



THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

PERSONAL AND CHILDRENS PROJECT

ASSOCIATIONS

DOCUMENTATION SUBMITTED

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BY

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## INTRODUCTION

*I was stone, mysterious stone, my breach was a violent one, my birth like a wounding estrangement, but now I should like to return to that certainty, to the peace of the centre, the matrix of mothering stone* <sup>1</sup>

My personal project developed out of my love for nature, a concern with earth art and my fascination with very ancient sites. For me there is a mysterious romantic element to wondering about the past, the ancient sites and images being outlets for the imagination that cannot be regulated, owned, or manipulated, because so little is or ever will be known about them.

There is also a strong overlay of culture on nature in pre-historic times, the earth artists of the 1970's recognising this fact and returning to the land to break from the commodity basis of the art practice. These artists wanted to re-establish lost connections between man and nature. Seeing the land as being made up of simple and basic elements which have been relied upon down through the ages both for survival and aesthetic purposes.

I therefore saw the megalithic sites and earth art work as offering a framework within which to explore the connections between man, nature and art.

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<sup>1</sup>LIPPARD LUCY - OVERLAY  
Page 15 SKYSTONES XXIII  
NERVDA, PABLO

## CHAPTER ONE

### PERSONAL PROJECT : ASSOCIATIONS

Natural environments and materials and their special qualities have always interested me, particularly the process of change from one season to another. Having grown up in an environment where natural materials were always in abundance, I developed an unconscious affinity towards them and over the past four years in my work I have used the landscape and its natural resources as my main theme.

Before coming to Dublin, I had spent the previous three years studying and working in Sligo and although I was well aware of my associations with rural environments, it was only through moving from one very different environment to another that I came to realise the extent to which both I, and my work, were effected by the environment surrounding me. While in Sligo I lived on the outskirts of the town and a short walk in any direction brought me deep into the countryside again, to the mountains, the lakes and the sea. I developed a great love for the Sligo countryside and its landmarks. I could always establish my bearings while living there, as I was constantly surrounded by what had become familiar and natural.

On moving to Dublin, I found myself living in a flat, three floors up, facing a towering office block and overlooking a continually busy street. It was difficult for me to adjust to the hustle and bustle of the city.

There were times I felt almost claustrophobic and frequently rode the Dart out to Howth or Bray, to try to escape from the urban environment. To return to the calmness and quietness of the sea.

I also found myself developing the ritual of walking through St. Stephen's Green on my way into Leinster Lane in the mornings. Walking for me has its pleasures, especially in such environments, there is always the surprise of discovery. It is also a good way to think, for me a lot of ideas come when walking or when sitting down to rest, sometimes the surrounding landscape puts them into my head.

Over the past few months I have watched how these environments have grown and changed. Becoming more aware than ever before of the structures of nature and how they are continually subjected to change and rearrangement. This was to form the basis of my personal work this year, the challenge I felt in expressing the endless variety and complexity of nature. But as I had always drawn information and materials from natural environments, this was not going to be a new direction.

What was new though, was, the alienation I have experienced in Dublin. It had made me re-evaluate my work, I realized that instead of being merely source materials those places had become an essential part of my life and subsequently effected me greatly. I now felt the need to make use of the experiences these natural environments had to offer.



In approaching this in a broader sense, I see nature on some level as still belonging to all of us, you have only to witness how people flock to St. Stephen's Green during the good weather to realise how evident it is. The obvious enjoyment people derive from surrounding themselves with natural settings and environments.

This led me to think about the interconnections between land and inner human nature and there was no time when this was more evident than in prehistoric times, there was a strong overlay of culture on nature then. One reason for this close relationship stemmed from these peoples total dependence on the land for survival. In-addition, there were few man-made distractions. Prehistoric man had to be closer to natural forces, than people living on our over-crowded planet. They were obviously aware of their environment in ways lost to us now.

I began my project by observing and drawing natural objects and environments I visited on my trips outside of the city. I also gathered on these days, objects to use as resource information back in the classroom, these included stones, shells, leaves and bones, anything that was small enough to be transported back to the college. It was also important for me to record the environments from which these objects came, always photographing on site, creating the finished pieces with an understanding of the materials and the environments from which they came. (Fig 1 & 2)

The stones used in the finished pieces were collected on the beach of Portmarnock. These were then worked with an angle-grinder and although I am dealing with a theme that draws from megalithic mounds and sites, I deliberately used modern equipment and means, as modern life and ideas had given me the pieces.

The stones I am using are naturally changed and eroded by the elements, when I removed the stones from their original environments, I took over this process of evolution and turned them into something that is manmade. I feel then that I have a responsibility when I take a stone from its original environment, and change it in a different way than nature would have. The manmade process starting the minute I touch the stone, marking it with the angle-grinder, hitting the stone and making a sound with the material. Therefore it is important to me that I photograph the environment from which these stones come from, the progress and change documented by photography, this forming part of my evolution.

As the theme comes from the arrangement of megalithic images, because I feel that the builders of these great monuments did not disturb nature too much. The pieces were made so that there are no boundaries between them and the surrounding environment. I wanted the pieces to have an elusive quality that allowed them to refer to numerous other prehistoric images, while never simply imitating them, appearing half-familiar but at the same time impossible to pin down.



The marks made on the stones were defined by the stones themselves, following the natural movement and direction to be found in them. I have not tried to conceal the fact that the pieces were worked by an angle-grinder, as I feel that it is important to be honest to the method or process of working, thus helping to free and clarify the idea. Blending old and new associations, giving a primitive feel to the pieces while still placing them firmly in the present, through the technical means of working them.

The stones themselves have been altered in such a way that they retain many of the characteristics of their original form, while still having their own identity. The marks made by the angle-grinder may appear aggressive but these are used to highlight the more natural rounded areas of the stones, the lines drawing the eye over the pieces, giving them movement and direction. There is also a vulnerable aspect to the floor piece as I have left it unpinned, leaving the stones themselves to contain and hold the piece. The fact that the pieces are placed directly onto the floor instead of on a plinth helps I feel to draw the observer closer making them want to investigate more. The whole shape of the pieces are created to provoke touch, this tactile quality is important in the work.

Ideally the pieces should be returned to an open space or environment, to see how they would integrate and interact with it, also to allow nature with its elements of time and change to take over the process of evolution again. (Fig 3

& 4)





1. WORKING DRAWING - PATRICIA







2. WORKING DRAWING - PATRICIA





3. PAST REVISTED - PATRICIA

4. ASSOCIATIONS - PATRICIA



## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Man has always lived in community groups, primarily for protective and survival purposes. The development of knowledge among groups of people was usually transmitted by word of mouth, from one settlement to another. Man learned from nature and with the accumulation of knowledge of the land, their understanding lead them to create some of the most mystifying open air sculpture pieces known to us today. A lot of the works, dwellings and burial grounds which were made by pre-historic man are now considered landmarks. While for these people they were more spiritual and ritualistic and not formative pieces of works in the environment. *"Pre-historic peoples in general were frequently more concerned to perpetuate the remains of the dead than to provide impressive earthly dwellings"* <sup>1</sup>

This is quite evident by the amount and range of tombs and stone circles which are found throughout Ireland today.

From the Megalithic right up to the Iron Age, early Irish man survived by means of their natural resources. All the skills and equipments that they needed for survival must have evolved from challenges that they faced daily in their surrounding environment, the settlers adapting themselves to the conditions and circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup>O'KELLY MICHAEL - EARLY IRELAND

We are left today with a wealth of both earthen and stone enclosures. These sites are thought.....

*... to have served ritual and ceremonial proposes, others are spectral and some of the stone monuments in particular being hailed as solar and/or lunar observations" <sup>2</sup>*

The use of the circular forms seems to indicate that they were influenced by the sun and moon. The impressive circular forms were made in direct response to their natural environment. Newgrange is probably the most famous of all of these sites, although along the west coast in County Sligo, another very impressive cemetery was built in Carrowkeel.

The bend in the river Boyne encloses a picturesque area, dominated by three large stone structures, known as Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. These structures are strategically positioned on ridges and situated about a mile apart, in sight of one another. These three large tombs are roughly similar in size and design and were erected over five thousand years ago. The major structures were completed sometime between 3000 and 3700 B.C., according to radiocarbon dating. This places them among the world's oldest remaining buildings.

*I say a house in the country, out of which no  
hostages are given to a king, fire burns it not,  
harring spoils it not, good the prosperity with  
which was conceived the kingly house. <sup>3</sup>*

Celtic history and tradition alike echo the high prestige of the Megalithic stone structures found in the Boyne valley. Locked away in Gaelic manuscript and lore are fragments of evidence which show that these mounds have captured the imagination and admiration of generations of people, extending down through the ages of time.

In the ancient literature Newgrange is described as "Brugh na Boinne" and the mound first appears in the very earliest Irish prose stories. These stories which belong to a group known as the "mythological cycle" are concerned with the "Tuatha De Danann", the earliest known native Irish gods, disguised as a supernatural race of wizards and magicians they descended from the sky and inhabited Ireland before the coming of the Celts.

These gods are referred to as "the Lords of Light" and from the earliest literary accounts of Newgrange it is they who dwell in the mound. Newgrange is described as a place of perpetual festivities, having magical and mystical attributes. It is an abode of living gods, conceived and born there.

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<sup>3</sup>COFFERY GEORGE - NEWGRANGE  
CHAPTER 1 and other incised tumuli in Ireland



It is only later in the famous love story of Diarmuid and Grainne that we see Newgrange used as a burial site, upon Diarmuids's death, Oengus brings his body to Newgrange in order to "*send a soul into him, so that he may talk to me each day.*" <sup>4</sup>

The Megalithic mounds were already very ancient when Celtic civilization emerged in Ireland. How far these myths go back it is hard to say, the literary accounts could not have been put together until more than a thousand years after the erection of the monuments. Therefore the myths had grown in order to explain the sites themselves. The mythical ancestors subsequently overshadowed in tradition the actual persons interned there. There is little firm evidence to support these myths but they may contain some survival of the ceremonies paid to the original dead.

Of the three tombs, Newgrange has been the most carefully studied and restored. The "discovery" of Newgrange is credited to a Welsh naturalist, named Edward Lhwyd, who was travelling in Ireland at the time. (Fig 1) In a letter he wrote, dated 15 October 1699 he stated,

*the most remarkable curiosity we saw by the way was a stately mound at a place called Newgrange near Drogheda having a number of huge stones pitched on end round about it and a single one on the top. The gentleman of the village (one Mr. Charles Campbell) observing that under the green turf this mound was wholly composed of*

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<sup>4</sup>COFFERY GEORGE - NEWGRANGE  
CHAPTER 2 and other incised tumuli in Ireland

stones and having occasion to carry off a considerable parcel of them, til they come at last to a very broad flat stone, rudely carved and placed edgewise at the bottom of the mound this they discovered to be the door of a cave, which had a long entry leading to it. <sup>5</sup>

To Campbell (the landowner at the time) the mound was a convenient source of stones that were ideal for use in roads and fences, so during the summer of 1699 while his servants were busy carting away stones from the base of the mound, the finest and most remarkable example of early architecture in Western Europe was discovered.

The last two and a half centuries have seen much speculation about the origins and nature of Newgrange, it has attracted the attention of many archaeologists from the continent, as well as from home. Edward Lhwyed himself, thought the site was pre-Roman, others thought it was Danish, Phoenician or Egyptian. Sir Richard Cott Haore, attributed it "*to some of the Celtic or Belgic tribes.*" <sup>6</sup> But it was not until the summer of 1962 when Professor M. J. O'Kelly began excavations at Newgrange, that they came a little closer to providing some of the answers. (Fig 2) The earliest researchers could not conceive that the monuments were indigenous constructions of the native Irish, but the work of invading colonists. However it now seems to many present day archaeologists that Newgrange is the triumph of local inspiration and architecture.

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<sup>5</sup>COFFERY GEORGE - NEWGRANGE  
CHAPTER 2 and other incised tumuli in Ireland

<sup>6</sup>IBID



The plan of Newgrange is circular and covers an area of about one acre, the greatest diameter of the mound measures 280 feet and its present height is 44 feet. (Fig 3) The mound or tumulus itself consists of an enormous cairn of loose stones, heaped within a curb of great stones, 8 to 10 feet long, laid on edge and touching end to end, over this structure a thin covering of grass has grown. (Fig 4)

A few yards outside the base, the tumulus appears to have been surrounded by a circle of standing stones, twelve of which may still be traced. Large kerb-stones which ring the mound, mark the entrance by curving inwards, also a large curved stone is placed at its mouth. (Fig 5 & 6) During reconstruction, the sides of the mound, were trimmed and faced with dry walling, this takes somewhat from the monument but may have been necessary for its protection. Immediately in front of the entrance lies a large flat stone, forming a sort of sill to the opening of the passage, this stone probably sealed the entrance, and has been forced back. (Fig 7 & 8)

The passage and chamber are cruciform in plan. The passage measures 62 feet in length and is formed of large stones, set on end, some 5 to 8 feet in height, it is also roofed with flagstones of great size. The average width of the passage is about 3 feet and at the entrance is 4 feet 9 inches high, but rises gradually to about 6 feet high. (Fig 9) The passage leads into the main chamber, the roof of which is funnel or dome shaped, formed of large flat stones laid horizontally and corbelled, one over the other, until closed by a single stone. (Fig 10 & 11)



The three recesses which give the plan its cruciform appearance are of unequal dimensions and on the floor of each recess is placed a large stone basin. It is thought that the use of these basins is connected in origin with the mode of burial, by incineration. (Fig 12 & 13)

One aspect of the tumulus that has long fascinated archaeologists is the roof-box which was installed to allow light to enter the passage-grave, its angle of construction is such that direct sunlight enters the central chamber for only 20 minutes each year on the 21st December, the date of the winter solstice. <sup>7</sup>

The remarkable carvings on the stones, of the passage, chambers and the entrance stone at Newgrange have also afforded a wide field of speculation over the years. Powell saw in one of the markings Phoenician character, while more recently, Martin Brennan claimed that the mound was orientated to the rising or setting positions of the sun at critical times of the year, and that the beams of light projected into the inner chambers at certain times, illuminated one after another the images carved on the stones, as if spelling out messages in an archaic code. George Coffey an Irish archaeologist believes that *"these markings simply represent the style of decoration of the period, and that their explanation is to be chiefly sought in that direction"*. <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>BRENNAN MARTIN - THE STARS AND THE STONES  
Ancient Art and Astronomy in  
Ireland

<sup>8</sup>COFFERY GEORGE - NEWGRANGE  
CHAPTER 1 and other incised tumuli in Ireland

In the markings there is a limited, identifiable and relatively consistent range of symbols which appear in widely different places within the mound. The art is highly abstract and is restricted to nine basic geometric forms, these combine to form all other marks and signs, dot, line, circle, quadrangle, arc or crescent, zigzag, wavy line, spiral and oval, these recur frequently and have a wide distribution. (Fig 14)

While the exact purpose of these markings will never be known, they do represent the first evidence of a spiral motif which was to remain an integral feature of Irish art for the next four millennia.

In Newgrange the art is harmoniously integrated into the architecture of the mound, the visual concepts, drawings skills and techniques of carving are far more advanced than in other stone mounds, indicating a development in both style and technique.

It is evident from Newgrange and other megalithic monuments that prehistoric man intuitively responded to the landscape, interacting with their natural surroundings, seeming to bridge the gap between man and nature. With continuous advancements in terms of science and technology, man has moved further and further away from his roots, the great awareness pre-historic man once had of his environment is now lost to us.

Since those early beginnings the landscape has proven to be a major subject matter for many artists, but it was not until the late 1960's and early 1970's that the landscape was re-investigated and questioned. New frames of thinking and ideas were put forward in fine art, literature and music. Artists sought a new way of looking at the world and tried to break with conventional ideas and modes. With fresh approaches the 70's saw formations of new groups of artists such as black art, conceptual art, process art and earth art.

These artists sought to break from the commodity basis of the art practice. Soho provided the artists with greater freedom by creating new spaces and environments for the artists to work and display in. *"They were created for artists who wanted to make art beyond the object, beyond the gallery, beyond the audience."*<sup>9</sup>

These alternative spaces, encouraged and incited sculptors to escape from the white cube installation of the gallery and to return their work to it's natural surroundings. Instead of dealing with the diffused fluorescent lighting of the gallery the artists now had to deal with the external elements such as air, water, light, space, time, sound, movement and the raw materials of the earth.

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<sup>9</sup>ROBINS CORRINE - THE PLURALIST ERA  
CHAPTER 1 American Art 1968 - 1981  
PAGE 1



*The earth artists in the 70's wanted to make contact with time, to reintroduce space/time coordinates into art. They started making their pieces in and from the earth as a way of starting over, of beginning again at the beginning.* <sup>10</sup>

Earth sculptures began to re-think ways of introducing themselves into the environment, each moving with their own specific interests. They communicated with nature in a natural sense through the use of land, space, time and civilisation.

They built work from the land, without disturbing the environment. The artists did not want to possess the work they made, the sculptures becoming inseparable from their sites. Evolution is a major process in both nature and earth art. The sculptor feels a responsibility when removing materials from their natural environment, because he is interrupting the process of evolution, changing the material in a different way than nature would have.

The main exponents of earth art were Robert Smithson, Richard Long, Nancy Holt, Mary Miss, Alice Aycock, Michael Heinzer, Robert Morris, Alan Sanfist and Dennis Oppenheim. These artists worked in different ways but within the context of their environments. (Fig 15\20)

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<sup>10</sup>ROBINS CORRINE - THE PLURALIST ERA  
CHAPTER 1 American Art 1968 - 1981  
PAGE 1

Artists were more concerned with allowing materials rather than systems to determine the form of their work, reflected in the ubiquity of temporary piles of materials.<sup>11</sup>

Earth sculptors used the available materials of the earth and they took into account their possibilities and properties.

Smithson described his work as "*the interaction between mind and matter.*"<sup>12</sup> Smithson understood his sites and left each piece to rest within its particular environment. He visited areas of the earth which were never considered before as areas of display.

Water played a major part in Smithson's work along with universally acknowledged symbols which were consistently revised in his earthworks. Spiral jetty which was constructed in 1970 was made solely from the materials of the specific site. (Fig 21 & 22) Smithson was attracted first of all to the location, to the vast array of colours he found there. The forms he envisaged creating, were to be embossed by man-made machinery, there was to be no direct contact between the artist and the materials. Unlike pre-historic man who relied on his intimate knowledge and understanding of nature to create his grounds. Advanced methods in technology has now removed man from the physical level of working with the materials and in this way he has lost the rich understanding and familiarity known in ancient times.

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<sup>11</sup>LIPPARD LUCY - SIX YEARS: THE DEMATERIALIZATION OF THE ART OBJECT FROM 1966 TO 1972

<sup>12</sup>HOBBS ROBERT - ROBERT SMITHSON Sculpture

Smithson wanted to return to the past in his earthworks using the strength of the natural materials as a medium, he tries to form links between man and nature, using symbols which have retained their philosophical symbolic meaning from the earliest civilisation down to the present day. The spiral has also been used by pre-historic man as a symbol presumably of time or religion.

*From out of the unfathomable depths so there arose  
a circle shaped of spirals - coiled up within the  
spiral lies a snake, a symbol of wisdom and  
eternity.* <sup>13</sup>

Land and nature has again become a dominant theme in terms of man's self-expression. The development of earth works during the seventies has opened new avenues for sculptors to work in, like pre-historic man we are now learning directly from nature and creating forms which are meaningful to us.

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<sup>13</sup>HOBBS ROBERT - ROBERT SMITHSON Sculpture



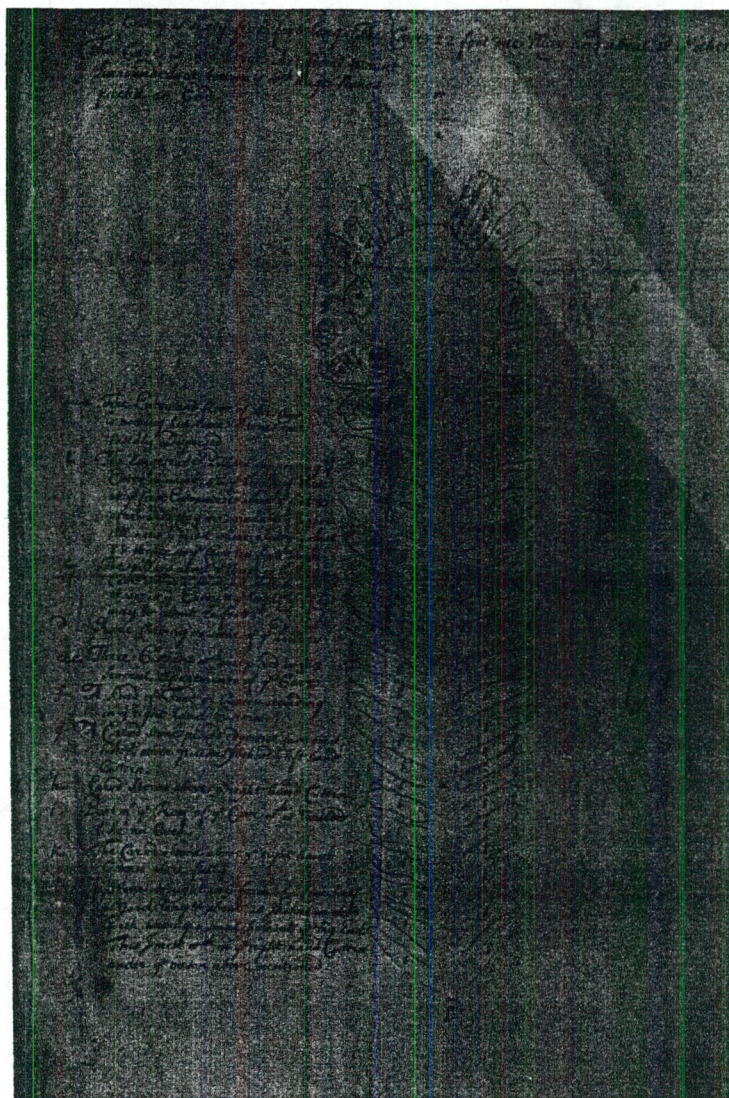


1. NEWGRANGE AS DISCOVERED IN 1699 - NEWGRANGE



2. NEWGRANGE DURING EXCAVATIONS - NEWGRANGE





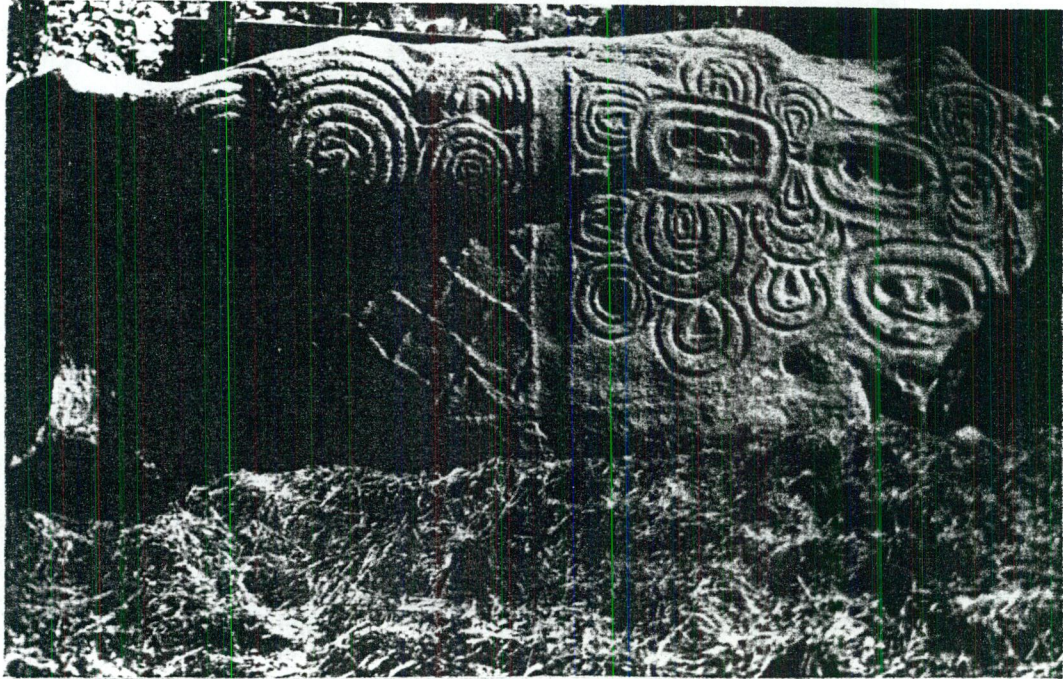
### 3. PLAN OF NEWGRANGE - NEWGRANGE

DRAWN BY WILLIAM JONES IN 1700





4. NEWGRANGE AFTER EXCAVATIONS - NEWGRANGE



5. KERB - STONE - NEWGRANGE  
67 AT NORTH-EAST SIDE

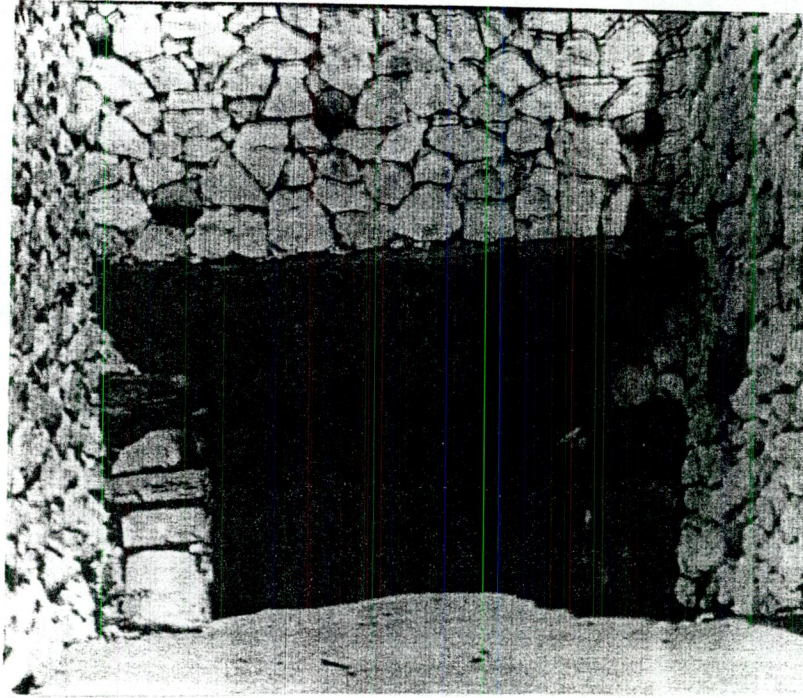




6. KERB - STONE - NEWGRANGE

52 AT NORTH-WEST SIDE





7. ENTRANCE - NEWGRANGE



8. ENTRANCE STONE NEWGRANGE





9. VIEW OF CHAMBER AND PASSAGE - NEWGRANGE  
LOOKING OUTWARDS FROM THE END RECESS





10. VIEW OF MAIN CHAMBER - NEWGRANGE  
LOOKING OUTWARDS FROM THE END RECESS



11. ROOF-VAULT - NEWGRANGE





12. RIGHT RECESS AND BASIN - NEWGRANGE





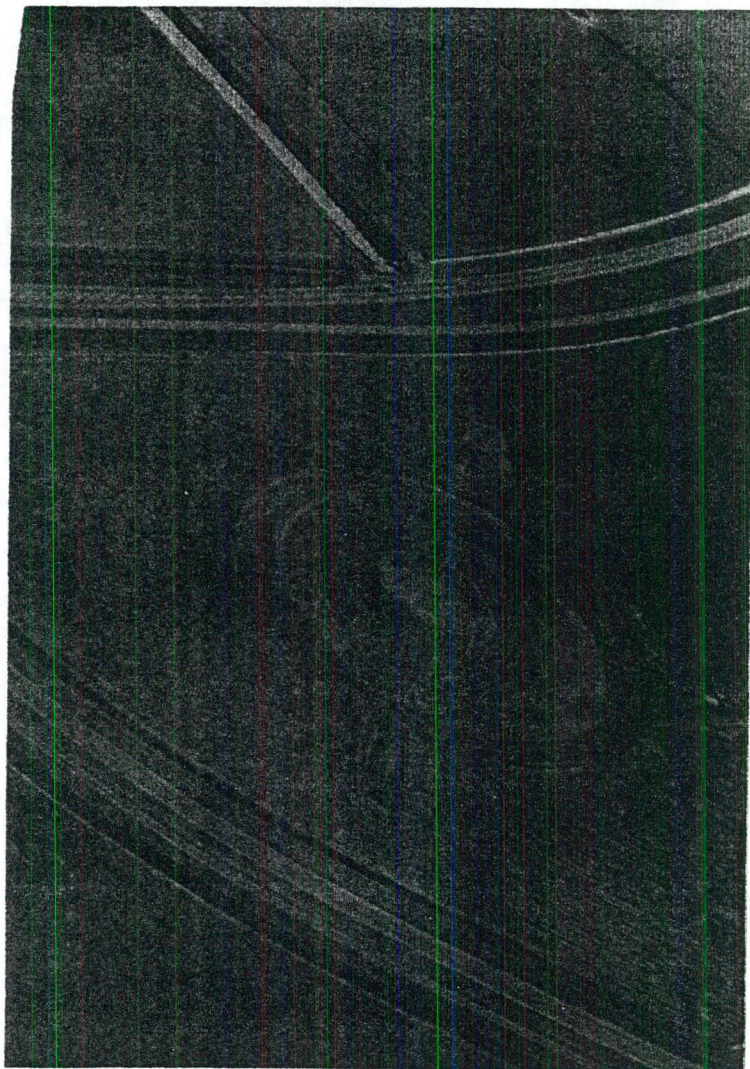
13. ROOFSTONE OF RIGHT RECESS - NEWGRANGE



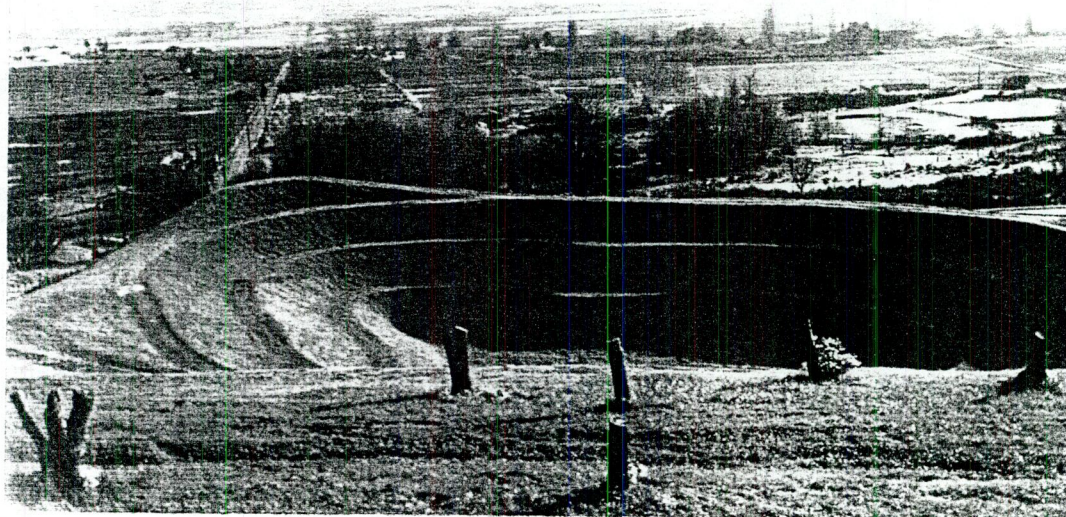


14. DETAIL OF SPIRAL MOTIF - NEWGRANGE  
IN MAIN CHAMBER





15. OBSERVATORY - ROBERT MORRIS



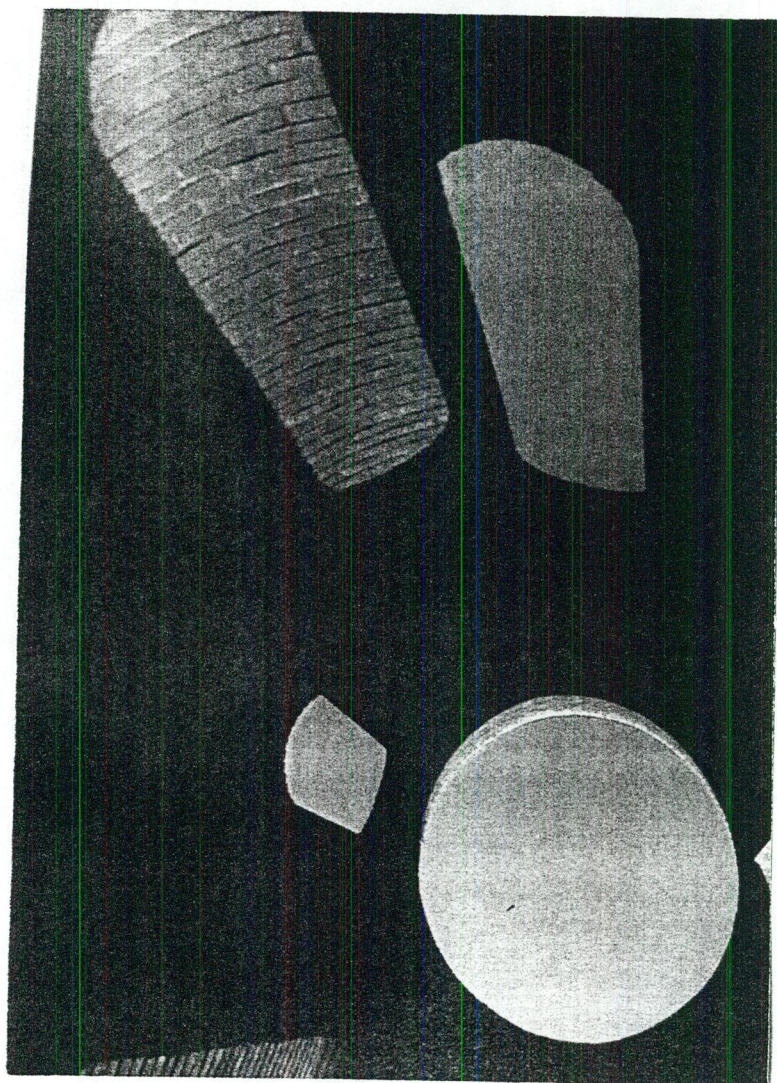
16. UNTITLED 1979 - ROBERT MORRIS





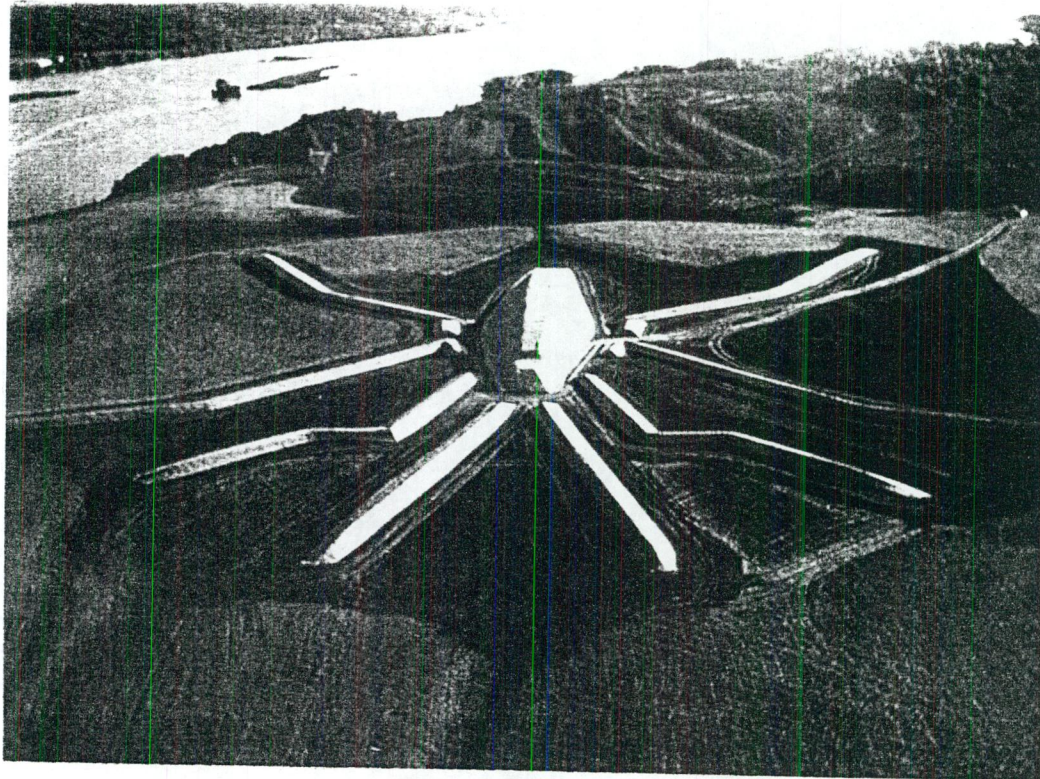
17. SUN TUNNELS 1982 - NANCY HOLT



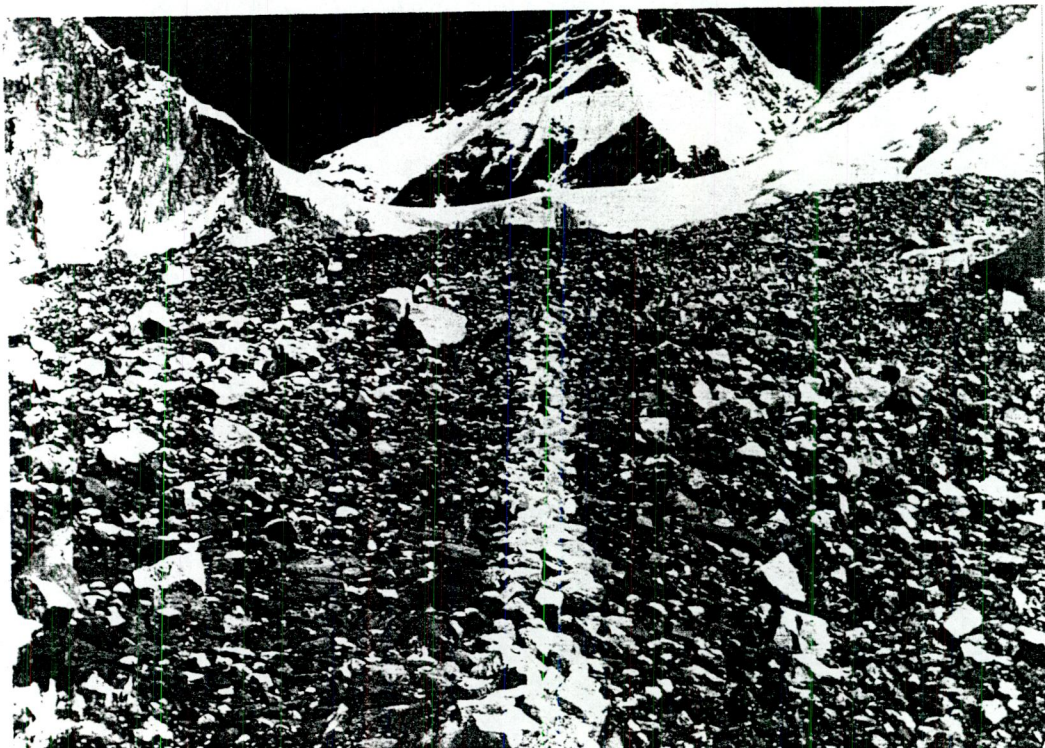


18. DETAIL 30 BELOW BRICK HEIGHT 1980 - NANCY HOLT





19. WATER STRIDER OF THE EFFISY - MICHAEL HEINZER  
TUMULI SCULPTURES 1983 - 1985



20. A LINE IN THE HIMALAYAS 1975 - RICHARD LONG





21. SPIRAL JETTY 1970 - ROBERT SMITHSON



22. SPIRAL JETTY 1970 - ROBERT SMITHSON



### CHAPTER THREE

#### EDUCATIONAL RELEVANCE

In the 1990's the general public has become more aware of their environment. Through the international Green Peace movement and the emergence of green politics, people are moving towards a greater sensitivity and understanding of their surroundings. If this is to continue then it is through young people's aesthetics and knowledge of nature that a firm basis for environmental awareness can be established! *"If we are to try and deal with the environment, we must begin at the level of our own perceptual process".<sup>1</sup>*

Most people at sometime or another have picked up a stone or pebble from the ground and have flung it into the air for the sheer pleasure of it. Sooner or later they will pick up a stone and examine it for its rounded form or its qualities of colour or decoration. Such awareness develops when we have the time to stop and look at things for ourselves. The sensory walk offers a means by which students acquire much more intimate knowledge about a place or a thing than they would arrive at by just looking. It is a way of intensifying and heightening that perception. It will help students to understand, the visual qualities of these environments and should lead to the desire and ability to improve them.

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<sup>1</sup>ARTICLE - SENSORY WALK

The response the individual child makes to the environment is essential part of the sensory walk, what he/she discovers about it, the opinions they form and subsequently how he/she expresses these ideas and feelings through the art process is an inevitable outcome of the programme of environmental exploration. Students should learn to have confidence in their abilities to appreciate and assess their emotional responses to the surroundings.

*To think effectively in terms of relations of qualities is as severe a demand on thought as to think in terms of symbols, verbal and mathematical.* <sup>2</sup>

The qualities that an object like a stone can convey are an important part of it's whole character and no amount of words can really describe an irregular shape quite as accurately as the process of art. Through art we begin to see qualities which have visual subtlety, such as the colour qualities to be found in a stone.

*Attending to special qualities which things have includes not only what children take in with their eyes but what they eventually give out in their art.* <sup>3</sup>

The move from experiencing and observing, to judgement and action should be the outcome of a sensory walk.

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<sup>2</sup>DEWEY JOHN - ART AS EXPERIENCE

<sup>3</sup>IBID



The resulting work being the students interpretation and response to the environment through the media they use. The sensory walk helps children to learn to look with open eyes at the world around them and to respond to what the environment has to offer. This in turn will heighten their creative potential.

*Art reminds us that the act of looking intensely, of opening one's sensibilities to the environment yields a qualitative reward in the process of living. <sup>4</sup>*

Developing visual sensitivity and perception in students is important for producing aware adults who care about the environment around them. Through a good art programme the judgements they might make would be founded on knowledge and awareness, enabling students to assume their share of responsibility for the improvement of the aesthetic dimension of personal and community living.

Because we are dealing with a class project, which is sufficiently flexible to cater for individual needs and abilities, it has the added advantage of providing each student with the opportunity to make his/her contribution somewhere, regardless of ability. It also encourages students to become sensitive to others, to their ways of working and styles. Students must interact supportively if the project is to be successful, this will develop respect for self and others.

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<sup>4</sup>EISHER ELIOT - EDUCATING ARTISTIC VISION

If children experience sharing, working together and interacting supportively as in a class project, then interpersonal growth is possible too. <sup>5</sup>

*The class project involves the student gaining a mastery of the creative possibilities of the medium, developing skills in shaping those materials. This shaping will involve the creation of artistic problems which must be perceived and solved. <sup>6</sup>*

There is also the value in confronting students with new and different materials. The handling of these materials and finding out what they can do demands a different kind of thinking. Students must make decisions regarding shape and form, they must respond to the power of the materials themselves. They must make further decisions as the works grow and change, persisting sensitively, with determination to a point of completion. <sup>7</sup>

The use of three-dimensional materials in this project, poses a different set of problems for the students to solve, than using two-dimensional ones. The three-dimensional process giving the students the opportunity to express a three-dimensional world in a three-dimensional way.

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<sup>5</sup>ARTICLE - THE PROJECT METHOD  
in Primary School

<sup>6</sup>THE CURRICULUM AND - THE ARTS IN EDUCATION  
EXAMINATIONS BOARD  
PAGE 8

<sup>7</sup>IBID



Primal art and earth works are naturally integrated into their surroundings, unlike a towering office block, a standing stone in the landscape seems not so much to dominate its surroundings as to coexist sensitively with them.

In becoming familiar with pre-historic art and more contemporary art, and in using the natural environment as a resource for learning, students should develop a greater sensitivity towards and understanding of their surroundings. This in turn will produce students who care about the environment around them and see art as a means by which they can enhance and improve on it.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SCHOOL PROJECT : PASSAGE GRAVES

The aims of the project are:

1. To promote the students personal development and expression of personal ideas through the experience of art.
2. To develop artistic sensitivity and the power of perception.
3. To promote in the student a developing awareness of and a discriminating attitude to the environment.
4. To develop the students understanding of art, in the historical, cultural, social and personal context.
5. To develop technical skills and a sense of achievement through, three-dimensional construction and the limitations of the materials.



Working with a second year group in the Loreto Convent, Crumlin, I saw the project as providing an ideal opportunity for the students to re-discover or experience again their local area and environment. In bringing the students on a field trip or sensory walk to the cemetery, Mount Jerome, they were to look again at an area that had become familiar to them over the years, growing up in Crumlin. (Fig 1) Some of the students had relations who were buried in the graveyard and had long associated Mount Jerome with sadness and loss. They were a little apprehensive and uncertain about the forthcoming field trip.

So on the 25th of March we set out from the school armed with both paper and drawing materials, unsure of what would be the outcome of the day spent in Mount Jerome. On arriving at the cemetery the students were given a work sheet and asked to complete it within an hour. They were to observe and record pattern qualities and designs that they discovered in the surrounding environment. Also to gather a selection of natural objects that they could use as source material back in the classroom. Individual students were also asked to look for a stone or pebble that they found interesting, whether it was because of its irregular shape or form or because of its decorative qualities. The students were to hold onto their stones until we were ready to begin the project back in the classroom. (Fig 2\4)

Previous to the field trip we had held a group discussion about the project. The students were shown slides on the passage grave at Newgrange and were familiarised with the art work and markings found there. Their sculpture piece was to be based on the layout or format of a passage grave and the students were divided into groups, depending on what area of the grave they wanted to work on. The groups were as follows:

The entrance stone: 1. Deborah  
2. Aileen

The passage: 3. Avril 9. Caroline  
4. Rachel 10. Audrey  
5. Jenny 11. Karen  
6. Amanda 12. Lisa  
7. Rona 13. Natasha  
8. Karen 14. Audrey

The corner stones: 15. Tara  
16. Lavina  
17. Nicola  
18. Sinead

The chambers: 19. Colette 22. Noeleen 25. Nicola  
20. Deirdre 23. Aisling 26. Rita  
21. Angelina 24. Colette 27. Stacey



On the 8th of April the students began work on constructing their stone like pieces. They were to use the stones they had collected on the field trip as a base for their forms. These forms were to be constructed in chicken wire and then covered in papier-maché.

The students were given a section of chicken wire 2 foot by 2 foot. They then manipulated the wire into their desired form, making sure that it had a base area, so that it would rest easily on the floor. The form was then ready to be covered in the first layer of papier-maché. The students dipped torn pieces of paper into wallpaper paste and gently moulded them around the wire. This process was continued until the stones were covered by three layers of papier-maché. This strengthened the forms and created a skin or ground for the motifs or designs to be built on in relief.

(Fig 5 & 6)

When the students completed their stone forms, they then began work on designing the motifs for them. In doing so they considered the shape of the forms already constructed, relating their motifs to them. The students used the drawings from the field trip in Mount Jerome as a basis for their motifs isolating areas in these drawings that could be used or developed into symbols. They were encouraged to be selective in their choice of symbols, also when designing their motifs to consider scale, varying the size of the symbols to create a more interesting arrangement. (Fig 7)

The students worked within their groups, trying to achieve an over-all harmony or unity between the various designs and motifs, considering their stones placement within the complete floor piece.

When the students decided on their chosen motifs these were then drawn directly onto the forms, the students modifying the designs where necessary, so that they related to the shape of the stone construction. They then used paper-pulp to build up the motifs in relief, moulding the pulp firmly onto the stones. Once the students had completed the work on their motifs and these had dried sufficiently, the stones were then covered in pollyfilla, the students applying the pollyfilla with a sponge, stippling or dabbing it on, to create a stone-like effect. The forms were again left to dry.

The stones had now only to be painted and the floor piece would be completed, the students stayed with the colour grey, when painting their stones, highlighting the raised areas, with a lighter grey and using a darker grey in the crevices or creases. This helped to project and enhance their designs, and as the paint was again dabbed on, this added to the over-all stony effect.

The floor piece was finally completed, the individual stones laid out in their positions within the format of a passage grave. The students were at last to see the results of their endless hours of labour. (Fig 8\10)



## CONCLUSION\EVALUATION

The students project took longer to complete than I had anticipated, as we ran up against some problems regarding the drying of the stone constructions, the papier maché taking longer to dry, because of the storage space. This left the students anxious to see how their finished floor piece would look like. However the class worked enthusiastically and were co-operative throughout the project and both them and myself were pleased with the final out come of it.

As it was the first time the class had worked in a three-dimensional way, I felt the introduction to three-dimensional materials in this project was an extremely important aspect of it. I was asked often throughout the project if what they were doing was a craft as opposed to making art, the students seeing art as drawing or painting and craft as being secondary to this. The enjoyment they derived from making and seeing the finished floor piece, I felt helped the students to gain a better understanding of art in a broader context.



1. MOUNT JEROME - CLASS 2T





2. MOUNT JEROME - NOELEEN AND SINEAD



3. MOUNT JEROME - AILEEN





4. MOUNT JEROME - CEMETERY



5. LORETO CONVENT - AILEEN, SINEAD AND AMANDA





6. LORETO CONVENT - AUDREY

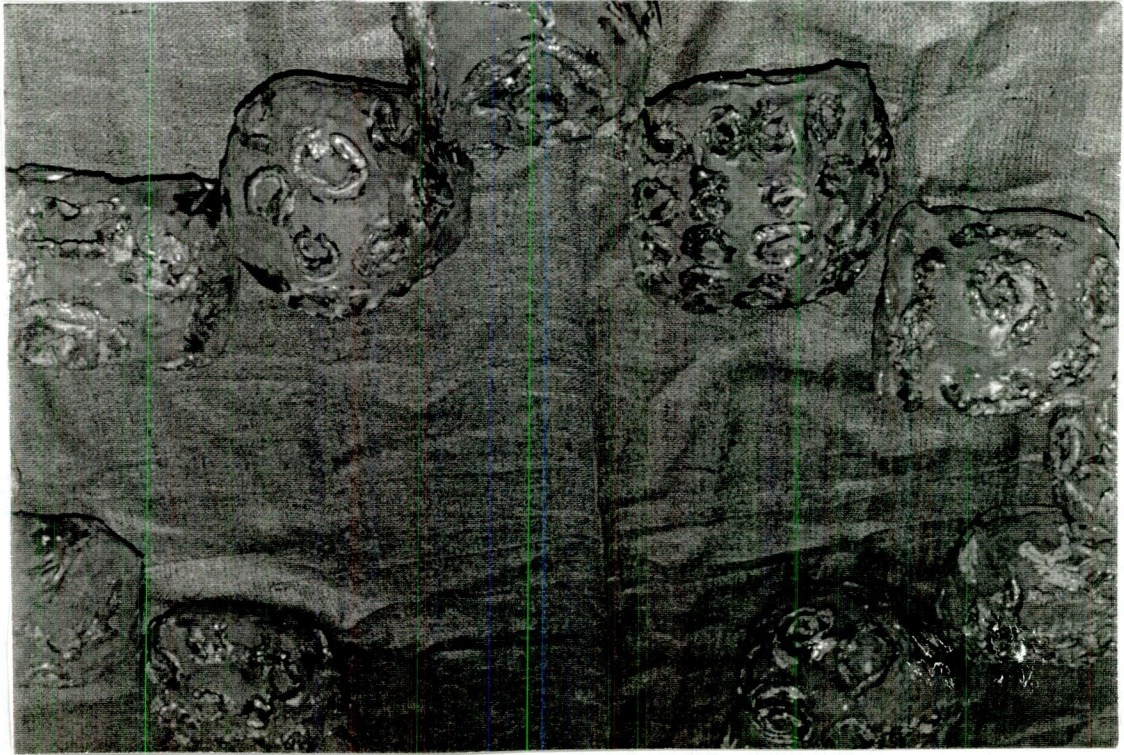


7. WORKING DRAWING - AVRIL





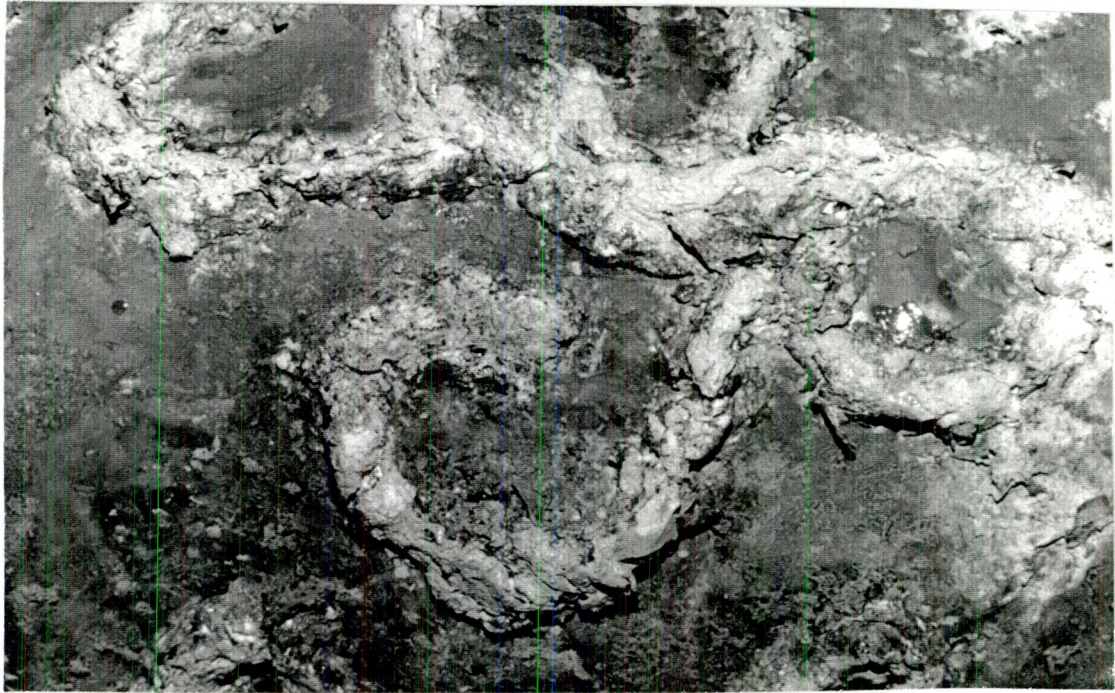




8. FLOOR PIECE - DETAIL



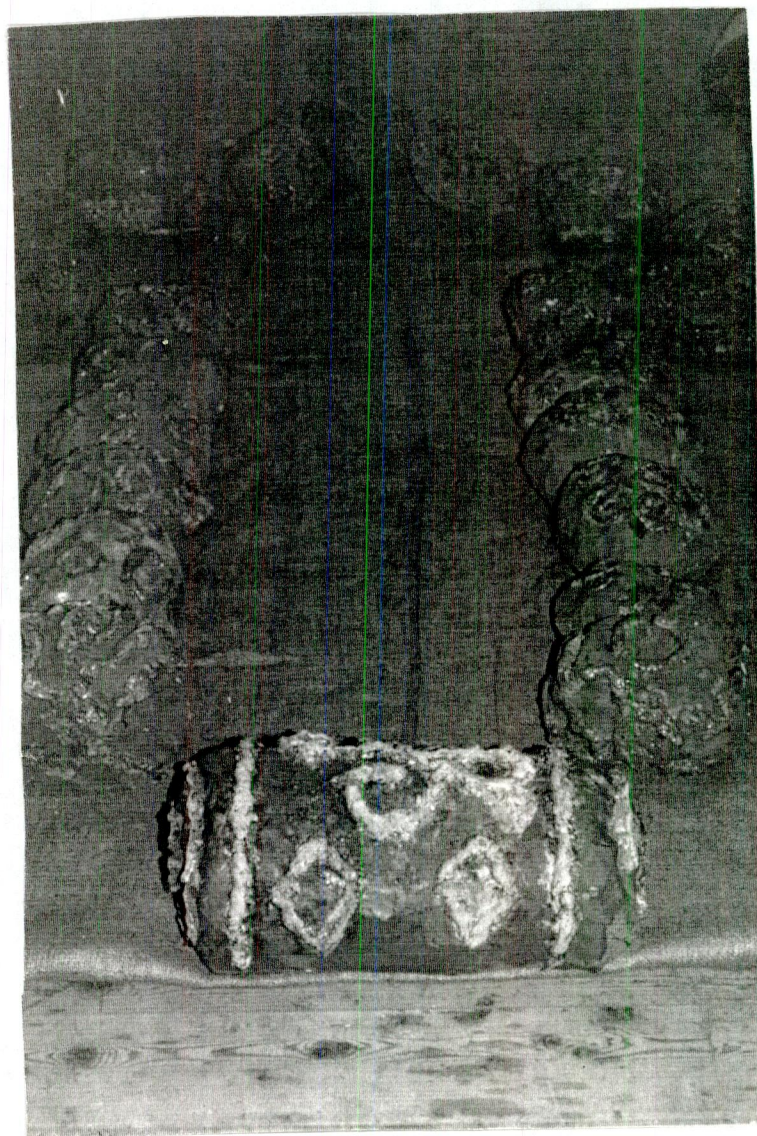




9. FLOOR PIECE - DETAIL

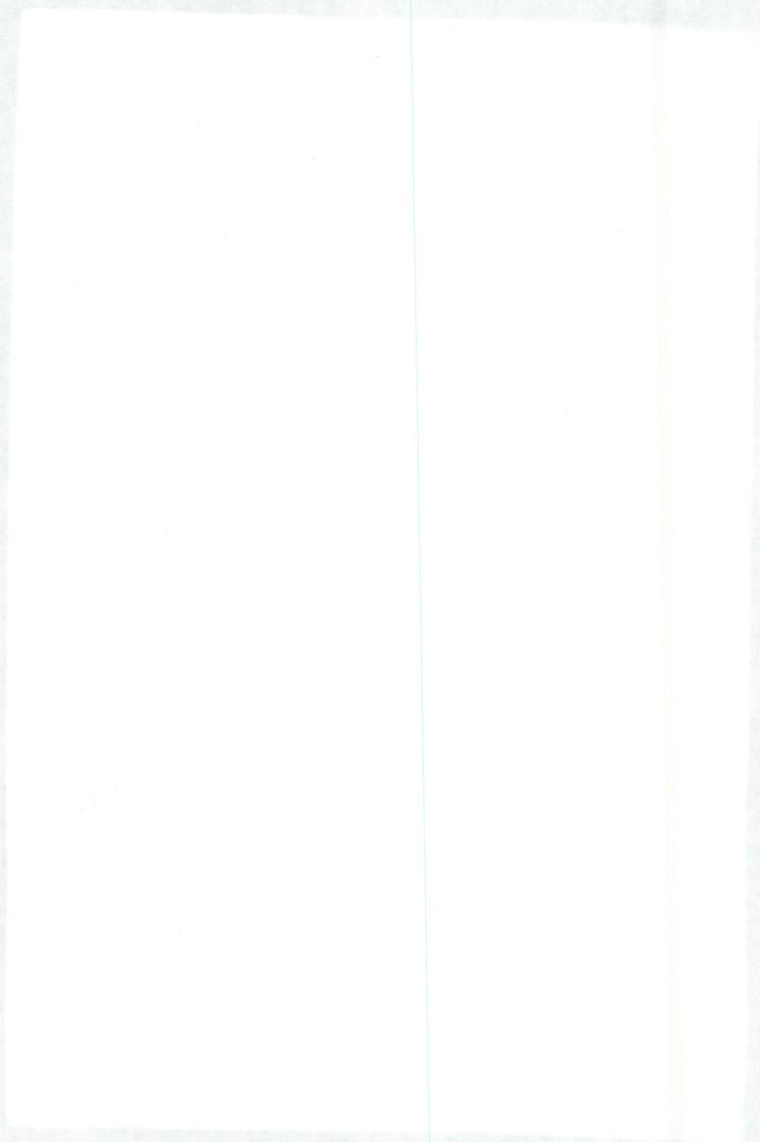






10. FLOOR PIECE - COMPLETE





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22. IBID

CHAPTER THREE

1. MOUNT JEROME

CLASS 2T

2. IBID

NOELEEN, SINEAD

3. IBID

AILEEN

4. IBID

CEMETERY

5. LORETO CONVENT

AILEEN

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AMANDA

6. IBID

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7. WORKING DRAWING

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8. FLOOR PIECE

DETAIL

9. IBID

DETAIL

10. IBID

COMPLETE