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THE BOND BETWEEN MAN AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

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## THE BOND BETWEEN MAN AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### INTRODUCTION

"Then the Lord God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it".

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust".

These two quotations from the Bible encapsulate the whole of human existence ... we came from the earth at the moment of creation, we return in burial.

To talk of the relationship between man and the natural environment is to miss the point - man is as much a part of the environment as the earth from which he was formed and to which he returns after death.

This point is underscored by Arnell W. Pattemore in "Art and the Environment. He writes:

"There is no doubt that the environment affects the personality and the actions of the individual, and the individual in turn affects his environment. He shapes it to his own liking. These are the facts of human growth and development. The environment is people." (1)

A similar point is made by Gyorgy Kepes in his book, "Education of Vision". On page 8 he writes:

"If in the world, man sees around him the rhythm of nature's processes revealed and if the colours, forms, and movements he sees are expressions of organic events, then his vision is nourished by the primal sanities of nature. If the primal sanities of nature can be

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(1) Arnell W. Pattemore, Art and the Environment, page. 9.

absorbed through his vision, man is led to see them in a world he shapes himself." (2)

However, in my view, we have to reconcile these ideals with the reality of life in a generally uncaring and materialistic society which injures our sensibilities, the basis of our creative faculties.

The formlessness of our present life has two obvious aspects. Firstly, the environmental chaos which accounts for the pollution of our air, water and earth which we ourselves have caused.

Secondly, our social chaos, our inability to live together, to let body, feelings and thought dwell together in harmony.

To regain direction and in order to give direction to this formlessness, we have to go back to our roots. We need to sharpen the creative faculties and our visual sensibilities. There is a correlation between our distorted environment and our impoverished ability to see with freshness, clarity and joy.

In this personal project, I intend to examine the special bond between man and the natural environment - the earth, the trees and plants, and the waters which surround us - and in my own paintings: to take this process a step further and paint man and the natural environment as one.

This idea of a man/nature bond has been explored by artists and philosophers alike for centuries. In my research, for instance, I discovered a reference to a manuscript from the National Library of

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(2) Gyorge Kepes, Education of Vision, page 8.

Vienna known as the Juliana Anicia Codex, containing plant drawings dated the 1st century A.D. (Figure 1).

This early illustrator noting the bond between man and nature and the physical link in the forms and shape of the root of the plant and the torso of a woman, has drawn them as one.

My own studies combining man and the natural environment involved extensive experimentation, observation, discovery and rejection. My idea was to convey in oils, on canvas or board with texture and movement, the uniting of the two in a joyful way.

After extensive study of the human form and the natural environment in a variety of ways, my paintings emerged from the dust of pastels and chalks as original works combining the many skills acquired in this education course. As my understanding of technique, materials and process grew, they became a language through which I could express my ideas. (This process is explained in Chapter III).

But what of my pupils? How would a human/environmental project appeal to them? This particular class of 5th Year girls in Mercy College, Coolock, is a mixed ability class, interested in art and in the environment. They are particularly conscious of the need to protect and defend it, as they demonstrated before the project even got under way. When the art equipment for the term arrived with the charcoal fixative in aerosol form, they immediately decided that as artists they could not tolerate the additional threat to the ozone layer which the use of the product would involve. They composed a group letter to the manufacturer asking if an alternative product was available. We still await a reply.





*Mandragora nar.*  
Mandragore.

Figure 1: Juliana Anicia Codex, Plant Drawing, Library of Vienna, 1st century A.D.





This commendable attitude on aerosols was a natural follow-on from their interest in the environment. From 2nd Year they had been bringing into class 'precious' shells, stones, tree bark and plants for discussion of texture, form, shape, etc. (Figure 2).

Life drawing was also a special favourite of this group so the combination of these proved as natural a choice as the subjects themselves. They had, however, never before experienced painting with mixed media, so this, I felt, would be an added challenge.

With only limited time allotted for the project we decided, after a class discussion, to concentrate on one specific area - trees. (The plan of work towards these mixed media paintings of a human/environmental source is discussed in Chapter VI).





Figure 2: Pupils of Mercy College, Coolock, drawing shells, stones and plants.



## CHAPTER\_I

### REASONS FOR CHOICE OF SOURCE

I chose the natural environment and the human form as my personal sources because I am fascinated by both. My interest, apart from the all-consuming one in visual art, is literature.

I read anything from Tolkien to Tolstoy and in poetry from Heaney to Hughes. If I could analyse why I have just named these four from the many authors whose works stock my shelves, I would say it is because they are writers who deal with people and their places, with their sense of belonging, their shared identities.

This poem by my favourite poet, Ted Hughes, likens a woman to a river:

#### "LOW WATER

This evening  
The river is a beautiful idle woman.

The day's August burn-out has distilled  
A heady sundowner.  
She lies back. She is tipsy and bored.

She lolls on her deep couch. And a long thigh  
Lifts from the flash of her silks.

Adoring trees, kneeling, ogreish eunuchs  
Comb out her spread hair, massage her fingers.

She stretches - and an ecstasy tightens  
Over her skin, and deep in her gold body.

Thrills spasm and dissolve. She drowns.

Her half-dreams lift out of her, light-minded  
Love-pact suicides. Copulation and death.

She stirs her love-potion - ooze of balsam  
Thickened with fish-mucus and algae.



You stand under leaves, your feet in shallows.  
She eyes you steadily from the beginning of the world." (3) (Figure 3)

I asked myself whether I could paint this picture, this woman/river that Hughes creates. That is the essence of my project.

This poem by Thomas Hardy, "Voices from things growing in a Churchyard", makes the point equally forcefully.

"These flowers are I, poor Fanny Hurd,  
Sir or Madam,  
A little girl here sepulchured  
Once I flit-fluttered like a bird  
Above the grass, as now I wave  
In daisy shapes above my grave,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily.

- I am one Bachelor Bowring, 'Gent', -  
Sir or Madam;  
In shingled oak my bones were pent;  
Hence more than a hundred years I spent  
In my feat of change from a coffin-thrall  
To a dancer in green as leaves on a wall,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily.

- The Lady Gertrude, proud, high-bred,  
Sir or Madam,  
Am I - this laurel that shades your head;  
Into its veins I have stilly sped,  
And made them of me; and my leaves now shine,  
As did my satins superfine,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily." (4)

My pupils had their own reasons for being attracted to the man/environment source. Like most teenage girls, pop culture had an important impact on the formation of their visual awareness. They

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(3) Ted Hughes, River Poems, Faber & Faber, London, 1965.

(4) Thomas Hardy, Voices from things growing in a Churchyard, Wain, 1966, page. 12

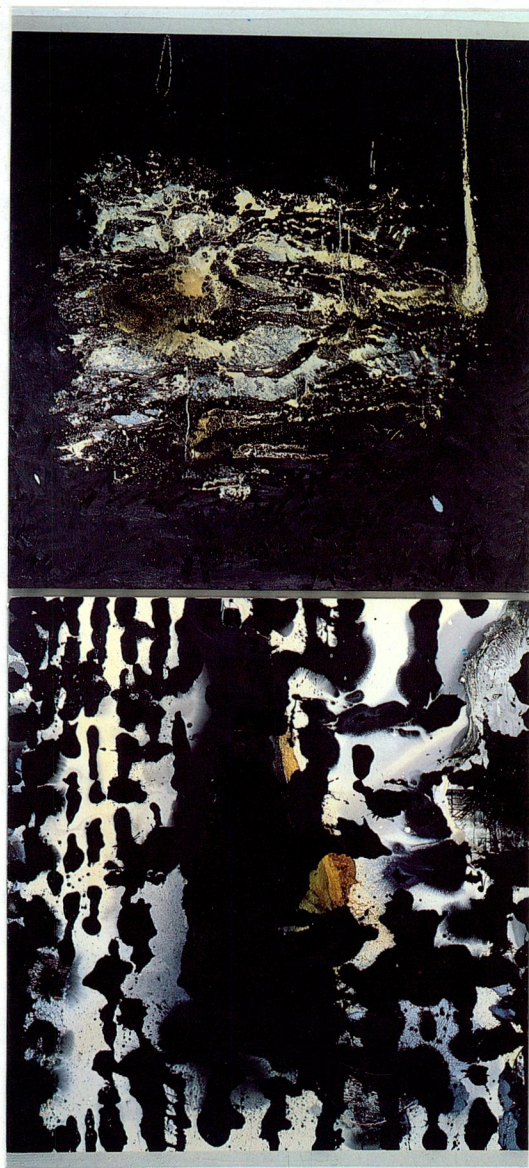
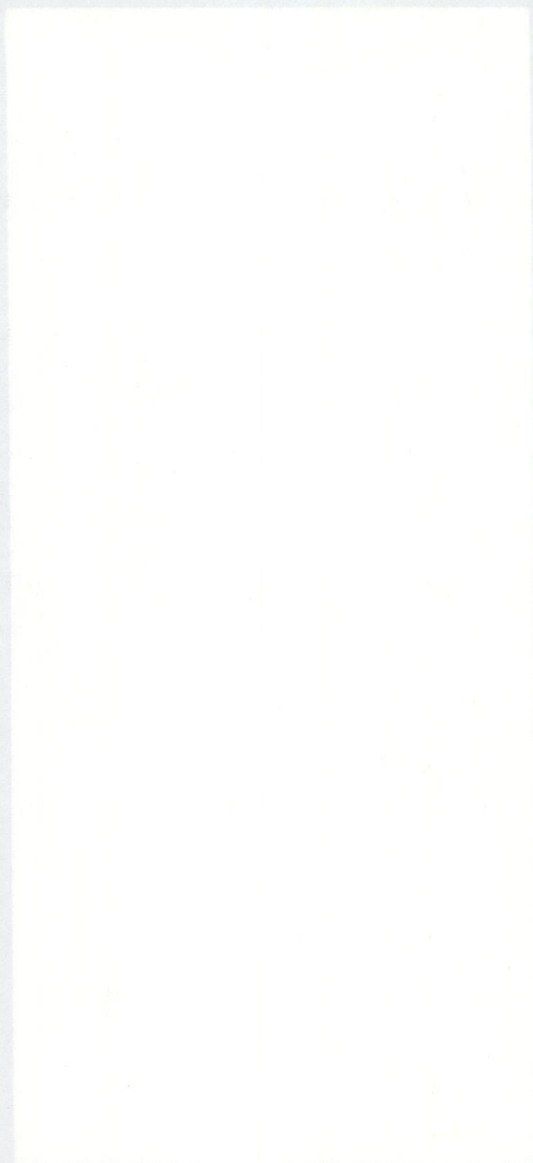


Figure 3: River photograph for Ted Hughes poem.







brought into class some of their records relating to our sources for discussion.

Their personal tastes in music ranged from heavy metal and rock music to traditional and country and western. A big favourite was the album and video by Irish singer Enya, called "Orinoco Flow", which they found visually stimulating (particularly impressive was the use of vibrant colours, juxtaposed to create a dramatic effect). (Figure 4). The slow-motion opening up of flowers from bud to bloom was seen as a telescoping of plant life in the different seasons, a perfect observational study of nature, all in a two minute lesson. But for the pupils the message was the bond between woman, in this case, the river, the flowers and the seasons. "A beautiful relationship", they called it, one that gave relevance to the recent Caring for Trees Week. They suggested we should have a Caring for Rivers Week, too. We discussed whether it was possible to bring this "beautiful relationship" into their work. (See Chapter VI).





Figure 4: Cover of Album "Orinoco Flow", by Enya.





## CHAPTER II

### JOURNAL OF WORK FOR PERSONAL PAINTINGS

#### 1) PHOTOGRAPHY

As a way of looking at both sources - the human form and the natural environment - I photographed them separately and together, noting the similarities in forms and textures, shapes and colour and in their relationships to background or foreground elements. I photographed sources which resembled or related to each other in form, texture, pattern and shape.

#### 2) DRAWING FROM LIFE

I drew the male and female figure in various media and in different ways (Figure 5). I noted the similarities in form to that of trees and plants: the outstretched arms of a figure that matched the spreading branches of a tree; the linear characteristics of human and plant form.

I aimed to stress the visual and tactile qualities by comparing, for example, an ageing man's face to the lines of a tree bark. I noted the similarities of texture and shape between both sources.

#### 3) PAINTING FROM LIFE

I painted the human form, using emulsion paint on large sheets of paper (Figure 6). I tried to convey the similarities of a windblown tree and a flowing river to the movement and energy of a human form. I painted trees which branched off into limbs of people, highlighting the similarities of texture and



Figure 5: Drawing from life indicating a similar movement of limbs to branches of trees.









Figure 6: Painting from life highlighting movement and energy.





form. I painted rivers whose currents took on a human form like that in Ted Hughes' poem quoted in Chapter I.

#### 4) INCORPORATING BOTH SOURCES

This exciting area involved exploring the differences and similarities of both sources and bringing them together in contrast or unity, depending on the effect required. I drew from my research in the history of art area a selection of artists who combined the sources of man and the environment. (Figure 7).

There was no doubt that bringing these sources together would border on the surreal, but I aimed more to achieve the beautiful rather than the bizarre, stressing the similarities of form, shape and texture of the two sources and the need to respect our environment, our dependence on it and it on us.

My "living landscapes", I hoped, would convey this bond between man the natural environment in a vibrant way, with energy and movement.

#### 5) COMPOSITION

I would consider the composition of a work of extreme importance. No matter how exciting a subject or how well it is executed, the impact depends on imaginative composition. Bearing this in mind, I undertook a series of composition experiments to ensure that all the elements of the planned pictures constituted a satisfactory visual entity, the sum of the parts forming a harmony of space without losing their effectiveness of pattern. Numerous experiments were required here. (Figure 8).



Figure 7: Painting exploring the similarities of tree/human sources.







Figure 8: Painting by Tintoretto indicating movement and energy and circular composition.





I studied the way in which artists like Italy's Tintoretto used composition to create energy and movement in their work. For my pupils' history of art lesson, we looked at the composition expertise of Matisse and Picasso in Fauve and Cubist lessons.

#### 6) TEXTURES

I used texture experiments to detail the similarities of the human form to that of trees, earth, etc. I discovered that brown sugar sprinkled on white glue, then painted in oils, gave a particularly rich "tree bark" texture which I later used in my paintings. (Figure 9).

However, some of the texture experiments - for example, the use of tinfoil and white plastic to convey the common characteristics of the figure and the sea, etc. - were discarded as I felt that the lack of durability of such materials posed practical problems. I also experimented in the use of texture to create energy and movement in my paintings.

#### 7) COLOUR

I used colour experiments to achieve background distance and tonal exercises for form work. Through experimentation I obtained colours which created the mood I was attempting to portray: a light-hearted joyful mood, achieved by using vibrant colours juxtaposed.

#### 8) PREPARING BOARDS

Preparing boards, priming, sawing and nailing were skills I had not acquired in my years of painting, as I had previously

opted for ready-to-use canvases. The techniques and skills involved were difficult, but valuable additions to the many others acquired during my course. There was also something very satisfying about working on one's own prepared board.

## 9) PAINTING

On the basis of my colour experiments, I chose the colours which would create the light-hearted mood I sought and would enhance the feeling of movement and energy. The colours ranged from pinks and yellows to light blues and oranges. My composition exercises resulted in a foreground figure composition to create the harmony I required. I consulted these and began my painting. (Figure 10)

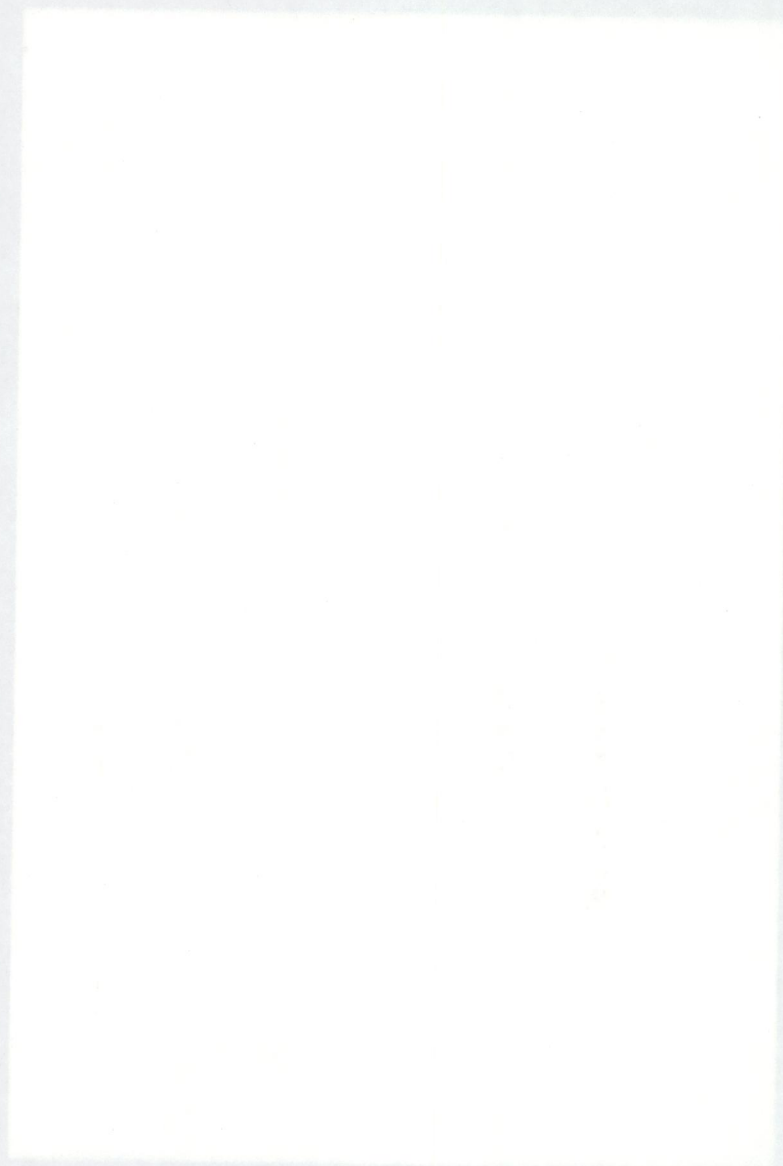
As I painted and became involved with the work, the painting itself seemed to take over aspects of the work. I tried to reach beyond the painting and draw upon this "outside source" of energy.

I wished to convey not just what was there but the emotion awakened in me by what was there. Picasso called this "reaching outside" the work while Matisse described it as "being moved" by the subject. The Irish painter, Patrick Collins, preferred the phrase "looking beyond" while Louis le Brocquy referred to his subjects as a "magic box". The secret, in his eyes, was to "open it up and look inside". Whatever one wishes to call this search "beyond" the work, I have no doubt it is a valuable skill, though one which might well involve abandoning some of the learned rules. Paradoxically, however, to be able to break these rules successfully, one must first learn them.





Figure 10: Painting in oils.



During the painting, adjustments had to be made to the composition. Ongoing reference to previous experiments proved useful in relation to form, texture and colour. (Links between the philosophy of teaching and my sources of the human form and the natural environment are discussed in the chapter that follows).



### CHAPTER III

#### PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

How could the project I have chosen help me to interpret for my pupils what I have learned in Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology? Of what benefit to the pupils is the teaching of art through human and environmental sources?

Elliot W. Eisner in "Educating Artistic Vision" says:

"The prime value of the arts in education lies in the unique contribution it makes to the individual's experience with, and understanding, the world. The visual arts provide for our perception of form that vivifies life and that often makes an appraisal of it."  
(5)

So teaching about the relationship between man and the environment helps pupils understand their role in the world and how to appraise and appreciate it.

Laura Chapman in "Approaches to Art" notes:

"In many cultures formal ceremonies precede the use of any natural resource for the human need. If a tree was cut down to make a house of a canoe the sacrifice of the tree was noted in prayer." (6)

So, if pupils have studied, drawn and observed nature, identifying with it through the seasons and discovering the changes in trees, plants and rivers, they are less likely to vandalise them, either now or in adulthood. If they understand more of the significance of the natural environment, become more aware through art history of the importance of respecting and preserving nature's bounty, are much less

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(5) Elliot W. Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, page. 9.

(6) Laura Chapman, Approaches to Art, page 10.

likely to become the factory owner who pollutes our rivers or the property developer who demolishes our heritage. (Figures 11 and 12). Part of a report setting out the rationale for the arts in Irish education describes the aim at post primary level as follows:

"To develop a practised understanding of the continuum between art and the environment and consequently a sense of responsibility for the natural and built environment." (7)

So the teaching of man's bond with the environment should produce a more enlightened and better citizen.

It is also an aid to the development of the person, as the creation and interpretation of nature through art is a valuable process of individual expression. In studying nature through art one discloses one's own individuality.

Mirko Basaldela in "Visual Considerations" says:

"From the most distant times, the human beings who inhabited the earth saw valleys, mountain plains, and above them, contained by them and containing them, sky. From these times man has felt the need to understand the things around him, to give them order and meaning. The visual medium of expression was an integral part of life. Accents of colour and symbolic forms, or simple ornaments of nature were used to emphasise the social function of the individual and express his or her individuality within this function." (8)

This eminent psychologist is saying, then, that man has felt the need to understand and use the natural environment as a means through which he can express his own individuality.

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(7) Report of the Board of Studies, The Arts, page 25.

(8) Mirko Basaldela, Visual Considerations, page 175.



Figure 11: Drawing from nature.









Figure 12: The Destruction of our Heritage.



In other areas in our schools, individual expression is not encouraged. Pupils are required to look alike, in the same school uniforms, to line up together, to go in this particular door and not that, to speak only when spoken to, making it easier to control them, not as individuals but as a unit.

Understanding and interpreting the world around them through a personal involvement in the natural environment by way of study counterbalances this stifling of individuality. In addition to learning more about the world in which they live, they have the sense of achievement of producing a "made" work, original to them, which can be placed on display to be judged by an audience. (Figure 13).

The personal achievement factor is valuable so this study through art, of man and the environment should help produce better citizens on the social level. From the psychological point of view, this individual identification of nature and its natural processes results in not only finding out more about the natural environment but more about oneself. That, in turn, should lead to a more fulfilled, knowledgeable and original thinking human being.

This study of man and the natural environment should, then, prove valuable to my pupils not only at an educational level but also at a personal and social level. As the teacher, I am presenting problems of challenging and educational value in relation to living. And that brings me to the difficult area of self-analysis.



Figure 13: Personal evolvement with Nature.



## CHAPTER IV

### DEVELOPMENT AS A TEACHER

As I have been teaching for a number of years, I am in the unusual position of being able to compare my approach to teaching before and after this final full-time year in NCAD.

Through study and tuition, I have become more self-critical and analytical in my aims as a teacher, more aware of the relationship between visual perception and thought and more adept at dealing with the interplay between disciplined technical competence, perceptive imagination, and perceptual understanding. My primary aim for my pupils is to open their eyes to their own individuality and originality, to help them to "see" the world in which they belong. I want to teach them skills and craftsmanship and stimulate their imagination.

Psychologist Anton Ehrenzweig in "The Psychoanalysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing" says:

"Professional skill in art often inhibits the full development of the creative imagination. Conversely, methods of art teaching that primarily aim at stimulating the pupils' imagination rather than imparting craftsmanship may succeed in producing imaginative and powerful work which lacks professional finish and a clear-cut purpose. Professionalism and imagination need not be antagonistic in this way."  
(9)

I have learned that this is so. With the skill of the teacher it is possible to achieve one without sacrificing the other. Pupils can experiment freely with the various artistic media without any definite

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(9) Anton Erherzweig, The Psychoanalysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing, page 27.

purpose in mind. It is possible to return to the work in a subsequent lesson and take a more disciplined approach without sacrificing the benefits already gained.

The questioning and self-analysis which this final full-time year has provoked in me has been beneficial. A similar approach by other teachers would, I suggest, be equally helpful to them and their pupils.

In my case, it has served to enhance my ability and stretch my talents both as a person and as a teacher. From the sociological perspective, I am more aware of my potential, more aware of my contribution to others and to my environment.

As a teacher, I have become more aware that my pupils' understanding and love of art depends on my informed enthusiasm. My role should include the revelation of personal response and feelings, encouraging them to recognise and value their own feelings, praising them for things achieved so as to raise their self-esteem. In most areas of school, this is not done. The Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1985 - "The Arts in Education" says:

"If education values the promotion of a respect for the diversity of individual feeling, then the pedagogical relationship, which should characterise the arts will make a valuable contribution to the achievement of this aim. In addition, if the arts are valued as a central experience in the life of the school community, the physical environment, the educational ambience and the social climate of the entire school will be enriched." (10)

This enrichment is doubly valuable if this study includes the appreciation of the natural environment and the people of the environment, for the reasons I have detailed in the previous chapter.

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(10) Report of the Board of Studies, The Arts, Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1985, page 20.



## CHAPTER V

### HISTORICAL ASPECT

The historical links between man the natural environment are as old as history itself, dating back to the earliest cave paintings.

As early as the 1st century A.D., the bond between man and nature was documented as can be seen from the Juliana Anicia Codex illustration shown in my introduction.

In medieval art, the early illuminator used the letter as a sign, as in this illustration from the Gospel of St. Matthew in the Book of Kells (Figure 14). This art lay precisely in the transformation of one thing into another, a letter into a human figure, a human figure into a plant. In the Book of Kells the artists created a new relationship between the structure of the letter and human, animal and plant forms, confronting us with structure as a living process as in the illustration from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

Francoise Henry in "Early Christian Art" says:

"A crouching figure inside a capital V may well be meant for moligus, who interferes with the good seed. The figure is twisted and sinister, the neck entwined in plant like motif of Christ and the Pharisee."  
(11)

In the realm of naive art, French artist Rousseau showed with affection the relationship between man and the natural environment. His canvasses revealed for us a world of unequalled magic and primeval innocence. In his "The Poet and his Muse", Pushkin Museum, Moscow,

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(11) Francoise Henry, Early Christian Art, page 106.



Figure 14: Gospel of St. Matthew, Book of Kells.





1909, his people and landscape merge into one, producing that remarkable contrast of spontaneity and rigidity which is the essence of Rousseau's art. While In "Woman in the exotic Forest", 1907 the woman becomes a flower of the forest in the instinctive rhythm and delicate balance of the composition.

In surrealist art, the man/nature image came together in a different way. The surrealists were fascinated by this link and often showed one as being physically part of the other.

Max Ernst, born 1891, was intrigued by man's relationship to nature. According to Mme. M. Scheede in "The Essential Max Ernst", Ernst:-

"Evoked with uncanny accuracy the hideous premonitions of the 1930s, the inexorable power of sexuality and the secret life of inanimate nature." (12)

In his "Nymph Echo", 1936, plant forms with the limbs of man engulf a living landscape. (Figure 15).

Living landscapes occur again from surrealist artist Paul Delvaux. In Delvaux's "Call of Night", 1937, the landscape lives with a tree/woman, hair of leaves and rooted limbs.

Some artists wished to make a particular point by combining the human form and nature. Arguably, the greatest surrealist of them all, Salvador Dali, who was born in 1904 and died recently, combined nature and man in his own "paranoiac critical" way. In "The Roses Bleed", Dali's nude stands in a provocative pose, bleeding roses growing

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(12) M. Scheede, The Essential Max Ernst, page 121.





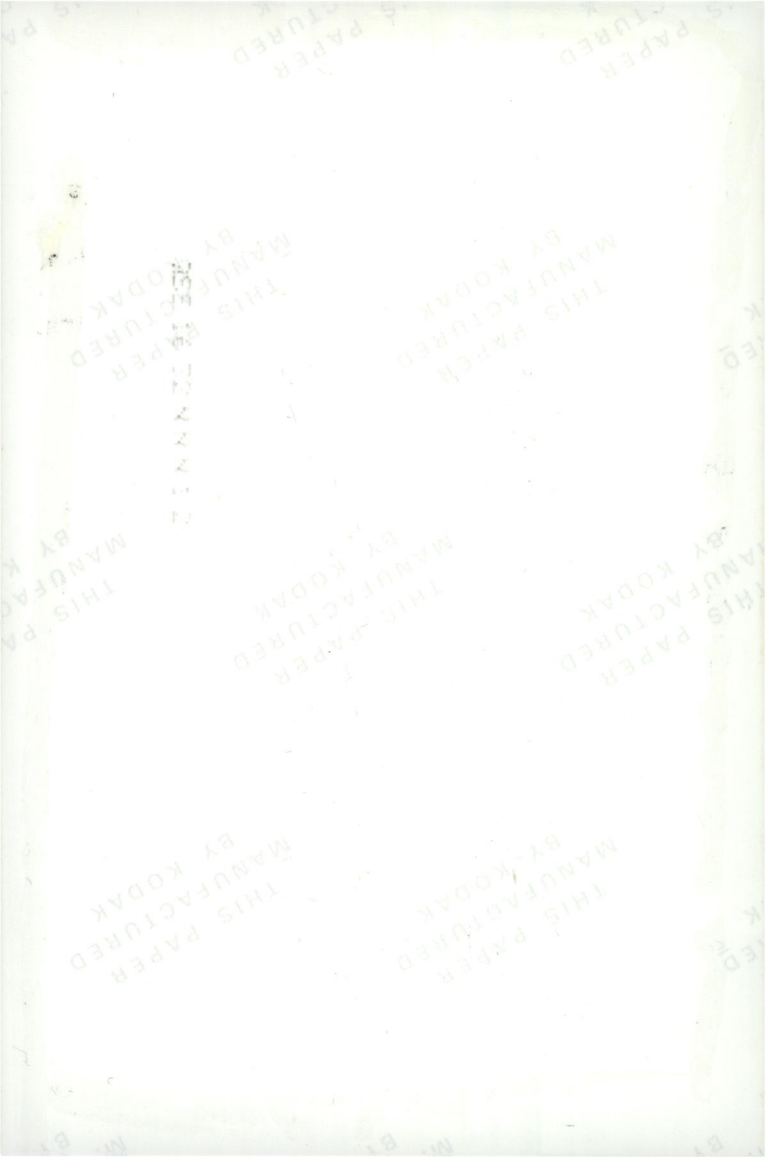
Figure 15: "Nymph Echo", 1936, Max Ernst.













symbolically from the torso.

This symbolic theme was echoed by the movement of that name, whose first exhibition was held in 1969.

The symbolists used man/nature combinations to convey a range of ideas from hope to despair. (Figure 16).

George de Feure, a leading symbolist, shows in his illustration "Door of Dreams", 1897, Picadilly Gallery, London, another kind of living landscape. Gustave Moreau in "Mystic Flowers" deals with the same theme.

Modern Irish painters like (Figure 17) Patrick Collens, Camille Souter and Michael Mulcahy reflect in a symbolic way man's relationship with the natural environment (Figure 18). Mulcahy's recent exhibition in the Douglas Hyde Gallery, for instance, featured paintings depicting the physical and spiritual way of life of pre-industrialised peoples such as the Dogon or the Australian Aborigines. The exhibition owed much to the tradition of artists who integrate with the societies they visit in order to find a personal transcendence in a new and distant environment. Linear symbols of the most important elements of their new world, the man and woman, the grasses and trees are used to illustrate this.

English artist Paul Nash is perhaps one of the most graphic examples of an artist who uses the man/nature sources and brings them to my particular kind of unity, as can be seen from "The Lake" 1921 and a later work "Chestnut Waters".





Figure 16: "Door of Dreams", 1897, George de Feure.







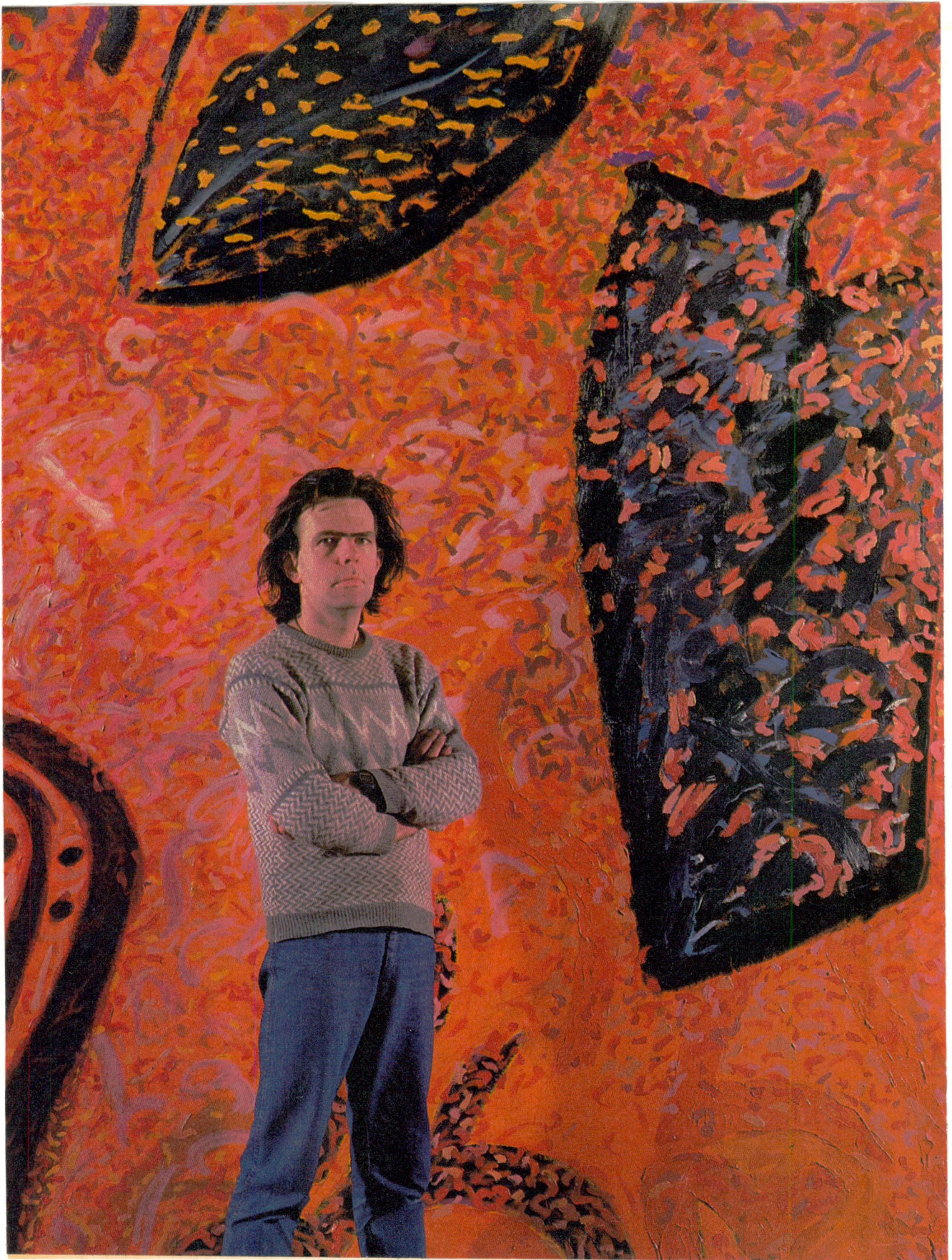


Figure 17: Michael Mulcahy, Douglas Hyde Gallery.





Figure 18: "The Lake", 1921, Paul Nash.



The search for references provided a wealth of ideas when I began to work on the project with my pupils.



## CHAPTER VI

### PUPILS PLAN OF WORK

The objective for my pupils was similar to my own - to make them more aware through their art work of the natural environment and their relationship with it. They would also learn the skills of painting, of identifying relevant sources and experience the different possibilities and limitations of the various media we would use.

Lesson 1 dealt with photography as a means of looking at trees and plants in the local environment, identifying their different shapes, forms and textures and any similarities to the human form. The pupils built on their camera skills and learned much about the texture, form and shape. The fact that they were specifically looking for similarities between trees and plants, and the human form, made them notice points they might otherwise have missed. The results were good and served a valuable starting point for study.

Lesson 2 - Silhouette (Figure 19) - I introduced them to silhouette as a way of discovering how the silhouette shape of a whole tree, as well as the silhouette shape of its components, are individual to each tree. This would show, also, any similarities between the tree shapes and the shapes in the human form. Pupils learned how to evaluate which sections of the trees would make successful silhouettes and why and how to arrange these shapes to make harmonious compositions.

Lesson 3 explored a new media - oil pastels. In this introduction to the new media the pupils discovered how to use





Figure 19: Silhouette work - pupils of Mercy College, Coolock.





analogous colours and their tones within a tree and hand composition . This new media and its specific qualities could be a valuable addition to some of the planned mixed media paintings.

Lesson 4 explored a further new media for this class - the use of ink. Pupils explored the different kinds of line and tone which could be obtained by experimenting with ink and different tools, within the drawing of a branch. A second drawing highlighted any similarity between the branch and the human form. Most chose the hand and showed the vein and bark similarity of texture and line. They learned that different tools created different effects.

Lesson 5 was a life drawing class. The pupils studied their photographs from Lesson 1 and chose tree forms similar to the human form. Placing their models in the pose of the tree, they discovered what was required in terms of line, size and composition for a figure drawing suggesting the movement of the tree. The results were good and they found that the gestural movement conveyed by the trees could also be conveyed by the people.

Lesson 6 explored a new method for the class - marbling (Figure 20). Through experimentation they investigated the different effects and qualities of marbling. They discovered that technique alone can produce random pattern and texture for spontaneous effects and that some measure of control can be used with these effects. They obtained tree and human shapes and textures which could be drawn upon for their mixed media paintings.

Lesson 7 explored composing their paintings from the information obtained from Lesson 1 to 6. How to attain a harmonious composition





Figure 20: Marbling - pupils of Mercy College, Coolock.





was discussed and the elements and pattern distribution required. Rough studies were made, how to deal with background and foreground relationships was discussed and how to obtain three dimensional effect with colour or perspective.

Lesson 7 (Figure 21) dealt with adjustment to the composition in terms of size and pattern distribution until a satisfactory harmonious composition was obtained by each pupil.

Lesson 8 explored the use of marbling from the learning experiments in Lesson 6. Pupils used marbling over their drawings in some cases and in others the cut-out method of marbling.

Some wanted to obtain the random pattern throughout their painting, blacking out areas they did not require. They drew on their earlier experiments with marbling and were successful in controlling the marbling to create the effects required.

Lesson 9 dealt with the use of poster paint and how colour could obtain different effects when used with their complementaries to achieve distance, and to create mood.

Lesson 10 and 11 completed their painting. The results were varied and individual and included the skills and observations drawn from the previous lessons.



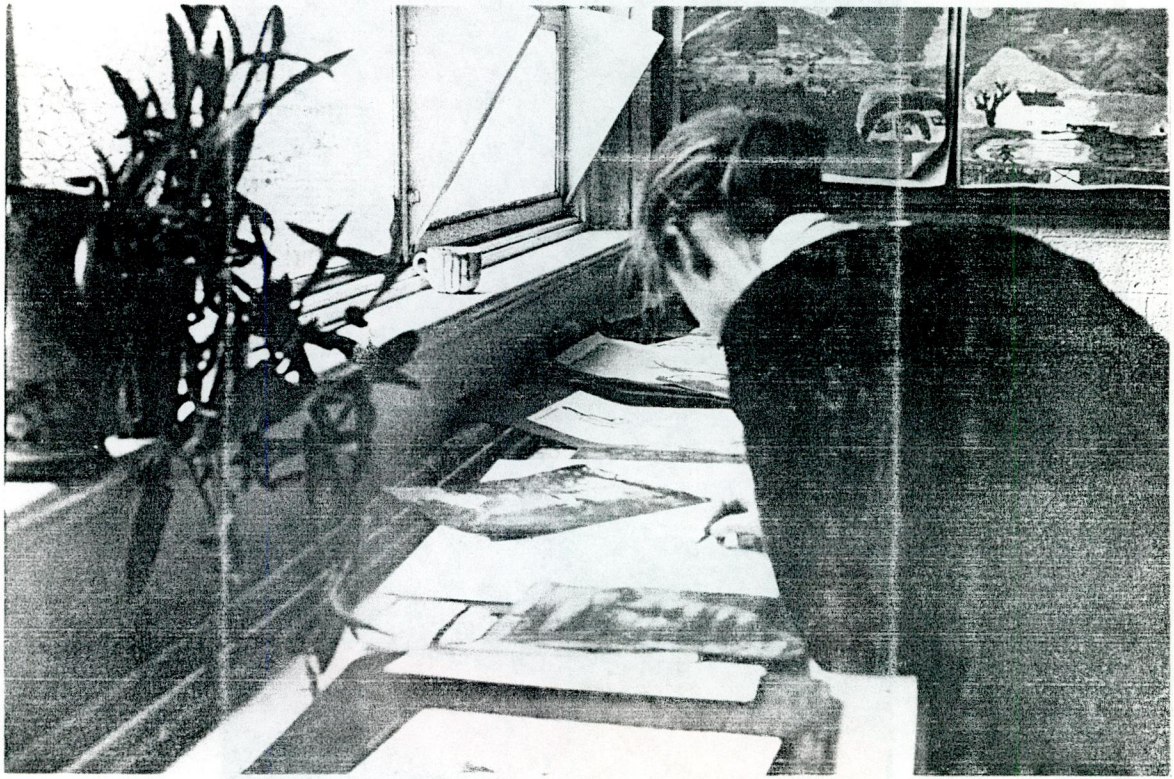
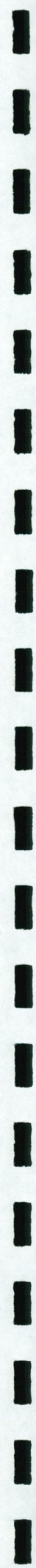


Figure 21: Composition work - pupils of Mercy College, Coolock.





## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Overall, the project proved a success. Not only did it confer on the pupils a wide range of artistic skills, increase their conceptual understanding and perceptual awareness but it also held their interest and stimulated their imagination. For me, as their teacher, that was a rewarding experience. But equally rewarding was the conviction that by arousing in them a special interest in their environment and an appreciation of its value, I had planted a seed that could produce a rich harvest in terms of the quality of life on this island for the next and succeeding generations.

Despite the carte blanche given to so-called developers and the almost criminal carelessness of industry and agriculture, the Irish environment remains relatively unspoiled, certainly when compared with the acid rain horrors of Continental Europe or the industrial sewer that was once the North Sea. But for how much longer will that continue if those of us in a position to influence the growing generation - and art teachers have a special responsibility, since the essence of art is to value beauty - fail to play our part in instilling in our charges an appreciation of the wonder of the world around them?

It is all too easy to blame councils, governments, multinationals or some other amorphous body for reducing the beauty of nature to a wasteland in the pursuit of profit or so-called progress. But to do that is to shirk our own individual responsibility to speak up, to protest and, most important of all, to pass on to those around us a shared appreciation of the gifts of nature - the magic of a forest



walk, the beauty of a trout lake, the wonder of a West of Ireland landscape.

Man and the environment is not just the title of some turgid thesis - it is the reality of the world in which we live, and in which our children and their children will live. And for the art teacher the present awakening of world interest in the environment offers a unique opportunity to spread the message that our quality of life depends on how we protect and defend it.

Suddenly Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth are fashionable causes, attracting the trendy as well as the committed. Suddenly the destruction of the rain forests of Brazil, the depletion of the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect have become subjects for common discussion with international pop stars like Sting generating such publicity on the issues that even unsympathetic politicians like Mrs. Thatcher are forced to climb aboard the bandwagon.

Let the art teachers lead the way, inculcating in our students through projects such as the one outlined an appreciation of their environment and of their responsibility to it. For the world around us is not ours to do with what we please - we have merely borrowed it from the next generation. And it is our job so to educate them that they will value it more highly and treat it a great deal better, than we have done.

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