



THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

A PERSONAL PROJECT - IN SEARCH OF HARMONY

A Thesis Submitted To:-

The Faculty of Education

and

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BY

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In writing this project, I have, for reasons of clarity, identified the Pupil as He and the Teacher as She.

Octopus Vase

Palaikastro, Eastern Crete

1550 B.C.



INTRODUCTION

IN SEARCH OF HARMONY

When I started working on this project, I set out to explore the environment as a preparatory exercise to taking my pupils on a similar project. I chose to use the seashore and marine life as a starting point for both myself and my pupils. By working from the same source and working in the same craft, it meant that I was aware of the possible difficulties that they might encounter.

I decided to work in ceramics because I thought that concentrating on a specific craft would be beneficial to both my pupils and myself. I wanted them to discover some of the endless possibilities with the ceramic medium.

The environment has offered us vast opportunities for future work, because it has such a variety of form, texture, shape and pattern. Through working with the seashore as our source, I intended that it would motivate the pupils and encourage them to participate fully. I wanted them to learn new skills and develop an awareness of form. In the poem by Hilaire Belloc she suggests that the sea shall

"perpetually show us new things and assure us"¹

1. Hillaire Belloc The Cruise of the Nona (1925)

'The sea is the consolation of this our day, as it has been the consolation of the centuries. It is the companion and the receiver of men. It has moods for them to fill the storehouse of the mind, perils for trial, or even for an ending, and calms for the good emblem of death. There, on the sea, is a man nearest to his own making, and in communion with that from which he came, and to which he shall return. For the wise men of very long ago have said, and it is true, that out of the salt water all things come. The sea is the matrix of creation, and we have the memory of it in our blood.

There, sailing the sea, we play every part of life: control, direction, effort, fate; and there can we test ourselves and know our state. All that which concerns the sea is profound and final. The sea provides visions, darknesses, revelations. The sea puts ever before us those twin faces of reality: greatness and certitude; greatness stretched almost to the edge of infinity (greatness in extent, greatness in changes not to be numbered), and the certitude of a level remaining for ever and standing upon the deeps. The sea has taken me to itself whenever I sought it and has given me relief from men. It has rendered remote the cares and the wastes of the land; for of all creatures that move and breathe upon the earth we of mankind are the fullest of sorrow. But the sea shall comfort us, and perpetually show us new things and assure us. It is the common sacrament of this world'.²

CHAPTER I

Before discussing my own work and that of my pupils, I thought it would provide an insight if we looked at the work of previous ceramic artists who have used the sea as their source.

PAST & PRESENT CERAMISTS WHO HAVE USED THE SEA AS THEIR SOURCE

Before I look at some contemporary ceramists, I will briefly consider the history of ceramics. Pottery, as it is so often referred to, is one of the oldest crafts of which we have knowledge. In some parts of the world there are pots still being made that are not that different to those that are millenia old. Pottery first appears in prehistoric Europe with the emergence of the Neolithic stage of culture, involving more or less settled agriculture and the domestication of animals. Various crafts flourished, one of these being pottery. Prehistoric pots before the Iron Age were built up by hand without the aid of the wheel and usually decorated by impressing and incising. Some early examples of ceramic work where the sea and its creatures has been used as a source can be found in the work of the Cretans, such as a vase called the Octopus Vase, Palaikastro, Eastern Crete about 1550 B.C. In Far Eastern ceramics, the history of China is particularly

dominant and the everyday events of the people are illustrated on their pots. We see the boats and sea illustrated on the pots, as fine examples of the trading that went on between the Eastern and Western cultures.

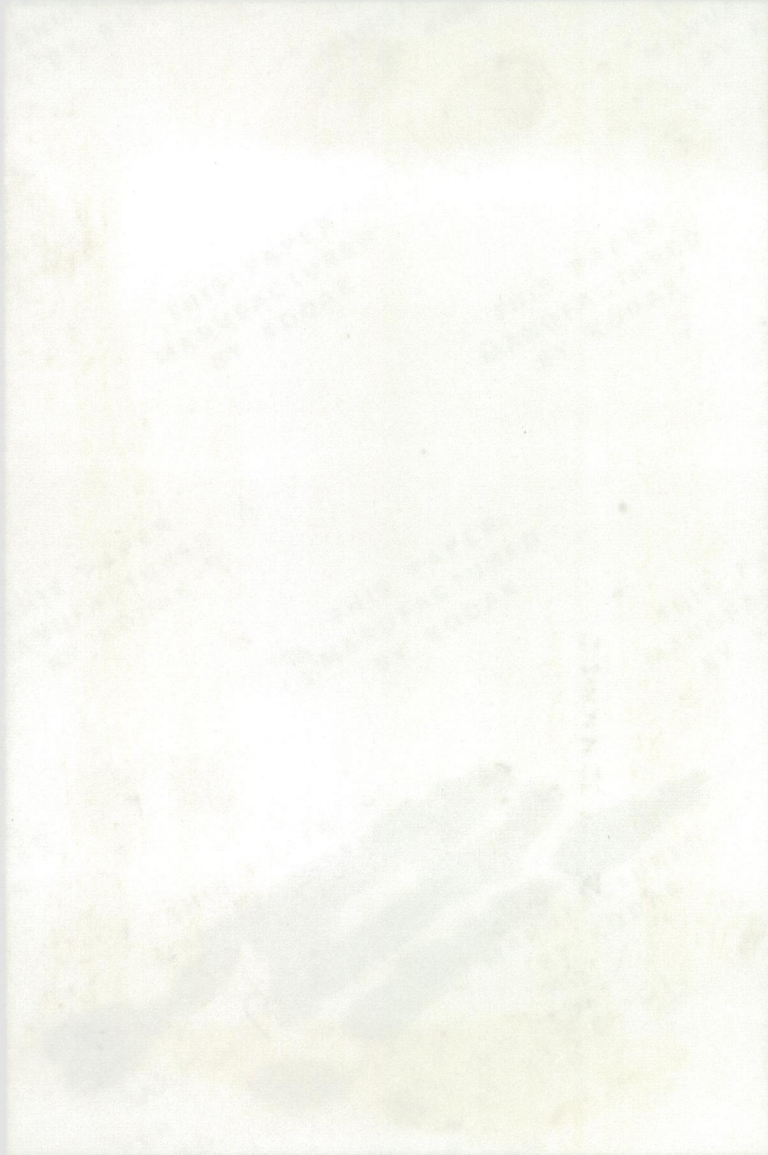
For the purpose of my project, which has the sea and marine life as its source, I have researched the work of other ceramists who have used the same source. I have also looked at the ways in which ceramists have used the clay and their preferred means of firing. Through this research, I have found that I would admire the work of certain ceramists for different reasons and have outlined them briefly.

It is a long time since I first saw and was fascinated by, the work of Hans Coper. One of the range of pots he made was called Cycladic pots. These pots were built with stoneware clay and were partly thrown and partly handbuilt. He decorated his forms simply, often using the sgraffito technique; he applied a heavy white glaze over manganese dioxide, he then scratched away the slip to reveal the manganese underneath.

It is the sense of harmony and simplicity of form that appeals to me most about the work of Hans Coper. It is timeless.

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'Jar With Rythm Figures in Counterpoint'

BY

Elizabeth Fritsch



A ceramist today, who was greatly influenced by Coper, is Elizabeth Fritsch. Her pots are very carefully decorated to suggest geometric movement on a curvilinear form. The inspirational source for her work is music.

It is her manipulation of the form and the combination of form and decoration, that I would appreciate in her work, Elizabeth Fritsch attributes this integration of form and painting to advice given to her by Hans Coper:-

"Hans helped me to paint such that it was rhythmic and integral to the pot"¹

This advice proved a turning point in the work of Fritsch.

In the decoration of my own ceramic pieces I am concerned that the decoration should work in harmony with the form.

A ceramist of recent times whose work is inspired by the sea is Kate Malone, a graduate of the Royal College of Art, London, 1986. Kate Malone works for the manufacturing side of pottery now. Her work demonstrates a balance between formal beauty and the conscious vulgarity of decorative motifs.

1. Quote By Elizabeth Fritsch, from the book by



MATTPOST
ZETA

Detail of Glaze On A Pot



BY

Kate Malone

Whilst I admire her spontaneous and exciting use of colour, I do not like the heavily ornate images that she decorates her pots with.

She has a range of industrial pottery dedicated to the shell. Her large pots are made by a construction of press-moulding and coiling. The detail is applied with sprigs or built up by hand. Ms Malone uses the fact of the glaze running, to stream down the side of the pot.

"Why not go with the flow"²

in the decoration. The glaze is thickened with a solution of calcium chloride. The powder is dissolved in hot water and added in drops, until the correct thickness is achieved. Kate Malone glaze fires several times, each time adding more and more glaze.

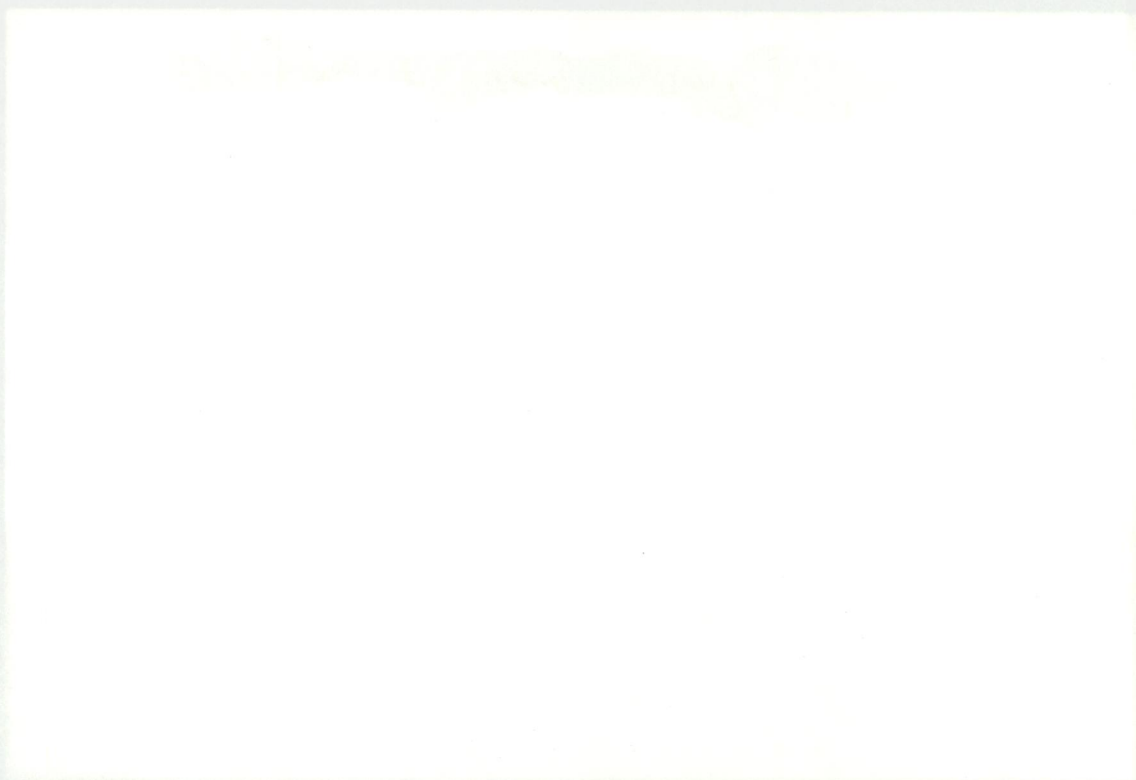
Another ceramist, who also uses the sea as her source is Mary Rogers. My interest in her work is because of her heightened awareness of natural forms. Mary Rogers feels that:-

"There is a natural order governing change or decay besides that which determines the forms of growth"

She goes on to say

"Living things emerge, enlarge and diminish in a structured fashion, changing all the while in response to internal and external forces, leaving the harder skeletal pots, such as

MATTPOST
ZETA



'Striated Crinoid'

Porcelain



BY

Mary Rogers

bones, skeletons, shells and husks, as a record of life"³

In one of her pieces, Mary Rogers has combined coiled stoneware and pinched porcelain - 'Waterfall'. It was fired at 1290°C and this combination of the two clays worked because the firing was compatible with the two clays. Another example of a pinched pot by Mary Rogers is 'Striated Crinoid'.

Some of the most exciting pots that I have encountered during my research are those of the Pueblo potters in Mexico. Whilst their work is very traditional, it is made with the utmost skill and expertise. Although they rely on their traditions of handbuilding and design, they also seek to create new designs for their pots.

These designs are very geometric and would be very different to the decoration of my own ceramic peices. However, I feel that I can learn from these people and their consideration of the whole form, in its decoration.

They have maintained the tradition of firing the pots in open fires and their pots are sought-after works of traditional beauty. They use their own clay dug from a particular pit that they will show to no-one. It is in a spot that is extremely difficult to navigate and these people quite rightly believe that once a road is built to

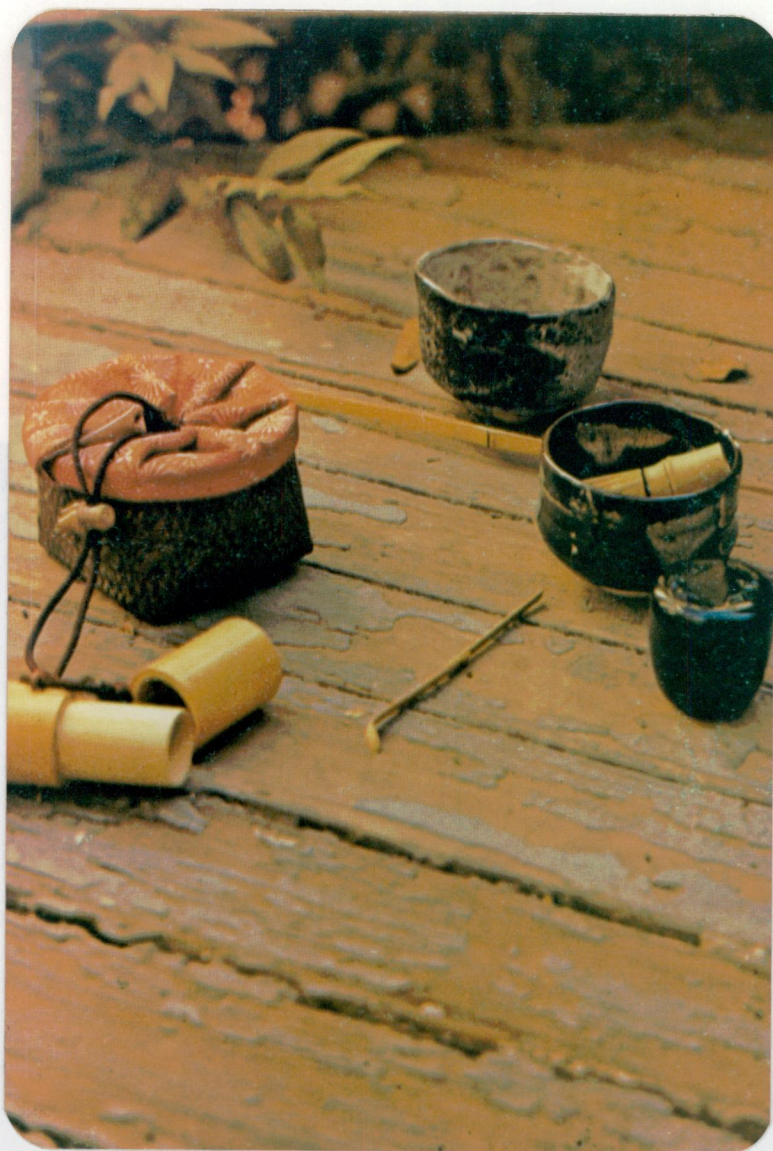
An Example of Pueblo Pottery

BY

Lucy Lewis



Raku Vessel



Raku

Tea

Ceremony

this spot, their heritage will die. They build an open fire and into the pit they dig, they place straw and amidst this the pots. They cover this with earth and dung and then set fire to it. After several hours and having allowed the fire to cool down, they remove the carefully carved pots, which have been painted and incised with a knife.

Tradition is a strong part of ceramics and it would be unthinkable to leave out the tradition of the raku process in Japan. It originated for the making of bowls for the tea ceremony and raku pots are still made in Japan today in this tradition. Rikya, a Japanese tea master living in the 16th Century is credited with establishing the tea ceremony, a ritual closely tied in with the philosophy of Zen and one which emphasises the beauty of the simple and natural.

One of America's most sensitive potters says of Raku:-

"The cult of tea or Teaism is a way of life that expresses an acceptance and veneration of the imperfect in an attempt to imbue man's commonplace surroundings with great meaning and beauty. It places great emphasis on meditation and quiet contemplation as a means of developing awareness of the inherent beauty of the nonperfect, assymetrical form. It celebrates the excitement of surfaces which derive their character from native inspired phenomena; and it becomes a part of the spontaneous process, transitory though it may be"⁴

All aspects of the construction of a tea bowl reflect the simplicity and influence of nature in the tea ceremony.

When a tea bowl is emptied a little bit of tea always remains in a shallow depression in the bottom of the bowl. This depression, the cha-damari, is supposed to resemble a depression in a rock and the tea in the cha-damari to look as:-

"natural as drops of rain in the depression of a stone"⁵.

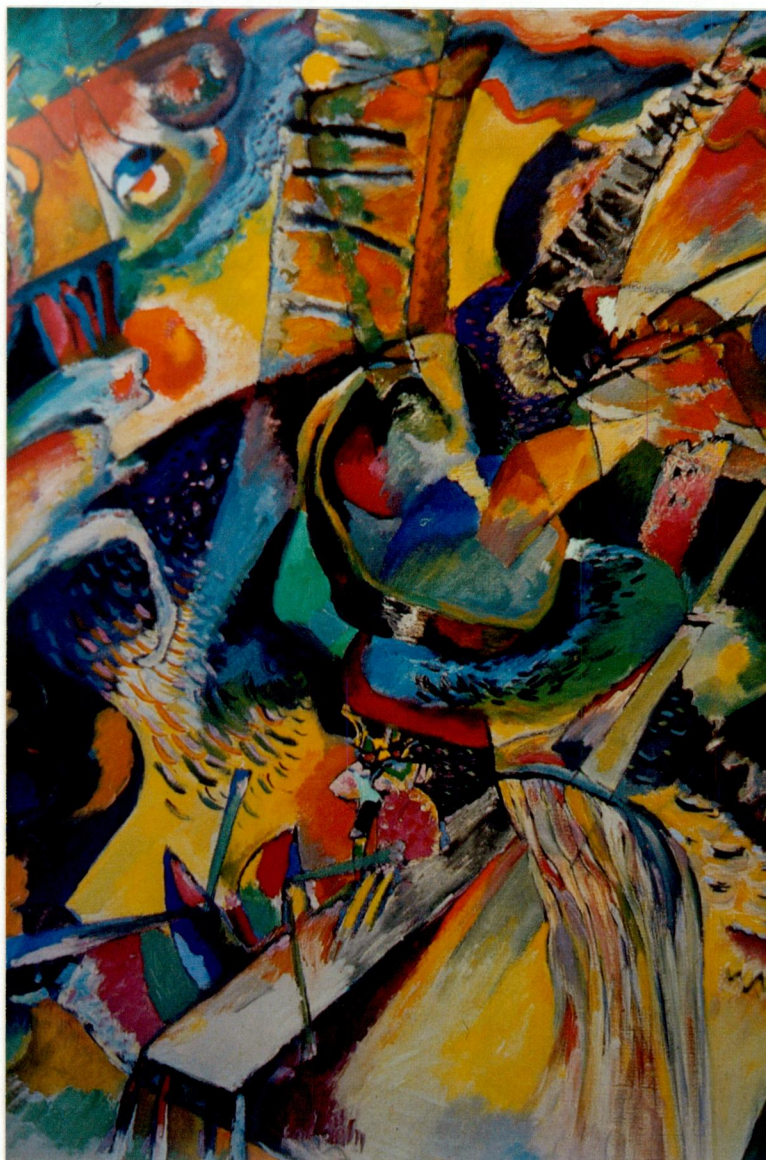
This quotation symbolises what I am attempting to create in my own work.

To summarize the impact that these ceramists have had on my work, is a difficult task. I have already said why I admire the work of each one, but the influence that they have had on me is subtle. Whilst I am aware of their work and the processes that they have used to make their ceramic pieces, I could not say that I have followed any one of these ceramists, in terms of my own work.

I would aspire to create forms that would compare to those of Hans Coper and Elizabeth Fritsch. I admire the



'Improvisation Gorge'



BY

Wassily Kandinsky 1914

vitality of the work of the Pueblo potters. There is a fragility that I like about the work of Mary Rogers.

Raku appeals to me because of its spontaneity and freshness. I have endeavoured to retain this spontaneity in my work and to create ceramic forms that are personal to me.

Two artists who have influenced me by their use of colour are Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), the first Abstract artist and the French Symbolist painter Odilon Redon (1840-1916).

Kandinsky uses patches of colour, concentrating on planes, rather than the linear quality. In his painting 'Improvisation Gorge' (1914), there appears to be no underlying principle for the composition. The patterns of colour appear to have been let loose on the canvas. The viewer's eye is brought from the Bavarian couple, to the oars of a rowboat and then to the waterfall on the right of the painting.

The brilliance of his colours are comparable to the colours of Raku.

Odilon Redon's work appeals to me, not just because of his innovative approach to the use of colour pastels in composition, but the serenity that his work achieved at the turn of the century.

'Roger and Angelique'

(pastel)



BY

Odilon Redon 1910



HOWTH HARBOUR



CHAPTER II

CHOICE OF SOURCE - ALONG THE TIDE

In choosing a source for my personal project, I was conscious of the fact that not only would I be working from it, but my pupils also. I started to look, with a fresh approach, at the area immediately around me, my home, the garden, the locality in which I lived and then, in a more general way. There were a number of factors I had to consider. Since my major study area is ceramics, it had to be a source that would translate well into clay.

My major concern would be with texture and form, so I looked for a place that would have objects that would have these elements in them. I was also interested in the use of space and creating a sense of movement in the form itself. Apart from these requirements I also needed to consider how the pupils would be motivated to use the source and how they could interpret the visual images they saw into structures.

The seashore and marine life seemed an ideal source. The sea had always held a fascination for me, from the time when I went on holiday to the sea, to the time when I came to live in Portmarnock. I regularly walk along the beach and visit Howth Harbour frequently, usually to buy fish from the quayside shops.

The sea has always provided me with a sense of inner harmony and peace. The sea can be friendly, moody and sometimes fearful. It holds contradictions in itself. The mood of the sea shows itself by the effects it has on the structure of the beach. This changes every year, according to the weather which causes some erosion. The rocks, the stones, the shells, the boats and their travellers are all subject to the moods of the sea.

The Velvet Strand, Portmarnock, stretches for approximately two miles. The only permanent structure on it is the concrete shelter. Above the shelter, to the right, is a Martello Tower, converted to living accommodation, but reminiscent of times past. The beach itself is fairly flat and considered safe for bathing. It is a popular place with the local families during the summer. The dunes above it lead to the old Portmarnock graveyard, where the legendary whiskey family, the Jamesons, are buried. There are groups of rocks on the beach that encircle pools of seawater. In the pools one can find little crabs and fish, and on a Sunday afternoon the local children can be seen fishing for these. Across the bay is Howth.

Howth is now a busy fishing village. Since the new marina was built the boats seem to be replaced by bigger ones each year. The town is prosperous and this is reflected in the harbour. Fishing nets and ropes lie in bundles on the quay. Rusty chains connect one boat to another.

It was obvious to me that this area would provide a rich source of variety in form and texture, for my work and for that of the pupils. This was their local area too, a place that they knew well. I felt that it was an ideal place for them to explore in greater detail. They would derive motivation and a deep sense of satisfaction in working from an area that they knew so well. I was also keen to ensure that they would look closer at things and places that they considered they knew already. By doing this they would understand that learning to look and see is a constant process and one that is never completed. I intend to use this process of exploration, through drawing and photography, as a key to both the pupils project and my own.

My Research:-

Having decided on the source for my personal area of study and that of my pupils, I started to explore this source through multi-media drawings. I visited the harbour and seashore on a number of occasions and did drawings based on these visits.

In some of these drawings I have combined two or more media. I have used paint, crayon, pastels and pencil. I have used polyfilla and seeds to create a textured surface.







I feel that it is important to use media that best describes what the final piece of work will be like. Where I have wanted to create a bolder finish, I have applied varnish over the media. I enjoy the use of mixed media and find that this method is a suitable means of expressing the intended piece of work in ceramics.

The objects that I have been using as my source are from the beach - the stones and shells. These organic objects from the shore are structurally what they are because of their development from within. This development of the form itself interests me.

There is a strong relationship between the pattern on the shell and the growth of the form itself. Without this relationship, the shell would not exist as it does. This sense of harmony and compatibility is what I seek to achieve in my ceramic work. I find form the most exciting element of working in ceramics. I prefer the forms to have a sense of simplicity and refinement, yet a form that has inner strength.

The Process:

The forms I am working on are handbuilt, using coiling and slab building and in some instances, press-moulding. Handbuilding gives me a great sense of satisfaction and

tranquility, qualities of the sea itself. Like the Japanese potters, I feel that if you are at one with the clay, you will produce work that is evident of this.

I noticed that the boatbuilders sought to create a sense of harmony with the sea in the manufacture of the boats. This harmony between sea and boat is necessary for survival and has dictated the technology of boat design'.

Most of my ceramics will show that I have avoided the use of a flat base. I have done this to create forms that will have a sense of movement and lightness in appearance.

I have impressed a wide variety of organic forms, seeds, shells etc. into the clay, so that they will give something of that organic quality to the form.

Another means of creating a subtle change in the texture of the pot is by sandblasting. The sandblasting has to be carefully monitored, because if too much pressure is exerted on the pot, the wall of the pot will disintegrate. I masked off certain areas of the pot and sandblasted the rest of the surface. This resulted in a fine finish, resembling that of sandpaper.



Detail of The
Glaze On One Of My
Raku Fired Pots



I tried various experiments using the source directly applied to the ceramic form. I also wanted to see what effect the organic forms would have on the clay, so I placed seaweed on the inside of the pot. Once fired, the seaweed had left a brown mark on the fired clay.

I have used the Raku process to glaze and fire my ceramic work. I like the brilliant colours that the glazes and Raku process produce. The colours are strong and vibrant, the results are spontaneous and varied. The unexpected and varied results are comparable to the changes in the beach, brought about by each tide.

I brushed some of the glazes onto the ceramic forms, and in some, I used a swirling movement, so that I could produce a spiralling effect, echoing the spiral movement of the shell.

The piece of work that I am presently working on is on a larger scale and I am using St Thomas stoneware in building this.

I have built up a large round form and within this form I have used the clay to suggest the spiral. I see my work developing from this piece and becoming more sculptural.



Work Still In Progress!



I intend to exert even more control over the Raku process, by isolating the object in a saggar during firing.

Because my work on the project is still in progress, it is still developing and evolving. I find this an exciting way to work because the possibilities are unlimited.

However, I feel that a recurrent theme is building up in the shape and design of my work. There is a similarity of form in most of my pieces, so in this way they harmonize as a group, yet they could equally well stand on their own.

There is a sense of movement within the forms that link them to one another. The movement is an expression of the sea. Whilst some of the forms are conical and others rounded, this sense of movement is evident in all of them.

They can also be viewed individually because they have their own particular characteristics of shape, texture and form.

CHAPTER III

WHY TEACH LIKE THIS?

During the course of this year, I have had the opportunity to study the educational theories of many philosophers and educationalists.

Through studying these philosophies, it has enabled me to consider my own theories and practise. This has influenced me in the planning of this project. I would like to explain these philosophies, as a background to my choice of subject for the project.

It will also explain the motivation and manner of execution of the project, by the pupils.

I have included the philosophies of John Dewey, Viktor Lowenfeld and Eliot Eisner and other eminent educationalists.

Because this project is concerned with the development of the individual, I have referred to the theories of the eminent psychologists, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers.

In order to relate my studies in education to what is happening today, I have included some references from the

Curriculum and Examination Board Discussion Paper, 'The Arts in Education'.

When considering the educational relevance that the source of study would have for the pupils, I think it is inevitable that I would have drawn on my own experiences as a student. The experiences that we call undergo, through our schooling to third level, would have an impact on our own pupils, whether for good or bad.

My early schooling was during the time of a teacher-centred philosophy of education. The pupils did what they were told to do. The blackboard and book were used and creativity was encouraged neither for the teachers nor the pupils. The system was totally geared to examinations. This philosophy has sadly been evident in Irish education.

Schools are still geared towards the examination system. This does not help the less academic pupil and can cause great distress. This system also has the effect of causing lethargy in the less academic pupil, because he feels he will 'fail' and is, as a result, unmotivated.

I would like to see a movement towards a system of education that will encourage all pupils towards achieving what is

best for themselves. If they can improve on their own work, they will feel that they are achieving, but if they are constantly bombarded with low marks in comparison to their peers, they will be disillusioned and unmotivated.

The Art class is a place where all manner of skills can be experienced. Some pupils who experience difficulty in acquiring drawing skills can often surprise both themselves and their teacher when they work in the crafts. I saw an example of this only recently, when a pupil, who had experienced difficulty with two-dimensional work, drawing and painting, demonstrated a high ability when working with clay. He was delighted with himself. This experience will help to build up his confidence and enable him to work in a more positive way when he returns to the two-dimensional.

It is essential that the teacher can identify the strengths of her pupils and reinforce these strengths.

The New Junior Certificate Syllabus in Art will also enable the pupil to develop his own personal ideas in a structured way.

The New Junior Certificate Syllabus has recently been presented to the teaching profession by the Department of Education.

I feel that the philosophy I hold for teaching the visual arts is summarized by this extract from the document:-

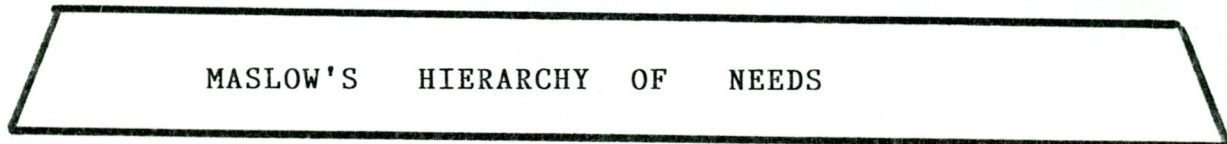
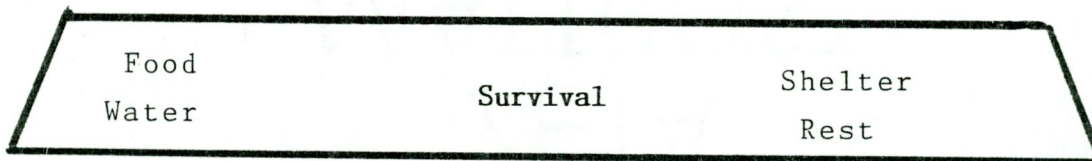
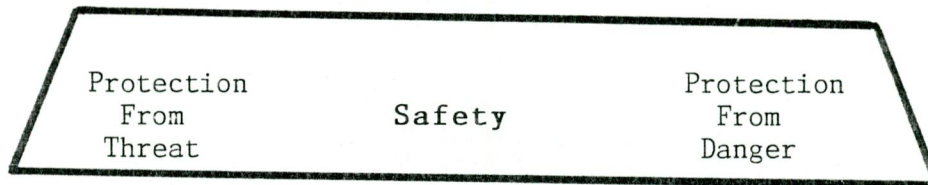
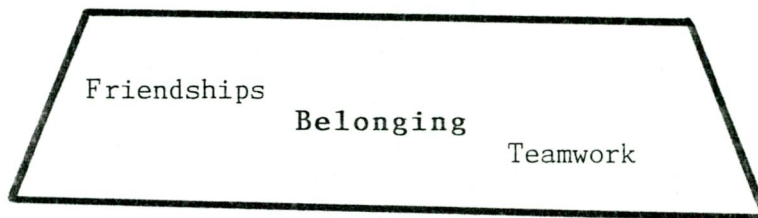
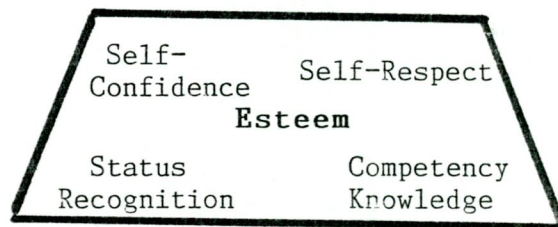
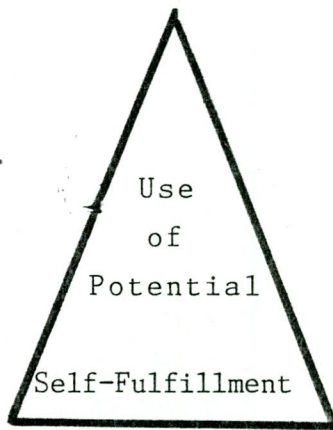
"The visual arts help to develop self-esteem, self-reliance and personal identity through creative achievement"¹

One of the major changes that will occur as a result of the New Junior Certificate is that the pupil will be assessed on the research he has done for his final work, as well as sitting an examination. This should give a fairer indication of the pupil's ability.

As Art Educators, we must recognize the pupil as an individual and value him as such.

Whilst considering the pupil as an individual, we also have to consider him as a person within a group. This group extends to his own peer group within the class and in the wider context, his school.

Abraham Maslow identified that the individual has a 'hierarchy of needs'. According to this hypothesis our needs can be arranged according to priorities; physical, needs being the lowest. These are followed in ascending order by security, social, egoistic and self-actualization.



"In this hierarchy, a higher need does not motivate until the lower, more basic needs are first satisfied"²

Once a lower-level need is satisfied, it no longer motivates.

Therefore, once our physiological needs are satisfied and are safely preserved, the individual seeks social acceptance and finally self-actualization.

(See Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs)

This emphasizes the need for the pupil to be accepted by his peers and only when this has been accomplished, is he motivated to seek his own fulfillment educationally.

Whilst teaching I have encountered individual pupils who have had a particular problem in becoming accepted. One young man comes to my mind immediately. He has a hormonal growth disorder and is consequently very short for his age. He is always getting into trouble in order to get the attention of his peers. At the same time, he has slipped backwards educationally.

He needs help to come to terms with his problems, because until he is happy with himself, he will unfortunately continue on this downward path.

2. Abraham Maslow

From a Paper Entitled:-
Maslow's Self-Actualizing People

This pupil is also from a broken home, so he and his family have a great deal to cope with. They all need support and counselling.

This, of course, is a specific case where a pupil has difficulties that are reflected in his school work.

All pupils however, need motivation and John Dewey, an educational philosopher, has suggested means to do this.

John Dewey:-

John Dewey, whilst not a specific art educator, has had a huge impact in the field of education and as a result of this, art education. His views are particularly relevant to the philosophy of education that I hold. In particular, his theory regarding the Project Method has influenced my thinking.

Dewey felt that there were two specific problems in education:

- (a) The curriculum was categorized into divided subject areas.
- (b) This confused the child and caused lack of motivation.

Dewey's recommendations for a learning situation are:-

- (1) The child should learn through discovery.
- (2) The curriculum should be integrated, so that the child can understand it.
- (3) The child's learning stages should not be seen as ends in themselves.

Like Rousseau, Dewey felt that the pupil should learn by experiencing for himself. Dewey's curriculum was integrated in such a way that no lesson existed as a unit in itself. There was a sequential order of learning to be followed. In order for the pupil to go on to the next stage, the teacher had to be aware of the stage of development that the child was at. When the teacher recognized this, she was in a position to encourage the pupil and lead him on to the next stage. The process of learning can then continue.

I feel that this process of experiential learning is particularly relevant to art. Many pupils can only 'learn by doing'. This philosophy is also advocated by Lowenfeld who was a major influence in art education in the nineteen forties and onwards.

Viktor Lowenfeld:-

Lowenfeld emphasized that

"Each child possesses a capacity for creative development.
The task of the teacher is to arrange the conditions whereby
these potentialities are realized"³

He identified different stages of development of the child,
noting that the child was affected by the stage of
development that they were at, at that particular time.

- (1) The Scribbling Stage (2-4 years):
The Beginnings of Self-Expression
- (2) The Preschematic Stage (4-7 years):
First Representational Attempts
- (3) The Schematic Stage (7-9 years):
The Achievement of a Form Concept
- (4) The Gang Age (9-12 years):
The Dawning Realism
- (5) The Pseudo-Naturalistic Stage (12-14 years):
The Age of Reasoning
- (6) Adolescent (14-17 years):
The Period of Decision.

3. Quote By Lowenfeld, from the book by
Eliot Eisner Educating Artistic Vision p.89

Lowenfeld also identified two modes of perception that can be seen from approximately the age of twelve:-

(A) Visual

(B) Haptic.

"The Visual minded person is one who acquaints himself with his environment primarily through the eyes and feels like a spectator.

The person with Haptic tendencies, on the other hand, is concerned primarily with his own body sensations and subjective experiences, which he feels emotionally.

Most people fall between the two extremes"⁴

Lowenfeld was aware of the fact that for most pupils, art was a subject that may not be pursued after their post-primary education. He felt that the art programme should be meaningful to the individual and:-

"Based upon young adults who are involved in and concerned about today's world, not a programme that is orientated toward making artists"⁵

Lowenfeld underlined the importance of the child becoming involved with the environment:-

"It is the stimulation of the interaction between the youngster

4. Quote By Lowenfeld, from the book by
Eliot Eisner Educating Artistic Vision p.3

5. Viktor Lowenfeld Creative and Mental Growth p.401
W Lambert Brittain

and the environment through the senses that makes the difference between the child who is eager to explore and investigate that environment and one who retreats from it"⁶

The pupils own environment is a suitable starting point for this learning process. It enables the pupil to extend his understanding of his own culture and heritage. By introducing the lesson with appropriate slides/visual aids of historical and contemporary works of art, the teacher can initiate a discussion with the pupils. This enables the pupils to make critical judgements.

Eliot Eisner rejects the idea that verbalizing about art is harmful:-

"The problem is not whether one talks about art, but one of determining the quality and utility of the talk"⁷

I feel that by getting to know my pupils and by knowing where their interests lie, I can make a decision regarding the choice of starting point for the scheme of work. Whilst devising the scheme of work, I would be aware of their strengths and difficulties and seek to confirm their strengths and overcome their difficulties. I believe that, within this framework, the pupils can identify specific areas that they would like to develop.

6. Viktor Lowenfeld Creative and Mental Growth p.13
W Lambert Brittain

7. Eliot Eisner Educating Artistic Vision p.226

The pupil needs some freedom and the teacher should recognize this:-

"When a group is permitted some freedom, the diversity that emerges is astonishing and the unique importance of each individual becomes more evident"⁸

Albert Einstein said:-

"It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little planet, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail"⁹

The freedom to learn has many implications. It means that the teacher has to be more flexible and creative in her methods of teaching.

It is necessary to relate all aspects of learning to the pupil's direct experience.

In working with this philosophy of freedom, teachers can encourage the development of the pupil's sense of enquiry and inventiveness, through a process of research and exploration.

8. Carl Rogers Freedom to Learn for the Eighties p.78

9. Quote By Albert Einstein, from the book by:
Carl Rogers Freedom to Learn for the Eighties Preface page

This could start at his own home and extend to the global environment, when he is ready. In the case of our source of study; we looked at the local beach and harbour. This was an area that the pupils were familiar with.

Through exploration and research of the environment, they assessed what they knew and probed further still. I would like to see the pupils develop an openness towards their experiences. If they could learn to use their experiences as a means of education, I would feel that I was approaching a system of education set out by experts such as Dewey and Eisner. The pupils would then be in a position where they could make choices. It is vital that pupils are able to do this because as Alfred Harris says:-

"If pupils reject their own sensibilities and attempt to adopt the teacher's answers, they will be accepting superficiality and abdicating self-esteem. It is essential that the teacher's 'taste' does not cloud the pupil's imagination, undermining his intellectual and personal integrity"

Alfred Harris goes on to say:-

"To help overcome the pernicious effects of the hidden curriculum, it is essential that pupils are introduced to the wealth of research in art, evident in artists works and writings about art and that discussions of such material become a regular feature of art lessons"¹⁰

Some experiences in education can be harmful. The teacher should be there to analyse the experiences with the pupils,

in the same way as a caring parent would be there when a child is watching television. Such experiences can then be discussed and assessed mutually.

As Dewey, the educational philosopher states:-

"Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. An experience may be such as to engender callousness; it may produce a lack of sensitivity and of responsiveness. Then the possibilities of having richer experiences in the future are restricted"

He goes on to say:-

"Experiences may be so disconnected from one another that while each is agreeable or even exciting in itself, they are not linked curricularly to one another. Energy is then dissipated and a person becomes scatterbrained. Each experience may be lively, vivid and 'interesting' and yet their disconnectedness may artificially generate dispersive, disintegrated, centrifugal habits. The consequence of formation of such habits is inability to control future experiences"¹¹

Therefore, it is not only necessary to assess the experiences of the pupil, but as we can see from the writings of Dewey and Harris, it is also necessary to ensure that there is a sequence of experiences in the lessons. The lessons devised should be also suitable for the age of the pupils.

Unless the lessons are relevant to the pupils, there will not be a suitable learning situation and it will inhibit future learning for the pupil.

The experiences open to pupils should also be relevant to their social background:-

"No one would question that a child in a slum tenement has a different experience from that of a child in a cultured home; that the country lad has a different kind of experience from the city boy; or a boy on the seashore one different from the lad who is brought up on inland prairies"¹²

The choice of project, should therefore reflect the area that the pupils live in and the experiences that they all undergo. This however, does not mean that the pupils should not be introduced to the work that pupils from other backgrounds produce. In the school where I teach we have sought to introduce the pupils to the work that is being done by pupils from other cultural backgrounds. This brings about a greater understanding of each other as individuals.

Young people can sometimes be insensitive to the needs of others. This is not always intended. I have found a great sense of comradeship and loyalty to their friends in

need. This also extends to the community at large, if they are made aware.

The art teacher can do a great deal towards encouraging this awareness, through art. We held an exhibition in our school that included a collection of photographs by Eugene Lambert. The photographs showed people with physical handicaps and disabilities. It had a profound affect on the pupils.

This social awareness is part of the overall development of the adolescent. The young person commencing post-primary education has in the majority of cases already reached the age of puberty and is undergoing physical and psychological changes.

It is for this reason that I have included a section that discusses the development of the adolescent.

CHAPTER IV

WHO AM I?

The young person commences his secondary education at a crucial time in his life, having reached the stage of adolescence. In considering the developing of the adolescent we will come to understand the pupil in a more caring way. Today we must be conscious that even the 'normal' development of the adolescent can be traumatic. This development is both physical and psychological. The adolescent can be subject to self-consciousness and embarrassment at the sudden rate of growth of his/her body. Their limbs can seem gangly and awkward, the young person will blush easily. They are extremely conscious of the opposite sex and this can cause some distraction for them.

The psychological effects are perhaps less obvious. They are dealing with these physical changes in their bodies and quite often their psychological development will not be taking place at the same rate. The situation can arise where the pupil has the physical appearance of a man, yet the mind of a young boy. Bearing in mind that the boys and girls commence school at the same age and that it is recognized that girls are approximately two years more advanced than boys at this particular time in their lives, it can promote problems in the mixed school. Nevertheless, these problems are a fact of life and human beings adapt to cope with these changes.

The reaction of the pupil to this set of circumstances that he finds himself in, can be summed up the words of Carl Rogers:-

"There is a basic aspect to human nature that inclines a person toward greater congruence and realistic functioning. Moreover, this urge is not limited to human beings; it is the part of the process of all living things. It is the urge which is evident in all organic and human life - to expand, extend, become autonomous, develop, mature - The tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, to the extent that such activation enhances the organism of the self"¹

The adolescent develops emotionally, cognitively and socially and in terms of personality. He becomes an adult with adult responsibilities. He is asked to make choices, both educationally and morally. The pupil needs the support of his teachers and a stable school environment. Viktor Frankl talks about choices that he and fellow prisoners were forced to make, whilst in a concentration camp:-

"When everything - status, identity, possessions, were taken from the prisoners - but months and years in this environment showed that everything can be taken from a man but one thing - the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's own attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way"²

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1. Carl Rogers Personality and Personal Growth p.337
 2. Quote By Viktor Frankl, from the book by:
Carl Rogers Freedom to Learn for the Eighties

For the pupils to choose their own way it is necessary for them to know that they can feel free to discuss their dilemmas openly with their teacher, without fear of reprisal.

A sense of trust must develop, where the teacher can be considered a confidante and counsellor, whilst still observing a professional pupil-teacher relationship.

The teacher must be sensitive to the fact that there are pupils who have additional problems to that of their own maturity.

They may be caught in the situation of a one-parent family, or there may be social problems in the home.

There are many problems that can confront a family today and these problems can cause anxiety and stress for the children within these families. This emotional distress does not necessarily show itself in an obvious way. The teacher must be aware of the potential problems and deal with them in an enlightened way.

The young person should be given help and support from the teacher, the school and his parents, in a united and positive way, possibly by counselling outside class times as well as by the consideration of the teacher within the class.

The process of maturation can present problems for the parents of the adolescent too. Schools often provide a wide range of talks by professionals - educationalists, psychologists, counsellors, drug-awareness groups, in an effort to familiarize parents with the needs of the adolescent. The parents gain a great deal of strength and support in just talking to other parents and finding that they too are experiencing the same difficulties in adjusting to their teenagers.

At this time in his life, the adolescent is more interested in what his peers think of him than what his parents have to say. An adolescent is inclined to feel that his parents know nothing. As far as he is concerned they cannot possibly understand him. It is up to the parents to maintain a close relationship with their child, but often they need help in doing this.

The adolescent is under pressure to conform to the standards of his peer group. He has to be accepted.

Commenting on the effects of peer pressure, Carl Rogers says:-

"It seems to imply that the person who is free within herself, who is open to her experience, who has a sense of her own freedom and responsible choice, is not nearly so likely to be controlled by her environment as is the person who lacks these qualities"₃

3. Carl Rogers discussing a Study on Peer Pressure by Richard Crutchfield

This indicates the importance of the pupil's realization of his own worth, so that he can cope better with peer pressure.

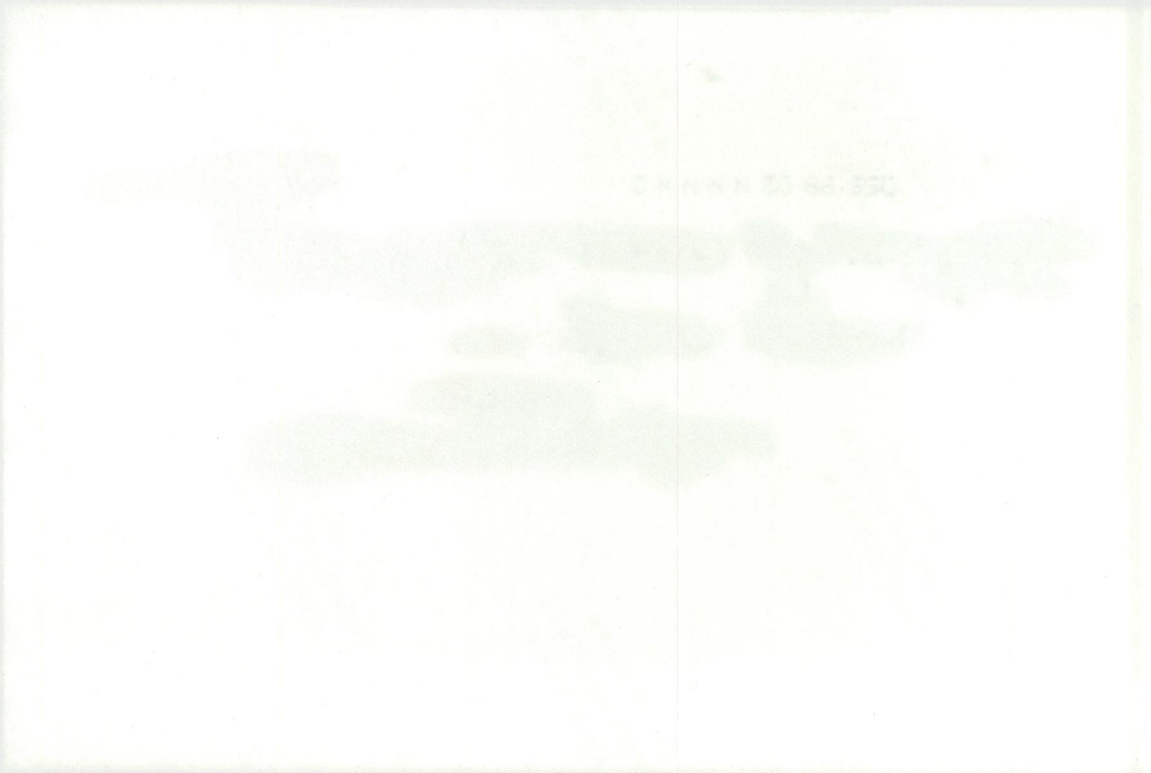
In order to encourage and develop these qualities, it is worthwhile to introduce a system that includes project work.

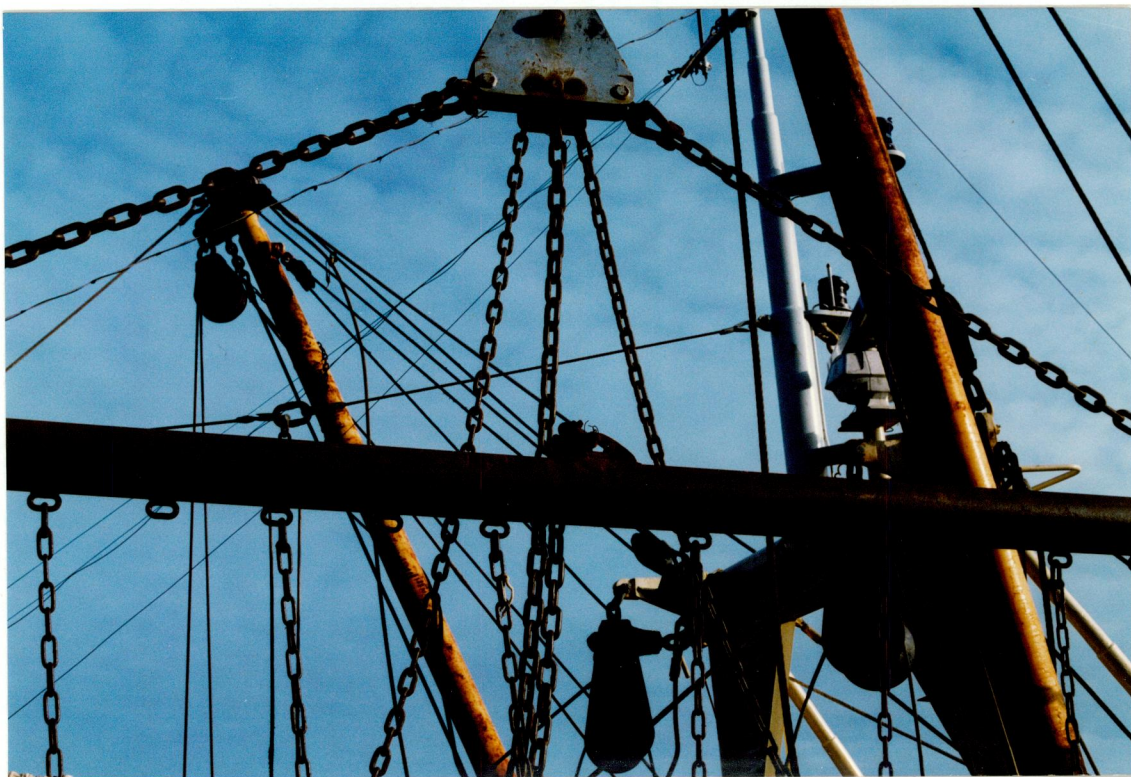
Project Work:-

Project work will encourage the pupils to discuss their objectives and to work out between themselves, the best means to achieve their objectives. Pupils can learn a great deal from one another. By discussing their own views it can also enable them to clarify their objectives and to be discerning. This encourages their self-esteem. It also offers the opportunity for the isolated pupil to integrate with the rest of the class.

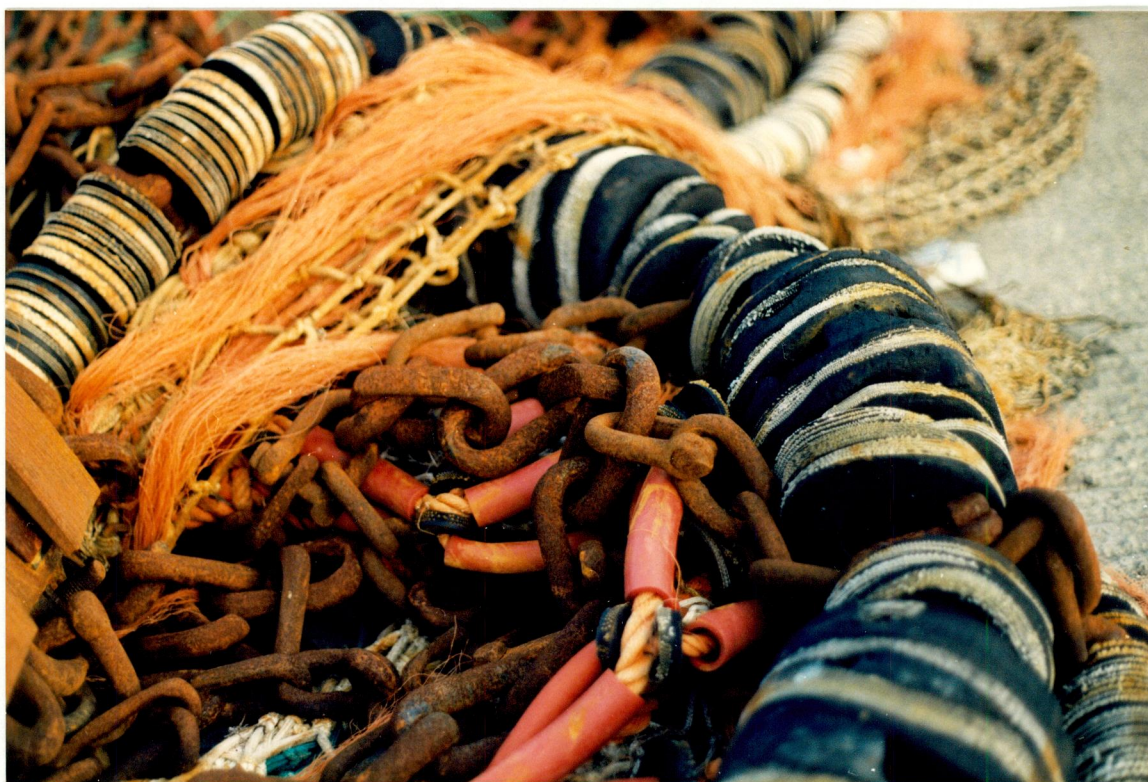
I have noticed that there always seems to be at least one pupil, in a class, who is a loner. Such pupils are not accepted members of a group. At least one reason for this may be that they do not conform to the standards set by the group.

I have found that through group outings, a better relationship can be fostered between the pupils themselves and also between the pupils and myself. Both teacher and pupils see each other in a different way. I took my pupils on a group visit to Howth in the course of my project.





Shape, Form and Texture



CHAPTER V

CLASSROOM PROJECT - From Sand To Clay

It was only after some discussion with the pupils that I chose the seashore as a starting point for this project. I did this for several reasons. The beach in Portmarnock is an area that they know well and Howth is the local fishing village, that they are also familiar with.

I felt it was important that we use a source that was familiar to them, but somewhere that still offered the opportunity of further study.

The seashore offered the opportunity of working from the organic, whereas the harbour at Howth offered the potential of working from man-made objects - the nets, the buildings and the boats.

Having used the same source in my own work, I was aware of the possibilities and the restrictions of working from this source.

The pupils had no previous experience of working with clay, so I devised a scheme of work that would give them the experience of using the different methods of handbuilding

with clay, prior to researching their source.

By doing this, the pupils would have a better understanding of what objects from their source, would be suitable to work from, using clay.

We Followed This SCHEME OF WORK:-

1. To explore the tactile qualities of clay as a medium in handbuilding, through the making of a pinch pot.
2. To explore the tactile qualities of clay through the making of a coiled pot.
3. To explore the process of making slab pots, using clay. To further explore the qualities of clay using slip.
4. To explore texture through the making of clay tile relief; by the addition and subtraction of clay and by using other texturing materials.
5. To explore the shape, tone and texture of an object in the preparation of a clay structure.

6. To explore the use of the camera through the selection and recording of visual information on a visit to Howth.
7. To explore the design possibilities of making a container, through drawing, using previous research of environment as a starting point.
8. To explore the making of a small-scale container in clay, using the previous research of drawings and photographs; in preparation for making a larger container.
9. To explore further, the form and texture of the objects from the source, through drawing, with mixed media.
10. To explore the making of a container in clay using previous research.
11. Continuation of construction of clay container, and addition of decoration, as previously researched and drawn.

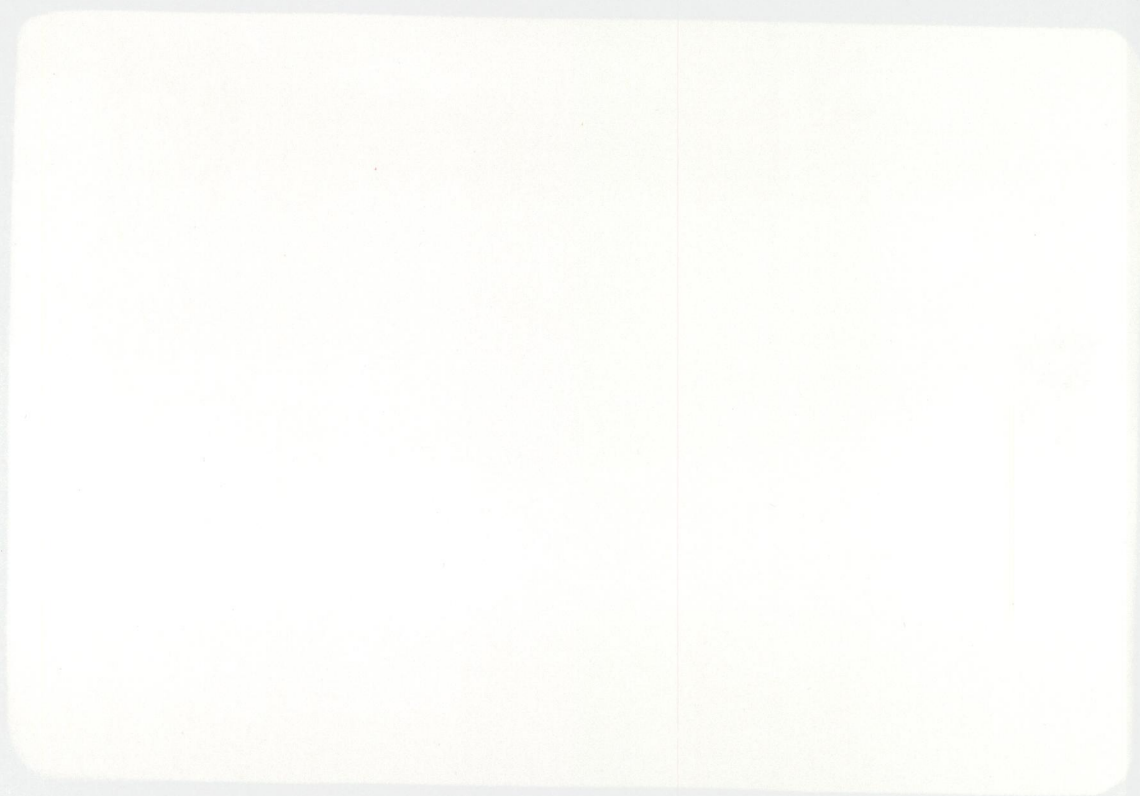
Each of the sessions consisted of eighty minutes.

The experience of working with the clay and using the various methods of hand-building, enabled the pupils to familiarize themselves with the properties of clay.

The pupils were then in a position to identify objects that would be suitable, as a source to work from, in terms of shape, texture and form.

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This proved an advantage when we went on a photographic visit to Howth Harbour. I had explained the basic principles of how to use the camera, prior to leaving the classroom. Most of them had never before used a camera that required focussing.

We had three cameras between us, so there was one camera to each group. They took it in turns to use it. We took two rolls of colour film and one roll of black and white.

The photographs will also be a valuable research record, that can be used for further information. The visit to Howth was extremely productive, although cold. The pupils were very interested in the shapes, forms and textures that they could find. Having taken their photographs, they completed their worksheets.

One girl spent a very long time trying to photograph a bird in flight and this finally proved successful.

Part of their research will include the developing of their black and white photographs. I intend to show the pupils, in small groups outside of class time, how to achieve this.

WORKSHEET 30B/J

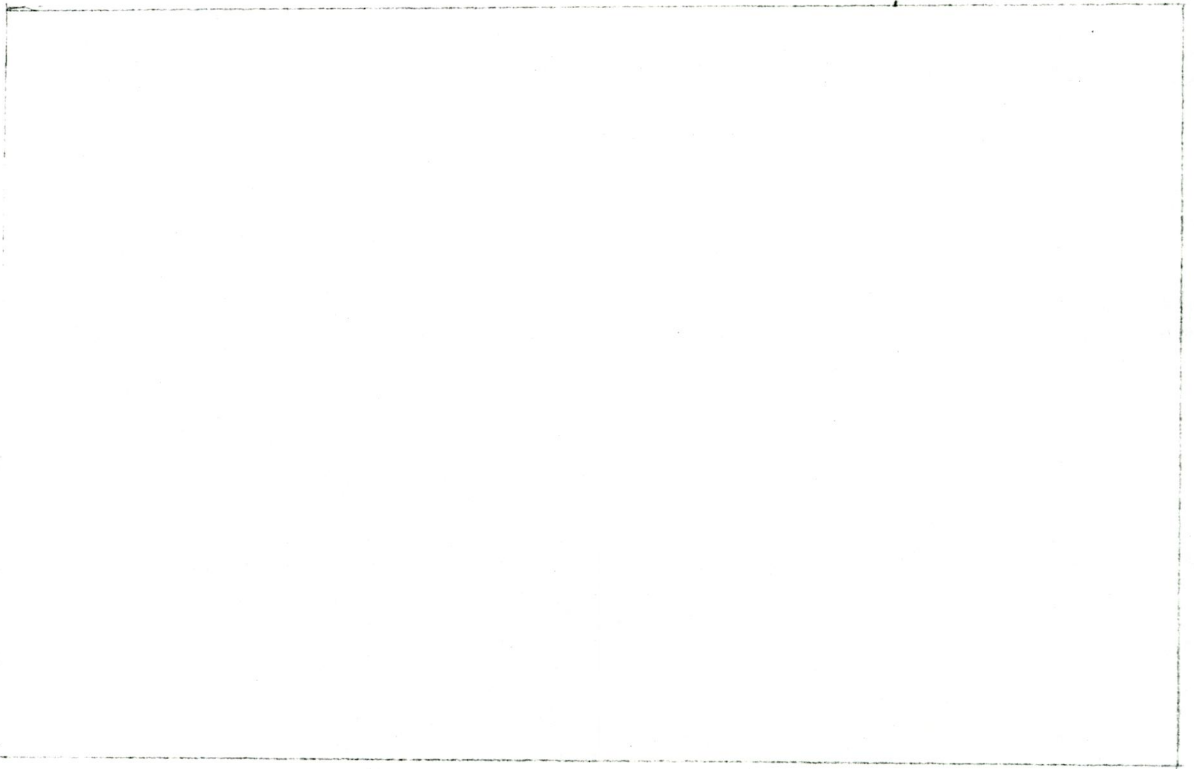
What is your first visual impression of this area?

Write a few words that describe this impression.

Make a sketch of this view, describing the foreground and the background (middle distance)

Description:-

Sketch of View:



What objects are in the foreground? Describe these objects in terms of:-

- (a) Line
- (b) Shape
- (c) Colour
- (d) Texture
- (e) Tone
- (f) Pattern

Which of these art elements is dominant?

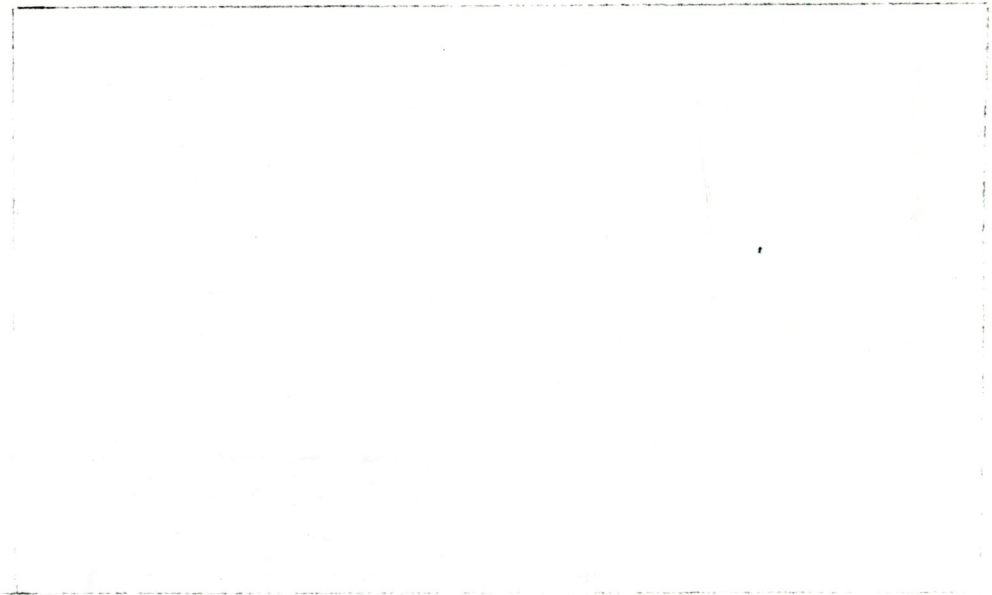
Tick those that are dominant.

Description:-

WORKSHEET 30B/J

Make a detailed drawing of the object that best describes form i.e. the hull of the boat, buoys.

Use tone to describe the object/objects.



What objects are in the background?

How do these objects

(a) Contrast with object in foreground

(b) Compare with similar characteristics.

How could you combine these characteristics when making a three dimensional form in clay?
i.e. texture and shape with form.





The next class involved a group discussion of our findings and suggestions as to how we should proceed. I was keen for the pupils to be involved in all decision-making and where appropriate, I would advise them on the feasibility of their suggestions. Whilst directing them and advising them, I wanted this project to reflect the pupils individual experience of their source.

During this class, I introduced the pupils to the work of Hans Coper and Mary Rogers and we discussed their ceramic pieces and compared the techniques they used, to the handbuilding being done by the pupils.

This comparison and discussion enabled the pupils to make aesthetic judgements regarding the work of recognized artists/ceramists and their own. It is also important that the pupil is aware of what is available in the commercial market. In order to do this, I showed them examples of pots available in Habitat.

This promoted a great deal of discussion and the pupils, expressed their preference for the commercial pot rather than

the work of art. This brings me to the point that pupils often find it difficult to accept the abstract, rather than the 'realistic'.

Reality is discussed by Picasso when he says:-

"Reality is more than the thing itself. I look always for the super-reality. Reality lies in how you see things. A green parrot is also a green salad and a green parrot. He who makes it only a parrot diminishes its reality. A painter who copies a tree blinds himself to the real tree. I see things differently. A palm tree can become a horse"¹

When demonstrating slides of containers to pupils, one of the boys was able to recognize that one of these containers, a bowl, had as its source the shell - 'It has the broken edges of a shell', and yet that same boy, when he came to make a sketch of the design for his own container, made a drawing that was based on a visual aid that I had made. He was therefore able to perceive but not to synthesize his own ideas, at this point.

The next lesson after the photographic visit comprised of a design class, where the pupils made sketches of the containers they intended to make.

1. Footnote: Picasso quoted by Aengus Buckley O.P. in a

Some of the sketches lacked detail so I decided that it would be an advantage if the pupils tried out their ideas in making a small scale model. They have acheived the skills in handbuilding with clay, but need to explore still further, the creative possibilities with the clay medium. I intend to develop the pupils ideas for the design of ceramic forms, through further drawing.

CONCLUSION

Art is a subject that is different to all the others on the timetable. It is essentially visual and allows the person to become involved with the medium. It is a potent means of expression, helping the adolescent to express his feelings and emotions. Through art learning, the pupils develop skills and perception.

I have found this project both stimulating and rewarding. Through working on the project, I feel that I have extended both myself and my pupils.

The project has allowed me time to develop my own skills in ceramics and to acquire new skills, such as photography. I have studied the works of educationalists, philosophers and psychologists and found support for my own personal philosophy.

I believe that, as a teacher, I must encourage the pupil to develop to the best of his ability - as a person who values himself and who is capable of making his own decisions. In order to do this, the pupil must be equipped with skills and have the self-esteem to carry these through.

Through working on this project, the pupils have developed an inquiring, discerning and informed attitude towards their environment, whilst becoming more aware of their cultural heritage.

Education is an ongoing process and in order for the pupil and the teacher to progress, we must all be open to our experiences.

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