NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
COLAISTE NAISUNTA EALAINE IS DEARTHA

NARRATION SICKNESS - SYMPTOMS,
CAUSES AND ANTIDOTES

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education

in

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by

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INTRODUCTION

> "All the Paddies having fun
> Since Yeats handed in his gun
> Everyman completely blind
> To the truth about his mind"
>
> Patrick Kavanagh - The Paddiad

Throughout the following chapters I hope:

(a)   to address the nation of the Irish, in general, as being passive products of a long established educational system, stemming largely from an eventful social and political past.

(b)   to look back through this history in order to begin to look forward.

(c)   to observe and analyse the failings of our educational system with particular reference to art education, in order to create a personal and practical teaching philosophy.

(d)   To illustrate how the relationship of politics to education has become a key theme in my work and in my teaching philosophy.

It would be naive of me to suggest that all children are blind submissive consumers, but I feel confident in saying that the Irish educational system plays a major part in the repression of consciousness of the child. Therefore, it is blinkering rather than blindness which is the issue in question. Our educational system is also

responsible for contributing to class fragmentation and thus the prejudices which go hand in hand with a hierarchical system of culture and materialism.

I base these beliefs mainly on my own experience, albeit a limited one, as an art teacher in three very different Dublin schools. This experience has had a profound effect on me and on my awareness of how passivity is really a modification of behaviour, rather than something with which one is inherently afflicted. In turn, this has affected the way in which I approach my function as an art educator. And finally, my interest in the relationships between politics, society and man's understanding and creativity is expressed in many ways through my work as an artist. I firmly accept the notion that each child is born with an inquiring, searching mind. This concept of the child is probably best explained by the Abraham H. Maslow in his views on humanistic education :

> Every human being has (two) sets of forces
> within him. One set clings to safety and
> and defensiveness out of fear, tending to
> regress backward, hanging onto the past,
> afraid to grow ....., afraid to take chances,
> afraid to jeopardise what he already has,
> afraid of independence, freedom and
> separateness. The other set of forces impels
> him forward toward wholeness of self and

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uniqueness of self, toward full functioning of all his capacities, toward confidence in the face of the external world at the same time that he can accept his deepest, real unconscious self.

I have identified two distinct types of passivity with which the educator must battle - that is if intellectual and creative processes are to be fully realised. I would also stress that passivity is not something which must be coped with by the teacher, but rather eliminated. To accommodate, or simply work one's way about the problem serves only to perpetuate it. While I recognise the psychological problems which contribute to individuals behaving in an inert manner, I would also suggest that these matters can be resolved through the teacher concentrating on motivation of and personal attention to the particular student. Any teacher can tell about the various limitations which they must endure - time, large classes, lack of facilities and so on - all of which are hurdles which echo through the staff rooms.

As a teacher, however, I felt that it is social passiveness which poses a far more monumental task for the educator. So colossal is this problem that it is often mistaken for, or fragmented into a myriad of lesser obstacles. Obstacles which seem more tangible, and which may be temporarily overcome with money. An example of this would

perhaps be the way in which the lack of facilities in the art room and the huge numbers of pupils the art teacher must deal with even for practical classes, are seen as individual problems as opposed to being seen as not only related but rather exemplary of the diminutive status of art in our schools. This view permeates throughout Irish life. And since it is my belief that art is fundamental for the liberation of the person - the art teacher must help inject a cultural confidence into society. This would free us from the cocoon of sentimentality and quasi-nationalism which inhibits us as a nation of exploring, creative minds. Throughout this thesis, I hope to deal with passivity - with particular reference to Ireland and the Irish social political and historical context - since I see these themes as more monumental and fundamental barriers for the educator than the many and varied contructions to passivity within the school. Having said this, I feel that many of the latter factors are impurities of an oppressed society - and as history cannot be ignored in a study such as this, I regard Ireland as a country struggling for an identity and thus the product of oppression.

I also hope to concern myself with the nation of just what "Irish" means with reference to culture and art. If as I suggest, our schools are churning out accepting vessels of facts and figures - we as educators, that is both the artist and the

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teacher, must reassess not only our legacy but our
society in general. This is the enormous but
essential task we must undertake, if we are ever to
grasp just who we are. And when we discover this,
we can strive for that which in platonic terms
could be described as that which is good and
therefore that which is true. In these terms,
ultimate truth may never be attained but through
striving for this truth, the channels for creative
and intellectual inquiry and creativity can only be
broadened.

To look at the social and political
factors affecting the society we know and operate
within today, it is advantageous, if not necessary,
to look back through history - using the flaws and
merits of the past in order to move forward.

FOOTNOTES

1.   Maslow, A.H. <u>Towards</u> <u>a</u> <u>Psychology</u> <u>of</u> <u>being</u>
   (p. 45-46)

CHAPTER 1

THE EFFECTS OF COLONIALISM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY, ON ART EDUCATION IN IRELAND TODAY

History, it would appear is infinite and so we must limit ourselves to a manageable distance in time. The nineteenth century is perhaps a good place to begin as it can be argued that most of our systems today, be they governmental, educational or class - can be traced back to this era. Ireland was an oppressed country under the powerful colonial rule of Britain. It is interesting at this stage to note that colonialism is, for the most part, the common experience. And that Ireland is not unique in its oppression but rather in its being Ireland. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was becoming increasingly obvious that we were loosing grasp of our Irishness. The struggle for identity began as early as 1845. The Nation proclaimed that:

"the vices of Irishness are of English culture; their virtues are the homegrowth of the heart - the nation's heart ". (1)

Indeed this verve for nationalism brought about much interest in subversive groups such as the Young Ireland Movement of the eighteen forties, which:

"inaugurated a cultural tradition that conceives the responsibility of literature and of other cultural forms, to be the production and mediation

of a sense of national identity". (2)

This ideology, while it portrayed "Catholic Ireland, symbolised as an island, as being innocent and, as yet, unpolluted by the modern, secular English word", (3) failed to recognise the British government struggle to gain control of our national school system. Which was, in turn, a struggle to mould the consciousness of the Irish people through the child. This largely involved the operating of constraints in language and art transmitted through culture - in other words a policy of anglicisation was implemented. This kind of tactic is fairly typical of oppressing governments worldwide because the educational system of a nation is undeniably the main tool for cultural domination. Its real function is best understood in terms of the need for social control in an unequal and rapidly changing social order, as was the case with our emerging state. Indeed, as Simone de Beauvoir suggests concerning the oppressors of this century, their interests lie in "changing the consciousness of the oppressed; not in the situation which oppresses them". (4)

In 1878, the <u>Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act</u> devised by Patrick Keenan, resident Commissioner for National Education at the time, was implemented in Ireland. It echoed the payment by results scheme which had already been introduced in English elementary schools in the 1860s and in Irish national schools in 1872. Despite a conscience clause which suggested that the Act was non-denominational - this clause framed

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a purely theoretical nation and one which was proven wrong in practice. Also, the Intermediate Board Exams scale of marks for the various subjects also introduced a hierarchy of subject matter.

Latin/Greek/English	1000 Marks
French	700 Marks
Celtic Studies	600 Marks
German/Italian	500 Marks
Maths	500 Marks
Drawing/Music	500 Marks
Botany/Zoology	200 Marks

Aside from the various inequalities which the payment by results scheme enforced, it is interesting to note that art is covered by the term Drawing so as opposed to "art", we have drawing - thus further suppressing the cognitive and intellectual values of expressive and creative work. Likewise, critical understanding of the art work and its function in both the spiritual and social spheres is inhibited. Thus, one is more tightly clamped into a state of social control.

"The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend to simply adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them". (Paulo Freire) (5)

For the artist and indeed the art

teacher, this had various implications. On a very practical level, the idea of man adjusting to the environment rather than transforming it, dismisses the artist, the architect and the creative mind as unimportant, if not completely dispensable. And perhaps on a more sinister level - it would suggest that man can be placed within an environment, to which he must adapt, almost like an animal in a zoo. Pavlov's dog experiments spring to mind as an illustration of this type of conditioning.(6) Except in our zoo, the curators are the ruling classes - heavily reliant on education to maintain class differentials. There is also a national and international bourgeoisie with a major interest in the reproduction of a capitalist society. This society is a direct result of colonialism - it is a post-colonial society.

Even as we proceed to examine the twentieth century, when the "Free State" comes into being, the meritocratic type of system evolving largely from the payment by results scheme is not only perpetuated but, I believe, is more stealthily applied than before. In the early part of the 1900s, we have changes inspired by an ideology of cultural nationalism occurring. The Minister of State at that time adopted the view that "the role of the state in education was a subsidiary one, aiding agencies in the provision of educational facilities". It is interesting to note that there is a huge difference between the 'Provision of Educational

Facilities' and the facilitation of education. In primary education, teachers were and indeed still are trained by a state funded system: this would point at the provisions for teacher socialisation being compatible with many if not all the requirements of a denominational system (Clancy). (7) Therefore, the very system which was sparked off by a desire to find and anchor cultural nationalism bears the same scars of our colonial past. Both systems using practically the same means to achieve a similar end.

Middle classes retained their leadership positions in the "Free State" - "they spearheaded the fight for independence through fostering anti-colonial feelings" (8) Nationalist values were promoted, "indeed primary schools became one of the major sites for the promotion of nationalist values".(9) Of course, it was advantageous for the middle classes to adopt this patriotic stance. A stance which would on a superficial level, seem to be a stance of patriotic rebellion - for the common good and all that. On the contrary however, it may also be seen as being reactionary as opposed to resistance to all that which caused the Irish as a nation to be suppressed. For this leadership, which sought a new cultural revolution, also strove to serve the interests of their own class.

And so a meritocratic system perpetuates. Dewey's 'master/disciple' syndrome is once again operational. Thus "a hard philosophy, the aggressive formulation of

an inhuman spirit" (10) is the legacy which we as teachers must confront and dispose of in order to destroy the spirit of Mr. Gradgrind -

"a galvanising apparatus too, charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the tender young imaginations that were to be stormed away" (Charles Dickens) (11) Each one of us has at some time been confronted by that machinelike character during our school years. Indeed, is there one pupil in the art class who has not been set the mundane and unmotivating task of sketching from the traditional still life with the essential Piat D'or bottle and the tired remnant of curtain material?

Hence, the educational system is exam-orientated teacher-centred and above all, I would insist, is an advocate of passiveness where the healthy mind is numbed and our students are fed merely to "fill them out" as Jean-Paul Sartre suggests in his "nutritive" theory of education. (12) There the process for awareness towards self-actualisation does not happen or is at least suppressed. It is at this stage that the educator must realise that he or she is working for a hegemony which encourages social division and favours specific social groupings.

This leads us onto another problem which arises from our educational system: Dewey's "master syndrome" highlights, what Freire has described as the 'narrative' nature of the teacher-pupil relationship as promoted by our system, whereby the subject is the teacher and the object takes the shape of the pupil. Even in my own experience, it occurs to

me that my pupils are conditioned to sit and absorb facts and figures which the teacher relays from the bench at the head of the classroom. It would seem that there is a morality of knowledge, where knowing is a good thing and not knowing a bad thing. This has a huge impact on the response of the student - where one is reluctant to voice an opinion or question the "master". After all, man fundamentally aspires toward the good and one does not wish to risk being wrong, as to be "wrong" would indicate that one is "bad". In the case of the creative process, this is a major obstacle for the educator. If the teacher-pupil relationship does not provide for dialogue to happen, the channels for communication and creative discussion are shut down. Education in the true sense of the word provides the student with a constructive dialogue where learning and creativity is facilitated and elicited. An idea cannot grow if it remains just so. Through discussion, an idea can be taken and developed with more knowledge and imagination. Making something of this idea, is what can be termed creative thinking. This type of thought is essential in the art class. The disciplines of art, craft and design rely on the materialisation of a single concept which is developed and in some way adds to or transforms the world. A practical example of how this development works is dealt with in a subsequent chapter where the class project stems from a set of suggestions raised through group discussion. This discussion brought forth many ideas which went towards the making of an "art work". If we, as

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teachers, refuse to allow the classroom to be a platform for discourse, we are surely inhibiting the channels of creativity.

"Starting from a given theme their minds laboured in unison. They had no conversation properly speaking". (Samuel Beckett - Malone Dies)

In his book Language, Truth and Politics, Trevor Pateman suggests in the chapter - "Not so Inquiring Man", that it is common practice to engage in avoidance of discussion and debate. He wonders 'why should the resolution of disagreement on the level of context create a relationship problem, or a particular kind of relationship problem?' I would suggest that our society hinges on the assumption that that which is factually correct and measurable is worthy of merit, whereas in the case of creativity and art, the same logic cannot be applied since it is virtually impossible to determine what is "correct" in a measurable, factual sense. Therefore, the pupil stunted by a meritocratic system is almost warned against exploration and against the danger of making mistakes. In my view, this accounts for not only the low status of art in Irish schools but also for the non-realisation of creative powers and their potential within the art class. Professor Iseult McCarthy in her thesis Creativity, Introversion and Communication through Art highlights through her study using The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, (13) that "by comparison with those of Britain and of the United States, the Irish educational system may be described

as more passive than active and may account for the lower self sufficiency and unimaginative life of these young artists".(14) These "young artists" being various fine art students studying at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. However, McCarthy's findings would also seem to support my suggestion that this passive behaviour is due to modifications rather than inherent submissiveness.

In her Summary of the Profile of the NCAD Subjects, (15) the art students while they were unusually tense, were above average in intelligence thus reinforcing the notion that the Irish mind is at least as intelligent and potentially creative as that of any other country, and arguably more so. The sheer quantity of literary and creative geniuses to come from our small island would indicate this. And while there seems to be somewhat of a lull in this tradition, it is worth remembering that the majority of our finest creative minds are forced overseas to find a receptive audience. There is much "Irish" art being made abroad about which many of us are unaware. An art of our own is surely what we should be striving for. Before I can hope to maintain a tradition, in the broadest possible sense of the word, through the work of my pupils, I feel it is necessary to explore what it means to be Irish and therefore what is actually meant by "Irish Art".

What I understand by the term "Irish Art" is not black and white. It is a much debated

subject.   With regards to my own work, I feel very
strongly that it fits into this theme, although it is
not true to say that all Irish artists produce "Irish
Art".   I feel that we can examine the Irishness of an
artwork by

(a)   looking at the subject matter or the theme of
       the piece
(b)   looking at the style, techniques and physical
       qualities of the artwork.

As I have discussed, the main theme of my work is
essentially concerned with our passiveness and with the
factors affecting it. With regards to the physical
appearance of the work, I have been drawn to the
stoniness of the Irish landscape and to the grey,
moss-covered architectural ruins which are an
indispensable feature of this.(Fig.1-4) Ancient
manuscripts and in particular, the stone carving
employed in high crosses and megalithic stones are also
an influence on my work. (Fig. 5) Although I have used
these influences in perhaps a modern way, that same
effect of tool cutting into earth is what I hope to
convey. (Fig. 6) I believe that literal transcriptions
of Celtic art and so on are very obvious and do not
always denote "Irish Art".

Our cultural tradition is an intrinsic part of us, it
is something inherent but which is all too often also
repressed in the same manner as creative thinking.
Many emigrant artists 'sell out', in that they work
according to foreign traditions - but looking back to

the Irish educational system - we are not encouraged to explore our Irishness - as to do this would be to examine our identity and question the system and the establishment in general.

This takes us back to the notion of the
Irish as a repressed nation - the ruling classes censoring and prescribing the consumption material for students to suit their own ends. (Fig. 7)

It is essential for the legitimacy of the capitalist
order that the population be convinced that people
in high status positions deserve their positions, that they are more talented and work harder than others. Schools are an essential prop of this legitimacy. (16)
With this in mind, it follows that students coming from
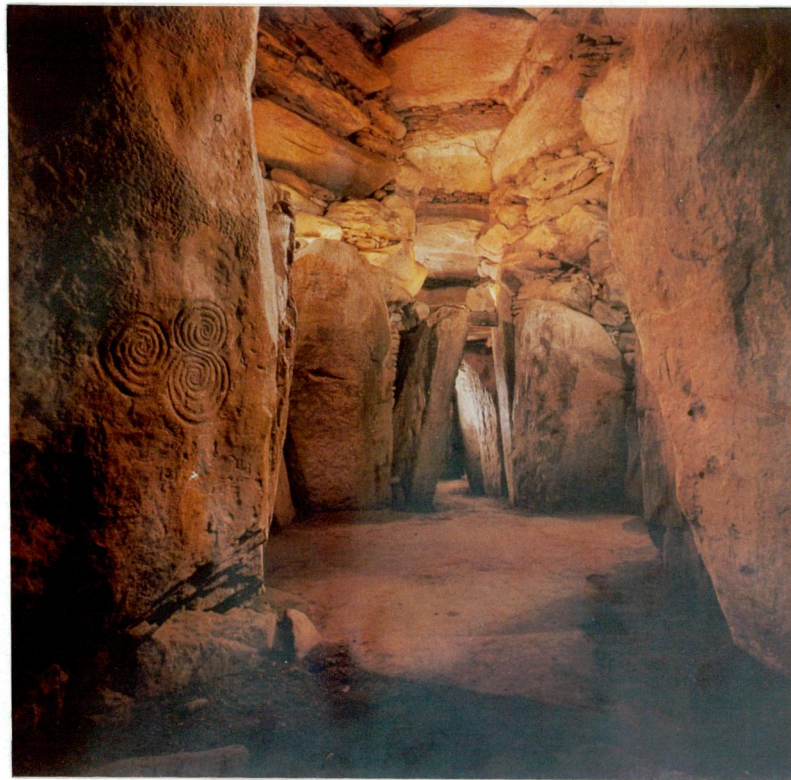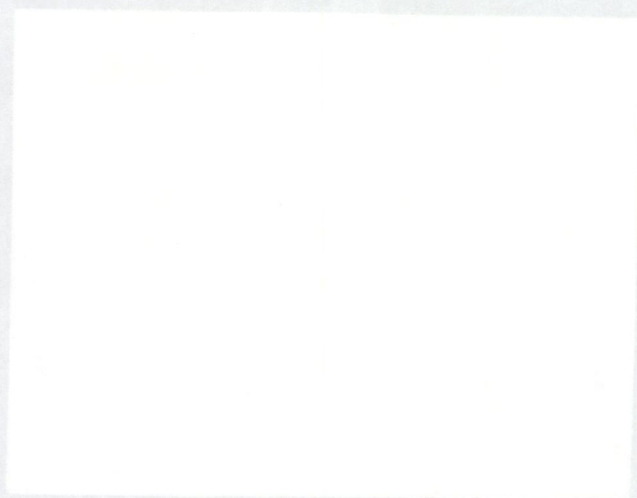
(Fig. 1) Newgrange

(Fig. 2) Newgrange   (Fig. 3) Newgrange
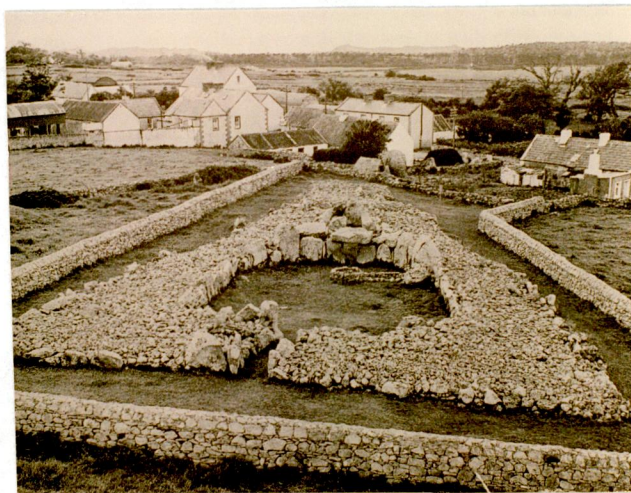
(Fig. 4) Man made stone walls of the West of Ireland

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(Fig.5) The High Cross of Dysert O'Dea.

(Fig. 6) Man/Woman, the tool and earth.

Carving into unfired clay with a gouging tool.

such a system will see success as something measurable and tangible - Irish schools, for the most part, have discouraged if not rejected the cognitive and creative value of art.

> Intellectual and temperamental characteristics of
> passive children would indicate that environment
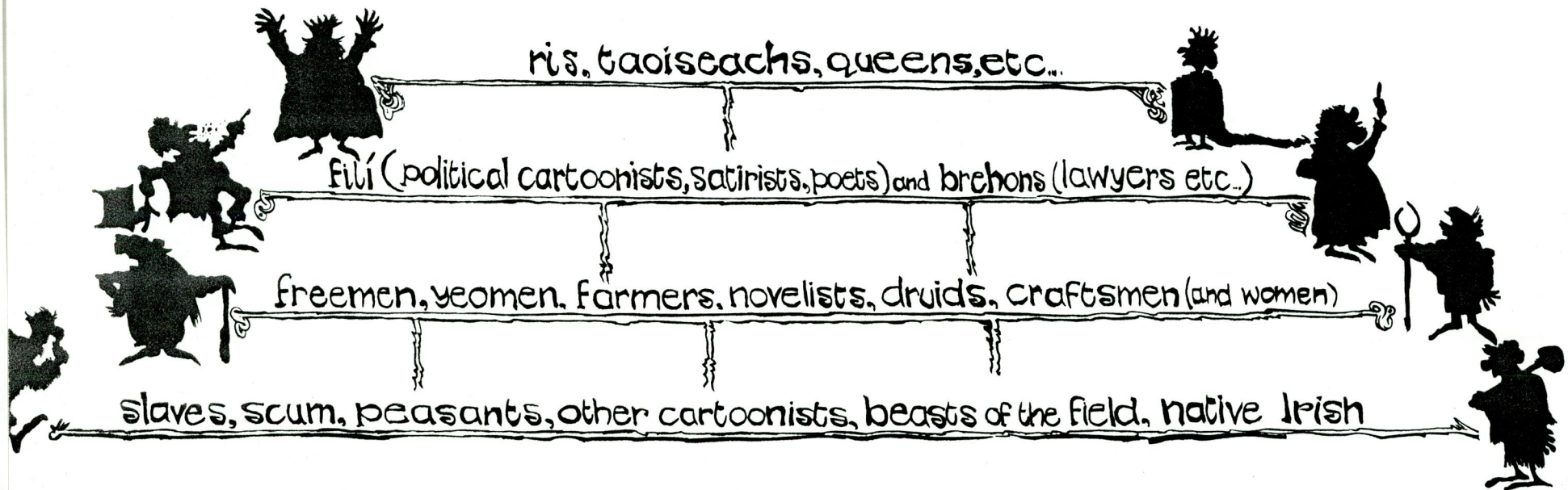
and

> it's various influences play an enormous part in
> their condition. (17)

Thus,

> Only when environmental conditions are
> ideal will a child's hereditary endowment
> determine the upper limit of his development.(18)

Despite this, society requires the child to compete in an academic world, but as Kathleen Lynch, so rightly suggests, "individual competition is only fair if one competes in a world with equally privileged peers." (19) Secondary level students hoping to achieve a high grade in Art at Leaving Certificate, are either helped or hindered by their background. The middle class child will generally have a better artistic vocabulary than their working class counterparts. They are more likely to have access to books, they will be more familiar with artists through the prints and paintings on the walls at home. They have more often than not have been brought to galleries both at home and abroad. I encountered children from both backgrounds through my teaching experience. It became apparent to me that the pupils who were
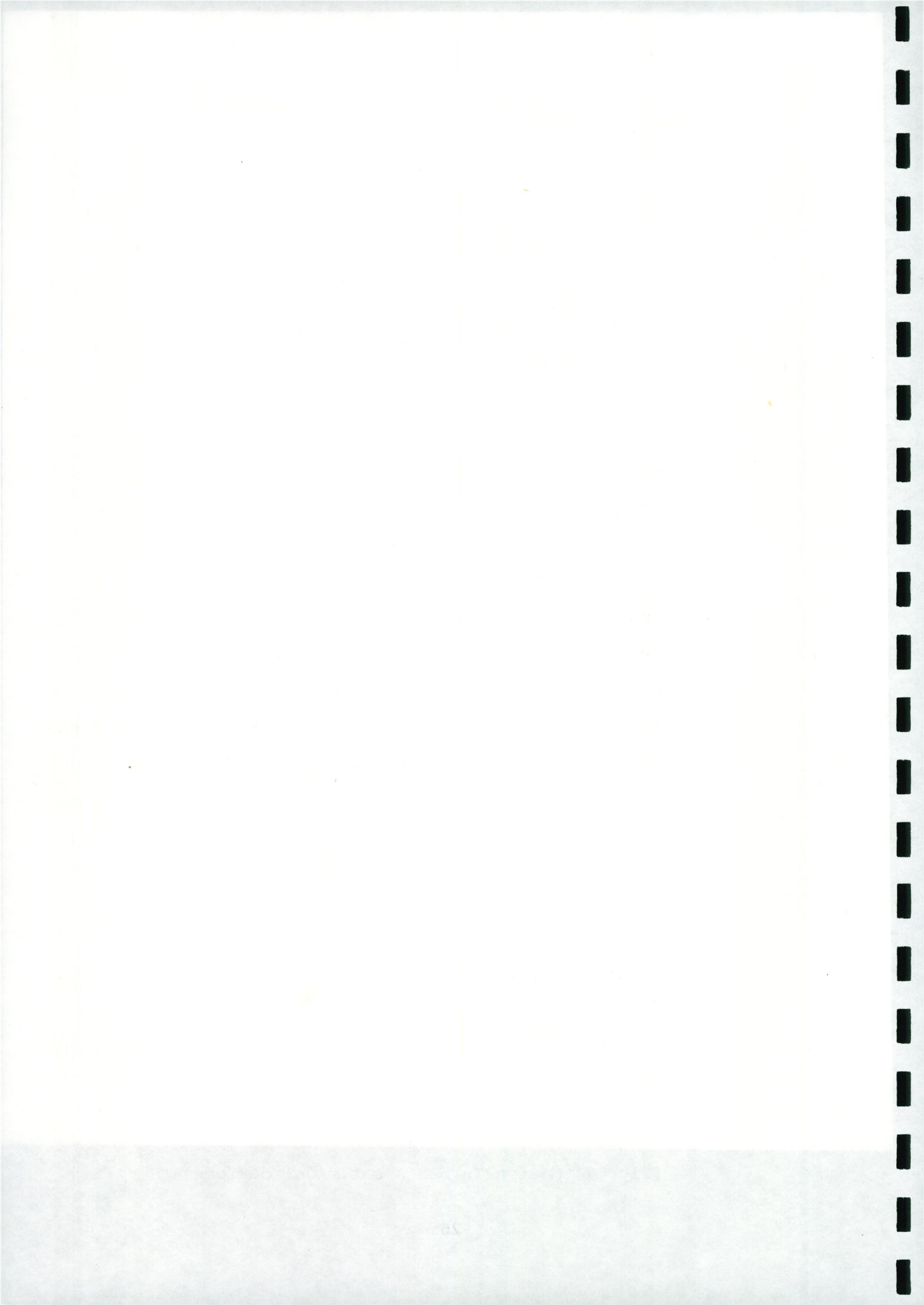
unfamiliar with the language of art, were far less self-assured to the point of being cautious and suspicious of the motives of the teacher. This is further evidence of the negative

(Fig. 7) Martyn Turner's satirical cartoon)

ORGANISATION OF CELTIC SOCIETY (Diagram)

rís, taoiseachs, queens, etc...

filí (political cartoonists, satirists, poets) and brehons (lawyers etc...)

freemen, yeomen, farmers, novelists, druids, craftsmen (and women)

slaves, scum, peasants, other cartoonists, beasts of the field, native Irish

aspect of our meritocratic system. In a materially and culturally hierarchical society, competition between equals is impossible without either handicapping the privileged or compensating the relatively disadvantaged. Without a doubt this "individual competition" is the main motivation within our schools. Therefore, it is left for the educator to either

(a)   reassess the entire social and educational

        system

                            (or)

(b)   plod along catering for the privileged and trying to compensate the disadvantaged.

(b)   plod along catering for the privileged and

        to compensate the disadvantaged.

Dealing with the various grievances of those hindered by the system and trying to work around the ills of a perpetually class conscious society such as sexism :

"masculinity is celebrated through the tough manliness of hard, unskilled, manual labour. The very values which help "the lads" with school, are the same ones which ensure their entrapment in manual labour". (20)

        In short -

"society cannot share a common communication so long as it is split into warring classes". (Brecht - A Short Organum for the Theatre.)

        Ivan Illich, in his book A Celebration of Awareness - a call for Institutional Revolution (21)

suggests that a programme of 'deschooling' is a necessary, albeit a radical move if the school system is ever to serve a purpose other than being 'the central myth-making ritual of industrial societies'.(22) Such revolt from control is spurred by an enthusiasm for spontaneity and what Dewey calls 'development from within'. (23) However, it must be remembered that revolt goes against that which we are led to believe is good and our passive conditioning blinkers us from the hand that wants to let us see - the hand of the educator. Therefore, since revolt can be seen as being the opposite of passivity, the creative mind must need a certain degree of rebellious action - be that to a greater or lesser extent - if progress is to happen.

Art movements which are perhaps extreme examples of this would include Futurism,(Fig.8) Dada (Fig. 9) and even in Ireland, the sixties saw third-level art students physically mashing plaster casts - heralding the close of an academic tradition of art education. On a less dramatic but equally important level, the courage to question, to delve into, must be instilled in Irish students today, starting with the infant in the cradle and working right up through the system.

Dewey tells us that:

"Freedom or individuality, in short, is not an original possession or gift. It is something to be achieved, to be wrought out", (24)

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Kathleen Lynch points out in less romantic terms that in Ireland today, consumption ability is a basic element in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills for the labour market. While the problem would appear to be easy to solve through government planning - the new Junior Certificate Syllabus would be a good example of this, Lynch is quick to point out also that:

> State intervention to improve the
> consumption capacities of working class
> pupils would also threaten the
> 'inheirtance' interests of those
> middle income groups who rely on
> cultural property to transmit privilege
> to their children. To terminate or
> upset the allegiance of such groups
> upset the allegiance of such groups
> would be, of course, to undermine
> the primary political support systems
> of state managers themselves; the employee
> middle class and the self employed are
> jointly the larges class groups within the
> state.

Therefore, we need to reassess our educational systemin terms of its function and the hidden curriculum. This would allow us as teachers to ensure that education is for the common good rather than for the advancement of specific social groups.
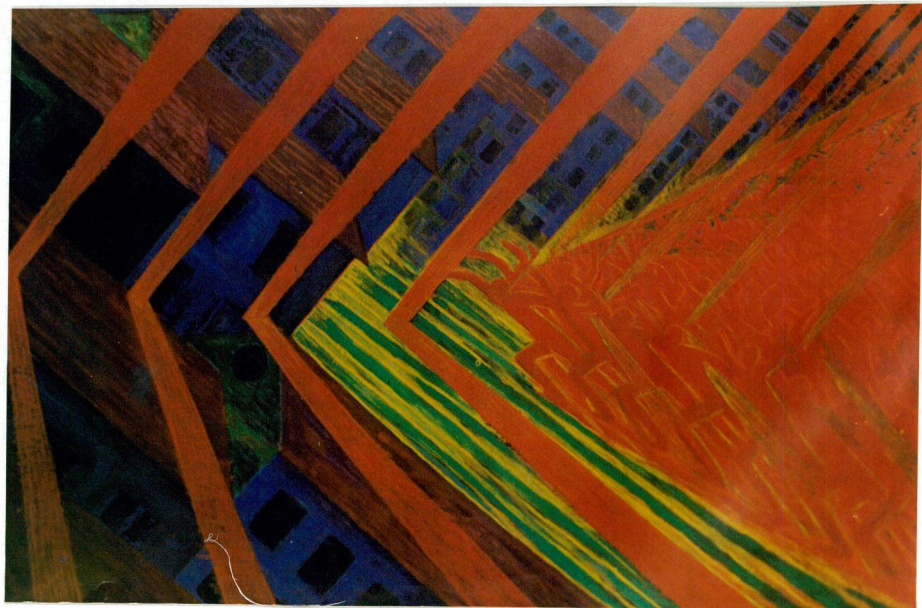
(Fig. 8) Luigi Russolo - The Revolt, 1911

Oil on canvan (150 x 230 cm)
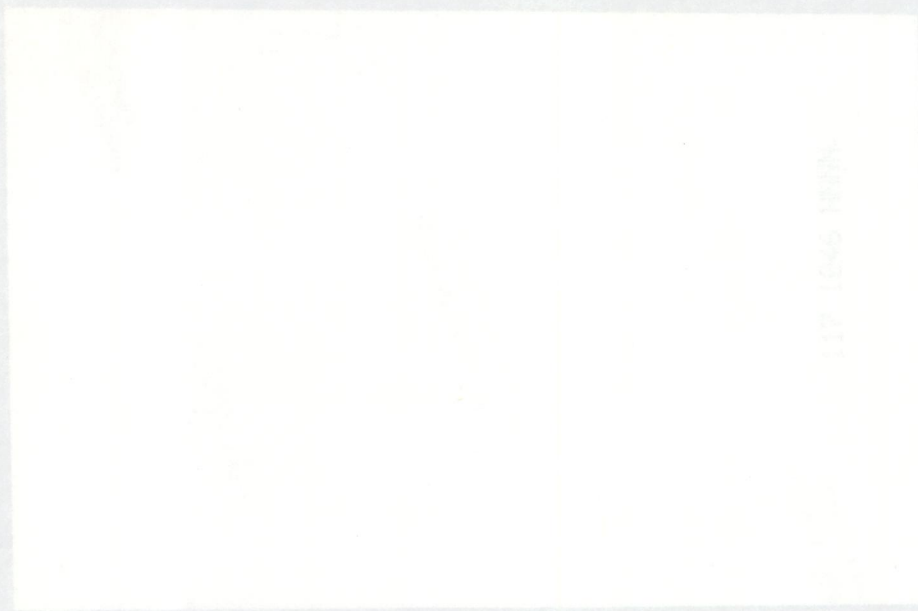
(Fig. 9) Marcel Duchamp - Bicycle Wheel, 1913

FOOTNOTES

1.   Gustave de Beaumont as quoted by David Lloyd,
 Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence
Mangen and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism
(P.242)

2.   Ibid.

3.   Ibid.

4.   Simone   de   Beauvoir,   La   Pensee   de   Driote
Aujourd'huias quoted by Paulo freire, Pedagogy of the
Oppressed (p.47).

5.   Paulo Freire, Ibid.

6.   Pavlov - Russian phsyiologist who discovered
classical conditioning while studying the digestive
processes of dogs.

7.   P. Clancy as quoted by Kathleen Lynch, The Hidden
Curriculum - Reproduction in education, an appraisal.

8.   Kathleen Lynch, Ibid (p. 123).

9.   J. Coolahan, Irish Education: History and
Structure (p. 38-45)

10.   F.R. Leavis on the effect on the moral
consciousness   of   a   tightening   class   society   in
Industrial England.

b11.   Charles Dickens, Hard Times.

12.   Jean-Paul Satre, Une Idee Fondamentale de la
phenomenolgie de Husserl: l'intentionalite, Situation 1

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as quoted by Paulo Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed
(p. 49).

13.   Iseult McCarthy, Creativity, Introversion and
Communication through Art (p. 150-186)

14.   Ibid (p. 172)

15.   Ibid (p.184)
16.   Kathleen Lynch, op. cit.
17.   Ibid
18.   Ibid

19.   Kathleen Lynch, op. cit. "technical Knowledge and
Competitive Individualism" (p. 147)

20.   M. Brake, Comparative Youth culture (p. 62)

21.   I. Illich, Celebration of Awareness - a call
for institutional revolution (Chapter 8).

22.   Ibid. (p. 103)

23.   J. Dewey, John Dewey on Education (p. 150)

24.   Ibid (p. 156)

25.   Kathleen Lynch, op. cit. (p. 127)

CHAPTER 2

"Education is suffering from narration sickness".

       If as I suggest, the student is repressed into a state of passiveness - our educational system, if it is to be truly educational, is clearly failing. If this system is, on the whole, a purely narrative system - the educational objectives in it do not coincide with a full and rounded learning experience either in the cognitive, affective or other domain. Categories in the cognitive domain consist of a taxonomy of six educational objectives:

1.   Knowledge: simple knowledge of facts of terms, of theories

2.   Comprehension: an understanding of the meaning of this knowledge.

3.   Application: the ability to apply this knowledge and comprehension in new and concrete situations.

4.   Analysis: the ability to break material down into it's constituent parts and to see the relationship between them.

5.   Synthesis: the ability to reassemble these parts into a new and meaningful relationship thus forming a new whole.

6.   Evaluation: the ability to judge the value of
material using explicit and coherent criteria, either
of one's own devising or derived from the work of
others.(1)

It would appear to me that Irish students, at whatever
level, due to all the factors discussed in the previous
chapter, and as a product of the educational system
would not achieve any further than perhaps the second
of Bloom's levels of objective. At this stage, the
student requires simple factual knowledge and perhaps
tries to comprehend this knowledge. This is not to
downgrade Irish teachers but they do come from within
the same structure and are regarded as good, employable
teachers only if, they can impart a vast quantity of
facts, figures and formulae, and explain these in non-
complete terms. Their pupils should then go on to
achieve good grades at state examinations. There is
little room for creativity when consumption capacity is
the criteria for that which is worthy of merit.

Just as cognitive development is
inhibited when students are not encouraged to apply
understood knowledge, to analyse, synthesise and
evaluate knowledge, so too is creative development
equally inhibited.

Art as Dewey says:

is great in proportion as the uniformities

of nature which it reveals and

utilises are extensive and profound

- provided, however, that they are freshly applied in concrete objects or situations.

As regards the Affective Domain, Krathwohl et al indentify five categories:

1.   Receiving (willingness to attend): the student listens, or asks or sits erect, or looks at.

2.   Responding (wiling to participate actively): the student answers or complies, or helps, or obeys, or reads or writes.

3.   Valuing (the ability to assign value to things): this differs from evaluation in the cognitive domain in that it involves attitude and moral and social judgment rather than the application of the specific principles of a given subject or discipline: the student joins, or justifies, or prefers, or commits himself, or shares.

4.   Organisation (the ability to bring separate values together and compare and relate them): the student modifies, or relates, or organises, or accepts responsibility.

5.   Characterisation by a value or values complex (the ability to take the organisational level a step further and build up a coherent value system or philosophy of life which informs all of one's behaviour): the student senses,
or acts, or influences, or shows self awareness.(4)

In my experience as both teacher and pupil, the educational system affects the pupil in such a way that while there is a willingness to learn, there is no "willingness to attend". There is no "willingness to participate actively" despite the universal desire to be a part of. It occurs to me that the assigning of value to things, whether of attitudes or judgments is not an issue with our schools as morals and ideology is pre-packed and prescribed for the big supermarket of life.

Despite the apparent negative stance I have put forward in this thesis, I would hope that, as one delves deeper into the notions suggested and the themes dealt with, the humanist, revolutionary educator would see it as a hopeful, positive stance. As Freire put it, the educator "must be imbued with a profound trust in men and their creative power".(5) Throughout I hope to have illustrated how the child is modified. Education can be seen as the machine which processes the child from his mother's arms, through formal education and out into the work force. Never is it proposed to the child that he should consider reality critically - lest he upset the established systems to which we must conform.

To imply that total anarchy is the answer could be described as romantic or even daft. However, there must be an antidote to the relatively dictatorial educational system which we encounter today. Dewey

uses an interesting analogy to illustrate this on the dictation versus free-expression debate. He uses the notion of a pendulum swinging back and forth. At either end, the two opposites - authoritarian rule and the laisez-faire idea of education. Dewey does not feel that the solution lies in finding a mid-ground but rather a change in direction of the pendulum. On the one hand, he believes that the student should not be formed by wiping out everything that the past has discovered. Nor, he suggests, should the student be formed by being given set tasks of a minute and technical nature with the main emphasis being to acquire a specific skill rather than to make anything worthwhile. With reference to the art educator, Dewey's ideas are of particular validity. For example he takes a specific example of the student of a creative discipline - carpentry. He says that "carpenters are educated in their calling by working with others who have experience and skill, sharing in the real undertakings, enabling them to observe methods to see what may be accomplished". (6)

In short Dewey comes up with two simple principles which are of the utmost importance to the humanist educator. They are:

(a) that the student must feel that he is participating in something which is inherently worthwhile

(b) that the student must perceive the relationship

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of means to consequences.

He also stresses the importance of working "with" the
master as opposed to "for" or "under" the master. And
so from a philosophy of how a full education may be
achieved, onto Paulo Freire who painstakingly seeks the
ideal material which would more readily make possible
"the pursuit of a fuller humanity".(7)

Already discussed in the area of the
present educational system, with its flaws and
failings, is the whole aspect of how the various
inadequacies of the system are perpetuated; and how the
teacher is often locked within this system herself.
One is taught that "to be" is "to be like" and "to be
like" is "to be like the oppressor".(8) Therefore, the
stimulation of the critical faculties does not happen
and Freire sees this stimulation as being fundamental
to the liberation process. Liberation, that is, from
oppression. I would like to put forward the notion
that much of the present Irish educational system may
be paralleled to Freire's 'banking method' of
education. Both are teacher centred, oppressive and
neither primarily concerns itself with providing the
child with a viaticum for life at it's fullest. He
says that the banking method emphasises permanence and
becomes reactionary.

Freire advocates a problem-posing education,
which accepts neither, "a well behaved present nor a
predetermined future". (9) This system 'roots' itself
in the dynamic present and becomes revolutionary. At

this point, it is interesting to note that the new Junior Certificate Syllabus for Art, Craft and Design, embraces the notion of a problem-solving education. In the introduction to the syllabus, the aims of Art, Craft and Design at junior cycle are listed as follows:

2.1   To promote in the student an informed, inquiring and discriminating attitude to his or her environment and to help the student relate to the world in visual, tactile and spatial terms.

2.2   To develop a sense of personal identity and self-esteem through practical achievement in the expressive, communicative and functional modes of art, craft and design.

2.3   To develop in the student an understanding of art, craft and design in a variety of contexts - historical, cultural, economic, social and personal.

2.4   To develop in the student the ability to apply evaluative criteria to his/her own work and to the work of others and to in his/her daily encounters with the natural, social and built environment and with the mass media.

2.5   To promote in the student a practical understanding of and competence in the principles and skills underlying visual and constructional design and problem-solving

2.6   To develop the student's artistic and aesthetic
sensibilities and qualities of critical appraisal,
appreciation   and   evaluation   and   to   enhance   the
student's   qualities   of   imagination,   creativity,
originality and ingenuity.

          Each   aim,   it   can be said   focuses   on   an
aspect   of   problem solving.   Indeed,   as   an   emerging
teacher,   I   welcome   the new syllabus   as   it   affirms
Freire's view of:

    men as beings who transcend themselves,

     who move forward and look ahead, for whom

     immobility represents a fatal threat,

     for whom looking at the past must only be a

     means of understanding more clearly what and

     who they are so that they can more wisely

     build the future.(10).
But   it must be remembered that it will   probably   take
the   more enlightened of currently practising   teachers
and   a vital group of new wave young teachers   who   are
committed to an education -

          which seeks to identify and cultivate

          in judicious measure the best

          range of the pupil's strengths and

          interests, and which thereby sets

          the emancipatory power of tradition

          to work in a challenging yet

          fraternal climate.(11) (Padraig Hogan)
It   occurs   to   me   that   the   teacher   who   willingly

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contributes to this "banking method" of education, will not readily make the effort to respond to what Freire calls the "essence of consciousness - intentionality - rejecting communiques to embody communication, that is problem posing education".(12)

In the school in which I have taught for the year , were I myself attended school, I find that the formalities of such a school close down the channels for dialogue between pupil and teacher. The children who attend this school are, for the most part, relatively privileged and middle class. They are well versed in artists and the language of art. However, I experiences major problems in motivating a response, suggestions and opinions and so on. This required me to reconsider my methods of teaching.

It is apparent that a complete, liberating education, should contain more than just the relevant. Relevant in the sense of that which is necessary for day-to-day existence in the work force.

The "constructive irreverent" as it has been described, is perhaps another essential part of a non-oppressive educational curriculum. "Constructive irrelevant" is perhaps an inaccurate description of the elements of this curriculum which would include those subjects and aspects of subjects which are necessary for the student to become ultimately and consciously "aware".

In the new Junior Certificate Syllabus for Art, Craft and Design, these inter-dependent

disciplines are described as being "fundamental to human existence".(13) It states that "Art, Craft and Design education develops a number of important personal qualities, particularly those of initiative, perseverance, sensibility and self reliance" .(14) These are surely all the components required for the upper limits of intellectual and creative growth to be realised. However, there cannot be total liberation until we completely reassess all aspects of the formal educational systems such as home environment, class values and so on with which we are affected from birth.

In the following chapter, I will deal with my attempt to counteract one sided "banking," like teaching through a project with on of my classes.

FOOTNOTES

1.   Paulo Freire, op. cit. (p. 45)

2.   Benjamin Bloom et al as quoted by Biehler/
Snowman in Psychology Applied to Teaching (p. 245)

3.   J. Dewey, op. cit. (p. 164)

4.   Krathwohl et all as quoted by Biehlev/Snowman,
op. cit (p. 247-248)

5.   Paulo Freire, op. cit. (p. 49)

6.   J. Dewey op. cit. (p. 150)

7.   Paulo Freire, op. cit. (p. 58)

8.   Ibid (p. 40)

9.   Idid (p. 57)

10.   Ibid

11.   Padraig Horgan, "The Fortress of the Good and
the Liberation of Tradition": A Review of Irish
Education in the Late Twentieth Century," (p. 275)
Studies

12.   Paulo Freire, op. cit (p. 52)

13.   C.E.B. New Junior Certificate Syllabus for Art, Craft & Design.

14.   Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

LIBERATING THEORIES MADE PRACTICAL

While teaching a group of second year students at a middle class Catholic girls school, I made a personal experiment - this project was intended to:

(a) help me to assess my techniques and objectives within the classroom.

(b) facilitate the pupil's learning, as that, not only the 'relevant' is taught but also the 'constructive irrelevant'.
Thus an education for life is the main concern.

(c) encourage the pupil to question and to understand that he or she is entitled to an opinion.

(d) show the pupil that "to be" is not necessarily "to be like".

(e) allow the pupil to tackle problems as opposed to working around them, so that he or she feels that he or she is participating in something worthwhile. Thus entrusting the pupil with a sense of responsibility for making decisions about his or her work and ultimately about life.

(f) enable the pupil to express, communicate and form

(Fig. 10) The Natural History Museum, Merrion Square, Dublin

(Fig. 11 Interior of Museaum.

the strain of the intimidating blank sheet of paper to be filled with pencil sketches was not there.

The following class consisted of analysis of our trip to the Museum. We set about creating an imaginary skeleton of a creature. The creature's history, form and function were described. Topics which came into conversation included - paleontology, archaeology, fossils, extinction of certain breeds of animal and the controversial issues which hit the headlines about the earth everyday. Above all, the girls related this project immediately to their study of the skeleton and the exoskeleton in the Biology class. The scientific knowledge combined with the visual and haptic understanding of bone structures seem to dispel the usual underconfidence with which these girls approach projects in the classroom. The underconfidence which stems from the fear of making mistakes.

The prior knowledge of the craft allowed them to decide just how the various pieces of our sculpture could be made and put together. Texture did not pose any great problem either.

With the craft and design aspects taken care of, it remained for us to explore the more abstract themes of what constitutes an art work, and what is the function of this art work. We discussed our "creature" in terms of sculpture - the type of sculpture which one sees in parks and in public places. The girls expressed a desire to create a piece that

would be large in scale and interesting in the aesthetic sense. This, it was decided, is one of the main functions of a sculpture. We looked at the sculpture of several artists and in particular that of John Kindness, (Fig. 12 + 13) who was exhibiting in Dublin at the time. We looked at the symbolic message within this sculpture. As it had a political "anti war" theme, they were motivated by the work. We considered the function of the skeleton.

(a)   It protects the vital organs.

(b)   It acts as a series of levers for movement.

(c)   It gives the body shape.

The function of protecting something set the pupils minds working. Several suggestions were made - for example, the theme of the earth's conservation was a popular idea. Some suggested placing symbols of the earth's vital resources within the skeleton. But the idea with which the entire class were pleased with was that of placing a secret within the rib cage of the constructed skeleton. These "secrets" took the form of letters and were to be suspended within.

The writing of these letters was a matter of great seriousness, where the students demanded to be separated in their desks! A graphic project was born out of this and great emphasis was placed on the importance of being part of a group and having a responsibility towards the final sculpture.

The pupils felt it was important to maintain a certain standard in their work. The degree of pride and importance in their work was astounding. This spirit of dedication to the group, rather than competition, continued throughout until the project was finished.
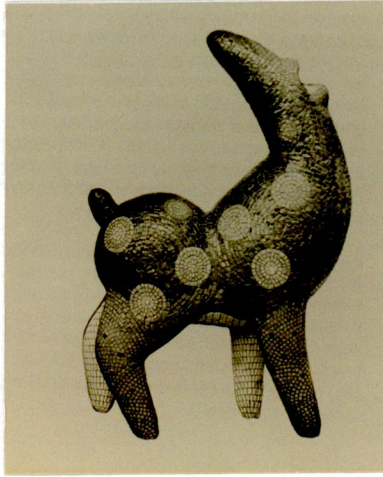
(Fig. 12) John Kindness - <u>Bull</u> <u>Dog</u>

(Fig. 13) John Kindness - Artists on the Boards Dublin

<u>Here</u> <u>Today</u>
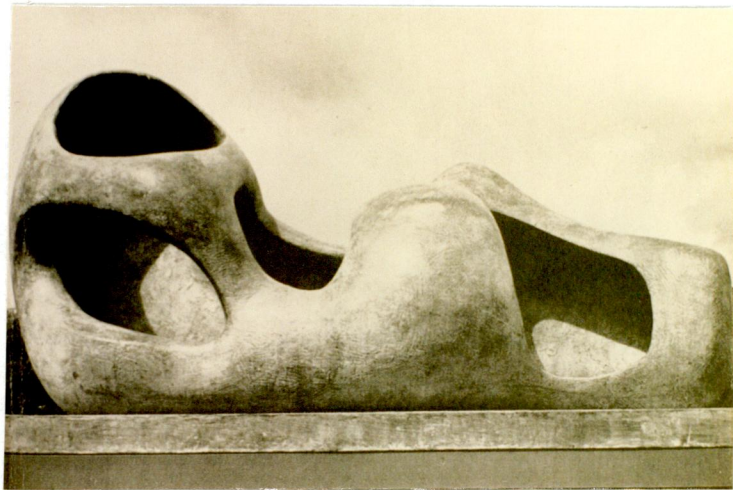
(Fig. 14) Henry Moore, Reclining Figure, 1935-1936

The girls also embarked on a mini project which coincides with their trip to the Natural History Museum. This involved looking at artists, whom we have studied and who would have looked at bones and the skeleton. Henry Moore was a favourite, as it was quite clear, through looking at slides and the sculpture in Trinity College, that he used bones as a direct source. (Fig. 14) We also looked at the difference that studying the skeleton and the anatomy of the body, in general, made to artists.

A good example of this was to contrast the art of the pre-Renaissance with that of the Renaissance. It was observed that the art of the pre-Renaissance is more stylised, lacked three dimensional qualities and relies on shapes rather than on tones. Whereas, the art of the Renaissance is more capable of conveying form and this is more illusionistic. Such concepts, while they may be obvious to the artist, are quite sophisticated for the Second Year pupil. However, by relating such concepts to everyday, tangible situations, pupils can quite easily grasp them. For example, one very effective way of getting across the idea of stylisation is to compare three visual images:

(a) The Weighing of Souls by Gislebertus from the eleventh century A.D. (Fig. 15)

(b) Any portrait from the Renaissance. (Fig. 16)

(c) The modern symbols denoting man and woman found on lavatory doors. (Fig. 17)

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Gisleberts

<u>The</u> <u>Weighing</u> <u>of</u> <u>Souls</u>

11th Centruy (Fig. 15)

Leonardo da Vinci

<u>The</u> <u>Mona</u> <u>Lisa</u>

Renaissance (Fig. 16)

Fig. 17
Modern stylized
symbols denoting Man
and Woman

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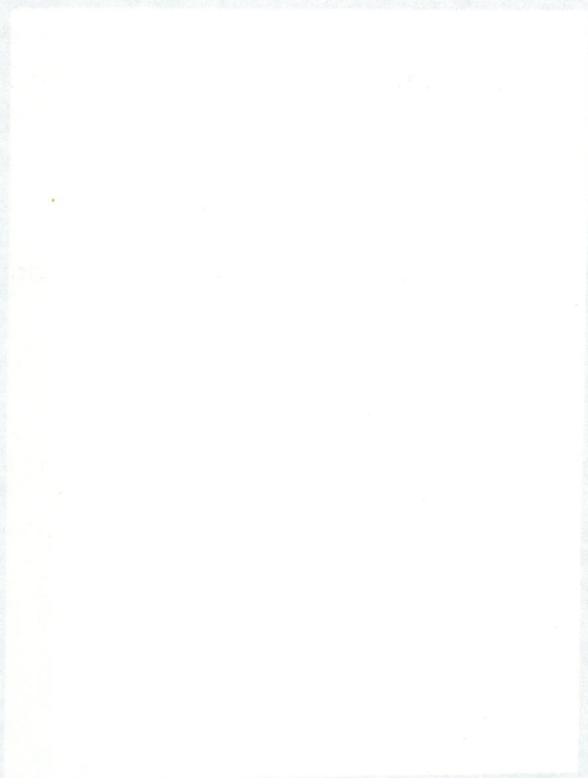
From these three examples, it is clear to see that both (a) and (c) are stylised, whereas (b) is representational, in that, the artist has observed and tried to show exactly what he sees in the light of the tried knowledge or experience.

This project brought with it many problems to be solved.

I found it a liberating experience for me as both teacher and artist. I feel the students have been facilitated towards finding solutions, towards understanding what it means to work through the creative process, from conceptualising, designing, learning craft and technique, to applying this knowledge in a synthesis of ideas and concepts.

On a practical level the objectives were to:

1.   Understand that man can create, transform and mould his environment.

2.   Understand the design process, its' applications and its' functions.

3.   Understand and apply a craft, its techniques and materials.

4.   Develop observational skill and to convey and understand dimension, form and texture in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional media.

5.   To explore a theme, in this case that of skeletons, in terms of history, science and so on so that it may be
used as a vehicle for personal expressions.

In terms of educational objectives in the cognitive domain, this project is intended to allow for development from knowledge of facts, through comprehension, application of this knowledge analysis of material and finally to synthesis of a new whole and then evaluation. Similarly in the affective domain, the pupil is encouraged to realise the five categories as identified by Krathwohl.

Ultimately throughout this project I have attempted to facilitate the learning of that which has been identified as the relevant but also the 'constructive irrelevant' - that which is necessary for the liberation of the self. (Fig. 18, 19, 20).

The next chapter describes my attempts to express myself through my own art work.

(Fig. 18)

(Fig. 19)

(Fig. 20)

The Students working on the project.

CHAPTER 4

Personal Consciousness and the 'Classical need for Order'

My work in clay is my main means of self-expression. I have become quite engrossed in the whole area of passiveness and how, albeit very subtly, we have been guided towards the status of consumer.

The whole notion of consumerism is a fascinating theme.

While we have a choice of what we consume, the various systems and the "powers that be" have a very large part to play in just what is on offer. For example, to get back to the educational system, throughout history, the ruling classes have dictated the material available for consumption. By perpetuating this way of learning and living, we are not encouraged to think creatively. I feel that it is essential that we remove these "blinkers" and see life for what it really is, in order that we should become ward of ourselves, our society and how we function within our environment. The artist and the teacher are the communicators of this world and are therefore the main educators in it. Throughout history it has been of service to the ruling classes, to control the substance of artistic communication. Through my present work, I attempt to challenge the viewer, to question him

and to create forms which are products of the craft process, in my case, this is ceramics.

From my first experimentations with clay, I have tended the organic, the assymetrical - attempting to convey the cunning subtleties which reoccur throughout living forms. For the most part, my response to this stimuli took the form of non-functional pieces; non-functional in that they were not vessels or containers, or rather were not intended to be. As I gained more competence and indeed more confidence with the medium of clay, I became more selective in the forms I chose to make. It is from working through various problems and making decisions that one's individual creative identity is manifested. This is just the discovery my students had made. Using clay, problems and decisions would include choices such as clay and glaze types, which tools to use, which technique to employ. Experience of the material and mastery of technology brings about a freedom, a real freedome within the discipline. Each person then will find a personal solution and thus a personal identity in their work.

As I began to explore clay about four years ago, certain characteristics evolved. The forms tended to have neither a specific top nor bottom. It became important that the forms could be viewed from all angles and could be touched and taken into the hands. Ideas for presentation were explored ranging

from glass shelves to suspending the objects from wires. Above all, the physical form was what I concerned myself with for the first three years of my ceramic study. By saying that the physical form is of primary importance, that is to say that more complex concepts and themes, such as those of social, political or philosophical ideas were not, for the most part, dealt with.

This early work is, in retrospect, an exploration of the medium of clay - which brought with it a certain naivete - an unresolved charm which provided the vocabulary for further development. This stage of my creative development with clay could well be paralleled to the first four categories in the cognitive domain, as discussed earlier. That is to say that knowledge of the craft has been attained, that the limitation and qualities of clay are comprehended, that the application of this knowledge can be applied to new and concrete situations. Also, after three years experience with the clay, I felt capable of the analysis category - where the learner has the ability to break material down into it's constituent parts and to see the relationship between them. As time went on, each little decision became essential in the control of the clay and affected the eventual form of the subject. Decision starting from the basic line of the form and progressing to questions of whether the imprint of a thumb enhances or detracts from the form - as Shakespeare put it -

"Happy are they that hear detractions, and can put them to mending".

Artists whose work I studied included Henry Moore.
I love the 'stoniness' of his work, and the way in which he insists upon truth to the material. The way in which he invents forms with such tremendous power and yet manages to keep a rare sensitivity. Through studying Moore's work, I came upon a writer, Roger Fry, to whom the young Henry Moore owes a lot. Fry goes into great detail on Negro and Ancient American art. I began to reassess my own work in terms of these "primitive" peoples ability to "logically comprehend form".(1) I began to research their "exquisite taste in the handling of material".(2) As Fry puts it:
"They have complete plastic freedom, that is to say, these African artists really conceive form in 3-D".(3) (Fig. 21)

It struck me that such "complete plastic freedom" is just what any sculptor would wish to achieve. Moore in his own way succeeds in creating forms which use, and fill, both positive and negative space, allowing the viewer myriad visual images in one piece as the point of vision shifts. Fry says of Ancient American Art that:

we may, then, dispense once and for all
with the idea of likeness to nature, of
correctness or incorrectness as a test,
and consider whether the emotional elements
inherent in natural forms are adequately

discovered, unless, indeed, the emotional

idea depends at any point upon likeness

or completeness of representation. (Fig. 22).

This observation was not only applicable to my own work but also came through in my own work in the classroom. In the described classroom project, there was no question of a right or wrong form. The forms were not intended to be representational but rather to suggest the subtleties and characteristics of bones. Just what is meant by "emotional elements" is perhaps debatable, but I feel that in this case, understanding that liking or disliking and the application of intuitive response is what is important - and may eventually lead to personal aesthetic understanding.

Ezra Pound said of the sculptor Gaudier Brzeska:

Sculptural energy is the mountain

Sculptural feeling is the appreciation

of the masses in relation

Sculptural ability is the defining

of these masses by planes

For me, sculptural ability can only be manifested after the energy and the feeling have evolved. Clay is the material which I find most helpful in the defining of 'the masses' in relation. At this stage, I feel as though I have a rapport with the medium, I know its personality and just how far I can exploit it. Perhaps, unlike media such as stone and wood, I felt that one cannot master clay, if one does not humour it

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sensitively, it can become the master of man. To enjoy a fulfilling working relationship with clay, the relationship must be a symbolic one.

Most of the above applies to the material itself but I also needed to develop a "language" within

(Fig. 21a)Statue of priest king or god, on a plinth
with a Sabaen inscription, believed to be a grayer for
fertility.   From Hawila-Assaraw, near Askum, Ethiopia
5th -4th century B.C. Limestone (Statue of 47 cms)

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(Fig. 21b) Altar with Sabaen inscription, in the
service of the moon god, Almagah, from Melazo, near
Askum, Ethopia circa 5th century B.C.
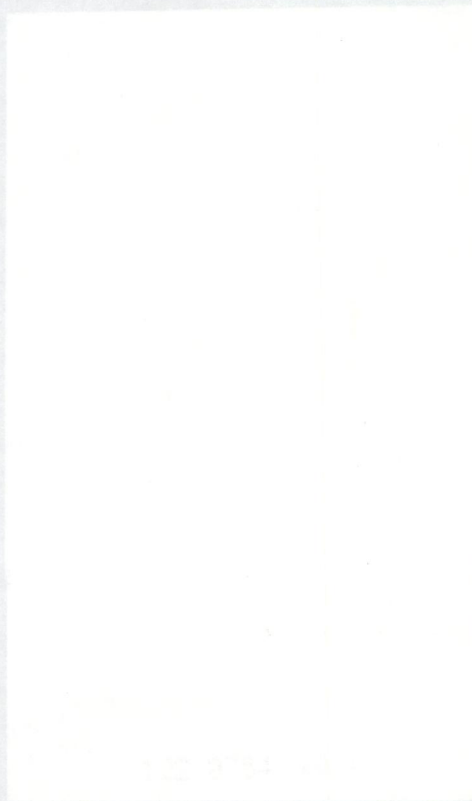
(Fig. 22a) Stylised head of Macaw. Basalt sculpture from Xochicalco. (Height 57 cm)
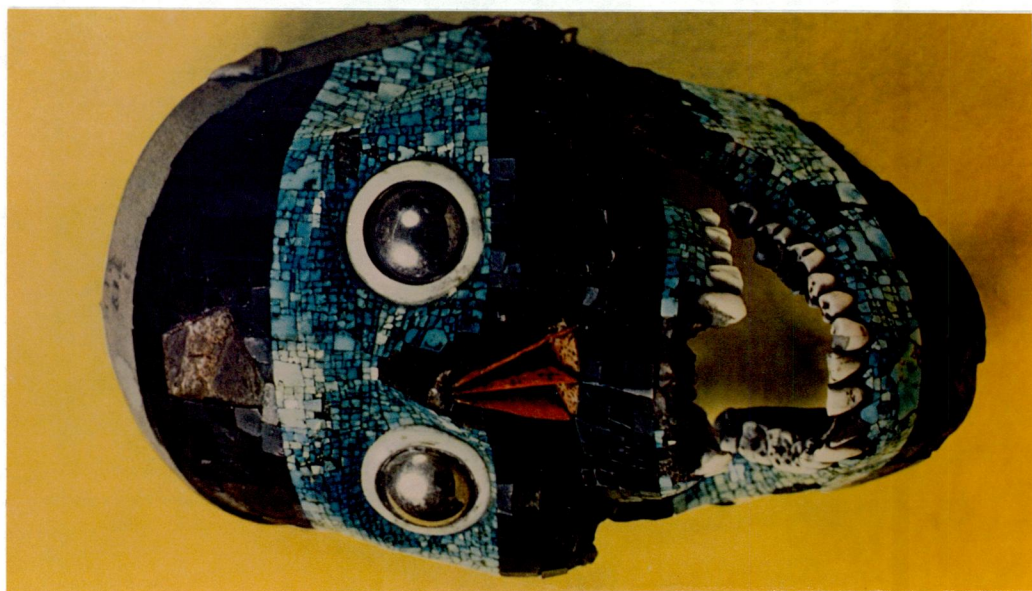
(Fig. 22b) Human skull, enbcrusted with mosiac of turquoise and obsidian, eyes of iron pyrites (Height 20 cm).

the material and so I looked towards other artists who have found a solution to this problem.

The work of Magdalena Abakanowicz is of great interest to me. Her use of material - twigs and so on, influenced the earlier forms I made.(Fig. 23,24) I moved on to networks of long narrow clay forms which resemble nests, cocoons, a crown of thorns even. This development from solid broad forms to groups of clay pieces allowed me to explore the relationship of one object to another, to observe the nature of positive and negative space and, in general, to develop my knowledge of sculptural elements. The observations made by Mondrian (Fig. 25) with regards to space and the relationship of one object to another have also been of interest to me:

We find that in nature all relations

are dominations by a single

primordial relation, which is

defined by the opposition of two extremes. (6)

The long, narrow, twig like pieces shifted to more organic, growing and finally reproducing pieces. Each piece is different and has a "personality" of its own. This ranges from relatively inert forms, right through to budding forms and onto oozing, bursting pieces. These forms intermingle - in much the same may as individuals work within society. This notion led on to a further development in these pieces. The pieces now begin to take on a sinister, weapon-like feel to them. It was at this stage that I began to take an interest

(Fig. 23) Magdalena Abankanowcz, from her <u>Pregnant</u>
<u>Series</u>

(Fig. 24) Magdalena Abankanowicz, Backs 1976 -1982

in the notion of forms embodying a paradox. In more
recent work, the paradoxes of everyday life are dealt
with. This brings me back to Henry Moore, and in
particular to his "Atom Piece". Writing of this piece,
Herbert Read says:

> This configuration of the piece was
> suggested by the shapes the cloud that
> rises after the explosion of an atom
> bomb - a beautiful shape, as is often the
> case with shapes associated with evil or
> murderous purposes - the shape of
> spears, axes, swords etc. This paradox
> in which good and evil, beauty and power,
> unite in one symbol, is fully realised
> in this unusual piece.(7) (Fig. 26)

At this point, I begin to understand
how form can be used to convey or communicate a message
as well as being purely aesthetic. The relationship
and dialogue between the piece and the viewer becomes
very important to me. Generally, the artwork is viewed
and the observer meditates to a greater or lesser
degree - I am interested in an art which addresses the
viewer but which also causes the viewer to feel
compelled "to be" as opposed "to be like" or not "to be
at all". I began then to look towards conceptual
artists. In his essay, "Pluralism since 1960", Marco
Livingstone says:

> The effects of economic forces have
> been manifests not only in a
> sometimes grotesque parody of
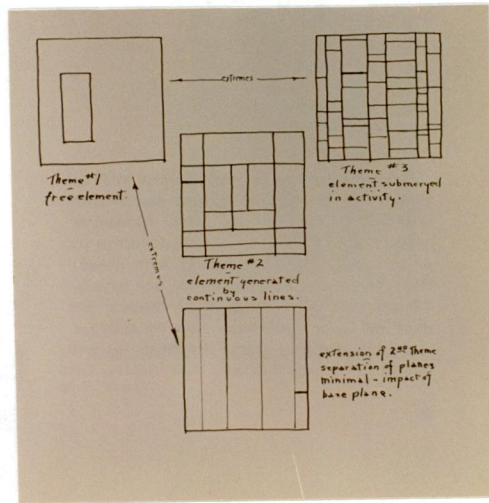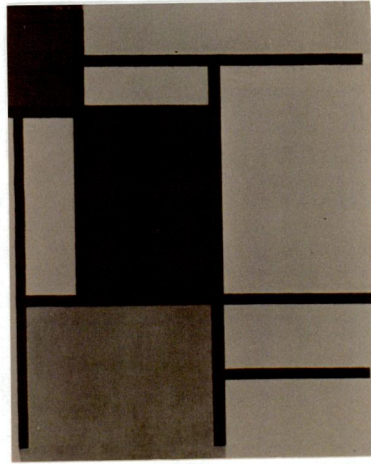
(Fig. 25) Piet Mondarian - <u>Composition</u> and Study from
his sketchbook

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the built-in obsolescence of the

consumer society, which requires

new status - building products

every season, but in the reaction

of artists who have sought to

subvert the system altogether by

abandoning the manufacture

of saleable commodities in favour of

art forms which do not lend

themselves so easily to such

manipulation: for example conceptual

art, video art, performance art and hand

art.(8)

In the work which I have involved myself with for the past year, I would hope that I have reached the final categories in the cognitive domain Bloom describes. At this level, the learner is able to synthesise in the sense of being able to use the elements of a material to produce a "new and meaningful relation", and to be able to evaluate this work. Dick Hebdige suggests:

aesthetic expression aims to

communicate notions, subtleties,

complexities, which have not yet

been formulated, and therefore,

as soon as an aesthetic order comes

to be generally perceived as a code

(as a way of expressing notions

(Fig. 26) Henry Moore -Atom Piece - 1964

en
losophie

which have been already been formulated),
then works of art tend to move beyond this
code while exploring its possible mutations
and extensions ..... much of the interest
of works of art lies in the ways in which
they explore and modify the codes which
they seem to be using. (9)

My ceramic project, this year has two
main aspects. Through it I aim to communicate with the
viewer not only on an aesthetic level but also by
reflecting the philosophical element of the piece back
onto the observer.

The first part of my project deals
mainly with a structural theme of bone forms and the
ingenuity of the skeleton as opposed to the whole area
of death, as a starting point. These pieces are in
fact a direct development from the 'nest' pieces of the
earlier work. The long organic forms are now spiny,
and are derived from my study of bones. (Figs. 26,27) I
see bones as relics in themselves - they are documents
of the past. Regardless of creed, race or status, one
is actually reduced to bone and ultimately to carbon.

Carbon, in fact, is a singular element
it is the only element that can bind
itself in long stable chains without a
great expense of energy and for
life on earth, precisely long, chains
are required. (Primo Levi) (10)
Paleontology and the burial rituals of various

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(Fig. 26 + 27) The organic, spiny forms I was making
- the forms derived from bones

countries have interested me for some time. I feel that through bones and bone-derived forms, the theme of death is quite easily evoked. The skull has been used throughout the years to symbolise death and despair.

Another theme which I have become interested in is the notion of the social and political aspect of functional ceramics. From the contrast between the elegant tea-cup,, synonymous with 'afternoon tea' as opposed to the plain mass produced cup or mug of the working classes. This phenomenon is not really obvious nowadays, however I feel that in the past, throughout history in fact, the cermic pieces found, in use, throughout the home give a good clue to the social status and conditions of the owner.

I see war as being an unnecessary cause of death. By way I mean not only large scale warfare but also the kind of sectarianism, which we encounter much closer to home the kind of suffering caused by oppression and apartheid. The nineteenth century battle artist Elizabeth Butler and her philosophies of her work struck me as being somewhat similar to my own. Wilfred Meyrell, summing up Lady Butler's career, wrote:

> she has exposed the horror
> of slaughter by simply
> centralising it; she has
> given to the victim
> of war the single

personality that has its
appeal to all others of
the human family. It
is no longer a marionette
that is 'put to the sword',
but a brother who has been done to
death.(Fig. 28)

At the beginning of this discussion I referred to the negative consequences of colonialism - my study of this subject stems from my interest in Imperialism - this is a theme running through my work.

My work is not a condemnation of any specific country but rather condemns all social and political agencies of passiveness. Agencies which blinker man into believing that he must kill another man, for whatever reason - for nationalism's sake, for glory or for King and country. I see the innocent victims of war and the sheep-like armies which slay them, as passive, modified puppets. Hence, my preoccupation with awareness and consciousness. However, I do wish to create forms which are aesthetic but also "beautiful" in the classical sense, forms which remain true to the ceramic craft and which can communicate a social, political or philosophical theme.

I hope that as both and teacher, I can facilitate others in having courage and initiative to seek for a personal identity, rather than accepting an enforced identity.

(Fig. 28) Lady Butler - The Return from Inkerman

The second part of my project uses very different

forms

to deal with a parallel theme. The form of these pieces is derived from those of the heroic classical sculptures of ancient Greece. (Fig.29 & 30) The classical is, for all intents and purposes, a measure of all that is considered harmonious, beautiful and balanced in terms of western civilisation. Is this:

(a)   because the classical image is at the root of our culture?

(b)   because we are brought up to accept it as being perfect?

(c)   because it truly is aesthetically "beautiful"?

(d)   because we live in an age of astronomy and mathematics and the "Classical" is the synthesis of mathematical harmony?

Whichever way, the Classical has become a symbol - it represents rationality, order, heroism, "beauty" and truth.   The major Dictators of the western world, interestingly, commissioned vast Neo-Classical building to mirror stability but they missed the "harmony" aspect by distorting proportion to emphasise the "power" aspect.

Gerhard   Merz,(fig. 31 & 32)   the conceptual   artist,   was one of the people   who's   work influences   me.   He   creates   classically   inspired

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installations based on the "classical need for order" (Gottfried Benn). In an interview with Thomas Dreher, Merz says that his:

"concern is with achieving, with the most highly developed forms of this century, a stability that Classicism also sought".(12) By 'stability' he means that which is free of distortion, free of caricature" And as Ezva Pound says:

"Classical art is the smallest possible deviation from the norm" (13)

I find Merz's work not only visually pleasing, but also interesting in that he does not seek the strange nor the "apparently skilled" but instead he deals with themes in what he calls "a much more direct, normal and natural way". But whereas he sees normality and presentability ideal in an art work, and while he assumes a fully-developed viewer, I attempt to use the attention capturing power of the unpredictable to address both the informed and the uninformed and thus contribute somewhat to the liberating process. This part of my project is an attempt to question the truth, truths in general, and to involve the viewer so that he or she does not maintain the position of passive consumer. It is interesting to note that the function of both the artist and teacher are parallel in that both must attempt to liberate and stir the consciousness.

Early Dadaist theories excite and

inspire me, although by the very nature of their passionate manifestos, they could not maintain a strength of momentum necessary to continue for any longer than they did. In Hans Arp 'The Naval Battle he says:

> The bourgeoisie regarded the Dadaist as a dissolute master, a revolutionary villain, a barbaric Asiatic, plotting against his bells, his safe deposits, his honours list. The Dadaist thought up tricks to rob him of his sleep .... The Dadaist gave the bourgeoisie a sea of confusion and distant, yet nightly rumbling so that his bells began to buzz, his safes frowned, and his honours list broke out in spots (The Naval Battle by Hans Arp).

> I too wish, in my own way, to be a revolutionary villain, if it means uncovering the buried truth, I want the bells to buzz so loud that the people will be moved to question. It was noit until 1969 that Marcel Duchamp, (fig. 33) one of the masterminds of the Dadaist movement, was cited as being the inventor of the "unassisted Ready-Made" and thus the person responsible for the change in the focus of art from "appearance" to "conception":

> "from the form of the language to what was being said". (16)
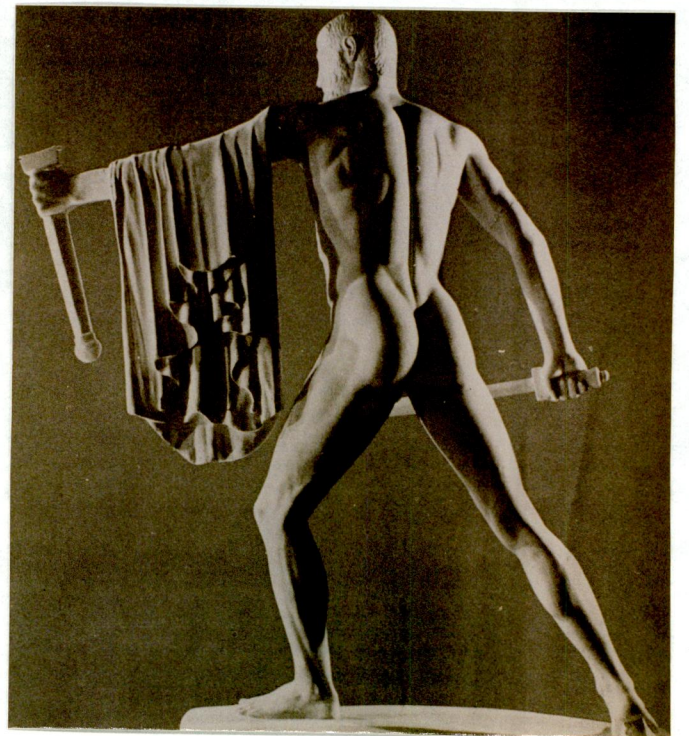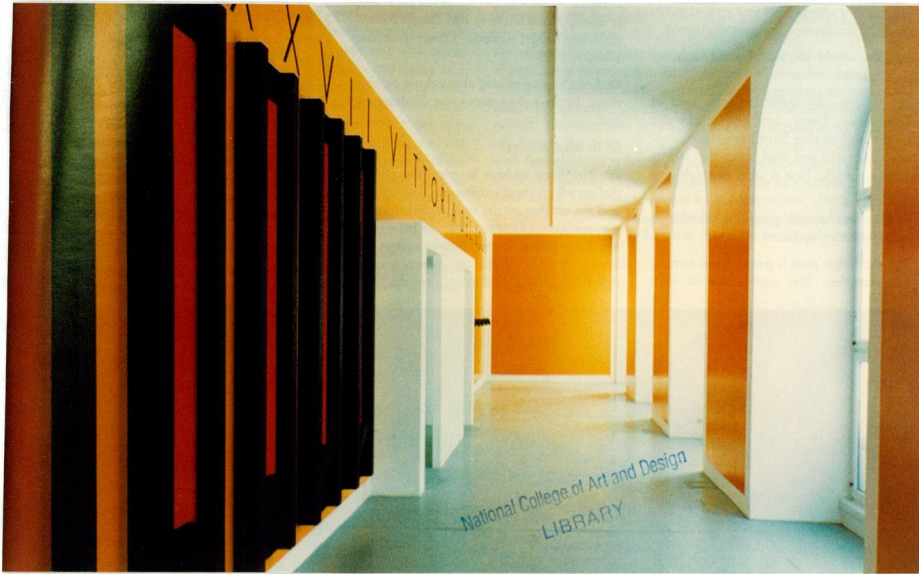
(Fig. 29) The <u>Belvedere</u> <u>Torso</u> by Apollonios,
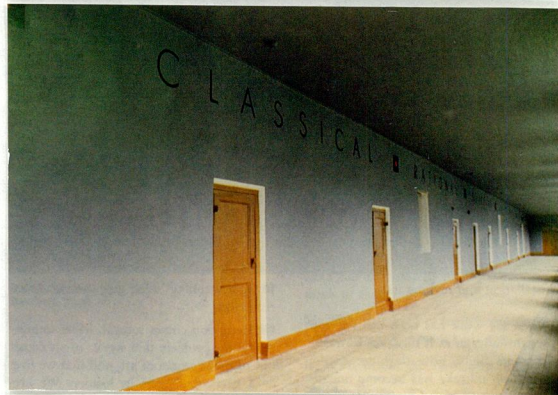
c. 150 B.C.

(Fig. 30) <u>Aristogeiten</u> - from the group by Kvitos and

Nesiotes 477- 476 B.C.
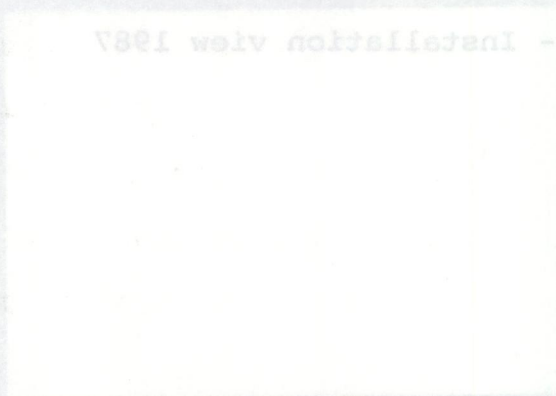
(Fig. 31) <u>MCMLXXXVII Vittoria del Sole</u>

Gerhard Merz

(Fig. 32) <u>Revolutionary - Classical. Rational.Superior</u>

<u>Aristocratic.Reactionary</u> Gerhard Merz (1988)

In many ways, borrowing the image of the classical torso was to use a 'Ready-Made' of a type. (Fig. 34) In my work, I do not wish to shift the emphasis from material concept but I feel that an equilibrium of importance for the clay and craft as well as for the philosophical theme is necessary.

The work of Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger is of particular interest to me. The relationship between written text and visual image in their work to provides a structure for philosophical, social and political inquiry in much the same way as I attempt to do. They "explicitly sought to decode the methods of advertising and mass media in order to reverse the depersonalisation and manipulation to which they generally subjected viewers". (17)

In my work, I carve written text into the clay using, for the most part Roman (Fig. 35) lettering, and specific recognisable typefaces from various publications. I feel this contributes to the unexpected and high lights the paradoxical nature of my work. Also, it reflects further my interest in the Classical, but more importantly transforms the torso form into a surface which allows me to address the audience. It also provides for the use of an alternative surface, other than a canvas or traditional surface for the application of a text. It is very often the case that artists or those who wish to communicate a political or philosophical message, often are considered subversive - their "canvases" range from

walls and building as is the case with the murals scattered throughout Belfast to witty and often cynical graffiti on lavatory doors.

Jenny Holzer uses many surfaces to get across her personal themes. She is renowned for her illuminated bill boards to confront the viewer - taking art out of the sacred, elite gallery situation. (fig. 36,37)
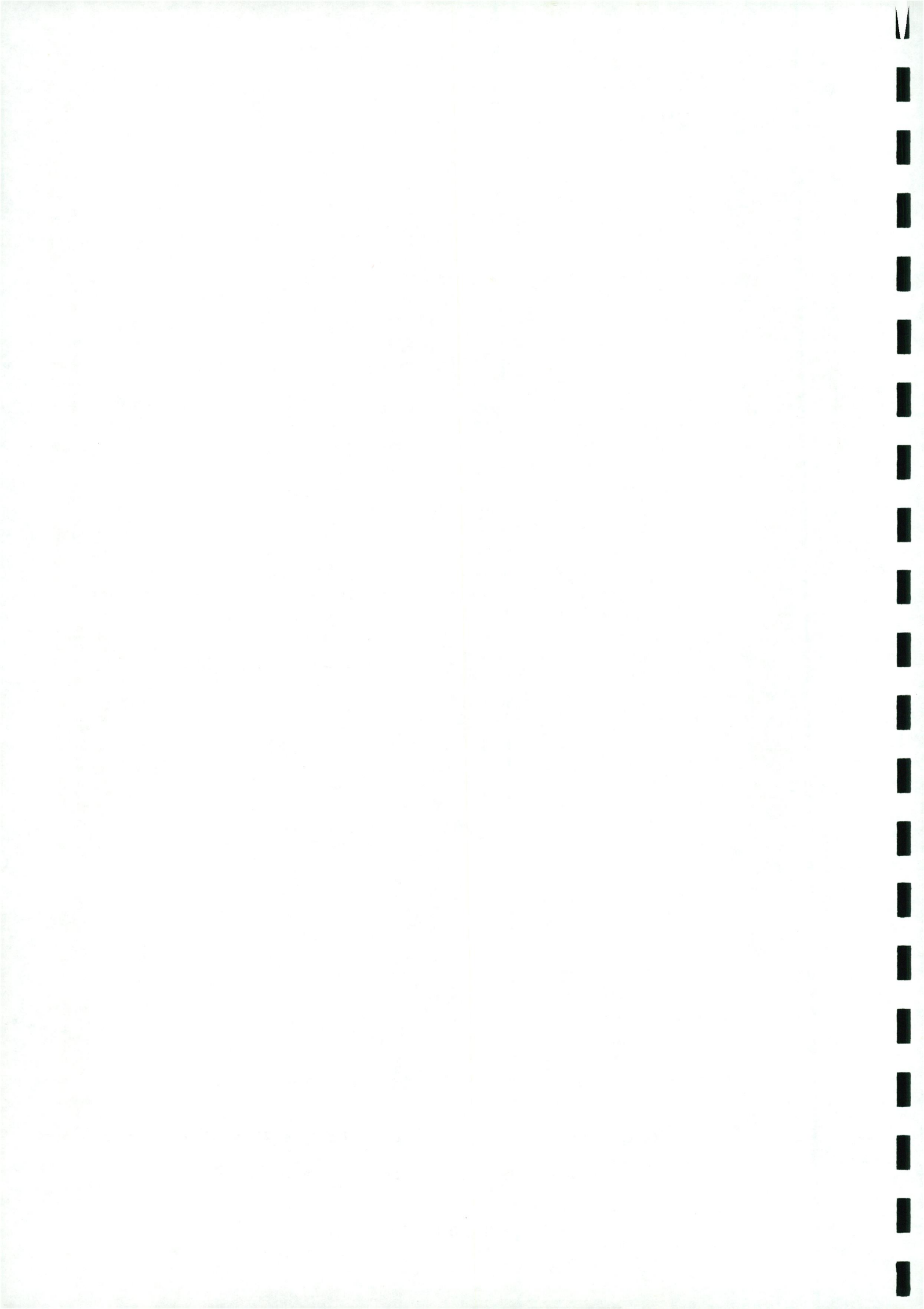
More interesting, for me personal, is the work of Barbara Kruger. With her photo-text pieces, Kruger's feminist politics are manifested in the context of her art
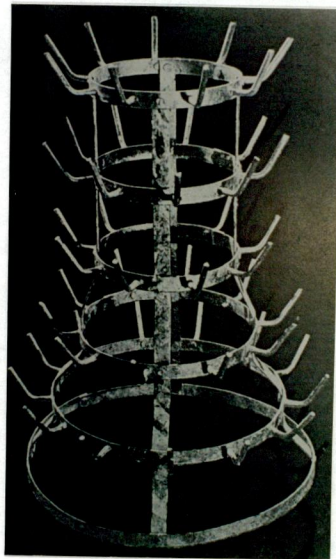
(Fig. 33) Marcel Duchamp's <u>Bottle</u> <u>Rack</u> (1914

(Fig. 34) My interpretation of the Classical torso -at
this stage, the torso has not been fired

rather than in the form. Her piece "Untitled (We won't play nature to your culture)" (Fig. 38) addresses artificially determined gender roles. She rejects the dichotomy of superior 'culture' and inferior 'nature', the latter being associated with woman's emotional, physical and domestic role. She pairs image with text to reveal the subtext of the context. Kruger boldly declares independence from the typecasting that associates women with elemental nature - men with culture and civilisation. This brings me to perhaps a lesser theme in my work and one which is again linked to oppression. The decision to use the male torso, is symbolic of the 'master culture' (Fig. 39) as mentioned earlier. this would appear to be a feminist theme but I feel it is a universal theme. The "straight/white/male" concept, along with the dichotomy of classes is more what is being dealt with.

"I am for an art that is political - erotical, mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum"
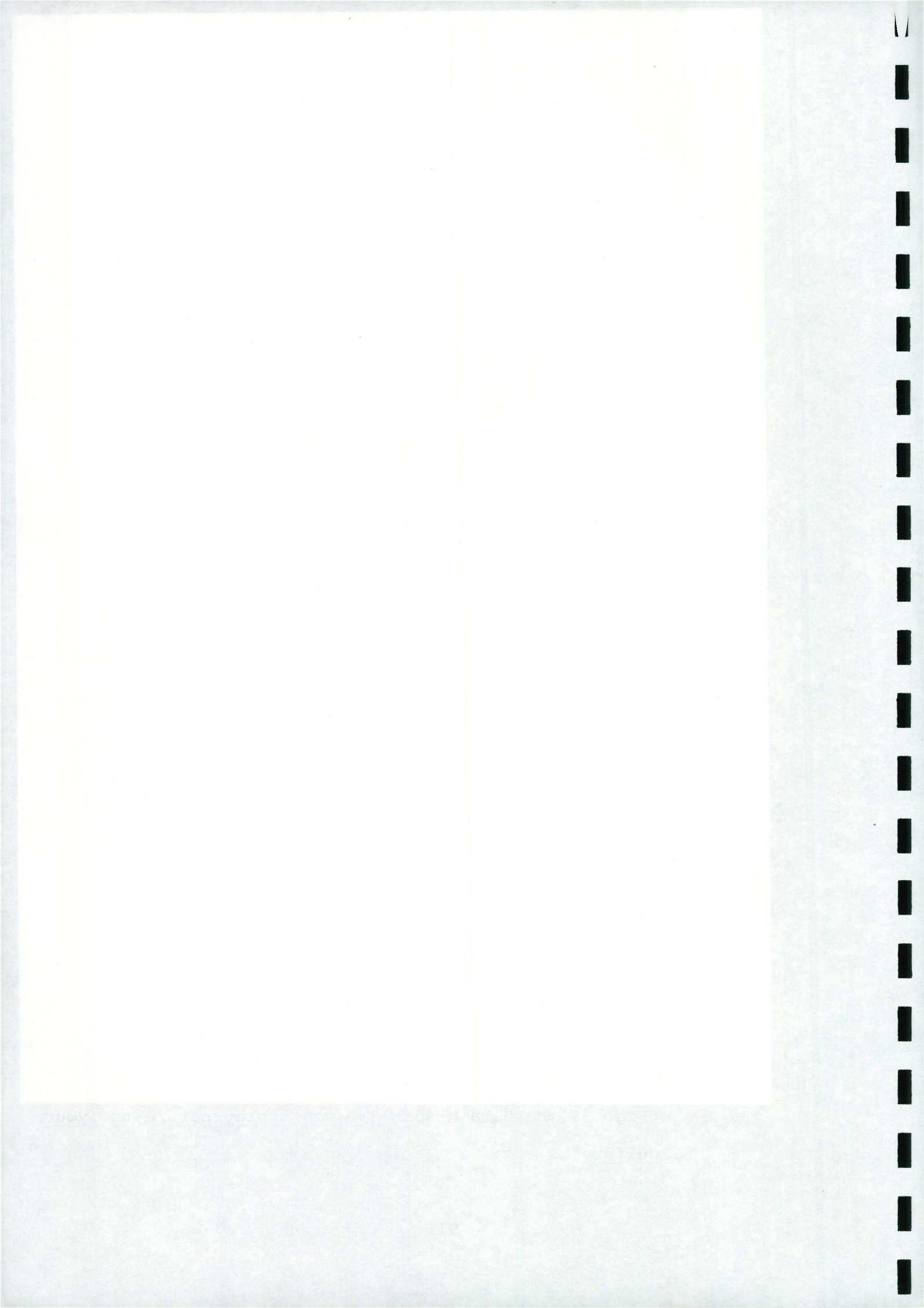
(Claes Oldenburg, Manifesto 1961) (18)

This brings me back to the points made at the start of this discussion. Points which I have tried to incorporate in my philosophy as both teacher and artist.
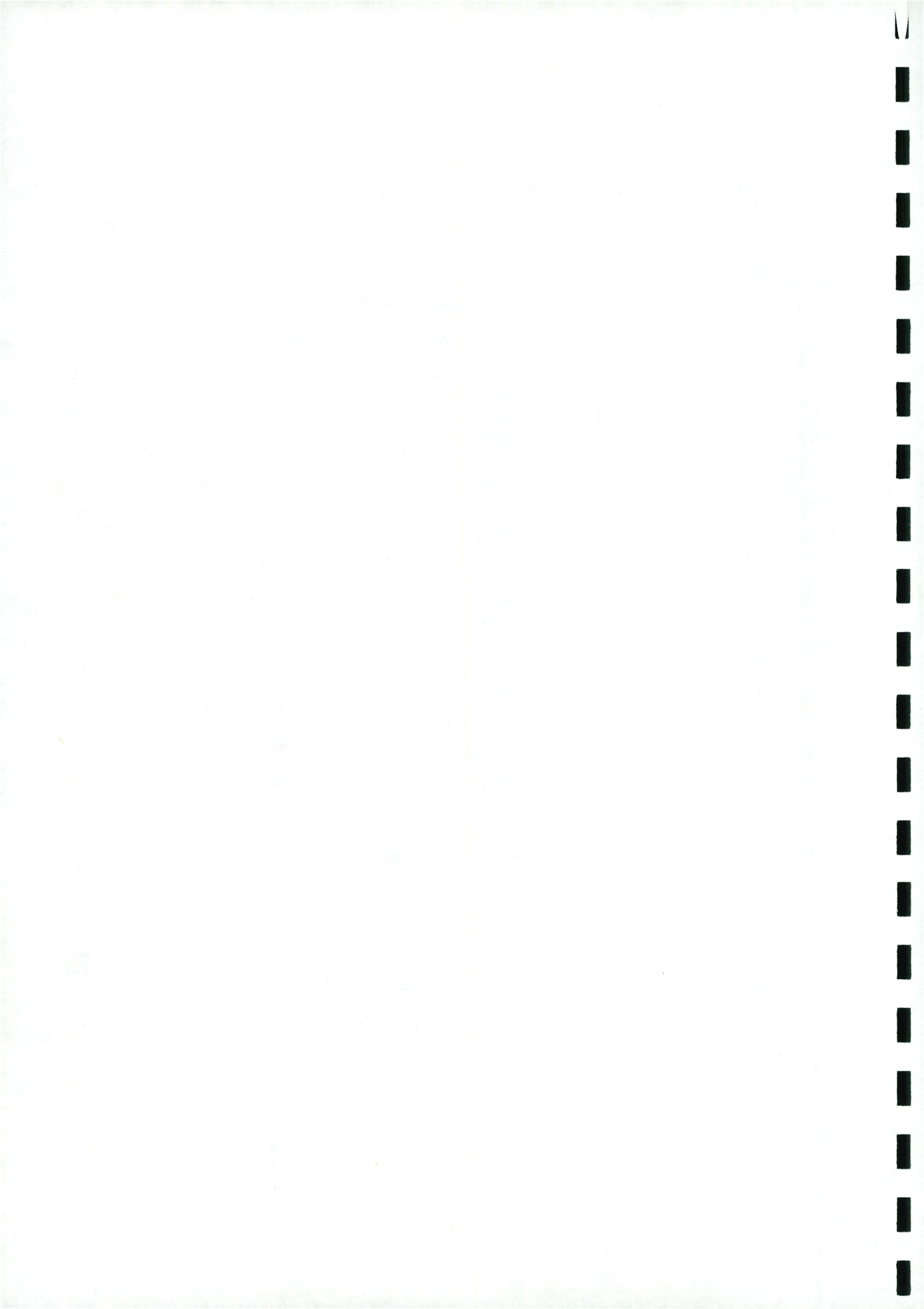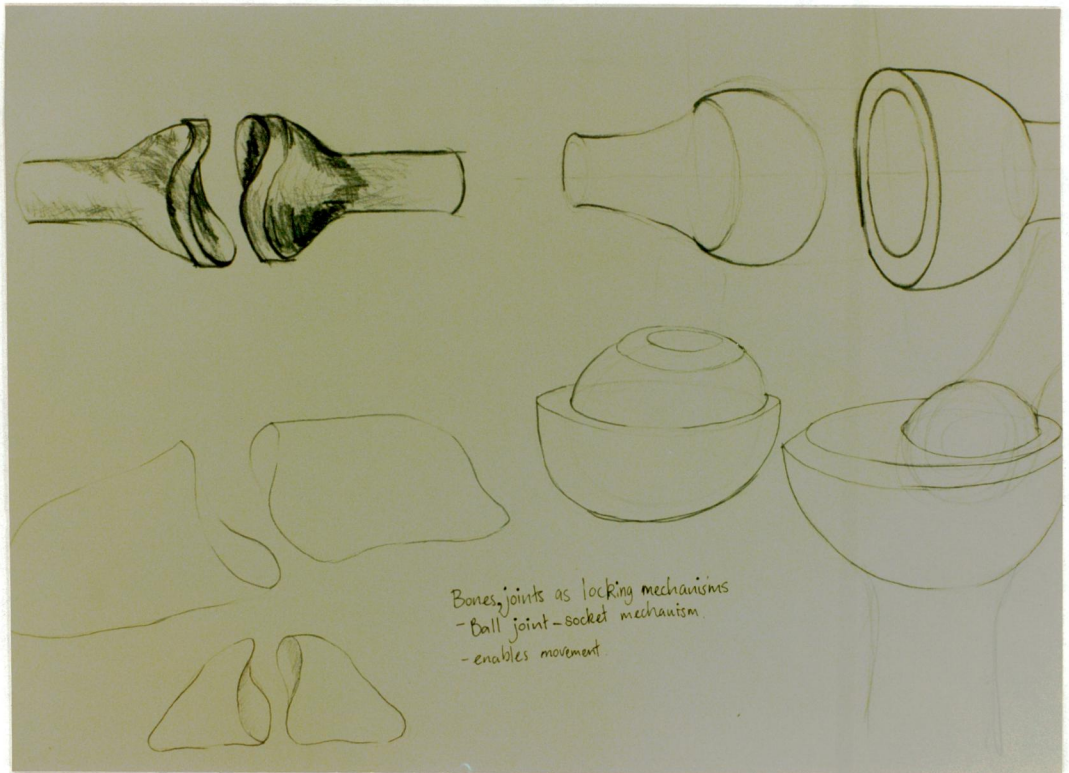
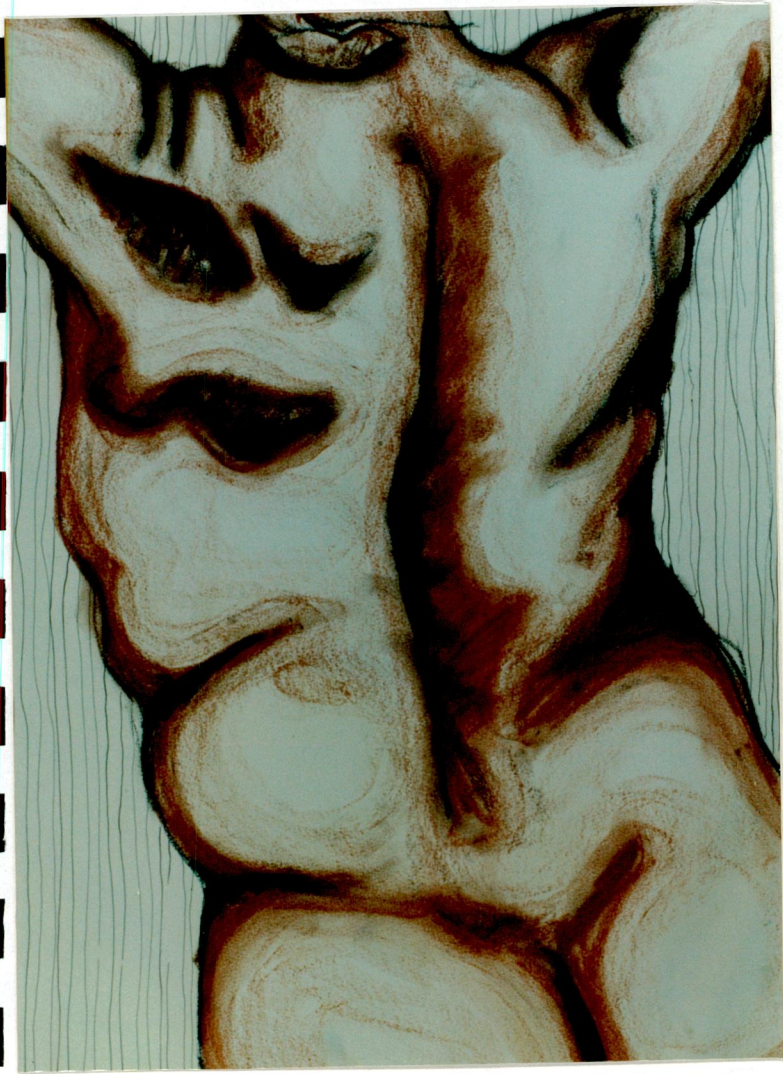(Fig. 36 & 37) Jennry Holzer's illuminated bill boards

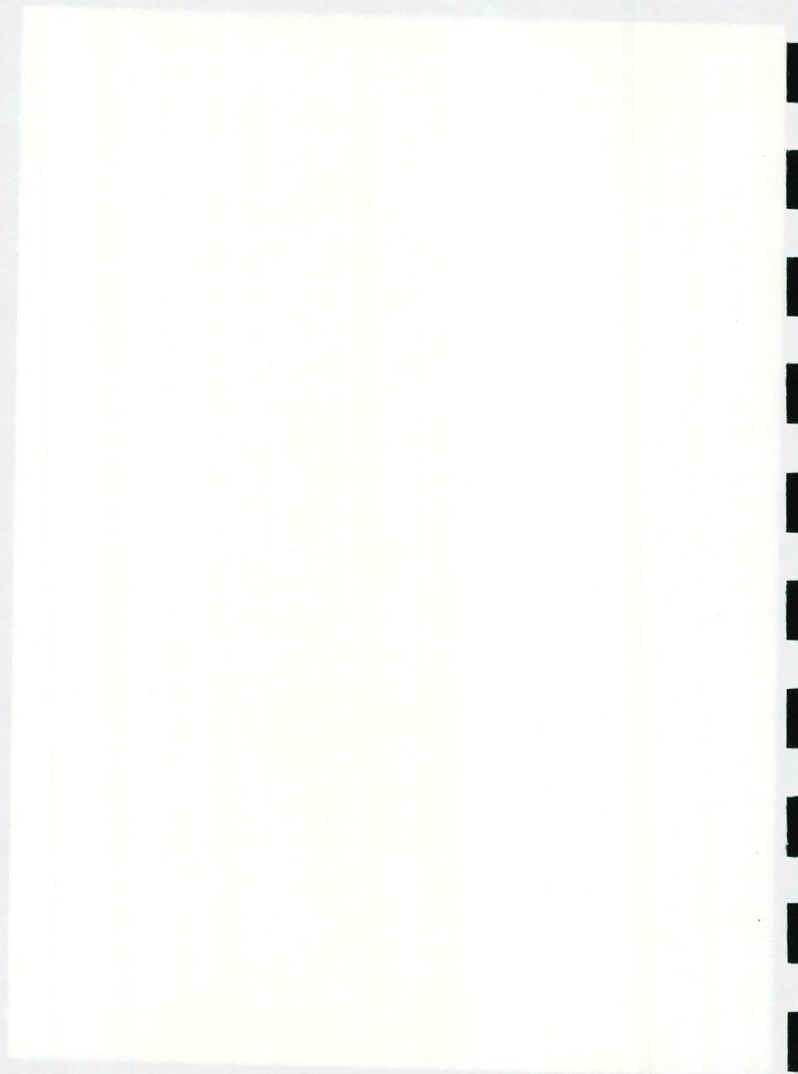(Fig. 38) Barbara Kruger "<u>We</u> <u>won't</u> <u>play</u> <u>nature</u> <u>to</u> <u>your</u> <u>culture</u>"

Bones, joints as locking mechanisms
- Ball joint - socket mechanism.
- enables movement

Personal work - preliminary sketches, observational studies and ceramic pieces (Fig. 39-45)

CONCLUSION

Throughout this discussion, I have attempted

to analyse the Irish educational system, as it concerns both my work and the environment and society in which I live. I have suggested ways of counteracting the passiveness which penetrates through our society and I have described how I deal with these issues through my craft - ceramics.

"What you gotta do, in this day and age -
You gotta agitate, educate, organise!
Take the time to live, take the time to give -
You gotta agitate, educate, organise!"

FOOTNOTES

1.   Roger Fry, _Vision and Design_

2.   Ibid.

3.   Ibid.

4.   Ibid.

5.   Ezra Pound, _Grandier-Brzeska; a memoir_

6.   Mondrian as quoted by J.M. Nash, "Cubism, futrism and constructivism" _Modern Art_ (p. 159)

7.   Herbert Read, _Henry Moore_ p. 246

8.   Marco Livingstone, "Pluralism since 1960" _Modern Art_ (p. 359)

9.   Dick Hebdige, _Subculture - the meaning of style_

10.   Primo Levi, _The Periodic Table_

11.   Wilfred Meyrell, "The Life and work of Lady Butler" _The Art Annual_ (p. 31)

12.   Gerhard Merz in interview with Thomas Dreher "A quite different coldness" _Artscribe_ (p.54)

13.   Ezra POund as quoted by Gerhard Merz, ibid (p. 55)

14. Gerhard Merz, ibid.

15. Hans Arp, The Navel Battle

16. Joseph Kosuth, "Art after philosophy", Studio
    International

17. Marco Livingstone, "Pluralism since 1960s" Modern
Art (p. 383)

18. Claes Oldenburg, Manifesto 1961 as quoted by
Simon Wilson, "Pop", Modern Art (p. 324)

19. That petrol Emotion - Big Decision

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