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AESTHETIC EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN
A SURVEY OF CURRENT THEORY WITH A SELECTED APPLICATION TO IRELAND

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BY

NORA DONNELLY

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PREFACE

Radical changes in the social climate and culture of society over the past twenty years have been reflected in the attitudes, needs, behaviour and expectations of Primary School pupils. During this period, I, as a teacher, have become increasingly aware that the structure, content and emphasis of the existing curriculum has become, and is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the needs of children. The investigation and recommendations contained in this thesis are the result of many years work, initially undertaken on a practical level in the classroom, and subsequently continued as a course of study of the theories of Aesthetic Education as propounded by leading Educational Philosophers, Aestheticians and Curriculum Planners.

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to all the children I taught for their enthusiastic response to my many lessons in aesthetic education, which helped me to realize its value and importance which, in turn, encouraged me to pursue a further study of the objectives and effects of Aesthetic Education.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my tutor, Dr. Ruane for her guidance and direction as well as the practical help she gave in the writing of this thesis; to my husband and family for their affectionate tolerance on the occasions when my work took priority over their needs; to the parents, staff and pupils of Marley Grange Primary School for their co-operation in making the video presentation, to the Hugh Lane Gallery for the facility to use the Gallery for filming; to the Video Department in N.C.A.D. for help in editing the video tape; and to the library of N.C.A.D. for locating and making available the large number of books necessary for the compilation of the surveys contained herein.

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SECTION I : THEORIES OF AESTHETICS WITH THE EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

THE TERM 'AESTHETIC':

Art education in which sensory contemplation or appreciation of aesthetic objects is practised may be termed education in 'Aesthetics'. Although often found in the literature of art education, the term 'aesthetics' requires some explanation. It was first used by Alexander Baumgarten in 1735. Baumgarten was an associate of Descartes who is often referred to as the 'Father of Modern Philosophy'. Baumgarten's concern had focussed on what Descartes had described as 'clear and distinguished ideas' by which was meant systematic thought as developed in logic or mathematics. Baumgarten noted that sensory and perceptual cognition were thereby excluded. Drawing on the Greek word for perception, Baumgarten coined the word 'aesthetics' for the science of perceptual cognition. As Sparshott has it, the word 'aesthetics' was originally coined to form a counterpart of logic. "What logic could do for analyzable symbols, aesthetics was to do for unanalyzable symbols."[1] The subject matter of Baumgarten's aesthetics is the sort of responses and experiences that works of art, natural phenomena and man-made artifacts produced.

The development of aesthetic theories has been relatively recent. There is now no single dominant theory of aesthetics. Each theory holds to be dominant in certain features that others would accept only as subordinate. The main difference among these views lies in the way they distribute their value emphasis within the field.

Aesthetics is commonly accepted as the name for a branch of philosophy which investigates a number of questions and concepts that arise out of our effort to understand aesthetic topics ranging from the nature, meaning and value of art to the aesthetic character of natural and humanly constructed environments. Aesthetics, however, also takes the form of scientific inquiry into the psychological and social dimensions of art. So there are, in effect, two kinds of aesthetics: philosophical and scientific.

As a branch of philosphy, aesthetics tends to have either a speculative or analytical character. In its speculative, or synoptic, form philosophical aesthetics consists of discussions of art that are part of a larger philosophical system of thought. The discussions of art in the work of John Dewey[2] and Suzanne Langer[3] are cases in point. In its analytical form - also called conceptual analysis - philosophical aesthetics consists of the study of such specific aesthetic concepts as form, expression, representation, style, aesthetic experience and critical evaluation of art. The purpose of conceptual analysis is to improve our understanding of aesthetic concepts so that we may use them rationally. Analytical aesthetics is exemplified in the work of Beardsley.[4] Although most work done in philosophical aesthetics today has an analytical character, there is much interest in more traditional or synoptic aesthetics.

Aesthetics also takes a scientific form, largely, but not exclusively psycholocial in character. It is in its psychological aspect that scientific aesthetics attempts to discover matters of fact about the dynamics of artistic creation and appreciation. Psychological aesthetics is exemplified in the work of Thomas Munroe,[5] Rudolf Arnheim[6] and

Howard Gardener.[7]

Many different styles of philosophy are represented in the work of contemporary aestheticians. Some writings are systematic and synthetic - theoretical attempts to demonstrate the inter-relationships between some or all of the arts; others, including most journal articles, exemplify analytic philosophy by concentrating on the analysis of specific aesthetic concepts or problems.

A SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS IN PHILOSOPHICAL AESTHETICS AND ART EDUCATION:

The relevance of aesthetics to the theory of art education can be seen in the amount of writings and articles published from the nineteen sixties onwards. This literature is impressive for its intellectual substance as well as the commitment on the part of philosophers, theorists of art education, curriculum specialists and research scholars to the value of aesthetic education and its role in human existence. They draw attention to the fact that the thinking art education has been and still is in transition and that the fields of basic assumptions and priorities are undergoing re-examination. In this vein Manuel Barkan[8] concluded that the educational frontiers of the sixties would consist of making the 'aesthetic life' a reality for theorists, teachers and students alike; an objective the attainment of which implied the use of aesthetics as a resource. Elliot Eisner,[9] in forecasting a new era in art education spoke of aesthetic education as "the humane education of man in, and through the arts", which implied not only looking at the behavioural sciences but also at aesthetics for ideas that might help such an education. Vincent Lanier[10] meanwhile anticipated what was to become

a major emphasis in the theory of art education: the unique role that the visual arts play in affording visual aesthetic experience - a type of experience he said is provided only through the interaction of an individual with an art object. David Ecker (1966) referred to "the extent to which principles of modern aesthetics can contribute to the total art education programme."[11] Also in 1966, R.A. Smith brought together a number of essays and exerpts from the area of philosophical aesthetics, art history and educational theory in his book Aesthetics and Criticism in Art Education.[12] This anthology noted in its introduction that the new language of art education emphasized the need for an effective integration of child-centred and discipline-centred conceptions of the curriculum, and the introductory essays to the various sections of the volume explained how the disciplines in question were relevant to the teaching of art. In particular, it was indicated that philosophical aesthetics help in understanding the problems of describing, interpreting and evaluating art. In the same volume Harry S. Brondy addressed the problems of the structure of knowledge in art education; B. Othaniel Smith examined the nature of critical evaluation of art and Edmund B. Feldman indicated the relevance of aesthetics to art education. Feldman expressed the belief that "all plans, motives and goals for the teaching of art take their origin from aesthetics ...". Such that "the objective of research is to discover the aesthetic basis which one way or another informs teaching and learning."[13]

In Aesthetics Beardsley [14] begins with a certain high level supposition about the nature of aesthetic objects but is mainly concerned with examining a large number of critical statements made about works of art for what they can tell us about the standards used by art critics. On

another level, Michael Parsons[15] first makes certain assumptions about the nature of aesthetic experience and then attempts to discern developmental stages in the growth of aesthetic awareness.

A SURVEY OF THE WRITINGS IN SCIENTIFIC AESTHETICS AND ART EDUCATION

The idea of a science of aesthetics grounded in the empirical studies of the arts has been most forcefully propounded in the twentieth century by Munro.[16] He recommended a scientific approach to aesthetics which should derive hypothesis from philosophy and art criticism and obtain its objective data from the analysis and history of form in the arts and from psychological studies of the appreciation of the arts. His most notable work was in the analysis of form. That educational activities should yield data for aesthetics which, in turn, inform the teaching of art was a central concern of his career.

But if Munro was in many ways the principal advocate of empirical studies of the arts, it was the psychologist Arnheim[17] who, through the study of visual perception and visual thinking had a dominant influence on psychologically orientated art educators. While Munro had acknowledged the relevance of Gestalt psychology to an understanding of art, Arnheim applied its principles. Arnheim wrote both about the properties of the object being perceived and about the act of perception. As art educators investigated the nature of aesthetic appreciation, Arnheim's analysis of form, space and expressiveness in works of art also began to be featured in art education textbooks. By stressing the intelligence of perception, Arnheim underlines what had been intuitively realized; perception combines thinking and feeling and has a cognitive character. The belief that

imagery plays an important role not only in articles and aesthetic activities in all thinking was cogently argued in Arnheim's 'Visual Thinking'[18] In his theory of aesthetic education, Arnheim also claims that perceptual discrimination can be improved through appropriate practice in art appreciation. This idea is borne out in Eleanor Gibson's[19] extensive research which shows conclusively that visual perception can be improved through relevant practice and reinforcement of correct responses.

A SURVEY OF WRITINGS OF 1970'S DEALING WITH THE EMERGENT IMPORTANCE OF AESTHETIC EDUCATION IN ART EDUCATION:

One result of systematic reflection concerning the nature of art education has been a gradual change in the image of the field. This image was solidified and expanded in several substantial textbooks as well as many articles in art education journals written by art educators during the nineteen seventies.

Feldman's 'Becoming Human Through Art' was subtitled 'Aesthetic Experience in the School' which reflects something of the interest the ideas of aesthetic experience and aesthetic education were enjoying among art educators at that time. In his preface Feldman writes that 'aesthetic education' may well be the best term for what he is emphasizing, and that his effort "can be regarded as either an art education text with a strong aesthetic bias, or an aesthetic education text with a strong art education bias.[20] Feldman remarks, along with many other writers of the time, that the tendancy of the field of art education was to overstress the development of artistic performance while the students "tremendous

creative potentials as intelligent viewers, perceptive critics and sensitive interpreters of the arts are left largely untapped."[21] His theme, then, is visual learning through the aesthetic experience of works of visual art.

Eliot Eisner, a curriculum theorist with an interest in art education published 'Educating Artistic Vision' in 1972.[22] He was concerned with aspects of artistic creation and appreciation. Eisner questions the over-emphasis in art education on creative activities and explains why it hinders the design for a substantive curriculum for aesthetic learning. Eisner also endeavoured to break down the dichotomy between reason and feeling, between the work of the head and the work of the hand. He argues that 'experience both in the creation and appreciation of art can properly be conceived as a product of intelligence" and asserts that "an educational program that neglects the qualitative aspects of intelligence, one that side steps the metaphorical and affective side of life, is only half an education at best"[23] The main feature of Eisner's text is a description of a curriculum project[24] that assembled instructional materials and explained to elementary school teachers how they could convey significant content about art to their students.

Coming near the end of the Seventies, Laura Chapman's 'Approaches to Art in Education'[25] emphasizes that art must be recognized as an essential subject in the school curriculum and is the right of all students -not merely for those revealing artistic promise. The breadth of Chapman's approach is conveyed when she remarks that "art programs should be electic; they should reflect major tradition of artistic thought and practice in Western culture as well as cross-cultural insights drawn from anthropology."[26]

She also stresses the importance of aesthetic education of developing intelligent and sensitive response to art objects. She lists modern art forms i.e. photography, film, television and product design as sources of study as well as traditional masterpieces of art and architecture. She discusses curriculum goals which include, among others, the perception, description interpretation and evaluation of works of art not only from the vantage point of the students but also from those of scholars.

New editions of standard texts also provide further evidence of the changing image of art education. The fourth edition of 'Children and their Art'[27] presents new material dealing with responses to art and aesthetic appreciation.

It is not only in standard textbook and periodical literature, however, that the new image of art education has been shaped. A large number of commission reports and policy statements also reflect it, as do the contributions of art educators to a number of volumes devoted to various aspects of art education.

CONCLUSION TO THIS SECTION:

Both philosophical and scientific aesthetics and their variants inform the study of aesthetic education in Primary Schools. However, in the Irish context, as the majority of teachers are cognizant with the theories of perceptual learning and development of scientific aesthetics, and familiar with the broad scope of philosophical aesthetics, it would follow that the former would be more relevant to their terms of reference.

The dealing of reading draws heavily on Arnheim's work on visual perception, and as all teachers have made an extensive study of the acquisition of reading skills, Arnheim's work is well known to them. The evidence presented by Gestaltist psychologists concerning perception in children is also incorporated in the teaching of reading. For example, it is generally accepted that children do not begin with simple elements and work up to larger combinations, but rather begin with easily comprehensive patterns and later analyze internal features. This type of perceptual learning applies equally well to a literacy programme as to aesthetic education.

Familiarity with these principles facilitates their use and therefore it is upon scientific aesthetics that it is proposed to base the study of aesthetic education directed towards Primary School teachers, as part of an in-service course which forms Section III of this thesis.

The belief that aesthetic education can be taught in schools is one that has been systematically articulated by a number of writers only in the last three decades. The result of their writing has been the

transformation of art education - i.e. an education that values the development of creativity - into one that emphasizes the importance of an education in understanding and appreciation of art itself; an education that implies that experiencing works of art aesthetically is more important than producing them. The survey of this literature gives theoretical support to the final section of this thesis, which is concerned with aesthetic education in Ireland in the context of a gallery visit.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]Sparshott, Francis, The Theory of the Arts, p.192.

[2]Davey, John, Art as Experience.

[3]Langer, Suzanne, Feeling and Form.

[4]Beardsley, M.C. Aesthetics : Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism.

[5]Munroe, Thomas, Toward Science in the Aesthetic.

[6]Arnheim, Rudolf, Art and Visual Perception : A Psychology of the Creative Eye.

[7]Gardener, Howard, The Arts and Human Development.

[8]Barkan, Manuel, 'Is there a discipline of Art Education' Studies in Art Education Vol. 4 No.2 p.4-9.

[9]Eisner, E.W. (1972) Educating Artistic Vision p.13.

[10]Lanier, Vincent 'Schismogenesis in Contemporary Art Education', Studies in Art Education, Vol. 5. No.1. p.15.

[11]Eisner, E.W. and Ecker, D.W., Editors Readings in Art Education.

[12]Smith, R.A. (Ed.) Aesthetics and Criticism in Art Education.

[13]Smith, R.A. Aesthetics and Criticism in Art Education, p.60.

[14]Beardsley, M.C., Aesthetics : Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism.

[15]Parsons, M.J. 'A Suggestion Concerning the Development of Aesthetic Experience in Children'. Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol.34. No.3. p.83-104.

[16]Munro, T. Art Education : Its Philosophy and Psychology.

[17]Arnheim, R. Art and Visual Perception : A Psychology of the Creative Eye.

[18]Arnheim, R. Visual Thinking.

[19]Gibson, Eleanor J. Principles of Perceptual Learning Development, p.148-246.

[20]Feldman, E.B. Becoming Human Through Art : Aesthetic Experience in the School, p.(v).

[21]Ibid. p.(vi).

[22]Eisner, E.W. Educating Artistic Vision.

[23]Ibid. p.(v).

[24]"The Kettering Project".

[25]Chapman, L. Approaches to Art in Education.

[26]Ibid. p.(v).

[27]Gaitskill, Charles D. Hurnilz. A., and Day Michael. Children and their Art.

SECTION II : AESTHETIC EDUCATION

INQUIRY INTO THE FOCUS OF AESTHETIC EDUCATION: THE AESTHETIC OBJECT:

Traditionally aestheticians have inquired into the nature of the objects of aesthetic experience as well as the nature of our experiences in art. In recent years the aesthetic inquiry as a philosophical discipline has become essentially the philosophy of art; being concerned primarily with the work of art as the focal point of aesthetic appreciation. "In its general use today the term 'aesthetic' more often means having to do with art than pertaining to sensory contemplation and its objects which is its broader and etymologically more proper meaning."[1]

Just as in the twentieth century the discipline of aesthetics has tended to take art and art related concepts as its major topic of analysis, so the theory of aesthetic education likewise stressed the study of the Fine Arts (music, painting, sculpture, architecture, dance and drama) as the main source from which aesthetic understanding can be directly cultivated. Great works of art evoke aesthetic experience in its purest form. It follows that works of art may be seen as the 'aesthetic object'.[2]

Beardsley uses the phrase 'aesthetic object' to mean a work of art. He further says that the inherent value of a work of art is co-related to its artistic value so that the more highly a work of art is rated according to strictly aesthetic criteria, the greater the effect it

is capable of producing. Sparshott defines 'aesthetic object' more broadly as a "term in use to designate objects insofar as they possess aesthetic qualities."[3]

He further says that works of art possess these qualities so they are the proper objects for critical evaluation and exegesis.

R.A. Smith concurs with this idea: "Art is the source of aesthetic enjoyment. The work of art possesses properties which are characterized as 'aesthetic'".[4]

However, many educational theorists believe that aesthetic experiences can be had through the perception of the natural world and many artifacts constructed for other than aesthetic purposes. Rudolf Arnheim suggests[5] that the common objects of daily experience can serve as a focus of aesthetic analysis. L.A. Reid[6] takes this theory even further by stating that, for children, aesthetic experience can only take place out of the art context. Children have an infinite delight in nature. This experience is of value itself and also as a building up of an aesthetic sensitivity in perception and feelings which are the basis for aesthetic appreciation of art. He suggests that the use of nature as a source of aesthetic experience will inform aesthetic appreciation of Fine Art.

Dewey[7] says that the significance which works of art have is their capacity to emphasize and heighten the quality of experience that we meet only accidentally when confronting things and events in the world. He would seem to advocate aesthetic study based on art works which will

inform and enhance our perception of the world - that aesthetic experience in art can help children understand and enjoy the visual qualities of the environment. R.A. Smith acknowledges this idea also: "... works of art can engender in beholders a more generalized disposition to regard the world aesthetically."[8]

Phenix allows that the environment can provide the resources for aesthetic experience, but endorses the belief that Fine Arts are the true focus of aesthetic education:

> "Nevertheless, the fine arts are particularly suitable for the study of meaning and for the special attention of educators because they provide the basis for the analysis of distinctive varieties of aesthetic significance in the most pure and unambiguous forms and because they are an excellent foundation for the explicit pursuit of aesthetic meanings through education."[9]

Laura Chapman's[10] writings are also interesting in this regard. She stresses the importance of developing intelligent and sensitive response to art object but she also lists modern art forms (i.e photography, film, television and product design) as sources of aesthetic study, as well as the traditional masterpieces of art and architecture.

I would suggest the nature rather than art object as a vehicle for creating aesthetic awareness has definite limitations. A pebble, while possessing its own set of characteristics has a relatively limited sphere of association when compared to a mass of pebbles that make up a particular tonal area in a painting. On the other hand the study of a painting may help the child to become aware of the pattern created by a pile of pebbles; the study of surface texture in a painting can inform the perception of texture and enhance the experience of tactile

pleasure sensorially apprehended.

Paintings, in and of themselves,are more affective and value laden in terms of interest than natural objects, which may be sources of aesthetic delight. However, not being objects of human construction, they have not called for an aesthetic study. The practical field of aesthetic study is smaller than the total field. It is the field of works of art.

OBJECTIVES AND RESULTANT VALUE OF AESTHETIC EDUCATION

To perceive and analyse works of art for the sole purpose of having a pleasurable experience may be a perfectly valid and valuable practice. Few aesthetic experiences are without pleasure and many philosophers cite enjoyment as the rationale for aesthetic activity.[11] However, the circularity of defining aesthetic qualities in terms of aesthetic enjoyment has been a mark of weakness in several aesthetic theories and does not yield adequate justification for a policy of aesthetic study in art education.

R.A. Smith[12] points out that the intrinsic work of aesthetic experience does not stop with aesthetic enjoyment. The state of being pleased with a work of art could be instrumental to some further good.

After reviewing Beardsley's[13] discussion of long range benefits for the study of art, Ralph Smith (1981) emphasises three benefits that were particularly appropriate for the educational focus of aesthetic education.[14] These are briefly summarised here.

1. Perception, Response and Understanding of Works of Art

As students learn to interact with works of art, their perceptions and discrimination of the import and meaning of the art works are refined. Students who learn to perceive all aspects of an art object begin to gain access to the powerful meanings in works of art.

2. Development of a Store of Images

Students who work with a wide range of works of art and become aware of their subtleties develop stores of images that constitute the imagination. As children acquire increasing sophistication about art they can call on their store of images to create and respond to works of art in their world.

3. Increased Understanding of Visual Metaphor

Study of works of art offers access to representatives of the highest of human achievements. Students may study works of art that represent an ideal, which provides them with a background to help them to interpret such ideals, and bring them to bear in art and in life. As they realize new possibilities they experience one of the profound benefits of studying art.

These are, according to Smith, are the immediate goals of an aesthetic programme and the acquisition of these three combined goals on the part of a student would constitute aesthetic literacy. However, it is one thing to say that the goal of aesthetic education is the development

of aesthetic literacy and quite another thing to describe the potential benefits to the individual which literacy in the matters of art confers. It is at this point the idea of the value of aesthetic education is pertinent.

Numerous theorists believe that the value of such a study of art resides in its capacity to energize experience and enlarge awareness in special ways. Aesthetic experience, then, has a cognitive character. It provides knowledge and understanding and lends a certain quality or dimension to experience.

A sense of art's capacity to affect human experience in these ways is discussed by Harold Osborne[15] who writes that works of art "at their best extend the perceptive capacities to the full and ... demand ever increased mental vivacity."

Morris Weitz likewise thinks that the great gifts of the arts consists in their "expansion of the realm of possibilities for personal experience and the intensification of the experiences already had".[16] Monroe Beardsley [17] holds that the pre-eminent value of art is to raise significantly the aesthetic level of experience that is desirable for personal wholeness or integration. For Dewey the main task of aesthetics is to restore the continuity between art and "the every day events or doings,and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience".[18] A study of art works yields a certain kind of understanding and "possession of this understanding broadens and refines the background without which judgement is blind and arbitrary."[19] Ralph Smith endorses this idea that aesthetic education augments man's

consciousness of his world. "The beneficiary of aesthetic education is made cognisant of the perceptual richness ... of things. Something is experienced in the act of aesthetic beholding which is unattainable through a normal goal-directed transaction with the environment."[2]

Suzanne Langer [21] maintains that artistic expression is the only adequate symbolic projection of our insights into feeling. A primary function of art is to make the tensions of life stand still so that they can be looked at. Artistic images, the domain of aesthetic education, serve two purposes in human culture. First, they articulate our own life of feeling so that we become conscious of its elements and they also review "the fact that basic forms of feeling are common to most people ... Art is the surest affidavit that feeling, despite its absolute privacy, repeats itself in each individual life."[22]

Even though aesthetic experiences may be self-contained it has been shown that many writers accept that works of art have a potential for influencing other important values of life. This makes a cognitive claim for art works; and this is an issue on which philosophers of art are sharply divided. There have been many claims for the kinds of knowledge that art supplies - divine truth, the ideal, the absolute. By far the most far reaching claim for the potential benefit of aesthetic study is that put forward by Brondy.[23] He wonders whether the Fine Arts should be studied only for their aesthetic value or if they should be taught as lessons in morality, religion and social justice. He regards aesthetic education as appreciative learning and broadly claims that the case for aesthetic education rests on showing what aesthetic experience can do for an individual in his quest for

a good life. For the student this ultimately implies "the ability to derive pleasure from the contemplation of a wide variety of objects that can, and do express in inimitable form the meaning of the more complex and subtle modes of experience; and by such contemplation help to produce the kind of life that finds its expression in the so-called goods works of art."[24] Works of art can be value exemplars in his theory of 'value education'. The outcome of value education includes an educated taste, and a number of different value subjects could engender 'enlightened cherishing'

Prominent among theories who hold that something becomes known through aesthetic experience are those of Suzanne Langer[25] and L.A. Reid.[26] Langer states that the aesthetic understanding of a given work comes through the cognitive-effective feeling of values embodied in the presented work. Reid says that if aesthetic judgements are based on a direct and intuitive knowing:

> "In aesthetic judgements cognitive affective feeling is not only intrinsic to the final judgements but intrinsic to the testing of these judgements."[7]

In conclusion, one may reasonably state that the immediate goals of aesthetic education may have long-term and far reaching effects on a student's life; that a cultivated disposition to regard art aesthetically can contribute not only to the development of aesthetic percipience but percipience generally; not only to the stretching of the imagination but imagination generally; nor only to an appreciation of artistic complexity but of variety and complexity generally; not only to perceive the tensions of life but to obtain or arrive at articulated feeling.

APPROACHES TO AESTHETIC EDUCATION:

Is the aesthetic experience something that requires study or is it an intuitive process? There are many schools of thought on this. Some theorists hold that there must be a gathering of factual information about the aesthetic object combined with a process of analysis before the viewer can apprehend the work aesthetically; others believe that such background knowledge and verbal dissection of the work inhibits and may preclude an aesthetic experience. Even among these broad divisions there are many areas where philosophers, educationalists and psychologists are at variance. Any survey of approaches to aesthetic learning must refer to the various strategies recommended as approaches to aesthetic education.

The analytical strategy of a curriculum planner (R.A. Smith), an art theorist (Harry S. Brondy) and a specialist in Elementary Education (Stanley Madeja) are worth noting as examples.

The first of these, Ralph A. Smith[28] recommends:

1. Descripton of everything that can be seen in the work of art - as objective as possible.

2. Analaysis of the composition - description of the formal relations to the parts ... their expressive affect.

3. Interpretation of the meaning of the work - an explanation of the ideas it conveys and its significance.

4. Evaluation of the quality of the work. The judgement based on aesthetic reasons or standards which may be primarily formal, expressive or instructional according to the work.

Harry S. Brondy [29] suggests that aesthetic perception can be controlled by systematic identification on the part of the learner of:

1. Sensory Properties of the object (vividness and intensity, colour, line, shape etc.).

2. Formal Properties (balance, rhythm, repetition, composition).

3, Technical Properties (medium, technique, skill).

4. Expressive Properties (moods, dynamic states, ideas).
Its import or meaning as aesthetically expressed.

Stanley Madeja [30] proposes a theory of aesthetic education[31] the composition of which are a) observation, b) description of visual relationships, c) selectivity, d) generalization of form and e) abstraction:

1. Observation: Madeja maintains that children can be taught to observe just as they are taught to read. Art exercises in observation can be designed so that the child becomes conscious of various types of visual stimuli. The object of these exercises in observation are to sharpen awareness, increase the ability to receive and the development of selected or controlled attention to visual phenomena.

The child is encouraged to react both linguistically and visually.

2. Description of Visual Relationships: The ability to recognize and describe either linguistically or visually relationships between the art elements e.g. line, shape, colour, texture. This would enhance the chances of his being able, later on, to generalize form.[32]

3. Selectivity: This is concerned with the cognitive function of recognition, and the ordering and simplification of visual phenomena.[33] A child, given a visual stimulus, must sort out the irrelevant visual components and extract a content which has meaning for him.

4. Abstraction[34] or Generalization of Form: A synthesis of visual principles.
   a) that the child will have the ability to analyse visual phenomena and be able to make a visual statement.
   b) be able to take the unrelated parts into a generalisable whole, as in a painting or a piece of sculpture.

These three suggestions by Smith, Brondy and Madeja, for a method of analysis, share common components - observation, description and analysis. Each claims that their object is that the viewer will become conscious of the qualities and analyse the subject of the work of art. Smith alone employs the critical faculty, anticipating that the student will make a qualitative judgement on its merit.[35] None of the writers here referred to recommend a study of the work in the context of art history.

The value of prescribed methods of analysis of works of art is that

it provides us with objective and impartial categories, consisting a system within which we can articulate our observations, which may otherwise remain very general or imprecise. Drawing from the approaches advocated by various educationalists I will refer to four principal categories of analysis:

1) Formal analysis which is based on the notion that the painting is held together by the use of the elements. The work is broken down to its formal components such as shape, form, line, colour, space, light and visual relationships are established among them.

2) Descriptive analysis: This is directly related to the subject matter of the work.

3) Iconographic analysis - related to Iconographic, narrative symbolic elements.

4) External analysis - this deals with political ideological or social aspects of the work; which would include placing the work in the historical context.

These basic categories are not used in isolation. Some theorists stress the value of formal analysis but include the necessity of art historical information and possible critical evaluation. Many use an art historical context as a frame of reference to describe the time in which the artist lived and the resultant effect on the work.

Formal Analysis:

All paintings and drawings consist of certain visual elements, used singly, or in combination in different ways. The ways in which these elements are used will depend on different pictorial qualities which are emphasised in order to express the artist's personal vision. Art elements, as defined by Joshua P. Taylor,[36] are colour, line, light and dark, mass, volume, plane and mass. Learning to analyse the art work formally means acquiring the knowledge of terms used to categorise art elements, noting and developing the ability to see visual relationships among these elements:- to see colour both as establishing a general key and as setting up a relationship of parts; line both as creating a sense of structure and embodying movement and character; light which suggests the character of volumes and creates expressive form.

Formal analysis enables children to dissect the art work in order to see its underlying structure. It is argued that by looking more deeply into the work, a deeper aesthetic encounter may be achieved. However, as has been previously stated, formal analysis is an objective way of looking at what essentially is a subjective experience. Furthermore, it may be felt that the attempt to increase aesthetic appreciation by this method of analysis may be a hazardous process, more likely to result in a self-conscious attitude than to develop visual consciousness on a deeper level.

The aesthetic quality of the work will not become apparent through formal analysis alone, regardless of its depth and scope. If this is so,

is analysis worth pursuing? Joshua Taylor asks this question, and answers it as follows:

> "We should remind ourselves that the very capacity of an effective work to elude definition gives it power to live in our experience. And, as the analysis serves to broaden our experience by refining our perception of the individual work, leading us towards the definition of quality that can only be completed within the depths of our personal understanding."[37]

Formal analysis then may contribute to the aesthetic experience. Knowledge of material elements and the terms used to describe them may contribute very effectively to the aesthetic experience, and once acquired will become inseparable from that experience. However, concentrating on the importance of formal analysis as an academic exercise may possibly interfere with aesthetic appreciation and can certainly, used exclusively, never replace it.

Descriptive Analysis - an appraisal of the function of language in Aesthetic Experience.

Aesthetics must distinguish clearly between aesthetic appreciation and non-aesthetic - a trap into which descriptive analyais may fall very easily. Describing everything that can be seen in a work of art is of no value in the aesthetic experience. It is not possible to create a verbal equivalent for an art object.

Descriptive analysis depends exclusively on language. Suzanne Langer[38] says that language does not play any part in the aesthetic experience. Each work, she emphasizes repeatedly, is unique, self-sufficient, untranslatable and indivisible and "the vital emotional experience it

symbolizes is of the kind for which verbal discourse is particularly unsuited."[39]

She further discusses the incapacity of verbal statements to form and convey feeling in the way that art does. "Verbal language is clumsy and all but useless for rendering the forms of awareness that are not essentially the recognition of facts."[40]

Langer says that the work of art is a non-discursive symbol which affords non-discursive knowledge. Even though art may be said to communicate non-discursive knowledge it should not be conceived of as an adjunct, a supplement to discursive language which rounds out meanings when words fail.

Langer, then, regards language as unnecessary in the aesthetic experience, and believes that it is deleterious to employ language as a tool to mediate between the spectator and the work.

Dewey also maintains that the meaning of art is immediately perceived, without explanation or intellectual processes.[41] Perception, not dependant on words, de-emphasizes language and verbal response.

Philip Phenix rules out descriptive analysis. He says that aesthetic meanings are gained by acquaintance with the object, and not by description, as is the case with empirical meanings. "Empirical knowledge is mediated by general concepts. Aesthetic understanding is gained by direct perception."[42]

Vncent Lanier,[2] on the other hand, has suggested the main purpose of aesthetic appreciation in schools is to provide children with the linguistic tools to talk about their responses and preferences. Eliot Eisner has actually devised a series of written tests called 'Art Information and Art Attitude Inventories", whereby art learning can be evaluated. He attempts to measure visual accuracy by verbal responses. Art terms and art critics' vocabulary are only unnecessary exercises in memory - an external handling of symbols. This is exactly what Herbert Read [45] thought that schools have actively encouraged: they have attempted to hand over the discursive forms of knowledge without the necessary prior engagement in the activities of art education.[46] Somebody who weilds a critical vocabulary should be able to understand what he enjoys and enjoy it even more, yet it is also possible that the possession of verbal tools may lead one to ignore properties of the art object on which they can not be exercised.

In the aesthetic study the object of art is the focus of attention. It, in itself, is the medium through which aesthetic experience occurs - not the words or terms used to described it. Levels of inquiry are based on the work itself and in order to direct attention to that work language must be kept to a minimum. It may be a tool, but a tool which is used discreetly to a very specific purpose. Because aesthetic education, based on the visual arts, relies more on seeing than hearing, motivations should include more looking and showing than talking and listening.

Knowing about art does not necessarily ensure appreciation. Knowledge and aesthetic experience are not synonymous. Stanley Madeja writes of the distinction between 'knowing about' and appreciation.[49] Knowing about art forms is only one part of aesthetic appreciation and should be viewed as a means rather than an end. Knowledge about the art object should be regarded as a reinforcing factor in the total process of appreciation and information should be introduced "... only when it is useful and appropriate."[50]

Smith refers to this distinction also. He calls it 'knowledge of' and 'knowledge about' art and, like Madeja, says they are not synonymous. "... one may have substantial information about a work of art - information about it s medium, origin and artist - without ever having really experienced its expressive presence. Ideally, knowledge about a work should help one to experience it aesthetically, but it does not follow automatically."[51]

L.A. Reid [52] says the immediate aesthetic experience we may have with an art object is not valid. "We may seem to know the aesthetic meaning of the work immediately ... but feeling we know is no guarantee of genuine knowledge. Learning to know meaning in art takes time and education."

Reid refers to knowing about art as a knowledge of materials, structure, technique, schools, idioms, fashions, social background and history of art, which are all 'most necessary' for the intelligent understanding of the arts.

"If this knowledge is assimilated", he says, "it can transform seeing, hearing and aesthetic understanding."[53]

Yet, Reid claims that the meaning of a work of art is embodied in it and if aesthetically apprehended it contains its own meaning. So we conclude that 'aesthetic appreciation' can not take place without overbearing and oppresive burden of the knowledge to which he refers. It is interesting to note, in the light of these statements, that Reid disagrees with formal analysis:

> "If someone is too rigid in their rules by laying emphasis on abstracted formal rules about balance, harmony and contrast without any consideration of their embodied expressiveness as a whole, then that person has missed out on the central principle of meaning - aesthetically embodied."

Phenix refers, also, to the embodied meaning in a work of art, but he maintains that this meaning may be perceived aethetically in a very immediate way. "Each work of art contains its own meaning and speaks for itself ... other forms of knowledge are mediated by general symbolic forms ... aesthetic understanding is immediate - referring directly to the objects perceived."

Phenix further states that information and knowledge about the work of art - its origins and effects, the processes used in making it and the artist's intention - does not yield aesthetic understanding.

Iconographic Analysis:

There is a prevalent idea that subject matter in an art work is

unimportant. Influential critics maintain that if a person asks what a painting or sculpture represents, he demonstrates that he has no understanding of art. However, one of the reasons that painting and sculpture has been greatly valued throughout history was because of the subject matter they presented. Historians stress the subjects in terms of their moral and religious content as well as their didactic function. There was a reaction against stressing the importance of the subject of an art work in the eighteen nineties and early nineteen hundreds. Bell and Fry were against 'literary painting'; the emphasis was on 'form' as against subject matter. The whole movement of abstract art, from Kandinsky onwards, emphasized 'form' as opposed to subject matter.

Yet, in most cases, it is the subject matter which engages our attention and particularly so in the case of children. That is to say that the subject of an aesthetic experience is an integral part of that experience. The danger is, as described in the preceding chapter, that one would attempt to present a work of art in terms of describing the subject matter verbally. Attending to the subject is not sufficient in itself to characterise a work of art.

Basically, an aesthetic study on subject matter can not constitute achieving aesthetic awareness. Over-emphasis on the subject misses the whole point of a work of art. Yet it has an essential part to play in the perception of form. Harold Osborne[55] makes this very clear. He points out that if we look at a picture which depicts an object, the depicted object will manifest different properties than those of the physical object.

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"Representation has its influence on formal structure. Aesthetic appreciation combines several modes of looking which fuse and interact while each retains a relative independence. A person who has not seen a picture as an abstract has not seen it as a picture; but one who sees a representational picture only as an abstract has missed out on its aesthetic content."[56]

In representative art subject matter is something apprehended by the artist from his point of view - his perception. It is not a reflection or a reproduction. It is a new creation, a fresh concretion embodied in the phenomenal aesthetic object. The 'subject matter' has been transformed and now has become the 'content'.

To prevent confusion between the subject matter and the complete aspect of a painting i.e. taking the part of the whole, Joshua Taylor[57] has coined the phrase 'expressive content'. This, he describes, as "the unique fusion of subject matter and specific visual form which characterizes the work of art." "Subject matters" are the objects and incidents represented; "expressive content" refers to the combined effect of subject matter and visual form. To clarify this complicated relationship, Taylor compares two paintings of precisely the same subject matter, which yet provide very different experiences: two paintings which have the same 'subject matter' but very different 'expressive contents'.[58]

CONCLUSION TO THIS SECTION:

Although in the study of works of art there is a danger of becoming so concerned with its place in history, the analysis of its formal aspect, its iconographic and stylistic content that a fresh, direct experience of the work and/or aesthetic experience may be weakened, however, the possession of such knowledge may reveal subleties and content to which our direct view may not have been made accessible.

Aesthetic experience can only be had in and through the art work itself. It exists only as embodied and can not be translated or paraphrased. Embodied meaning emphasizes the inseparability of form and content. Form which embodies meaning is more than merely instrumental to the grasp of aesthetic meaning. Attentive perception of the form is an essential part of the appreciation of meaning.

Meaning is not an attribute of the work of art in the way its colours, shapes, texture, etc. are. It emerges from the totality of its properties and is such that any major change in the elements of the work would change its 'expressive content'. Since each work of art is individual and signifies whatever it means through a unique constellation of its qualities, it is most unlike a character in a rule-governed symbolic system such as discursive language.

Anything that directs our attention away from the perceived work of art itself is irrelevant and inhibitory to the aesthetic experience of the work. If the viewers were directed away from the integral aesthetic qualities of the work through language they would miss the

ideas and feelings which visual forms convey.

The value of aesthetic experience, the knowledge and understanding of aesthetic menaing is nourished and enriched from many sources through the form of analysis, but in the end all must be gathered into the intuition of a gestalt of transformed embodied meaning. While formal analysis may form some part of the preparation for aesthetic experience, it is not the end of a study but rather a means to an end. Formal education is used to modify and direct perception. Aesthetic experience takes place essentially under the guidance of the art work and we can follow this guidance if our faculties are prepared. Aesthetic appreciation is acquired by the student himself given motivation, stimulation and sufficient space for the normal development of the natural capacity to perceive.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]Sparshott. The Theory of the Arts, p.480.

[2]Ibid. p.481.

[3]Sparshott claims that the term 'aesthetic object' is used in twelve distinct senses in addition to those which have been derived from the fundamental meaning of the word 'aesthetics'.

[4]Smith, R.A. (Ed.) Aesthetics and The Problem of Education, p.10.

[5]Arnheim, Rudolf. Art and Visual Perception : A Psychology of the Creative Eye.

[6]Reid, L.A. Art Education : Heritage and Prospect. 'Art teaching and the conceptual understanding of art.

[7]Dewey. Art as Experience.

[8]Smith, R.A. op cit. p.14.

[9]Phenix, P.H. Realms of Meaning, A philosophy of the Curriculum for General Education, p.34.

[10]Chapman, L. Approaches to Art in Education.

[11]

[12]Smith, R.A.

[13]Beardsley, Monroe C. Aesthetics : Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism.

[14]Smith, R.A. 'Art, the Human Career and Aesthetic Education'. Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 15. No.3. p.9-25.

[15]Osborne, Harold. The Art of Appreciation.

[16]Weitz, Morris. "The Role of Theory in the Aesthetics" in Philosophy Looks at the Arts. Ed. J. Margolis, p.23.

[17]Beardsley, Monroe. Aesthetics, Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism.

[18]Dewey, John. Art as Experience.

[19]Ibid. p.312.

[20]Smith, R.A. Excellence in Art Education : Ideas and Initiatives.

[21]Langer, Suzanne. Mind : An Essay on Human Feeling, Vol.I.

[22]Ibid, p.64.

[23]Brondy, Harry, S. Enlightened Cherishing : An Essay of Aesthetic Education.

[24]Brondy, Harry S. Art Education, Elementary, p.195.

[25]Langer, Suzanne. Feeling and Form. 'The Concept of Aesthetic Development.'

[26]Reid, L.A. The Development of Aesthetic Experience. Ed. Malcolm Ross.

[27]Ibid, p.20.

[28]Smith, Ralph A. 'Aesthetic Criticism : The Method of Aesthetic Education'. Studies in Art Education.

[29]Brondy, Harry S. 'Theory and Practice in Aesthetic Education' Studies in Art Education. Vol. 28. No.4. 1987. p.204.

[30]Madeja, Stanley. Art for the Pre-Primary Child. Ed. Hilda Present Lewis. National Art Education Association 1981.

[31]This theoretical approach to analysis is based on the work of Arnheim and Piaget. Arnheim states that visual perception constantly involves the apprehension of relationships between the whole of the visual field and some item within it. Piaget said that the establishment of relationships is one of the principal cognitive mechanisms.

[32]"Art does not exist in itself but because of the elements within it. A synthesis should be provided in instruction which introduces these elements into the 'field' in the Gestalt sense so that the child sets up environmental reference to these elements."
Ibid, p.121.

[33]Arnheim states that selectivity is part of direct perception. He indicates that all cognitive activity presupposes selection and that the mind must focus on the subject to be considered and thereby lift it out of the continuance of the given world. Perception is selective by its very nature.

[34]In Arnheim's terms abstraction does not mean to withdraw from a direct experience but rather to find a generic pattern within given or particular instances.

[35]References, in brief, to other suggested schemes for analysis:

(a) Feldman : Description, Formal Analysis, Interpretation, Judgement.

Art as Image and Idea, p.245.

(b) Barkan and Chapman : Description, Interpretation and Explanation, Tentative Judgement.

Barkn, M. Chapman, L. "Guidelines : Curriculum Development for Aesthetic Education." Studies in Art Education. Vol. 4. No.2. 1963. pp. 4-14.

(c) Ecker : Creating and appreciating, Criticizing, Challenging Judgements, Theorising about the nature of art, Analysing theories and arguments.

Ecker, D.W. "Justifying Aesthetic Judgements" Art Education. Vol. 20. No.5. pp.5-8.

[36]Taylor, Joshua P. Learning to Look, p.63.

[37]Taylor, Joshua. Learning to Look, p.64.

[38]Langer, Suzanne. Feeling and Form.

[39]Ibid, p.103.

[40]Ibid, p.104.

[41]Dewey, John. Art As Experience.

[42]Phenix, Philip H. Realms of Meaning : A Philosophy of the Curriculum for General Education. McGraw Hill 1964.

[43]Lanier, Vincent. 'Beyond Aesthetic Education' Studies in Art Education. Vol.36. No.6. 1983. p.31-37.

[44]Discover Artistic Vision, p.225.

[45]Read, H. Education Through Art.

[46]Read embodies his notion of the adverse affect of language in visual education in this example. The teaching draws a triangle on blackboard and says to the child 'This is a triangle'. To understand the word 'triangle' the child must discriminate the drawing from whatever other marks or scratches are on the blackboard. In contemplating the triangle he must also discriminate its triangularity from its colour, size and so on. Such discrimination is done visually, not verbally. If the discrimination is not made, then learning the word 'triangle', Read would say, is of no value.

[47]Smith, R.A. 'Aesthetic Criticism : The Method of Aesthetic Education'. Studies in Art Education. Vol. 9. No.3. p.19.

[48]Art history can, in certain circumstances, be presented anecdotally. Some artists (such as Michelangelo or Van Gogh) who led dramatic lives may be studied in terms of their biographies with close referential links to their work. In depth studies of a period or an artist may enrich their understanding of his work and consequentially contribute to the aesthetic experience.

[49]Madeja, Stanley. The Joyous Vision p.5.

[50]Ibid, p.6.

[51]Smith, R.A. (Ed) Excellence in Art Education.

[52]Reid, L.A. 'Concept of Aesthetic Development' Development of Aesthetic Experience p.5.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Phenix, Philip H. Realms of Meaning : A Philosophy of the Curriculum for General Education. 1964.

[55]Osborne, Harold. The Art of Appreciation.

[56]Osborne, Harold. The Art of Appreciation. p.139.

[57]Taylor, Joshua P. Learning to Look p.51.

[58]The two paintings compared are 'Crucifixion with Saints' Perugino and 'Crucifixion' Carlo Crivelli. Taylor uses formalist criticism in analysing the works which he says 'serves to broaden our experience by refining our perception of the individual work'.
Ibid, p.62.

[59]Categorising works under the heading of 'Subject Matter' when setting up an aesthetic study in a gallery may be an interesting way of working with primary school children. Frequently visits for older students are based on the study of work from one country, period, style or indeed artist. These erudite considerations are not relevant or meaningful for younger children. they would be more strongly aware of categories like 'Portraits', 'Landscapes', 'Still Life'. Everyday Life (Genre paintings).

SECTION III : AESTHETIC EDUCATION IN A GALLERY CONTEXT

IN-SERVICE COURSE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

4TH - 8TH JULY, 1988

INTRODUCTION:

It is possible to discern a general trend over the last twenty-five years in art education. Thinking in the field has evolved from a conception of learning, associated mainly with the creative activities of children which do not teach anything formally or substantially about art, to one that, for the most part, does. The ideas and theories of aesthetic education, more over, played important roles in affecting the redefinition of the objectives and focus and approaches to aesthetic education.

The literature surveyed in the first two sections of this thesis, is impressive for its substance and commitment to the value and importance of aesthetic education. The research in speculative aesthetics, philosophical and educational theory and pedagogical rationales have been drawn on in preparing the following Section, which comprises papers to be read and a video to be shown as part of an in-service course in Aesthetic Education to be given to primary school teachers in July, 1988. Practicing teachers deal daily with a wide variety of subjects which constitute a considerable workload. They endure the economical and physical constraints of the educational system; they suffer the lack of any specialist training and the paucity of any resource material directed specifically to the Primary School child.

There is a justified resistance and even hostility to the idea of any further serious and demanding area of specialist study from a profession which is already under pressure to inform itself of the many new developments in techniques of teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.[1]

Bearing these factors in mind, approaches to aesthetic education have been selected which are most readily acceptable to teachers and can be of the maximum benefit to their pupils. I have endeavoured to assist teachers beyond their own paradigms which have been set by their training, culture and practices. Activities and suggestions, which can be readily implemented, have been presented, which will promote a degree of confidence and competence in aesthetic education.

Theory has been translated into practice; references have been kept to a minimum, and the issues debated are presented in a lucid and simple form. There has not been any specific allusion to a particular age group in the following papers, and children of varying ages (8-11) have been included in the video so that the theories and practices presented have been general and can be utilized by teachers of any group from First Class to Sixth Class.

It is beyong the scope of this thesis to deal (however perfunctorily) with a curriculum structure for aesthetic education in the Primary School, nor indeed with a syllabus for any single class. Aesthetic education and the aesthetic experience have been dealt with in the context of a visit to an art gallery. This is something which many teachers undertake as part of their ordinary syllabus.[2]

AESTHETIC EDUCATION IN A GALLERY CONTEXT:

A series of papers to be presented as a base for general discussion during an In-Service Course for Primary Teachers to be held in The National College of Art and Design - 4th - 9th July, 1988.[3]

THE TROUBLE WITH ART GALLERIES IS ....

John Dewey is probably the greatest educational philosopher that America has produced and his book 'Art as Experience'[4] is perhaps the most significant treatises to aesthetics to come out of the American twentieth century. Yet, in the first few pages of the book, Dewey begins with a sharp, direct and sustained attack on the institution of the Gallery.

Dewey wanted to restore continuity between works of art and everyday experience with which they are originally associated. He deplores the acts of collection and segregation by which art works were taken from their original place in the ongoing life of society. He is alarmed at the remoteness which is forced on them by being taken from their original habitat and placed in a special repository. He rejects the rationale by which they are separated from their original role as agents of general cultivation and civic enhancement.

Yet, the Art Gallery with all its insularity and isolation, may be the most suitable environment in which a true aesthetic experience is possible, if the definition of aesthetic experience is the "attitude of disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of the work of art for its own sake alone."[5] The concept of the Art Gallery as an exclusive assemblage of nothing but great works of art invites pure aesthetic contemplation - a consideration of the work of art for its own sake. This definition neglects subject matter, representation and cognitive content in favour of exclusively formal values.

Art galleries can make teachers feel very inadequate. On a certain level we have ascertained that no factual knowledge is necessary to aesthetically appreciate works of art.[6] Yet the labels accompanying these works usually assume a great deal of knowledge on the part of the viewer. The meaning of specialised terms, as well as the general background in history which enables the viewer to place an object in the enormous historical and visual content from which it emerged are presumed to be known. Such knowledge, however, is usually the province of those few who have studied art history extensively. We do not want to say anything wrong, fearful that we will betray our ignorance.

But what if there were no labels? Would we feel more comfortable? Recently, in the National Gallery in London, an exhibition took place in which all the labels were attached to a barrier rail in such a way that the viewer was not immediately aware of them. Sir Michael Levey, Director of the Gallery, who mounted the exhibition, wrote in the accompanying booklet:[7]

> "The purpose of the exhibition is to urge the importance of looking at paintings without being too preoccupied by the painter's status as recorded by its label. To encourage the visitors eye to do its work undistracted, all labelling in the exhibition has been made subsidiary. You are asked first to look and only afterwards to read. The pleasures of looking seem permanently underrated ... compared with those of reading or listening to music. Yet here is an art that only asks of us eyesight and imagination. Perhaps there lies the trouble. That the apparatus required is too slight and the activity too close to the childish, are feelings which probably unite a good many academics and would-be intellectuals to practical men of affairs. Lack of any awareness of Shakespeare or Beethoven would be shocking to both groups, while not even mild surprise would be caused by total ignorance of Titian."[8]

It has been argued that art history is the best background for all professionals working in an art gallery. Much of the information which

is supplied to the public is derived from art history, and art history is the major point of reference in the organization and planning of art galleries' central activities - the acquisition, preservation and exhibition of permanent collectors and the showing of temporary exhibitions. Certainly, it is the major function of galleries to preserve the artistic heritage of mankind and to make it widely available, but it is surely the function of gallery directors to cater for the aesthetic awareness and education of their public. The thesis that aesthetic education is not among the defining functions of a gallery holds water only if some other institution is performing that function, which, in this country, is not the case.

Admittedly, the curatorial function of our galleries is still of paramount importance, but equally important is their educational function. There seems little point acquiring and exhibiting great masterpieces if only the informed few can appreciate or understand them. Elitism in art galleries is a thing of the past. It is the responsibility of the gallery to make their collection accessible; to help and encourage their public to develop the skill of aesthetic vision; to see holistically and to intensify their perceptiveness of expressive qualities in their works of art.

AESTHETIC IN-SIGHT FOR ALL:

Today an education in the arts - particularly the visual arts - assumes a new importance as we realize that mass communication has developed a language increasingly characterised, if not dominated, by images.

Verbal language, the dominant communication form for centuries, is being forcefully reintroduced to its roots in pictorial and symbolic visual form. Photojournalism became standard for mass communication and television overlays our direct experience of events and places. Our thinking is increasingly being moulded by the direct perception of images. Not to be able to apprehend the expressive and cognitive power of images is to be placed at a great disadvantage.

Aesthetic education in the visual arts - the domain of imagery - is a fundamental need for all children, not just those with a discerning talent for drawing or painting. Every pupil can develop a capacity to experience aesthically and respond with feeling.

Children must be introduced to the cognitive significance of visual works of art. This is not to deny the sensory and the emotive value of artistic images. It only means that as a result of an encounter with great art we know something we didn't know before. The knowledge that we get from art is communicated by it. Communication takes place through a well understood process; a process in which line, shapes, colours, textures, spaces and volume act together in the same way as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and punctuation marks cooperate to convey meaning in written sentences.

The problem of aesthetic education in general is to establish the idea that visual images do speak to us. Most people have a good intuitive understanding of the language of visual images just as most people understand spoken language without heavy formal instruction in grammar. On the other hand, just as familiarity with parts of speech and syntax helps to analyse written sentences, so familiarity and understanding of the elements of art facilitates the analysis of visual statements. That is not to say that analysis should be undertaken as an intellectual exercise for some vague esoteric purpose; rather, analysis of works of art faciliates their understanding and draws us closer to their embodied meaning. The essential meaning or 'expressive context' of an art work is contained in the totality of its properties and constitutes the aesthetic experience.

Attending to and observing an aesthetic object is the exercise of a particular skill in the sphere of percipiance. It is a mode of perception which is differentiated byt he fact that it is practiced for its own sake; not for the practical purposes of everyday life, nor yet for theoretical categorisation, or for scientific and analytical discrimination. It runs counter to our normal way of perceiving the world around us, as, in ordinary circumstances we look at the world in order to <u>know</u> - in contemplation of fine art we look for the sake of looking. We speak of aesthetic experience when a work of art can hold our attention in this mode of percipience and extend our perceptual powers to ever greater tension, fulness and vivacity. When we direct our attention to the formal unity or the complex whole of the work it induces an intensification and enrichment of the activity of perception itself and this is called aesthetic appreciation. To some degree, the

study of aesthetics is applicable to all age groups and all levels of readiness because aesthetics, despite its seemingly esoteric character when part of formalized philosophical systems is essentially the study of how people relate to a particular phenomenon ... i.e. Art. Knowledge about an art work can help direct and deepen this mode of seeing, but it can never take its place. Theories of style and art historical information may only burden one down with intellectual baggage and inhibit the natural process of seeing and responding. If properly used, information about a work may enrich contemplation but there is a danger lest it encourage the very general tendancy to substitute the acquisition of information for aesthetic appreciation.

It is easier to absorb a body of elementary facts about the works displayed in a gallery than to master the ability of intense and prolonged perception necessary for seeing them complete and unabridged as the unified wholes they should be. Hence there is a temptation to substitute catalogue learning for seeing. Very often they are filled with extraneous information which distracts from, instead of helping perception. Catalogues are still very much the preserve of the scholar and tend to be treated as outlets for research. Information leaflets do not have the permanence of a catalogue. They are unlikely to be kept for any length of time and will seldom be reffered to again.[8] Their effect is more ephemeral and transient than that of a catalogue. Should not the more important publication be for the ordinary uninformed visitor who represents the majority of visitors and the cheaper production for the academic audience who, after all are trained to utilize such emphemera?

A GALLERY VISIT ... WHO RUNS THE SHOW?

Many teachers believe that the best way to be shown around an art collection is by a professional, so they engage the services of a guide. Most guides, who are responsible for the direction of the art gallery aesthetic education policy, have been trained as historians. They may have absorbed the doctrines of influential theorists in their field. Berenson's emphasis on "tactile values"; Fry's "significant form"; Wolfflin's distinction between painterly and linear styles; Panofsky's writing on "iconographic meanings"; Gombrich's investigation on "the a proiori of the spectator's anticipations"; but they are not educators.

Teachers are well versed both in the psychology of learning and in child psychology. By virtue of this and their experience in coming to know and understand children they are sensitive to their needs. They do not isolate the child/aesthetic student from the child/person. They know their capacity to feel and respond. This is their most important qualification for organizing and conducting a gallery visit. Many teachers have no specific art training from the Colleges of Education and so they must rely on their own school background in the subject; but they do know how children perceive and understand; and so can lead them to an understanding of art. They <u>do</u> know the interests of children and so can direct and motivate them; they <u>do</u> know their attention span and so can encourage them to concentrate directly on a visual source for an appropriate time; they do know the value of a child's individuality as a unique human being and can expand his capacity to experience the world about him with a spirit of wonder through aesthetic contemplation

of a work of art in a gallery. It follows that the class teacher may be the best person to initiate the aesthetic experience with her children in an Art Gallery. The following paper is written (albeit in facetious style) to facilitate the classroom teacher in a practical way to effect such an experience.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO A GALLERY VISIT

IMPORTANT DO'S AND DON'TS:

The learning experience provided by a visit to the gallery is quite different to that provided in school. The physical encounter with the gallery building and the experience of space is valuable in itself. Initially children will be overawed by their surroundings. Later they will want to explore the vast spaces by running through the rooms, sliding on the floors etc. This should not be encouraged.[9] The excitment that a gallery trip arouses can work for the children in that it will raise significant questions and quicken dormant ideas. It may work against them too. Herding large groups of excited children around the hallowed space of a gallery can be an unnerving and difficult experience.

DON'T feel obliged to look at a lot of work. If you look at everything you will see nothing.

DO use your eyes, look and look again before you clutter your mind with the label.

If you have any background knowledge of the painting

DON'T provide an authoritative interpretation. It encourages life long dependance on the experts or the pseudo-experts, and militates against the emergence of a personal interpretation based on the pupil's own perception.

DON'T use your knowledge to batter pupils into submission.

DON'T tell them what they are looking at.

DO ask them what they see.

DO develop a strategy of questioning to force observations.

DO lead them from what they see to analysis of form.

DO remember that learning to reason and argue from visual evidence yields a variety of educational dividends.

DO respect the natural preferences of children when selecting works for study. We recognize and take into account where they are "at" - not where we want them to be.

DO remember the point of discussion is embedded in the specific character of the painting.

DO avoid work that is too small for the whole class to see comforably. Each child is entitled to a "front row" seat. Recognizing that seeing is a positive act, involving intense visual concentration, the children must be able to work from a suitable viewing space.

DO point out to the children that there are many different responses to what is apparently the same stimulus.

DON'T tell them that you are going to get them to "write about it" when they go back to school. They may substitute remembering and listening for looking and treat the perception of art as an occasion for verbalisation

DO look on every encounter with a visual image as an occasion for fresh inquiry.

DO challenge their statements. Force them to defend their arguments using the visual source.

DO listen to what they say ... it is possible for children to make original observations and valid inferences during the process of a critical enquiry.

DO abandon the notion of the full vessel pouring its contents into the empty ...

DO remember that aesthetic pleasure, which is the goal of a gallery visit, takes place when the child is pointed in the right direction to look at the ark works and sees more in them than would have met a hasty glance.

DO recognize that just as you can not east and drink for your pupils, you can not learn for them.

ARRIVING AT AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE:

By affording a group of children an opportunity to encounter and attend to original paintings in the Municipal Gallery, providing them with experiences which impart information and ideas which enhance their ability to understand and appreciate visual art; it was hoped to demonstrate to teachers through the visual record of this event the manner in which children's preceptions of works of art and the role they play can be modified and expanded; the means by which their ability to see a wider range of qualities and meanings embodied in visual art can be increased; and the methods by which their understanding of the significance of paintings may be deepened.

Children bring to the aesthetic experience their personal knowledge and cultural background which affect their attitudes and perception of art forms. Their overall ability to perceive, both psychological and physiological; their levels of development (i.e. their age and maturity); their receptiveness and openness towards the paintings all affect their ability to appreciate art. The teacher increases the students' perception of the work by techniques of questioning that can expand the children's knowledge about the work itself. These questions are both resources and strategies used by the teacher to develop interaction between the student and the work. As quality and character of the children's perceptions are altered, their perceptions about what is important to look for are changed, as is their disposition to respond. They become sensitised to expressive visual form and can respond aesthetically to a diversity of forms.

The child is seen as both the spectator and communicator. This process of aesthetic education has taken the form of an investigation of the ideas and feelings contained in the symbolic forms of expression in the paintings. Symbolised form has been made the object of a very basic analysis and, through reflection, the children have been led to arrive at its meaning and so to create their own aesthetic experience. The process can not be thought of as a preparation or an education for aesthetic experience - it <u>is</u> an aesthetic experience. Nonetheless the value of this experience enlarges the children's awareness. Because of the cognitive nature of the art work, the aesthetic experience affects all subsequent human experience: something is experienced in aesthetic beholding which is unattainable in normal goal-directed transactions with the environment. It augments their consciousness of the phenomenal world by leading them to see and hear the order in it, by restoring sight, touch, gesture and vision where these have been inhibited or stunted, and it increases their ability to respond to it both sensuously and aesthetically.

APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES IN AESTHETIC EDUCATION AS ILLUSTRATED IN 'ART WORKS FOR CHILDREN':

Two approaches to Aesthetic Education have been utilised in this video:

1. A perceptual approach to the video which engages the child in suggested sequences or orders of experience. Aesthetic perception isolates or reveals qualities held to be of special importance to the understanding of art. This process embraces a multisenosry approach which invites the child to identify emphatically with the art work, so that the children's total sensory apparatus can be brought to bear on the aesthetic experience.

2. A phenomenological approach which is Aesthetic Experience based on Description, Analysis, Interpretation.

Although these are two different approaches (i.e. the first perceiving the work as a variety of sensory reactions, and the second based on a simplified analysis), both systems have been considered to be valuable and necessary components of a total process of of aesthetic appreciation. Sensory approaches are valuable in that they involve the children immediately and hold their attention for another and deeper level of engagement. Analysis can be a means of characterising the full expressive content of the art work.

It provides objective and impartial categories and can be used as a strategy to direct observation. Of the four principal categories of

analaysis (Formal, Descriptive, Iconographic and External) only two have been considered applicable to the video presentation, to wit Formal Analysis and Iconographic Analysis.

Formal Analysis has been limited to an identification and discussion only of the art elements - i.e. colour and space-and only when they have been dominant or distinctive, or when they have contributed expressively to the whole work.

Iconographic Analysis has been used extensively. As may be seen in 'Art Works for Children', young children inevitably begin aesthetic experience through involvement with the subject. It is an essential part of any aesthetic study with children. However, the children have been quick to notice that the subject matter of a painting manifests different properties than that of the physical object; that it is an expression of the artist's perception - his "world as I see it". The artist does not reflect or reproduce the subject, he transforms it through his own vision. Through this process the 'subject' becomes the "expressive 'content'" of the work.

Whereas each study of all of the paintings in the video began with a discussion of and engagement with the subject, yet no subject was centered solely or exclusively on it as a basis for aesthetic experience.

It should be noted that this video presentation is as important for what has been omitted as for what it contains. External analysis has not been employed; there is no reference to art history, to the artist, to the social or cultural contexts of the work nor to the title (with one

exception - and in that case the children arrived at the title through the embodied meaning in the art work).

The focus of the experience has been in 'knowing' rather than 'knowing about' the object.

Neither is there any mention of the movement or school associated with the work, the biography of the artist, or any other factual data.

Descriptive analysis has been used only to demonstrate inadequacy. Through one of the activities the children have seen that a verbal description can not convey the meaning of a painting; that painting is non-discursive. Language has, however, been used as a tool to interrogate the art work. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, to structure this video without any verbal input to fulfill the purpose for which it was made. However, the language has been employed to direct attention and elicit responses to the work itself.

Technical terms have not been referred to, general descriptive terms have been used when relevant (i.e. 'landscape', 'subject','style', 'contrast' and 'gesture'). Techniques have not been discussed nor has there been any reference to the medium employed in each work. Each painting has been the central focus, and nothing was used which directed the children away from the perceived work. In every study, the issues were embedded in the image.

The children's perception of the work was increased by questioning which was structured to expand the children's knowledge of the art work. Their

expectations about what was important to investigate changed as did their disposition to respond. They have been enabled to make statements and to justify them about expressive and aesthetic qualities of painting.

NOTES ON LINES OF ENQUIRY AND EXERCISES USED IN VIDEO

Introduction: A period of reflection.

First Painting: 'Madeleine Green et son fils'. Anthony Green.

Exercise to show that descriptive analysis has little value in Aesthetic Experience. Directed observation. Expressive use of colour, shape. Formal relations if elements. Expressive qualify of work. Place of subject in pictoral space. Multi-sensory exercise to help identify with subject's expressive content.

Second Painting: 'After the Fire'. Patrick Harris.

Listening to a painting's Aesthetic Character. Observation. Initial engagement with subject extending to subject as expressive content. Colour making strong expressive statement. Multi-sensory approach. Line as gestural mark. Arriving at title of work from aesthetic observation. Contrast. Significance of light and dark.

Third Painting:

Children's reaction to painting of nude subject (!)

Fourth Painting: 'Lavacourt? Winter'. Monet.

Realism as objective visual record or Artist's perception. Cognitive

character of work, aesthetic study can inform perception of natural world. Style. Colour effected by light.

Fifth Picture: 'The Pool'. Courbet.

Engagement with subject. Expressive properties and affects of work. Meaning expressed. Transfer of meaning from the art work to all subsequent perception. Multi-sensory exercise 'walking into the painting'. Individual perception and directed observation of colour. Significance of the work - how the idea or feeling is conveyed and signified.

Conclusion: A period of reflection.

CONCLUSION TO THIS SECTION:

St. Thomas Acquinas once said "Only God can teach". This, in a sense is true of aesthetic education - the teacher can do little if his pupils find it difficult to look or cannot see. But the teacher can direct the child's attention to the things to look for and perhaps how to 'see' them.

To be initiated into this in early childhood can transform the experience of a whole lifetime. To miss out on it, or to be deprived of it, is not only a personal improverishment, but, where the impoverishment is widespread, a cultural and social disaster.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]These observations have been made from the writer's personal experience as a teacher.

[2]The writer would hope, in the course of some future study, to prepare a more comprehensive sequentially structured curriculum in Aesthetic Education as part of the Art Education Syllabus.

[3]This course has been devised by the writer.

[4]Dewey, John. Art as Experience.

[5]ob.cit. Art as Experience, p.52.

[6]In papers presented at the In-Service Course, the writer has identified herself with the teachers to whom the paper is to be read.

[7]Sir Michael Levey. The Neglected National Gallery : Booklet accompanying exhibition of that nane. National Gallery London, April, 1983.

[8]Ibid, p.2.

[9]Pamphlets and leaflets either picked up or bought for pennies in a gallery have the same life-span and ultimate destination as brochures given out at the Spring Show.

[10]This paper is to be read to teachers of children of varying ages, consequently, it does not make any specific reference to any particular age group, but rather to children in general.

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