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COLAISTE NAISIUNTA EALAINÉ IS DEARTHÁ  
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

ART AND LITERATURE  
- LINKS IN EDUCATION -

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

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JUNE 1999





I hereby declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted as an exercise for a diploma or degree in any other college or university.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation, "Art and Literature - Links in Education" aims to show the connections between art and literature in the work of artists and writers and how these two art forms lend themselves to cross-curricular projects on all educational levels.

During the research stage of this study, a lot of the information was obtained through conversations with Catherine Marshall and Anne Davoren of IMMA, other major sources were exhibition catalogues and art journals, artists' biographies (Pyle, Hilary/Arnold, Bruce - the Yeats family) and reports on the arts in Ireland and education (see Brown, Terrence and Druary, Martin in the bibliography).

The results of the practical scheme were fairly successful considering the restrictive time limit (the mixed-media compositions produced are of a high standard) but the project should really have had more connection with the pupil's English teachers. There is great potential in schools for cross-curricular schemes of this type - it only requires suitable scheduling of school timetables, communication between teachers and a healthy enthusiasm for both arts.



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## INTRODUCTION

Written imagery such as mythology, legends, fairy and folk tales, the Bible, poetry and prose have influenced and inspired visual artists since the history of the arts began. Examples of the union between literature and art can be seen in illuminated manuscripts; in the Renaissance artists' renditions of the Bible or Dante's Inferno; in emblem art (verse and image on one plate) brought to extremes by the poet and painter William Blake; in Neo-Classicism's Roman sagas; in Romanticism's interpretation of Byron as in Eugene Delacroix' "Death of Sardanapulus"; in Pre-Raphaelite paintings of Arthurian legend, Shakespearian and Biblical scenes; in Aubrey Beardsley's interpretations of Oscar Wilde's writings; in Expressionist, Surrealist and Dada experiments with poetry and writing; in the attraction poets have as models for artists (Apollinaire and Picasso, the busts of Jacob Epstein, Irish writers and Edward Maguire \ Louis Le Brocquy) and in conceptual artists' incorporation of text in video and installation.

This dissertation will discuss the relationship between contemporary artists and writers in Ireland and will explore how the two art forms can be linked into educational programmes. Chapter one commences with a brief background history of the verbal and visual arts in Ireland, with particular focus on fine art and its development. Reference will be made to the work of the Yeats family, Louis Le Brocquy, Brian Bourke, Barrie Cooke as well as that of the group shows "Literary Themes"(IMMA), "Joycesight"(Rome) and The Great Book of Ireland (IMMA and The Irish Life Mall).



Chapter two examines three different educational programmes that demonstrate how liaisons are possible between art, literature and education. American artist Tim Rollins and KOS (Kids of Survival) take literary classics, discuss and analyse the texts and finally incorporate the pages into their mixed media compositions.

Youthreach and the education office at IMMA used the exhibits from the "Literary Themes" show as a starting point for their programme. The trainees and pupils involved worked with poets, artists, literacy tutors and IMMA co-ordinators to produce very personalised photomontage books with interwoven texts.

English Sculptor Andy Shaw worked with primary school pupils in Wigan using George Orwell's Animal Farm as a theme. The pupils' teacher read the novel in class and gave them the opportunity to discuss their ideas on and opinions of the various characters. The children participated in every stage of the process and became very involved in the characters through reading about and creating them.

Chapter three carries on from the Animal Farm theme but involves working with secondary school pupils during their normal art timetable. The fifth years read the book for homework and listened to the tape during class while simultaneously learning about new techniques, artists and materials. Their task was to design and paint an A2, mixed-media composition based on a personal interpretation of the novel. During the course of the scheme the pupils were also asked to verbalize their reasons for selecting particular figures or scenes for their compositions. The feasibility of such a scheme within a secondary school curriculum will also be discussed at the end of this chapter.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE VERBAL AND VISUAL ARTS IN IRELAND

#### Historical Background

That Ireland has a renowned and ancient literary history cannot be disputed. From Celtic mythology to Joycean sagas and Nobel prizes for literature, the island's writings have received world acclaim and recognition. Not so with our tradition in the visual arts, which in turn has its negative effect on how art is regarded and taught in our schools and subsequently how it is appreciated by the Irish people. Pick up any twentieth century Modern Art book and Irish visual artists will almost certainly not be mentioned, the rare exception being Sean Scully of Irish birth, now an American citizen and resident. However, any reputable chronicle of 20th century literature will feature Yeats, Shaw, Beckett, Joyce and Seamus Heaney to name but a few. The following chapter aims to establish why this is so and also to discuss the numerous collaborations and relationships between artists and writers in Ireland as well as the benefits that each art form offers the other.

The gap in our visual arts development is most definitely linked to our turbulent history of constant invasions and colonization. The bardic tradition of story telling & poetry recitation had been handed down orally, so recording and developing this art in writing still remained possible despite oppressive circumstances as it materially required only a corner, paper and pen and failing that an attentive ear. Even during the Penal Laws when the education of the large Catholic population was forbidden, the famous Hedge Schools not only kept the literary tradition alive but also exposed their pupils to the classical worlds of Greek, Latin, & Hebrew through the study of both language and culture. While the Hedge School curriculum's broad spectrum can only have helped



increase the variety and imagination of Irish literature, art however, did not feature in these schools' priorities.

Education in the visual arts requires more extravagant materials and training resources, unattainable in a country constantly being invaded. Fine Art in any country has always been costly to produce both in a material sense and in its demanding, all-consuming nature - requiring the artist's entire time and concentration. It therefore remained a pursuit of the richer classes until this century. In a country continuously besieged by marauding invaders, poverty, eviction, religious and political persecution, emigration and civil war, the plastic arts quickly lose their significance and can as in Ireland's case, almost completely disappear. Colonization in the nineteenth century and at the turn of the twentieth, was still very much in effect and the emergence of fine art in Ireland was at first only in a British academic context and very much in the control of the Royal Hibernian Academy. Modernism very nearly followed the fate of the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution and missed an Ireland preoccupied with insurrection and civil war, but was fortunately introduced (albeit tentatively) in the form of cubism by a group of largely female artists who had studied in France.

It was not until 1943 that the newly independant Ireland was publicly exposed to international visual art through the first "Irish Exhibition of Living Art". The latter was established by Mainie Jellett, Evie Hone, Louis Le Brocquy and Norah McGuinness and broke away from the academic strictures of the RHA. In 1951 the Arts Council was set up but this did not automatically lead to a flowering of the arts; indeed this decade was one of the bleakest for both art and literature. In Ireland - a Social and Cultural History 1922-1985 Terrence Brown states:



For most people in Ireland in the post-war period, the amateur dramatic movement which burgeoned in the 1950's in festivals and competitions, was their only point of contact with artistic activity of any kind. For many, literature, art, intellectual endeavour or architectural innovation would have seemed luxurious irrelevancies set against the daily struggle for survival in years of economic despair.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1960's visual artists may have had a slight edge on their literary contemporaries (who were heavily censored) as criticism about the absence of art in Irish universities and institutions urged the purchasing and displaying of artworks in public places. Art galleries were opened, banks initiated collections of Irish art, a new middle class bought small works and although it was still impossible to make a living there was more publicity for artists.

This marginal lead of fine art over literature was shortlived. During the past two decades the erosion of the church's state-authority combined with the revival of interest in and appreciation of Irish culture has hugely promoted Irish literature and film on an international scale. Irish fine artists, however, remain relatively unknown and rarely feature in major international exhibitions of contemporary art. Some critics such as Brian Fallon believe that the fame of one sister art has been detrimental to the other. He takes James Joyce as an example and maintains that

Joyce's vast reputation has to a large extent been responsible for the continuing myth that the Irish are an aural or verbal people rather than a visual one; this has hindered appreciation of Irish painting and sculpture of the past hundred years, and it still tends to distract attention from it. Compared to their writer counterparts, Irish artists have had an uphill struggle for recognition outside their homeland.<sup>2</sup>



### The Yeats Family

Yet despite ups and downs in the Irish arts world created by church, state and economic situations, in the twentieth century strong bonds have developed between writers and artists. In other eras, notably the eighteenth century in Germany with Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832) and the nineteenth century with the Rossetti family, it was not at all unusual for poets to engage in the practice of painting and for painters to turn their hand to the art of writing. Following this tradition in Ireland at the turn of the century were the multi-talented generations of the Yeats family.

The father John Butler Yeats (1839-1922) was an established painter, whose early work was influenced by Dante Rossetti (1828-1882) and the Pre-Raphaelites and whose interest in literature was passed on to his famous sons William B. Yeats (1865-1939) and Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957). The former, one of Ireland's most famous writers and instigators of the Irish Literary Revival, trained first as a painter before deciding on a literary career. The latter, the most acclaimed Irish painter of the first half of the century, also wrote and published poetry, plays and short stories. In her book, Yeats-Portrait of an Artistic Family, Hilary Pyle comments

Both of the sons inherited the dual gift: W. B. Yeats, who had less inclination to practise art, has a marked visual element in his verse; Jack's preoccupation with words grew alongside his visual genius from his youth...He wrote juvenile plays and books, collected ballads and published them with his own illustrations, and, at the age of sixty, he started a career as a serious writer of novels and books. These were admired by Beckett.<sup>3</sup>

Although many biographers of the Yeats family (Hilary Pyle included) tend to treat the brothers as being of separate genius, it must be acknowledged that their sources of inspiration often overlapped - eg. their mutual interest in Irish folk culture and nationalism, Sligo and the West of Ireland, the symbolism of the rose and the clown as a



symbol of man's/the artist's tragic situation. Both brothers' fascination with and accurate observation of Irish life is evident in the poems "The Ballad of Father Gilligan" and "The Fiddlers of Dooney" by W.B. Yeats and in Jack B. Yeats' illustrations to J.M.Synge's The Aran Islands (1907), in Life in the West of Ireland (by the artist - 1912) and George A. Birmingham's book on the Irish type - Irishmen All (1913) (see figures 1a and 1b).

When Jack B. Yeats set up A Broad Sheet (1902-03) ie a poetry, prints and ballads periodical, some of his brother's poems were published alongside his own illustrations. The two Yeats sisters, Susan Mary (Lily) Yeats (1866-1948) and Elizabeth Corbet (Lolly) Yeats (1868-1940), themselves embroidery and watercolour artists, set up Cuala Press in 1908 which ran until 1945. Cuala featured writings and illustrations by both brothers amongst its publications, particularly in Jack's second periodical A Broadside (1908-15) (see figure 2).

### **Louis Le Brocquy (b. 1916 -)**

The works and personas of William Butler Yeats and James Joyce were in turn to inspire the beginning of the most fruitful creative period of another major Irish artist, Louis Le Brocquy. In 1975 the artist was approached by a Swedish gallerist to contribute to a portfolio of thirty-three Noble-Prize-winners. He chose Yeats. While attempting to concentrate the writer and everything his written imagery symbolized into a visual image, Le Brocquy created a body of one hundred studies of the poet (see figure 3).

Le Brocquy went on to delve into the consciousness of Joyce, Lorca, Heaney, Shakespeare and other literary figures, as well as illustrating one of his major graphic





### The Ballad of Father Gilligan

The old priest Peter Gilligan  
Was weary night and day ;  
For half his flock were in their beds,  
Or under green sods lay.

Once, while he nodded on a chair,  
At the moth-hour of eve,  
Another poor man sent for him,  
And he began to grieve.

" I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace,  
For people die and die ; "  
And after cried he, " God forgive !  
My body spake, not I ! "

He knelt, and leaning on the chair  
He prayed and fell asleep ;  
And the moth-hour went from the fields,  
And stars began to peep.

They slowly into millions grew,  
And leaves shook in the wind,  
And God covered the world with shade,  
And whispered to mankind.

Upon the time of sparrow-chirp  
When the moths came once more,  
The old priest Peter Gilligan  
Stood upright on the floor.

" Mavrone, mavrone ! the man has died  
While I slept on the chair ; "  
He roused his horse out of its sleep,  
And rode with little care.

He rode now as he never rode,  
By rocky lane and fen ;  
The sick man's wife opened the door ;  
" Father ! you come again ! "

" And is the poor man dead ? " he cried.  
" He died an hour ago ; "  
The old priest Peter Gilligan  
In grief swayed to and fro.

" When you were gone, he turned and died  
As merry as a bird." "  
The old priest Peter Gilligan  
He knelt him at that word.

" He who hath made the night of stars  
For souls who tire and bleed,  
Sent one of His great angels down  
To help me in my need.

" He who is wrapped in purple robes,  
With planets in His care,  
Had pity on the least of things  
Asleep upon a chair." "

Figure 1a - The Priest (from Irishman All - G. Birmingham) - Jack B. Yeats - 1913

Figure 1b - The Ballad of Father Gilligan - W. B. Yeats





Figure 2 - A Broadside / Illustrations to "The Felons of Our Land" - Jack B. Yeats - 1910



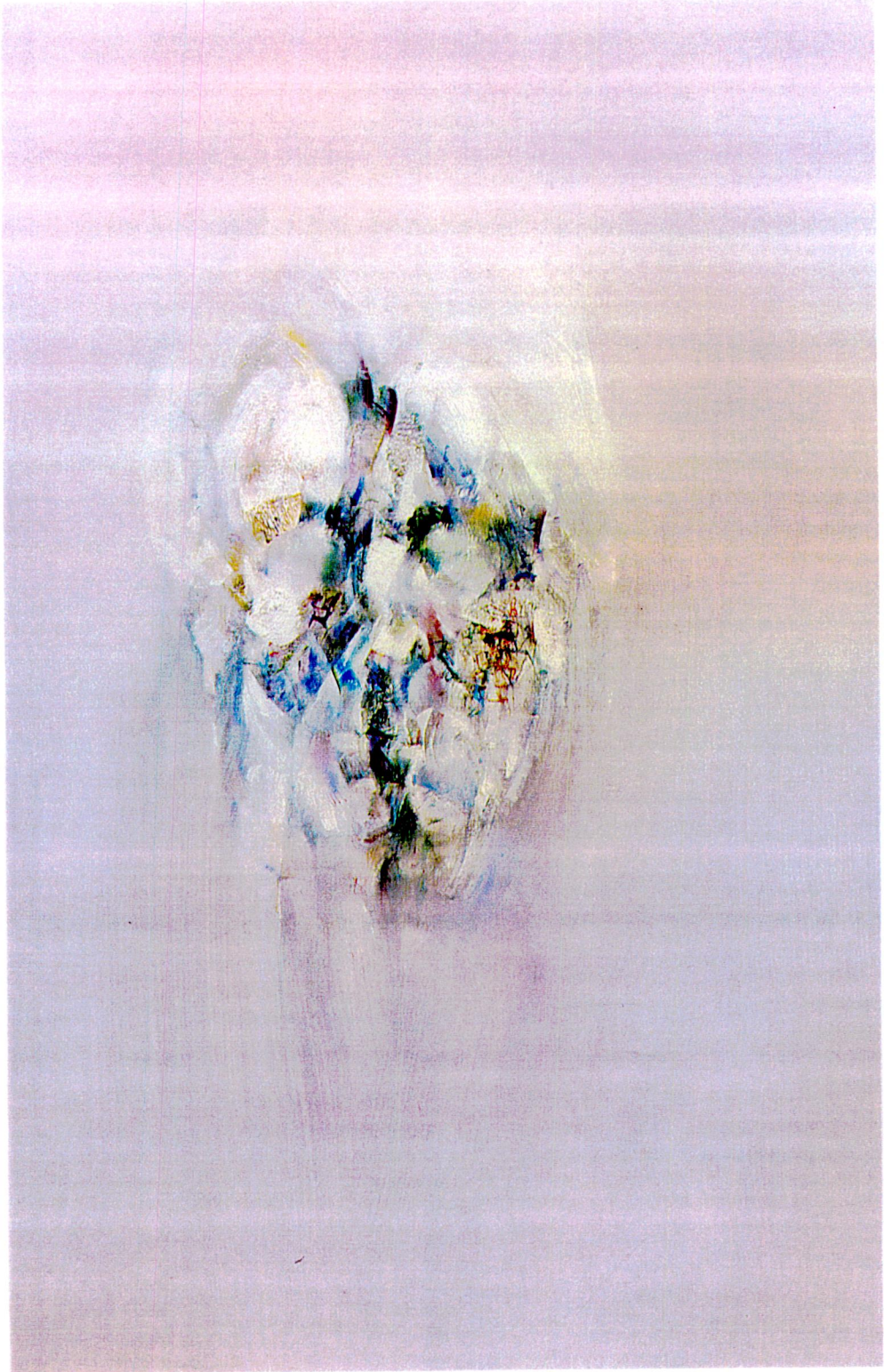


Figure 3 - Image of W. B. Yeats - Louis Le Brocquy (Oil on Canvas), 1994



works - Thomas Kinsella's translation of the Irish epic The Tain (see figure 4). The artists views his depictions of the writers as "essences" rather than portraits, which arise through his preoccupation and personal identification with them and their literature. He has written of his Joyce portraits:

It is said that no Dubliner can quite escape from the microcosmic world of Dublin, and in this I am certainly no exception. James Joyce is the apotheosis, the archetype of our kind and it seems to me that in him - behind the volatile arrangement of his features - lies his unique evocation of that small city, large as life and therefore poignant everywhere.<sup>4</sup> (see figure 5).

Le Brocquy further explains his fascination with great Irish minds when he says that "this preoccupation of mine is not altogether unlike that of the Celts of prehistory, with their oracular cult of the human head, the mysterious box which holds the spirit prisoner."<sup>5</sup>

### **Brian Bourke (b. 1936-)**

Another artist equally inspired by myths brought alive by literature is Brian Bourke, who painted a series of compositions about Sweeney, a legendary king of Irish lore. The poet Seamus Heaney explains the character Sweeney and artists' affinity for him:

Sweeney, the mad king cursed among the bushes is a figure of displacement, and it is precisely this outcast, marginal condition which makes him attractive to artists. He is on the verge of society and in the lap of nature, again a condition which artists aspire to. He represents something very ancient and at the same time very modern, reminding us at one moment of a character in Beckett, at another moment of a mythic figure like Dedalus.<sup>6</sup>

Bourke became fascinated with the mad King after reading Heaney's 1983 translation of J. G. O'Keefe's Buile Suibhne, in the form of Sweeney Astray. The legend



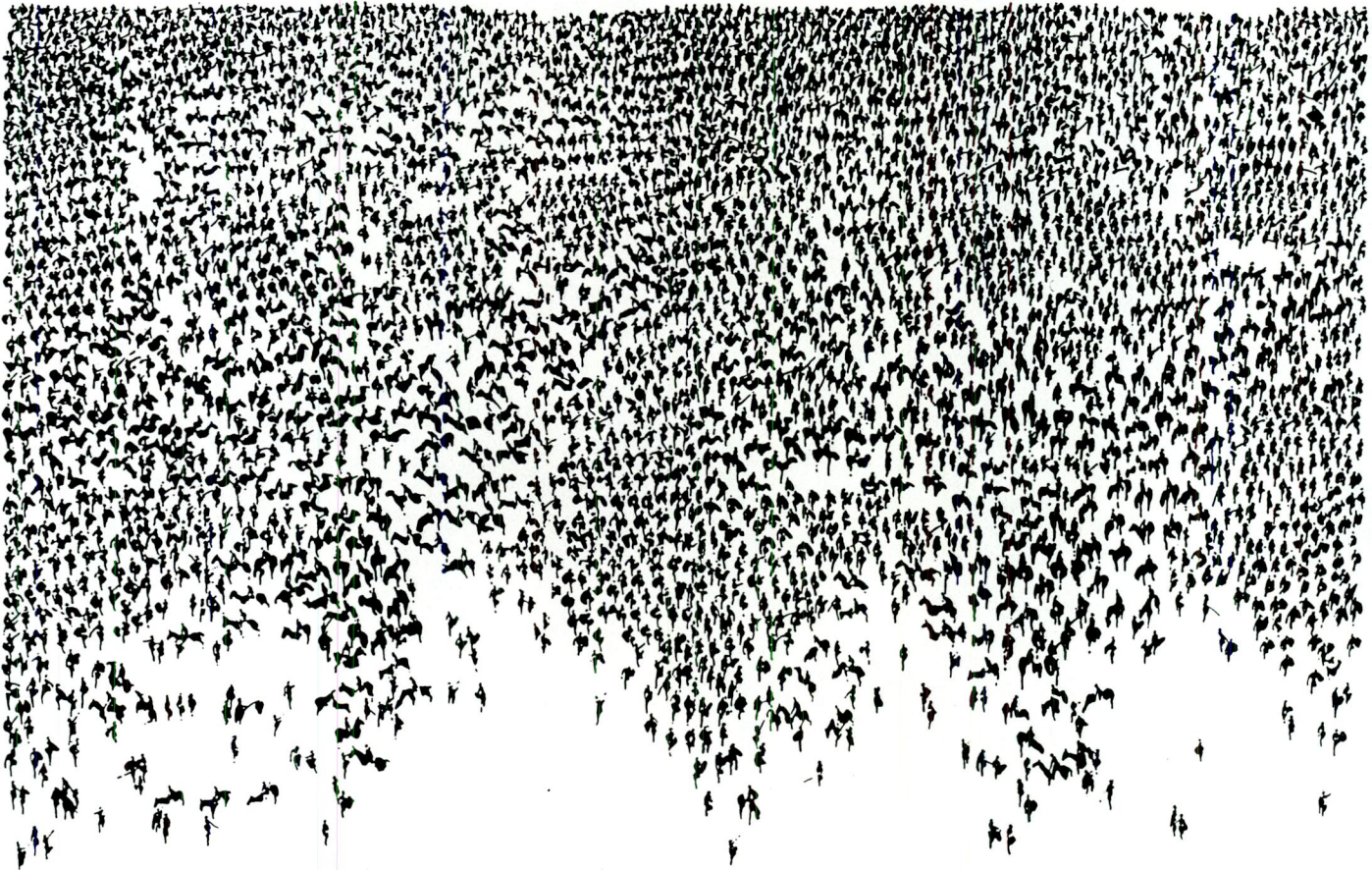


Figure 4 - The Tain - Louis Le Brocquy - 1969





Figure 5 - Image of James Joye - Louis Le Brocquy - 1977 (Charcoal)



epitomises the dual denomination of the Pagan-Christian Irish character. Bourke states "Sweeney, for me represents Ireland much more than any of the other mythological characters I have come across, he's really a very peculiar character.....straddling the pagan and the Christian world; he is the pagan under the thin skin of Christianity".<sup>7</sup> (see figure 6).

It is probably this parallel with our hero which most fascinates Bourke. He identifies himself wholly with this eccentric character considered mad, shunned by society, cursed by the church and driven to rely on a hide-out in nature, in order to survive. No longer religious but brought up Roman Catholic, Bourke hasn't forgotten the effect it can have. Heaney furthers the analogy between the two by writing

In so far as Sweeney is a figure of the artist, displaced, guilty, assuaging himself by his utterance, it is possible to read the work as an aspect of the quarrel between free creative imagination and the constraints of religious, political and domestic obligation.<sup>8</sup>

Just as Sweeney's poetry becomes more elegant during his exile, Bourke again parallels our literary hero by crediting his own work's progress to his rejection of religious, political and domestic obligation and his similar flight into Nature, to the remote West of Ireland.

The fact that Sweeney's story dates back to 637 AD doesn't hinder Bourke's comparison of their two life styles. Indeed the same character not only acted as a dominant theme and major creative source for Bourke's 1980's work, but he also inspired other artists such as Tony O'Mally and Barrie Cooke to contribute to a large show of "Sweeney" works at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in 1987.



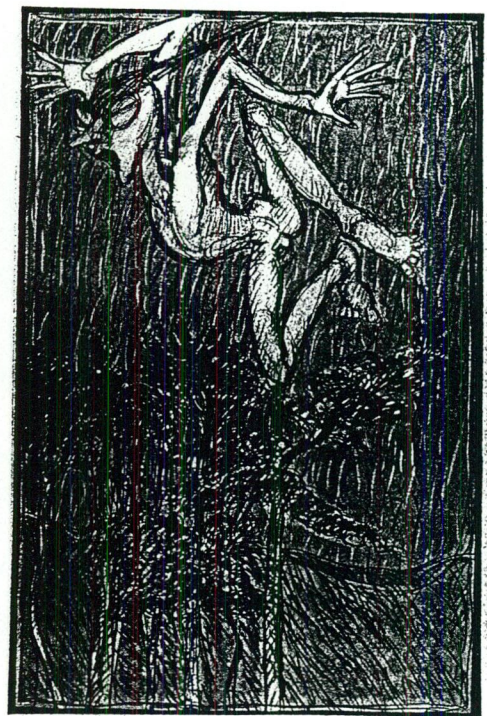


Figure 6 - Sweeney above the trees - Brian Bourke - 1988 (Mixed media on paper)



**Barrie Cooke (b. 1931-)**

English-born Barrie Cooke adopted Sweeney in his painting as he himself has become accepted as Irish. The mad eccentric referred to by John Montague as a „human beast“ surrendering to “the humid pull of the earth“ is linked like Cooke in a relationship to the earth, bogs, lakes, rivers, organic matter and remains. In “Elk meets Sweeney“ (1985/1986)-(see figure 7) the painter sets two dominant influences beside each other - that of the excavations of times past preserved only through the bog and mythology - and that of the free, flowing spirit in touch with nature such as Sweeney’s.

Literature had always ranked highly amongst Cooke’s interests seconded only by science - Chinese Poetry and Art History both featured on his initial list of studies at Harvard. His belief that the truest confrontation of reality can only be found in nature, attracted him to the writings of the poets Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney, whose work exudes a raw naturalism and is verbally tactile.

Cooke’s relationship to the latter was to become one of frequent dual collaboration where first one party and then the other would inspire artworks in each discipline. Both Heaney and Cooke shared a common fascination for the Jutland bog people excavated in Denmark and were mutually absorbed by the organic qualities of the finds, their ancient history, preservation and permanence through time. In the 1970’s Cooke created a series of perspex boxes on this theme into which he placed strange organic objects reminding one of bone or plant matter. The result of these artworks was to cause a turnabout in the usual writer-influences-artist-sequence, as Seamus Heaney inspired by Cooke, dedicated his poem “Bone Dreams“ to the artist. Catherine Marshall, curator of IMMA, selected these works for the exhibition “Literary Themes“ at the museum in 1996. She aptly defines the significance of this team effort which in her



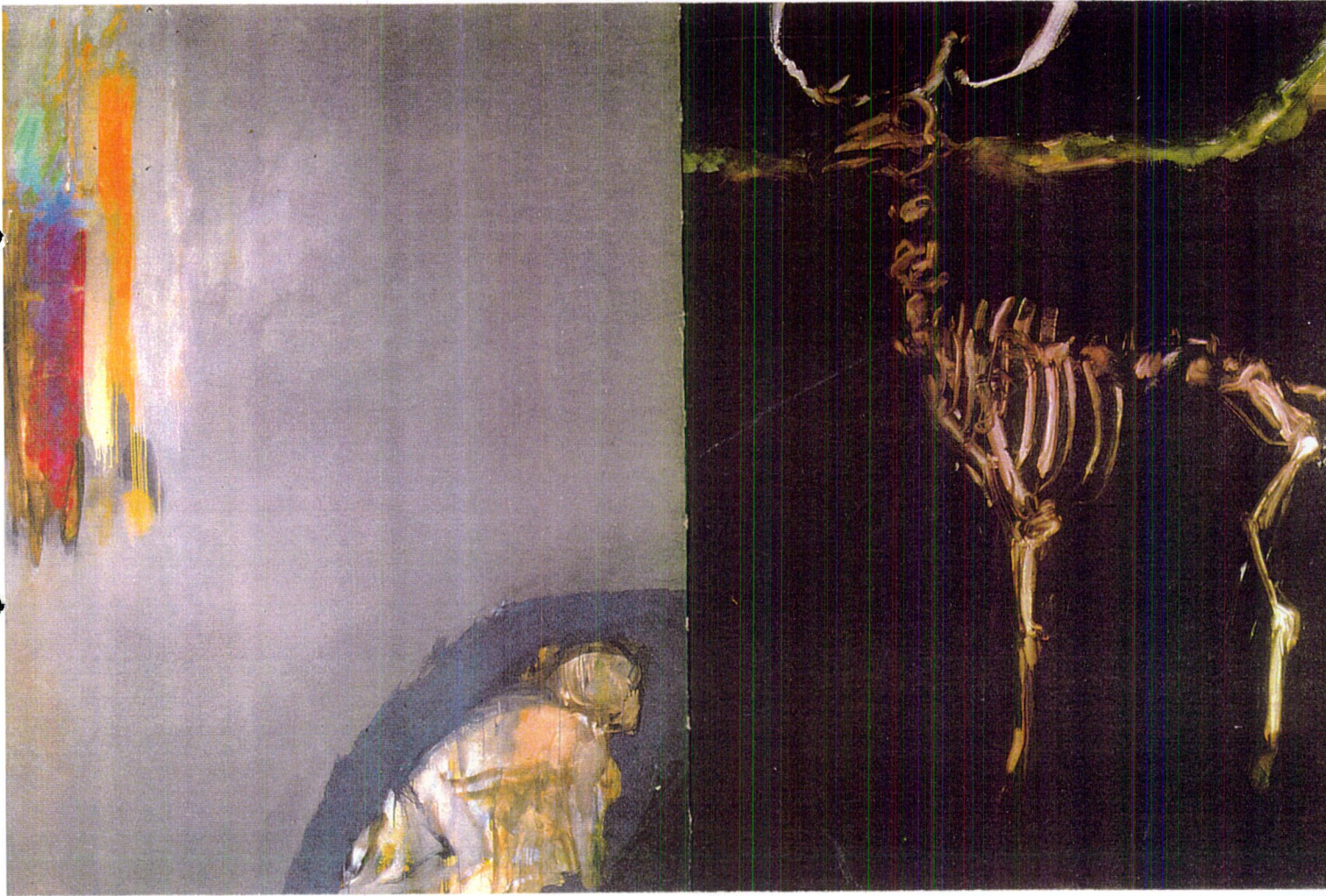


Figure 7 - Elk meets Sweeney - Barrie Cooke - 1985/86 (Oil on canvas)



opinion helps to dismiss the accusation that art based on literature is mere illustration (one reason why artists dislike their work being referred to as “literary”). She states - “The most serious allegation against artists who attempt literary subjects is the allegation that their art is therefore subservient to another art form.”<sup>9</sup> That this is clearly not the case is suggested by Barrie Cooke’s “Bone Box” which inspired S. Heaney’s poem “Bone Dreams”(see figure 8 and 9).

This project led the two men to further collaborate, resulting in the books Bog Poems and Sweeney Astray being accompanied by lithographs and monotypes by Cooke (see figure 10). Heaney comments on “Bone Dreams” -

What follows is a sequence of images that resulted from the the editor’s invitation to contribute a piece of writing complementary to Barrie Cooke’s “bone-boxes” and his watercolour drawings of bone. I have not attempted any literal description or critical appreciation of Mr. Cooke’s art. Instead I have tried to lure the imagination towards the marrow and history of the word “bone”, to answer his obsession with the image by aural and literary explorations.<sup>10</sup>

That Heaney has followed the course of Cooke’s painting career and also been influenced by the latter’s previous work, is evident in his poem’s reference to the Silen Gigs as “that Irish feminine archetype who appears allied to water and ground in many of Mr. Cooke’s earlier paintings. She, in turn, reminded me of the finds in Jutland, of women (witches?) staked and buried in the bogland”.<sup>11</sup>



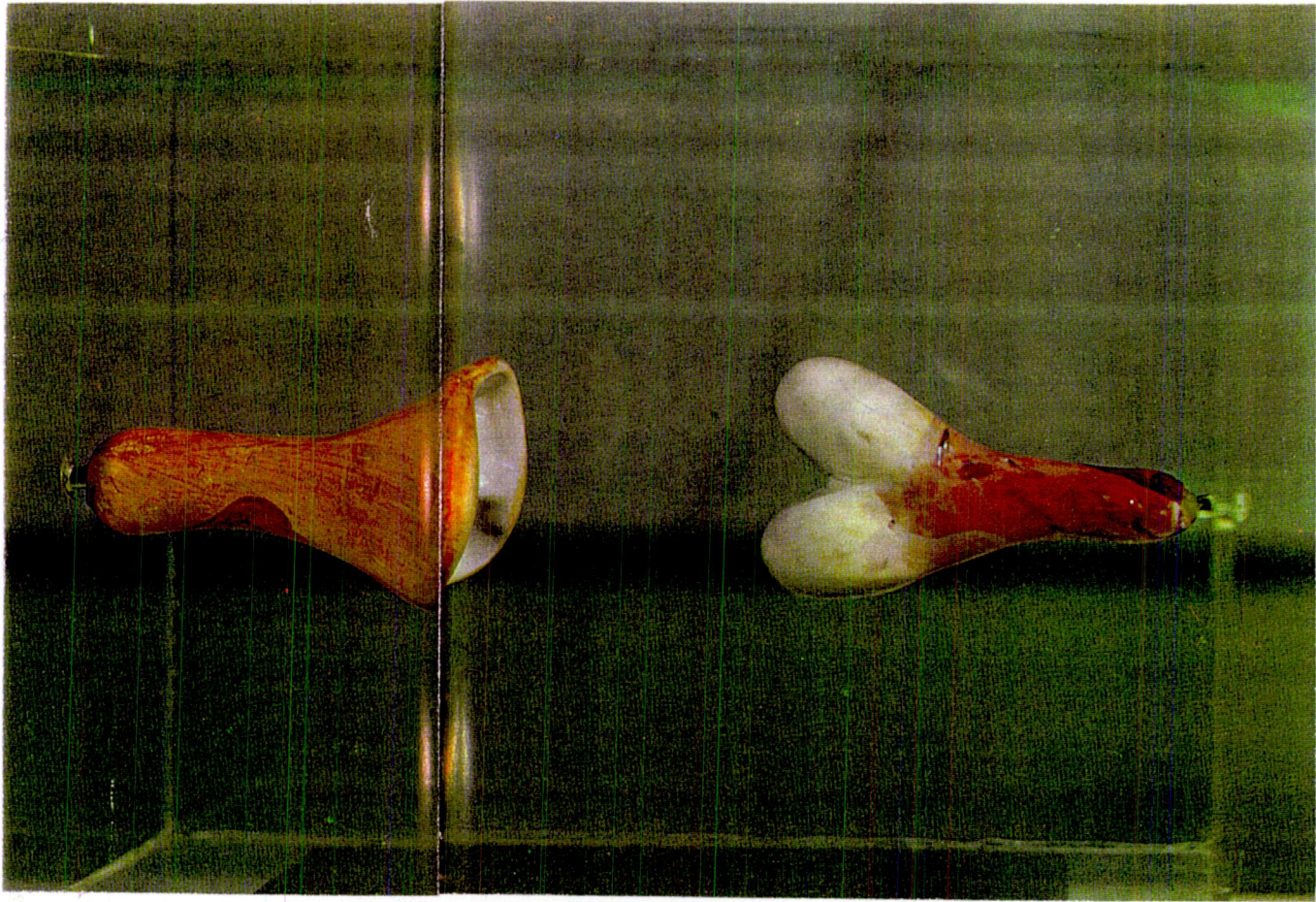


Figure 8 - Bone Box - Barrie Cooke - 1972



# Bone Dreams

for Barrie Cooke

- i White bone found  
on the grazing:  
the rough, porous  
language of touch,

and its yellowing, veined  
lair in the grass,  
like an opened pod.  
As dead as stone,

flint-find, nugget  
of chalk,  
I touch it again,  
I wind it in

the sling of mind  
to pitch it  
and follow its  
drop into speech.

- ii Bone-house:  
a skeleton  
in the tongue's  
old dungeons.

I push back  
through dictions,  
Elizabethan foliage,  
Norman devices,

the erotic mayflowers  
of Provence  
and the bog-Latin  
of churchmen

to the scop's  
twang, the iron  
flash of consonants  
cleaving the line.

- iii In the coffered  
riches of grammar  
and declensions  
I found *bān-hūs*,

its fire, benches,  
wattle and rafters:  
where the soul  
fluttered a while

in the roof-space.  
There was a small crock  
for the brain,  
and a cauldron

of generation  
swung at the centre—  
love-den, blood-holt,  
ring-hoard, bone-box.

- iv Come back past  
philology and kennings,  
re-enter memory  
where the bone's lair

is a love-nest  
in the grass.  
I hold my lady's head  
like a crystal

and ossify myself  
by gazing: I am screes  
on her escarpments,  
a chalk giant

carved upon her downs.  
Soon my hands, on the Roman  
road of her spine  
move towards the passes.

- v And move into  
the marrow of currents,  
the river's long nerve  
and natural

contractions,  
a muscle system  
turning on its bed.  
At the source,

under tufted levels  
of upland bog  
the accouchement of water  
is neverending:

contortionist water,  
double-jointed, shameless,  
flaunter on gravel,  
lipper of bridges.

- vi Now my hands have found that queen  
staked in the bog, and I unpin  
her darkness: out of the black maw  
of the peat, sharpened willow

withdraws gently.  
I unwrap the skin and see  
the pot of the skull,  
the damp tuck of each curl

reddish as a fox's brush,  
a mark of a gorget in the flesh  
of her throat. And spring water  
starts to rise around her.

I reach past  
the riverbed's washed  
dream of gold to the bullion  
of her Venus bone.





He heard the stag bellowing and he made a poem in which  
he praised aloud all the trees of Ireland, and rehearsed some  
of his own hardships and sorrows, saying:

Suddenly this bleating  
and belling in the glen!  
The little timorous stag  
like a scared musician

startles my heartstrings  
with high homesick refrains—  
deer on my lost mountains,  
flocks out on the plain.

The bushy leafy oak tree  
is highest in the wood,  
the forking shoots of hazel  
hide sweet hazel-nuts.

Figure 10 - Illustration to Sweeney Astray - Barrie Cooke (monotype) - Text translated  
by Seamus Heaney - 1983



### Group Exhibitions with Literary Connections

**Literary Themes:** It has already been mentioned that Cooke's "Bone Box" was exhibited alongside S. Heaney's "Bone Dream" at IMMA in 1996. All exhibits from "Literary Themes" are part of the museum's collection, a sizeable body of which is connected to writing. By exposing the abundant examples of art and literary links, the curator Catherine Marshall was also addressing the aforementioned issue that literary artworks are somehow inferior and she makes the point that

...to make art which relates to literature is to challenge the most basic tenet of twentieth century Modernism; that the artwork should be complete in itself and does not refer to anything beyond itself. Yet many artists who are committed to the creation of work which is relevant to the contemporary world ignore that rule.<sup>12</sup>

Some of the other contemporary participants playing exceptions to the rule were Irish artists - Louis Le Brocquy, Brian Maguire, Richard Gorman and Cecil King and international artists- John Bellany, Robert Motherwell, André Masson, Ferenc Martyn, Tim Rollins and KOS. The books which inspired them are Jaymes Joyce's Dubliners (Le Brocquy); Finnegan's Wake (Gorman, Masson); Ulysses (Martyn, Motherwell); Stephen Crane's Red Badge of Courage (Tim Rollins and KOS), Wilde's Salomé (Masson); Orwell's 1984 (Maguire) (see figure 11); The Tain (Le Brocquy); Seamus Heaney's Glanmore Sonnets (King); and Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea (Bellany).

**Joycesight:** Le Brocquy, Bourke and Cooke were again featured in a literature / art context in an exhibition which took place in June 1988 in Rome, entitled "Joycesight". The show also included pieces by Basil Blackshaw, Camille Souter, Michael Farrell, Anne Donnelly, Brian King and Conor Fallon. All the artists have at some time been





Figure 11 - 1984 - Brian Maguire - 1985 (Oil on canvas)



strongly drawn to or motivated by the works and enigma of Joyce. Brian Fallon explains the writer's kinship with artists when he defines Joyce as...

the epitome of the artist-exile, the intellectual wanderer without a homeland, *l'homme voyageur*, a twentieth-century archetype reflecting an epoch of cultural uprooting and upheaval. Joyce seems to have been perfectly aware of this *persona* himself - almost certainly he did not choose the title "Ulysses" merely because of its Homeric ground-bass of interlinked episodes. Bloom the outsider and Wandering Jew, reflects an entire side of his psyche, just as Stephen Dedalus embodies another one.<sup>13</sup> (see figure 12)

Artist Michael Farrell was so deeply impressed by the writer that he moved to Paris and lived there for a period tracing Joyce's footsteps. His paintings reenact meetings and friendships between Constantin Brancusi, Ezra Pound, Picasso and the author. Farrell wishes to eliminate the theory that Joyce had no connection to the arts of his time (a difficult thing to avoid in Paris of that era).

**Great Book of Ireland:** The Great Book of Ireland is a unique volume consisting of the combined works of 120 painters, 140 poets and 9 composers which was unveiled to the public in June 1991. All the artists and writers worked straight onto the large vellum sheets in a free contribution to the fund-raising venture run by Clashganna Mills Trust Ltd. (a charity aiming to gain independent living for disabled persons) and Poetry Ireland.

One of the aims of the project (apart from raising funds) was to create a book which should be a dialogue between the communities of artists and poets in the country. In the beginning the choice of poets and artists was easy. The editors, Theo Dorgan (Poetry Ireland) and Gene Lambert (Artist), chose the most well known names but as the project continued to grow poets put forward painters they knew of and painters suggested poets. There were only two ground rules - no illustrations, no pastiche.





Figure 12 - The writer encounters Pablo Picasso - Michael Farrell



Working directly onto vellum was not without technical difficulties and as the book is fondly referred to as a "latter day Book of Kells" the project managers turned to original old manuscripts for guidance. It is indeed ironic that the first Irish links between the painted image and written word are turning full circle and being reincarnated in contemporary style and content. Theo Dorgan says of the project:

The beginnings of Irish art and poetry find a triumphant expression in the early illuminated manuscripts, and the sense of recuperating an ancient tradition in a thoroughly modern idiom became one of the driving excitements of making the book.<sup>14</sup>

Each page was dealt with as a piece in itself and the poems and images were artistically unified by Denis Brown's calligraphy (see figure 13). Certain entries to the book are especially poignant as in Samuel Beckett's contribution made just before he died, accompanied by a painting from Louis Le Brocquy (see figure 14).

Dorgan sums up the achievement of the book and its significance for verbal and visual artists in Ireland when he says

The Great Book, as a priceless and unexpected artefact, is an achievement we can be proud of in itself. More than this, it allows us to celebrate the ferment of creative process which is one of the hallmarks of the new Ireland. Fractured and contradictory though our lives are, we have a wealth of poets, playwrights, composers, musicians, novelists, painters, sculptors - practitioners of all the arts - which even two decades ago would have been unthinkable. Many of these are young, are at the outset of careers which may end in triumph or in silence; many have considerable achievements already and a few are already secure in their reputations. The Great Book of Ireland celebrates and demonstrates this wealth of promise and achievement.<sup>15</sup>







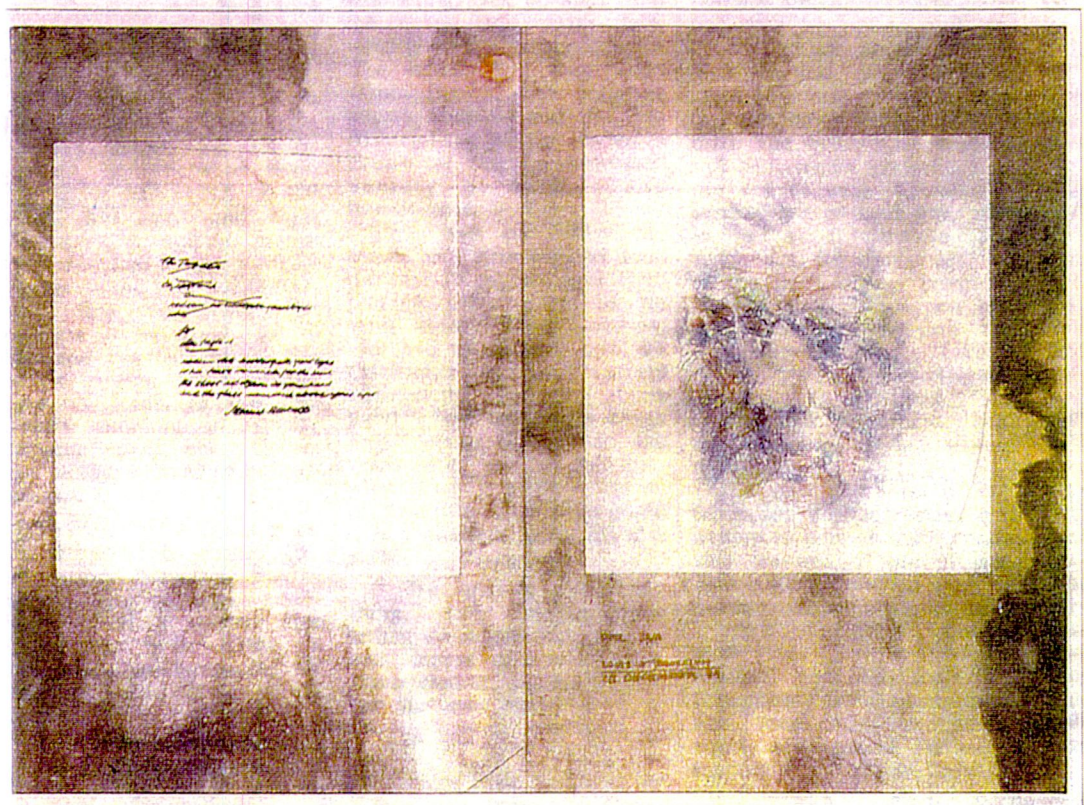


Figure 14 - The Great Book of Ireland 1991 - Poet Samuel Beckett and Painter Louis Le Brocquy - 1991



Despite the relationships and collaborations between writers and artists in the history of Literature and Art, the two subjects could not be further apart in their ranking on the education front. "Art" doesn't have a very high status in schools and is seen more as a fun, extra, non-academic and easy subject. Literature on the other hand, is translated into the subject "English" in school terms and is obligatory in all schools.

The Victorian era put an end to "wroughting" (the art of shaping something by hand) being one of the 3 R's and replaced it with "rithmetic", thus widening the gap between reading and art. That art is considered non-utilitarian is also part of this period's legacy which remains in our educational system. The following chapter discusses how various educational programmes have managed to bridge this gap between art and literature and simultaneously remove the "academic" aspect of reading that must appear insurmountable to the "non-academic" pupils often doing arts and crafts.



## FOOTNOTES ON CHAPTER 1

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<sup>1</sup> Terrence Brown, Ireland - A Social and Cultural History 1922 - 1985 (London: Fontana Press, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> Brian Fallon, Joycesight Catalogue (Perugia: The George Moore Society, 1998), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Hillary Pyle, Yeats - Portrait of an Artistic Family (London: Merrell, Holberton, 1979), p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Louis Le Brocquy, Irish Art 1770-1895, History and Society (Cork: Crawford Municipal Gallery, 1995), p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> Le Brocquy, Irish Art 1770-1895, p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> Seamus Heaney quoted from: Sarah Walker, "Heaney, Sweeney and Brian Bourke's Drawings," Irish Arts Review (1987, 4): p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> Brian Bourke quoted from: Sarah Walker, "Heaney, Sweeney and Brian Bourke's Drawings," Irish Arts Review (1987, 4): p. 68.

<sup>8</sup> Seamus Heaney quoted from: Sarah Walker, "Heaney, Sweeney and Brian Bourke's Drawings," Irish Arts Review (1987, 4): p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Marshall, Unpublished text from "Literary Themes" Catalogue (Dublin: IMMA, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Seamus Heaney, "Bone Dreams for Barrie Cooke", The Arts in Ireland (1972, Autumn): p. 52.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Catherine Marshall, Unpublished text from "Literary Themes" Catalogue (Dublin: IMMA, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Fallon, Joycesight Catalogue, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Theo Dorgan, Great Book of Ireland Brochure (Dublin: IMMA, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Theo Dorgan, Great Book of Ireland Brochure (Dublin: IMMA, 1991).



## CHAPTER 2

### ART, LITERATURE AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

The following chapter will illustrate three very different examples of how art and literature have been integrated into various educational programmes. The approaches taken by the projects are all quite different but the three have a common emphasis - that of selecting a text-based theme, breaking it down to suit the needs of the participants through discussion and pursuing a process from start to finish.

#### **Tim Rollins and KOS (Kids of Survival)**

American artist Tim Rollins was first motivated to set up a workshop for disadvantaged teenagers with a low level of literacy in 1982, when he encountered a dyslexic teenager drawing on a book. The image he had made captured the meaning of the text despite his inability to read it. Rollins believed that children with literacy problems, who very often had learning and behavioural problems, could further develop themselves and their knowledge through the mediums of drawing and painting. Christened KOS, meaning Kids of Survival, the group comes from the South Bronx in New York and through their team achievement under Rollins' workshop supervision, they have erased negative labels of race, class and academic ability. Catherine Marshall, curator of IMMA, says of their work exhibited in Literary Themes in 1996,

Their communalism challenges western art's cult of individual genius. Their treatment of the book is also challenging. Instead of tamely illustrating the written word, they use books (always literary classics) as a conceptual framework for an exploration of aspects of their own personal experience and of global socio-political issues.<sup>1</sup>



The main concept behind Rollins' education method is to gain knowledge through action. The title of his first independent workshop extended from his high school programme was "Art and Knowledge". The programme is very practically based but also incorporates reading, discussion and direct contact with art in museums and galleries. Rollins believed in uncovering innate creative ability in children through group participation, encouragement and training. For Rollins there was no reason why underprivileged, coloured children should not have an equal introduction to art. Art critic Jean Fisher writes about the group's aims to oppose accepting a standardised measurement of academic and artistic talent,

Romantic paradigms of the transcendental self, the creative individual, or one who possesses privileged knowledge continue to frame questions of subjectivity. Tim Rollins and KOS radically challenge these purist and elitist notions. Their collaborative art interprets culture through young people who are generally dismissed as having virtually nothing to do with it.<sup>2</sup>

The group has successfully sold paintings to famous art collectors and major museums in national and international exhibitions. The proceeds of these sales have enabled them to start plans for building an independent school with art at the centre of the curriculum. They participated in Rosc '88 exhibiting a portrait of Charles Haughey based on the text Animal Farm, part of a series depicting world leaders (see figure 15). To create this piece they studied photographs of Haughey and read vast amounts of newspaper footage. This was followed by long group discussions and numerous sketches before they communally agreed on the main imagery. These images were then transferred to acetate and projected onto canvas already primed with pages of the text.



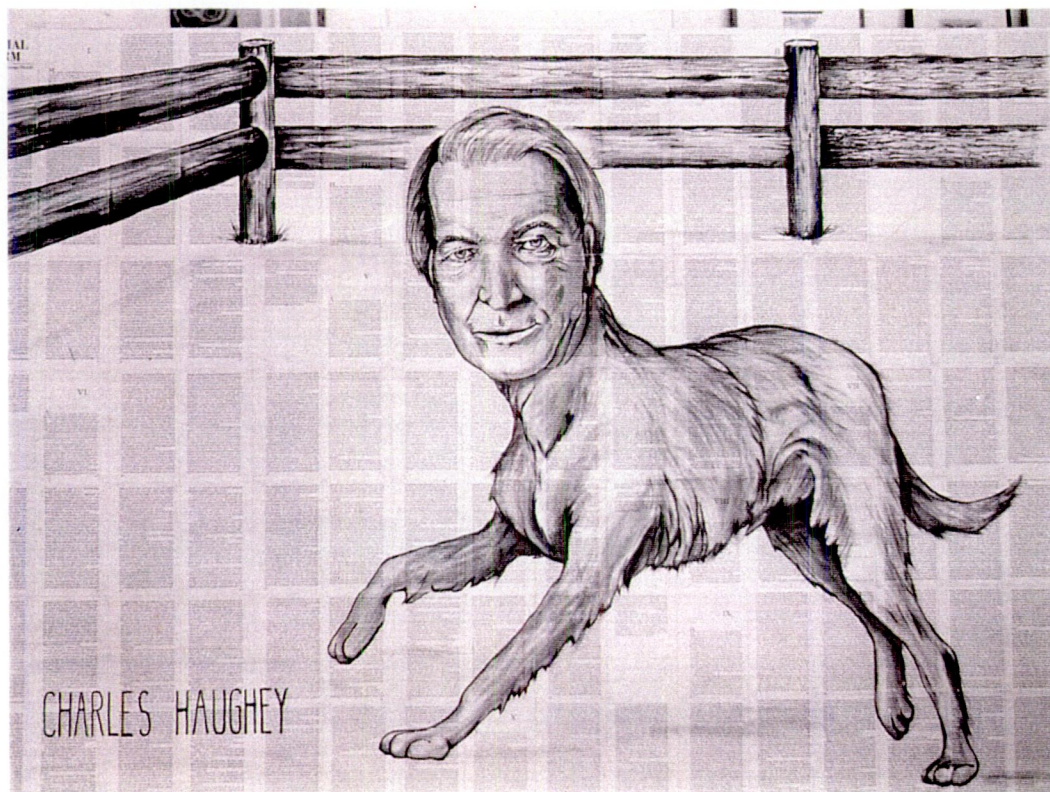


Figure 15 - From the Animal Farm: Charles J. Haughey - Tim Rollins and K.O.S. - 1988



The book pages are an integral link between all the group's artworks. Fisher explains that,

KOS begins with the book. Container of knowledge and guarantor of 'civilized' culture, the book also represses those who are not its subjects, especially those educated in a history and ideology that effaces their own experiences and traditions. KOS therefore investigates classics of world literature, examining primary theme or instants in these texts that can be reinvested with KOS's knowledge and feelings, both of local experiences in the South Bronx as well as of broader world issues.<sup>3</sup>

The book which may previously have represented something denied to the group, is consumed, digested, reinvented and physically incorporated into a new artwork.

Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane recounts the story of an inexperienced young soldier during the American Civil War, his initial cowardice and the nightmarish circumstances of war which finally drive him to commit a real act of courage (see figure 16). The KOS group use the book as their own personal metaphor for passing from childhood into adulthood in a violent urban environment. Fisher interprets the piece as being

like the body in a Grünewald altarpiece, the pages of Stephen Crane's novel are marked by open wounds. These are signs of the violation of those whose lives are insignificant or expendable according to a symbolic order that appropriates their deaths through a language of heroism, supporting its own master narratives.<sup>4</sup>

One of the group, Richie, further emphasizes this in his comment on the same piece

The wounds in the painting represent bad stuff that has happened in our lives, like scars on our memory. You can't paint this with realistic figures. The wound is you; it's a self portrait.<sup>5</sup>



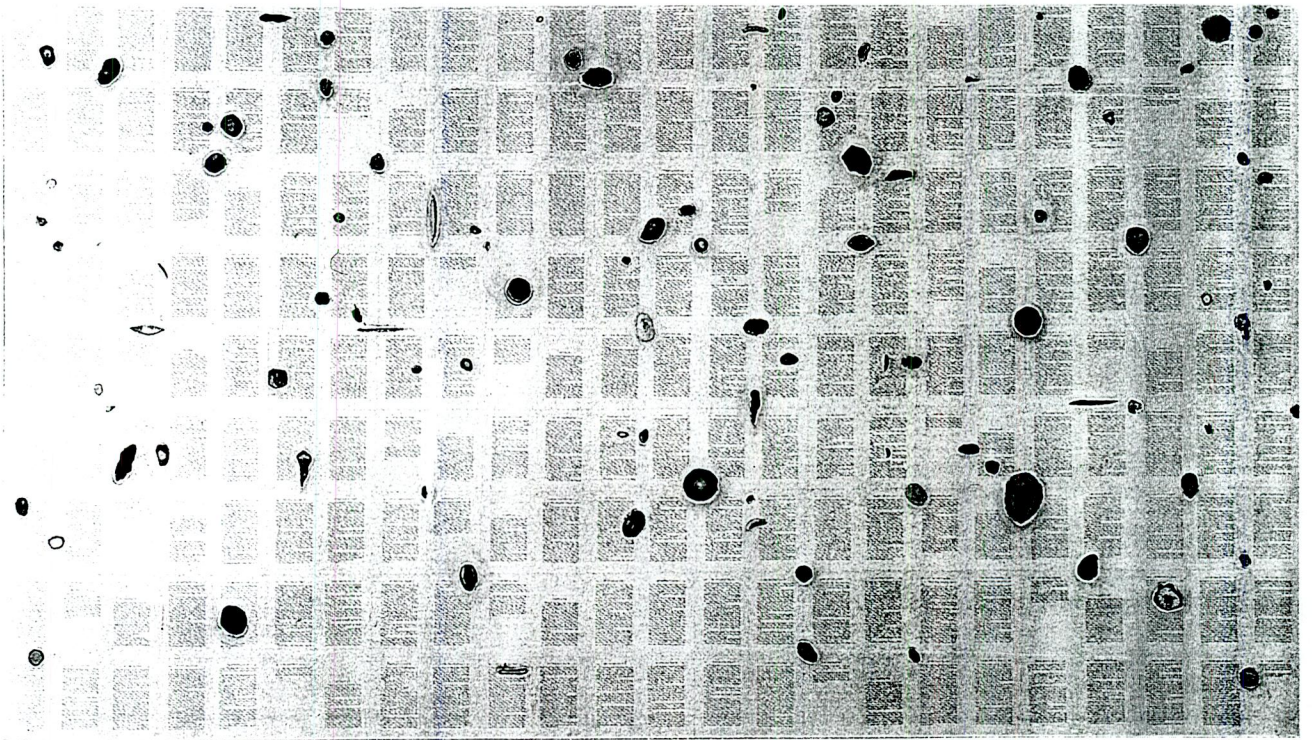


Figure 16 - Red Badge of Courage III (Stephen Crane) - Tim Rollins and K.O.S. -  
1986/87



### **The Book Project and IMMA**

Tim Rollins and KOS were an actual part of "Literary Themes" but another art education programme titled "The Book Project" is also an offshoot of the show and continues to tour with the exhibition. The Book Project was set up early in 1996 by Youthreach tutors from Dublin, Dundalk, Edenderry, Youghal and Monaghan, the IMMA curator Catherine Marshall and Education Officer Anne Davoren. Artist and film maker Joe Lee coordinated the various centre projects and was joined by artists Trish Brennan and Susan Kelly. The aim of the project was to produce a series of handmade books using IMMA's Collection Exhibition "Literary Themes" as a starting point. The work was divided into photomontage workshop sessions taking place at IMMA and in the Youthreach Centres. The trainees from Dublin visited the museum for four half day sessions and those from outside Dublin had two full day workshops - other related work was continued in the Youthreach Centres.

During the first session at IMMA the participants viewed the exhibition and a talk on "Literary Themes" was given by Catherine Marshall. A few exhibits were focussed on, in particular Brian Maguire's 1984 painting from Orwell (see figure 11), John Bellany's series of prints from Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea, and KOS's Red Badge of Courage III (from Stephen Crane's novel). These talks aimed to show the trainees how different artists used their reaction to books as a point for an artwork. A further objective was to encourage the participants in the idea of creating finished work on self-selected themes.

As the literacy level of most Youthreach trainees is quite low the literature side of the project was toned down and camouflaged. The project was to be as unlike a school situation as possible. Some of the reasons why Joe Lee chose photomontage as a



medium for the “books“ were to avoid the “I can’t draw syndrome“, and to complete the project with a product of high quality and professional finish. He has worked with this medium with teenagers in the past and has found it to be the most suitable method of combining text and images within a short time limit.

The aims achieved varied slightly in each Youthreach centre but were based on a book which included

1. a photographic self portrait
2. textured, coloured and printed pages (dividers)
3. lettering and images to communicate their ideas expressively
4. a personal choice of theme layout and overall design.

Colaiste Ris, Dundalk: One of the Youthreach projects was run simultaneously in Colaiste Ris with 5th years and Dundalk Youthreach trainees and was at times problematic. The artist Constance Short found it very difficult to develop the project with the Youthreach trainees as they had very little experience in art. They weren’t willing to experiment, saw every task as having to have a perfectly finished outcome and felt themselves to be out of their depth. It took a lot of time and extra encouragement from both printer and poet Vrona Groake to eventually convince the trainees to attempt the project using their own verbal and visual imagery. The artist believes however that this kind of project is only beneficial to trainees if it is carried out on a continuous basis saying,

It is hard to see the value of what we did with the Youthreach group if efforts are not made to continue helping them explore their creativity, as we were attempting to do. I could see it helping them to become more self-reliant, learning to have confidence in their own ideas, but it would have to be ongoing and not just an occasional thing.<sup>6</sup>



The Art teacher Olive Eustace who worked with the printer and poet at Colaiste Ris, stated that the project was a success, “an opportunity for students to work with an artist and poet in a joint project where open discussion and decision making took place”<sup>7</sup> and a way of bringing art into a new environment. Her only criticisms were that more time was required, that the pupils found it difficult to immediately combine images and words into one and that the pupils’ English teacher could have interacted with the poet and group.

Project coordinator Joe Lee was relatively happy with the results and believed that the participants who completed their books left with a sense of achievement, especially when they saw the professional finish of the work in the exhibition (see figures 17 and 18). He did however think that some of the groups couldn’t grasp the link between the work in Literary Themes and the task undertaken and that they found it hard to relate to the artworks. He suggests that in future the project should involve more preparatory work before the gallery visit and more synchronized plans between the group leaders, artists, literary tutors, etc. On the whole the Book Project was an accomplishment and evidence of how crosscurricular educational projects can work with pupils of low concentration level when a complex theme i.e. Literature in Art is simplified according to their needs.





Figure 17 - Love and Hate series - David Sherlock (Lucan Youthreach) - 1996  
(Photomontage)



Figure 18 - Rave on - Emma Chaney (Clondalkin Youthreach) - 1996 (Photomontage)



### Wigan, Orwell and Animal Farm

The last example of a crosscurricular art project using literature as a starting point is quite different to the two already mentioned because of the younger age group involved and the chosen medium. This project was set up in national schools in Wigan in England by a sculptor Andy Shaw and a local amenity group in 1987.

The latter approached the artist about plans to redesign the platform of the disused Wigan North Western Station. Shaw immediately envisioned the site as a "plinth" for a sculptural project and came up with the Animal Farm theme as a means of connecting the rural area, the author George Orwell, his writing about Wigan and the station together. The artist felt that the novel would provide an interesting cross-curricular activity for the children, involving them in history, politics, art and English - he comments

'Animal Farm' was a book I'd read several times at school doing English Literature. It is a book I've enjoyed reading ever since, so it seemed a nice one as it had good connections with Wigan. There was Orwell and the animals and it had a political side. It was also good subject matter to use because we could bring English into it as well.<sup>8</sup>

Each character of Orwell's is welded, constructed in chicken wire, filled out with newspaper, layered in papier-maché and resin and finally spray painted. The pupils are totally involved in every stage (even the welding) and are supervised by Shaw who stays as a resident artist in that school until the animal is finished, before moving to the next school in the area (see figure 19).



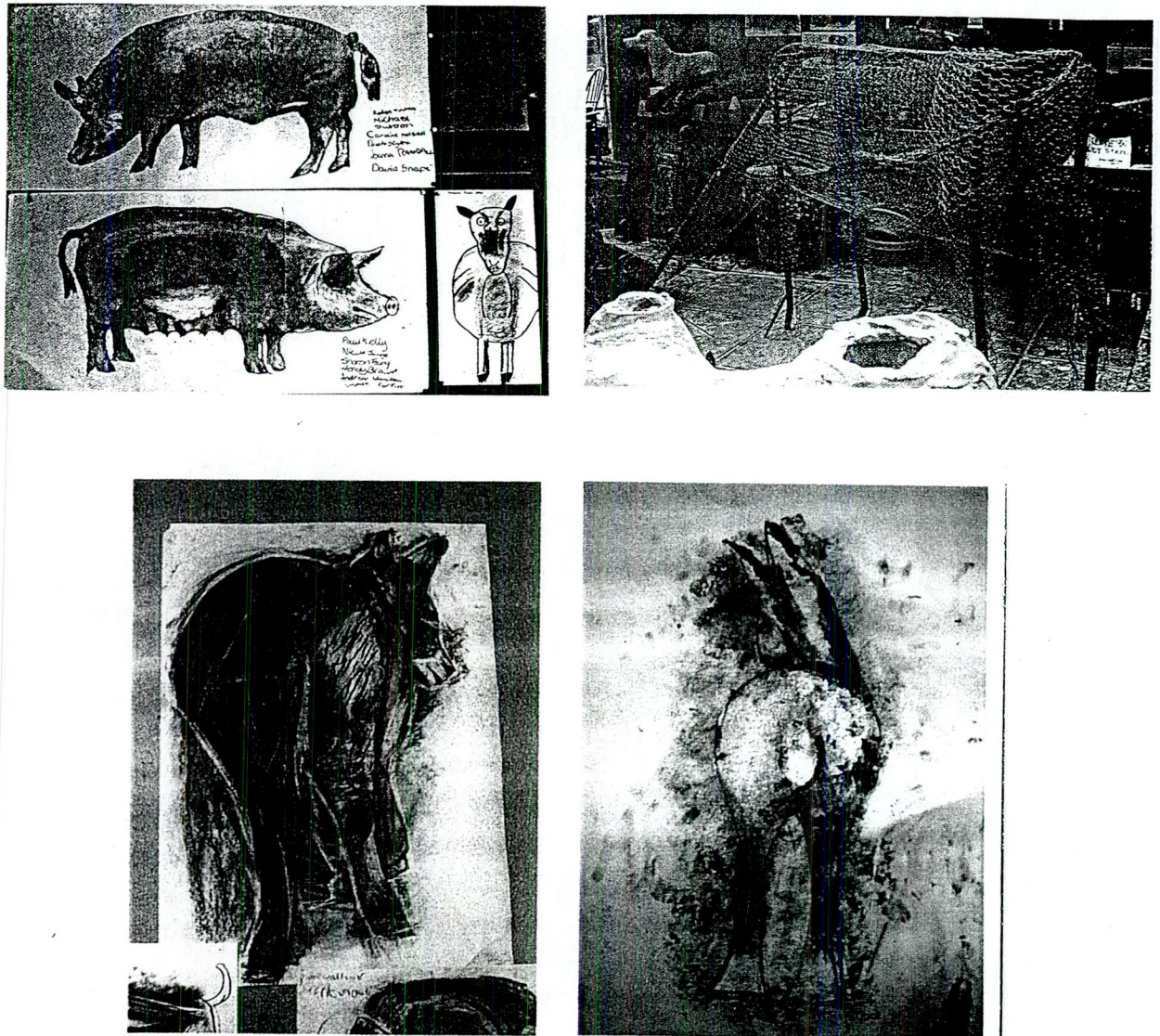


Figure 19 - Animal Farm - Preparatory Work in Wigan Schools



The children are very much exposed to real animals as a major part of their design process involves going into fields to look at, draw and take measurements of cows, horses, donkeys, sheep, etc. During this observational stage the children are also absorbing the book and beginning to analyse the characters for themselves. Shaw maintains that this choice of literature, sculptural art forms and range of materials (plaster, steel, straw, resin, plastic, vinamould, chicken wire) are exciting new experiences for both national school pupils and staff... "I can guarantee that in every school I go into, at least one teacher will pick up on what I am doing, read the book 'Animal Farm', actually talk about some of the material etc."<sup>9</sup>

The animals aren't just any sculpted creatures to the children, they are most definitely Orwell's characters - to date a life-size Boxer (see figure 20), Benjamin, Napoleon, Snowball Squealer, the cows, the sheep, Muriel, Major, Blueball, Jessie and Pincher have been created in different residencies. Some of the children (often as young as 8 or 9) say that they preferred Orwell's Animal Farm to their usual stories. Throughout the course of the work - the selecting, planning, designing, construction and decorating of the animal - the pupils were able to really identify themselves with their character and became emotionally involved. The tragedy of Boxer and the falseness of the Seven Commandments seem to have made the deepest impressions on the youngsters who were still able to discuss them months after their project was finished.

These three projects show that there are no academic, age or ability barriers which can't be crossed in cross-curricular art and literature projects - if the environment and information breakdown are appropriately set up. Involvement is the key word to the success of these educational projects as Confucius said - "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn".





Figure 20 - Boxer - Andy Shaw residency in Wigan schools



This short maxim epitomises the success of the three projects already discussed and in each case “involvement“ was possible at every stage of the process. The following, third and final chapter will give an account of a secondary school art project also based on Animal Farm, where involvement is not to be taken for granted in Ireland’s curriculum-centered school system and the fragmentation of the arts in Irish education becomes fully apparent.



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 2

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Marshall, Unpublished text from "Literary Themes" Catalogue (Dublin: IMMA, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Jean Fisher, "Tim Rollins and K.O.S. at Jay Gorney Modern Art", Art Forum (1987, 1): p.111.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Rollins and K.O.S, Catalogue of Exhibition at the Ikon Gallery, (Derry, Orchard Gallery, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> Constance Short, Youthreach Book Project Report, Education Office IMMA.

<sup>7</sup> Olive Eustace, Youthreach Book Project Report, Education Office, IMMA.

<sup>8</sup> Andy Shaw quoted from: Rod Taylor, Artists in Wigan Schools (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1991), p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 41.



### CHAPTER 3

#### ANIMAL FARM IN THE ARTOOM

##### Reasons for Choosing Animal Farm

This third chapter will discuss the cross-curricular project of Art and English literature which started in Old Bawn Community School in Tallaght on the 11th January 1999. The group of nineteen fifth years involved are of good ability artistically and of mixed ability academically. The aim of the scheme is to design and compose a multi-media painting of a personal interpretation of George Orwell's Animal Farm. The reasons for choosing this particular novel are as follows.

- It is common to both the honours and pass English curricula for the 2000 Leaving Certificate examination and is therefore very relevant to all the pupils.
- The novel is very visual and tactile in its imagery. It is set in an agricultural backdrop which is possible to bring into the classroom in the form of farm elements as a still life. It was also possible to bring the pupils directly into such an environment on a visit.
- The symbolism in the novel is pitched at the right level for teenagers - not too complicated yet diverse enough to give the pupils as much free rein as they want.
- There is great potential in the novel for both the pupils' opinions and their compositions to be discussed.



### General Objectives

- To explore the learning potential open to pupils studying a verbal, academic text in an actively visual manner.
- To carry out an experiment to decide if the ability to express an opinion/feelings about a text in a visual way, could aid and improve verbal articulacy on the same theme.
- To take a theme in one form of the arts (in this case modern literature) and explore, digest and reconstruct it in another visual art form (painting).
- To link school subjects on the fifth year curriculum and develop a symbiotic relationship between the two. ⇒ The text inspires ideas which receive their outlet in the painting. ⇒ The painting gives physical expression to these ideas and receives input from the text.
- To promote cross-curricular projects (between art and other subjects) in secondary schools.
- To discover if pupils involved in an activity they enjoy ie painting are receptive to external stimuli - in this case the tape cassette of animal farm playing while they work and also the light discussion and commentary occurring about events in the text, throughout the class. (Pestalozzi's example was Gertrude teaching the children arithmetic while they wove or spun).



### Art Objectives

- Lesson 1 - To examine elements of composition in a still life - to explore monochromatic tonal ranges in paint.
- Lesson 2 - To explore how neutral 'grey' tones can be mixed combining two complementaries and white.
- Lesson 3 - To observe and experience farm animals in their indoor/outdoor environments. To gather ideas and imagery for Animal Farm composition.
- Lesson 4 - To design a composition and explore paint application through thumbnail sketches. To introduce different methods of painting, in particular mixed media, through my own portfolio.
- Lesson 5 - To explore some methods of applying texture to a painting - both visual and tactile. To begin final compositions.
- Lesson 6 - To further explore visual and tactile texture and incorporate drawing media.
- Lesson 7 - To critically analyse the pupils' use of colour and emphasize complementary colours, and the positioning of warm/cool colours. To explore the possibilities of collage. To verbalize reason for choice of composition and methods used.
- Lesson 8 - To continue to explore collage and finish painting.

### Scheme process

**Preparation:** Just before the Christmas break I announced to the pupils what their next project was going to involve. They had already heard of the book Animal Farm, a few had read it and about one third of the group had seen the film. I explained



that we would be reading the text to get ideas for a painting, which would be their own personal interpretation of the novel. For homework during the holidays I gave them three chapters of the book to read. A simple worksheet which accompanied these chapters requested that the pupils underline striking passages, identify three different moods, two backdrops and make a quick descriptive sketch of one of the characters (see figure 21).

Lesson 1 - We started with a casual discussion about the book, while I was setting up the still life of various elements to do with the theme ie several pig skulls, a sheep skull, a fox skull, apples, eggs, horseshoes, logs, sacking, straw and feathers. I asked the class if they had found the chapters difficult to understand. One of the girls retorted that it was easy because it was a children's book. A discussion ensued as she was contradicted by other pupils who maintained that the novel is very serious. I then intercepted quietly and said that although Orwell had named the novel "A Fairy Tale", it was aimed at a much broader audience. When I inquired of the pupils if they believed that the book was just about life on a farm, they responded with themes of revolution, strikes and inequality.

They argued amongst themselves about when the book was written and eventually asked me. When I answered that Orwell had written the book at the end of the second World War (1943/44) and that it was published in 1945 some of the pupils were surprised. We then discussed briefly how the book would still apply today and I told them that Orwell had really intended the book to be a critique and satire on Stalin and the Russian Revolution. The art objective of this lesson was to explore composition and monochromatic tonal ranges in a still-life painting. The pupils produced some very sensitive and painterly compositions (see figure 22).



1. Read the first 3 chapters 50

2. As you read, underline any passages which strike you as having very strong visual imagery.

3. Within these three chapters pick out three moods that you can sense - note the paragraph and page.

(i) Pride. (Pg 16/17

"BEASTS of England" Joy / Disbelieve : Pg 20 para. 1

(iii) PANIC / FEAR Pg 19 Para. 4 "Mrs. Je

4. Describe 2 scenes or backdrops to the events.

(i) "Sugarandy Mountain" - beyond the clouds, almost heaven  
serene, relaxed, free, life-giving, flourishing, safe

(ii) The Farmhouse - "unbelievable luxury" - comfort  
Preserved as a museum. Symbols of animals inside  
"feather mattresses" - "horsehair sofa"

5. Pick one of the characters mentioned and make a quick descriptive sketch showing their personality.

Name: "BOXER"



Name: PATRICK RYAN

for the 11/01/99

Figure 21 - Worksheet on first three chapters of Animal Farm



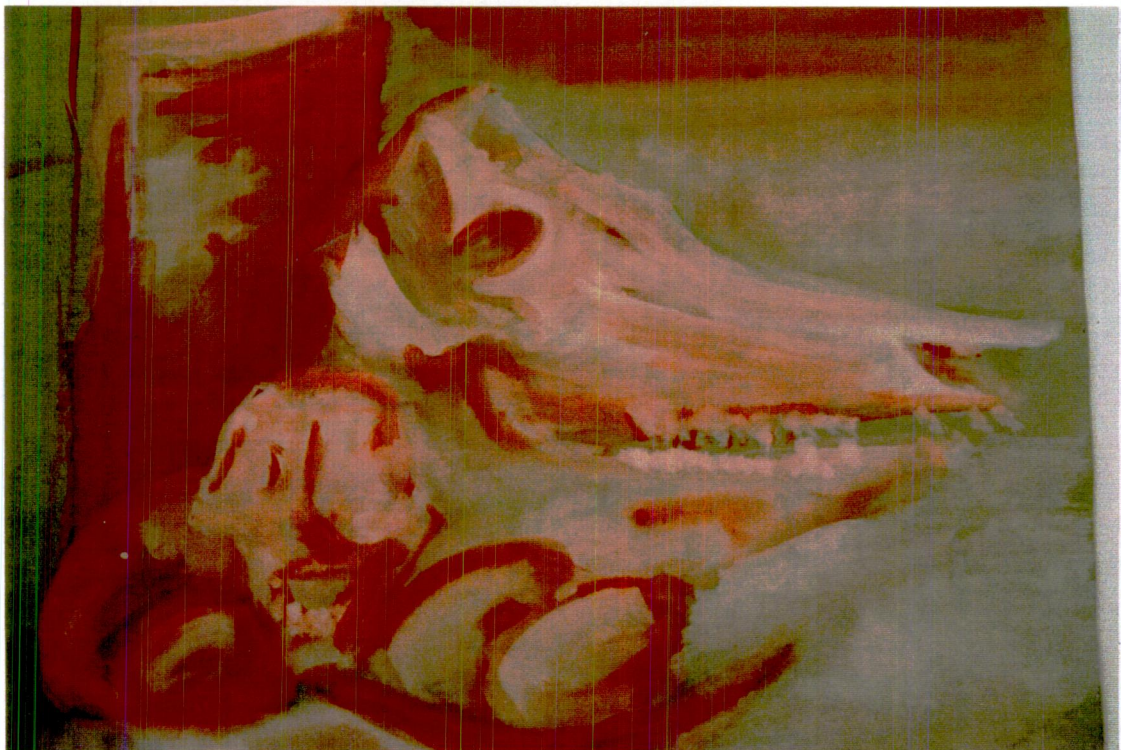


Figure 22 - Lesson 1 - Animal Farm Scheme - Pupils' work



Visual aid - unbalanced, monochromatic still-life composition beside a balanced, stronger composition.

Support studies - Picasso's "Guernica", Blue/Rose Period and Georgia O'Keefe's still lives, Francis Bacon.

Homework - chapter 4 of the novel.

Lesson 2 - In this lesson the pupils continued to explore composition and the theme still-life. They were introduced to neutral greys through mixing two complementaries together with white. Technically they needed more time for their task - they were a bit hesitant about mixing the greys - but what they finished was sensitively done (see figure 23). The pig skulls in particular seemed to fascinate them. In terms of integrating Animal Farm the lesson was successful. I had brought in the tape cassette of the book and played it in the background.

At first the pupils continued to chat and even raised their volume slightly, but after a few minutes there was a lull. I knew they were paying attention when I heard giggles at "Beasts of England" being sung and laughs at the different levels of literacy achieved by the various animals and the types of Animal Committees they set up. There were ironic comments at the mention of the missing milk and the pupils naturally zoned in on words like "castration knives".

I didn't want to ruin the atmosphere by asking a list of questions so I condensed it into one - could they see a turn in events anywhere? The class all responded with the same answer - the pigs appropriating the milk and windfall apples for themselves. I believe that they are enjoying the book despite trying to appear disinterested.

Visual aid - still-life painting of skulls done in neutral greys.





Figure 23 - Animal Farm Scheme - Lesson 2 - Pupils' work



Support Studies - Lucien Freud paintings

Aural aid - Cassette side 1, Tape 1 of Animal Farm

Homework - Next two chapters of the novel (5 and 6)

Lesson 3 - Visit to St. Mark's Youth Centre (Pet Farm) (see figure 24). This outing proved worthwhile, although unfortunately, less than half the group could attend because the rest were set-painting for the annual play. The main objective here was to observe and experience a farm atmosphere. Some of the pupils genuinely didn't know the difference between a donkey and a pony or between ducks and geese. They got a "hands-on" experience of the donkey, pony, goat and dogs and a good idea of the scale, form and texture of sheep, hens, geese and ducks. We were unlucky with the weather as it was bitterly cold and the pupils' hands went blue after completing the first boxes in their worksheets. We ended up retreating into the barn where they made quick sketches (see figure 25). Instead of drawing the animals' texture I sent them out to gather feathers, grain, straw, string etc. While in the barn I asked them if they could visualize what kind of composition they were going to paint. A few of them had already decided on a barn interior atmosphere. On their worksheets they had to note which animal characters in the book were represented at St. Mark's.

Visual Aid - My sketches, worksheet (see figure 26)

Support Studies - A. Dürer / A. Wyeth / my sketches

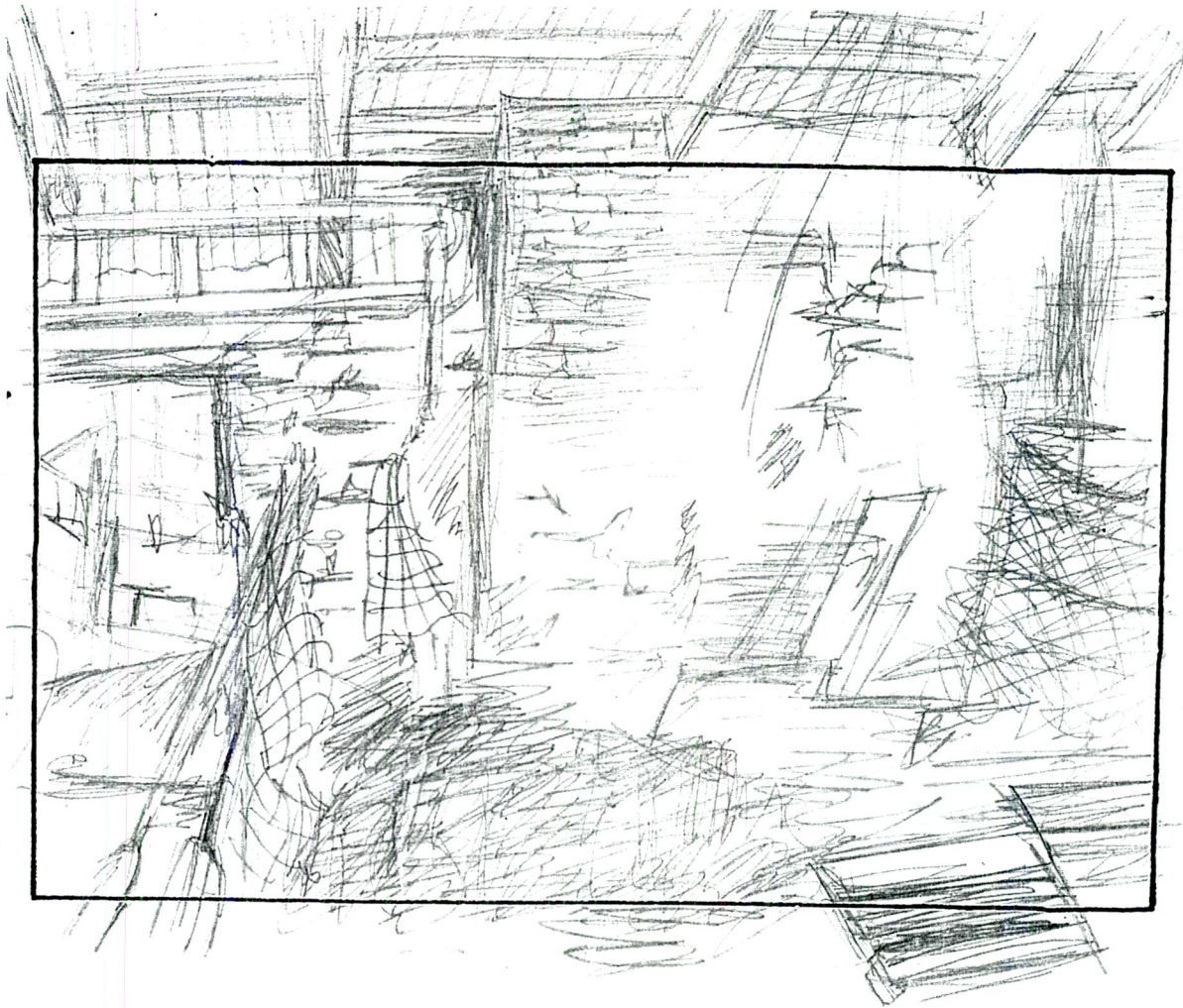
Lesson 4 - To introduce the pupils to composing their final painting I started the lesson by showing them a portfolio of my own work. The first three compositions were all literary themes (a Dutch play by Suzanna von Lohizen, Michael Kohlhaas by Heinrich von Kleist and Orwell's Animal Farm). These were accompanied by their process sheets and preliminary studies.



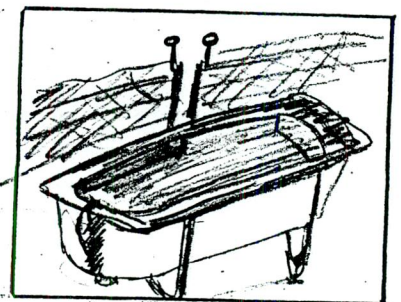
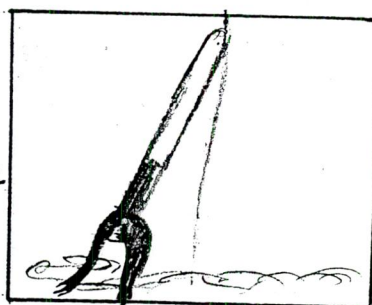


Figure 24 - Lesson 3 - Pupils' visit to St. Mark's Pet Farm





5. Record two other aspects of the centre which you might use later in your "Animal Farm" composition.



eg: cartwheel, well, bucket, straw bales etc...

Figure 25 - Lesson 3 - Pupils' work

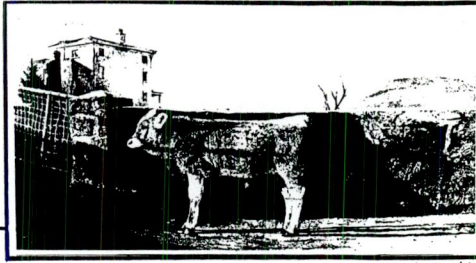


# WORKSHEET

St. Mark's  
Youth Centre

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 25/01/99



1. Go around the centre and make a note of all the animals there, which are mentioned in "Animal Farm". \_\_\_\_\_;

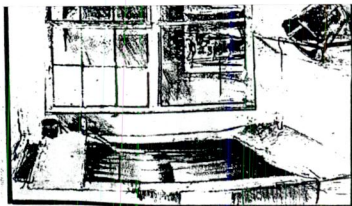
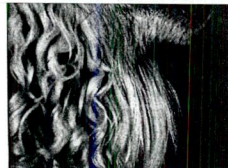
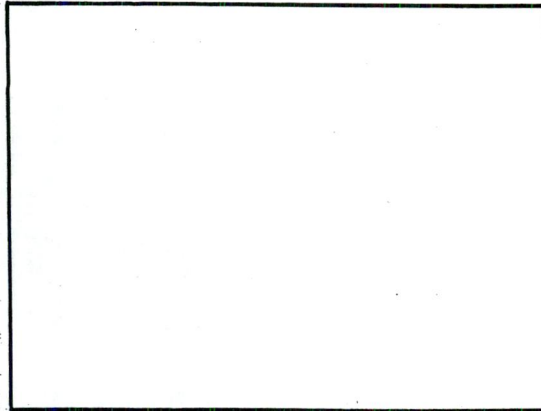
\_\_\_\_\_;

\_\_\_\_\_;

2. Name 3 characters or animal types whose species is not present at St. Mark's.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_ (ii) \_\_\_\_\_ (iii) \_\_\_\_\_.

2. A.  
Make a gestural drawing of an animal in boxes A & B. The animal will probably move - try to capture this movement in your line drawing. (Choose two different animals for A & B).





We discussed my interpretation of the book (see figure 27) - I elicited from them the type of and reasons for materials used and asked if they could read into any of the symbolism involved. Their answers were both intelligent and interesting - when asked for example what the pig's skull on the pillow might mean they responded with Old Major's skull being honored and on the contrary the commandment "No Animal shall sleep in a bed", they also made the parallel between my pig sketches sewn into the pillow and the luxuries that the pigs found in Jones' house.

As they began working on their thumbnail compositions and paint application task it became very apparent who was reading the novel and who wasn't. These pupils who had been following the text had more immediate and concrete ideas. They also felt a lot more confident and responded better when questioned about their sketches. The pupils who haven't continued to read the book are guiltily trying to catch part of it from the tape. They know some names of the different characters, but they are very vague about what kind of scene or mood they want to set. Their choice of animal character was steered by the support studies ie paintings/photos/sketches of animals, they picked the ones that appealed to them most. An example of a pupil who is really thinking about the theme and has already finished the book is Ross. One of his thumbnails showed a pig looking into a mirror and a man's image peering out (see figure 28).

Most of the pupils are reticent to use new materials and painting methods - they are firm believers in the 2B pencil and the No. 2 sable. Getting them to paint with card/sponges/rollers is new. All of them tried it out and more than half are still working with these materials. However, getting these pupils to move away from realism, as well as their familiar styles and materials is very difficult. Their discomfort is obvious when I





Figure 27 - Some are more equal than others - Michelle Lloyd - 1997





Figure 28 - Lesson 4 - Pupils' work



show them some of my more abstracted animals - they light up visibly at the sight of Andrew and James Wyeth and compromise on Jack B. Yeats.

Visual aid - My portfolio, paint application chart

Support studies - Andrew and James Wyeth, Jack B. Yeats, Franz Marc, Vincent Van Gogh, Rudolf Koller, Erich Fraaß, Dermot Seymour, anatomical models and my own animal studies (see figure 29).

Aural aid - cassette 1 side 2 of Animal Farm.

Homework - next two chapters (7 and 8)

Lessons 5 and 6 - The pupils were really enthusiastic about using texture and textured additives in paint in these lessons. I elicited from them the difference between visual and tactile structure ie. that the former describes how a surface looks and the latter how it feels. They were particularly interested in how I had made my textured additives board. I asked them to guess what materials I had used.

Most of lesson 5 was taken up with mixing and experimenting with the different additives ie. polyfilla, flour, tea, seeds, split peas, string, glue, etc., a task which the pupils thoroughly enjoyed. I kept reminding them to keep their compositions in mind when trying out the new textures.

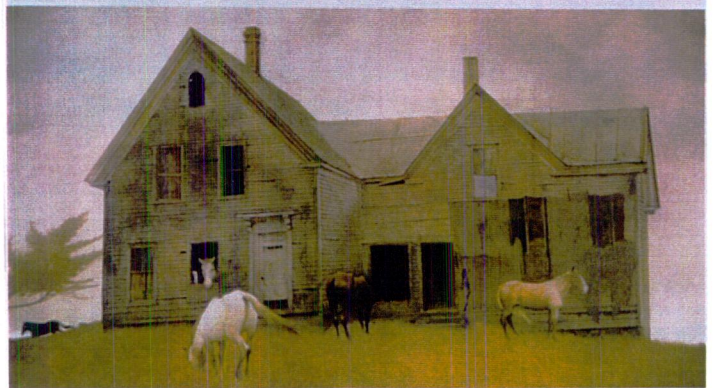
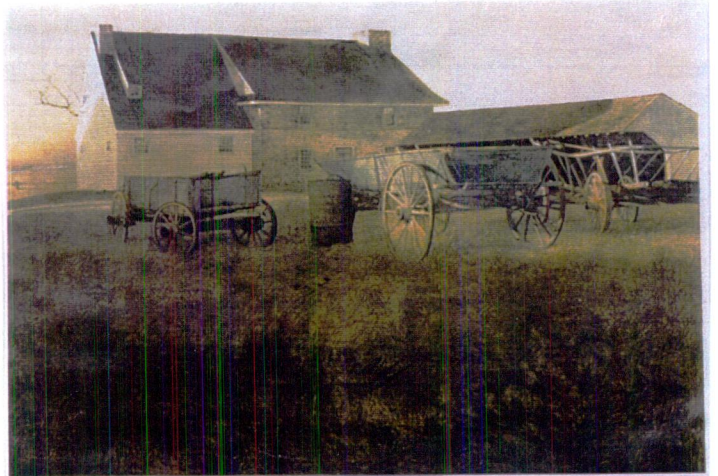
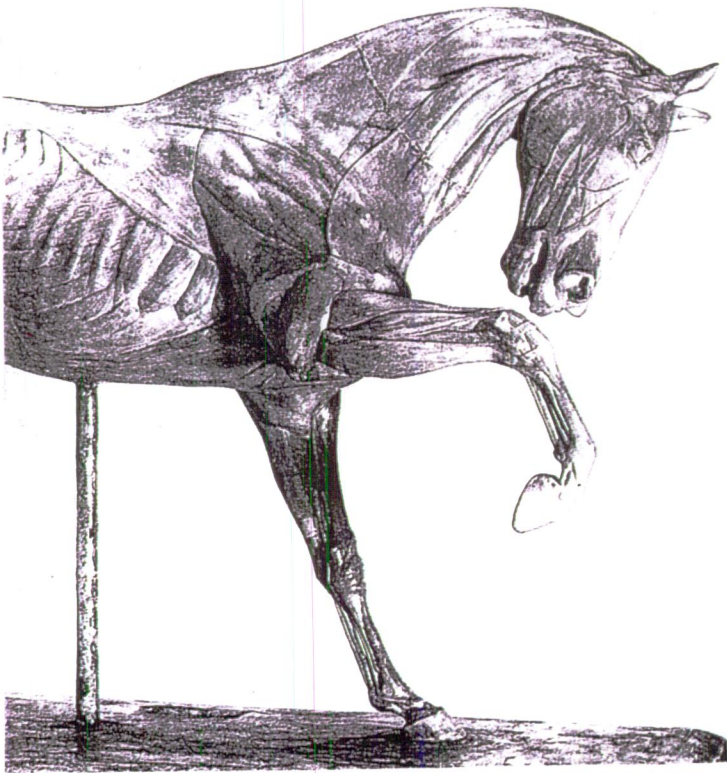
In lesson 6 we continued applying texture and this time I asked them to put all pencils and small brushes away and to complete the background before any more work was done on the figures. It was necessary for me to intervene in this lesson as their compositions and colour ranges had weakened momentarily. Due to the experimental nature of the scheme I had perhaps given them too much freedom. We spent some time discussing complementary colours and why they were necessary (see figure 30).

Animal farm was still being played in the background and I had given the pupils the task of writing a short text about their compositions. They completed this task in a





JACK B. YEATS



A. WYETH

Figure 29 - Lesson 4 - Support Studies



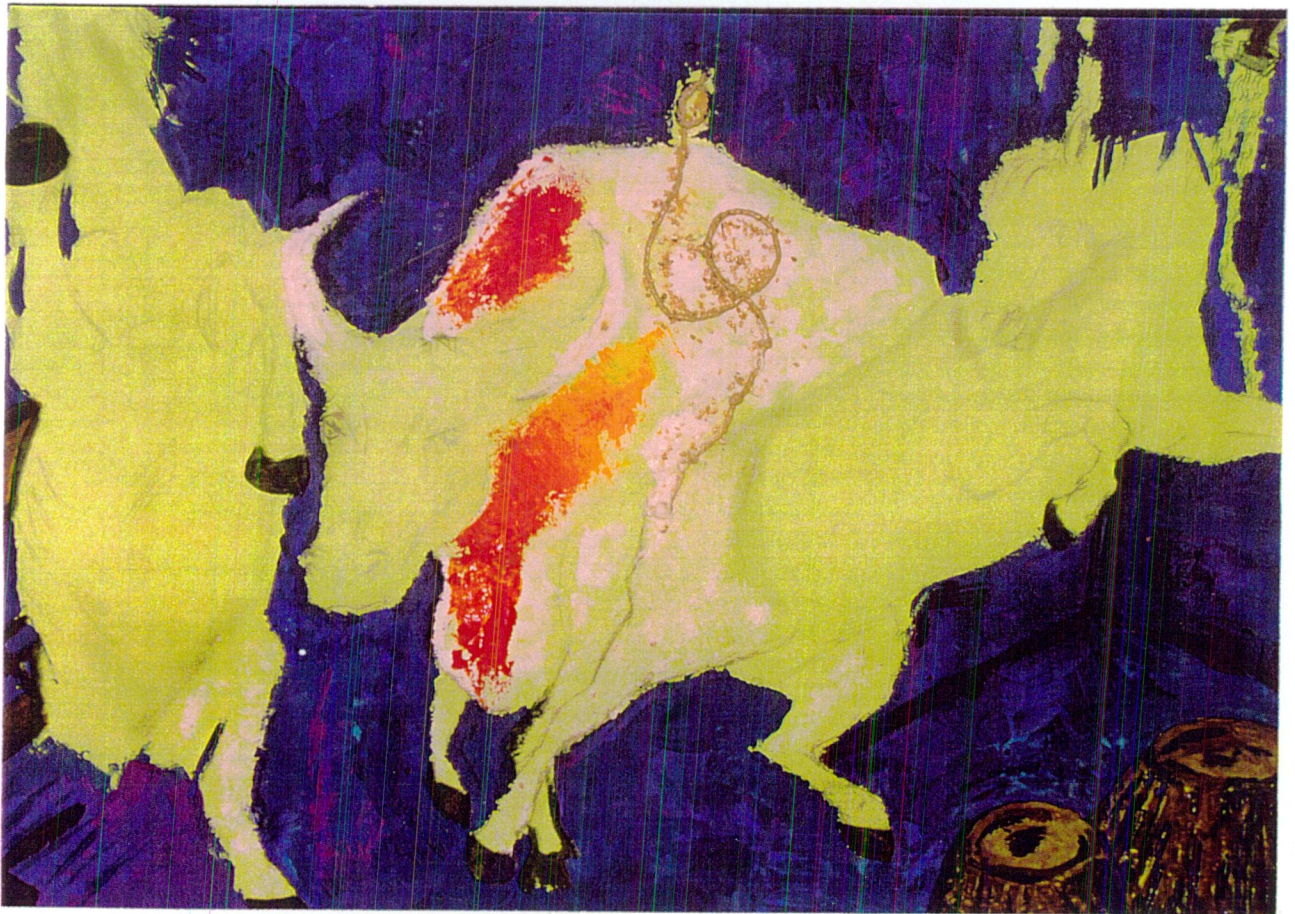
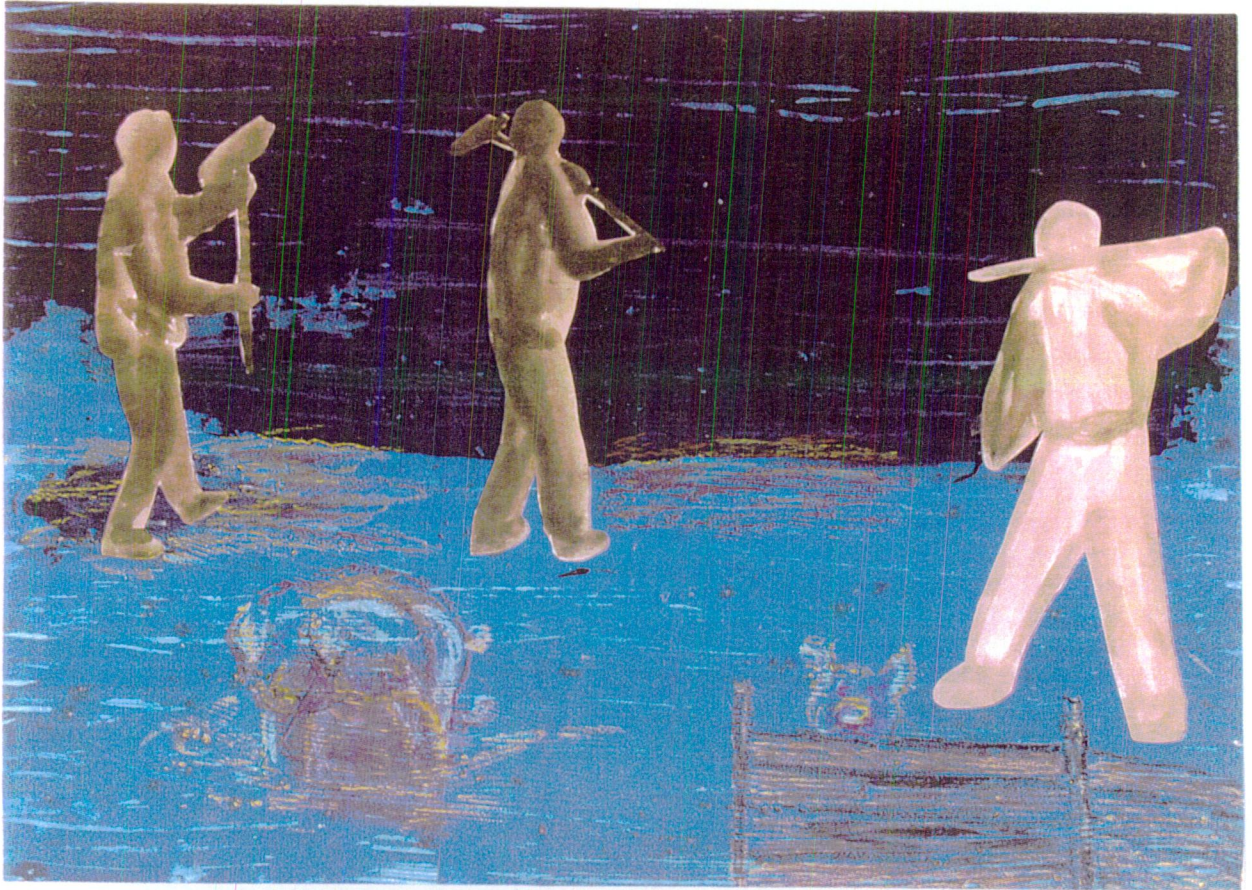


Figure 30 - Lesson 5/6 - Pupils' work



mature and articulate manner and gave good arguments for where their imagery came from (see figures 31 and 32).

Visual aid - Textured paintings (my own)

Support studies - Kiefer, Francis Bacon, Wols, Cezanne, Klimt, Margaret Mac Namidine, Howard Hodgkin

Aural aid - Part 3, cassette 2, Animal Farm

Homework - Read next two chapters and write a short text about your imagery and composition

Lesson 7 - This lesson was based on collage which followed on from texture very effectively especially as some pupils had already begun to incorporate corrugated cardboard and life drawing sketches into their work. (During the life drawing scheme prior to the Animal Farm project I had deliberately done a class in which the pupils had posed in threatening and defensive gestures with a brush or stick in their hand).

Collage was incorporated into part of the pupils' compositions and they combined the technique with paint and dry media very successfully. I demonstrated how to use transparent tissue paper collage to tone down colour areas which were too strong. The pupils were also instructed to mix complementary colours into areas where they had used too much pure colour. During this lesson I invited one of the English teachers Judy O' Sullivan (who also teaches art) to come and talk to the pupils about their compositions. Originally I had intended hanging everything on the walls and getting each pupil to talk about their work. Due to the restricted time limit for the project and the fact that the fifth years were really involved in applying their collage I asked Judy to go around and talk to them individually. She questioned the pupils about their scenes, characters and compositions



Art.

Patrick Ryan

## ANIMAL FARM

My composition is based on a number of different scenes and characters from 'Animal Farm'. The focus of the painting, the cow reflects the strength of the animals early in the story and illustrates the scene where the animals break into the barn. "One of the cows broke in the door of the store-shed - -"

The two horses, strong and powerful, portray Boxer and Clover, but also the fear of the animals and the conflict which occurs later between the pigs. Both seem distressed and are moving in opposite directions of each other, suggesting the break-up of the unit.

I chose to use the horses and the cow in my picture, rather than the pigs because of the physical strength and powerful, noble appearance.

Figure 31 - Pupils' text on composition



ART project / Ross Byrne / 28/2<sup>nd</sup> / 99

My painting - depicting the character of Napoleon from George Orwell's classic tale of politics and dictatorships - Animal Farm, is mainly a character portrait. Although, it did give me the opportunity to use a few different art/painting techniques. Including Texturing - the "feel" of a painting and also basically mixing various elements together.

The character of Napoleon is central to the whole story of Animal Farm. Apart from being the villain of the piece, he is a symbol of the type of Dictatorship being parodied in the book.

I'm not sure why Orwell chose to make all the protagonists Animals - maybe he was trying to be a bit more commercial after the bleakness of his "1984", but anyhow, it works. There is something quite fitting about the snobbery and elitism of Napoleon and his cohorts being depicted as pigs.

This is why I've chosen to show the character of Napoleon in my painting, as he is the strongest character/personality in the book for me, and represents the underlying themes.

Figure 32 - Pupils' text on composition



and why they had chosen them. She was very impressed with both the standard of the work and their knowledge of the book.

While the final part of the cassette was played there was running commentary from some pupils about what was going on. The pupils all quietened down momentarily when Boxer was betrayed and taken to the slaughterhouse. A short discussion followed about this other meaning for the word "knackers" and about the novel's final words:

No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.<sup>1</sup>

Visual Aid - My own collages.

Support Studies - Picasso, Kiefer, Ernst and my own found object collage, Tim Rollins and KOS

Aural Aid - Part 4, cassette 2, Animal Farm

Lesson 8 - Lesson 8 was only a single class which gave the pupils a chance to finish off details and further explore collage, toning down and highlighting the compositions where necessary. We used the same visual aids and support studies as in lesson 7. The pupils evaluated briefly about terminology and techniques they had encountered in the scheme such as composition, monochromatic colour, mixing neutral greys, tactile and visual texture, and collage. I thanked and praised the pupils for their participation and concentrated work and said good bye to them as I will have a new group of fifth years for the next project (see figures 33 and 34).



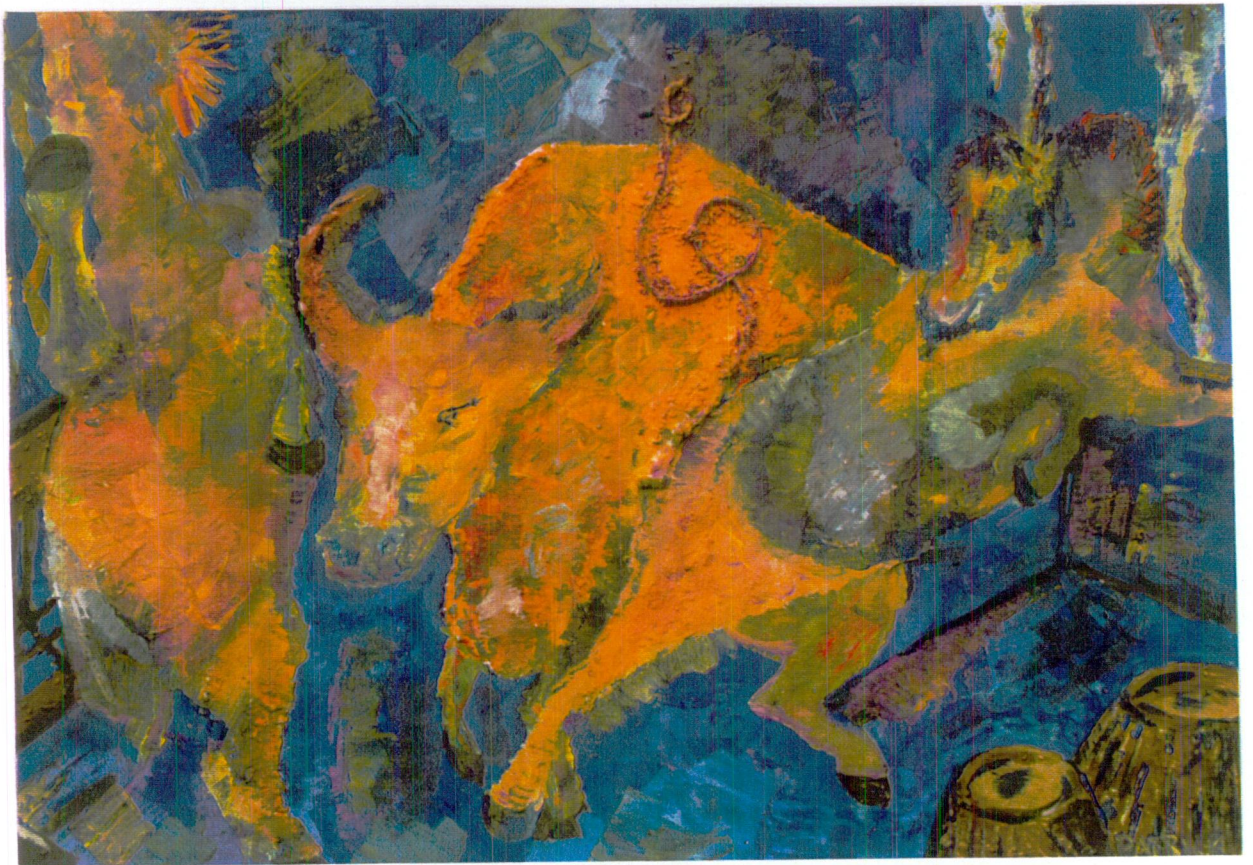
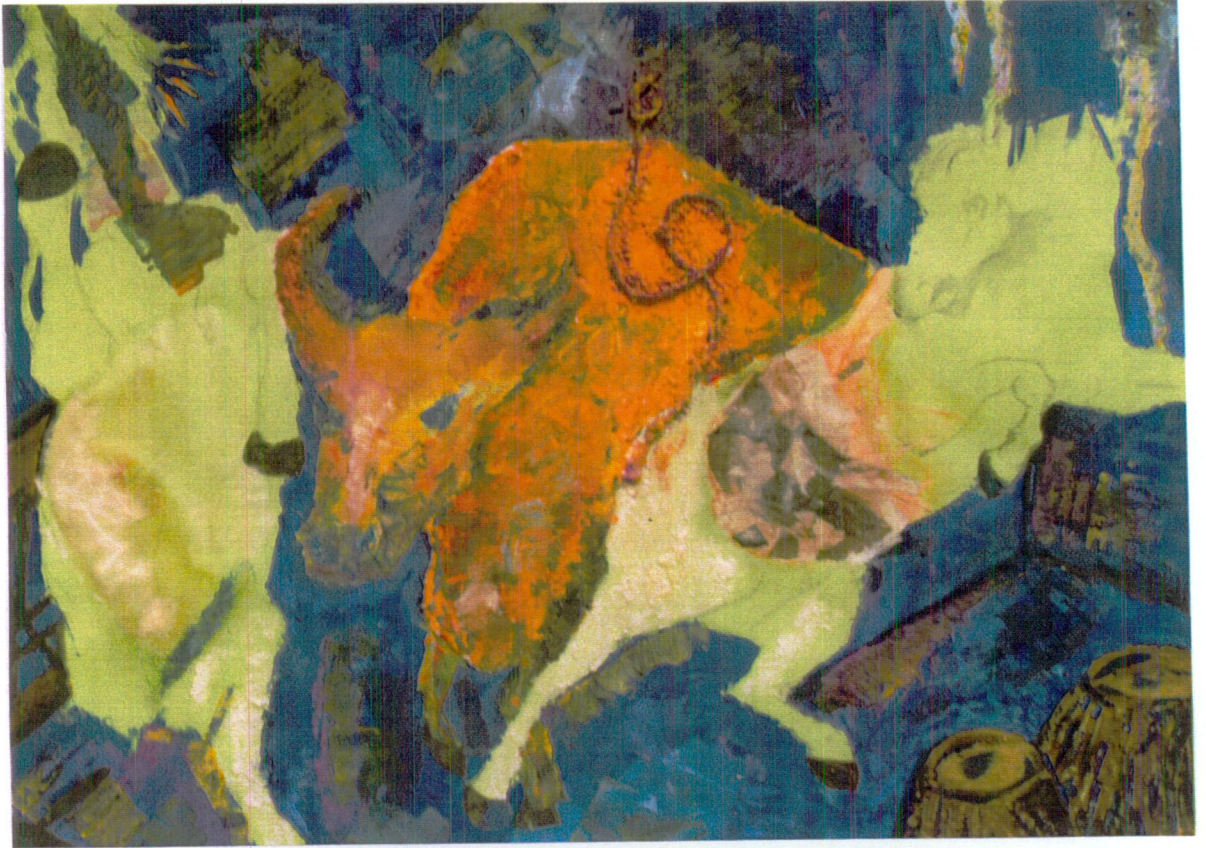


Figure 33 - Lesson 7 and 8 - Pupils' work





Figure 34 - Lesson 7 and 8 - Pupils' work



**Problems confronted:**

- This project should really have been done in conjunction with the pupils' English teacher. However, the group came from about six different fifth year classes and it would not be possible to get 6 English teachers to all start doing Animal Farm together. (This project would work far more successfully as a full arts week project with close cooperation between the Art and English teachers).

- As we continued to read the book I began to probe the pupils about certain characters and events. I noticed that some of the pupils reacted negatively (fortunately only a few) and that they weren't reading the book. These pupils unfortunately believe that I don't have the right to bring English novels and cassettes into their art class and stubbornly refuse to participate. This illustrates these pupils' own suspicion of cross-curricular activities and their belief that Art is fun and English literature is work.

- The pupils are conditioned in giving answers in a certain way ie factual, to-the-point responses. Trying to get them to give their real feelings about something and then on top of that, asking them to express these in a personal, visual manner proved difficult for most of the class. A literal illustration of the text is what they know best - it's safe. As well as this, the pupils are sixteen/seventeen and it may be naive to expect them to give voice to themes such as revolution, betrayal and exploitation.

- Time proved to be another problem. Due to my not being in the school the whole week, lack of contact to other teachers and breaks in the school schedule (midterm break, staff days, school play) there was a lack of continuity in the scheme.



### **Scheme evaluation**

Apart from the problems previously mentioned this scheme was quite successful. There was a stronger element of expression in the compositions of the pupils who were reading the novel than in the less confident paintings of those who were not.

The pupils were exposed to new techniques, materials and artists' styles, the benefits of which they acknowledged themselves in their texts on the project. Towards the end of the scheme, after they had experimented with more unusual materials and paint application methods, the fifth years became more receptive to the work of artists they had previously considered "bad" eg Francis Bacon, Anselm Kiefer. Pupils who had formerly been happiest with a pencil or ink pen produced mixed-media compositions of a high standard using card, rollers, collage and texture. Once the pupils realised that I was not going to ask for verbal analysis of Orwell's characters or metaphors, they relaxed and enjoyed the scheme more. If I were to do this project again I would definitely try to prepare it with the English teachers in advance. Simultaneous discussion and written evaluation of the novel alongside the painting, would have strengthened their ability to verbalise their artwork and opinions. However even without this I believe a lot of the pupils realize that they are now quite familiar with a question on their English paper. They will hopefully attempt it in the year 2000.

Playing the aural aid in the background was beneficial - it reinforced what the pupils had already read (and informed those who had not been following the homework tasks). During the second last lesson I played the first few sentences of side two\cassette two and paused it - most of the class were able to tell me what stage of the book it was. The tape promoted a form of relaxed, enjoyable learning and the fifth years acquired a passive knowledge of the text effortlessly.



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**FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 3**

- <sup>1</sup> George Orwell, Animal Farm (London: Penguin Books, 1951), p. 95.



## CONCLUSION

Chapter one of this dissertation has shown that many artists and writers collaborate and often find inspiration and reinforcement in each other, even if the latter has the stronger international reputation. Despite Modernism and the threat that artworks of literary connection may be negatively labelled "illustrations", these writers and artists are aware of the wealth of imagery- aural, oral, verbal and visual- to be gained from merging the two art forms.

Artists such as Jack B. Yeats practised both painting and writing successfully; Louis Le Brocquy's artistic career has been dominated by his fascination with creating "essences" of writers; Brian Bourke has centered series of work around characters from books such as Sweeney and the hero of Cervantes' Don Quixote; and Seamus Heaney's close collaboration with Barrie Cooke proves that the writer is not always the artist's muse. Group exhibitions "Literary Themes" and "Joycesight" convey how the influence of different writers have been interpreted and expanded on by visual artists. The Great Book of Ireland acts as a reunion of Irish verbal and visual, creative personalities and a union of the arts they contain.

Tim Rollins programme with KOS demonstrates that a pupil does not have to be academic to appreciate and interpret literature and painting. In the course of their projects the group has broken down and reconstructed literary classics into personalised compositions of contemporary significance. Youthreach's joint project with IMMA's education office and workshops was unconventional too, because it enabled trainees of a low literacy level to write, design and assemble personal books using exhibits from "Literary Themes" as a starting point.

Andy Shaw's residency work in Wigan primary schools successfully merged listening to Orwell's story of Animal Farm with the actual life-size construction of the characters. Children



of eight and nine were emotionally aroused by the events of a literary classic which shows that in cross-curricular projects of this nature age is not an obstacle.

In chapter three, problems regarding time restrictions, scheme interruptions and pupils' inhibitions with self-expression have already been mentioned. Both the former and the latter could be combated if schools were prepared to schedule their timetables so that "arts" subjects such as Art and English followed each other on one afternoon a week. This would enable teachers to organize cross-curricular schemes such as the project illustrated in figures 36 and 37, where a group of theatre people took Max Beckmann's painting "Die Nacht" out of its two-dimensional form and transformed it into a living, breathing theatre performance. The actors, director and stage artists involved, built on the characters and scene that Beckmann had already created and let their imaginations extend the story even further.

Similar projects could also be undertaken in secondary schools - this would improve art's status as a subject, incorporate creative writing and expression into English and eventually increase Irish society's cultural awareness and appreciation of the arts. In his essay "Back to Basics-The Arts and Education" Martin Druary laments the "cultural fragmentation" occurring in Ireland, which he defines as an "excessive separation between the arts and society.....between formal arts practice and formal educational practice". Druary also criticises that English is so rigidly taught and restricted by our exam-based curriculum, that it hardly qualifies as one of the arts. Is it not time that the Irish education system lost its suspicion of creative thinking and self-expression in the classroom and opened our schools up to a more European ethos ie regular arts weeks, theatre visits and drama/painting/writing workshops? This might encourage Irish children (and subsequently adults) to celebrate art and literature alongside music, dance and drama collectively, as a natural part of everyday culture - more than as an educational "value".



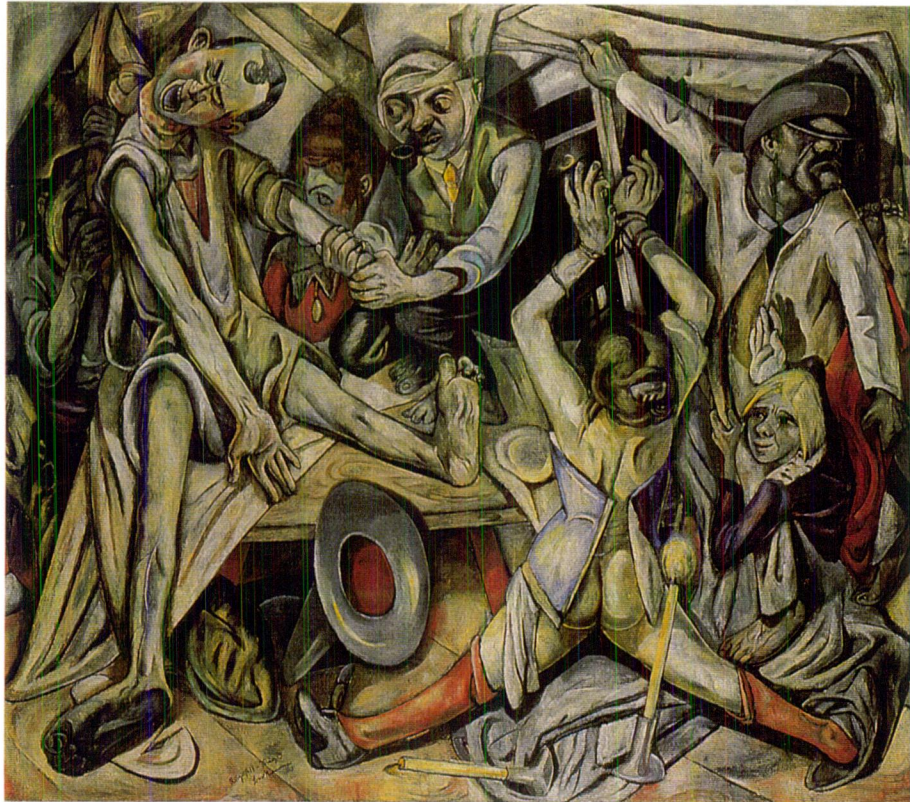


Figure 35 - Die Nacht - Max Beckmann

Figure 36 - Scene from the play "Die Nacht", Schwedt theatre, Germany



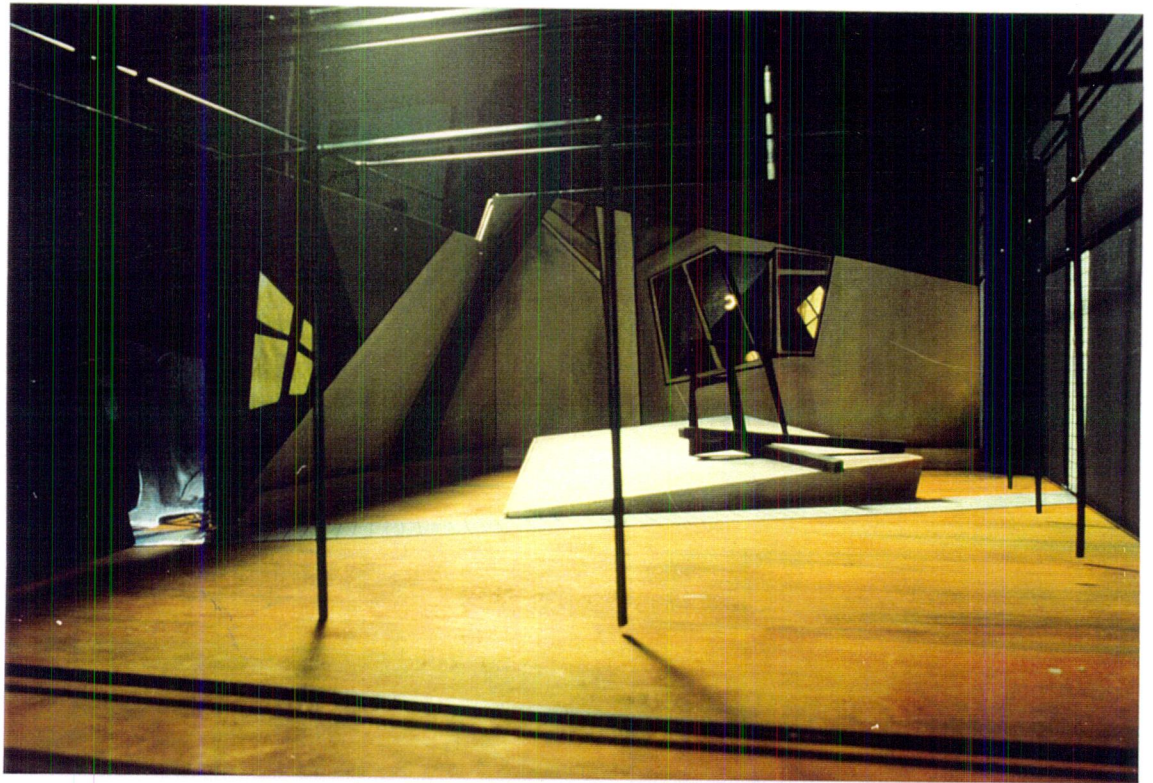


Figure 37 - Scene from the play "Die Nacht", Schwedt theatre, Germany



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### Interviews

Information and Reports on the Book Project were obtained in an interview with Anne Davoren, the Education Officer at IMMA, November 2nd 1998.

Other information was obtained on the telephone from Poetry Ireland, Catherine Marshall (Curator of IMMA), the Arts Council, the Education Office at the National Gallery, Art House Temple Bar and from Udo Krause (Stage designer and Artist in Schwedt, Germany).

