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FISH AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

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CHAPTER 1

PERSONAL PROJECT

Introduction

When I see fish or people fishing, I recall all the delightful memories I have of my childhood. Having two sisters and no brothers, I often felt tears sting my eyes as my father assembled all his fishing tackle into his green canvas bag and he would ask, "Is anyone coming?". All too often the answer would be "no". I began saying yes for I was desperately afraid of him falling into the water and being alone and never coming home. My father could swim, as he said "like a stone". I, the brave and fearless eight year old, by going along, felt not only would I make my father happy by keeping him company, I could also save him from the jaws of death. I, could swim after all.

We had just got a new boat called 'The Misuru'. Fairness is everything, the name was carefully worked out by my father by using the first two letters from each of our names Miriam, Susan and Ruth, in order of birth, of course.

I remember vividly watching all the other boats on the vast Lough Sheelin in Co.Cavan (Fig 1.) with the figures fishing revealed as tiny silhouettes against the summer sky. The serenity of the lake was unforgettable, the only sound being the swishing of Dads' fishing line as he cast out on the silent water.

I would trail my hand in the water when we would move to where we had observed the trout 'rising', making concentric circles on the mirrored surface. I did my share of fishing with my own rod and would inevitably get the hook caught in my life jacket, the weeds or even on one occasion, the bottom of the boat. I will always remember one particular day, catching three small



Fig 1.

Lough Sheelin, Co Cavan

perch and was so proud bringing them home to show Mum.

Even then, at the age of eight, I loved the look of fish, their shapes, textures and their subtle colours.

Today, I still love looking at fish although I absolutely detest the taste of them. I now find them endlessly fascinating subjects for my artwork.

The following text documents part of my exploration of the fish theme that is dear to my heart and is so much a part of me.

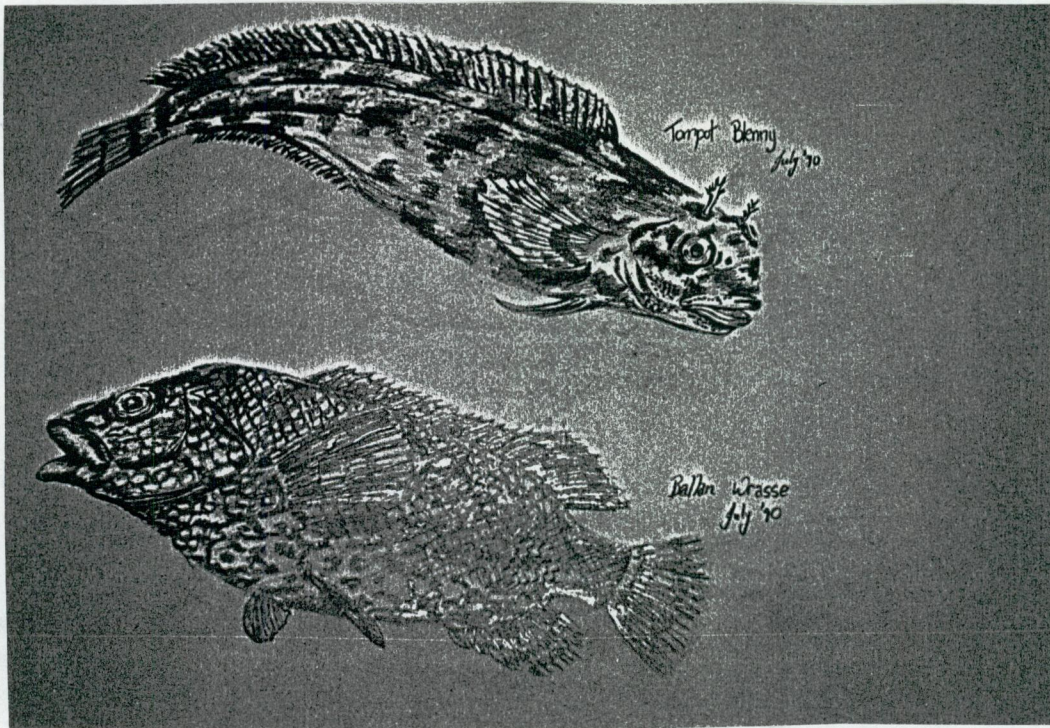


Fig 2.

Preliminary Pencil Studies



Fig 3.

'Sardines', Watercolour Inks. 96" x 72"

My drawings began as close detailed observational studies, looking at the silvery quality of the fish which I had seen so often on my own kitchen weighing scales (fig 2).

I remember studying seventeenth century Dutch still life as part of my Art Historical studies in school and finding this branch of Dutch painting so enthralling. These still lifes usually show beautiful vessels filled with wine and appetizing fruit, lobsters, fish or other delicacies arranged on expensive china.

Willem Kalf for example, liked to study the way in which light is reflected and broken by coloured glass. He studied the contrasts and harmonies of colours and textures and tried to achieve ever new harmonies between rich Persian carpets, gleaming china, brilliantly coloured fruit, fish and polished metals.

I experimented with various media in the initial drawing stage to render this reflection of light which I had closely observed in Kalf's work.

I felt my drawings were too tight and confined in size. I needed both to 'free up' my drawings and to introduce colour. I have been influenced by the work of Matisse whose paintings and collages I could honestly describe as my personal favourite of all the artists I have studied. His sophisticated simplicity and use of colours give me immense pleasure and enjoyment.

My tutor, Mo McDevitt suggested that I should work on a much larger scale to my previous drawings and use strips of card and large brushes and paint. (Fig 3.) I covered my wall with large pieces of paper and used a much looser method of paint application, making sweeping movements of my entire arm and

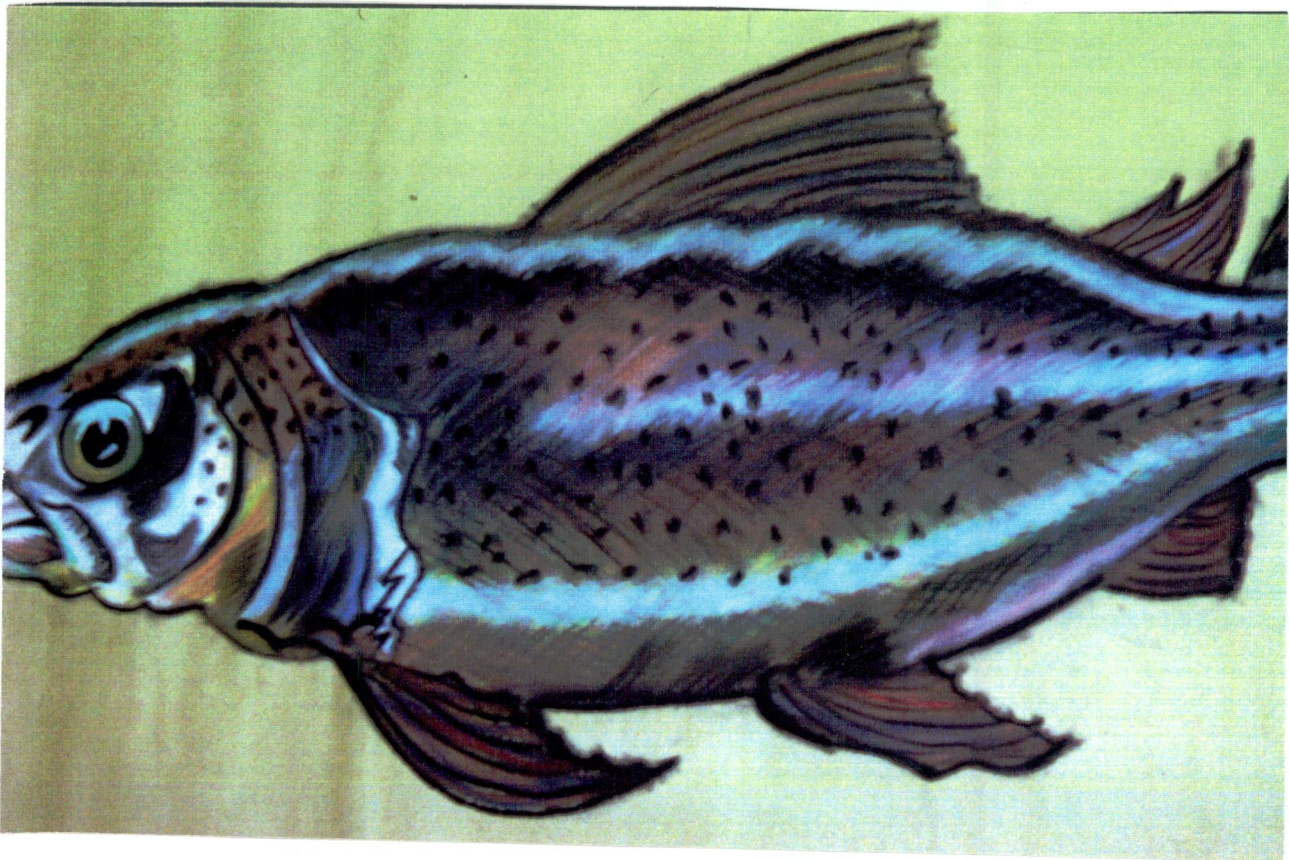


Fig 4.

'Salmon', Pastel 36" x 48"



Fig 5.

'Pouting', Pastel 36" x 48"

not just my hand and wrist, as in my previous drawings. (Fig 4 & 5)

Looking back on my art work throughout the years, the vibrant colours run like a thread throughout, culminating in my Diploma show work which was composed of highly decorative and extremely colourful ceramic pieces.

The craft I am studying this year is Printed Textiles and it is through this medium that I will develop my personal project. I found the technical processes in print did not limit the type of work I could do as I had thought at first they would. Instead, the scope of the effects I could achieve was opened up through working in different processes and with various media.

I used my fish drawings as a basic source from which to experiment and play around with the adaptation from my drawings into my first fabric print. This was the first major step forward in my personal project.

The early Egyptian cave paintings, with their extraordinary symbolism and simplicity, interest me enormously and have proved to be a major influence on my work. One in particular, "The painting of a pond from a tomb in Thebes", which was painted circa 1400B.C., influenced my first main textile print design.

In this design (fig 6), I have sought to combine the influences of the textural rendering of the Dutch still lifes, the simplicity of the Egyptian tomb paintings and of course, the vibrancy of Matisse's colours. These influences, I will discuss in detail in Chapter Two.

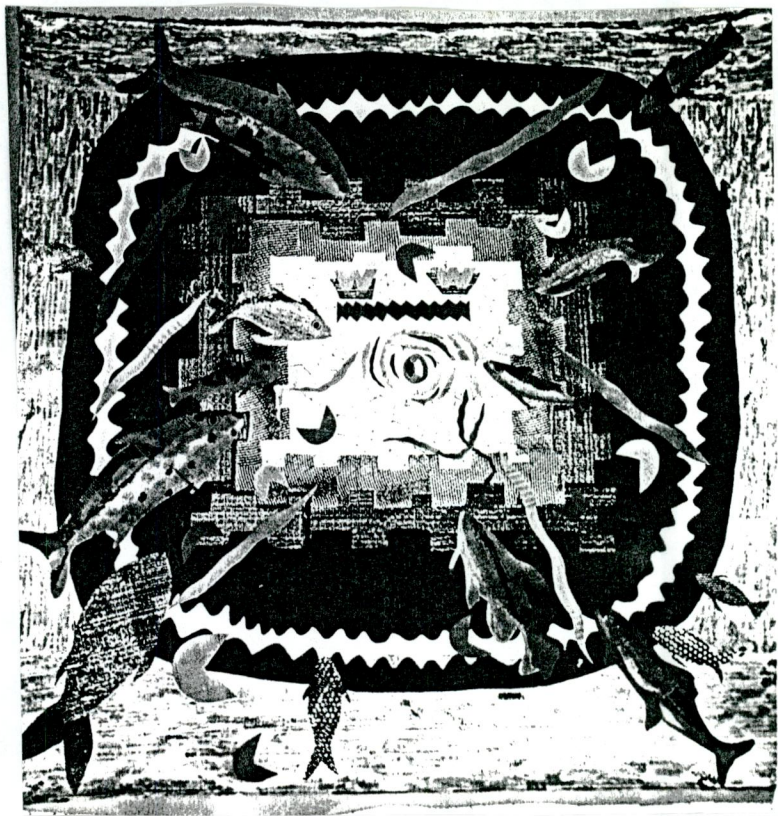


Fig 6. 'Pool of Fish', Fabric print 36" x 38"



Fig 7. Fabric Printed Screen

My first design required the combination of several printing techniques including transfer printing, photographic screen printing and the use of a combination of applique sections of transfer printed fabric, with the screen printed sections.

My design took on a whole new life. I was pleased with the result, particularly with the accuracy of the rendering in print of the various textures in my design.

The next stage of my work in print involved design work for my final piece. I had decided at an early stage that I wanted to use my final piece for something other than a wall hanging which was to be the final outcome of my pupils' print project.

One day as I walked along Wood Quay, I discovered a quaint little antique shop called 'Shambles'. Naturally I went inside, I spotted a beautiful antique room divider which I bought and carried back to the college.

This screen determined the size and shape of my final design. Earlier in the year I had used my drawings of pouting fish as a source for my lino print designs. I combined these drawings with my drawings of sardines and seaweed for my final design.

I wanted movement, texture and colour to be predominant in this design. I isolated linking areas in the four panels of my room divider and chose a rich cream herringbone calico fabric on which to print, this I felt would compliment the vibrant colours I had chosen (Fig 7).

However pleased I was with my printing, I felt the need to make fish forms

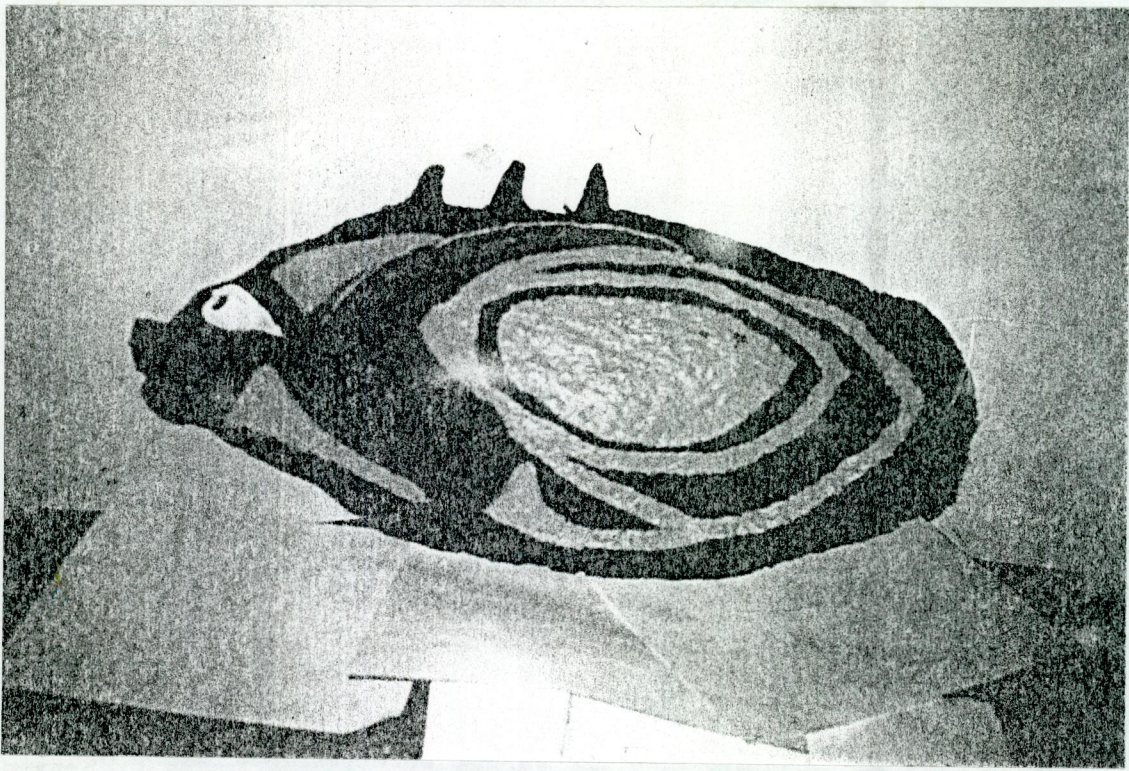


Fig 8.

Three dimensional tropical fish (papier mache)

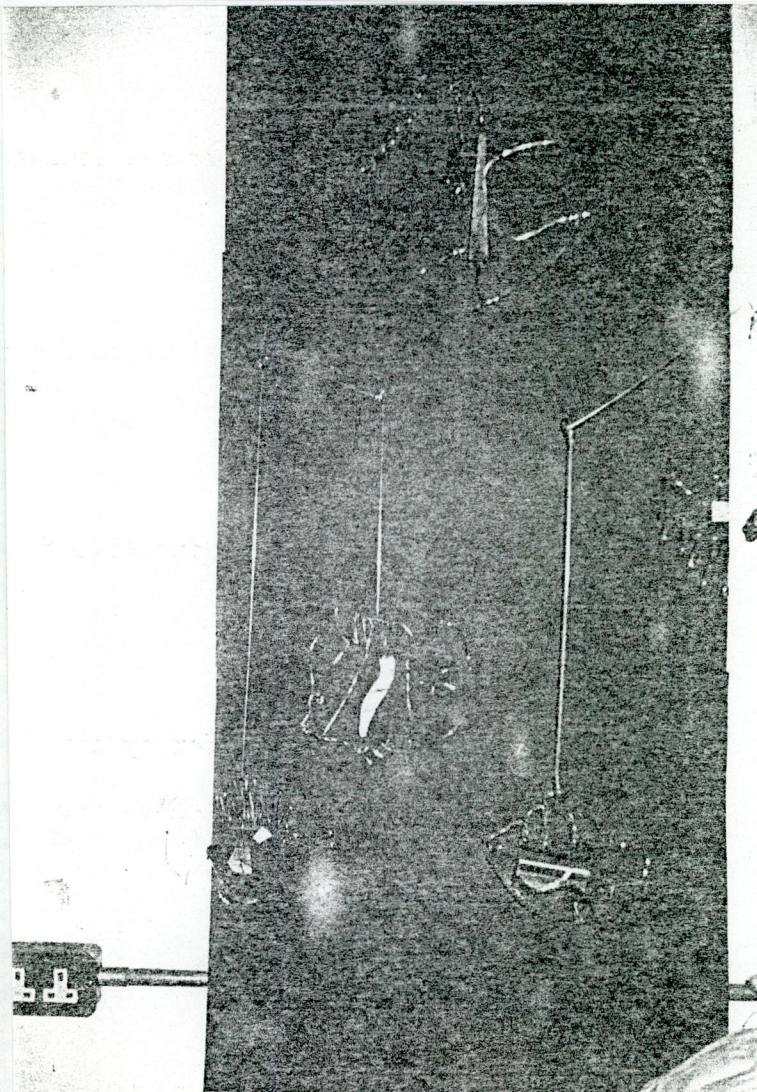


Fig 9.

Fish Mobile, copper wire and coloured glass

in three dimensions. This work was based on my brightly coloured drawings of tropical fish.

I constructed the basic shapes in polystyrene and used the pulp papier mache method to model the overall shape of the fish. A combination of wire and tull netting provided colourful "fun" fins and spines on the fish (Fig 8).

The use of wire in the three dimensional fish led me to the construction of my fish mobile. In this piece I used a combination of copper wire and coloured glass to construct the mobile (Fig 9).

During my years in ceramics I have used many forms of decoration, in my slab built pieces. Having cut two fish based lino blocks, I decide to use these images to impress decoration into clay. I used slabs of T-material clay and constructed a simple box form which I stained with copper and cobalt oxide (Fig 10).

Finally, I painted a watercolour in support of my final print which I had upholstered onto the antique room divider (Fig 11).

In my work I have portrayed and used fish as a source for a variety of purposes and I have used a combination of various crafts.

The fish has proved to be a fascinating and endless source for my art work and even after a year of using it as a source for my work, I have not tired of it at all.

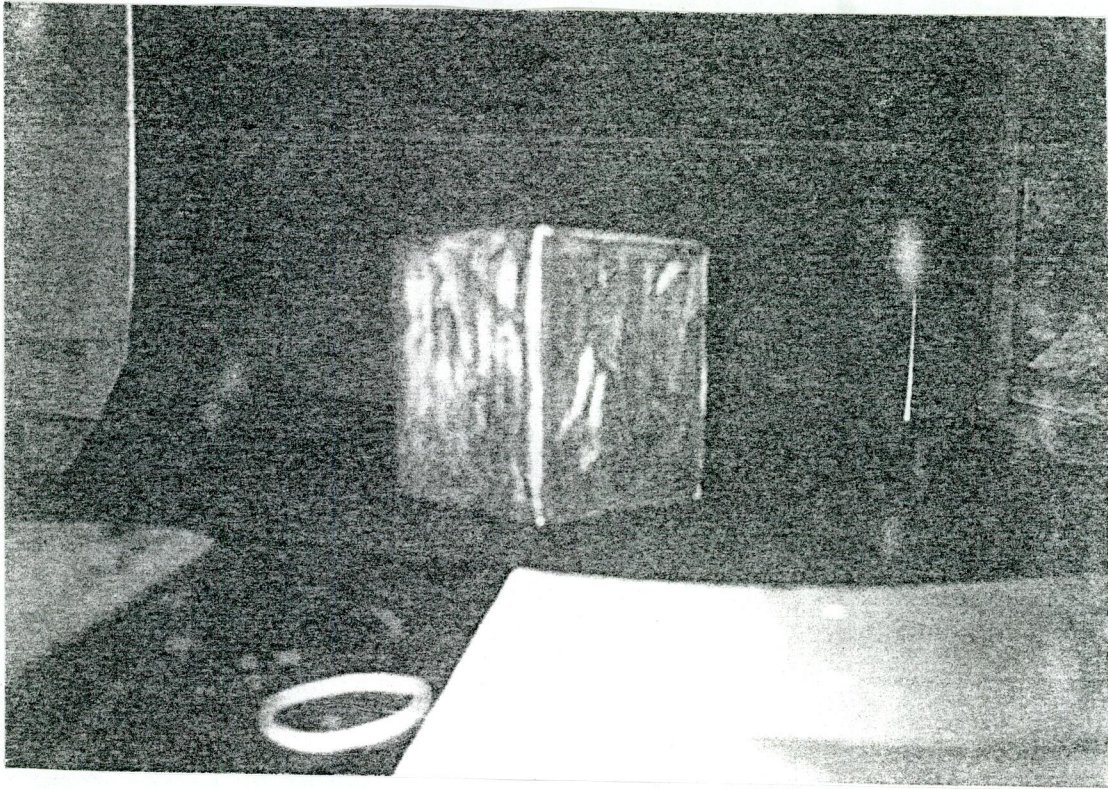


Fig 10.

Slab built ceramic box

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

All artists tend to have one or two images, which runs like a thread throughout their work. For example, we associate Lowry with his depictions of the Industrial North of England populated by Matchstick men. Degas is associated with his dancing ballerinas. Monet, for most people, is associated with his lilies and Turner with his romantic seascapes.

The artists I have chosen for my Historical reference have all dealt with fish as an image at some stage in their work. This image has been explored by many artists and craftsmen throughout the ages, ranging from the paintings in the tomb of Thebes which are dated circa 1400B.C. right through to the art of the contemporary period.

Considering that the source for my personal work, my historical reference and my class project relates to fish, I felt it both necessary and stimulating to research the various symbolic meanings of fish.

Few people realise how their everyday lives are imbued with and controlled by symbols, mostly of ancient lineage. Such symbols have been handed down to them not only through the ages but through many different races, cultures and religions. Today, for the average person, a symbol is an empty thing, little more than a sign conveying no other meaning than its outward appearance suggests. For example, a triangle is an accepted sign for danger, whereas the full symbolism of the triangle is both ancient and religious and almost endless in its implications.



As J.C. Cooper writes: "Signs are concerned with ordinary life; symbols contain an inner archetypal meaning leading to higher realities."¹

We live in a world of symbols, most of which are either not understood because of ignorance or are taken so much for granted that their real significance is overlooked. In fact, we fail to recognise many symbols when we see them. Symbolism is a treasure-house of the past and holds meaning for the present. It has not been invented by individuals but has grown naturally out of the need for expression in a mode that transcends the limitations of words, yet speaks a language that we all can understand. From the moment we are born to the time of our death, we use symbols that were current in ancient times and lands, yet are still in use in contemporary society.

Today, for example a bride wears a veil, a white dress and a ring. In doing so she adopts the same symbols of virginity, fertility and union that were used by brides who lived, married and died thousands of years ago.

As children we were all told that Santa Claus came down the chimney with our presents. Why? Why could he not come in through the door. As a child, I often wondered this, but never questioned the reason. What is a chimney to me or any other child only something that every house has to get rid of the smoke from the fire. I was amazed when I discovered the symbolism of the chimney whilst undertaking research for this documentation. According to J.C. Cooper: "Traditionally and symbolically, the chimney was the opening heavenwards and as a hole in the roof, the spirit of man could travel from our world to the other and through which the spirit of heaven could descend."²



Santa Claus coming down the chimney thus symbolises gifts brought directly from heaven instead of through an earthly door.

Symbols are an international language, those such as the cross, swastika, circle, tree, fish and serpent, appear in every developed culture as well as in many earlier or more primitive societies. Such symbols span the ages from the remote civilizations of the Aryans, Sumerians, Chinese and Egyptians down to the present day.

While animals live on the element of land and birds in the air, the elements of water has been regarded by most traditions as being the origins of all life. J.C. Cooper writes:

The primordial waters are chaos, formless, containing the potential of all forms and all possibilities in manifestation. They are essentially, the creative element of the material, the mother of all things, so that it is not surprising that fishes are associated with all aspects of fertility and creation and have a universal varied and rich symbolism.³

It is interesting to look at and compare the views held by various writers of the symbolism of any one object. I found a contrasting view to that of Cooper's on the symbolism of fish in the work of J.E. Cirlot, he writes:

In broad terms, the fish is a psychic being, or a 'penetrative motion', endowed with a 'heightening' power concerning base matters - that is in the unconscious. Because of the close symbolic relationship between the sea and the Magna Mater, some people have held the fish to be sacred. There were some Asiatic rites that embraced fish-workshop and Priests were forbidden to eat it."⁴

The fish incorporates a variety of meanings, reflecting the many essential facets of its nature. For some people, the fish has a phallic meaning, whereas for others, it has a purely spiritual symbolism.

In essence, the character of the fish two fold:

Cirlot says "by reason of its bobbin-like shape, it becomes a type of 'bird

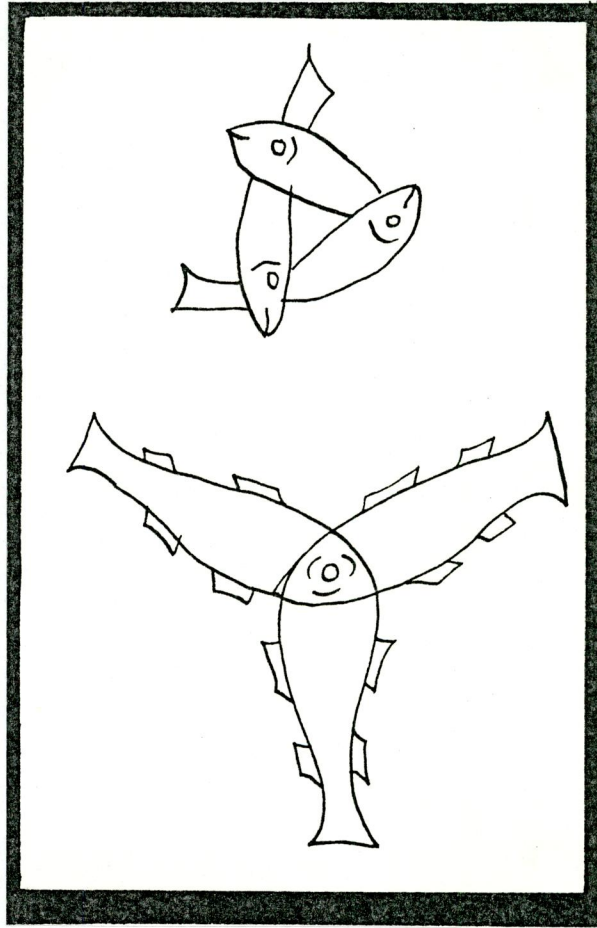


Fig 1.

Three fishes as the trinity of divine power.

of the nether regions', symbolic of sacrifice and of the relationship between heaven and earth." ⁵ On the other hand, by virtue of the extraordinary number of its eggs, it becomes a symbol of fertility.

I spoke to a friend of mine, who is a Catholic Priest, Fr Vincent Quilter, regarding the symbolism of fish. He stated "The fish became a primitive Christian symbol. The early Fathers were called Pisciculi and fish were equated with the converted, swimming in the waters of life. The apostles were 'fishers of men'. In Christian art, fish with wine and a basket of bread are a commemoration of the feeding of the five thousand and represent the Eucharist at the Last Supper. The fish also signifies baptism, immortality and from Jonah's emergence from the whale, resurrection. Christ was depicted by the rebus ICHTHUS, a fish, as Jesus Christos Theos Huius Soter (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour). The three fishes intertwined (fig 1) or with one head, was adopted from the earlier religions denoting baptism under the trinity".

This symbol of the three intertwined fish is found in iconography in such widely different cultures as ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Celtic, Persian and French.

Two fishes indicate spiritual and temporal power and one fish symbolises a solitary lonely person, such as an orphan, widow or widower. I found it amusing as I researched the symbolic meaning of fish, as I was born under the Zodiac sign of Pices, the twin fish, facing in opposite directions, represent the arcane substance. It had not occurred to me previously that my project was linked with my birth sign.



I have chosen to consider and examine in some detail, the approaches of three different artists who used the theme of fish at different periods in the History of Art. It is the recurring use of this fish theme and the variety of ways it has been treated that interests me most.

These are:

- 1) The Egyptian Tomb paintings,
- 2) The paintings of Matisse and
- 3) The work of Graham Knuttel.

Because they are from very different periods and movements in history and so they have different influences and meanings in their treatment of the theme.

Egyptian Tomb Paintings

The art of Egypt has a tremendous importance for mankind. The Greek masters went to school with the Egyptians and we are all pupils of the Greeks, as the Greeks were the first real educators of the western world.⁶

Everyone knows that Egypt is the land of the pyramids, those mountains of stone which stand like weathered landmarks on the distant horizon of history. However remote and mysterious they seem, they tell their own story. They tell us of a land which is so thoroughly organised that it was possible to construct these gigantic mounds in the lifetime of one King or Pharaoh. They tell us of the sheer wealth and power of the Pharaohs who could force thousands and thousands of workers or slaves to toil for them year in, year out, to quarry stones, drag them to the building site and to shift them with the most primitive means until the tomb was ready to receive the Pharaoh.

" The Pharaoh was considered a divine being who held sway over his subjects and on his departure from this earth he would once again ascend to the gods



whence he had come."⁷

The pyramids soaring up to the sky would probably help him to make his ascent. The Egyptians believed that the corpse must be preserved if the soul is to live on in the next world. This is the reason for their elaborate methods of embalming and binding the corpse in strips of cloth. These great tombs were constructed for the mummy of the Pharaoh. Some of these sepulchres, Cottrell writes "were hundreds of feet deep, long galleries were hewn out of the rock leading to chamber after chamber until at last they opened on to the 'Golden Hall', where the body of the Pharaoh lay in the full panoply of his greatness, enclosed in a golden coffin which, in turn, nested within other larger coffins, elaborately inlaid with semi-precious stones."⁸

Around these coffins were built a series of wooden structures, like huge boxes, also plated with thick gold. In adjoining rock-cut rooms were all the things which the Pharaoh would want in the after life: his rich furniture, beds, chairs, tables, chests, his royal chariots for hunting and warfare, his weapons, clothing, even games and of course an abundance of food and wine.

All around the burial chamber spells and incantations were written to help the Pharaoh on his journey to the next world. The majority of these great tombs were robbed by local Egyptians who made a skilled profession of 'tomb-robbery' and 'illicit digging'.

One of the most remarkable discoveries was that made by a British Egyptologist, Howard Carter, in 1922. Carter had spent ten years in a search for more tombs other than the robbed tombs discovered by archaeologists before him. Carter's workmen discovered a step cut in the rock immediately under



a workmen's hut. On investigation Carter discovered that this was the first of sixteen steps which led to a doorway. The door was still sealed with the seal impressed in the plaster by Necropolis Priests. The seal showed the sign of the Royal Necropolis 'the jackal and nine captives', it also bore the name 'Tutankhamen'. Carter knew this name as it was on the list of the Pharaohs. As further evidence, he had found scraps of fabric and some jar sealings bearing the name of Tutankhamen in a small shallow pit the previous year.

With trembling hands, wrote Carter,

I made a tiny breach in the upper left-hand corner. Darkness and blank space, as far as an iron testing-rod could reach..... Candle tests were applied as a precaution against possible foul gases, and then widening the hole a little, I inserted a candle and peered in, at first I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber caused my candle to flicker but presently as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room, emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues and gold - everywhere the glint of gold.9

It is not only these oldest relics of human architecture which tell us of the role played by age-old beliefs in the story of Art. The Egyptians believed that the preservation of the body was insufficient. They felt certain of his continual existence if the likeness to the dead King were also preserved.

Sculptors were ordered to chisel the Kings head in granite and this also would be placed in the tomb, there to work its spell and help his soul to keep alive.

In Egypt, in a grim and distant past, it had been the custom when a powerful man died, to let his servants and slaves accompany him into the grave. Horrifically, they were sacrificed so that he should arrive in the next world

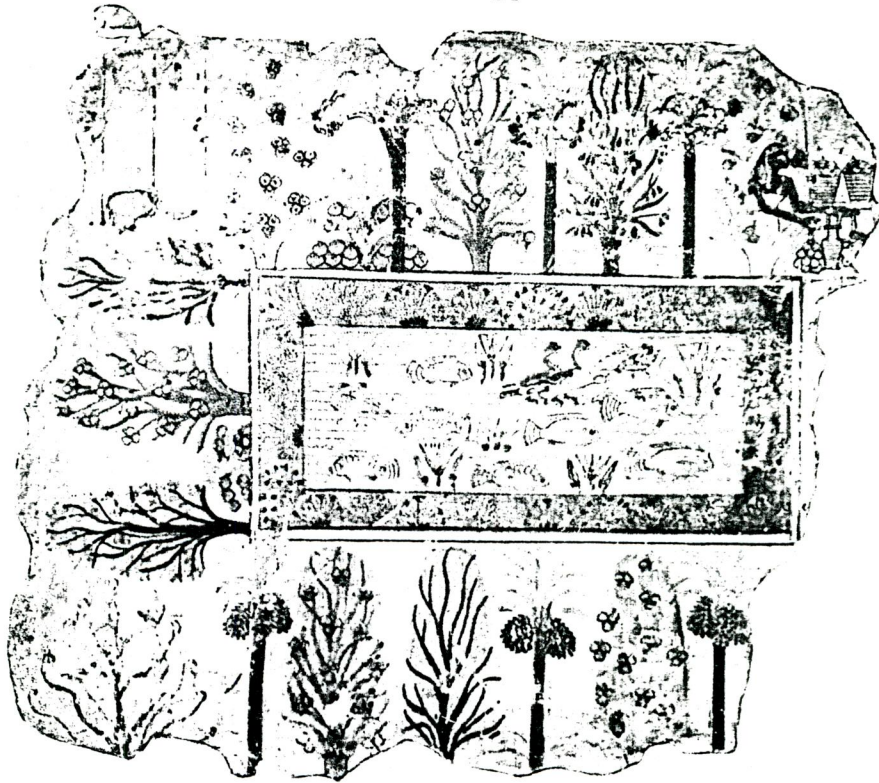


Fig 2.

A painting of a pond from the tomb of
Thebes circa 1400B.C.

with suitable accompaniment. Later, such activities came to be considered either too cruel or too costly and so, art came to the rescue. Instead of real servants, the great ones on this earth were given images as substitutes. The pictures and models found in Egyptian tombs were connected with the idea of providing the soul with helpmates in the other world.

To us, these reliefs and wall-paintings provide an extraordinarily vivid picture of life as it was lived in Egypt thousands of years ago. Yet, looking at them for the first time, one may find them rather bewildering. The reason is that the Egyptian painters had quite a different way from ours of representing real life. Perhaps this is connected with the different purpose they had to serve. What mattered most was not prettiness but completeness. It was the artist's task to preserve everything as clearly and permanently as possible. So they did not set out to sketch nature in a realistic manner from any fortuitous angle. Instead, they drew from memory, according to strict rules which ensured that everything that had to go into the picture would stand out in perfect clarity. Their method in fact resembled that of the map-maker rather than that of the painter.

Looking at the painting of a pond from the tomb in Thebes (Fig 2) which is dated circa 1400 B.C. This shows this map-making simply. It represents a garden with a pond. If today, we had to draw a similar scene, we might wonder from which angle to approach it. The shape and character of the trees could be seen clearly only from the sides, the shape of the pond would be visible only if seen from above. The Egyptians had no compunction about this problem. They would simply draw the pond as if it were seen from above, and the trees from the side. The fishes and birds in the pond, on the other hand, would hardly look recognisable as seen from above, so they were drawn in profile.

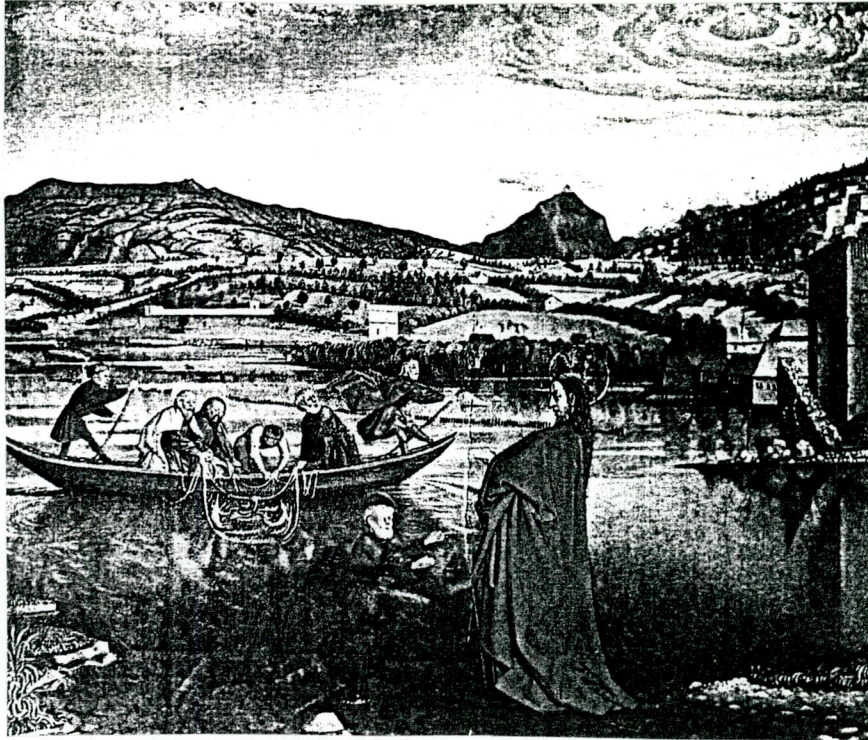


Fig 3.

"The miraculous draught of the fishes"
Conrad Witz, 1444.

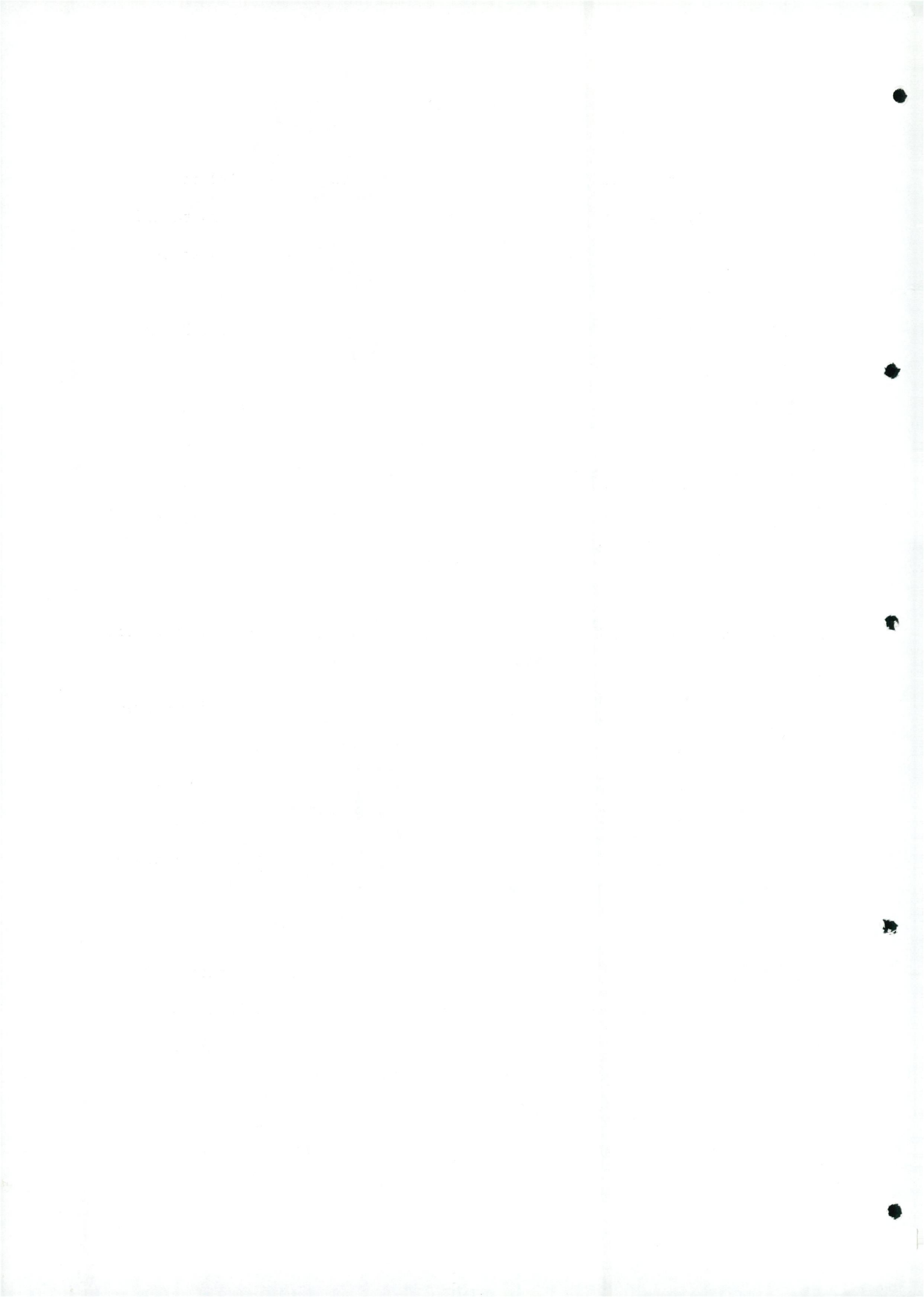
In such a simple picture, we can easily understand the artists' procedure. A similar method is often used by children. But the Egyptians were much more consistent in their application of these methods than children ever are. Everything had to be represented from its most characteristic angle.

The list of artists who have dealt with fish in their work is endless. The artists of China favoured the graceful curves of fish as they swam. They exploited this to suggest movement.

Conrad Witz in this painting "The Miraculous draught of Fishes", (Fig 3) in 1444 desired to bring home to the burghers of Geneva what their environment must have looked like when Christ stood by the fishermen, not the dignified apostles of older pictures, but uncouth men of the people busy with their fishing tackle and struggling rather clumsily to keep the barge steady. Because of this sense of realism, this painting somehow reminds me of my own fishing trips to Lough Sheelin with my father.

As a fourth year student in secondary school, my class were working on a fabric print design. My source was the markings on bananas as they rotted. These shapes I enlarged and depicted in my favourite bright colours. I had worked extremely hard and the result was a print which my teacher called "very Matissey". "Who is Matisse?", I asked. Sr. Enda gave me five postcards of the work of Matisse which I cherish to this day.

Since that time in school I have read a lot about this man whose methods of artistic expression I appreciate more than any other. I have seen some of his work in London and bought books about him. So, for me, it is only natural that I should include Matisse in my historical reference concentrating



specifically on his paintings which include images of fish.

The world that Henri Matisse left behind at his death on the third of November, 1954, was vastly changed from that which had initially sustained his talent in the Paris of the 1890's. The Parisian art world was still on the eve of the twentieth century; inward-oriented, self-contained and largely unconcerned with events elsewhere. For at least a century, Paris had been an international magnet, a focus drawing artists from all over the world. It was into this milieu that Matisse, born in a small town in the north of France on the last day of the old year 1869, entered when he came to Paris as an aspiring art student in the autumn of 1891, in his twenty-second year. He was a late starter, having previously begun a career in law, which he had studied in Paris in 1887.

Matisse was denied official acceptance to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. However, in 1892 he was discovered by the gentle Gustave Moreau and was invited to train with Moreau, that same year. Over the next decade, Matisse discovered the new movements in French painting, progressing steadily but with great deliberation, selecting, rejecting and then returning to various new tendencies as he sought to 'find himself' as a painter. Matisse believed his role as an artist was to provide calm; "I don't wish to disturb, because I myself have need of peace."¹⁰

Throughout his long career, Matisse's art was nourished and replenished by a variety of nineteenth century movements like Neoclassicism, Realism, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. As John Jacobus writes of Matisse:

His style is inconceivable and inexplicable without this tradition and yet he developed into one of the most inventive of twentieth century masters, one of the few painters of the first half of the century



who continue to have a major influence on the younger painters of today."¹¹

Matisse's art moves beyond the restricted ambiance on his close friends the painters Marguet, Camoin and Bonnard, men whose art was primarily directed toward the winding up and completion of a particular vision inherited from the past. Matisse's career instead, must be seen as parallel to the quests of those like his non-Parisian contemporaries, notably Kandinsky and Mondrian. Both of these artists had started at roughly the same point in time and style, although in different national traditions.

With Matisse, the struggle to transcend the world of visual perception was much more time-consuming, painstaking and even poignant. He was committed to the pictorial transformation of the world of appearances, creating works that were untoubled with systematic metaphysical speculation, works that yet remain pregnant with the germ of a new spirit, works that still serve as a "key foundation for the new abstraction and even the new realism of the later twentieth century."¹²

Although Matisse is recognised as one of the most important artists of the twentieth century and is the subject of one of the largest literatures in modern art and although he make public statements about his art for nearly half a century, his writings have been given little attention. Only one very limited collection has appeared in German and there has been as yet no collection in French or English.

As a result, many of Matisse's most important writings have never, or have only partially and sometimes misleadingly, been reprinted, or have appeared only in inadequate or fragmentary translations. Furthermore, many of the writings have been virtually inaccessible and in some cases unknown, even



to specialists in the field.

"In a certain sense, the writings of artists are as much a part of the artistic tradition as the body of works which form that tradition."¹³

With the publications of the writings of Matisse, students of art and the general public could become more familiar with the thought of Henri Matisse, it would promote a broader appreciation and understanding of this most important modern master.

In 1953 Matisse wrote an essay titled "Looking at Life With the Eyes of a Child". In this essay, Matisse stresses that the artist must look at everything as if he were seeing it for the first time, as though he were a child, for without this faculty he felt it is impossible to express oneself in an original, personal way. Matisse stressed that this equivalence and transposition of objects from the chaos of actual visual reality to the order and structure of a picture is achieved by infusing the picture with the same power and beauty that is found in nature.

Creation is the artists true function; where there is no creation there is no art. But it would be a mistake to ascribe this creative power to an unborn talent. In art, the genuine creator is not just a gifted being, but a man who has succeeded in arranging, for their appointed end, a complex of activities, of which the work of art is the outcome. Thus, for the artist, creation begins with vision. To see is itself a creative operation requiring an effort. Everything we see in our daily life is more or less distorted by acquired habits and this in perhaps more evident in an age like ours when cinema posters, and magazines, present us every day with a flood of ready-made images which are to the eye what the prejudices are to the mind."¹⁴

Bernard Noel in his book titled 'Matisse', writes that the artist believed we have only one idea, we are born with it and all our lives we develop our



Fig 4.

"Zorah on the Terrace", Henri Matisse.

fixed idea, we make it breath.

One 'idea' as Matisse puts it, for him was obviously fish as he has used images of fish extensively in his work. It is this area of his work which I have chosen to write about. Three paintings which have a particular personal appeal for me are: "Zorah on the Terrace", "Goldfish" and "Goldfish with Sculpture".

During the years 1911 to 1913, Matisse undertook two working trips to Tangier. These trips to a Muslim environment cannot be dissociated from his profound appreciation of Persian art. John Jacobus writes of Matisse:

It was as if he were trying to reinforce artistic experiences through a real confrontation with a nature and a people foreign to normal European experience. At the same time, thanks to the internal development of his own art, he was exactly at the point of being maximally prepared for the experience, so that it reinforced rather than diverted the creative path on which he had embarked during the previous decade.¹⁵

The study of Zorah the Tangier model, depicted in a crouching pose (Fig 4), thrusts us into a world tantalizingly parallel to that of Delacroix's "Women of Algiers", but with significant differences. Whereas Delacroix conjures up the closed, shadowy world of the harem interior, with opulent surroundings, Matisse places his model outside, on a rooftop under blazing sunlight with a minimum of accessories. But the intensity of the light is muted by a pale green shadow that supports this colour in Zorah's dress, much as the blue of the carpet functions for the lower part of her dress. The pink patch of sunlight in the upper left is balanced by a matching hue in the goldfish bowl in the lower right. As for the goldfish, an element curiously out of context here, it is simply a reference to a motif that the artist was currently exploring in many different versions in his studio. In effect,



Fig 5.

"Goldfish", Henri Matisse.

given its placement, we might think of the goldfish as Matisse's monogrammed signature of this picture.

Of Matisse's several still-life subjects, few were more productive than that of goldfish. They occupy a prominent position in his work. The languorous, fluid bodies of these two motifs provoked rather different pictorial results, given the successive stages of his development.

The influence of Rodin on Matisse the sculptor seems at least equal to that of Cezanne on Matisse the painter, for Matisse seeks in sculpture the relationships of masses. Michelangelo said that a statue is beautiful only if it is thrown down a mountain and reaches the bottom undamaged. Does Matisse know this celebrated remark? For, like Michelangelo, he wants his art to be characterized primarily, by the solidity of its form, its monumentality.¹⁶

The iconographic association with fish is made explicit when the picture titled "Goldfish", (Fig 5) is compared with his work on similar subjects which Matisse painted in Copenhagen and New York in which the round aquarium world of the goldfish is juxtaposed to a rendering of the bronze reclining nude I. (Fig 6). In this version, the fish in their round aquarium are placed on a table in front of a window in a curious, decoratively cubistic manner, one which probably owes much, according to John Jacobus,

to the artist's discussions and arguments with Juan Gris dating from the Summer of 1914. From the strict Cubist point of view, the composition is not especially profound, and yet certain general tactics of his rival, Picasso's art are here, rather naturally integrated into Matisse's more decorative approach, with its greater reliance on surface tensions.¹⁷

I found it extremely interesting to read the selection of brief interviews Matisse gave with regard to his art as it gives one a greater insight to the thought processes of the artist. During an interview with Andre Marchand in 1947 Matisse spoke of the vision of a man.



Fig 6.

"Goldfish and Sculpture", Henri Matisse.

Do you know that a man has only one eye which sees and registers everything. This eye like a superb camera which takes minute pictures, very sharp and small and with that picture man tells himself 'This time I know the reality of things,' and he is calm for a moment, then slowly superimposing itself on the picture, another eye makes its appearance, invisibly which makes an entirely different picture for him.

The man no longer sees clearly, a struggle begins between the first and the second eye, the fight is fierce, finally the second eye has the upper hand, takes over and that's the end of it. Now it has command of the situation, the second eye can then continue its work alone and elaborate its own picture according to the laws of interior vision. This very special eye is found here, says Matisse, pointing to his brain.¹⁸

The type of composition used in "Goldfish and Sculpture", by Matisse in which he employs contrasting vertical bands of differing hue or value turn up later in other works.

The theme of the view through the open window is an old and ongoing one in Matisse's art. In the painting simply titled "Goldfish", Matisse has managed to indicate three separate environments, namely, the sky of the exterior, the water of the aquarium and the space of the interior.

The last artist I will discuss in this chapter is the contemporary Irish Artist, Graham Knuttel. I have chosen Knuttel's work because the fish theme runs predominantly throughout. I was fortunate enough to be given a personal interview with this thirty-seven year old Artist whose work interests me a great deal.

Graham Knuttel came to painting as a means of expression quite recently. When he left art college (Dun Laoghaire) in 1976, he was very keen to become a sculptor. He had painted as a student



Fig 7.

"Fish Sculpture", Graham Knuttel.

but had never conducted a sustained effort in this direction. Knuttel worked at many jobs from Chauffeur to Chef in order to subsidise his work. He feels it is "important for an aspiring artist to remain apart from the 'system' as much as possible and only use it as a means to an end".

Six years ago Knuttel worked as a stonemason's fixer, this job entailed working in a monumental stoneyard here in Dublin. His job involved preparing the stone for the mason to work on, installing and erecting the monuments and headstones. Knuttel went on to explain that there is "a whole science involved in the handling and lifting of large stones. Often it would be necessary to lift huge slabs of stone over ditches or other graves to reach the site with only the aid of levers and rollers". Knuttel found this work gave him an insight into the building of the Great Pyramids. The principles of moving these stones he explained have not changed at all in thousands of years. I found it extremely interesting as he spoke about large slabs weighing a half ton can be spun "like a top" by levering it up and placing a rounded stone, no bigger than a tennis ball underneath it.

"Stonemasons are an extraordinary breed of men", he said and the stonemasons Knuttel worked with held "extraordinarily trenchant views on every subject". Knuttel worked in this job for three years and has great memories of it all. He said "I remember the endless lines of headstones on a frosty morning and the constant ringing and tapping of the masons mallets".

When Knuttel finally gave up this work he began experimenting with

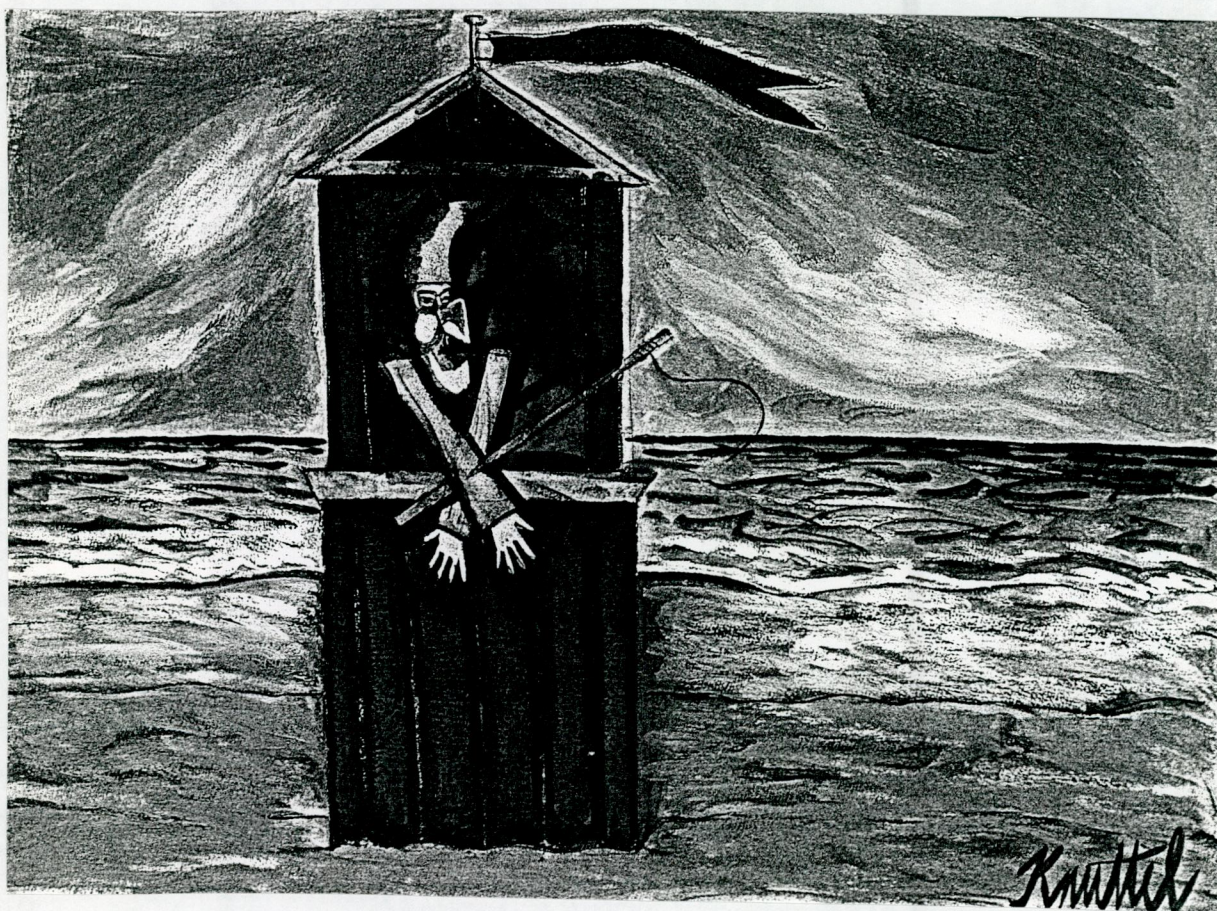


Fig 8.

"Mr Punch", Graham Knuttel.

a new material for him, papier mache. However, he explains, "the years of lifting monuments seems to have instilled in me, the desire or need to make my own. I was interested, as a sculptor, in the simple slabs and cubes placed on top of each other not in tension, but held by their own weight." The fish he saw as elegant simple shapes to work in contrast with the geometric nature of the monumental bases.

A recent work by Knuttel shows a headstone joined by a fish (fig 7). But what does the fish symbolise for Knuttel? He explained that very often the symbolism of ones work only becomes apparent on completion and "if there is a symbolism in play in these works then I would imagine that the fish, whilst primarily concerned with offering the rounded, contrasting form to the bases, also symbolise the giving of life or of flow and movement".

This is why Knuttel first began to use fish in his work as a symbol or image. As is the nature of things one idea led to another. His use of papier mache in a three dimensional form led him to using coloured paper in collage form to make two dimensional images, then to coloured pastel and finally, to paint.

Knuttel now finds himself painting more and more. The fish image has now taken on a new function in his work. "My main preoccupation with paint is, as a colourist", he says, "and images have become vehicles for exploring the nature of colour."

Knuttel paints from life on an everyday basis, but at time he uses other images, like the fish or Mr Punch (fig 8). This gives



Fig 9.

"Fish", Graham Knuttel.

him a freedom to work more specifically on colour. The image of the fish or Mr Punch is entirely cerebral and this gives him complete control over his colours in much the same way as Johannes Itten or Paul Klee.

"A fish is a very simple round or oval form and can be of any colour or combination of colours". Knuttel says he uses the fish image as a research tool in order to understand and apply colour relationships.(Fig 9)

Graham Knuttel paints seven days a week. He begins when the daylight has reached an acceptable strength. He paints on either canvas or board in oil or acrylic.

Not being a painter I was intrigued to hear Knuttel speak of how he approaches a painting.

"Sometimes I will draw in charcoal first, sometimes not. Sometimes I will paint lines or an outline, sometimes I will paint the entire canvas dark and work 'wet on wet'. There are no rules. It depends on how I feel".

Knuttel has however, a rigid discipline which he thinks all painters have. He went on to describe the stages of his painting.

A painting has a definite life or evolution. There are stages in every painting that are common to all. There is a threshold of pain which marathon runners speak of, towards the end of the painting throughout its execution there are moments of pleasure and ecstasy, thoughts of despair and intense feelings of failure. When it is finished, it is abandoned like an orphan and the next one is begun straight away to capitalize on one's experience.

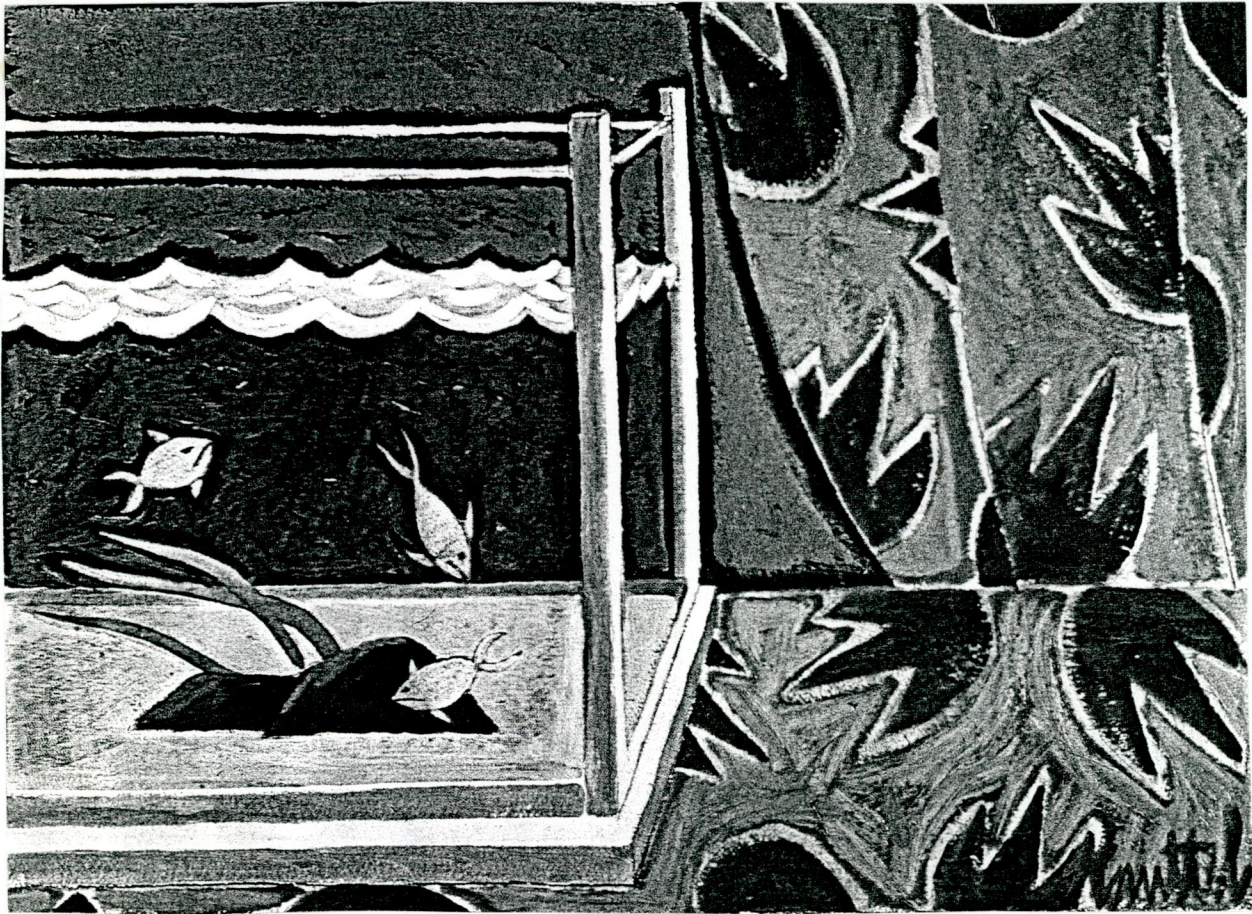


Fig 10.

"Fish Tank", Graham Knuttel.

Knuttel finishes work as the light fails. Because he deals with colour, he feels it is the light which makes the relationships and as it ebbs, so does his energy. "As the light goes, the picture closes its world to me and leaves me waiting until the next day."

At their time of execution, tiny areas of painted surface hold huge areas of discovery for Knuttel (Fig 10). But, a day later, he might look again and wonder why he was so excited by it. "The whole business is very exclusive and that is what makes you try and try again."

When I asked him why he chooses not to paint in a more realistic style, Knuttel feels that the style chooses the artist. "A style is something that evolves and represents the uneasy relationship between the painter and the paint. It is a common ground and represents the extent of the painter's control of his paint."

When asked to name the artists he most admires, Knuttel replied, as he said he felt most artists would: Cezanne, Picasso and Matisse. For him, the work of these artists, "outlines the framework on which our environment has been built in terms of art, design and architecture."

Knuttel finds it interesting that the work of these artists is so widely and so frequently reproduced. He wonders how many people have seen the full range of Picasso's work, which amounted to thousands of different pieces. "The majority of people will have seen no more than five or six of Picasso's most reproduced images. Yet his work will represent for them an era and dynamic movement that at the time produced so much change in our civilization. People underestimate the power of photography and printing methods in effecting huge change on people's

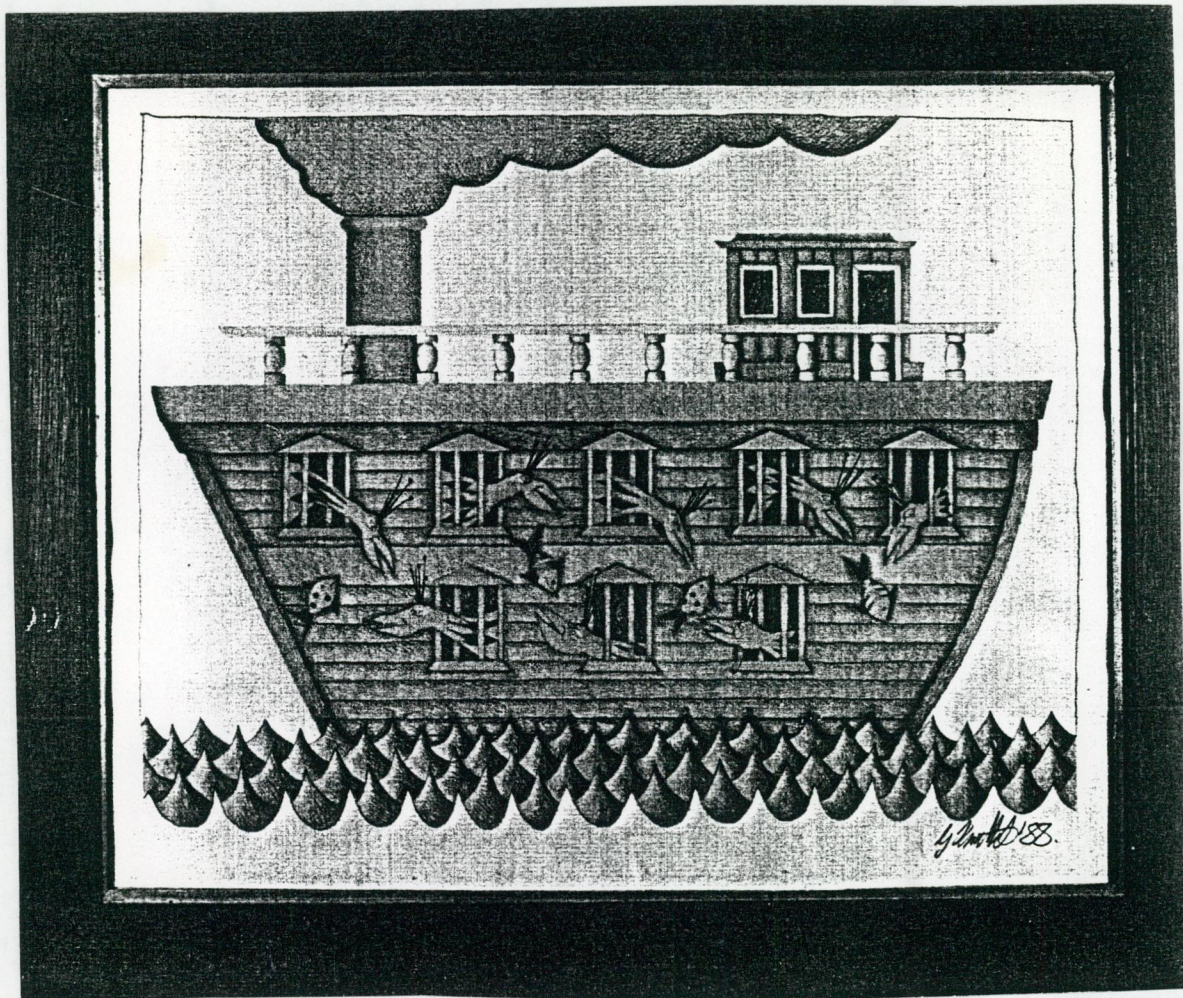


Fig 11.

"Fishing Boat", Graham Knuttel.

visual senses."

Knuttel feels that in the future, abstract artists will "fade away" as the realist artist rises to the challenge of building the framework for our new visual perception and creates for future generations the visual memory necessary to understand the past.(Fig 11)

Knuttel is also interested in the work of other Irish artists. It is not necessarily that he likes the work, more that he can see it and learn different techniques and viewpoints. He particularly admires the work of Markey, Dillon, Campbell and Kernoff, and their tenacity at their task of injecting life into what was undoubtedly a very repressed society. Knuttel feels there is as much to be learned by studying the work and lifestyles of Irish Artists from times past, as there is from Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse or other such artists.

"There are two strands running through my work, fantasy and reality. Sometimes they meet and I feel safe".¹⁹



FOOTNOTES:

Chapter 2

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CHAPTER 3

EDUCATIONAL RATIOALE

Introduction

Art is a form of experience that vivifies life. It helps the growing organism recognise that it is alive; it moves one to a height of feeling that makes it possible to identify that experience as a unique event in one's life.¹

Much as I agree with Dewey's view on the nature of art, this perception of art is unfortunately not the case. From a review of the literature written on the status of art and from my own experience to date, it seems to me that Art is on the periphery of the curriculum. It tends to be geared towards low achievers. Art does not get enough hours in the time tables of our schools and many school principals in Ireland seemunaware of the value of art in the education system.

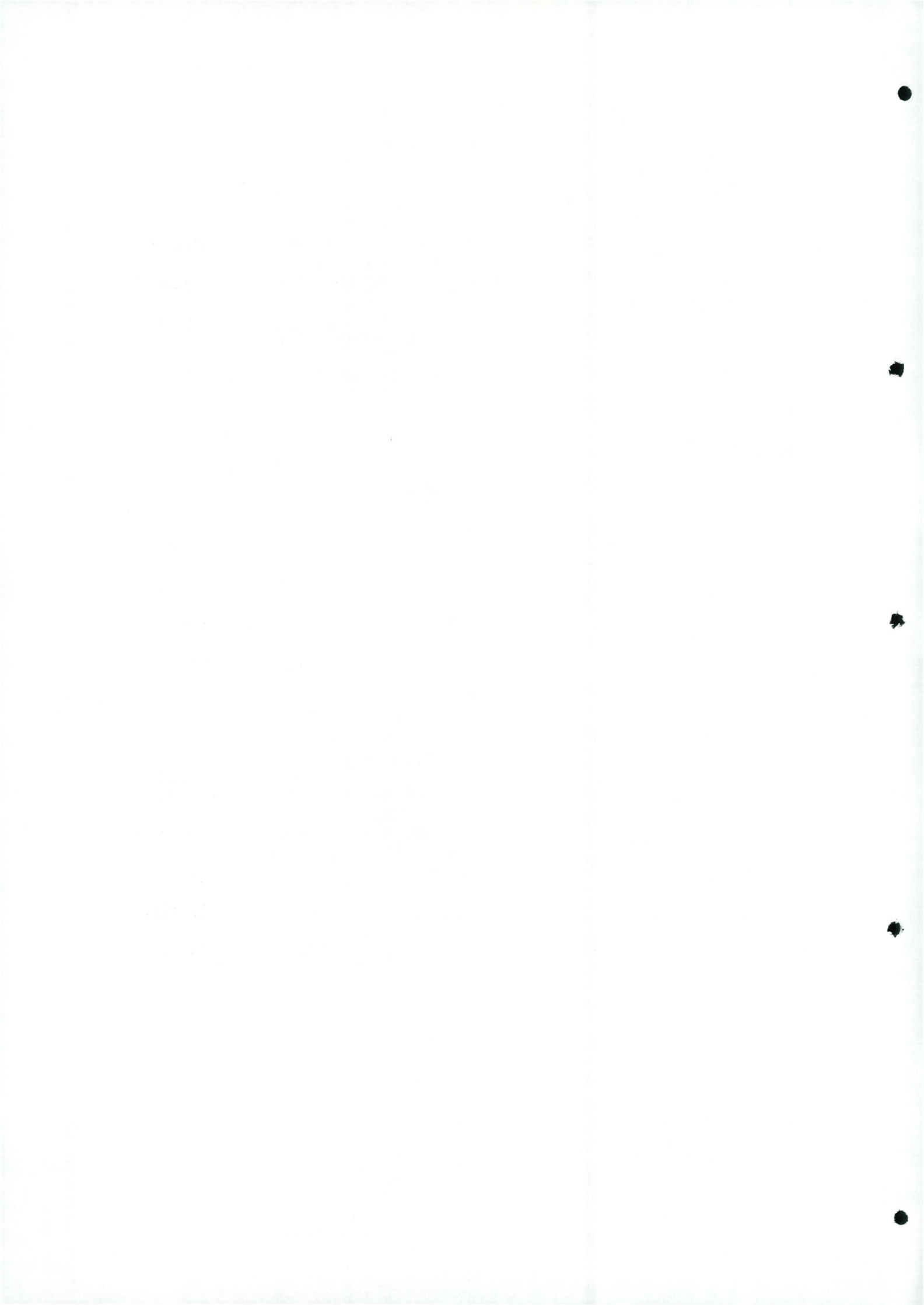
Ciaran Benson's views on the status of art including crafts is,

"that even though it is a subject for the Group, Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations, the standard of visual arts education in our post primary schools appears to be very low."²

This statement is reinforced by looking at the report in 1976 by the N.C.E.A. (The National Council for Educational Awards) on their recognition and awards for courses in art and design. The N.C.E.A. stated that:

"The standard of art at second level is so mediocre that the results obtained in the subject at the Leaving Certificate examinations are no indication of the students potential"³

and that foundation courses will continue to be necessary for many students until very considerable improvements have taken place in art and design education at second level. Regrettably, there is a particular stereotype of the arts in many Irish schools.



The arts are seen as more suitable for girls than boys and for the less intelligent rather than for the more intelligent pupils. They are often judged to be more interesting than useful and their most significant contribution is frequently conceived of as a pleasant means of passing time.⁴

The problem begins, I feel in primary school. Art activities so often take place on Friday afternoons. How can pupils possibly have a high regard for art if their teacher says to quote Eisner, "When you are finished your work, you can do some Art."⁵

Many primary school teachers have only studied art themselves to Intermediate Certificate level and their, "teacher training consists of approximately thirty hours of art over their three years of training. This training needs to be vastly improved; if the attitudes on the value of art in education is to change."⁶ The Curriculum and Examination Board in its Discussion Paper of September 1985 laid out three general aims which the Board felt must be achieved for a comprehensive policy for the arts in first and second level education.

The first aim requires that the student be enabled to develop an interest in and a value for the arts in a way that is appropriate to his/her needs or abilities. Such interest and valuation can in time develop into that love of art which should be regarded as an idea outcome of arts education.⁷

The Board discussed the importance of the teacher in achieving this aim. The teacher's enthusiasm is a vital component in motivating the students interests.

This assumes that in their own education as teachers of the arts, they themselves have been able to value and love the art form in question, and that the experience sustains their enthusiasm which is a prerequisite for good arts education.⁸



The second aim put forward by the C.E.B. is to provide students with an education in both artistic and aesthetic education which the Board stated are "two complimentary processes."

Finally the third major aim of arts education according to the C.E.B. must be to acquaint the student with the traditions of art. That is to say that art should be placed in its appropriate cultural context.

As both student and teacher of art, I have become aware of the dichotomy which exists between art and other subjects and I agree with Eisner when he states; The sense of vital living that the perception and creation of art provide..... is not so intentionally developed.⁹"

Studies carried out by educationalists such as Eisner and others prove that the vast majority of schools overlook the value and indeed the relevance of Art in Education.

According to Lowenfeld and Brittain: "the development of creativity is one of the basic reasons for arts existence in the school."¹⁰

Lowenfeld and Brittain argue that art is an important element in society insofar as it promotes self-identification and self-expression. They propose that art is a means of understanding the emotional, intellectual, physical and perceptual growth of our children.

The Curriculum and Examinations Board, in its discussion paper also dealt with the current position of the arts in schools. The Board outlined a number of extrinsic and intrinsic reasons for the inclusion of arts education in our school curricula including of course, art education.



I found these reasons to be a balanced synthesis of the views held by a range of art educators. The following are the C.E.B.'s extrinsic arguments for the arts in general in education:

- 1) The Arts constitute a small industry.
- 2) The skills learned are transferable.
- 3) Good design is promoted by an artistic education.
- 4) Artistic education would result in an improved environment.
- 5) Tourism is sustained by a healthy culture which is in turn sustained by the arts.

The C.E.B. took the view that these extrinsic arguments, are the easiest to advance due to their congeniality to certain restrictive notions of relevance which are influential in Irish Educational thinking. But, the paper stresses the fact that these arguments are by no means the most important nor ultimately the most convincing arguments. They tend to be "short-term and reactive" diverting attention away from more fundamental educational concerns. The intrinsic reasons outlined by the C.E.B. for the inclusion of arts education in our school curricula are in fact more important. The Board holds the view that their rationale "rests firmly on a description and justification of the intrinsic value of the arts as distinctive forms of knowing.¹¹"

Visual arts education is an active process through which the student learns to see and to think visually. This learning process involves both the artistic and the aesthetic experience. The interdependence of the disciplines of art, craft and design is vital to the development of visual thinking - nor, indeed can artistic and aesthetic experience be separated since the making of art must be fully integrated with appreciation and enjoyment of visual art in all it's forms.



discover what techniques were used and what way the people lived at the time that piece of work was created. When comparing an Egyptian tomb painting to a Picasso, for example, pupils can see how materials and techniques have developed and progressed. In this way the potential of art education extends far beyond the boundaries of art as a subject. It also allows for cross-curricular linkages to be forged.

Looking at art history can bring alive information regarding our Irish ancestors and the culture and pre-occupations of other races. If pupils relate what they have gleaned from the study of art history to their own present condition, the art teacher can help facilitate the appreciation of comparisons and contrasts of previous lifestyles to their own. For example, specific themes in art and the way in which various artists have treated them: death, life, fish, festivities, genre themes, still hold true today. If a class is embarking on a project which has a main theme it is invaluable to look at a variety of treatments. It anchors the theme so that the pupils can see it comes from somewhere and is based on a firm foundation. The work can be made more meaningful by looking at this work from the past, instead of just drawing a landscape outside or a still life in the classroom.

As well as contributing to the personal development of young people, the arts can play (and often have played) a key role in imaginative and flexible educational programmes. Benson writes:

Any attempt to deal with the history of man and his development especially before the advent of photography and film, inevitably turns to art for its images and cues of the past, whether these be carvings, paintings, poems, music, dances or buildings. The greatest works of art, together with those of science, philosophy or religion, represent mans highest reaches of imagination and creativity. The arts provide a unique resource that can greatly enhance the teaching of subjects in other curricular areas.¹³



Similarly, Keith Gentle believes that the central aim of teaching art is to

raise pupils levels of sensitivity to visual and aesthetic qualities and to heighten their creative and critical awareness of art forms.¹⁴

In terms of art teaching, these are understood as sensitivity to media, to appearances, arrangements and relationships occurring naturally and man-made and both a creative and critical awareness of the visual ideas and meanings they promote.¹⁵

If this is case, then we as art teachers must understand the complex nature of art, craft and design and its role in the personal, social, artistic and aesthetic education of the young people we teach. We must become familiar with the processes of stimulating, communicating and guiding the efforts of pupils.

In support of Dewey's view on the uniqueness of art, Elliot Eisner writes on the justifications for spending time, effort and money in the area of human experience which only art can provide.

According to Eisner there are two main types of justifications for the teaching of art. The first is "the contextualist justification which emphasises the instrumental consequences of art in work and utilizes the particular needs of the students or the society as a major basis for forming its objectives."¹⁶

This would be particularly relevant in some of our inner city schools. From my own experience in teaching art to young boys in Dundalk in Co. Louth, which has an unemployment rate of 37%, I certainly applaud the contextualist justification. However, I feel the contextualist view cannot be separated



from Eisner's second justification for teaching art, the essentialist view, which "emphasises the kinds of contributions to human experience and understanding that only art can provide."¹⁷

As teachers of art, I feel we should have an understanding of the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of the young people we are teaching.

Robert Clement, in the Art Teachers Handbook puts forward the following as a rationale for teaching art:

In the school context, it is not sufficient merely to categorize art as creative, or expressive; it is necessary to appreciate its unique qualities as an aspect of human consciousness which it makes to educational growth in the way that it deals with the cognitive/perceptual complexities inherent in the contemplation and creation of visual forms.¹⁸

I personally feel very strongly about the uniqueness of art in what it has to offer the developing young person. Like Clement, Eisner holds a similar view on the value of the arts in education. Although he holds that contextualist and essentialist justifications mentioned earlier, are appropriate under certain circumstances, they do not Eisner feels, "provide a sufficiently solid base for the field of art education."¹⁹

He argues that in saying art education contributes to the worthy use of leisure time, that it contributes to the fine muscle development of the younger pupil and that it provides releases from pent-up emotions is not truly justifying art education, as these justifications can be claimed by a host of other subject areas.

Eisner agrees with Clement when he writes;



The prime value of the arts in education lies in the unique contribution it makes to the individuals experience with and understanding of the world. The visual arts deal with an aspect of human consciousness that no other field touches on: the aesthetic contemplation of visual form.²⁰

Few schools offer environmental education as a subject in its own right. Many other subjects contribute to the study of the environment mainly Geography, Humanities, Science, Social Studies and Religious Education. Art should form the "hub" of any integrated scheme in environmental education. As the C.E.B. stated in its discussion paper, "The low status attached to artistic education and aesthetic values in the school experience of most of our young people is reflected in the environment and in attitudes towards it".²¹

Noting the importance of observation studies in education, Charles H. Gibbs Smith wrote,

There is no department in life which cannot be enriched by improving the powers of observation; and the man or woman who learns to observe, will find endless applications of such powers in both work and leisure.²²

I believe that promotion of an awareness and appreciation of our environment should be, one of the aims of education today.

Sensory exploration is a starting point which may well appeal in art and design education, but the issues confronting us to-day know no disciplinary bounds and if it happens to be the art teacher who takes the environment to heart in a particular school, then he/she may well provide the only opportunity for students have understand issues which pass in and out of the headlines with increasing regularity.



If we think about it, we rarely take a good look around, as we walk about a city or town. The space we pass through, the people we meet, are almost non-existent, merely a backdrop to our own egocentric activity.

However, all of us as children, were amazingly sensitive perceivers, far more open to sights, colours, touch, sensations, apprehensions of mass and strength and lightness, scents and tastes than we have become. gibbs smith says that "The sensory walk, offers a format for experiencing an environment be it urban or rural - as a foundation to descriptive, analytical or experimental society."²³

For such reasons as these, I felt a sensory trail to the sea was a suitable starting point from which to launch my school project. A sensory trail is an opportunity to look again at a familiar environment and at the same time to re-examine how we see the world.

The aims of undertaking a sensory trail are as follows: Sensory awareness heightens the imagination and creative potential of the pupil. It improves pupils' sense of judgement and their ability to discriminate. Sensory awareness is clearly an individual attribute, but it is shaped by group response and social conditioning.

The content of what we teach and the teaching method we use should raise pupils' levels of sensitivity to visual and aesthetic qualities and heighten their creative and critical awareness of art forms.

At this stage, and in relation to my class project, I now wish to discuss the method of teaching known as 'the project method.'

This is the teaching method I chose to use with my project class, a group



of Second Year pupils in Margaret Aylward Community College in Whitehall, Dublin.

I began with a sensory trail which I feel provided the pupils' with a way of deliberately paying attention to phenomena not normally thought of as worth bothering with. The project method generally refers to group work through which the pupils learn through shared activity in a social setting.

A particular theme is chosen, and the teacher plans sequential lessons so that after a given time the pupils arrive at a communal response.

The function of the teacher in a group activity in art is parallel to those associated with individual learning. The methods of motivation, isolating and defining themes, establishing artistic goals and selecting media and tools of expression now must be applied to those pupils whether few or many, who make up the art group.²⁴

There are, I feel many advantages to the project method of teaching for pupils of all levels of ability.

A weak pupil who has been disappointed in his/her previous individual efforts in art can find their own niche working in a group. Their membership of the group can generate enthusiasm because they feel the finger cannot be pointed at them if there are mistakes made. They can also be motivated to higher achievement levels as a result of contact with more able peers. The weaker pupil might find it easier to communicate a problem to a peer than to an authoritarian figure. The average ability student may be motivated to try harder to compete healthily with their more able peers.

The project method can also help the teacher identify problem areas in class exercises and to develop a clearer notion of the effectiveness of his/her teaching. The promotion of socialisation skills is another advantage of



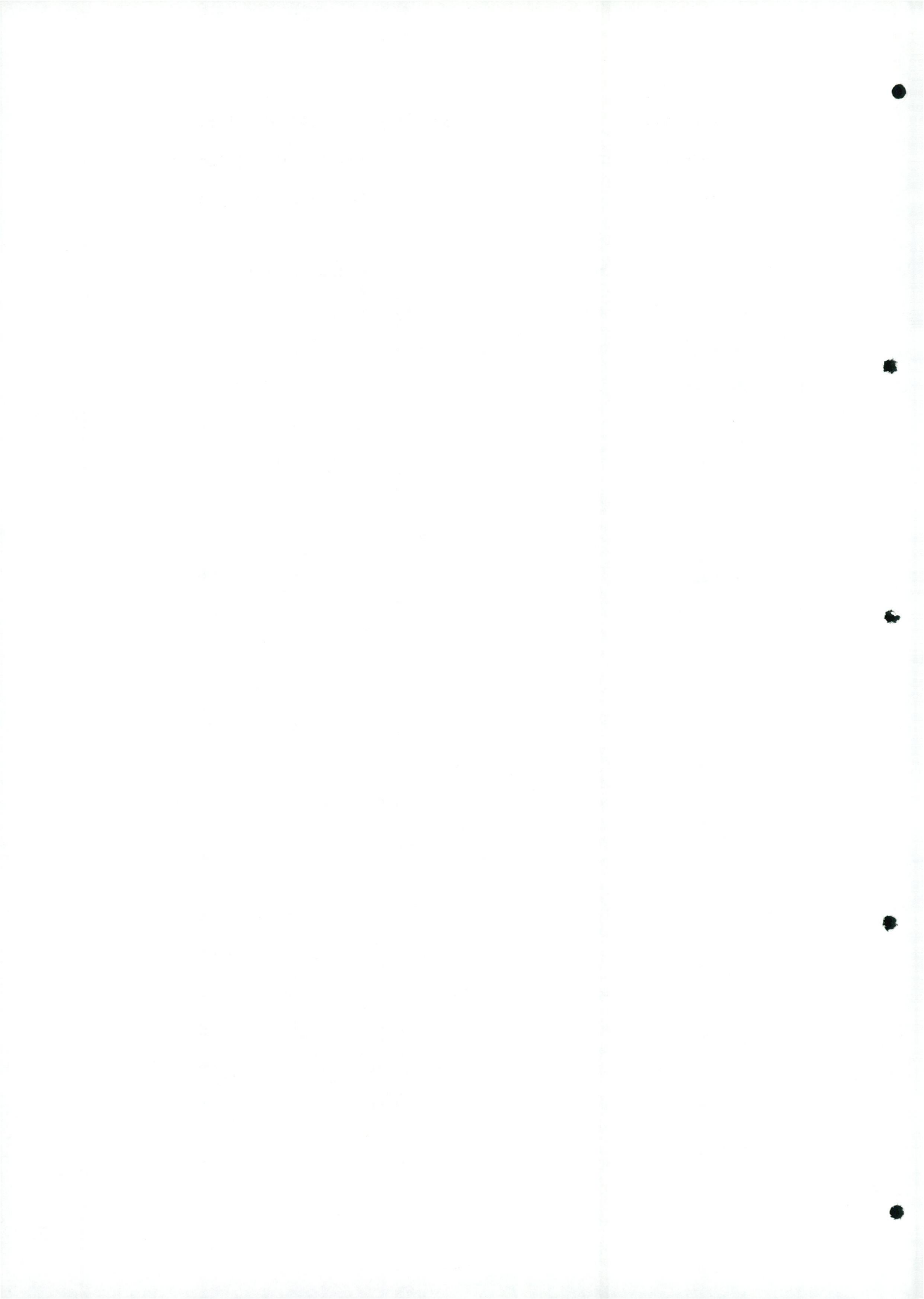
the project method. The breaking down of the class into smaller more intimate groupings encourages greater participation particularly in the case of shy and withdrawn pupils.

Very able pupils also benefit from the project method because they learn to share their learning and in doing so reinforce their knowledge and skills. Yet another advantage of the project method is that of greater achievement, in a real sense, for all pupils.

Collective work has been proven to be more productive than individual assignments. This is possibly due to the fact that all pupils regardless of ability are motivated to achieve and contribute as much as any other member of the group. There is always a healthy competition between groups which also spurs pupils to do better.

My pupils were introduced to the theme of "Fish and their Environment." The ensuing work required the recording of information at the sea. The development of this information required analysis and selection of design problems into two dimensions and the realisation of these problems into printed panel.

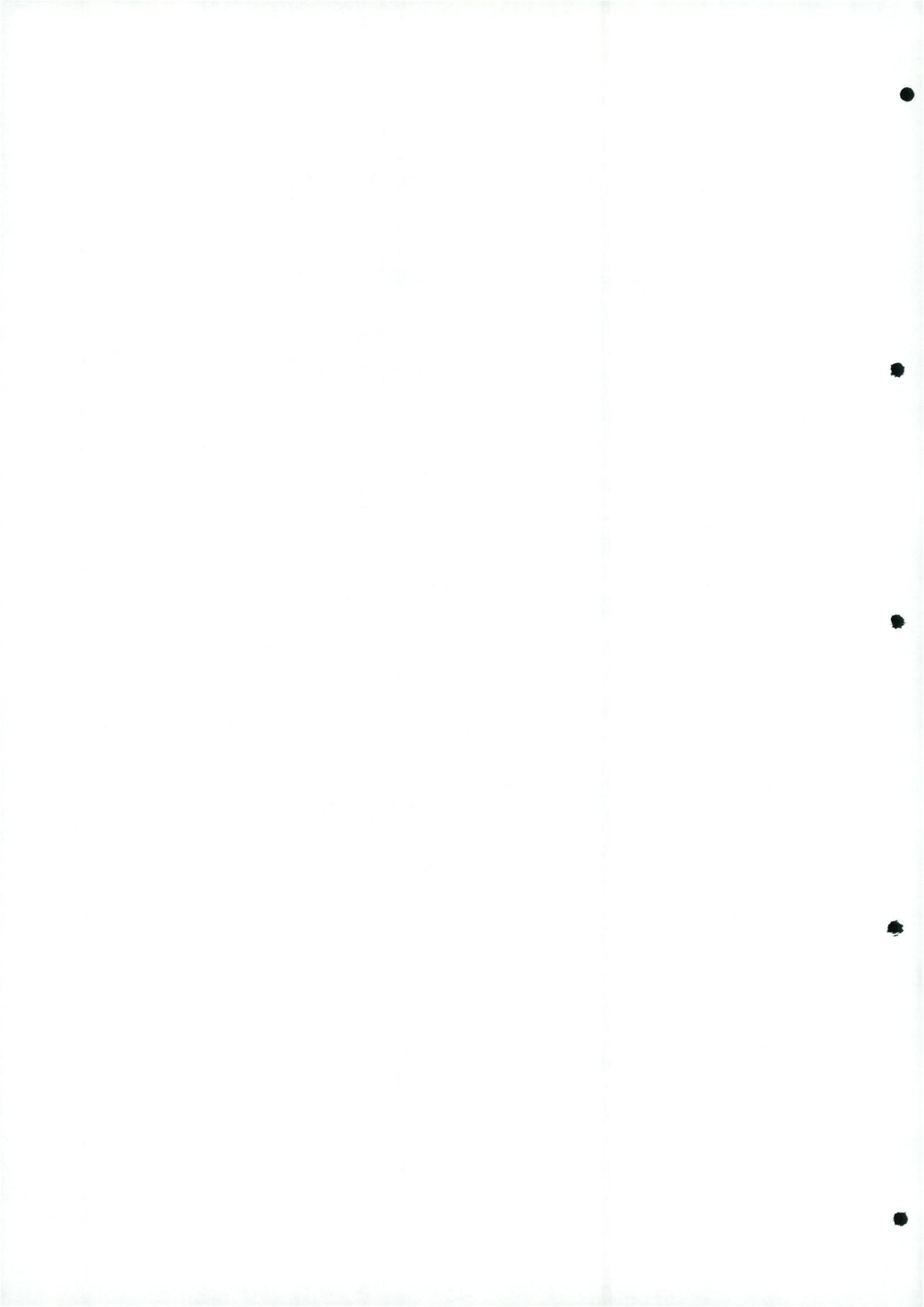
The second stage of the class project involved a visit to the National Museum, Kildare Street, I provided a detailed worksheet, see (Fig 9.) chapter four which the pupils completed. The completion of this worksheet involved observational drawing and recording of information in the ceramics room of the museum. This information was then used by the pupils as a source for a three-dimensional project based on pieces with fish or shell motifs in the Museum.



The following chapter more fully describes this project, its aims, stages of development and exploration of a theme. The resulting activity provided a meaningful and enjoyable experience for both the pupils and myself.



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22. Charles H. Gibbs Smith.
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CHAPTER 4
THE SCHOOL PROJECT

A Brief History of the School

The school I am teaching in this year is Margaret Aylward Community College in Whitehall, Dublin 9. The school was founded in 1969 by Sr. Jemma Hand and Mrs. Pearl Quigley. The school was a Holy Faith Secondary School which covered the Junior Cycle only. The school began with seventy students. In 1983 the school was taken over by the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee. The principal, Sr. Jemma Hand retired and the principalship was transferred to Mrs. Pearl Quigley.

The catchment area is very wide extending from Drumcondra to Swords. There are fifteen surrounding feeder schools, the main ones being the Holy Child, Larkhill and Our Lady of Victories, Ballymun.

Since 1983 the school has expanded and now has three hundred pupils. Margaret Aylward now offers Vocational preparation training courses, an excellent remedial course for weaker students. From 1992 the school will offer a Senior Cycle course.

At present eighty per cent of students go on to Leaving Certificate. Past pupils of the school include Orla Guerin who works for Radio Telifis Eireann and Julianne Fallon who works as a model.

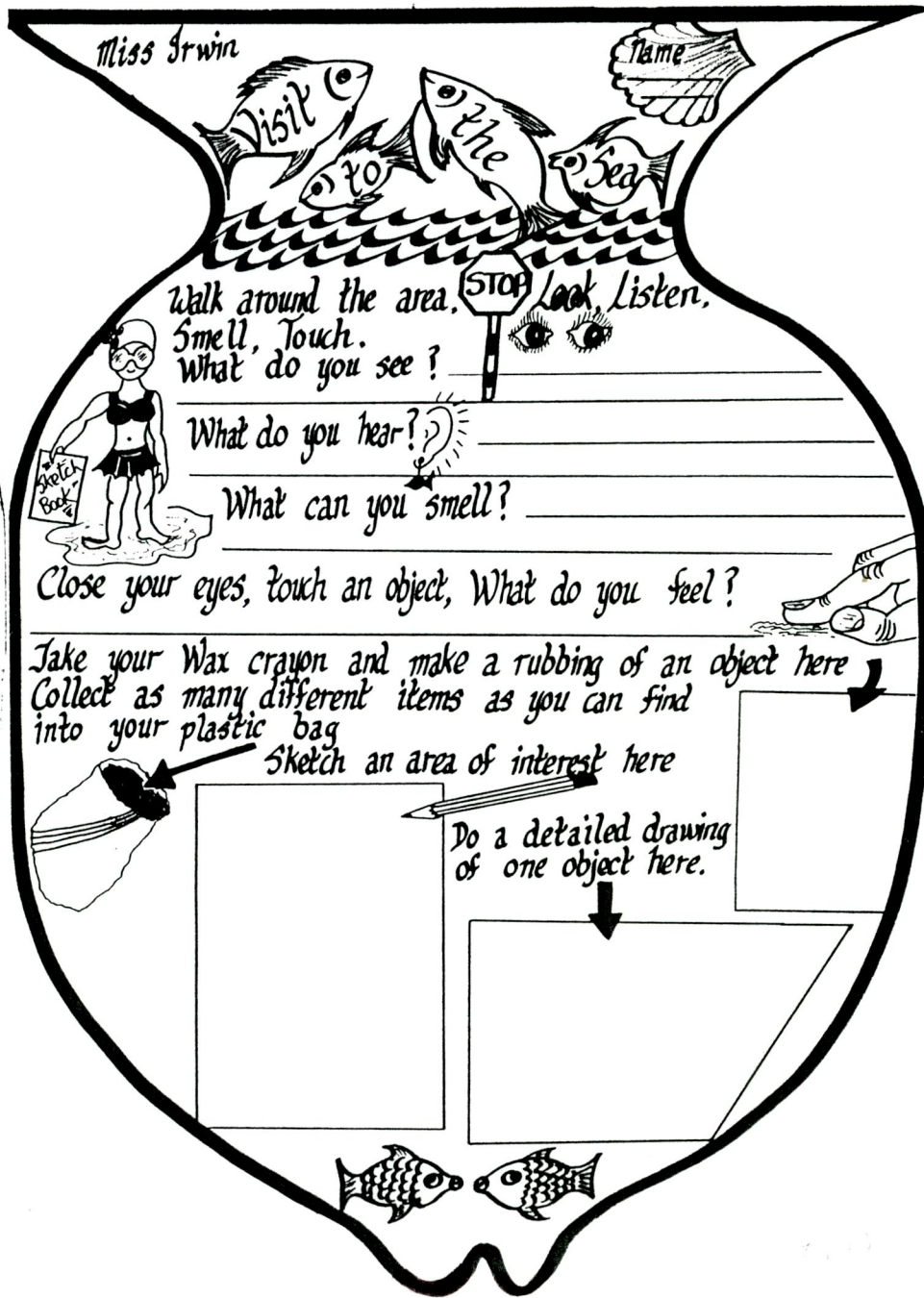


Fig 1.

Sensory Trial Worksheet.

The Project

The class I have chosen for my school project are Second Years, 2S are a good ability class. The class worked on individual designs based on a Sensory Trail to Sandycove beach. Each design was explored in collage, followed by the painting up of the designs. The transfer printing process was the method of printing we choose to use. It was necessary to send to England for the transfer inks as they are unavailable here in Ireland.

Each pupil printed her design onto satin acetate. The prints were sewn together to form one large group project; which is displayed as a wall hanging.

The project progressed with the fish/shell theme. The source being the ceramics collection in the National Museum. We visited the National Museum where the pupils completed a detailed worksheet, which involved observational drawing and the recording of information. These drawings were then used combined with observational drawings of actual fish and shells as a source for the designing of a modern day equivalent which the pupils constructed in three dimensions using clay.

I choose fabric printing and ceramics for this project for two main reasons. The first being that fabric is my major craft this year and the second being the fact that I majored in ceramics for three years.

The following chapter describes the range of learning situations involved in this project.



Fig 2.

Class 2S at Sandycove.



Fig 3.

Class 2S at Sandycove.

Stage 1

Lesson Plan: 04.02.1991

The most important lesson when embarking on any project is the introductory lesson. This provides the stimulus, the source material and the motivation for the pupils. Class 2S were aware of the thematic approach to the project so they understood the importance of the Sensory Trail as a starting point for the project.

Wrapped up in our winter woolies, armed with sketchbooks, pencils, wax crayons, jars, plastic bags and A3 worksheets, we set off on our Sensory Trail to Sandycove beach.

The trip was an investigation of the Sea environment using all the senses, see worksheet which I have reduced for this documentation (Fig 1). Pupils recorded what they could smell, see, hear, feel and taste. They gathered information by writing, drawing, taking rubbings and collecting various objects of interest in their jars and bags. (Fig 2).

Four rolls of film were taken for use as back up source material and to record the trip on film. (Fig 3).

Stage 2

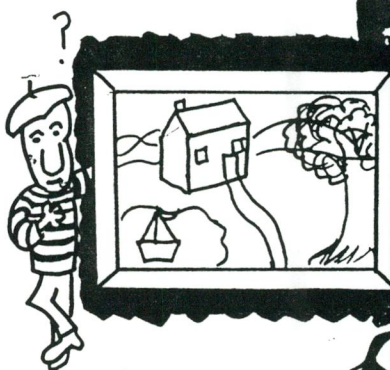
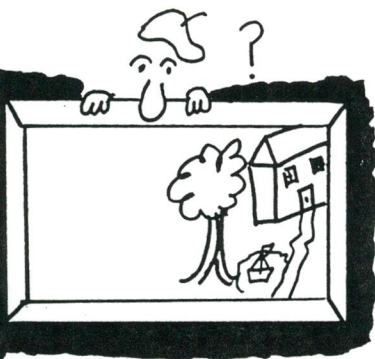
Lesson Plan: 04.02.1991

The lesson began with an evaluation of the information gathered on the trip, followed by a discussion on pollution and the items found on the beach which invade the seas environment. A discussion on the sea environment in the Gulf was particularly relevant due to the situation to date. An introduction to the work of the Environmental awareness society here in Dublin, promoting the care of the environment made pupils aware of the necessity of caring for our environment.

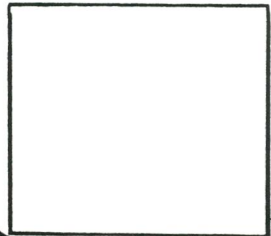
Miss Irwin Name: _____

WORKSHEET

What is Composition ???



Which of these Two compositions look the best. No 1 No 2
Why? _____



You compose your own picture using these shapes!

Fig 4.

Composition Worksheet.

Using a large visual aid to explain arrangement in creating a pleasing composition, with cut out objects, the pupils arranged the shapes into various compositions so they could discern which arrangement made the most visually pleasing composition. A brief slide show on the Egyptian Cave paintings helped to reinforce the pupils understanding of arrangement and composition.

Each pupil began by choosing a selection of the objects collected on the trip and folding their page in four, they experimented with various compositions by arranging the objects, doing a line drawing to fill one of the four sections. Re-arranging and re-drawing the objects the lesson ended with an evaluation of the work which ensured that the pupils were clear on the concept of composition.

For homework each pupil got a worksheet on composition which will re-inforce the concept, reduced for this documentation (Fig 4).

Stage 3

Lesson Plan: 18.02.1991

A re-cap on the work to date helped to put the third stage of the project into practice. The compositional arrangements from the previous class needed to be re-evaluated. For the purpose of our project, there was now a need to enlarge the composition which was most pleasing to the individual pupil. Using the actual objects, an enlarged drawing was made based on the previous compositional arrangements, this time the drawing of detail was included.

A side show on the paintings of Henri Matisse displayed clearly his use of simple compositions which included areas of detail. I distributed collage worksheets for homework as preparation for the next stage of the project which is collage.

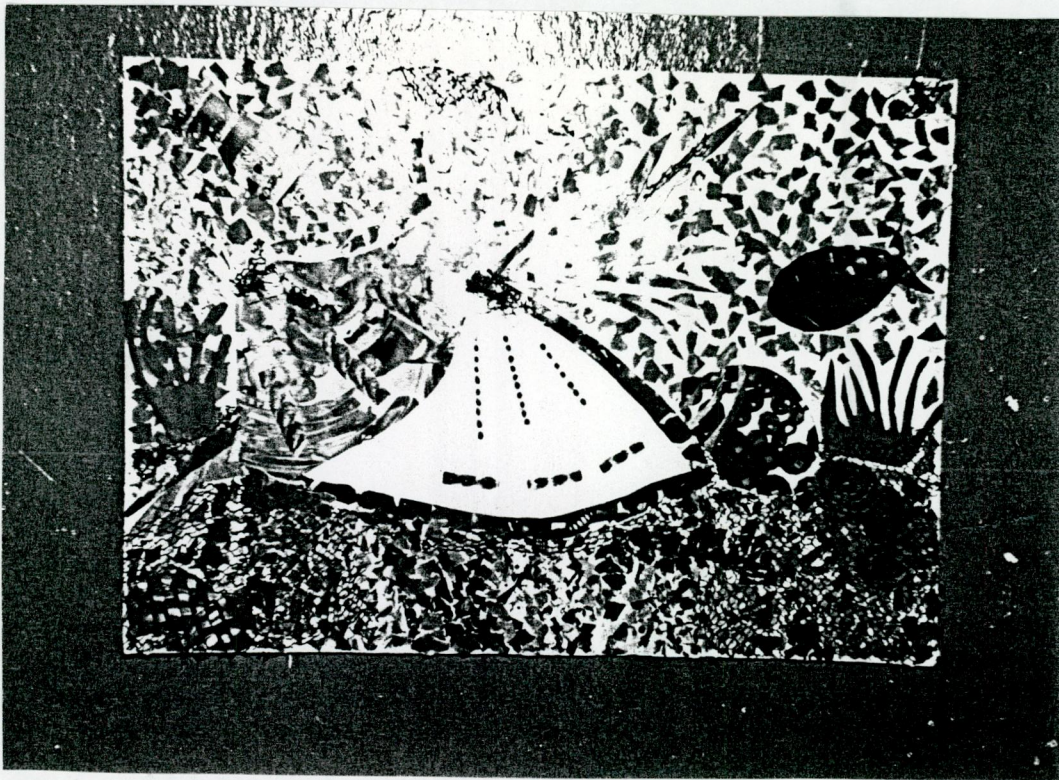


Fig 5.

Collage by Alison Hart.



Fig 6.

Painting of print design.

Stage 4

Lesson Plan: 04.03.1991

The lesson began with a slide show of the Collages of Henri Matisse which motivated the pupils well.

Using my own sample sheets of the colours available in transfer inks, we discussed the colours we associate with the sea and compared them to the colours available to us in the transfer inks and crayons.

Using their compositional drawings as source, each pupil made a large collage of their design. (Fig 5). The pupils used a scissors as a drawing tool to render the shapes previously drawn. This lesson required decision making and the use of evaluative skills as to what colours they would use for their final design.

The collages were completed as a homework exercise.

STAGE 5

Lesson Plan: 11.03.1191

The lesson began with a slide show of the fish and sea paintings of Graham Knuttel. The vibrancy and simplicity of his work appealed to the pupils. The vibrancy is due to the fact that Knuttel is primarily a colourist. The class was an exploratory class in the methods of application of the transfer inks and crayons and the printing of samples to use as a guideline for the pupils major print. Using their collages as source, pupils will complete a painting as a practice for the painting of their piece.



Fig 7.

Barbara, transfer painting her design.



Fig 8.

Fabric printed panels.

Stage 6

Lesson Plan: 25.03.1991

The lesson began with a demonstration on methods of paint application. Pupils used their drawings and collages from previous classes and their printed samples from the previous class as sources to work from. Each pupil painted up their designs onto cartridge paper. (Fig 6.)

Stage 7

Lesson Plan: 08.04.1991

This lesson was spent completing the painting process and beginning of the transfer printing. (Fig 7). A demonstration on transfer printing was necessary to re-cap on the process. I gave a brief explanation on natural and man-made fabrics, as the transfer printing process works most successfully on man-made fabrics for example, satin acetate, which we used.

Stage 8

Lesson Plan: 15.04.1991

Pupils brought in extra irons, I provided electrical extensions, with a result fifteen printing areas were set up. Those who were finished helped the others. By the end of the lesson every girl had her print completed. We laid out the prints (Fig 8) and pupils used their evaluative skills in deciding which prints should be placed where for the large wall hanging. The class stayed back with me after school and we sewed the panels together in the Home Economics Room, (Fig 9). There was a fantastic sense of achievement in the class which motivated the girls for the next section of our project that being the visit to the National Museum.

Stage 9

Lesson Plan: 16.04.1991

This lesson involved a visit to the National Museum which I organised for Tuesday morning, April, sixteenth.



Think back to the Video you watched.

What items were made in the factory? _____

Which of the Ceramic Categories is talked about in the film?

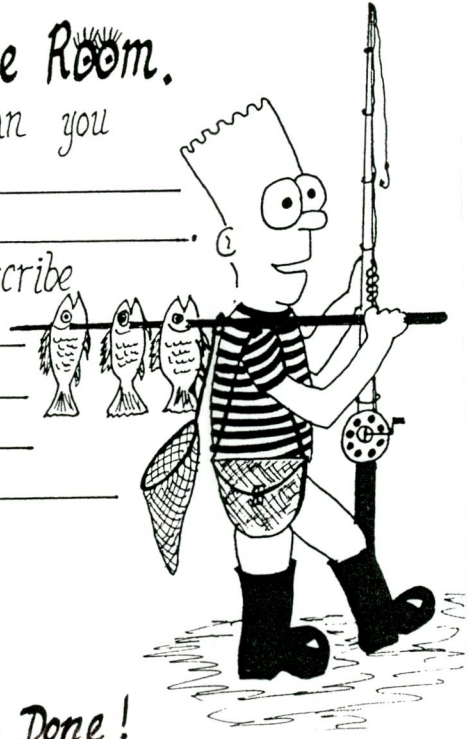
Who do you know who lives near the Factory shown? _____

What county in Ireland is this factory in? _____

Finally, Look around the Room.

Where else in the room can you see images of shells? _____

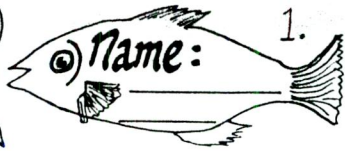
When you fish this out, describe what you see. _____



Take your Catch and go Home.
Well Done!

Fig 10.

Miss Irwin



Ceramics:

The oldest Craft known to man!

The general name is Ceramics. There are many different types. The differences come from the different clay used and the different temperatures the clay is baked or fired to.

Ceramics can be divided into 3 Categories

Earthenware
Stoneware and
Porcelain (or China)

Where would you find
Ceramics in your home?

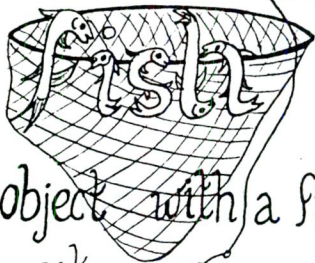




Take a Good Look around



Go fishing for Ceramics
which have a  theme **or**
a  theme.



Choose 1 object with a fish or shell theme
When you get **HOOKED** on 1 object
Study it Carefully

To which Ceramic category does it belong? _____

Could you hold it in your hand? _____

Would you need both hands? _____

What do you think it was used for?

What country does it come from?

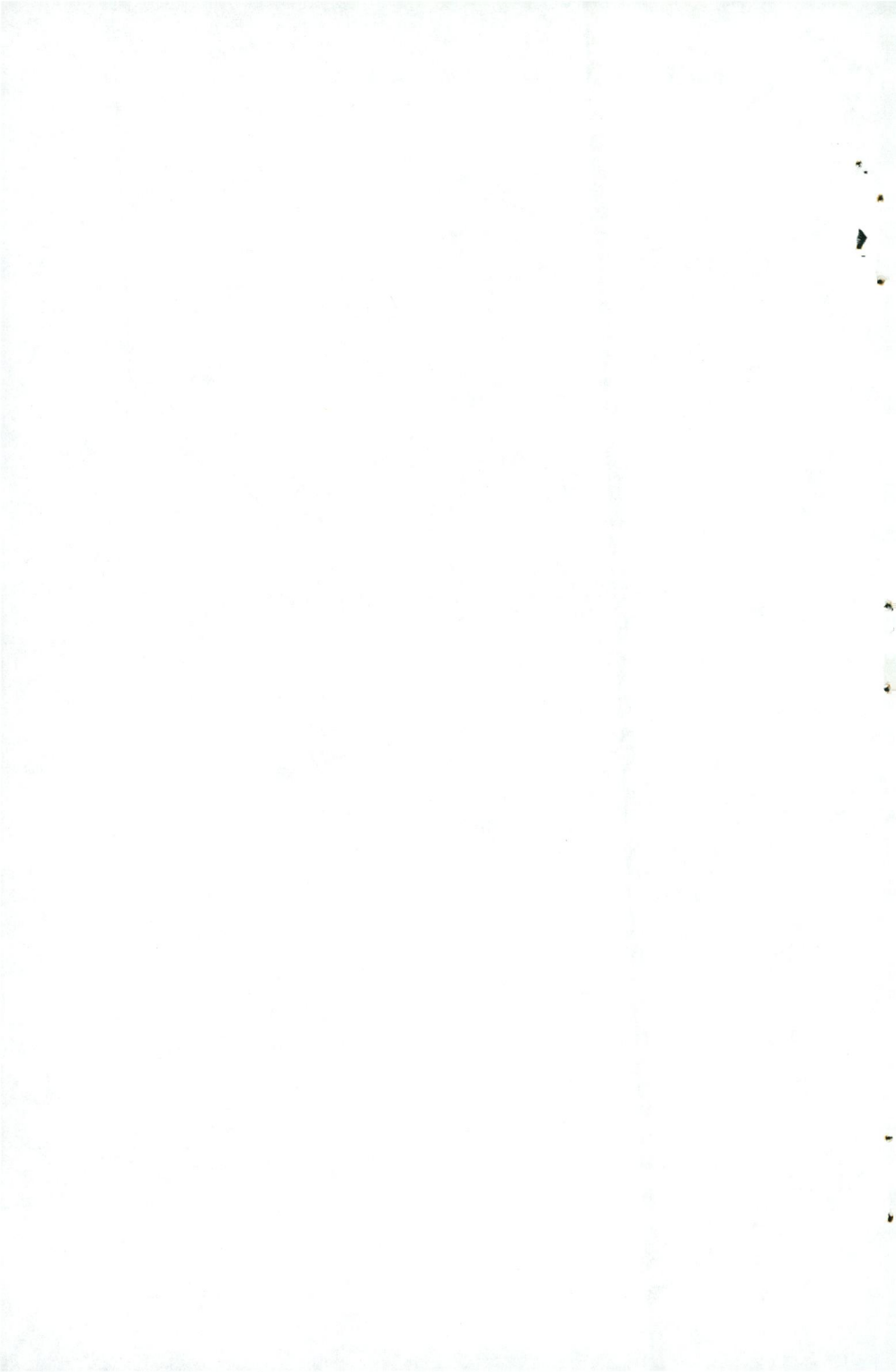
How much detail can you see

Place a ✓ in the correct boxes. Dots

Eyes Gills Fins Scales Lines

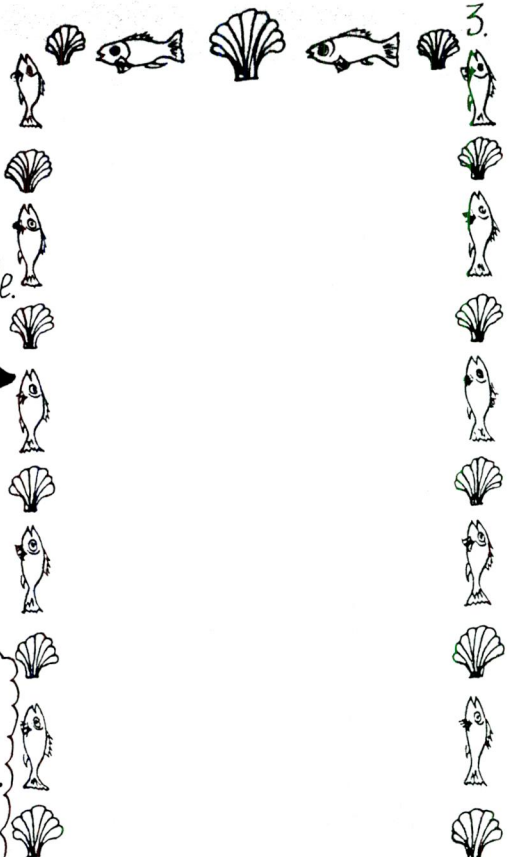
Seaweed Shells Pattern



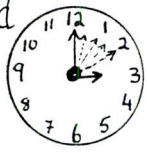




In the box opposite, Draw the object you have Chosen + shade.
Fill the box →



Do you need to turn this page around ?
You should spend 10 minutes on this drawing.



Can you see as many Colours on this object as you have in your crayon box? _____
Why is this? _____

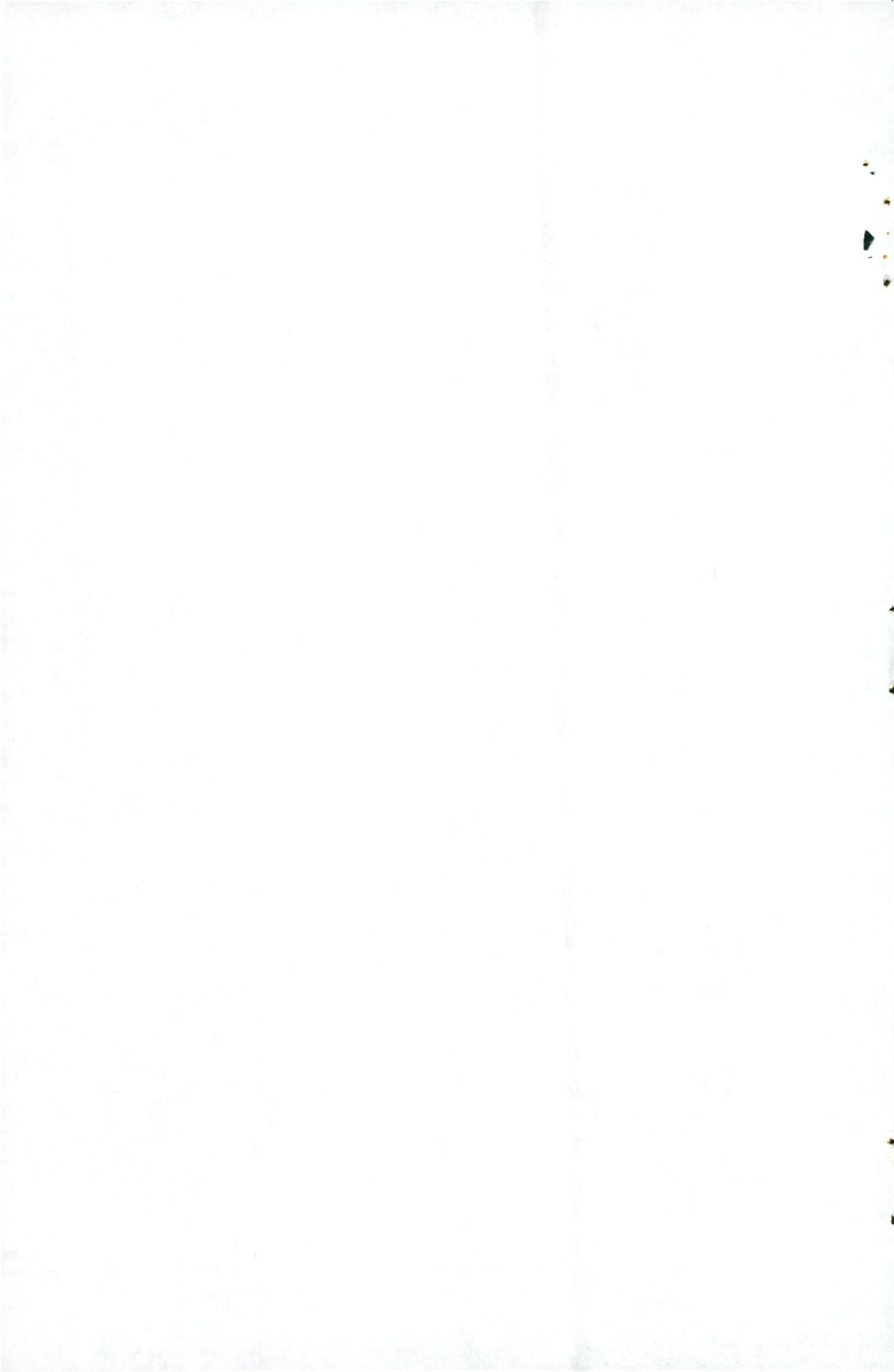
Does the piece have painted patterns? _____
_____. If not, what kind of patterns does it have? _____

Do you value this piece? _____
Why? _____

What would you use this for yourself? _____

Why was the object made from Ceramics do you think? _____







Some More.

Look for the Belleek China Cases

Story of Belleek (Co. Fermanagh)

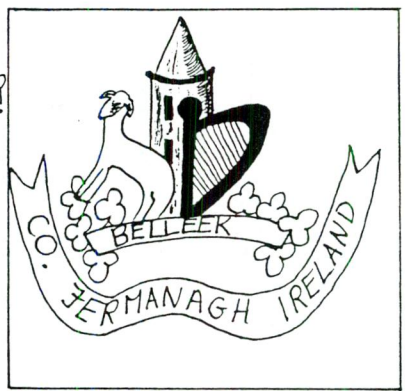


Long, long ago.....
 In 1852 Kaolin or China Clay and Feldspar were discovered at Belleek on the River Erne. As a result, in 1857 a factory for Ceramics was set up.
 By 1860, the factory was making dinner, breakfast + toilet services in fine Ceramics.

Belleek porcelain has always been prized for its fineness, delicacy and its shiny mother of pearl-like glaze.
 From the beginning every piece was marked on the base with a special Belleek Stamp.
 The design of the stamp changed slightly from time to time so that people would know roughly when the piece was made.

There is a card in one of the cases showing these Stamps.

Look for this one →
 The word circa means about.
 What is the date of this stamp?



Does Belleek have many colours? _____

What is used instead? _____

Among the Ceramic pieces you have looked at today, what different ways have the craftsmen made the patterns? _____

What do you think are the main differences between Belleek Ceramics and the others? _____



This visit concentrated specifically on the pieces based on fish and shell motifs in the ceramics collection of the museum.

Detailed worksheets were provided (Fig 10) and the museum trail began with the watching of a video from the 'Hands' series on the manufacture of Stoneware drainage pipes. The pupils were required to answer questions, record information on a chosen object which they had to draw in detail. (Fig 11).

Stage 10

Lesson Plan: 22.04.1991

For the next stage of the project, I felt it necessary for the pupils to draw from direct observation, actual fish and shells. The pupils were required to combine their observational drawings with their recorded information from the Museum Trail to design a modern-day equivalent based on their chosen object in the Ceramics collection in the museum including the type of decorative motif to be used as surface decoration.

This lesson allowed for the combination of using our heritage and the pupils observational drawing as a source for their craft work.

Slides of Belleek china proved to act as a good motivating factor.

Stage 11

Lesson Plan: 29.04.1991

The class had never before worked with clay, as a result I felt it necessary to devote a lesson entirely to the introduction to two basic construction methods in ceramics these being coiling and pinch pots, allowing for experimentation with this material and to become familiar with its limitations.



Fig 11.

Class 2S in the National Museum.



Fig 12.

Ceramic pieces based on the Museum Trail.

This encouraged a more in-depth exploration of the methods of construction and decoration used by the craftsmen who made the pieces in the Museum.

As the pupils grasped both methods of construction, they were quick to experiment with the material.

Stage 12

Lesson Plan: 06.05.1991

This lesson was the class visited by Dr. Anthony Dicen, our external examiner.

The pupils were introduced to a third method of ceramic construction, slab building and to the various methods of decoration. These were reinforced by looking at my personal

Diploma work which contained a variety of methods of decoration.

The use of large colour reproductions of various pieces in the museum jogged the pupils' memories and motivated them to work extremely hard.

This fostered in the pupils, an appreciation of the skilled craftsmanship of our ancestors. I observed an improvement in the pupils manipulative skills in the construction and modelling of their three dimensional forms.

Stage 13

Lesson Plan: 13.05.1991

The first fifteen minutes of this lesson was devoted to a trail through 'the depiction of fish in Art.' The trail comprised of an audio-visual presentation with 14 accompanying slides depicting a selection of the representation of fish by Artists throughout the ages.

The audio-visual presentation was followed by the practical work of completing the construction of pieces previously designed. (see script for slide show). Pupils concentrated on putting into practice what they learned about decoration last week (fig 12). I felt it was important for the class to see how a range of artists dealt with the fish theme they themselves dealt with all year in a variety of ways.



Thematic Slide Presentation

Theme: The depiction of Fish in Art

The image of fish has been explored by many artists and craftsmen throughout the ages, ranging from the Egyptian tomb paintings which are dated about 1400B.C. right through to the art of the contemporary period.

The fish has a strong symbolic significance and incorporates a variety of meanings, for some people, the fish is a primitive christian symbol, others hold that the fish in broad terms, is a psychic being, a symbol of fertility or a symbol of baptism.

Slide No.1

Fish feature predominately in Egyptian art as we can observe in this first slide which depicts a painting of a pond from the Egyptian tomb of Thebes and dates back to 1400 B.C. These tombs were built to hold the body of the dead King or Pharaoh. The Egyptians were strong believers in the next world and so, it was the custom when a powerful man died, his servants were sacrificed and buried with him to ensure the Pharaoh arrived safely into the next world.

Later thankfully this activity was considered too horrific and too cruel and so, art came to the rescue.

Instead of his servants being sacrificed, the walls of the Pharaoh's tomb were painted with images which represented his hobbies and interests. Here we can see one of these paintings, we can observe a garden with a pond. In Egyptian art, everything was painted in its most characteristic way. Look at how the



trees and fish are painted, the pond is painted as though the artist was looking from above, however the trees and fish are painted as if being viewed from the side.

Slide 2

The next slide shows a detail of the same painting. The art of Egypt has a simplicity that is comparable to children's drawings, however, Egyptian art is much more consistent. What mattered most was not the prettiness of the painting but the completeness of the image.

Slide 3

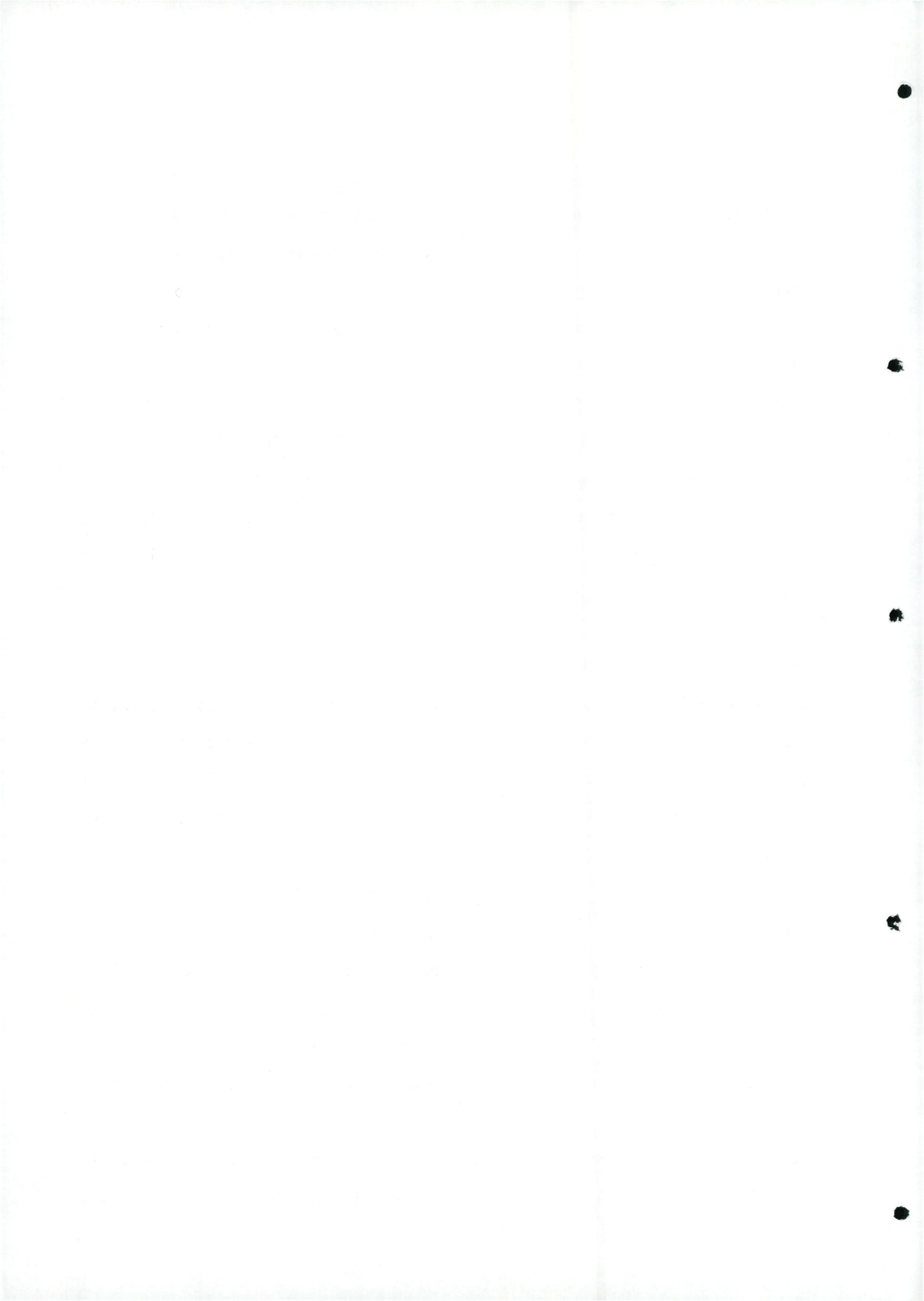
This second painting, is also from the tomb of Thebes is titled, "The pleasures of Fishing and Fowling". It depicts great men hunting with throw sticks which was a sport of the well to do and to us, these paintings provide an extraordinarily vivid picture of life as it was lived in Egypt thousands of years ago.

Slide 4

The next slide shows a painting by the Swiss artist, Conrad Witz hundreds of years later in 1444 in a period called Renaissance. The painting is called "The miraculous draught of the fishes", and is from a church altar in Geneva.

It is dedicated to St Peter and represents the Saints encounter with Christ after the Resurrection as it is told in the Gospel of St John.

If we compare this painting to the Egyptian tomb paintings, we have just looked at, we can see this painting is much more realistic than the simplicity of the



Egyptians.

The story of the painting is that some apostles had gone out to sea to fish, but had caught nothing. The next day Jesus stood on the shore but the apostles did not recognise him.

He told them to pull in their nets but the net was so full of fish that they could not pull it in. At that moment, one of them said, "It is the Lord", and when St Peter heard this he threw himself into the sea. Witz wanted to paint the scene with a real landscape as it looked then and indeed as it still looks today. It is perhaps the first exact representation of a real view ever attempted.

On this real lake, Witz painted real fishermen, not the dignified apostles of older pictures, but uncouth men of the people, busy with their fishing tackle and struggling clumsily to keep the barge steady. St Peter looks somewhat helpless in the water. The risen Christ miraculously appears to his apostles on the shore to give them help and comfort.

Slide 5

The next slide is a painting by an Italian artist called Raphael, it is titled, "The Nymph Galatea".

This is a small fresco which Raphael painted in the villa of a rich banker in 1514. A fresco is an image painted onto wet plaster.

Raphael chose a verse of a poem as a source for this painting. The verse describes how the clumsy giant Polyphemus sings a love song to the fair sea



nymph, Galatea and how she rides across the waves in a chariot drawn by two dolphins, laughing at his uncouth song. While the gay company of other sea-gods and nymphs are milling round her.

Here, Raphael's fresco shows Galatea with her gay companions. However, long one looks at this lovely and cheerful picture, one will always find and discover new beauties in its rich and intricate composition.

Slide 6

Look now at this painting by Hieronymus Bosch, who was one of the most intriguing artists of the late middle ages.

Bosch, whose horrific visions of Hell are some of the most graphic ever painted. Through an art rich in strange and disturbing images Bosch reflected the concerns of an age which was everywhere dominated by religion and death. His mysterious paintings emerge as complex, moralistic allegories, intended to point out to men the error of their ways.

This painting titled "The Temptation of St Anthony" illustrates certain details from an account of the saints' lifestyle that was published in Dutch in 1490.

St Anthony's temptations were of two kinds, worldly goods and attacks by demons. Here, Bosch has combined both meanings over three panels, creating a dazzling and disturbing fantasy world.

However fabulous they appear, his subjects are rooted in what Bosch and his contemporaries considered to be reality - the reality of man's sinfulness and depravity.



His monstrous birds and fish, although strange and hybrid or cross-bred are based on detailed observation.

While artists at this time used a slow and painstaking technique in order to render forms as realistically as possible, Bosch worked quickly - often without revision to achieve dream like effects.

Slide 7

Almost fifty years later, in 1559, this painting by the Italian artist Titian depicts the "Rape of Europa" by the insatiable Jupiter, here in the guise of a bull. A winged infant cheekily pursues the couple on the back of a dolphin, while Europa's companions watch helplessly from the shore. The vivid colouring and bold brushwork are typical of Titians' late style. In his long career, Titian was unsurpassed in his field. He brought to new heights, the traditional Venetian love of sensuous colour and evolved a revolutionary style of expressive brushwork.

Slide 8

Look now at the top image here by the accomplished sixteenth century draughtsman and engraver, Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

Here we see an engraving titled, "Homage to Bosch", which was published in 1557 with an inscription saying the 'inventor' was Hieronymous Bosch. This was an attempt by Bruegels' publisher to cash in on the popularity of Boschs' weird fantasies which we have previously looked at.

11-
81

Slide 9

Let us move on now to the twentieth century and to the work of Henri Matisse. The first slide titled 'Zorah on the Terrace', was painted in 1912 during working trips Matisse took to Tangier.

These trips to a muslim environment cannot be dissociated from his profound appreciation of Persian art.

The study of Zorah, the Tangier model, depicted in a crouching pose, thrusts us into a tantalizing world.

Here Matisse places his model outside, on a rooftop under blazing sunlight with a minimum of accessories.

But the intensity of the light is muted by a pale green shadow that supports the colour in Zorahs dress, much as the blue of the carpet functions from the lower part of her dress. The pink patch of sunlight in the upper left is balanced by a matching hue in the goldfish bowl in the lower right.

As for the goldfish, an element curiously out of context here, it is simply a reference to a motif that the artist was currently exploring in many different versions in his studio.

In effect, given its placement, we might think of the goldfish as Matisses' monogrammed signature of this painting.



Slide 10

Of Matisse's several still-life subjects, few were more productive than that of goldfish. They occupy a prominent position in his work. The languorous, fluid bodies of this motif provoked rather different pictorial results, given the successive stages of his development.

In this painting, simply titled "Goldfish", which was executed in 1915, Matisse has managed to indicate three separate environments, namely, reading from back to front: the sky of the exterior, the water of the aquarium and the space of the interior.

We can observe how Matisse has employed contrasting vertical bands of differing hue or value in the structure of this composition.

Slide 11

If we compare this painting with another by the same artist, titled, "Goldfish and Sculpture", we can see a similar compositional device. In this work which was painted in 1911, the round aquarium world of the goldfish is juxtaposed to a rendering of the bronze reclining nude which was a sculpture by Matisse in 1907.

Matisse often featured pieces of his own sculpture in his paintings. The goldfish bowl stood as a metaphor for the qualities he wanted to distil in his art - a secret, almost magically enclosed world of calm and powerful colours.

Just as the goldfish swims tranquilly in its own self-sufficient watery sphere, so the models, almost always female, are depicted as content within their own, almost harem-like world.



The overwhelming colour here is blue, a bright, Mediterranean blue. A yellow strip of curtain sets off the turquoise colours of the bowl, in which the starkly red goldfish swim sluggishly. The same turquoise reappears in the vase where the red of the flowers is almost identical to the goldfish.

Slide 12

This third painting, at first glance looks remarkably similar in terms of the depiction of goldfish in a round aquarium.

On closer examination however, we may observe that Matisse's treatment of the goldfish is more detailed as indeed is his treatment of the flowers and foliage surrounding the aquarium.

The red and green colours are also similar to those used in, "Goldfish and Sculpture".

Matisse believed his role as an artist was to provide calm and I quote his words, "I do not wish to disturb, because I myself have need of peace".

Slide 13

Finally, let us move forward to the present day and to the work of a thirty seven year old, Dublin-based artist, Graham Knuttel.

Knuttel uses the image of fish extensively in his work. For him, the fish symbolises the giving of life, of flow and movement and he uses its image in his work as a research tool in order to understand and apply colour relationships. Because of their simple round or oval forms he feels the fish can be of any colour or combination of colours.



In this painting simply titled, "Fish", Knuttels colours of blues and orangy reds are similar to those of Matisse.

Slide 14

In contrast to his painting, let us look now at Knuttels' "Fish Sculpture". Knuttel worked as a stonemasons fixer for three years in order to subsidise his work. In this job, he was constantly surrounded with endless lines of headstones.

On leaving that job he began sculptural experimentation with simple slabs and cubes placed on top of each other, not in tension, but held by their own weight. The fish he saw as an elegant, simple shape to work in contrast with the geometric nature of the monumental base.

Here, in our final image, we can observe a brightly coloured papier mache fish joined by a headstone-like base.

THANK YOU



As this was our last class of the year, there was no point in bisque firing the pieces so, instead the pupils painted and varnished their pieces. A brief re-cap on colour and paint application and the class set to work.

It was an ideal time to utilise and develop their painting skills on a three dimensional object.

I was delighted to see the lively methods of application and range of paints used.

The pupils had explored a number of processes and produced a wide variety of pieces. There was an obvious Museum influence which proves quite clearly that trips to Galleries, Museums and such places are most beneficial and educationally worthwhile as sources of motivation.



CONCLUSION/EVALUATION

This project beginning with our Sensory Trail to the sea, has proved worthwhile and enjoyable learning activities for class 2S.

During this most successful project, the class covered a vast amount of work and have learned a wide variety of concepts and skills. I feel I really pushed them to the limits of their abilities. The project catered for the very high ability pupil to the not so high ability pupil in the class. Even though it was a group project, there was adequate provision for individuality which I personally feel is vitally important.

I had thought that maybe the class would get fed up or bored with using the fish as a source for their years work, it became clear by the end of the year that each step we took in our project proved to interest and motivate them even more.

I feel the success of the fabric printed banner acted as a promoter of a positive self esteem and of the importance of each pupil to the class make-up.

With the result, the class were highly motivated for the Museum trail which followed.

This project incorporated environmental awareness and also an appreciation for our heritage in conjunction with all the skills and concepts learned.



POSSIBLE EXPANSION

If I were approaching this project again, I would begin three to four weeks earlier. If the weather was too cold for the trip to the sea, I would do the Museum Trail first which would leave adequate time for the completion of ceramic pieces of high quality and craftsmanship.

I would most definitely choose transfer printing again as this proved highly successful and the pupils learned a lot during the design and printing process involved.

I would choose to expand on manipulative skills by using a variety of media, eg. *papier mache, *lino printing and *expanding on clay work.

I would like to choose another theme and approach the project in much the same way -

- * Animals including a trip to the Zoo and Museum.
- * Architecture, including a trip to the Casino in Marino.
- * Figures in the environment including a trip to the National Gallery and drawing trips to public places.

Depending on the age group of the class involved a possible expansion to the fabric printing process would be:

- * T-shirt printing.
- * Silk screen fabric lengths.
- * Hand painting on silk, eg. scarf design.

The theme we choose for our art work is irrelevant as the possibilities for active and meaningful learning through art, craft and design activities are limitless.

As teachers, I personally feel we must continue to explore and create ourselves so that we are in a position to motivate and facilitate the artistic and aesthetic growth of the pupils we are teaching.



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