NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

"WATER AND THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT"

Submitted to:

Faculty of Education

In Candidacy for the

DIPLOMA FOR ART AND DESIGN TEACHERS

by

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JUNE 1991

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INTRODUCTION

Water is the most common substance on earth. It covers more than 70 per cent of the earth's surface. It fills the oceans, rivers and lakes, and is in the ground and in the air we breathe. Water is everywhere.

Ever since the world began, water has been shaping the earth. Rain hammers at the land and washes the soil into rivers. The oceans pound against the shores, chiselling cliffs and carrying away land. Rivers knife through rock, carve steep canyons, and build up land where they empty into the sea.

This power, coupled with it's beauty, is what attracted me to use water as a theme. This theme developed to include the surrounding environment also, as I felt a lot of the beauty and interest of water lay along the point where the water meets the land.

In the chapter on my personal project I trace the development of my work from concept to completion. In the historical chapter, I discuss the work of three artists who

use water and the surrounding environment as a theme. I then go on to outline my pupils' project and the educational justifications for it.

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PERSONAL PROJECT

I came to the Dip ADT course having completed a Degree in Three Dimensional Design at Manchester Polytechnic where ceramics was my major study area. While in Manchester I gained a great deal of knowledge and experience in both making and firing, and I wanted to use some of what I had learnt and discovered on my degree, on the course this year. I have always used natural forms as the source for my ceramics. The colours, shapes and textures of objects such as seedpods, fungi and shells have all influenced the surface texture, colour and most importantly the forms of my ceramics. The final collection of pieces I made in Manchester were coil built vessel forms, with ceramicists such as Jennifer Lee, Nancy Angus, Gordon Baldwin and Ewen Henderson being particularly influential in the evolution of my style. I admire Ewen Henderson and Jennifer Lee's way of letting the colour and texture of the clay be the sole decoration and the strong forms of the pots made by Nancy Angus and Gordon Baldwin.

The work I have done on the Dip ADT course has been carried through to both ceramics and weaving, weaving being my major craft on the course. I decided that the theme running through my work this year would be the sea. I began by doing observational studies of objects taken from the sea; seaweed, shells, stones and driftwood. I was particularly interested in subtle colour changes and the unusual forms of objects such as the pods on seaweed.

At this period we were being introduced to 'Photography for the Junior Certificate'. I had always been interested in photography and so relished the opportunity of going out and photographing my source. While I appreciated the wide angle views of the sea and shore that I took, it was the focusing in on objects lying on the seashore or on the harbour that particularly interested me. For example, photographing a collection of subtly coloured stones washed up on the shore, or a close up of a jumble of nets and buoys or seaweed clinging to a wall.

This focusing on a small area containing interesting multiples led me to move away from being solely concerned with the sea - as a body of water viewed from a distance and more interested in it's edges - the shore line and the objects I may find there.

fig. 1.

It was at this point I began to consider my pupils' project. I realised that it would be impossible to travel to the sea with a large group as it would involve taking two buses and we were only allowed spend half the day on the sensory trail. I began to broaden my thinking and consider what there was in the local environment that would be related to my own project. I immediately thought of the Royal Canal. It is only ten minutes by bus from the school. I spent a number of Saturdays wandering along its banks trying to find a place that would be interesting and have enough visual information for their project.

I did a number of studies along the banks, mainly studies of the distortion that occurs in reflections. I also took a good many photographs. I began to see that the canal had a lot to offer as a source - not only for the pupils' project but also for my own. I liked the contrast between the roughness and freedom of the sea and the static confined features of the canal. I felt that studying the differences would be a lot more stimulating than focusing on one or the other.

The canal has a lot of evidence of man's presence, sign posts, bridges, locks, pathways, mills yet most of the canal is bordered by hedges, bushes, reeds, trees and looks very picturesque. The principal reason for building the canals

at the start of the Industrial Revolution was to transport goods that were now being mass-produced. I found the notion of something being built for practical purposes being seen today as something of beauty, thought provoking. It also leads to contemporary comparisons. - Will the 'West Link' toll road, just completed, be seen as a scenic thing of beauty in 150 years? I think not. I feel it is the presence of the water and the abundant evidence of nature that invites us to view the canal as a thing of beauty.

I decided to change my theme from that of the sea, to water and its surrounding environment in order to take in both of my interests; the sea and the canal.

It was at an early age that I began to appreciate and collect stones and shells, I was always on the lookout for a stone with unusual markings or patterns, or more often for one that felt good to hold and turn over in my hand. When I began to work on this project I spent a lot of time at the sea holding stones and examining them. I was conscious that the stones I selected were all unique. Every stone had been eroded by the currents flowing over them - some were smooth to hold as though polished by the ebbing, flowing tide. Others were jagged as though they had been hacked off a larger rock and had not yet had its bumps and jagged edges smoothed by the ceaseless tide. All of the stones varied in their visual appearance. Some were large, others small.

Some slightly irregular or very unusual shapes. There were both subtle and striking differences and I began to see that there is no such thing as 'a rock' or 'a stone'. You cannot generalise. You have to be specific in your observation and drawing of stones, as with any natural form since each one is different and unique.

I decided to combine all my gathered information into something tangible. I choose to work on ceramic vessel forms for a number of reasons.

A vessel is defined as something which contains; especially liquids.

I see the land as being a vessel for the sea with the seashore being the rim. Nature controls the form the shore takes, and the shape of the rim is never fixed as the tide ebbs and flows, changing the shape of the rim with every wave. This is in stark contrast to the canal. The canal is a manmade vessel made to hold a channel of water, while canals are now seen as things of beauty they are nevertheless the stamp of man upon the natural world. The rim of this vessel is fixed and static except when man chooses to alter it by opening or closing a lock, nature has little power just as man has no control over the shape of the sea shore.

I want to make my own version of water holding vessels. I will control the form they take and the shape of the rims, just as nature and man control the form of the sea and canal, in that order.

My vessels will not always contain water, sometimes they will contain nothing but my ideas, inspiration, feelings, intuitive responses to the clay and my personal taste. I chose to work on ceramic vessels because I enjoy the tactile quality of the clay and developing ideas in a three dimensional way. I also enjoy experimenting to make an original statement within certain limitations.

> Pottery is an art of limitations. Its form has changed little in six thousand years, even in the hands of its more radical exponents: Voulkos, Rudi Staffel and Jerry Rothman. The elements of foot, belly, shoulder, neck, mouth and lip remain constant. The challenge of the art is to find unique expression within these limitations.[1]

I began making vessel forms which were based on my observations of rocks and pebbles found at the seashore. My first collection of vessels are three large coil built vessels. The shapes are similar - a wide rim tapering gradually to a small base, yet each one, like the stones, is different.

I used a stoneware clay to make the vessels which was easy to manipulate. The nature of handbuilding is such that each vessel will be unique and have little features that distinguish it from another. The three vessels will be

fig 2

Fig 3

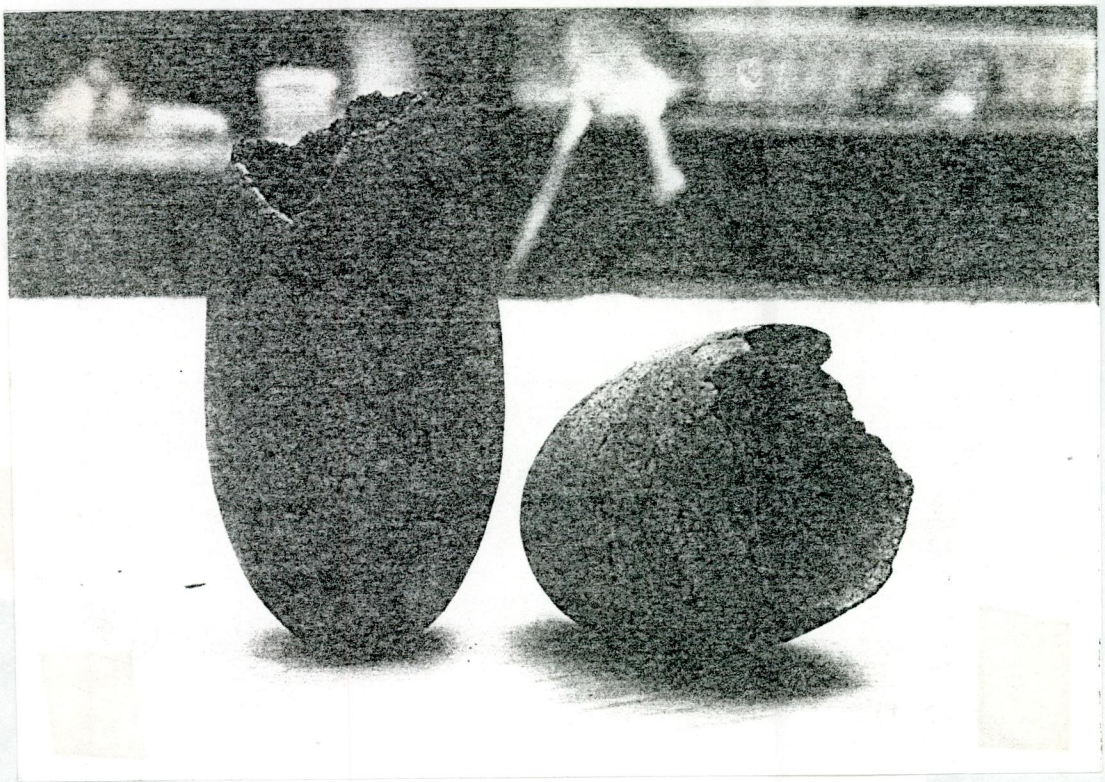
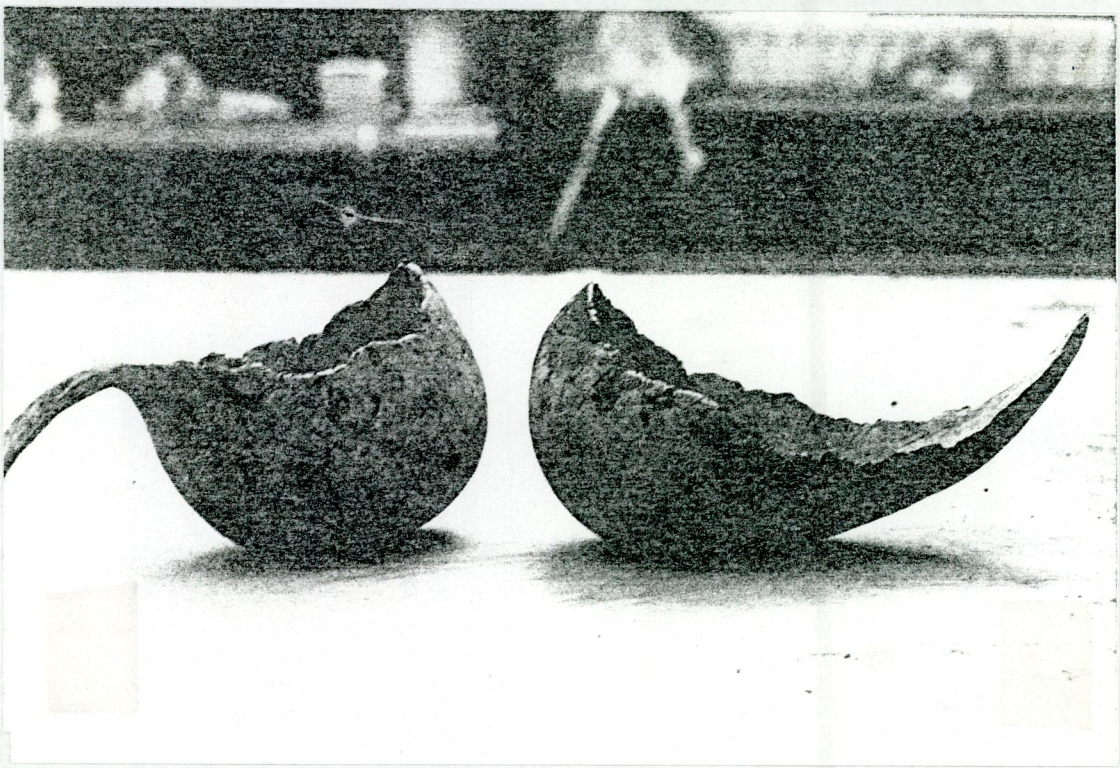


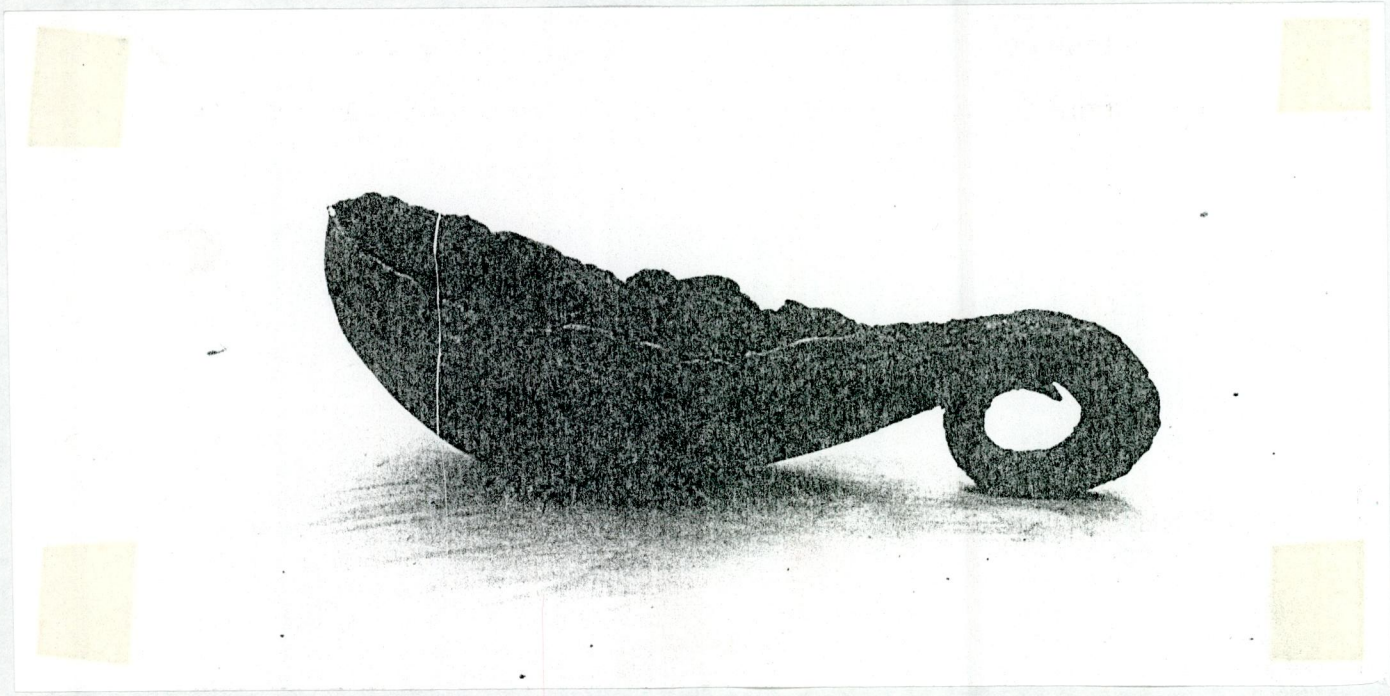
fig4

decorated with oxides which will be rubbed into the surface and sanded away. This will mean that the colour will only stay in the crevices and lightly on the surface giving a very subtle effect.

The next group of pots I worked on were on a completely different scale. I decided to make a collection of vessels that could be held in the hand like a pebble or a stone. I decided to combine different clay bodies to try and get a very natural-looking effect based on the variety of colours found in rocks and pebbles. I continued to explore vessel forms of various sizes based on my observation of the stones. All the vessels were decorated with oxides but I chose to leave them unglazed as the dry matt surface of unglazed ceramics is more like the stones and pebbles I had worked from.

As a development of these hand built vessels I made a group of hand built ladles. I was toying with the notion of making objects to transfer the water from one vessel to another. The ladles that I made are not like smooth industrially produced ones, they have very textured surfaces and the forms look as though they have been carved rather than cast. The ladles are based on pebbles also. It was an additional challenge to make the handle and to ensure that it was sympathetic to the form. It was one which I enjoyed.





Having explored vessel forms based upon my observation of pebbles found on the seashore and canal bank, it was a natural progression to make a collection of forms based upon the actual sea and canal as a whole. As I have said, the land is a vessel for the sea with the seashore being the rim. The rim is very irregular and natural and I decided to retain this element as the main feature of the sea vessels. To make the irregularity of the rim more noticeable, I chose to make the body of the vessel very regular and controlled. The easiest and best way to do this was to press mould the vessels. The sea's width is echoed in the collection of wide-necked press moulded bowls I made. The colouring of the bowls was achieved by using body stains mixed in with the clay. The colours are based on those of the sea. The texture on the inside of the bowl varies between very smooth and very rough, it represents the different surfaces of the sea, the choppy wild surface and the smooth glass-like surface.

When considering what forms to make to represent the canal I examined what features and qualities of the canal I would include - I felt the rigidity, order and straightness, and the locks and bridge, were essential for the pot.

The forms I made to represent the canal are very different to those for the sea and pebbles. This is due to their being natural and the canal being man made. The canal pots are cones with additions. They rely on two colours, black

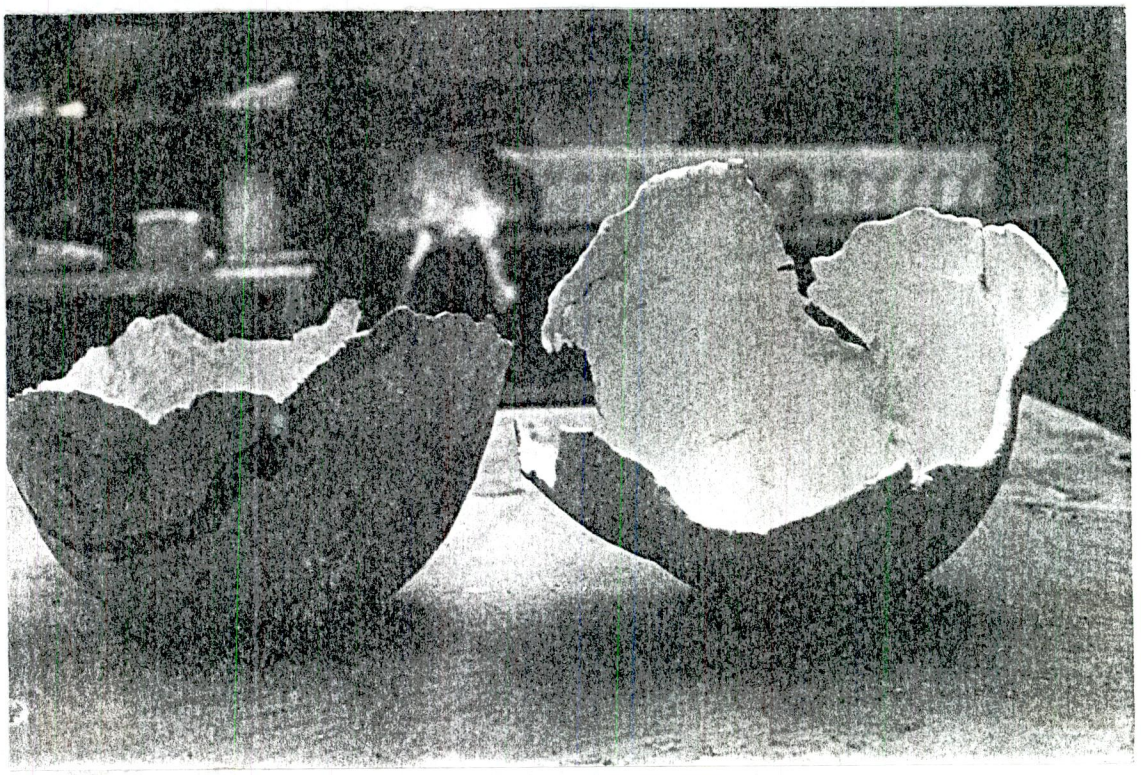


fig 7

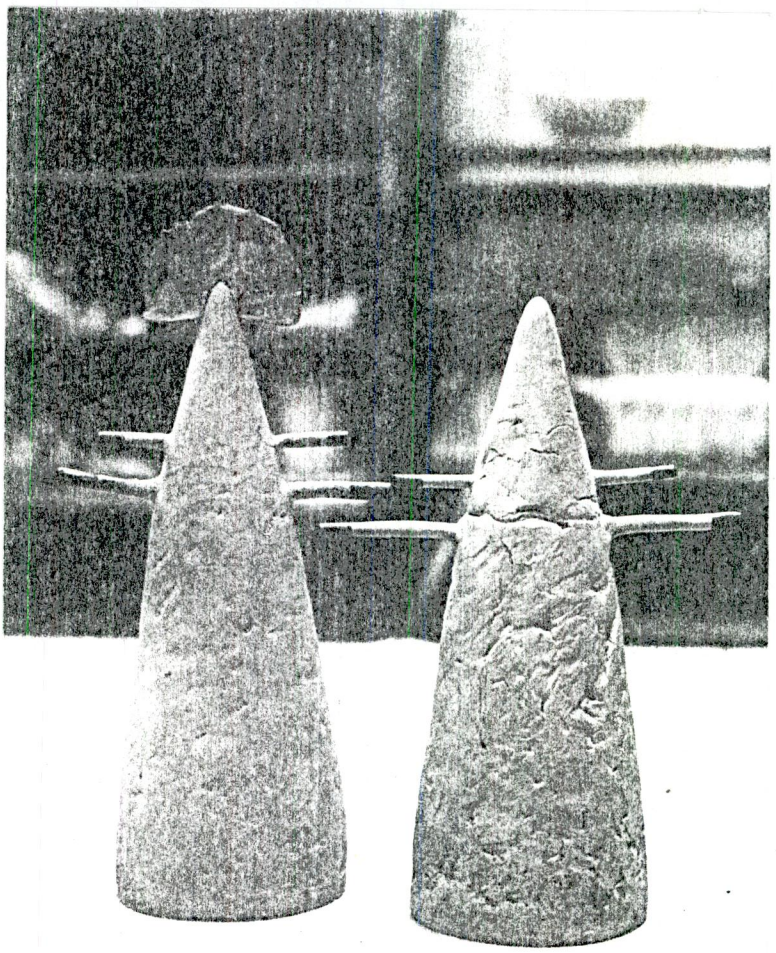


fig 8

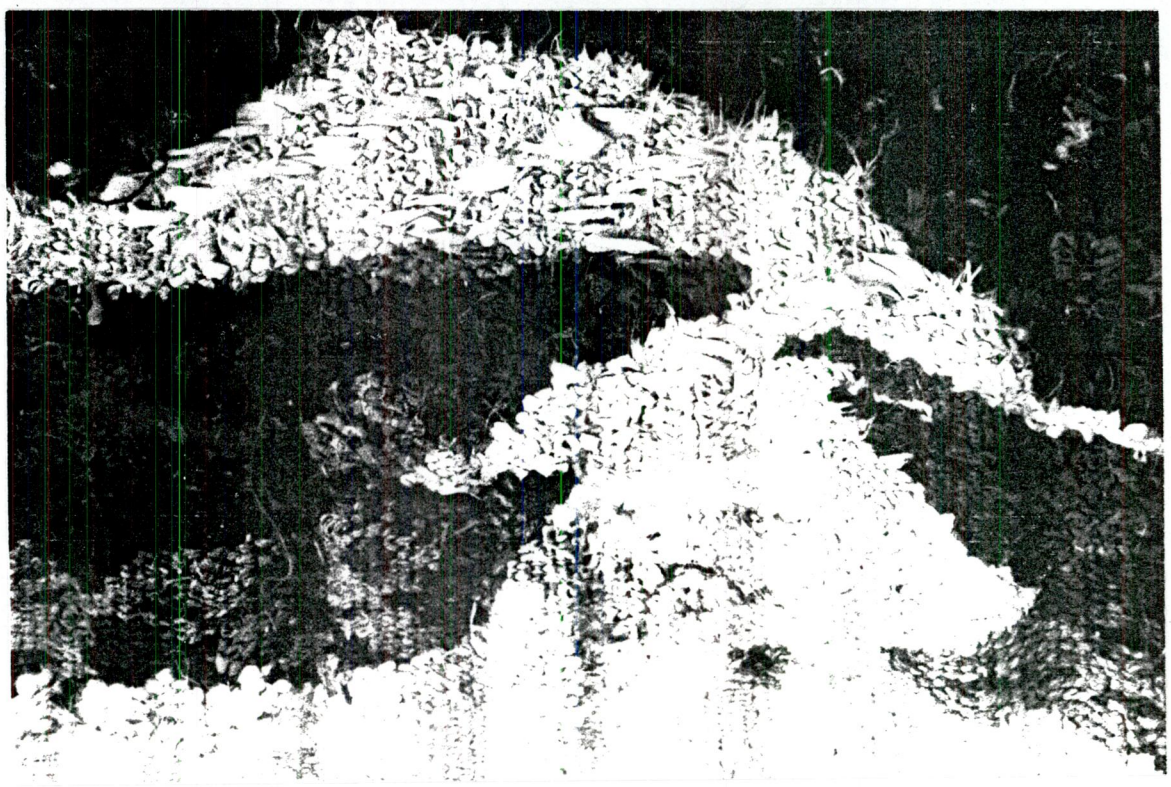


fig.9

and white, the colours of the locks. The cone represents the view down the canal, seeing it taper to a point in the distance and the additions are based on the locks and bridges.

Upon completion of the ceramic vessels I examined the collection as a whole. I like the muted colours and the relationship between the forms. I have worked on many new forms this year that I intend to expand upon and develop next year. When displaying the vessels, they will be arranged in groups of multiples that compliment each other.

In addition to making ceramic vessels I have also made paper pulp vessels, these are also based on the sea and pebbles. These vessels combined with back-up paper research and large hand-made paper studies were an integral part of my personal work and will be displayed in conjunction with the vessels.

In this year I have been lucky enough to try a craft I have not had experience of before - weaving. My final piece was made having done many samples exploring shape, pattern, colour blending and texture.

The design evolved from my studies of the colours and shapes of the water, in canals and the sea, and the surrounding environment.

I began by doing studies in paint and pastel where colours were blended. The blended colours would be difficult to transfer into weave as there was no definite shapes to work up. To combat this I began to work in collage - working with torn and cut our coloured paper from magazines. I was aware that the image I wanted to achieve was that of an Irish water scene as opposed to that of a Mediterranean country. I began to look at Irish artists who studied our coastline - Paul Henry, Nathaniel Hone and Walter Frederick Osborne (see figs), and I noticed that their palette was limited to grey, green, brown and beige. There were no Royal blues, no vivid yellows and no bright reds. Their colour sense was simple, muted and evocative of Ireland's quite beauty. In my own photography and studies of the Irish coastline, my sensitivity to subtle colour changes was heightened, and I became convinced that the subtle colour of the Irish sea coast and a variety of textures would be the predominant features of my weaving.

In my weaving I have used a variety of materials from sacking and cotton to wool and silk, and in order to achieve the specific colours I required I began to dye these materials using tea and coffee as well as the more typical Dylon dyes.

I feel that the colours and mood of my weaving compliment the ceramics, and vice versa. Both have a quiet simplicity

on first glance, yet both, on closer observation, have subtle qualities, in colour, form and texture that make them worthy of exploration.

NOTES: Chapter One

1. Garth Clarke, American Potters, New York 1981, p.27

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HISTORICAL REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

The beauty, majesty and purity of water and its surrounding environment has been a source of inspiration for countless artists.

So many artists have portrayed the sea, canals and lakes that it was difficult at first to know who to focus upon. Eventually I decided to limit myself to the paintings of three artists, Nathaniel Hone, John Constable and Claude Monet. I chose these artists because I could see whether there was a marked difference in the Irish, English or French interpretation of the source. I was also attracted to these three artists because both direct observation of, and interaction with, the natural environment are essential to their work.

My initial observation was, that there is a large number of Irish artists who use the sea, lakes, rivers and canals as subject matter for their paintings. Perhaps this preoccupation with water is due to the fact that nowhere in Ireland is very far from the sea and the most scenic spots

in Ireland are inevitably surrounding a lake, canal, a river or by the sea.

The portrayal of water in a landscape is a dominant theme for countless artists including Paul Henry, Nathaniel Hone, Walter Frederick Osborne, Jack B. Yeats, William Davis, Jonathon Fisher, Roderic O'Connor, Sean Mac Sweeney, William Crozier and Gwen O'Dowd. The range of styles varies considerably from:

> Paul Henry's (1876 - 1958) work which reveals a superb understanding of Irish light as in 'Dawn, Killary Bay' and a remarkable subtlety in his treatment of the strange and unusual combinations of colour in his many paintings of lakes and boglands in Connemara and Donegal. Many of these having extreme simplicity relying on just the careful composition of water and headlands. [1]

to: the vibrant studies of water by Jack B. Yeats. Yeats paintings of water were usually brightly coloured and always included people in the composition. It is obvious that Yeats primary interest was in showing the people, with the water as a backdrop. For Yeats, unlike Henry, the scene including water was an opportunity to show people at work as in 'Riverside Long Ago', or at leisure as in 'The Liffey Swim' or 'Boat Race Day', rather than an opportunity to observe and portray the beauty of nature in isolation.

fig 10.

NATHANIEL HONE

Nathaniel Hone was born at Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin on October 26th 1831. His family had a long tradition as artists. However Hone studied engineering at Trinity College, Dublin and later worked for the Midland Great Western Railway.

> But his profession by constantly bringing him into the open country and an early passion for yachting, by familiarising him with the sea, must both have done much to develop his latent love of art.[2]

At the age of 22 he took up painting by studying in Paris under Yvon and Couture. His real training came when he went to the village of Barbizon in 1855 and later to Fontainbleau. He stayed in France for 17 years mainly in Fontainbleau or Barbizon. In 1875 he returned and settled down at St. Doulough's near Malahide in County Dublin. In 1872 he married Magdalene Jameson and was married for 45 years before he died in 1917.

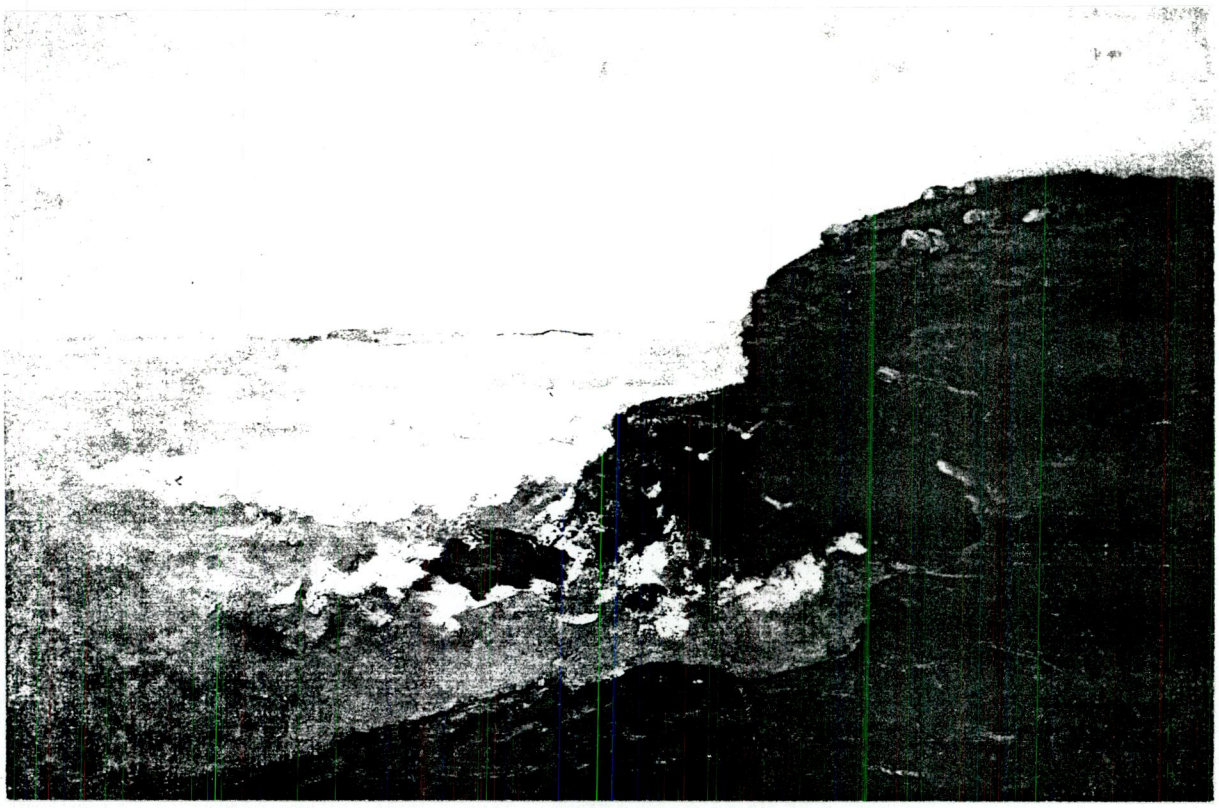
> Irish scenes were but a part and that, perhaps the greatest part of Hone's work but he also painted in England, France, Italy, Turkey, Holland, Greece and Egypt.[3]

However Hone is best known for his studies of the Irish coast, in Co. Clare and near his home at Malahide. When painting, the influence of many artists whom he admired or came in contact with is evident, Constable, The Barbizon Painters, The Impressionists, but predominantly The Fontainbleau School.

> It is as a colourist that he is pre-eminent. Hone's art was lyrical or emotional rather than didactic or intellectual. He could draw well, as he proved in many pictures but he was not primarily concerned with drawing, nor with detail. The green of the tree delighted him more than its grace, the blue of the sea more than the tracery of its waves; the yellow of the strand more than its folds.[4]

> While Hone's approach to landscape is distinguished by its Barbizon and Fontainbleau traits, his application of them to his Irish environment is assured, sympathetic and profound. His horizon line is generally low, giving him adequate space for his magnificently painted skies and for the immensely subtle play of light and colour which is so essentially a part of the Irish landscape. 'Pastures at Malahide' is Hone at his best. His composition, in which the sky is dominant, is simple and powerful. His colour, while restrained, is fresh and vital. And in spite of the peaceful and unified tranquillity of the subject, the painting has enormous strength and vigour.[5]

In the painting 'The Coast of County Clare with the Atlantic' one gets a vivid sense of the Atlantic waves crashing against the timeless rocks of the western coast.



(fig.11) NATHANIEL HONE "THE COAST OF COUNTY CLARE WITH THE ATLANTIC"

Rather than relying upon a photographic effect to create an image of crashing waves, Hone relies on the accurate observation of colour to convince us that what we see is real. The cool blues and warm greys of the sky are reflected in the distant horizon in the sea. In the middle ground the colour becomes even more muted, with cream and beige paint loosely applied giving the impression of crashing waves. The brush strokes in the sea are free and resemble the way waves rise and fall and crash against rocks. In the foreground there is a cliff which swoops to the right leading us into the painting. The colours of the cliff have been carefully observed and you can clearly see its structure.

> To his deep feeling for the colour of a landscape, his marvellous power to reproduce it, he joined a talent for bold design, a breadth of vision and a vigour of execution that combined to lift him to a foremost place among the landscape painters of his age, no matter what their country.[6]

JOHN CONSTABLE

I began to look at Constable's work because I knew he had made a large number of paintings of the locks and mills along the canals in the South-East of England. This made him an appropriate artist to study as I have been doing studies of the Royal Canal and the pupils' project is also based on a sensory trail by the Royal Canal.

John Constable was born in 1776 and his most famous paintings such as 'The Haywain' and 'The Cornfield' have become known, through constant reproductions, the world over. They seem to embody an ideal of naturalistic landscape that is immediately accessible and to which he devoted himself singlemindedly.

Constable's childhood was very comfortable. His father was a corn merchant and owner of several mills including 'Flatford Mill'. John was to take over the family business but instead chose to become a painter. He is well known for his series of paintings which include an aspect of the canal or river, such as the painting 'The Boat Passing A Lock', completed for the Royal Academy in 1824. (see fig. 12).

The painting is in an upright format, and almost six foot in dimensions. There is a full scale sketch that Constable carried out which shows that he originally intended it to be horizontal in format, but there seems to be no other

fig.12

preliminary drawings or sketches. The scene is at Flatford Lock with the Lock gates being opened to allow the passage of a barge downstream. On the horizon is the tower of Dedham Church.

> A local visitor to the Academy Exhibition, who knew the area well, said it 'flattered the spot but did not belye nature'.[7]

The overall effect of the sketch is rougher in texture and more exuberant in atmosphere than the finished painting. Skeins of paint and strokes of the palette knife are everywhere visible, to suggest the sky appearing through the tops of the trees, or the texture of the river bank. The composition of the sketch is an elementary opposition of horizontal and vertical which combined with the vigorous handling give a powerful thrust to the picture.

In the finished painting as might be expected, the surface has been refined and there are subtle changes in the composition. He has done this by providing greater interest on the left: both the boy in the red cap and the tow horse become more prominent. There is a greater variety of greens in the finished painting and the leaves in the foreground, in common with the rest of the painting, have been tightened up.

I prefer the sketch to the finished painting as I feel the finished painting is too restrained and has been made

picturesque. In the study, the wildness and vigour of the clouds and water and the loose treatment of the vegetation make for an exciting and strong painting.

He reported to Fisher on 8 May, 1824 that he found his picture 'liked' at the Academy.

> It forms a decided feature and it's light cannot be put out, because it is the light of nature - the mother of all that is valuable in poetry, painting or anything else.[8]

I was so much more impressed with the study Constable did of the lock directly from observation than the finished painting he executed at a later stage that I decided to look at other preliminary sketches of water that he had done rather than focus on the well known finished paintings.

Constable's wife Maria was ill and between 1824 and her death in 1828 she spent long periods in Brighton for the sake of her health as it was felt the bracing sea air was beneficial to invalids. Constable went down to Brighton when he could. He did not do any work on canvas at this period as a large canvas could not be brought on the stagecoach to Brighton. Many of the studies in oil on paper that Constable did at Brighton have a spontaneity and immediacy that is, in my opinion, sadly lacking in his finished paintings.

The study 'Seascape Study with Rain Clouds at Brighton' (c.1824-8) has an energy and honest observation that makes it exciting to look at. We can see Constable is unconcerned with prettifying the picture. He is working quickly, trying to show the reflection of dark clouds in the sea before the cloud passes overhead (see fig.13).

> This Study of a shower of rain over the sea is one of the most intensely observed and dramatic of Constable's studies of passing appearances and the phenomena of nature.[9]

In Brighton, Constable produced some exquisite oil sketches of the sky and sea which can be compared in brightness and immediacy to anything he has done in Hampstead or in Suffolk. However, Constable had a distaste for what he saw as the vulgarity of the seaside.

> The magnificence of the sea and its... everlasting voice is drowned in the din and lost in the tumult of stage-coaches, gigs, flys and carriages and the beach is only Piccadilly by the seaside. In short, there's nothing here for a painter but the breakers and sky - which have been lovely indeed and always varying.[10]

In my opinion when you look at Constable's sketches of water - the canals around his home in Suffolk an his studies of the sea at Brighton - you can see what Constable meant when he said:

> Painting is but another word for feeling.[11]

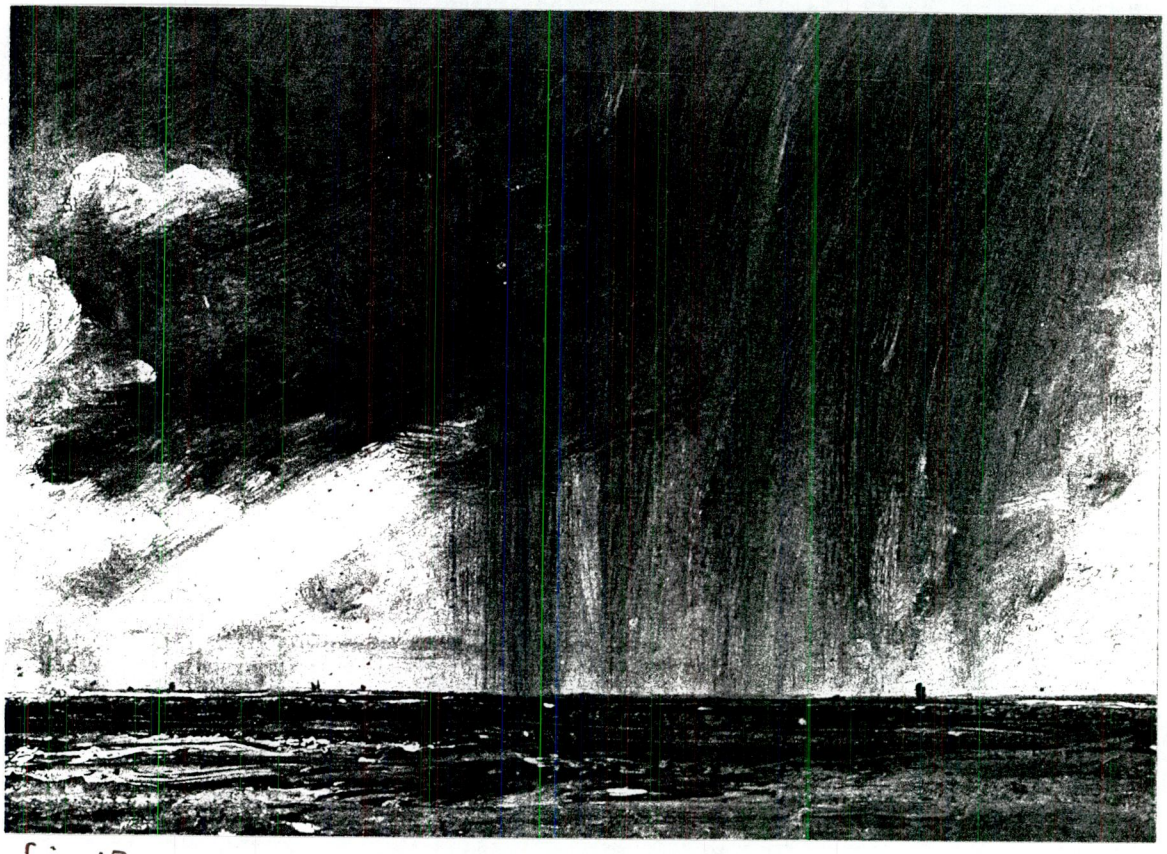
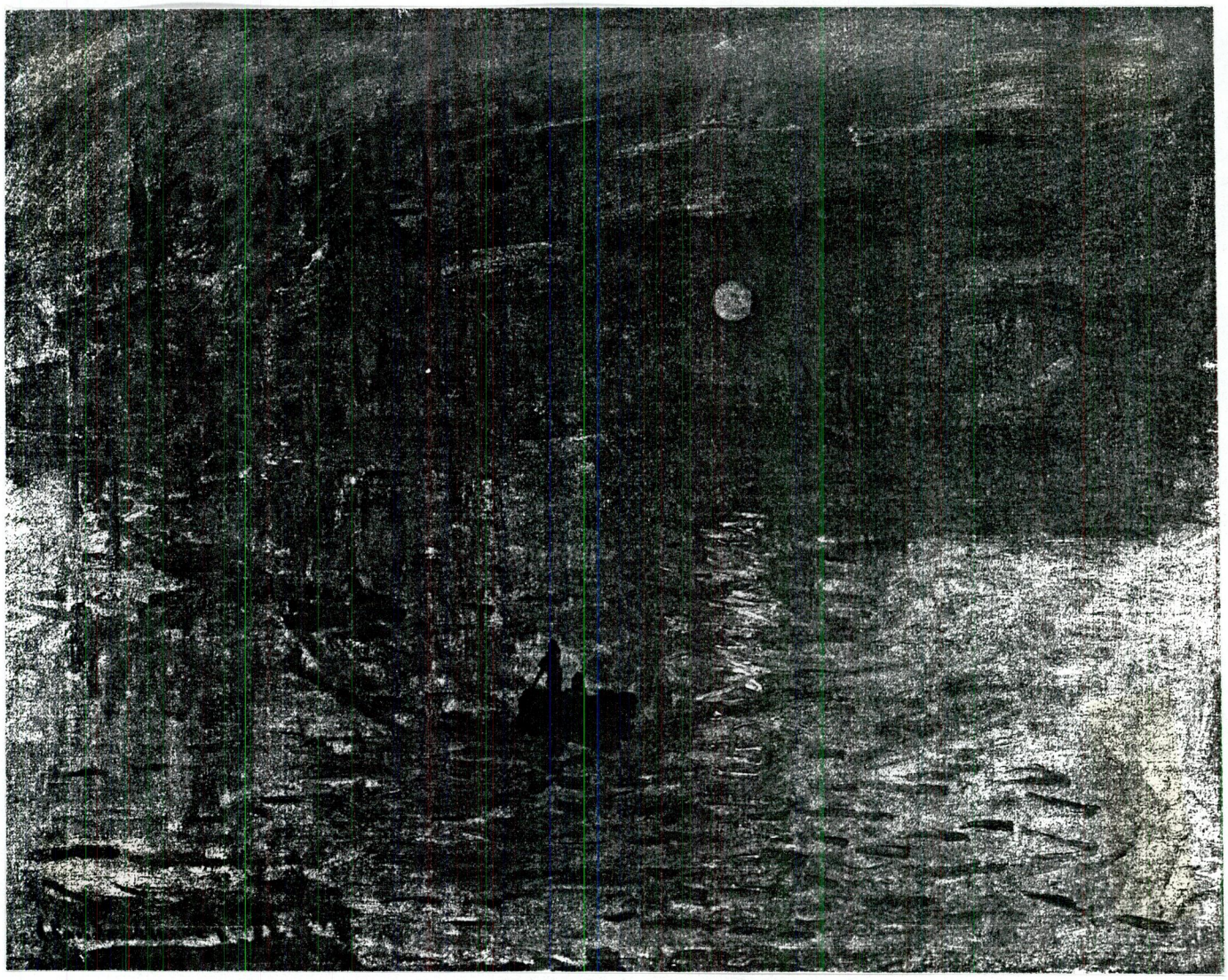


fig. 13

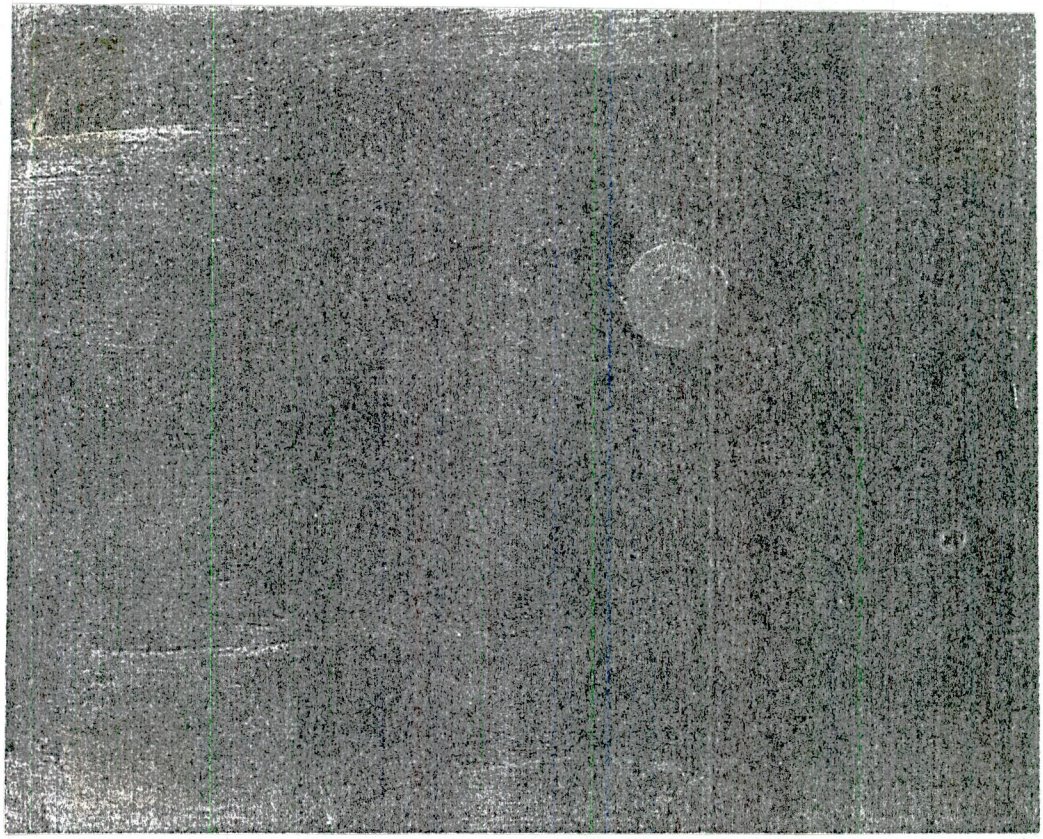
CLAUDE MONET

Claude Monet was born in 1840, the son of a successful wholesale grocer in Paris. He was the central figure in the Impressionist movement. The Impressionists broke away from the accepted historical, religious and mythological subject matter and painted what they saw around them - landscapes and scenes of everyday life. Monet himself went further, always working out of doors directly from life. He rejected the smooth brushwork favoured by the Academicians of the day, handling his paint in a varied and inventive way so that the textures found in nature are emulated by the marks of his brush. His life as an artist was an unceasing effort to capture the fleeting effects of nature by means of a small palette of pure, bright colours and he often painted several versions of the same view under different lights, working on four or five paintings in the course of one day.

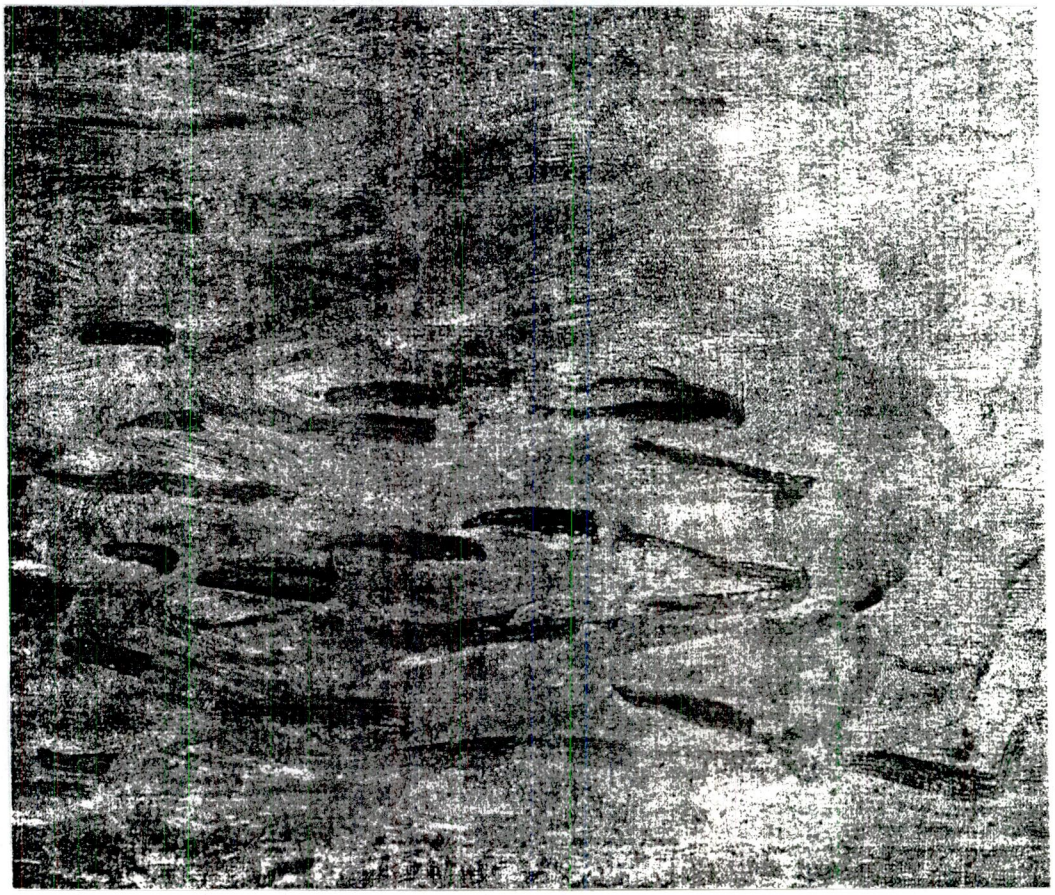
One of Monet's most significant paintings is the small painting 'Impression, Sunrise', primarily because of the title he chose (see fig 4). The painting was exhibited in the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874. The painting was picked out by a critic as having the half finished look typical of all the work on show and he dubbed the group 'Impressionists'. 'Impression, Sunrise' is a sketch of, or impression of, Le Havre, almost certainly completed on the



(fig 14) CLAUDE MONET "IMPRESSION, SUNRISE"



(fig.15) CLAUDE MONET "IMPRESSION, SUNRISE" (detail)



(fig.16) CLAUDE MONET "IMPRESSION, SUNRISE" (detail)

spot in a single sitting, depicting the harbour at Le Havre as the sun rises over cranes and masts of anchored ships. The painting gives the suggestion of the early morning mist and industrial smoke of the city. The most obvious characteristic of the painting is the immediacy of execution and the way it captures just one perceived moment. The forceful clear shape and strong colour of the sun provides a keynote for the work, with the muted pale blue surrounding it providing the opposition of complementary colours which enhances the brilliance of both (see fig 15). The dark note of the nearest boat identifies and stabilizes the colour key. While the sun is the dominant note, all the spatial and colour patterns are set up by this boat. With the passage of time underpainting has come through in the lower left and right hand areas, further evidence of the urgency and immediacy of the painting. Monet's treatment of the water relies on portraying the reflections. He shows the colours and shapes in the sky and on land reflected in the water. Horizontal strokes in a deeper colour shows the rippling effect on the surface of the water (see fig 16). 'Impression, Sunrise' is a very atmospheric painting giving as its title suggest an impression of the sunrise, port and water.[12]

Hone, Constable and Monet are all from different countries and backgrounds yet all three saw the raw beauty in water and its surrounding environment. The 3 paintings I have discussed in this chapter in detail 'The Boat Passing A

Lock', 'Impression, Sunrise' and 'The Coast of Co.Clare with the Atlantic' are very different for a number of reasons.

The most obvious one is that while the water is a constant in the paintings, the surrounding environment varies. We see a scenic English country scene, a busy port at sunrise and wild desolate cliffs. The colouring in the paintings is distinctive also. We see Monet's use of the complimentary colours - blue and orange; Constable's fresh spring colours, typical of his work; and lastly we see Hone's muted colours which are so evocative of the west of Ireland seascape.

When designing my weaving, while appreciating the colour in Monet's and Constable's work, I found that my weaving owed more to the colouring and subject matter of Hone's painting. The subtle natural colour and quite moment of time captured for ever, were what I wanted in my weaving.

What attracted me to the work of these three artists - Monet, Hone and Constable - was their dependence on direct observation and sensory experience in the environment. This has been an important element in my work and the pupils' project.

HISTORY OF THE ROYAL CANAL

The first reference to a proposed canal 'from the north-west end of Dublin by Castleknock to .... the River Shannon', is to be found in the Journals of the Irish House of Commons, where in February 1756, a Mr. Cole presented a bill for forming such a waterway. The proposal was not acted upon until thirty years later, in 1789 to be exact, when the matter was reopened, and in a peculiar way.

As a result of a quarrel among the directors of the Grand Canal Company, one of the members of the Board, Mr. John Binns, deeming himself to have been insulted, declared in a fit of pique that he would build a rival canal which would eventually take all the traffic.

> "The canal makes its way from Spencer Dock on the North Bank of the Liffey through Drumcondra; where Brendan Behan's "Quare Fella", heard: 'the Oul Triangle, Go jingle jangle, Along the banks of the Royal Canal'; Ashtown, Blanchardstown, and Clonsilla and on through the counties KIldare, Meath, Westmeath and Longford until it enters the Shannon at Cloondara."[13]

The Canal, which is ninety miles long, presented great difficulties in construction, not the least of which was the fact that near the school at Clonsilla, it's course encountered a quarry which necessitated blasting through solid rock. This was both expensive and time consuming, and

as the building of the canal progressed, the Canal Company seemed to get into frequent financial difficulties.

The Royal Canal never carried as much goods as the Grand Canal. In 1844 only 91,065 tons were carried on the Royal Canal as compared with 239,014 tons on the Grand, and it was obvious that the Royal would never compete. The shareholders therefore were willing to accept the £289,000 offered by the newly formed Midland Great Western Railway Company. The railway company's interest in the deal was to build their new railway on the company's property, alongside the canal, as far as Mullingar and on to the west of Ireland. This they did. They were bound under conditions made at time of purchase to dredge, maintain water-levels and operate weed cutting along the canal. However a Royal Commission on Canals and Waterways found against the Railway Company for not maintaining the canal and suggested that the canal be removed from it's control.

A similar commission set up by Dail Eireann in 1923 came up with findings very like those of it's predecessor, but again nothing was done. Under the Transport Act of 1944 the canal found itself under the control of Coras Iompair Eireann.

During the war years from 1939-45, the canal was used again by horse-drawn barges bringing turf to Dublin from the Midlands but shortly after the war only two boats remained at work on the canal. Mr. Jim Leech of Hyde Park, Killucan

The Royal Canal, Blanchardstown Lock.

fig 17

was the last trader to use the canal. He ceased to operate in 1951. Ten years later the canal was officially closed to navigation. However work is in progress at the moment to make the canal navigable once more. [14] (see figs. 17 & 18).

The pupils were fascinated by the history of the Canal and as is typical in the child and adolescent, the morbid and tragic was of particular interest. The Royal Canal is not without it's share of tragedy. The worst accident involving canal passengers in these islands occurred in the dark of a November night in 1845. Where the canal is just a narrow channel through blasted rock at Clonsilla, the bow of a boat struck a rock and immediately capsized. Sixteen passengers were trapped and drowned. Other accidents had occurred at the same dangerous spot over the years involving the towing horses and their handlers, but never with such a tragic loss of life.

The trip to the Royal Canal combined with stories about the history of the Royal Canal provided a strong motivation for the pupils' project.

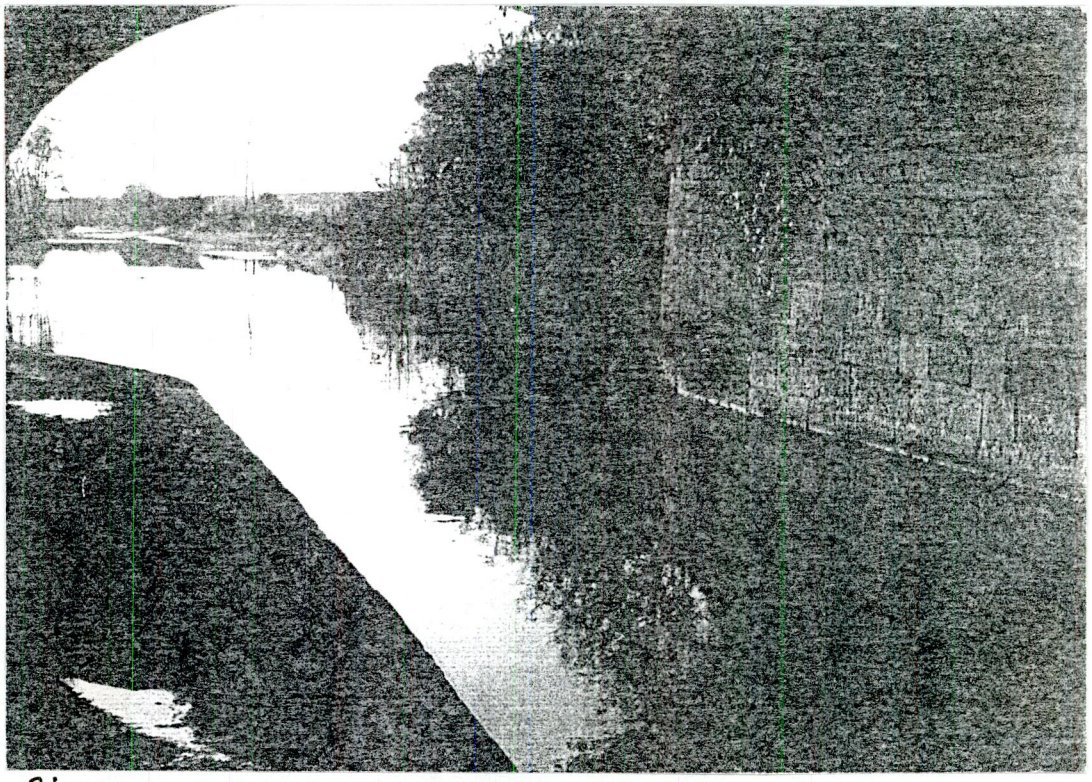


fig.18

NOTES: Chapter Two

1. Bruce Arnold, A Concise History of Irish Art, Norwich 1977, p.140
2. Thomas Bodkin, Four Irish Landscape Painters, Dublin 1987, p.46
3. ibid, p.54
4. Michael Wynne, Fifty Irish Painters, Dublin 1983, p.40
5. Bodkin, op.cit., p.57
6 ibid., p.60
7. Michael Rosenthal, Constable The Painter and his Landscape, New Haven and London 1983, p.158
8. ibid., p.154
9. Graham Reynolds, Constable's England, New York 1983, p.140
10. ibid., p.130
11. ibid., p.31
12. John House, Monet, Nature into Art, London 1989, p.56
13. James O'Driscoll, Cnucha, A History of Castleknock, Dublin 1981, p.116
14. ibid., p.119

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EDUCATIONAL JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CLASS PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

The project is being carried out by second year pupils ageing from 13 to 14 years old from Blakestown Community School. Blakestown Community School is a mixed school and the pupils are from varied social backgrounds.

The project starts with a trail or sensory walk along a stretch of the Royal Canal at Blanchardstown. The information collected on the trail will form the basis for a sequential project carried out in the classroom.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLASS PROJECT

The project method allows pupils to learn through activity in a class setting. It's aim is to involve the pupil in the class activity as part of a group. The project can be structured to encourage individual activity or group collaboration, or both. Pursuing a common theme each pupil may focus on a different aspect and then all research could be pooled. Communal decisions could then be made. This form of research allows for a more detailed and extensive study than one person could manage by him/herself. The

project method typically calls upon and develops a wide variety of skills; seeking, observing, exploring, analysing, comprehending, discriminating, solving, applying and evaluating.

THE VALUE OF THE CLASS PROJECT

The values of a class project are numerous. A class project allows pupils to have a chance to interact and get to know each other outside the confines of the school (if a sensory trail is included as part of the project). Pupils who may not previously have interacted, when in a new environment, may do so.

The nature of a project means that co-operation and teamwork will be encouraged in the classroom. This will improve the adolescent's social skills and enhance self concept as during adolescence there is a great need to be accepted and valued by peers and an urgent search for identity.

The art project builds upon previous experience of the pupils and encourages them to use their experience as a means to develop their own potential. The project has the advantage of providing a wide variety of tasks suitable for all levels of pupil ability. Each is able to make a

contribution whatever their previous experience of art has been and wherever their particular strengths lie, in art, craft or design. In this sense although the project method is essentially a communal effort it also take into account individual strengths and weaknesses. Because it takes into account the skills and weaknesses of each individual, each individual will be able to achieve. The feeling of success that participating successfully in a project can produce, will raise the pupil's level of aspiration. When a pupil's level of aspiration is raised in one subject it will improve the pupil's likelihood of success in others. If a pupil only experiences failure naturally his/her expectations will be low. So achievement will be unlikely. It is a vicious circle. The project method allows for a change in classroom routine and activity. Activities such as introducing the pupils to the project with a sensory trail, the exploration of historical precedents and the process of collective decision making and responsibility all contribute to the pupils' motivation.

The project method encourages qualities to blossom in the adolescent such as mental ingenuity, curiosity, appreciation of one's own and others opinions, tastes and abilities.

I chose to work on a project with a group of 2nd Year students. These 13-14 year-olds will benefit greatly from integration with their peers on this group project. They have just entered adolescence, a turbulent period which can

result in the pupils experiencing negative emotions such as confusion, anger, isolation and a poor self concept. This project, by bringing everyone into the group and encouraging teamwork will encourage everyone to feel they belong to a whole.

In a review of studies on adolescent turmoil, Ozzie Siegel noted that "it seems a reasonable conclusion that the adolescent process is an interruption of peaceful growth and is normally attended by anxiety, worry and concern regarding self-esteem, physical appearance and body image."[1]

In this project the pupils work in teams of three. This means special bonds can form between members of the same team as they work together on their panel. And when justifying and evaluating their contribution to the group, they will not feel alone. Attention will not be focussed solely on one person as it normally is in classroom activities, thus there will be less anxiety.

One of the main aims of this project is to increase the pupils' sensitivity towards each other and the environment. For Lowenfeld the developing of sensitivities is one of the main purposes of art education. He says

> Teaching must include developing our sensitivities, especially our sensitivities towards values... An art education which does not promote these sensitivities is not an art education.[2]

The pupils come from various social backgrounds and there is a tendency for the class to divide - with friends only sitting beside friends and no social interaction across the board. The teamwork will promote communication with, and sensitivity towards people outside their usual circle of friends with teams being made up of pupils with different backgrounds, abilities and weaknesses. By working on a group project the pupils from both high and low S.E.S. (Social economic status) backgrounds will benefit.

Some of the pupils from low S.E.S. backgrounds have a low level of aspiration and a low self concept. They are unwilling to give their opinion or take leadership roles. Perhaps, as Maccoby has said, values such as obedience, hard work and compliance have been installed at home. Some of the pupils from high S.E.S. backgrounds are more articulate and willing to assert their opinions. High S.E.S. parents usually promote assertiveness, ambition and leadership qualities. When the two groups are working together in teams they will learn from each other. Pupils who normally shy away from taking positions of leadership, when in a smaller group, may do so. Low S.E.S. pupils will benefit form the rich and articulate language of their peers, and can emulate their leadership skills. The pupils who are more confident and natural leaders will have to become more aware of the opinions of others as it is a group contribution, not an individual contribution.

Art brings people from top and bottom stream together (Blakestown operates a streaming system from First Year up) at the same time. Whereas other subjects, Maths, English, Irish may be broken up according to ability, art classes are not divided into top and bottom stream. While there are disadvantages of having a mixed ability art class, I feel the advantages are greater. The art room can become a mixing pot of values, ideals, ambitions, abilities and personal opinions.

Bearing in mind Lowenfeld's belief that resensitising the pupil is all important, I come to the benefits of the sensory trail. The sensory trail was a vital element of this project. All too often we wander along not using our senses fully. Looking, but not fully seeing and perceiving, hearing but not listening. The environment around us can become a backdrop. It was important therefore to deliberately focus on an aspect of the environment and through direct tactile, and audio and visual experiences allow the pupils to become resensitised - more sensitive towards their sensory experiences.

> By sensory experiences, I mean the senses which we have been given by God. We must use them so that we learn to refine them in their usage. Psychologists say, and rightly so, that without the use of our sensory experiences there is no learning. .....Fortunately, we have our senses. But wouldn't you think that education would draw its conclusions from that important statement? - that it would say, "Well, wouldn't it be logical then to refine our sensory experiences so that we can learn better?"....We should try to develop sensory perception as much as we can.....We should try to make the individual see things - things which he has never seen before".[3]

The pupils' sensory perception was heightened on the sensory trail they went on at a scenic stretch of the Royal Canal at Blanchardstown. The variety and complexity of nature is both inspirational and motivational. Therefore I was happy that the project I had devised led on from direct experience with and observation of nature.

Lowenfeld says to a group of Art teachers:

> "Most of our inspirations will come from nature. There's no doubt about it. Science is only a servant of nature. You always have to come back to the greatest of experiences, and that is nature. So keep your eyes open and your ears open and try to create an enthusiasm in your students to see new things and to use them as a basis for their creations.....Let's observe those most intimate things in nature, and out of this get our inspirations. It is those things to which you should direct your students".[4]

On the trail the pupils were looking at the reflections, taking rubbings of interesting textures, listening to the noises around them and smelling the fresh smell of the grass they sat on. They were using their senses in a deliberate way. They may have passed the stretch of canal a thousand times on the bus but now they were really looking at the area. The development of a sensitivity to nature and the environment will aid the pupils in being more sensitive to their home and school environments, and in time sensitive to the needs of others.

The area that the pupils went on their sensory trail is a stretch of the Royal Canal at Blanchardstown. Blanchardstown is only ten minutes by bus from their school in Blakestown, and both Blakestown and Blanchardstown are part of the old and historically important borough of Castleknock or Cnucha as it was known. I believed it would be good for the class to do research for the project so close to their homes and school as it would heighten their awareness of the beauty and source of artistic wealth around them. I felt that focusing on something in their area and establishing it as an area of interest and importance, would increase the pupil's self esteem. The importance of their locality would in turn make the pupils feel important. The pupils may not have much pride in their home, their family or their housing estate so it is vital that the pupils have something to be proud of to build their self esteem, be it their school, youth group or an item of importance or beauty in their locality.

Learning about the heritage and history of their locality can bring a class closer together as it is something all the pupils can share in - just as the Royal Canal is something they can all share as it belongs to everyone. Their common past can bring them closer together and ancient glory reflects upon them.

I began to research the Royal Canal when I decided to bring the class there and this led to researching a little about the history of Castleknock, Clonsilla and Blakestown. The stories about the ancient and modern events along the Royal Canal, particularly in the nearby neighbourhood were very motivating when I related them to the class. The pupils were particularly interested in stories which involved tragedy or glory. Some of these stories I have related in the historical chapter, along with a brief history of the Royal Canal.

NOTES: Chapter Three

1. Victor Lowenfeld and Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, p.37
2. ibid., p.97
3. ibid., p.147
4. ibid., p.152

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PUPILS' PROJECT

The project is broadly based on water and its surrounding environment. It is set at a stretch of the Royal Canal at Blanchardstown. The project will culminate in a high relief ceramic panel.

The project begins with the pupils collecting information on a sensory trail which will be worked from in the classroom. The pupils will work on pictorial composition both in the classroom and at home on a larger scale than was possible while working out of doors at the canal. When the larger pictorial compositions are completed, areas of interest can be isolated with a viewfinder and considered as a part of the areas of pattern and texture that will make up the tile panel. The pupils will work in groups of three, selecting a pictorial composition from the work they have done, to be made into a ceramic tile. They may choose to combine pattern and representational imagery, for example putting a patterned border around the tile. Each group of pupils must work together on the design and construction of the tile pieces and these will be assembled later to form a ceramic tile panel.

As I have mentioned, the source of the pupils' project is the same as my own: "water and its surrounding environment". I considered the possibility of the pupils making a collection of vessels, as I am doing, but dismissed it as I felt the vessels (while displayed together) would still be very much individual objects with every pupil responsible for his/her own vessel. I felt the collective end product was an important element in the project as there is a lot of social interaction required while working towards the end product. Also the pupils would learn a lot more by working on a ceramic tile piece than on individual vessels which would be about exploring form. In addition to learning and mastering techniques associated with working in clay, the pupils also had to consider scale, proportion, pictorial composition, symbolism, pattern, texture, additive and subtractive process of making and how to transfer an image from one medium into another and how to achieve a feeling of depth in a relief piece.

Aims of The Class Project

1. To increase the pupils' awareness of his/her environment that is a great source of artistic wealth by focusing in a practical project on one small area - the stretch of the Royal Canal at Blanchardstown.

2. To promote the pupils' visual awareness.

3. To increase the pupils' sensitivity.

Objectives of the Class Project

1. To enhance his/her ability to discriminate and appraise the environment.

2. To develop problem-solving, discriminatory creative thinking.

3. To facilitate the ability to analyse, comprehend, apply and evaluate the project in its entirety and all its elements.

4. To introduce the craft of ceramic relief and to promote the ability to translate images into low and high relief form.

5. To develop self confidence by encouraging personal responses and a sense of responsibility for discoveries and development.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE FOR THE PUPILS

1. Andy Goldsworthy

I showed the pupils the work of Andy Goldsworthy, prior to the sensory trail. He creates environmental sculptures using found natural objects. His sculptures may be the simple placement of a group of subtly coloured stones together in a pile, or an intricate carving in ice. On the sensory trail the pupils will work in groups on their own environmental sculpture.

2. Nathaniel Hone 'The Coast of Co.Clare'
John Constable 'The Boat Passing a Lock'
Claude Monet 'Impression, Sunrise'

I showed the pupils the work of the three artists I feature in my historical chapter. All three painted water and the surrounding environment. The surrounding environments differ, from dramatic cliffs to a port at sunrise, to a canal bank and lock. The different environments and treatments of subject matter were stimulating.

3. Japanese pattern from the Edo Period.

When the pupils had their pictorial compositions resolved they isolated an area or shape and repeated it in either a half drop or full drop pattern. I had visual aids showing both half drop and full drop patterns and to motivate the pupils I showed them Japanese fabric designs which clearly illustrated the half drop or full drop pattern.

4. The clay murals of Jean Powell and panel at Setanta Way.

When it came to planning and making the clay tile panels the pupils worked in groups of three. They had to look at the work done by the three and select elements from the work that would be appropriate for the clay panel. When considering the design of the panel they had to consider what areas would be in relief and what areas should be hollowed out. To help them to design for relief pieces, I showed them the colourful ceramic murals of Welsh ceramicist Jean Powell, and the photographs of the rich ceramic panel on Nassau St. at Setanta Way (see figs 20,21,22).

The two visual references provided a high motivation factor for the pupils when they saw what could be achieved using clay for a panel.

They also provided technical ideas such as having areas in steps of relief going from a hollowed level to the surface level of the clay to various raised levels. And how to balance areas of high texture or relief with plainer areas to achieve a pleasing composition.

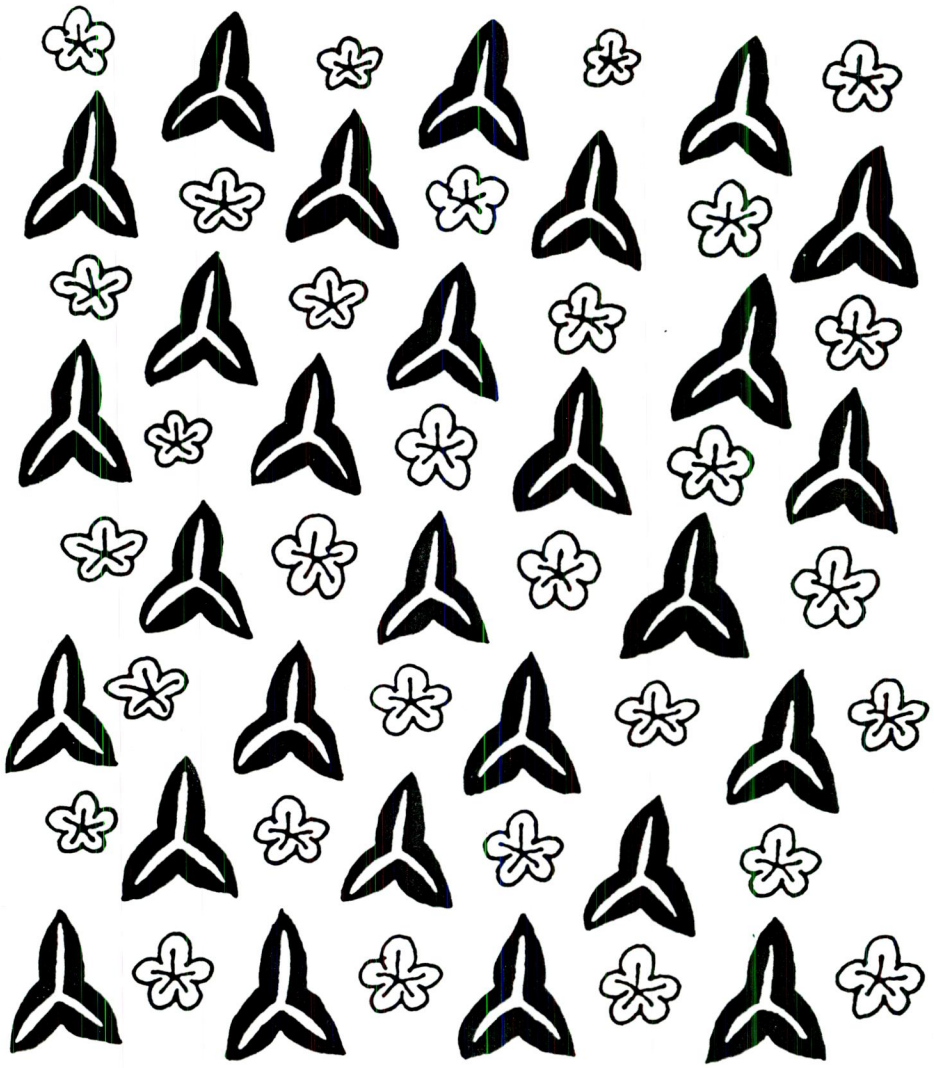


fig. 19

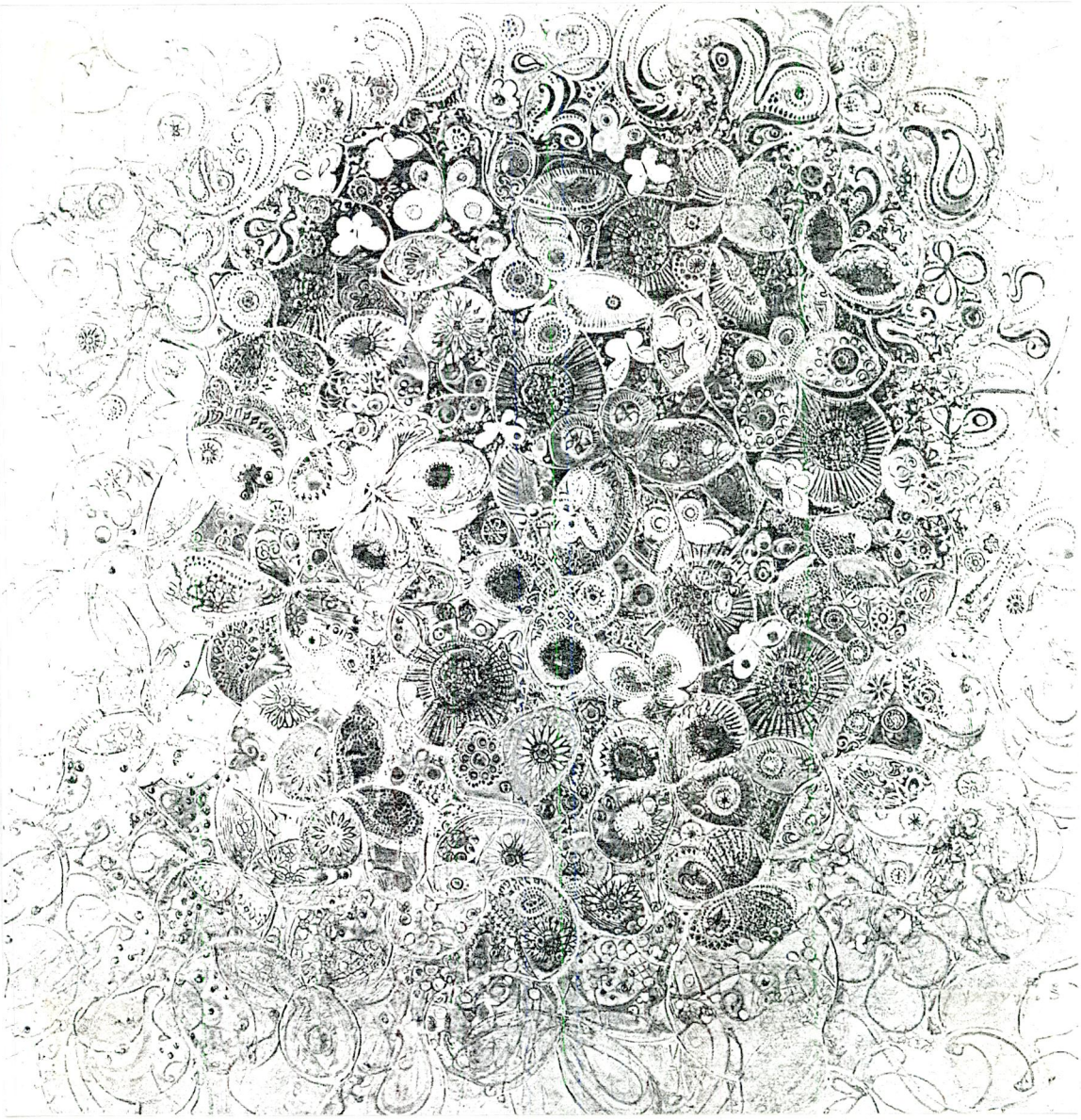


fig 20 JEAN POWELL "A BREEZE OF BUTTERFLIES" 1 metre x 1 metre

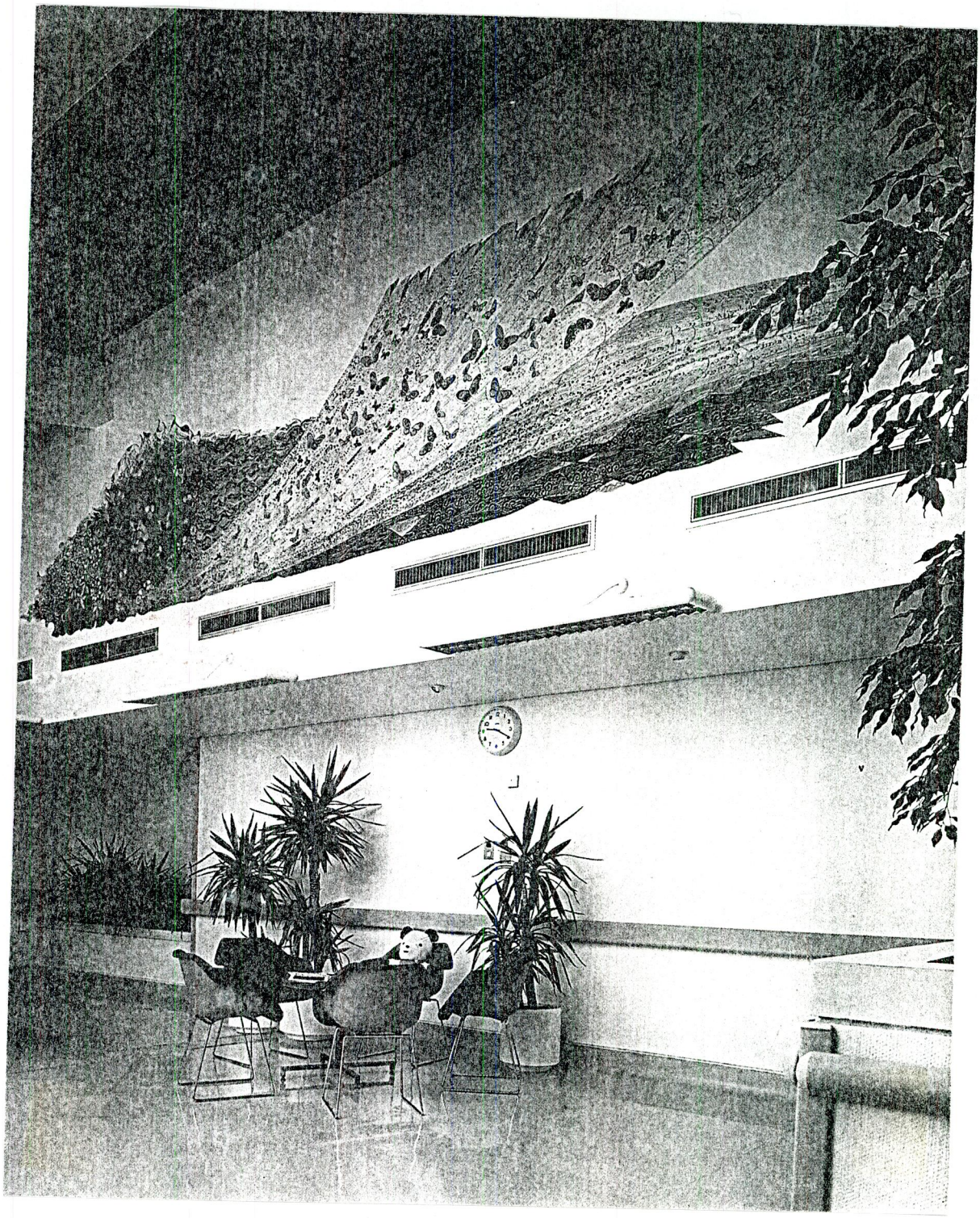


fig 21

JEAN POWELL A swirling comet of butterflies made and fixed in Clatterbridge Hospital, Wirral, during the year of Halley's Comet. 2 metres x 9 metres.

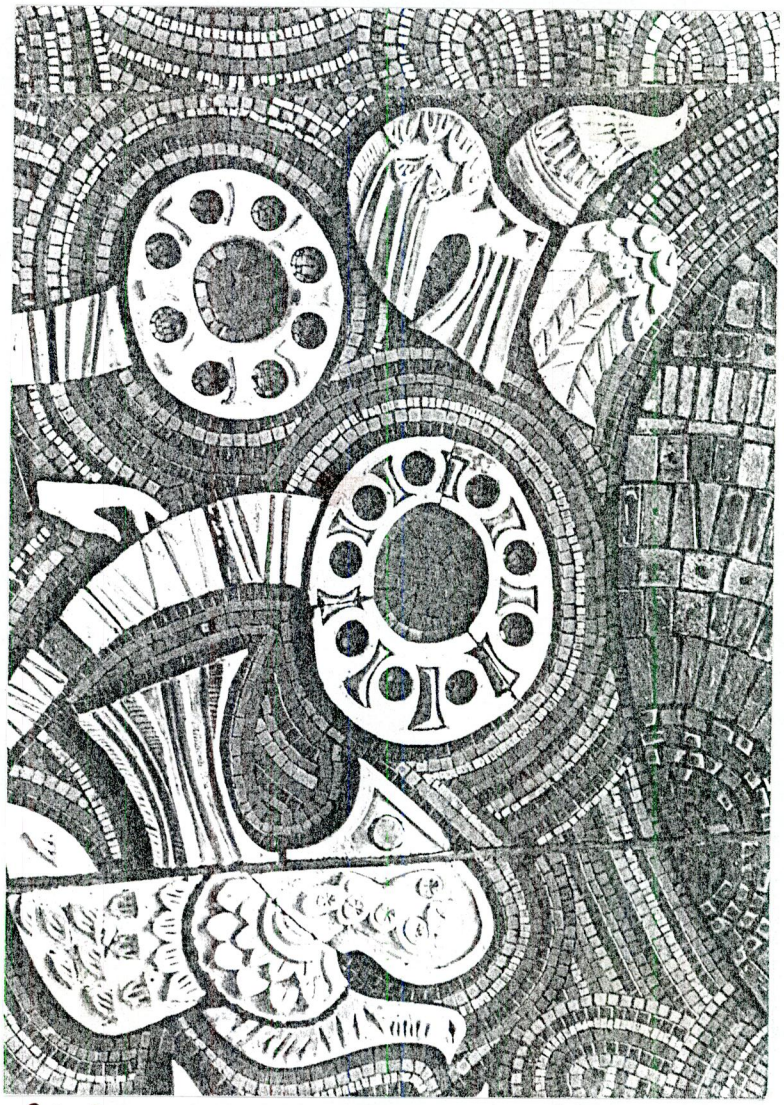


fig. 22

STAGES OF THE PUPILS PROJECT

1. Planning the sensory trail
2. The sensory trail at a stretch of the Royal Canal at Blanchardstown.
3. Working on pictorial compositions in the classroom.
4. Working on repeat pattern based on isolated shapes or areas of the pictorial compositions.
5. Working in teams of three, designing the tile panel based on previous work. Experimenting with making marks in clay.
6. Begin making the panel.
7. Continue working on the tile panel.
8. Complete work on panel, allow to dry, to be fired.

STAGE ONE

This entailed planning the trail at the canal at Blanchardstown. The pupils were told:

* what the project would culminate in - a ceramic tile panel.
* what the reason for the sensory trail was - to gather enough suitable information to sustain a six week project.
* the practical aspects such as what materials to bring, how long we would be away from the school, where we would be going and to wear warm clothes.

The pupils were told to take time to let the beauty of the environment sink in. Not to run around without noticing things. They should look carefully at things that interest them, be it the structure of the bridge, the colour of tree bark, the exciting pattern created by the rippling on the water's surface.

The pupils were also introduced to the work of Andy Goldsworthy. He is an artist who makes environmental sculptures. He is very attuned and sensitive to the environment and he sees beauty in the smallest stone or leaf. He arranges units such as stones, grass or leaves into pleasing arrangements and photographs them.

The pupils were very impressed and motivated by this work. It provided a source for discussion for topics including:

* the importance or unimportance of expensive materials
* the subtle beauty of the units that make up the whole.
* how the leaves individually can be as worthy of examination as the tree they came from. (This is relevant to my project where I am examining how the stones on the seashore are as worthy of attention as the panoramic view of the sea.)

The pupils are going to work in teams on an environmental sculpture using the objects found by the side of the canal. The purpose is to introduce team work at an early stage in the project and to increase the pupils sensitivity to the objects growing or living around the canal. They will have to examine them, assess their

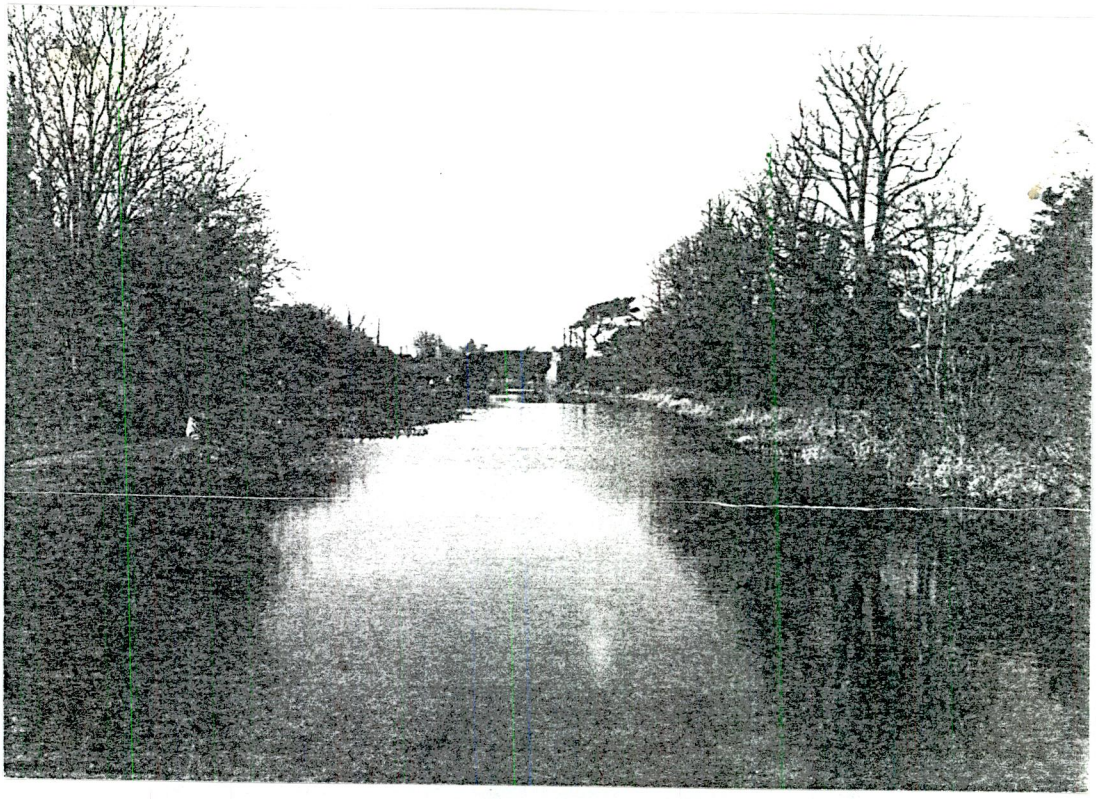
suitability and either include or reject them for their environmental sculpture.

STAGE TWO

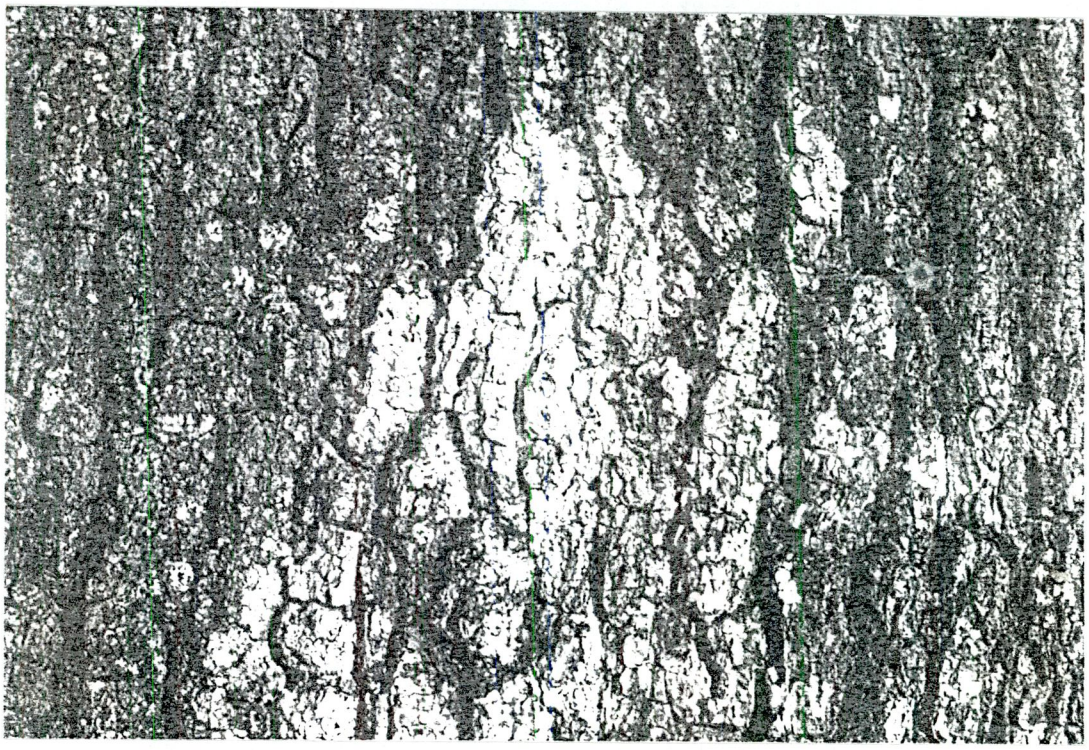
As I have already mentioned the project began with a sensory trail at a stretch of the Royal Canal at Blanchardstown. The stretch of the canal is only 10 minutes away on the bus from the school. Yet the beauty and tranquillity of the canal is in stark contrast to the bleak uniform housing estates surrounding the school (see fig 23).

The pupils worked from a worksheet which I devised and distributed. The benefits of the worksheet were that because the pupils had a loose structure to work within, they could focus on the information they had to gather and not flounder, unsure of what to draw. Also the worksheet had adequate space for the drawings to be completed on it. This meant pupils did not need to bring a lot of paper etc. Everything could be contained and carried easily.

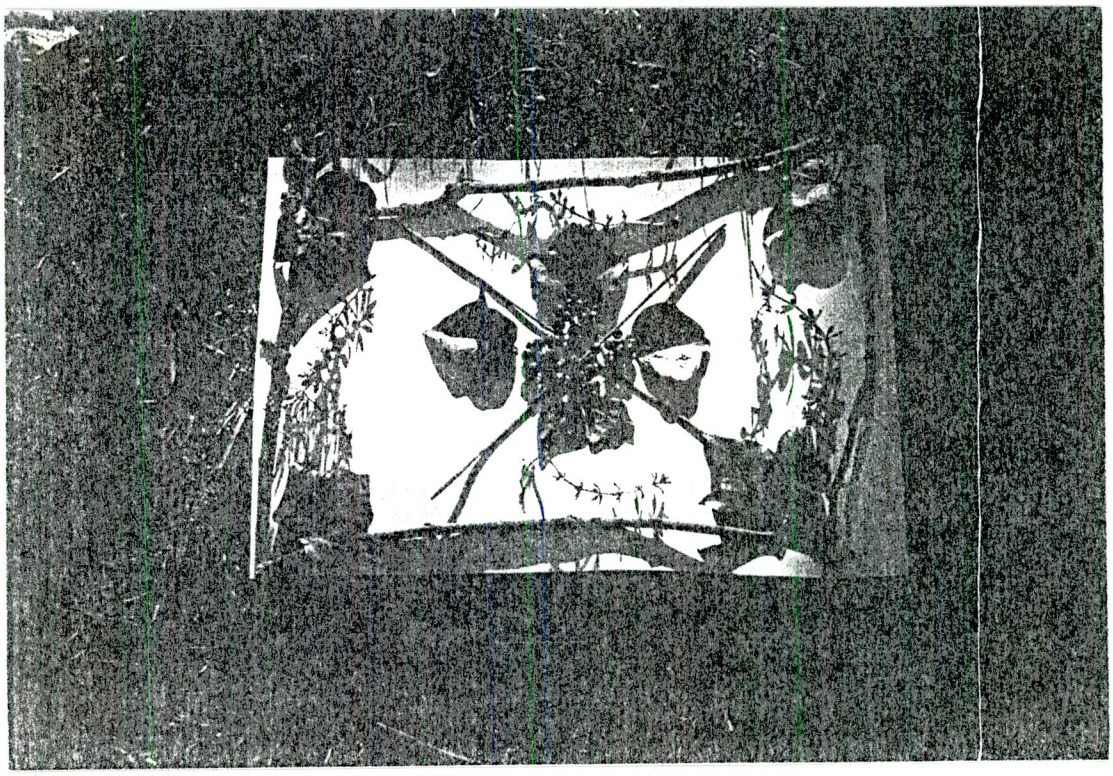
I also brought a supply of large white sheets of paper for those who wished to work on a larger scale and for the pupils to use to take rubbings. The pupils observed the various textures around them and took clay pressings or rubbings of man-made and natural textures (see fig 24).



(fig. 23) Scenic view of the canal taken by James Byrne.



(fig. 24) Textures such as tree bark and stone were studied and photographed. Rubbings and clay pressings were taken on the sensory trail of the interesting textures.



(fig. 25) Environmental sculpture, made and photographed by Ashling Allen.

(fig. 26) Environmental sculpture, made and photographed by Lillian Maye and Alison Patton.

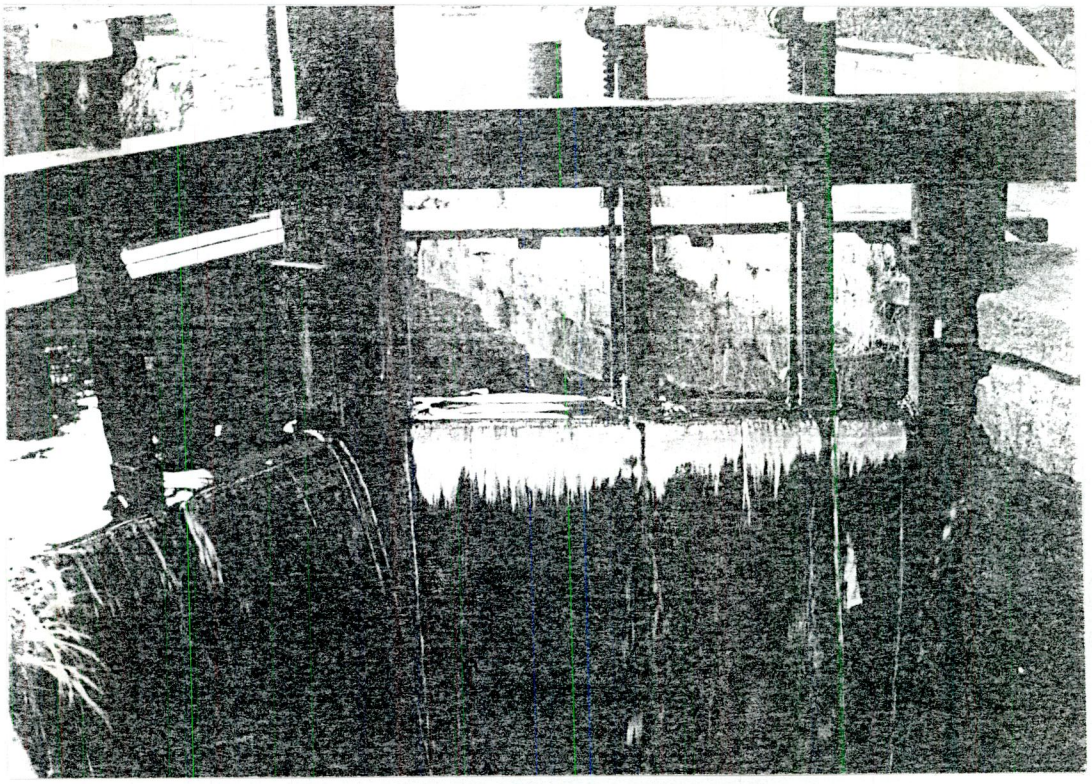
The pupils observed and drew many things - such as view down the canal encompassing the bridge, the lock, the plant life both in and around the canal. They paid particular attention to the distortion that occurs when objects such as trees are reflected in the water. They drew the patterns that occur in water, the swirling lines and horizontal stripes.

The pupils got into teams to make their environmental sculptures, they used leaves, an old window frame, ivy, reeds, stones and other objects they found around the environment (see fig 25). When they had completed the environmental sculpture, I showed the pupils the basics of how to use the camera.

* how to select an area of interest using the view-finder
* how to focus correctly

The pupils were then able to record their environmental sculptures. In addition to this they also were able to photograph aspects of the area that particularly interested them (see fig 27).

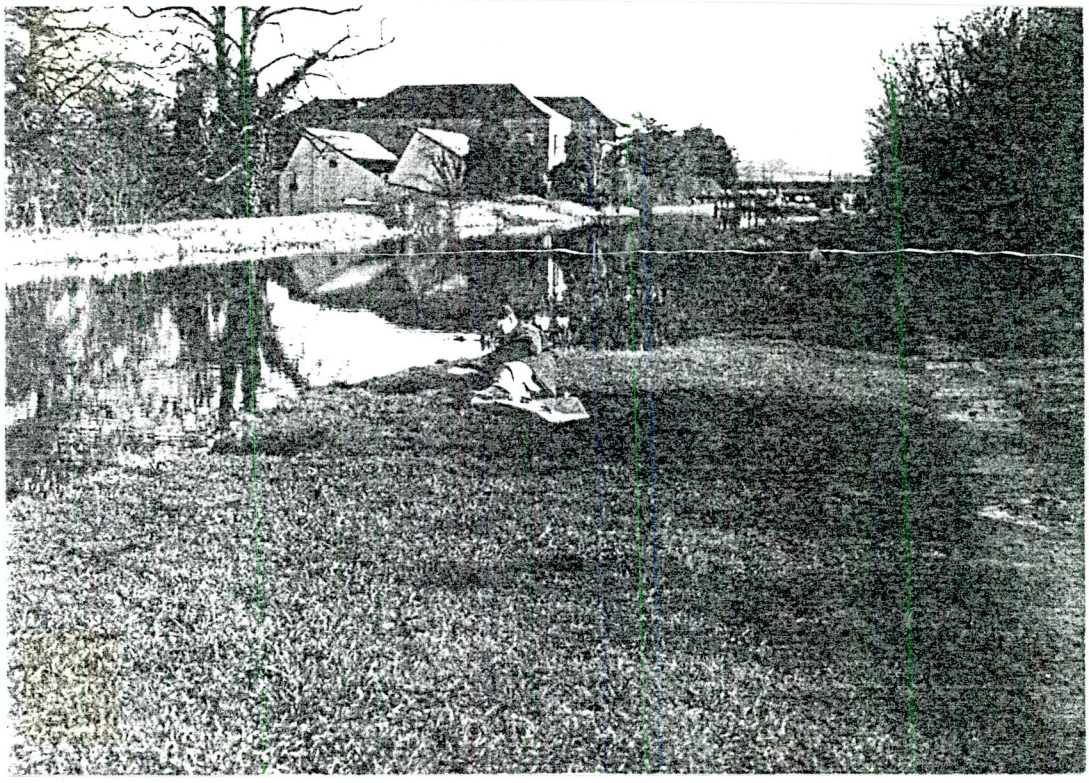
The trail ended with the pupils satisfied with the work they had completed, proud of their achievements and enthusiastic about the forthcoming project.



(fig.27) Photograph of the lock taken by Alan McCrum.

(fig.28)
Photograph taken by
Daniele Sansovini.

(fig.29) Daniele doing a study of the tree in the photograph.



STAGE THREE

On returning to the classroom the pupils presented their completed worksheets and the additional sheets of drawings and rubbings of interesting textures. I felt that the initial drawings could be developed further into pictorial compositions. While at the canal it was impossible to use a variety of materials, the pupils were limited to colouring pencils and chalk pastels and markers. By working on pictorial compositions in the classroom the pupils would have the opportunity to use paint, collage, mixed media to recreate the colours and textures that occurred.

The pupils used completed worksheets and photographs that they took as the basis for their pictorial composition. They worked on a larger scale than was possible at the canal. This was beneficial because as the tile pieces were going to be large, the increased scale of the drawings meant that the imagery could be transferred more easily. By enlarging the size of the studies the pupils will be able to easily select shapes or isolated areas of interest from their composition to be developed into pattern in the next stage. The studies done by the pupils show a sensitivity to colour and shape. Some pupils did interesting close up studies of tree bark, ivy, stones, etc. All in all the pupils have plenty of source material for the next stage.

STAGE FOUR

This was the stage when the pupils began to work on pattern. The reason for moving into pattern was that the pupils would be able to use areas of pattern on their tile piece, either as a central feature or a border. The pupils isolated shapes or areas of interest from their pictorial compositions. They traced the shape or area with tracing paper. The tracing paper was then laid on top of folded paper and the shapes in the selected area cut out. The folded paper means that when cutting out the shapes you are cutting multiples of them. The multiples are then placed on a page of a contrasting colour in a repeat pattern. The pupils were shown examples of Japanese fabric pattern, contemporary gift-wrap, and wallpaper designs of William Morris. Half drop and full drop pattern was pointed out to them and the pupils arranged their multiples in one or other of their patterns. This stage worked well as the black and white of the patterns makes them very striking, and the patterns are very clear and eye catching.

STAGE FIVE

The class was divided alphabetically into groups of three. By dividing the class alphabetically I ensured that there was no danger of friends going into groups together and not interacting with other members of the class. The groups looked at all of their work, their pictorial compositions, worksheets and patterns and began to discuss what the tile panel would look like.

* would it have a central area of pattern or a patterned border?
* would it have one large representational area based on their observations at the canal?
* would the panel be broken up into smaller sections which would each have a scene or pattern in them?

When they had designed the composition and each member of the group was satisfied, they had to decide what areas would be in relief, scratched on or hollowed out. To help them imagine their composition in relief I showed them some modern ceramic panels. The clay murals by Jean Powell and the impressive clay panel on Nassau Street, have a rich surface. They have bright colour, exciting patterns and various levels of relief, therefore they were both motivating and educational visual references.

When the pupils decided what areas of the panel would be made up of marks impressed into the surface they began to experiment with the clay. They used a variety of tools, modelling tools, kitchen knives and spoons, graters, sticks and found objects in the classroom to make the marks in the clay. They tried to imitate the texture of areas of the drawing and the environment. The class ended with the pupils having a definite design for their panel and a vocabulary of what can be achieved in clay.

STAGE SIX

At this point the pupils were ready to begin making their panels. The first thing to be done was to make a flat slab. This was done by putting a huge pile of clay on the table on top of a plastic bag on a drawing board. (The plastic acts as a resist and keeps the clay from drying out and the drawing board means the clay panel would be able to be moved around easily without distortion occurring.)

They rolled the clay out until it was flat and about half an inch thick. They marked out the size of the panel by putting their sheet of paper on top of the clay and lightly drawing around it. Then using a knife and set square the pupils cut the panel. The pupils then lightly scored on the main shapes of their design. This enabled them to see clearly the areas that would be hollowed out and the areas that would be built up. The pupils then began to do this -

hollowing with spoons and ceramic tools, building up relief with modelling tools, sticks and their fingers. The pupils wrapped their clay in sheets of plastic to prevent it drying out by the next stage.

STAGE SEVEN

The pupils continued working today on the panels. There was definite group co-operation and allocation of jobs. One pupil may be working on the border, one on the foliage and one on the water as in (fig. 30).

Alternatively, two pupils may work on an area together as in (fig. 31) where two pupils cut out the leaves , while the other pupil worked on the veins. These roles were reversed after a while - with everyone participating in every aspect of the making.

There was a buzz of excitement and elation, when a group would discover a novel way of representing something. eg. Here in (fig. 32) the pupils discovered grated clay gave a texture similar to that of foliage, and here in (fig. 33) by impressing a piece of Scotchbrite, used for cleaning pots, they could achieve the effect of stone.

At the end of the class some of the groups were fully finished while other groups' panels needed a little more refining or relief built up.

fig30. One of the panels made by 3 pupils.

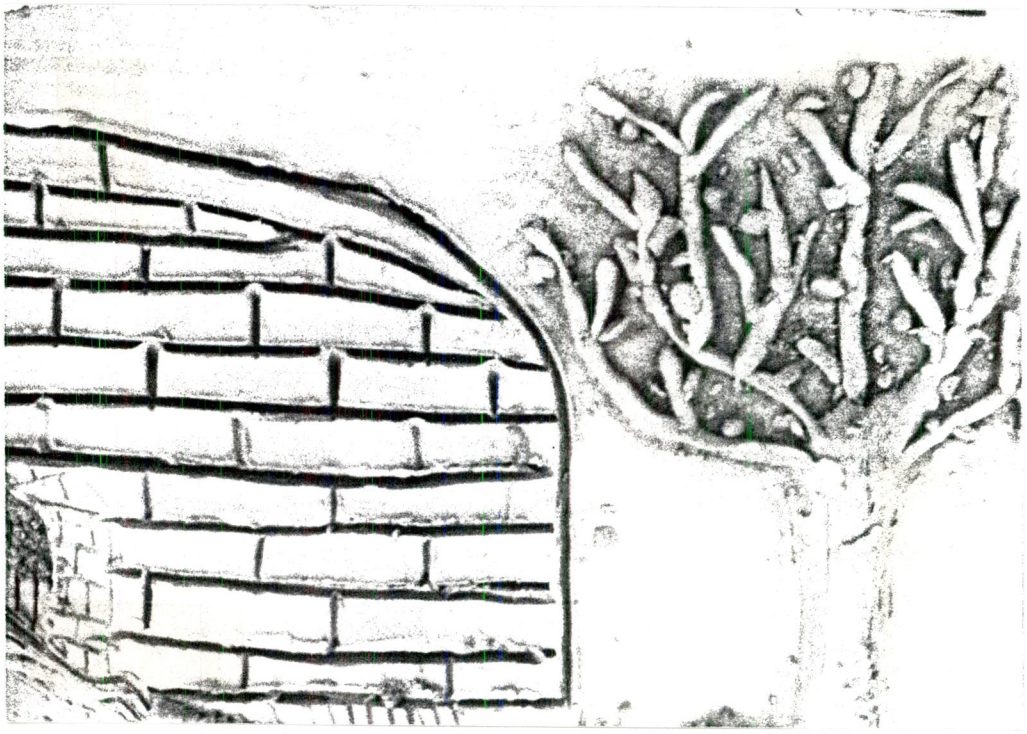


fig31 Detail of the above panel.

fig32.

STAGE EIGHT

The pupils completed their panels adding final details and sharpening up some modelling. The work was then assessed and evaluated. There was group discussion about the merits of each panel and the way each one could be improved if it was to be done again. The pupils also decided how the panels would be displayed; which ones should go next to each other and what shape the panel should be - horizontal or vertical. They decided that the panel should be put on permanent display in the school. As the panels didn't belong to any individual, but rather were the property of the whole group, no one could take them home.

The panels will be on display from September 1991 in the lobby of Blakestown School - a permanent testament to the hard work and creativity of a group of pupils.

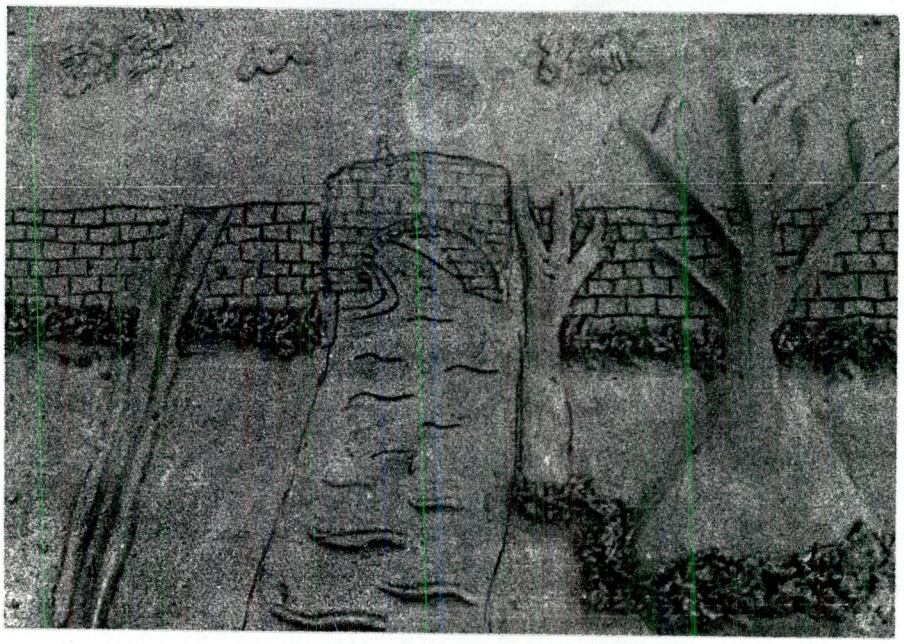


fig 33 A panel made by Regina, Eammon and Gillian.

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CONCLUSION

The project is a realisation of the theme 'Water and the Surrounding Environment' supported by historical research into the work of John Constable, Nathaniel Hone, and Claude Monet.

The project runs on three parallels all of which influence each other. The three parallels are, my personal work, the pupils' work and the historical research.

The personal project stemmed from my interest in the Natural Environment and the objects to be found within the environment such as seaweeds, rocks and pebbles. These objects were a major influence on the form and decoration of my ceramics, while the muted colours to be found on the Irish seashore were the primary influence on my weaving.

The pupils' project was executed in clay and they produced a group panel made up of 8 tiles depicting an aspect of, or their emotional response to, the Royal Canal. The project allowed the pupils to experience team work and benefit form the qualities team work fosters. The pupils worked very hard together and are very proud of their achievements.

They have already decided where the group panel should be put on permanent display in the school.

I was so inspired by the sheer pleasure the pupils derived from working on the panels, and the visual impact a panel has, that I would like to work on a number of panels as soon as possible, exploring texture, composition, narrative content and relief. I would also like to develop my 'canal forms', exploring the notion of making vessels with no obvious opening and the idea of adding pieces to a form to change or enhance that form.

I feel I have really benefited from my experience of doing weaving this year. In my opinion it has a lot to offer in a school situation. Pupils with high or low ability would be able to achieve success doing weaving. And the beauty of weaving is it's simplicity and lack of expense. Any Art Department would be able to assemble cardboard, for improvised looms, and wool, without much effort and the pupils would get a lot out of it.

To conclude, I would just like to say that I found the theme 'Water and the Surrounding Environment' an interesting and motivating one for both myself and the pupils. It was tight enough to allow me to focus, yet broad enough to allow me to explore various aspects such as the colour and forms of objects in the surrounding environment. The theme also lent itself to my exploration of it through different mediums - Weave, Paper, Ceramics, and Two-Dimensional Studies.

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