youth by their consumption of brand labels also needs to be addressed. This is illustrated in the visualisation of the fairy tale characters in Lesson 2 (fig. 2.2). To the teenage girl the labels you wear declare immediately who you are. Kathy Sheridan quotes Gunter and Furnham (1998):

> In a culture where many adolescents
> work on the principle "I am what I consume
> and what I have" the solution as always is
> education... schools should have consumer
> education programmes and it should be an
> essential element in the curriculum. (11)

That traditional views of the female role in society need to be challenged has been established in Chapter 1. The use of art as a medium to explore and create positive self-images for the adolescent is born out by the images created by the students in Terenure, Carol's queen of Brit Pop and the proud new owner of a moped, Donna's devilish queen of the road (figs. 2.13, 3.1)

As we enter a new millennium and technology is taking a bigger part in the school environment it is essential to harness the uses of computers, photography and video in the exploration of a young girl's place in society. These mediums all have a relevance to an adolescents' world and are strong potential motivators in the educational development of all aspects of the individual. As the Junior Cert. Programme principles state "address the immediate and prospective needs of the young person, in the context of the cultural, economic and social environment." (12)

Fig. 3.1: DONNA'S "QUEEN OF THE ROAD".

Fig. 3.1: DONNA'S "QUEEN OF THE ROAD".

The Art Room should give a forum along the close cross curricular support for issues that affect adolescent lives, because as Lowenfeld (1982) states:

> ...for individual needs and for society's
> needs art can fulfil a real purpose. (13)

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 3

1. Viktor Lowenfeld, W. Lambert Brittain. <u>Creativity and Mental Growth</u> 7th ed. ,(New York: McMillan, 1982) p. 399.

2. Iseult McCarthy, Gary Granville eds. <u>Design In Education</u>, (Dublin: Faculty of Education N.C.A.D. and N.C.C.A. 1997) p. 2.

3. Ibid. p. 3.

4. Ciaran Benson ed. <u>The Place of the Art in Irish Education</u>, (Dublin: The Arts Council, 1979) p. 48.

5. Colin Robinson, "The National Curriculum for Art: Translating it into Practice", in <u>Teaching Art and Design</u>, (London: Cassell, 1995) p. 125.

6. Ibid.

7. Anne Bridget Ryan, "Gender Discourses in School Social Relations", in <u>Women and Irish Society</u>, eds. Anne Byrne, Madeleine Leonard (Belfast: Beyond The Pale Publications, 1997) p. 26.

8. Kenway *et al*, (1994) p. 203 quoted in <u>Women</u>. P. 36.

9. Gerry Jeffers, <u>Reel 2 Real</u>, (Dublin: The Educational Co. of Ireland, 1997) p. 4.

10. Ibid.

11. Kathy Sheridan, <u>The Irish Times</u> April 4th 1998.

12. Dept. of Education, <u>The Junior Cert. Art, Craft and Design: Guidelines for Teachers</u>, in "Aims and Principles".

13. Lowenfeld, Brittain, <u>Creativity</u>, p. 392.

CONCLUSION

The hypothesis of this dissertation was the question of whether the art room can help adolescent girls to produce positive self-images. In the course of investigating the influences and attitudes of society to the female, the need to challenge interpretations in the visualisation of women became apparent. The role of the mass media has been shown to be extremely influential. Attitudes and ideas have gained currency when transmitted through the media and the vulnerability of the adolescent especially the young girl caught up in the maelstrom of adolescent physical and emotional change has made her very susceptible to its' propaganda. That most of the media is market-driven has been accepted and adolescence has been shown to be a market commodity. Chapter One also looks at how the adolescent girl could be confused by media images, as the arch manipulators of the media duck and weave their way through any new developments in feminism to mould them to their own ends. This chapter concludes that to develop an inclusive society the rights and potential of women have to be addressed and have to be addressed through the educational process.

Chapter Two looked at how educators have used reinterpretations of stories to challenge patriarchal stereotypes. In the Practical Project this concept was used in conjunction with illustration of a fairy tale to explore the notion of an autonomous

heroine. This project showed how receptive the students were to working with these concepts, how they know more than they think they do of the visual world because their generation has grown up in a world dominated by the visual media. On completion of the project they had created positive autonomous images containing humour and wit.

Questions of skill, talent and motivation with regard to mixed ability grouping, surfaced in the process of this project. This chapter looked at how enabling and facilitating were judged to be not beneficial enough in themselves educationally for the student. The necessity that art training should encompass critical analysis that empowers the development of an awareness of visual language was also addressed. The balance between using traditional academic art training, Bauhaus methods and contemporary art practice was advocated to investigate issues pertaining to students' lives.

This fed into questions of relevance in Chapter Three. Does art have a relevance in adolescents' lives, how do they perceive it and does it impinge in any way in their consciousness? The negative perceptions were levelled directly at art teaching. This chapter reflected on the challenges for educators to make art relevant to the adolescent and how tapping into their experience and culture is essential for motivation. The role of the mass media has been discussed throughout this dissertation and it is education about and through its medium, which is seen as vital as

we enter the next millennium. The art room can be seen as the de-coding room for the adolescent girl as she struggles to make sense of herself and her place in society and in the development of her full potential.

In the light of the findings of this dissertation, the needs of the girl to interpret the view of the female in society so as to develop her full potential has been established. The use of art as a medium to successfully visualise positive self-images and the needs to make art relevant to the adolescent so that it can be used as an educational tool to investigate society have also been proven. This small reinterpretive fairy tale project has shown the potential of this kind of teaching and how it can be used as a springboard to develop further awareness of contemporary issues relevant to the adolescent girl.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Carol's Story

Years ago when the Rolling Stones were only the Wobbling Pebbles there lived a beautiful princess called Justine. She enjoyed weight lifting, jogging wrestling and playing guitar.

Her parents decided it was time Justine went to college and they selected a very interesting course.. Before Justine left her mother gave her a very expensive leather Jacket. Justine got on the train and headed for college with her Jacket and her guitar. Justine fell asleep and while she slept the Jacket spoke to her telling her that her future would be decided at college.

Two months into college and Justine was at the top of her course and she had a handsome boyfriend (who was working class) with whom she'd formed a band. When her parents heard of this they ordered her to return to the palace. All the way home her Jacket warned her that if she was not careful she would be married before she returned to college.

When she got off the train her parents met her, along with them was a strange, gangly, ugly boy with a huge quiff. His name as James Ray and Justine was informed that she was to marry him. She didn't like him at all and the night before their marriage

she was woken by her Jacket who was crying for her. The Jacket told her to run away and to take her guitar and himself. So she got dressed and took her guitar and ran from the palace leaving her parents with a six foot wedding cake and a huge overdraft.

Justine decided not to go back to college and met three of her mates. She formed a band with them and started dating the King of Brit Pop, became Queen of Brit Pop, they reign happily from their penthouse apartment in Camden.

Appendix B - Sarah's Story

Once upon a time in a poor city called Markade there grew up the most beautiful and fair young girl, who was the daughter of the local blacksmith. She was the most beautiful sight to be seen in a provincial town like this. She grew up without the luxuries of the wealthy of that time and was able to fend for herself.

And one day her luck was to change dramatically, she was to inherit a near fortune as her mother who she had never seen before had died and as she had just turned eighteen she was given all her mother's money and worldly possessions.

Her mother was a Queen who lived in a palace. The reason her father and herself lived in the woods as peasants was so she would be brought up to be an unselfish and pleasant Queen, as her parents believed not in wealth and fortune but in knowledge and great wisdom.

When the princess moved into her new home she brought her magical pen that she had been given when she was a baby.

One day she asked the pen what is to become of me. It replied, you are to marry one of the village men and to live happily ever after and that she did. Also she shared her wealth and riches out among the poor and needy.

Appendix C: Louise's Story

Once upon a time there was a girl called Jade, she was the biggest Oasis fan ever. She wanted to go and see them in concert but couldn't afford a ticket and her evil parents said she would have to work to go to the concert.

One day Jade went out to look for a job, she got one in a bike shop selling mopeds and motorbikes to rally trendy "Princes" all day.

She was enjoying her new job and had just about got enough money to buy a ticket for the concert when all of a sudden the most dazzling bloke she had ever seen walked into the shop. "Can I help you?" said Jade.. "Is it a moped you're after?" "No" said the mystery man, "I've already got a moped, I'm looking for someone who'd be interested in going to a concert to see my band play".

Then as he took off his sunglasses and faced Jade she realised who he was, it was Liam Gallagher the lead singer of Oasis. He had spare tickets and was just looking for someone to give them to. He saved jade from a fate worse than death.

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