

puppetry in education

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INTRODUCTION

What is the educational value of Puppetry? Why has it been included on the syllabus for both Primary and Secondary Schools? Are there obvious connections between its present-day use and its historical origins?

These are questions I must ask myself before including Puppetry in my own syllabus. Not only must I answer these questions but more important, I must be involved on a very practical level in puppetry. As in the well-used adage:

'The best way to learn about Puppetry is by
doing it'

As a result of this questioning and reasoning I have gathered information which for definition purposes I will separate into three categories.

The first deals with the patterns of development in Puppetry from Past to Present. Does its use today bear much relation to its historical development? What are the theories behind the emphasis now being given to puppetry in schools? Educationalists, people involved in the therapeutic value of the arts in general and Professional puppeteers have given varied opinions on the topic. Reading these opinions has caused me to be more aware of the many different approaches to using puppetry with children.

The second category contains practical information from friends who have been teaching puppetry and from many written sources. Even though this second-hand experience is limiting it is very interesting and undoubtedly helps in avoiding many mistakes. Though I did not have access to a teacher or area devoted specifically to puppetry a most interesting

lecture was given by an amateur puppeteer - Mr. McCormack. This helped to rekindle an enthusiasm which was beginning to lapse half-way through a year of personal motivation.

Finally I would like to give a brief description of some of the puppets which I have made this year. Concerning one puppet, the first, which I introduced to my three year old niece I will give a summary of the episode. This final chapter acts as a conclusion in that a conclusion can only be drawn once I begin my own personal experience of making puppets and having them perform. Following this I ought to be in a position to introduce the making of puppets to the children I teach. The most important discovery has been not only in making different characters but in realising that with a little effort these characters can be brought to life in a relatively simple and effective performance. This is the best advice to give anyone interested in beginning puppetry in a school - Firstly work towards losing your own inhibitions by making many different types of puppets and animating them yourself. In doing this you will discover the problems of construction and possibilities of movement and expression inherent in each individual puppet.

It is worth noting one of the suggestions made by Peter Slade to teachers in his book on Child Drama:

'Children have stronger imaginations than we have,
take account of this.' 1

The best way of doing this is to give your own imagination the freedom to discover the infinite possibilities of the Art of Puppetry.

Puppets Past and Present

Why Puppets?

To truly understand puppetry we must first go to the source of its development. Where did it first originate? Like most of the arts its origins are confused by many conflicting theories and explanations. As a result a clear pattern of development can never be outlined. Even more to our disadvantage is the transitory nature of the art, for puppets are made to perform rather than to be static exhibits of artistic expression. Their life expectancy is short if we consider the endless lively shows which they perform. Some have survived and are to be seen in Museums and private collections. But from their inanimate state it is impossible to gain an impression of the role they would have played in society. The closest we can come to understanding this role is by examining early written accounts of shows and performances or by going to see one of the few remaining traditional performances.

Different forms of the art of puppetry can be found in almost every country in the world. In Eastern countries, particularly Indonesia, Java and China, the art has survived in its traditional form. However in Europe it has undergone many changes and periods of decline. The current revival has little evidence of the early 'Punch and Judy' tradition.

Before classifying puppetry into its different techniques it is important to understand its significance in the development of drama. Man from the earliest days has made images of human and animal form, but how did he use these images? Most theatrical historians believe puppets were first used as part of religious practice, developing from, with, or even before the regular drama which employs live actors.

The following passage is an example of an early ritual which used puppets or images. It was performed with the intent of bringing man into a profitable relationship with his environment.

'Let us look at an old custom in Bohemia, where not merely dance, but dialogue, action and puppetry enter to present dramatically the death of an old and the birth of the new life. On the fourth Sunday in Lent a puppet called Death was thrown into water, then girls went to the woods, cut down a young tree, fastening it to a puppet dressed in white clothes. This doll, personifying the spirit life of the tree, is then carried from house to house, while they sing the refrain being -

'We carry Death out of the village

We carry Summer into the village' 3

All over the world such rites are found, some have remained virtually unchanged over the years. The following extract describes a recent film documentary on life in remote part of the Himilayas.

'In a Buddhist monastery on the borders of Negal and Tibet monks perform the temple dances or ritual designed to ensure safety for the crops, and to drive far away the forces of evil. The audience or congregation are vitally concerned with the correet performance of the ritual which will affect their own lives, they stand, sit and gaze as the careful performers achieve every action.

In a white mask, presenting advanced years, the

ens vous i trueuent des ames estes souire



*Early documentation
of a puppet show:
miniature by Johan
de Grise, 1344.*

spirit of aged and doddering wisdom, comes a 'lama' (in character). Then the black-hatted magicians dance and are worsted - for they represent the old gods of the country, driven out by Buddhism; these are jesters who entertain the souls of the happy - it is interesting to see how this basically religious act of worship logically introduces entertainment and fun; enter the skull-faced demons who play out their warfare against man - represented in this episode by a puppet. As the dance triumphs, so will they be unable in actual fact to do evil. Thus the demons are driven out from the valley by sympathetic magic. The audience (or worshippers and sharers in the ritual, and after all an audience is always both these things) achieve the triumph with the actors; so happiness and prosperity come to the valley. The old struggle between good and evil, life and no-life, creation and destruction, is played out in superb mystery drama, with it's grotesque masks and its sense of urgency.' ' 3

It is now obvious that we can no longer talk about puppets in isolation from the audience for whom they were created. Perhaps looking at the changing role of the audience can best explain the changes and developments in the evolution of puppetry.

Early societies with their close contact with nature enacted rituals which were designed to bring them into harmony with their environment. Puppets and regular live dramatic techniques were used to a greater or lesser degree in most parts of the world. Puppets, just as drama itself, developed in accordance with each societies religious practice.

In the temples of the ancient world images were made that

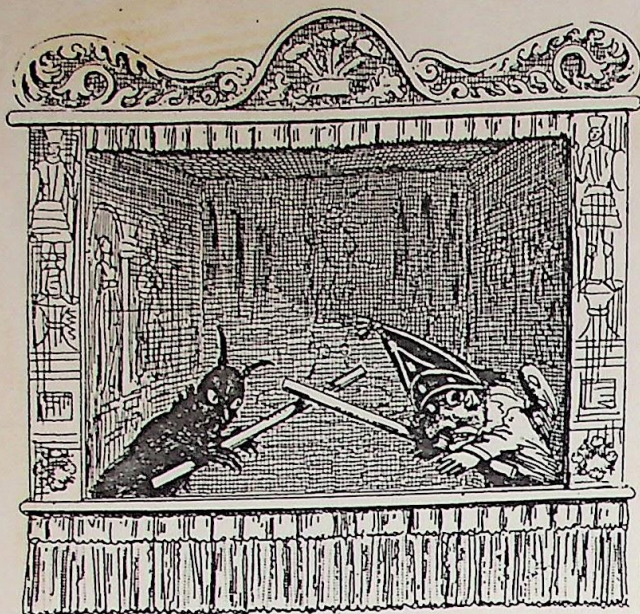


*A comedian-magician
attracting customers
with a puppet. From a
magic book of the fairs,
Hoccius Doccius, of the
eighteenth century.*

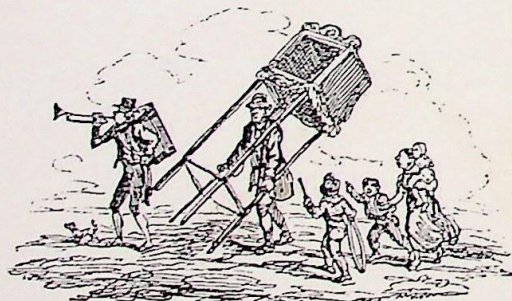
could move their heads and limbs; today primitive tribes have similar idols. Both the people of the ancient world and of primitive tribes worship these idols and if these very idols could move, seemingly without human or machanical aid, then they would have all the more awe-inspiring effect.

Let us consider then that animated images such as puppets are ideal for portraying the super-human quality of gods and religious themes. Thus it is easily understood how puppets were adapted for use in the Christian religion to act out biblical stories for large congregations during the Middle Sges in Europe. Even after live performances of biblical plays were banned puppet plays continued. But puppetry was not confined to Religious performances. The puppet play has often helped to keep secular drama in being. When prohibition, control, or difficulties in organising groups of actors hindered live theatre, the puppeteer with his small compact troupe could easily transport himself to isolated areas.

For many communities the puppet play was the only form of entertainment. But to speak of ot merely as entertainment is perhaps to limit our impressions of what it meant to the people. 'The Runner' by Hugo Von Trimberg I300 tells about comedians who pulled puppets out of their coats and made all the bystanders laugh. This ability to bring laughter to the people was good but the puppeteer was capable of much more. The puppeteer like the minstrel was one of the few people who brought news of the world into the towns, villages, inns and remote farmhouses. He knew how to speak to the people, and could give the uneducated audience a view of a richer life. His puppets were not merely entertainers but had something of magical importance, for often the puppeeter himself was a decendant from old mysterious gypsey tribes. His repetoire would have included magic tricks, fortune-telling and prodigious remedies.



Hurrah! Punch, the misery is over,
The Devil is dead, hurrah!



"Thus the puppet of the minstrel - made in his own image - was simultaneously clown (magician), critic of reality, and announcer of a desired more beautiful world. Loved and admired by the people he brought happiness to the children and the simple-minded, he was prophet of the poor and oppressed, rich in the clown's freedom; he was a rebel, who at least in the show could do things no other could dare. This explains the hostility of the Church and persecution of the authorities to which the puppeteer was exposed for centuries." 8

The universality of the use of puppetry can be explained by comparing the above description with that of Indonesian Puppetry.

"Puppetry throughout Indonesia, has always been important, not merely as pure entertainment, but also because it is true theatre, originating in and reflecting its vision back to the life of the people. The puppeteer is himself a teacher and enlightener, bringing to the people the Buddhist ideals through the events his puppets portray. Not that there is conscious propaganda (that of course puppets can excellently present just as they are used for classroom teaching of specific subjects in the West) but rather the meditation of aspects of life, thoughts that sustain mankind, and the Indonesian approach to these. The conflict between good and evil is shown. If the sceptic says 'What is good, and what is evil?' we have in the puppet plays an answer; the good is the refined the thoughtfull, the sensitive, the considerate, the evil is the coarse, careless, clumsy, thoughtless;



there is the contrast between human qualities, human strength, human faith and mere brutality, force and stupidity.' 3

One might well ask at this stage Where does our Punch and Judy puppet show fit into this development? Can its social significance be compared with the developments already described in Indonesia. The Punch and Judy show was performed by European puppeteers of the style earlier described. The character Punch appears in different countries under different names ... Kasper, Guignol, Pulcinello. Whatever name is used the theme of the performances given by the character is the contrast of good versus evil. René Simmen from her historical research of the character writes convincingly of his influence.

'Since Harlequin, Kasper, Punch Guignol and their predecessors, puppet clowns have been loved not only by children but also by those adults who know that a beating is good when others get it. They admire the actions of those cunning ill-bred fellows who for centuries have beaten up Death, the Devil, emperors, kings, clergymen, robbers, dragons, enraged dogs, witches and policeman whenever these importunates happen to cross their paths. They themselves are bravely kicked and punched, but they always find their way out of even the most entangled situations.' 8

Puppetry has survived to the present day but its role has changed. It is no longer a vital communication link for isolated areas. This has been taken over by Television, Radio, telephones and newspapers. As entertainment for the general public it now competes with these various forms of mass media. Paradoxically it is television which has given puppetry the extra vitality which it needed to sustain it as a popular form of entertainment. Television has brought puppetry

to many people who would otherwise never have been aware of these performing characters. Not only is it used for a great variety of childrens programmes, such as Wanderly Wagon, Sesame St., but it has captured a large proportion of the adult audience in the varied antics of Muppet characters on the Muppet Show.

Jim Hanson, the inspiration behind the Muppets, when asked why he thinks the show has caught on in the tremendous way it has replied:

'Well first of all it appeals to children and adults alike. But I think the real reason for its popularity is that it is a very human sort of show. We try to humanise everything we put on the screen - from a frog to a bowl of spaghetti, to a mop, to a loaf of bread. People are made to identify with the most unlikely objects and it really does seem to work. Also we deal with the kind of everyday relationships people have with one another, yet it is all done on an abstract level. Which is kind of funny I guess.'

Peter Harris the English director of the show said of it -

'It gets into your blood and blurs the contours between reality and fantasy. All you think about are Muppets, Muppets, Muppets.'

One of the chief advantages of televising puppet shows is the small studio space required for recording a performance.

Apart from televised puppet shows there are many professional and amateur puppeteers at work in Europe and America.

In Europe the puppet show can be divided into two categories, folk and art. In the folk theatres of certain parts of France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Sicily and Greece traditional dramas are still presented. However these folk theatres represent dying

traditions, and are only kept alive by intellectual enthusiasts. Their themes no longer appeal to the ordinary people for whom they were originally created.

The art theatres are used by gifted professional puppeteers who treat the performance as a medium for artistic expression. These theatres hold regular performances and often have excellent museums attached to them.

In America because of the many nationalities there are puppeteers using the different types of puppet - glove, rod, string and shadow puppets. Some specialise in one type while others combine different types in one show.

Our visiting lecturer Mr. McCormack spoke with great enthusiasm of an adventurous group called The Bread and Puppet Theatre in New York city. This has become street theatre with performances in supermarkets, churches, gyms, schools and on crowded street corners. Thus its public consists of people from every walk of life. Just as in our own rare performances given by The Childrens T. Company this type of public performance caters for audience participation.

In Asia due to the strong traditional attachments of the people the shadow theatres and puppet shows continue to survive in their traditional state. In China, Indonesia and Thailand the shows are receiving government subsidies.

In Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia and Rumania, as well as in the German Republic there are state-aided theatres. In Czechoslovakia provision is made for the systematic training of puppet artists by the state, and courses are organised throughout the country. This state sponsorship is easily understood when we consider how puppetry is used to instruct the people in political ideas. In these countries also the people show is an integral part of every kindergarten and every school. In comparing these Eastern European techniques with those of the

West the following criticism has been given:

"It is an interesting question as to why the West has'nt applied this technique as a new way of learning in the school systems, since it promotes the arts of speaking, poetry, sculpture, painting and music in equal measure"

This criticism leads us to the question of the use of puppetry in education.

Why Puppetry in Schools.

Firstly we must consider the two main aspects of using puppetry in schools.

- a) Puppets used for instruction.
- b) Puppets made and used creatively by students.

In China, Russia and Eastern European countries puppets are used to spread political ideas. Even today puppets are used in India to help people with health problems and family planning. However the educational value of puppets used for instruction has been questioned by many Western authorities.

George Bernard Shaw wrote in 1920 -

"If the stage is turned into a 'Cathedral' it will diminish in value; the child as such has a right to its imagination, and merely speaking about the child is not education at all. The puppet theatre should not only treat the child as a spectator, but should inspire it to participate in the play and to imitate; it should spur it on to active work of its own. If that were to succeed, then the puppet play would be once more, as in the olden days, one of the most popular forms of art - an art for which one can justly assert that it has its roots in the folk, a thing which can be said of none of the fine arts of present day." 2

The popularity of any particular school activity is reflected in the writings and organisations which have resulted from an

enthusiastic interest in this subject. It is from such sources that we gain some idea of why, and in what way this activity has developed. Though George Bernard Shaw is not contemporary his opinions are similar to those of the present chairman of the English organisation - Puppet Centre Trust, and well know writer on the subject of Educational Puppetry - Mr. David Currell. In his article introducing the subject of puppetry as an educational medium David Currell writes:

'Occasionally puppets are used for instruction in such areas as dental health, but there is a great deal of other learning that can come through puppetry. However, the notion of presenting puppets to children to 'drum the information into them' is a very narrow and highly questionable view which, unfortunately is not as uncommon as one would like to think. It is still in the hands of the child himself that the real value of puppetry is to be found.'

5

Are we to understand then that puppets used for instruction are absolutely taboo. There must be a compromise which allows for the child's creativity while making use of the puppet medium for instruction.

The following note is taken from the Newsletter of the Educational Puppetry Association ... 'Puppet Post'.

'In an article in Self Training', a bulletin of safety notes for children and parents, instructions were given on 'lets make a puppet play'. This was to be used as a starting point for a visual aid in road safety teaching. This use of puppet making and performing involves the children in making their own visual aids, and by making aids for safety training they are giving their own ideas for making safety lessons stick'

4

Thus puppetry is not only considered as a craft or drama in an

aesthetic sense but also as a highly flexible audio-visual instruction medium and one which offers to the students an outlet for their own ideas and commentry. It involves the students directly not just as a participating audience but as producers, script writers and performers.

If we now ask the question 'Where should the emphasis be in Educational Puppetry?', the answer does not swing in favour of instruction or child creativity, but is found in an understanding of how both can be used effectively by giving the child the opportunity to produce instructive programmes.

PUPPETS MADE AND USED CREATIVELY

As a creative activity what has puppetry got to offer? This is an area which cannot be precisely defined. Peter Slade, teacher of Child Drama, has given his interpretation of the advantages and disadvantages of using puppetry. Though they are from the Drama teachers viewpoint, the art teacher cannot afford to dismiss such important aspects of puppetry; -

For Puppetry

'Puppets can become life-like in one sense, but are seldom actually 'photographic' to look at, and so are nearer Child Art'

'They provide a valuable incentive for playing out violent themes, difficult themes, themes that pertain to personal fears.'

They can be used as a half-living visual aid to many educational subjects.

'Play is essential to the proper living of life - St. Thomas Aquinas. Puppetry is an ideal medium for free expression as well as providing enlited potentiality for more planned productions. The

puppet itself, even if it is known to be nothing but scraps of rag, paper or cord and a few trinkets, stimulates the child's visual imagination."

Identification with a puppet character often leads to healthy self-revelation and this in turn leads to a general adjustment of deep-rooted problems."

AGAINST PUPPETRY

"They are often too ready-made, in a way too glamorous. Puppets often become a fetish. If this happens, it is quite possible for children to become arrested in the doll stage.

"The adventures of personal play are renounced; in shy children quietly avoided. The children spend far too much time in projected play and can become quiet and wide-eyed and odd, instead of healthily using their whole bodies, speaking out as themselves or courageously and personally being different people. And, although shy children can obtain cover enough for release and build up confidence with puppets, too much use of them brings the habit of seeking cover, which is the very opposite of this."

"In addition we often find continual concentration on one body position, which causes round shoulders, and drooping head, the other position, as from underneath, is better, but the whole body is cramped." 1

(In his advice to teachers he comments on using puppets in a confined space.)

If art teachers are to become involved in Puppetry they must understand it for its true purpose. It is from the comments of

drama teachers and professional puppeteers that help can be gained.

An English Educational Survey on Drama (1968) produced the following statement regarding puppetry;

"Puppetry has never fully established itself in this country and it has tended to remain in a kind of no man's land, inadequately supported by drama, craft or art. Yet there is no denying the intense pleasure that Professional puppetry can bring to children and adults alike, or the educational viability of puppetry in schools.

They provide opportunity for the most purposeful and imaginative work in craft, and work that can be related to close observation of human beings, their shapes, their clothes, their way of moving, as well as of animals and many aspects of nature. Having been made, they can be used. Shadow puppets lend themselves to a great variety of two dimensional movement. Glove and rod puppets provide the very essence out of which plays are made. Children must not only manipulate the puppets but speak the lines, preferably having composed the dialogue themselves. They can give a performance without being obliged to present themselves before an audience. Puppets are not a replacement for drama; but they provide an admirable opportunity for a subtle combination of sound, music, speech, movement, art and drama that can be expressed on any level from the simplest to the most sophisticated."

The challenge which is presented by puppetry is so great that it calls for a teacher who is involved and aware of all the arts, for

a well-planned puppetry project by its very nature, can serve as an introduction to all the arts, Drama, Music, Art, Dance, the spoken word, the written word, not as separate entities, but as an integrated whole. Is this to be expected of an art teacher? I cannot answer this question until I have experienced or faced this challenge myself.

This final extract emphasises the complete approach to puppetry which has been advocated in the above survey;

'Art and theatre must be considered. Also, 'A puppet can be any inanimate object that is given life through movement, through sound, or both. It can be as abstract as light played against a screen, or as concrete as a detailed reproduction of the human figure. But a puppet is nothing until it is given an opportunity to make a statement, no matter how simple a statement. A puppet must be given a reason for being, and this can only happen when it is born out of drama.'

'A puppet is an extension of a human being who seeks another way to communicate. Puppet and child are one and the same.'

'The puppeteer would be the last to refute the effectiveness of the puppet as a teaching tool, but puppeteers have cause for concern as they see quality give way to quantity. They cannot rejoice when they hear the cry 'Come one, come all, to Puppetry, the new pink, candy-coated pill guaranteed to cure all ills.' Through bitter experience the puppeteer knows there is no such guarantee. Like any other tool this one is only as active as the person who wields it.' 6

So what is necessary before a person, and in particular an Art teacher can use puppetry effectively, The extracts I have included serve only as a brief introduction to the subject. It is hoped that these would incite further reading, as such I have included a short list of recommended books in the bibliography.

HOW TO TEACH PUPPETRY

There is no set pattern for teaching puppetry. Being a relative beginner myself it would be misleading for me to work out in theory a series of easy stages in an approach to the subject. However my experience to date has made me aware of some points which are worth recording.

The Making and Use of Puppets

These two activities cannot be divided. If the puppets once made are not given life they have as much meaning as a soft toy and their true value will have been completely overlooked. It is understandable how many art teachers find themselves in this position, as the complications of organising a puppet performance can be inhibiting. But a beginning need not be complicated at all. The simplest performance might result from getting the students to use their puppets in response to simple questions such as; 'Have your puppet scratch his head', 'Bow, sit, wave, twist, shake, shake hands', 'Say hello to his neighbour.' and eventually, depending on the characters involved, the students should themselves begin to invent stories.

I have discussed the problem of organising a performance with our Tutor Mrs. Margaret West. She advised me to allow the students to explore the idea of image making without threat of a set performance. Such a performance involving puppets with definite characteristics could come at a later stage when they had become familiar with the making and use of puppets.

Though a full performance need not necessarily be the aim of each puppet making session it is most important that the puppets should be used in some form of drama. Mr. McCormack, an Irish puppet enthusiast, in his lecture advised us not to worry so much about what it looked like but to consider the life of the puppet. He defined

performance then not in terms of a final show but as how the puppet was used or had 'life'.

'It is not a static object, the puppet must move and movement is more important than speaking, 'Man is the sum of his acts', so also a puppet is the sum of his acts and to emphasise these acts it always helps to add props. The noise made props, swords, cans chains, bells make it more effective than elaborately written scripts. Do not let a puppet play get too wordy. Puppetry is a visual form, the puppets are doing something not jiggling around to long wordy conversations.'

THE TYPES OF PUPPETS TO MAKE

What kinds of puppet are there?, how do you make them?

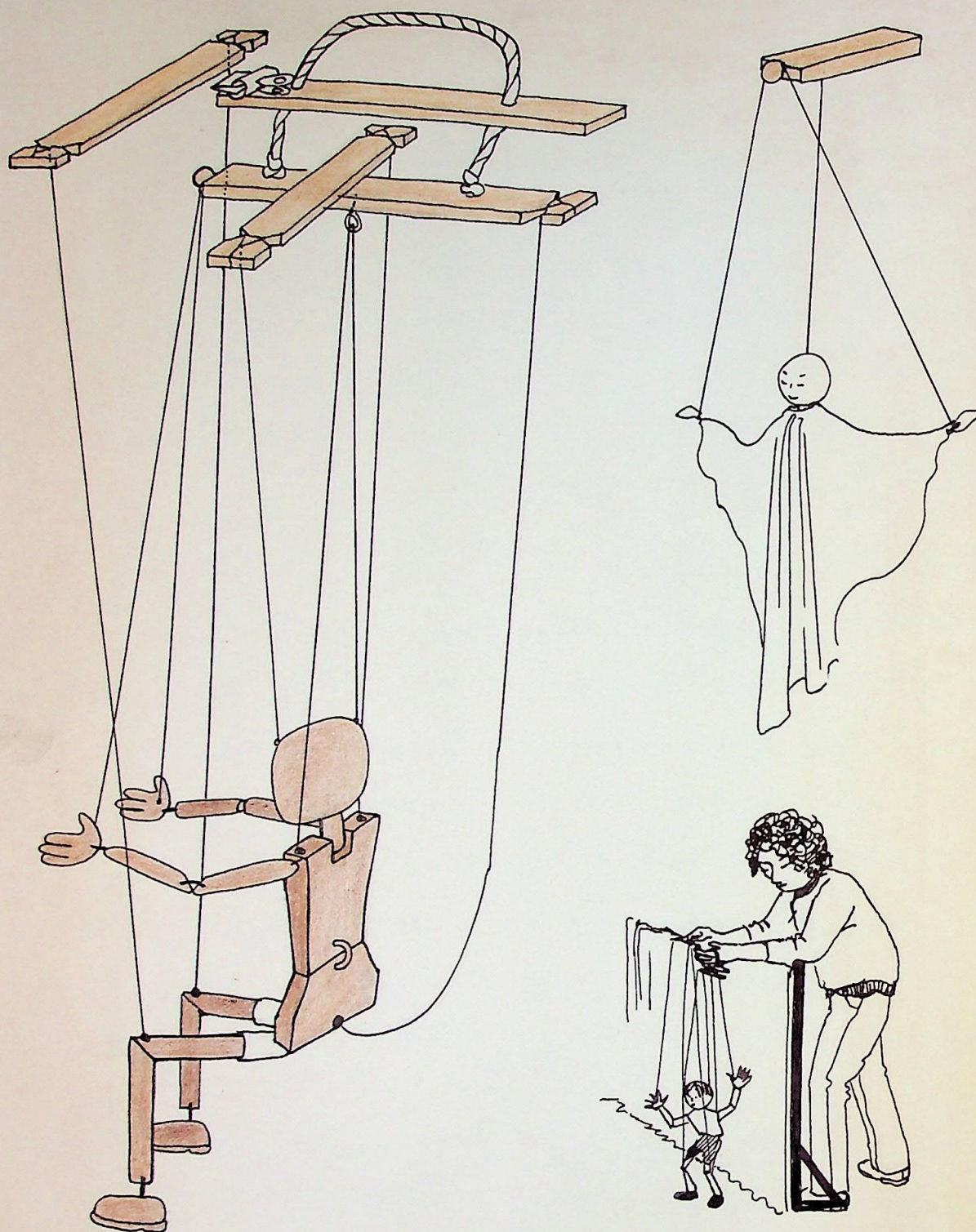
Firstly let us look closely at the general definition of puppets.

'A puppet is any sculptural or pictorial reproduction of a human or animal which by means of articulation or movement can be used for a dramatic purpose.'

Glove and rod puppets and marionettes are sculptured for they are made in three dimensions. Shadow puppets are pictorial, for all that is seen is the two dimensional shadow cast by light shining on an image.

To understand the individual characteristics of each type it is better to look at their historical origins than to spend time on 'How to do it' books. These books are useful, but it would be better to have solid background information on which to base your experience, and experiments. Some very interesting information on the history of puppets can be found in books, which I have included in the bibliography.

It is far beyond my own capabilities and experience to date, to give a step-by-step guide on how to teach puppetry. The approach



STRINGING A MARIONETTE

THE STRINGS HAVE BEEN SHORTENED FOR DEMONSTRATION PURPOSES. IN ACTUAL PERFORMANCE, STRINGS SHOULD BE LONG ENOUGH SO THE CONTROL CAN BE HELD AT LEAST AT WAIST HEIGHT.

depends greatly on the experience of the teacher and the group of children.

"The great value of puppetry as a teaching tool is its versatility."

Limitations are imposed only when the teacher lacks the broad experience necessary for such an activity.

Now that I have declined responsibility for giving a guide to making puppets I will at least attempt to draw some comparisons between the different types which can be made. This is something which is often not made clear in some books. It is only through looking at the movement and articulation that we can appreciate the need for different methods of construction. The illustrations explain construction but movement can only be understood through live action.

Mr. McCormack, being familiar with marionettes and glove, rod and shadow puppets was able to give some advice on which type was best suited to different age groups.

Marionettes: This is the least suitable, particularly with the younger groups, because of the technicalities of balancing and weighting. The results seldom come up to the image the child wishes to have. Because the puppet is operated by a complicated arrangement of strings a performance demands a high degree of manual dexterity. Though Mr. McCormack advised is against using marionettes he admitted that for children they are often the most magical.

"The marionette can seem to defy gravity - helping to create an airy or supernatural effect."

However if the string puppets created by Eric Bramall of Wales can be classified as marionettes then there is a very simple approach which could be used in the classroom. The performance given was a string puppet ballet by chiffon handkerchiefs tied at the corners with strings.

"Stringing the puppet can be as simple or as complex as the designer wishes."



This statement offers a challenge to the art teacher to adapt this technique to the capabilities of the students.

GLOVE PUPPETS:

To this category we could also add the finger puppet. These are the easiest to make. Although their manipulation is controlled spontaneously by movements of the hand and fingers it can be difficult to work well. Children are often not capable of sophisticated movements which account for much of the appeal of glove puppets. However glove puppets are ideally suited to comedy and fast action which are the demands most often made by students in their dramatic performances.

ROD PUPPETS:

Many examples of this type of puppet as used in regular puppet plays need two or more to operate the arms. Kermit the frog from the Muppet Show, is a rod and glove puppet operated by two people. The Lambert Puppet Group had a very fine production using rod puppets. Rod puppets can have very graceful movements mainly of the hands. There is little reason why this type should not be included as part of the students discovery of puppets. The rod puppet has one main advantage over the glove puppet and the marionette and that is it can be of any size, even larger than lifesize and still be manipulated effectively. The Bread and Puppet Group use enormous puppets operated by a number of people. Mr. McCormack suggested a technique which could be employed. The size of the puppet could change to suit his status at different moments in the play. This would involve making the same character to different scales.

SHADOW PUPPETS:

Unlike the previous types which are sculptural and colourful the shadow puppet is confined to two dimensional flat forms.

Transparent colours can be used, though as the name describes the characters are usually shadows cast on a screen by cut-out cardboard figures with moveable limbs. Problems such as the durability of cardboard could be overcome by coating both sides with wood adhesive. A typical exercise on paper cut-outs would be less typical and much more exciting when the shapes are combined with light to form movable characters on the stage of a shadow theatre.

MATERIALS:

Of all the crafts puppetry offers the widest range of materials. Depending on the construction, a puppet making session could introduce students to stuffed fabric, clay modelling and papier mache, wood carving, metal construction, glues of different types and numerous fabrics, yarns and fibres for features and clothes. Not only does this offer discovery of new materials but it also helps students to gain manual skills in construction using craft knives, needle and thread and glue.

'The ingenuity of the designer makes almost any material possible'

There is the question of what type of materials would suit certain age groups. Again this depends on the teacher and what has already been experienced by the class. We are advised by the Department in the Curriculum for Primary Schools to introduce puppets through utilizing 'junk' such as everyday disposable materials.

Our tutor Mrs. Margaret West has used puppetry with children of different ages and her advice was:

'Using junk is fine with junior classes, but a more professional approach is necessary with fourth and fifth years.'

As a result of a series of lectures and practical exercises given by English educationalist, Mr. Bernard Aylward I have planned

three separate lessons which could not only introduce puppetry but also begin a discovery of the properties of different materials.

(A) Discovery of Metal.

(B) Discovery of Wood.

(C) Discovery of Clay.

What is to be done? Discovery of ways of joining and shaping assorted pieces of metal. Eventual aim is the construction of movable metal puppets from light, disposable or expensive metal.

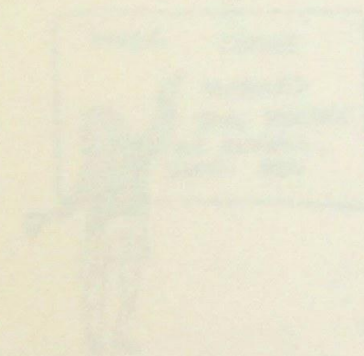
Why is it to be done? This lesson introduces METAL as a material which depending on its properties can be changed and shaped by the student's hands or with simple tools.

How is it to be done?

Empty a varied assortment of light metal objects with a crash onto the floor.

Teacher: 'Why did I bring in these?'

Pupils: (Suggestions on blackboard)



TOOLS: Hammer, pliers, knife, (if safe), perhaps clasp, tools for making holes, heavy anvil or wooden block for pull, tin opener.

EVALUATION: 'How do you join these? Is it secure?'

EXPANSION: 'Do some of your pieces suggest ways of making figures?'

METAL

'MAKING A CLANGY METAL MARIONETTE'.....2-3 LESSONS

LESSON 1

What is to be done? Discovery of ways of joining and shaping assorted pieces of metal. Eventual aim is the construction of movable metal puppets from light, disposable or inexpensive metal.

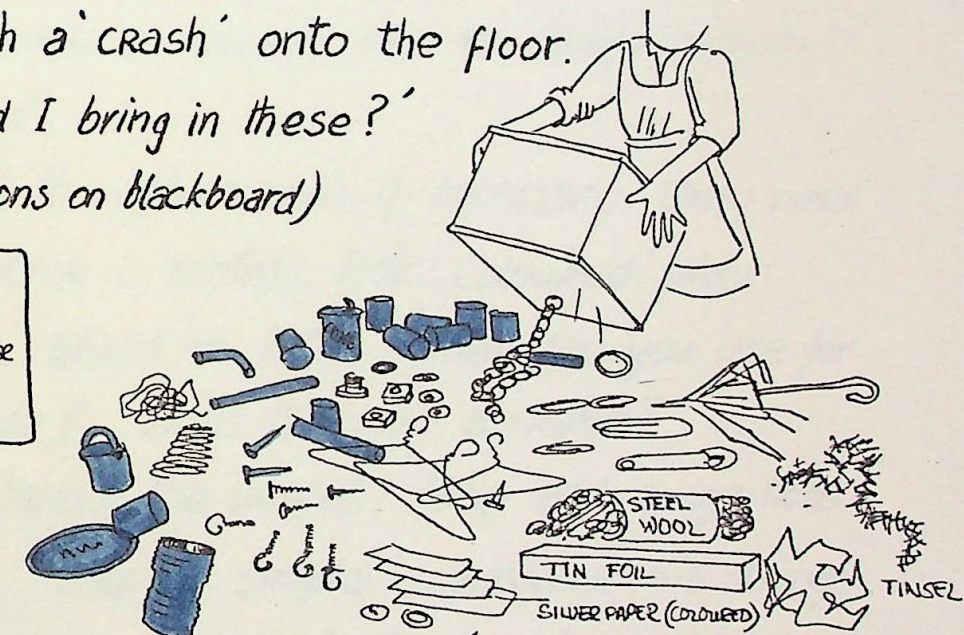
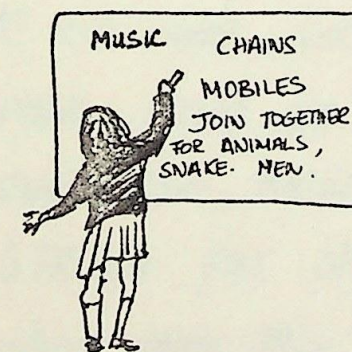
Why is it to be done? This lesson introduces METAL as a material which depending on its properties can be changed and shaped by the students hands or with simple tools.

How is it to be done?

Empty a varied assortment of light metal objects with a 'crash' onto the floor.

Teacher: 'Why did I bring in these?'

Pupils: (Suggestions on blackboard)



TOOLS: 'Hands' Hammer, pliers, knife, (jig-saw), portable clamp. Nails for making holes, heavy concrete or wooden block for anvil, tin opener.

EVALUATION: 'How did you join these? Is it secure?'

EXPANSION: 'Do some of your pieces suggest ways of making figures?'

'MAKING A CLANGY METAL MARIONETTE'

LESSON 2

What is to be done? Having discovered ways of linking and joining tins, chains, wire, pins.....use these methods to construct movable figures which could then be strung in marionette fashion.

Why is this to be done? Making particular use of methods of assembly of metal by making puppets. Emphasis in early use of puppetry is for 'EXPERIMENTAL' use of 'JUNK'. Uniformity in technique as materials limited to METAL.

How is this to be done? Same materials as previous lesson and more 'FINDS' by students.

'How would you make a movable man or animal 'monster'?'

'Will 'it' be noisy?'

Students allowed to work in pairs if necessary. Only metal to be used. Colour : metallic look. Coloured silver paper could be 'glued' on later. 'What can you use for eyes, hair, hands? Does it have a name?'

STRING for stringing the puppet. Help and suggestions when doing this. Keep it simple..... maximum 4-5 strings.

Evaluation : What does he do? Dance, bow, stretch, wave, shake hands with another puppet, fight.

Expansion : Simple puppet play, improvising boxes drapes for sets with flexible stage area.

WOOD

MAKING A SIMPLE WOODEN PUPPET..... 2-3 LESSONS.

LESSON 1.

What is to be done? Looking at wood in different states, twigs, branches, roots, driftwood, sticks, blocks, dowels, sawdust, shavings. Construction work with these materials.

Why is this to be done? Can we find ways of using wood to make puppets? Finding out properties of different woods.

How is this to be done?

Collecting materials from walk outside, noting source eg. twigs from elm tree, roots of briars, bog oak. Supply other woods: driftwood, sticks, blocks, boxwood, dowels, sawdust, chipboard, plywood.

Teacher: 'What can we do with all of this?'

Pupils: Suggestions written on blackboard. Class divided into groups to work on varying construction ideas.

Ⓐ Joining twigs together with thread.

Ⓑ Sawdust and glue

Ⓒ Sawing and constructing with boxwood.

Evaluation: Did you find that wood easy to cut? Does it bend or snap? Why are wattles (sallies) used for baskets?

Expansion: Use construction methods for puppet making. Ⓐ and Ⓒ for marionettes Ⓑ Glove puppets.

CLAY

MAKING A GLOVE PUPPET HEAD3-4 LESSONS.

LESSON 1

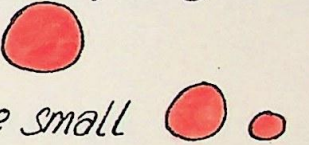
What is to be done? Using 'grapefruit' size piece of clay for modelling, rolling, cutting in free discovery of what can be done, finally directed towards making a head for a glove puppet (human or animal).


Why is it to be done? Firstly this lesson introduces clay as a modelling material. This also introduces the making of a base for constructing puppet heads.

How is it to be done?

With desks covered with cardboard or polythene give each student a 'grapefruit' size piece of clay.

'What can you do with this?'

Divide clay into two pieces, one big, one small 

Make an egg shape. This is like a head but it has no eyes, ears, nose, mouth, neck. How can you make a head with these features? What will it be? Use toilet roll tubes for neck piece . Cover clay with cling film to keep soft. If possible have a skull model of human or animal.

Evaluation: What type of character is this? Eye sockets?

Expansion: Covering clay model with papier maché for head of glove puppet.

PUPPETRY AND ITS USE WITH OTHER SUBJECTS.

Because of its versatility puppetry can offer an awakening of a variety of interests These interests could arise from any aspect of producing a puppet play, be it modelling, painting, music, singing, script writing, stage workings, lighting. Without having mentioned subject matter of the play we can see how puppetry can broaden the scope of the art class. Not only can it offer practical construction and involvement in related arts of music, speech and drama, but the subject matter of the play could interest pupils in any topic of history on a visual and dramatic level. Is puppetry limited to art, craft and performance experiences?

'In preparing a puppet play there may be elements of written and oral expression, mathematical and scientific concepts and experiences of various environmental studies as well as art, craft and performance experiences. Thus puppetry may act as an integrating medium in the curriculum and the knowledge that is acquired by these means may be more meaningful for the child.'

Mr. Currell goes on to describe how puppetry was used in different projects

(A) Civics Project; Making puppets of local figures in the community and the dramatic activity was connected with everyday procedures which a family (rod puppets of mother, father, son and daughter) need to go through on moving to a new district. Other characters included the mayor, housing manager, town clerk.

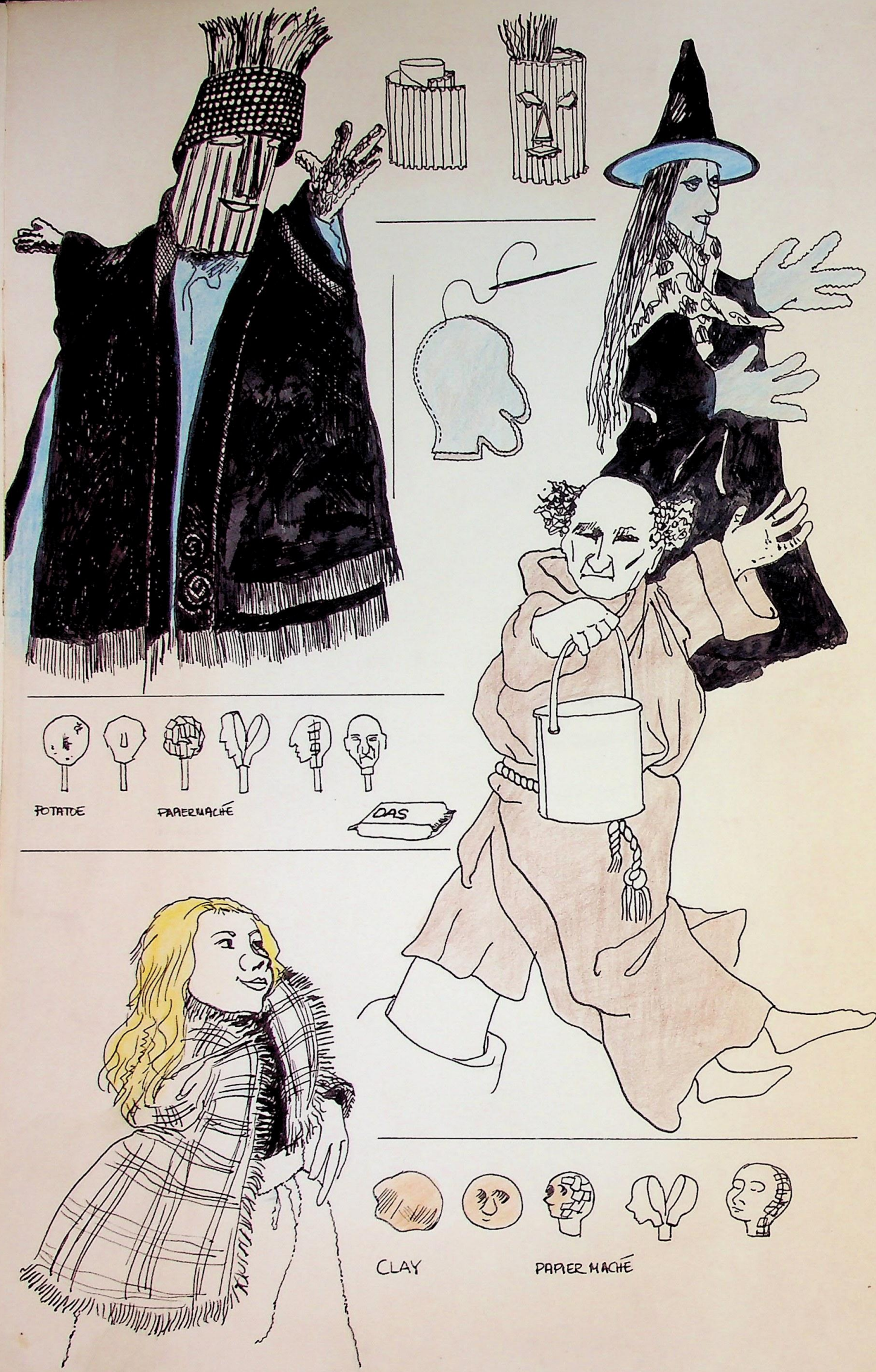
(B) The Secret of Fire; History and Geography tied in with this project in two ways. The background research for the play, set in Russia, How did they dress, what did their houses look like, how did they tell the time? Then one child asked ..'did the Persians have puppets?' This gave rise to second aspect of history and geography as the children investigated the history of the art. The story of puppetry touches most countries of the world. Its spread

risers and declines in popularity relate to many historical factors and geographical features. It is fascinating story, rich in content for the school curriculum. In the area of History of Art puppetry could introduce a subject or artist in a very lively and colourful manner.

" History of Art Project.

Make a model stage set of studio of a famous artist.
Make a puppet of the artist also contemporary artists or family influence. A narrator could fill-in extra details. Postcards drawings and miniature models in plastacine or clay could be part of the set. Consider life-style of the period and country when adding other details. "

As a learning resource puppetry has many possibilities and again their effectiveness depends on the teacher and his or her willingness to sustain the challenge offered by such a wide embracing subject.



PUPPETS I HAVE KNOWN

The illustration opposite describes some of the puppets I have made this year. They are all glove puppets with the exception of the 'Thumb' puppet (he exists only when I wish to make him) Though they are glove puppets each follows a different construction. These differences can best be understood from the diagrams, however there are some important points about these differences which effect the manipulation of the puppet.

(A) In the 'Druid', (Max) I have used extension tubes for the hands to give them extra length. While this technique allows for a less shorter look it does restrict movement. With the tube on, thumb and finger quick and subtle actions are lost. Also they can be uncomfortable unless properly fitted. The head is made very simply from corrugated cardboard.

(B) Unlike most glove puppets the Saint has a hidden glove which allows for the making of a complete figure with feet. Bare feet which walked the roads are an essential feature of this character so they had to be there to show the audience. The head was made from papier mache using carved potatoe as a mould.

(C) Molly is a simple glove puppet. The head was modelled in clay which was then used as a base for a papier mache construction. Bright yellow hair is her chief characteristic.

(D) 'Maggie' the witch, the head was made by cutting out two pieces of profile view, sewing together and stuffing very tightly with dishcloth cotton. Bright shining sequins are ideal for eyes as they catch the light. The soft construction of the head has the advantage that it can be squashed and pulled into different expressions.

(E) Thumb Puppet; This character is so simple that it could be used at any time and any place. It could be an introduction to using puppetry in schools, because rather than making an image



from objects which have to be given life, the thumb puppet is alive the minute you move the thumb. Drama and movement is important right from the very beginning of the puppet. However for the free inventiveness of making features and costume the scale is a bit small.

Rachel Meets Max.

While looking for pencils for Rachel, who was three years old at the time, I happened to take out Max the Druid. I placed him on my hand so that she could see him properly and naturally I moved him very simply. Rachel moved away very quickly and was quite afraid and began to whimper. I felt that if I put Max away that she would be left with the fear so I brought her back to the kitchen where her grandmother, mother and two sisters were having tea. Here she was happier, but still with Max on my hand she made sure to stay at the opposite side of the table watching him constantly with a worried look on her face. I then made as if to talk to the puppet myself rather than have him address her. I told her what he had said to me and moved him to show that he agreed. After much encouragement with; 'he is very shy, but he would like you to say hello', she said; 'Hello Max.', to which he responded 'Hello Rachel'. This eventually progressed to her coming tentavily around the table to tip his head very quickly, as the first contact. Later she took his little hand and began to shake it vigorously and began to smile. Then I said he was very tired was going to sleep for a while. this she took seriously and said goodbye and moved to him as I walked with him on my hand out of the room.

Perhaps it connects with the surprise she got on first seeing Max. but what happened later when she asked for some of my drawing paper and pencils did surprise me. Up to this any drawing I had seen her do was scribbling back and forwards and jagged attempts at making letters, and this was usually accompanied by ... 'draw for me'. This I have never done but have tried to encourage her by suggesting things such as family and events which she could draw. But on this occasion there was no need to suggest, she had taken her pencil and drawn a very determined circle. When I asked her what she was drawing. She replied spiritidly; 'I am drawing him.'

There are many factors involved in the development of image making by young children and these are difficult to determine, but in the case of Rachel's first circle the puppet Max could possibly have been the motivation.

It is possible to draw one conclusion only from this experience of giving 'Life' to a puppet; it would suffice to support the question of using puppetry in education. The conclusion is that not only do puppets stimulate children but this carries over to enliven expression in other activities.

A similar conclusion on introducing puppetry to seven girls in my fourth year class. The first lessons were given without mention of puppetry. These were drawing the skull and drawing faces expressing different emotions and characteristics. The drawings were mostly flat frontal views. Then we began to clay the model of a head. The head was then covered with a protective layer of plastic and this was used as a base for layers of papier mache which formed the head. When this had dried for a week it was cut open and the clay removed. The pieces were glued back together and allowed to dry. At this stage I asked the girls to draw in sequence the process they had gone through. The drawings produced showed a much greater understanding of form than I had ever thought they would be able to describe. In the case of one particular girl who lacks confidence and whose work is normally quite weak. She illustrated each stage with brown marker, a solid mass of clay developing into a rounded shape, a rounded shape with neck and features of nose and ears. I then asked her how she was going to show the eyes. We looked at the head which she had in front of her and taking up a black biro proceeded to shade to give the impression of a sunken eye socket. Having completed a process they were confident about drawing clearly and simply the different stages in that process. An important factor in this process was the moulding and handling of

the head.

These experiences are brief and simple but they have been enough to convince me of the value of puppetry. However, I will finish with a statement from the author of 'The Students Guide to World Theatre' Mr. E. J. Burton;

'Experience teaches, but to state that experience precisely is not possible.'

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