

THE ARTICLE PRESS



Talking in Class

Edited by Tom Davies & Arthur Hughes

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Foreword

Norman Binch, the National Coordinator of the AC/CCP

The project was initiated by Colin Grigg, the former Visual Arts Officer at the Arts Council, and Susie O'Reilly, Education Officer at the Crafts Council. It was funded by the two organisations and by money obtained through the regional groups. The Birmingham group was one of ten regional groups, each of which set up their own schemes of work involving around five or six schools.

The original intentions were to explore the potential for curriculum development provided by the implementation of the GCSE. The main emphasis was on resourcing—the way that schools might use galleries, museums, artists in residence and other external sources to support their own collections of learning resources—and assessment. The project was overtaken by the introduction of National Curriculum Art, but its work became even more important in relation to Attainment Target 2. As Arthur Hughes comments in the text, 'A criticism of the model of critical studies... is that it stresses the importance of knowledge at the expense of understanding...' and goes on to raise important issues about the nature of 'critical studies'. Most of the schools involved in the project were attempting to extend their range of work through systems which deployed a rich variety of resources, both to stimulate initial response and to support learning as the work progressed. This presentation of their work exemplifies good practice but, equally, allows us to see some of the problems of implementing AT2. The issues raised by Arthur Hughes will, in my view, be the focus of debate and curriculum development in art and design during the next decade.

Assessment remains a vexed issue. The National Curriculum was expected to provide a clear structure for assessment, probably based on the ten level scale used for other core and foundation subjects. In the event, these developments were halted at the stage of writing End of Key Stage Statements. There is little guidance for

teachers in constructing a sensible and workable assessment system for their own use and, as a result, schools are trying to develop their own, sometimes in collaboration with others but mostly in relative isolation. The revised GCSE National Criteria for Art and Design may provide a basis for developing suitable systems through the examination structure, but there is a pressing need for a national structure through which the important principles of progression can be properly developed. The project has identified effective and workable systems which may provide support for further work at a national level.

I am delighted that the Birmingham group, along with others, has been able to provide a publication of this quality. It was policy to encourage regional groups to publish their own findings as well as to produce a main publication which summarised the whole project. The funding was insufficient to recompense teachers and others involved for all their work, and here we have another example of the extent to which teachers, lecturers and gallery education officers, are willing to commit time and energy to furthering the development of art and design education.

Finally, and most importantly, we should recognise the capability of young people in producing work of such quality. The National Curriculum is far from 'broad and balanced' and art, music and PE were disadvantaged through being the last subjects in its development. In addition, all other subjects are required to work to prescribed content. One consequence of which seems to be a return to didactic teaching methods and passive learning, with an emphasis on cognitive rather than affective modes of behaviour. Art is one of the few subjects in which children can still experience a true sense of ownership of their work and learn by imaginative, risk-taking in properly controlled conditions. The evidence of their capabilities contained in this book should encourage us all. ■

conventions of form and meaning we find in the art of other cultures. One factor seems to be that we are often much more at ease with an art whose impact has been blunted by time and exposure. This in turn leads us almost inevitably to the acknowledged, 'great' artists and the concomitant worship of genius. Art which was radical and challenging a hundred or so years ago, is all too often reduced to a 'bedroom wall icon', stripped of everything except a kind of residual sediment of its original meaning or significance. As explanation in schools, anecdote, biography and a focus on 'the elements of art' (colour, tone, line etc.) are usually preferred to a deconstruction of a work's meaning in terms of its social, psychological or philosophical significance. Current orthodoxy tends to avoid the more difficult issues surrounding a work of art—matters of race, gender, politics, ethics etc. in favour of a much more formalist and traditional approach that seeks to induct young people into what in the National Curriculum is termed, the 'principal features of our artistic heritage'.

There is nothing in this introduction to art that is necessarily critical. Critical study requires analysis, speculation and debate—supported wherever possible by appropriate facts, which might properly include dates, periods, biographical details and points of view already expressed. This debate, hypothesising and speculation requires discourse. It can also include visual experimentation, but this implies a degree of systematic enquiry into ideas, techniques and approaches. The mere aping of the superficialities of style, technique or subject matter is not in itself a critical or necessarily reflective activity. Although, it may be a necessary or helpful initial mode of engagement with a work of art, craft or design; its principal function being (to paraphrase I.A. Richards⁵), to place the concept of a painting, sculpture or building in the child's mind. If this is not done, Richards suggested that opinions tend to have little to do with the work under consideration and are more likely to reflect instant reaction not genuine reflection. To acquire a concept of the work takes time.

In his book, *Thinking Through English*⁶

Paddy Creber, writing about the use of images in English lessons, says that, 'if a picture is to be any use to me it must stir the mind and the mind must be free to be so stirred.' Time and again he stresses the importance of avoiding stock responses to works of art. Like Tony Dyson⁷, he has searched for ways of preventing the image from becoming a mere classroom text and making the young person's approach to the art of looking, more thoughtful and more positive.

The projects and experiences described in this publication were all designed to stir the minds of young people. They did this partly through the carefully thought out introduction of artists and craftworkers into schools. Artists and craftworkers who not only practised their art but engaged young people and their teachers in dialogue and debate. Quentin Bell once pointed out the error of always teaching about 'great' art and forgetting the richness and educational advantage gained through commerce with art that may not be great, but is accessible to the learner. The accounts here are of the work of a small group of extremely gifted teachers who have set out to enhance the quality of their pupils' educational experience by confronting them as far as possible with what Bob Clement has called the 'Real Thing'.

The young artists were chosen because their work and their ideas are challenging and inspiring. These are artists working against a contemporary backdrop and communicating directly to young people. Much of the work is about contemporary issues as they are seen and felt by the young artists. In some projects, children are engaged in exploring these issues as they are related to their own lives. In other cases they are moved by a consideration of universal themes such as war and human suffering. Each of the schools is, as will become clear, quite different. At the time of writing, one is grant maintained. The Art Department here is known for its capacity to motivate young people through a continuous involvement with the work and ideas of 'real' artists and the showing of travelling exhibitions in school. Another, has a tradition of offering a liberal environment in which pupils take

responsibility for their own learning. The Art Department has something of the relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere of a good foundation department. Shireland is a multicultural inner ring school with an art department well known for its entrepreneurial spirit. The fourth school, a highly regarded comprehensive between Birmingham and Walsall has an Art department known throughout the borough as one of the strongest in the area. What

each department has in common is that it is run and staffed by outstanding teachers who are prepared to take risks, to generate excitement and to challenge their young charges to grapple with the new and the unexpected. The work is not cliché ridden or stereotyped, which is the result of children being empowered to make decisions for themselves within a stimulating but disciplined school environment. ■

Notes and References

¹ Gardner, H. 1993. *DEMOS Quarterly*. London. Reprinted in *The Guardian*, October 12 1993.

² Graham, D. 1993. *A Lesson for Us All*, Graham & Tyler, London, Routeledge.

³ Barnes, D. 1977. From *Communication in the Curriculum*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

⁴ MacGregor, N. December 27 1992. Top of the Postcard Pops. London, *The Observer*

⁵ Richards, I.A. 1978. *Practical Criticism*, London, Routeledge & Kegan Paul.

⁶ Creber, P. 1990. *Thinking through English*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

⁷ Dyson, A. 'Art History in Schools' in Thistlewood, D. *Critical Studies in Art and Design Education*, Longman/NSEAD.

Talking in Class

Tom Davies, PGCE Course Director in the School of Art Education at the Birmingham Institute of Art & Design, University of Central England

The Arts Council project was launched in Birmingham in 1990. On that occasion I recall outlining the proposals that distinguished our contribution to the national initiative.

It was envisaged that a number of schools involved in the teacher training 'partnerships' would work with students and University (then Polytechnic) staff to initiate opportunities to promote contemporary issues in art and design. Staff were drawn from Fine Art and a number of design disciplines within the Institute of Art and Design, coordinated by Arthur Hughes and myself. Schools were self selecting on the basis of interest and second year BA students were 'twinned' with PGCE students. The latter had the advantage of knowing the particular schools involved and had some insight into the educational benefits of artists, designers and craftspeople working in schools.

Initially, ten secondary and four primary schools were involved in the scheme. Each had previous experience of curriculum development initiatives involving the PGCE course. Through a mixture of approaches and methods, the schools determined the individual strategies and the artists/teacher trainees adapted the framework to accommodate specialist knowledge and skills. Some proposals were very specific and targeted particular pupils while others were more general and served to support the curriculum intentions for whole year groups. Aware of the aims of the project, the steering group focussed on the similarity of schools' proposals rather than individual differences. Distilling a consensus view from the school submissions appeared to endorse our own view that a key to engagement with art, design and craft was talk. Talk, therefore, became a major reference point and within each submission teachers and students considered the variety of ways in which pupils would be involved in the dialogue and become empowered to use language.

Using the National Curriculum for Art in conjunction with supportive texts and visual references, PGCE students drafted schemes of work with BA students to 'harmonise' artist/designer in residency placements. If knowledge and understanding were to be linked to classroom discussion then appropriate and adequate time would need to be built into each programme.

For practical purposes, classroom intervention was considered on three related but discrete levels:

1) TEACHER TRAINEES

PGCE students prepared schemes of work that attempted to challenge preconceptions about art activity being necessarily or predominantly practical. This was done with the full support of the schools who looked at alternative approaches to critical and contextual study.

2) ARTISTS, DESIGNERS, CRAFTSPERSONS IN RESIDENCE

Undergraduates developed a model for the residency that pivoted on the partnership between PGCE students and school departments. These placements ranged from two to six weeks during either a main block teaching experience (PGCE course) in the spring term or as part of the special placement programme (again, an aspect of the PGCE course) in the summer term. In both patterns of attendance, BA students set up working environments in the schools.

BA students elected to contribute to this research in a number of ways. First, through their practical work they revealed some of the working practices of artists and designers. Secondly, they were prepared to elaborate on the principle influences on this work. Thirdly, and most importantly, they sought to further develop pupils' opinions and judgments about art and design through the processes of thinking and making.

3) MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

The third component served to link schools to local museums and galleries. Here museum colleagues worked closely with both groups of students and collaborated in the accommodation of school groups and the development of 'out reach' initiatives that provided collections and exhibitions for schools.

PROJECT EVALUATION

No curriculum development project goes quite to plan and often what is learnt from the disappointments is more valuable than the obvious successes. After debriefing, most of the difficulties reported seemed to fall into two main categories. The first being considerably easier to modify than the second.

1) COMPATIBILITY

Team teaching can be extremely difficult and in a number of schools contributors reported clashes of expectation and value judgment. Role relationships sometimes became confused—ie. teacher/student/artist.

Each of the mini-projects provided enhanced opportunities for pupils to engage in their own work and that of others. Feedback from the range of schools seemed to indicate the benefits for pupils. Both groups of students, however, reported occasional problems trying to maintain a balance of talk in the programme. Some PGCE students had a tendency to over direct while some BA students were inclined towards reticence.

Amongst the many complimentary accounts of the projects from school colleagues, reference was made to the 'conventions' of school and difficulties associated with 'dress'. This was traced to a single student who had resisted modifying his appearance for the placements. Though the match of student/s and schools was extremely important and while this particular incident was isolated it represented a shift in thinking that was evident elsewhere.

2) ACCOUNTABILITY

Some individuals experienced difficulties in deciding what counted as

worthwhile outcomes and the issue of assessable evidence was raised within a number of departments. Here we became aware of a detectable increase in the pressure to perform in aspects amenable to examination. This it may be argued has generally resulted in the risk of a reduction of open-ended experiences for an increasing number of pupils.

While negative feedback related to relevance, counted for an extremely small percentage, a more worrying spectre of change appeared to be taking hold in a representative sample of schools. Over the period we had systematically promoted and encouraged 'talking in class' while aware of an increasing climate that did not wholly support this premise. Frequently that which was being advocated as 'good' practice was associated with quiet, often, individual performance. It seemed likely therefore that this irresistible force could undermine the prospect of pupils associating art with critical debate, insight, opinion and values.

Targeting talk as desirable could be seen by some as 'progressive,' for the concept of 'working noise' is, at best, contentious. Coinciding with the two years of the project we have received from central government simplistic views on teaching competence and powerful messages about how teachers should teach. Little reference is made to the centrality of talk in the learning process and the compatibility of talk and work is an area of concern.

From my own research into assessment in key stage 4, the most valuable aspect of GCSE was, and is, its emphasis on negotiated learning and self assessment. While GCSE has not achieved all that it claimed, there was, at best, a real attempt to develop articulate pupils who were encouraged to reflect upon and respond to the subject. Norman Binch has frequently reminded us that examinations in art would be determined by ability to assess performance. The inference being that it was up to teachers to devise strategies that would best support the interests and aspirations of the individuals concerned.

More recently it has been widely accepted by the profession that all major decisions on policy are assessment driven

with the simpler models of assessment taking precedence. It would seem clear that both groups of students (BA/PGCE) received conflicting messages over the period of the project. Overtly, from both schools and college, the emphasis was placed upon considering the curriculum in terms of activity, methodology and the perceived needs of the child. Covertly they were encouraged to think of relevance in terms of examination, coursework and other tangible evidence.

Some teachers were feeling the impact of a 'back to basics' movement within their schools and felt the strain of producing results in what was for many a diminishing percentage of contact time. The rationalisation of the option system to accommodate the National Curriculum was resulting in fewer opportunities to choose art and greater pressure to secure the future through examination statistics.

Throughout the 1980's we have witnessed a government inspired movement away from the child as the centre of educational thinking. The demands of the curriculum has largely replaced talk about pupils' needs, but many colleagues and particularly those represented in the following case studies find it difficult to accept that the best educational encounters are inevitably formalised to prepare young people for testing. Judgments about their work with pupils could be evidenced in increased pupil confidence and the ability to communicate value in the visual arts. Learning, as we know, is a continuum, broken by periods of time in school. Not all of this formal learning is coherent to pupils

who are rarely consulted as to what they know, need or understand.

Assumptions are made about teaching, learning and the effectiveness of both. But how do children best learn? Is it by being told, which is the essence of the didactic approach? Are these teaching styles as contradictory as they seem or is there a way of combining the best features of both?

The didactic approach is widely accepted as traditional, while finding out is thought of as progressive. Those who believe that education should maintain a traditional approach which has been 'tried and tested' may be ignorant of educational history. If 'risk' in education is being marginalised and along with it pupils' ability to discover things for themselves, then art will be one of the first casualties. Educators and philosophers have for long emphasised the informality of learning and none more so than those in art and design. As the next generation of prospective art and design educators enrol for teacher training they will undoubtedly perceive an emphasis on knowledge and competence rather than the development of personal qualities and sensitivity that have long been associated with the profession in general and art education in particular.

The case studies here represent examples of some of what was attempted over the period of the project and reflect the character of the individual author. Each in a very real sense is trying to preserve the wisdom of the ages, knowing through doing, appreciating through direct experience. ■

Trinity School

Leamington Spa

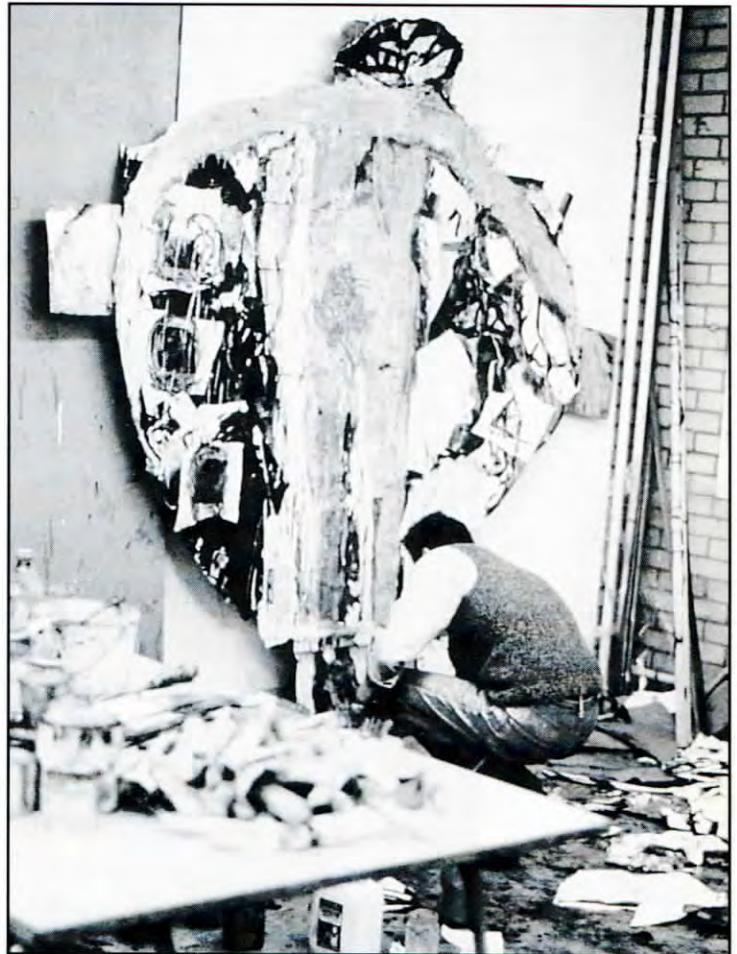
Kirstie Barton, Head of Art at Trinity School, Leamington Spa

Trinity School is a split site Roman Catholic comprehensive school that has long enjoyed a widespread reputation for its outstanding arts education. The first headteacher, Peter Hastings, recognised the value of the creative arts and made art, music, theatre, dance and poetry the core curriculum of the school. As a result, each of these disciplines has had many successful and different experiences of residencies.

The fine art area comprises three open plan teaching spaces and a darkroom. Although the facilities and resources are no more than basic, it continues to be an oversubscribed, lively and happy environment where visitors, staff, artists and pupils are always to be found in enthusiastic conversation and meaningful debate.

AN APPROACH TO CRITICAL STUDIES IN ART

Not long ago a group of sixteen year olds tried to explain to me why the 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles' had been named after four Renaissance masters. Although simple, their reasoning seemed to me to be both tenuous and confusing. No doubt just as confusing as the history of art is to them. Few of our pupils have been to a gallery, let alone savoured first hand the glories of the Italian quattrocento! For those who have, the experience was often bewildering and awe inspiring. Silent, dimly lit rooms, with watchful guards and 'do not touch' signs are not conducive environments for most adolescents. Although many galleries do offer 'hands-on' experience, budgetary and timetabling constraints often make them inaccessible. To give students a realistic idea of continuity, interaction and cultural breadth they could easily spend months out of the classroom. Despite the problems, we believe passionately that looking at artwork critically and contextually should be central to our curriculum.



Jones' use of 'found' materials to create ART still has implications for us today.

During the 1980's Gulbenkian funding provided several residencies. Nationally acclaimed artists such as Ana-Maria Pacheco and the expressionist painter Ian Jones, had an influence that still pervades our art teaching. An illustrator, printmaker and photographer also enriched the art experience. Here at Trinity, pupils and teachers *collectively* talking about their own work has always been of great importance, therefore students quickly responded to all of the artists and would confidently question, debate, analyse and often emulate. For many, the fact that the artists exist and deal with contemporary issues was a revelation. They were then quick to realise that 'Art' is not necessarily only to be viewed in gallery spaces.

Lack of funding and changes to our teaching areas took their toll and by the late 80's studio residencies were no longer viable. We tell our students that every experience they have will prove of relevance at some time in their lives. Insignificant details will make sense later on. So it is with Trinity's programme of contextual studies. Gradually, information, ideas, beliefs, will fuse together. Collectively it will add up to make greater sense. One of our concerns was that students should begin to question the siting of artwork and start to think about the concept of permanence. Our society exhorts individuals to look after the environment while allowing large organisations to abuse it, so we also wanted our students to think about using throwaway and biodegradable materials. To this end, in early 1990, we looked for a local artist whose work would tune our pupils thoughts to these issues.

A scheme to allocate studio space to second year BA students from the then Birmingham Polytechnic led to the arrival of Andy Elliott in June 1990. He was a sculptor who worked outside on an illusionistic piece that, due to the weather conditions failed to fully materialise. This proved to be an extremely valuable lesson for the students, who discussed the technical problems, possible solutions and the transient nature of the intended piece.

In the previous February, one of our Lower Sixth students had spent a work experience placement in the sculpture department of Trent Polytechnic. She returned to Trinity very excited by a talk given by Andy Goldsworthy and was keen to work outside. We had by this time tracked down a local 'land artist' who was willing to work with our students. Heather Steele, like Goldsworthy, uses natural materials but also incorporates made elements when appropriate. Elliott too had already been seen by our pupils working with a combination of the natural and the made. As a department working from direct experience we have always encouraged students to enjoy and value their familiar surroundings. We also seek to give them new and varied experiences whenever possible and to this end chose to work with

Heather Steele in mid-Wales. This 'adventure' was funded by TVEI and has been written into the curriculum on an annual basis—though we no longer take the artist and the funding is now provided by students and teachers.

The Welsh scenery was a radically different and challenging stimulus. Working for a day on a beach poses its own problems. With only sand, sea and stone to create with, many resorted to mark making exercises, simple sculpture or relief work.

In sharp contrast, working in the forest provides a wealth of materials. In a clearing a student responds to a Heaney poem, creating a pathway inspired by Goldsworthy's 'Sidewinder.' Dense coniferous trees, reminiscent of a Klimt painting, through which pale shafts of light penetrate, surround a mutton cloth sculpture symbolic of pools of sunlight. The following year this piece, when found tattered and weathered was moved to a derelict cottage window. Why should a piece always remain the same?

The abandoned quarry, our third environment and not a typical Goldsworthy one, provides an abundance of media. Rusted metal sheeting, shards of glass, grey and yellow rock and endless piles of slate. Contrasts of colour and texture resulted in stacked pieces, primitive stone circles and pathways. A frail curtain created from tiny fragments of coloured glass and mirror suspended from an archway moves gently in the breeze. The student subsequently went on to work with sheet glass positioned in the landscape after seeing Duchamp's 'Bride'.

Back in Warwickshire our students persist in working out in local fields and woodland. There is now a strong tradition of land art and utilising natural materials is considered highly relevant. Students have visited exhibitions of both Steele and Goldsworthy's work. There continues to be lively debate about whether pieces should be brought indoors. Should aids such as tacks and thread be used? Do photographic records constitute a separate art piece? Goldsworthy tells us: 'I have always been aware of the contradictions of showing what is essentially an outdoor experience in the form of an image' but some students



see it as a valid and natural conclusion. As well as looking at works by Richard Long they have watched the work of local artists such as Herbert and English develop. As autumn approaches we know that many of our pupils will use the landscape to resource projects in lots of ways. It is heartening that through looking at work critically and contextually they perceive the relevance of coloured leaves as a vehicle for making a statement, and that the process does not have to end with the product but continues as the piece dries out, rots, evaporates or melts. The creation of art work at Trinity cannot happen

without the hours we spend in conversation. Viewing and discussing are of prime importance. Our students learn to listen as they look, to continually question as they work in search of solutions both personal and universal: visually, emotionally and intellectually. This curiosity about their own work extends to that of their peers and any other artists they come into contact with. Critical and contextual studies begin and end with conversation. Through words we make sense of experience, through sharing our experiences we place ourselves and our work in context.



Art as a Response: War, Conflict and Suffering

David Troughton, a member of the Art Department at Trinity School, Leamington Spa

An important part of any adolescent's development is coming to terms with their place or position in society. This will take the form of forging and breaking friendships with their peers; falling in and out of love; trying to understand their parents and developing beneficial relationships with their teachers.

In addition to this, the young adult will be trying to determine his or her political stance relative to the wider world which encompasses their more intimate environment. As they approach the age of majority they will be forming opinions about events and attitudes, building on emotional responses, talking about and discussing their feelings, trying to formulate a well informed and reasoned attitude and outlook to the world.

As soon as a mark is made on the paper, paint put on a canvas, clay moulded, the maker, the artist, enters into the history of art. Culture and society are inextricably linked. The culture produced by a society is the response to that society by the individuals in it. People have always needed to find their place, to try and understand their existence. This struggle or grapple with the *raison d'être* can manifest itself in many different ways. For some it is introvert and private. For others it is extrovert and externalised in the form of artistic statements.

Using art as a means of working out an attitude to or expressing an opinion about social events or currently held beliefs is nothing new. Some argue that art that does not have a social or political aspect is invalid, irrelevant or 'merely' decorative. Others claim that art inherently contains observations on the society in which it is produced as the art of any given time could only have been produced at that time and no other. Whatever one's position regarding the functions of art, we know that from Hogarth to Kienholz it has been used many times for overtly sociopolitical statements.



In discussions with students who feel that they need to make such statements, interesting and challenging notions appear that make them question their own assumptions and preconceptions about art. A different criteria or aesthetic can emerge. Ideals of beauty and harmony can be displaced by discord and even ugliness in order that the message is got across or the point made. Discussions on art as propaganda can usefully be introduced. The starting points for this type of work are many and various and range from images and ideas from the media to the finding of interesting natural forms on a country walk. Our students have addressed many social issues and produced very different resolutions including chicken wire and tissue paper sculptures of famine victims, collaged condemnations of fox hunting, haunting sculptures of battery hens, installation pieces based on the unearthing of human remains revealing past atrocities, and devastating banner essays on the horrors of human conflict.

HANGING AND SUSPENSION

For this project students worked from and explored the meaning of the words 'hanging and suspension'. As a drawing aid/stimulus, the group were asked to construct a large paper hanging, construction or installation in the corner of the working area. The students contributed to it individually over a period of a week and then used it for a series of drawing exercises. The paper used was from large pop promotional posters, plain on one side with images and text on the other. One student included a paper chain of cut-out figures holding hands. The words 'mother' and 'child' appeared on some of these figures and elsewhere in the construction.





RAJESH PUNJ

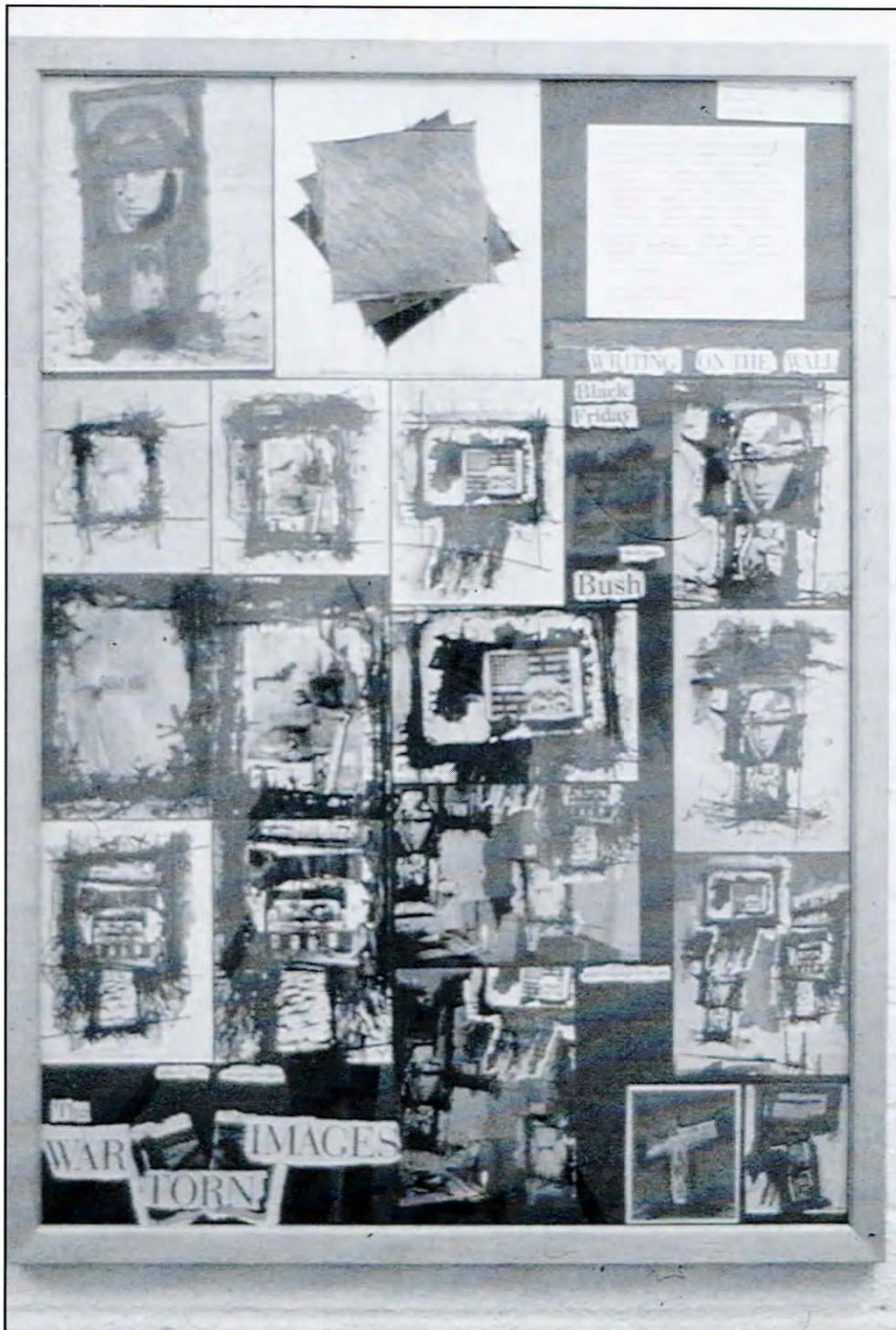
One particular student, Rajesh Punj, picked out these figures and words, emphasising them in his drawings. The conflict in the Gulf had just begun and Rajesh had read an account of this war written by children who had been directly affected by it. He was moved by these accounts. At the same time he had seen a series of works by Ralph Steadman based on the Gulf war in the *Independent on Sunday*. These too had a profound effect on Rajesh. Up to this point his work had largely been tight and very controlled - self imposed constraints that were beginning to frustrate him. The

Steadman's led him to look at the work of the American artists, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, as well as the English painter, Richard Smith.

Rajesh's own work began to be freer and more expressive as he began to get to grips with communicating his horror and distaste of the futility and cruelty of war. Influenced by Smith's canvas hangings, he rejected the formal picture format and produced a series of A1 size banners incorporating images from newspapers and magazines. These banners were charred at the edges and hung, lit from below, in a small bunker, and viewed through a slit in

the bunker wall. Some images were chosen because they represented contrasting depictions of the same subjects, for instance, a mawkish image of a child used in a fashion advertisement was juxtaposed with a harrowing image of a child victim of the conflict. The irony of finding two such contrasting images in the same magazine was not lost on Rajesh. The random juxtapositioning of a feature on starving Africans opposite advertiser's copy extolling the virtues of a new luxury car was a source of much discussion on the morality of the mass media.

Rajesh continued working on the Gulf War theme and produced a further series of banners/hangings using perspex sandwiches in which he trapped images on acetate, etching into and painting the 'outside' of the perspex. These were hung from the ceiling and viewed from both sides. A transcription of a child's view of the conflict was printed onto a glass sheet and stood upright between two sandstone blocks from derelict gravestones, providing a poignant and pathetic testimony to the loss of innocence in yet another brutal man-made catastrophe. ■



Animal Sculpture

Sheridan Horn, a member of the Art Department at Trinity School, Leamington Spa

Man and animals are inextricably linked. Animals have been used to fulfil our needs at all levels of existence—physical, moral, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. We have dominated and exploited animals both scientifically and economically. Our increasingly industrialised and polluted world has now forcibly drawn our attention to the fragile interplay between man, animals and the environment. Animals are used as totems, symbols, admired for their aesthetic qualities, enjoyed for their entertainment value and loved as pets.

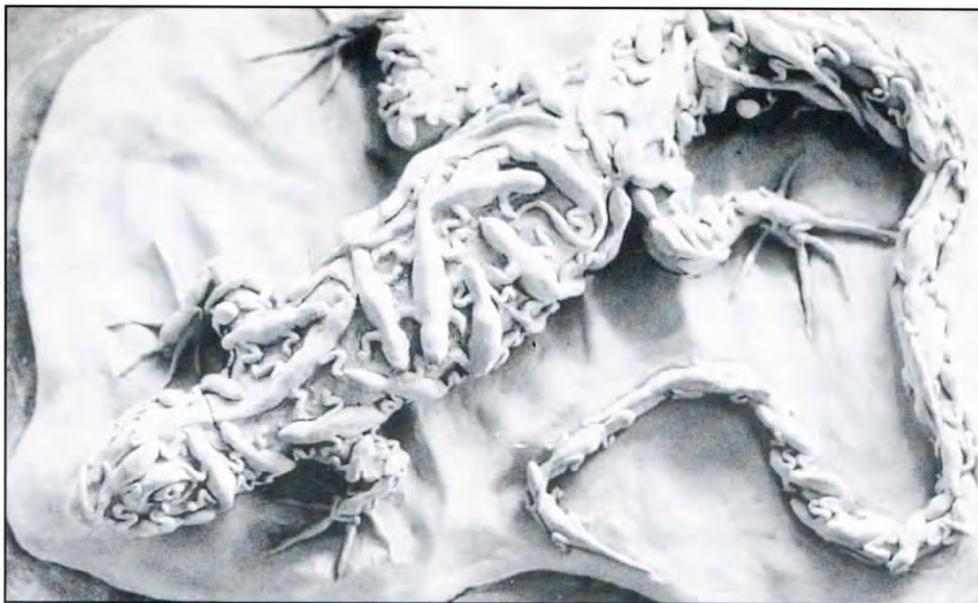
Sculptors have been inspired in many different ways by animals. Degas was fascinated by the movement of thoroughbred horses and produced wax maquettes that captured their physical characteristics in a series of split second poses. In contrast, Elizabeth Frink's life size bronze horses and riders are monumental and evoke man and horse as warrior companions. Barry Flanagan's humorous and acrobatic bronze hares dance, tumble or stretch out in full flight, evoking the lyrical and spiritual aspects of this creature. Hicks has produced a variety of animals by working in mud, bronze, plaster and straw. They range from life-like portraits of individuals such as a Jack Russell terrier or greyhound to semi-mythological beasts. Constantin Brancusi on the other hand represented animals through the use of minimal form. The movement of a fish through water is distilled to an elongated marble or bronze ellipse in order to convey its essential nature.

At a very early age children begin to understand the significance of animals in relation to themselves. They learn to observe, explore, identify, collate and marvel at the animal world. Many families keep domestic animals which have to be nurtured and cared for. Education and entertainment are combined with visits to the zoo, safari parks, aquariums, farms, bird sanctuaries, seaside exploration of



rock pools and even a walk in the park.

The study of animals therefore provides a splendid starting point from which to introduce children to the complexities of three dimensional art. In order to produce a sculptural piece based on an animal, it is vital for the student to collect information taken from direct observation. When asked, children are often delighted to bring in their pets and livestock for the duration of an art lesson. However, as the teacher, one has to organise this carefully as one child's favourite rabbit or hen is a temptation that another child's dog can barely resist! Beware of goats—they eat anything, including year 9 drawings!



Where possible, it is even worth considering bringing into the school grounds a large individual animal such as a pig, cow, sheep or horse. Other creatures that can be borrowed include snakes, lizards, insects of all kinds, garden snails, birds and fish. The use of freshly killed animals also allows for a more detailed study. The basic principles of anatomy and armature construction can be effectively demonstrated through the use of skeletal remains, especially if the skeleton is complete.

Besides collecting information such as drawings, art historical information, objects, photographs, postcards and so on,

the student will also need to research the living habits and characteristics of their chosen creature(s) before attempting the final piece. Once again this will help them to portray with conviction, movement, form and surface quality. There is no substitute for working from direct observation and final pieces are often richer and far more accurate in their rendition as a result.

The translation of an animal into media needs careful planning and discussion. For instance, how can one portray form, surface quality or a sense of movement? Metal can be used to portray the shiny, reflective, or iridescent quality of



surfaces such as fish scales, butterfly wings and lizard skins. The fierce, powerful energy of a cheetah or leopard can be translated into various metal components, relating them to man-made engines and speed.

Teachers must ask themselves, what in particular does the student wish to convey? Social issues may be an important consideration in the choice and treatment of certain materials in the way that the sculptor, Ann Carrington built a crocodile

out of crocodile skin shoes and handbags. A group of Trinity students made a life-size cow for a dairy unit, the surface of which was made from the packaging of Gold Top milk products, emphasising the link between the cow and the consumer product. Other possibilities may include the use of three dimensional collage from found objects in the way that Picasso built up his famous, 'Monkey with Young' (1952) in which a toy car 'becomes' the head of the monkey.



ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Dawn Berrisford who was an artist in residence at Trinity School in 1992 constructs animals out of discarded consumer items and junk materials. Her innovative use of junk media has included the translation of car exhaust pipes into elephant tusks, mattress stuffing into the hair of an orang utan and a flattened football into the shell of a tortoise.

While with us she and year 10 and 11 pupils worked to the theme title, 'Animal'. They were joined by Sophie Molteno, a former pupil who was preparing a folio of

work to support her application to an HND course in model making. Sophie had made many animal sculptures at school and had been introduced to carving, casting, construction, mixed media, modelling and land art.

When considering an artist for a residency we aim to extend the knowledge of the art team as well as the pupils. Berrisford was excellent in this respect. She taught us how to solder, arc weld and construct large wood and metal armatures. This, combined with her imaginative use of junk materials was easily assimilated by the

students and led to lively and exciting work. Everyone produced a sculptural piece—including two life size baby elephants using wrinkled brown paper; a huge metallic butterfly with a six foot wing span; life size kangaroos from hessian and paper sacking; lizards darting up our school walls, a life size mock leather crocodile; a shark's head complete with razor sharp metallic teeth and an ostrich with billowing tissue paper wings. Dawn herself produced a seven foot vulture (now in the school grounds) and Sophie's metallic dragonfly with its eight foot wingspan rests on an exterior wall, marking the start of a developing sculpture trail. Other items produced included close up details of

animals' eyes and skin patterns. One student even made herself a latex snakeskin body suit!

Following this project, during which they had been made aware of Ryder's galvanised wire animal sculptures, Hepworth's abstracted carved shell forms and Cartmel's wooden hermit crabs, many students decided to develop their ideas further by working in the landscape. They often used natural materials—skeletal twigs for a reindeer, a boar made out of moss and a mud hippo. Some explored turf cutting to produce a lizard, tiger and giraffe, all related to Simon English's work such as his zebra burnt into a field of stubble, or even the Wiltshire and Dorset white horses. ■

Molteno at work on her butterfly



Small Heath School – Residencies

Monica Keating, Head of Art at Small Heath School, Birmingham

Small Heath School is a vigorous inner-city 11 to 16 school situated in a predominantly Asian area. The majority of the student population is Muslim, with families originating from Pakistan and Bangladesh. In recent years, with the help of EEC money and the establishment of a new business zone, the area has had a significant face lift. Nevertheless, it has some of the highest unemployment and infant mortality rates in the country.

Although most of the pupils are Muslim and Asian, they are in no sense mono-cultural. Adherence to Islam ranges from a fundamentalist to a 'high days and holidays' observance. Whilst family structures are generally hierarchic, they are often severely disrupted by visits to the mother country, parental illness and death. The extended family structure is helpful in as far as it provides a good model for the corporate life and discipline of the school but it tends to perpetuate an attitude of acceptance and a reluctance to be critical. Under Islam, the traditional role of women is perceived as passive and severely constrained. Whilst this is not invariably the case, religious, cultural and class influences do confine and constrict the behaviour and educational expectations of many of the girls.

The life experience of the majority of the pupils centres around the family, school, the mosque and television. Although the centre of Birmingham is only three miles away, most children have rarely made the trip. This lack of experience is one of the many issues that the art department seeks to address. However, in spite of the enthusiasm of many pupils and much very good work, the local community places little store by an education in art. It is understandable that in a largely unskilled and relatively impoverished community, unless a school subject has direct currency in career terms, it is seen as of little value.



ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

Close to the city centre, we use selected exhibitions from both the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the very different Ikon Gallery.

Three major residencies have followed from exhibitions of work which were either gallery based or part of an Ikon touring exhibition—selected by the school each year from a list of exhibitions on different themes. All the work from the Ikon is contemporary and women artists are strongly represented. The gallery provides matched sponsorship and a gallery based workshop with advice and information about and for the artists. This school has chosen to work with artists who are addressing concerns and issues that we as an art department consider important, such as gender, culture and the environment.

Gallery funding for artists, exhibitions and workshops has been matched by resources from the school and from local businesses.

Artists in residence, gallery visits and school based workshops have been an exciting and invigorating experience for the department. We have benefited from the introduction of new techniques and ideas and the artists have said how much they have benefited from the questioning they have been subjected to from both pupils and staff. It has been a two way process of discussion and analysis of purposes that has been of great benefit to the school and, by their own accounts, the artists.

BA ART & DESIGN

PGCE (Art and Design) students have also played an invaluable role as artists in residence during the summer term of their course, when they have freedom to structure their own placement experiences. One student set up a dark room and taught both pupils and staff the practice of black and white photography, with the result that pupils were entered for a GCSE in this subject for the first time. We have been fortunate to have in placement a young teacher who later joined the department on a part time basis. He is an outstanding mask maker, and his activities have had both staff and pupils spell bound.

A major problem which the school experienced with our residencies has been the quality of communication between the artists and the pupils in terms of concepts and the use of language. This happens to a greater degree with our BA residencies. The students, almost invariably white and middle class, are often reduced to a state of bewilderment in our school. Jonathan, one of the students working on an impressive abstract sculpture, when asked by a pupil what it was, replied, 'Art' !

Many of our pupils think that Birmingham Art Gallery with its impressive classical facade is for 'posh people'. Working alongside artists diminishes the mystique. Pupils can see the process from conception through to the finished work. The Ikon Gallery which is at the more esoteric end of the contemporary market has been exemplary when it comes to encompassing the wide spectrum of

expression in modern art, addressing issues of culture and exhibiting a strong group of women artists of exceptional quality. The latter is of particular concern in the department as many of our girls are not encouraged or permitted by their parents to go on to college

We are aware of the need to assess and evaluate outcomes with regard to the residencies. Clearly, some have been more successful than others in terms of work produced. New areas of the curriculum have been introduced while others have been revitalised. The critical and contextual dimension is now central to all of our work. Pupils particularly enjoy working with new young people who do not have the responsibility of being their class teacher.

ANU PATEL

Anu's residency was a result of research into a project we were planning in the department. Both the Ikon and City Museum and Art Gallery were hosting exhibitions of work in celebration of motherhood which were to become a starting point for a project with year 10 GCSE pupils. The City's gallery focussed upon traditional approaches to this theme in an exhibition entitled, *Sacred Bonds: Images of Motherhood*. The Ikon on the other hand commissioned work under the title of *Mothers*. It was arranged for two artists represented in the exhibition to conduct workshops and they offered co-funding for a residency. As a school we were familiar with the work of Anu Patel and felt that as a ceramic sculptor we could support her work and develop this area of our curriculum.

Anu's residency was arranged for twelve days in the autumn term. She would work with selected groups for one day a week and on the second day, develop her own work. Her involvement would encompass the continued making of her own work and the presenting of it through informal contact with pupils. This would be a process of showing examples of her finished work and explaining the processes. Finally she would be both instructing and facilitating. This would involve staff and pupils acquiring new skills and understanding through active participation.

In every respect this residency exceeded our expectations. Through her ability to communicate and teach, Anu built up a strong rapport with pupils and the day she set aside for her own work was gradually given over to further contact with pupils. She demonstrated her techniques through large ceramic sculpture. Individual pupils responded enthusiastically and some produced bas relief sculptures based upon their own drawings. The response of pupils to her work was so enthusiastic that we mounted a major exhibition of her ceramic sculpture, monoprinting, paper cuts and appliqué on the theme of mothering and recent works influenced by a trip to India.

This exhibition caused much excitement in the school and gave access to her work to pupils who had no direct contact either with Anu or the art department. Pupils produced work in clay, paper cuts and printmaking -much of the latter being based upon architectural forms, a strong feature of Anu's personal work derived from her visit to India. Pupils felt able to make personal connections between this work and their own experience. Gender issues were a high priority.

The work of many pupils was transformed by their contact with Anu. They gained the confidence to work in a variety of media and to attempt work on a large scale. Many willingly gave up their lunch hours and even stayed after school to work with her.

CHIU KWONG MAN

Chiu came to the department initially for a one day a week placement as part of his PGCE course. He is an obsessional mask maker who makes the most wonderful creations using very cheap or waste materials. His brief, therefore, was to work with two year 8 groups on mask making. Chiu's approach was intuitive. He did away with the need for initial drawings and the pupils worked directly with materials, responding individually as their structures grew.

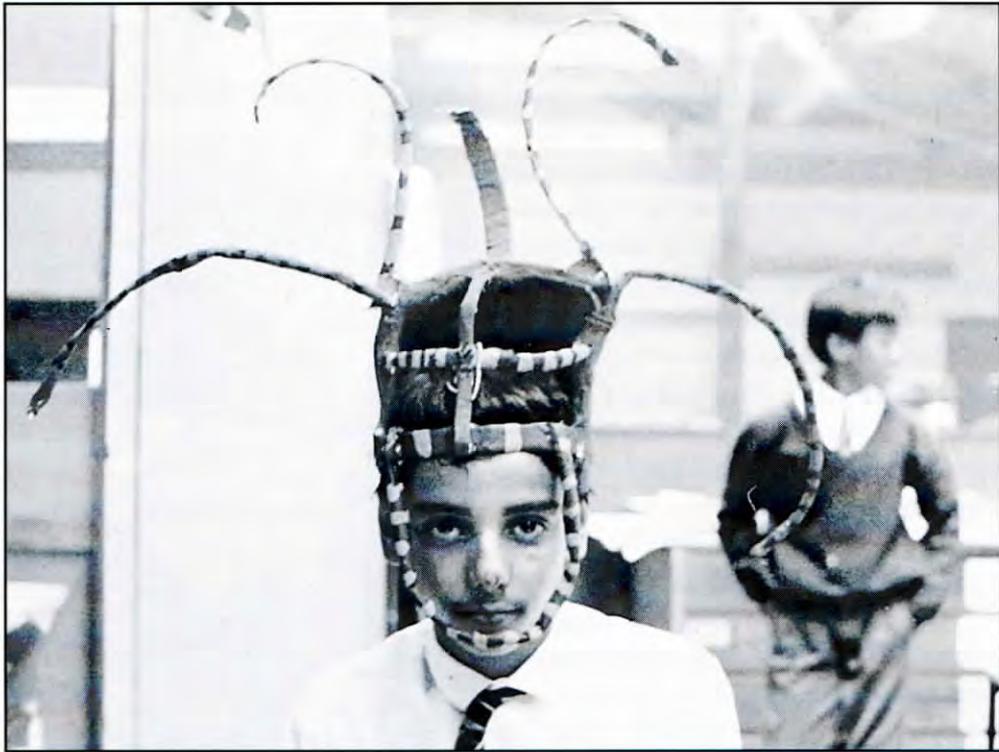
One project employed rolled newspaper rods which the pupils used as a base in the form of a skull cap (rather like a cycling helmet) to which they attached additional rods to shape exotic pieces of



head gear which they completed by adding a covering of paper strips.

Chiu's other projects involved 'drawing' in wire to describe the mask—loosely based upon face painting from many cultures. When the wire structure was in place it was covered with tissue paper and painted. Pupils found the wire work difficult but nevertheless responded enthusiastically to both projects, working directly with material without the frustration of being held down to the making of preliminary drawings—so often redundant in work of this nature.

All of this work was resourced with copious cross cultural references which were already available to the pupils. In parallel with these projects, Chiu continued his own experiments which he shared with staff and a large art club following of enthusiastic pupils. He developed this work into more sculptural forms and used paper and card to make his forms. He has subsequently been employed on a temporary contract by the school and



continued his mask making, which became ever more adventurous, ending up with large articulated shapes made from card held together by paper fasteners.

The staff and pupils were enlivened by his enthusiasm, his constant research and development and his understanding. He encouraged us in the use of large scale 'impossible' projects and it was thoroughly refreshing to respond imaginatively and intuitively to materials.

KAREN BABAYAN

Karen is an Iranian born artist with an Armenian mother. Much of her inspiration comes from Armenia's rich cultural traditions. The church is a repository of much of this tradition and plays a large part in her work, which consists of painting and lino printing. This work is enriched by a tradition of story telling. She is also concerned with environmental questions and the clinical precision bombing witnessed in the Gulf war.

Karen came to the school for a sponsored 12 day residency through our contact with the Ikon Gallery. Her work had been included in the travelling exhibition, *The Nature of the Beast*—work by five artists in different media on the theme of animals. The paintings she worked on in school were based on stories from her childhood in Iran. The children

responded well to this and were encouraged to recreate family stories and histories for themselves. Karen was able to build on the oral traditions of the pupils and their families and they felt safe to share and explore these aspects with her. Many of the illustrations to their stories involved captions in Urdu, which she was able to translate—which impressed the children no end!

Three months after Karen left the school a display was mounted of all the work started during her residency and much of the work she had completed herself around that time - an experience that certainly enthused both staff and pupils.

The common factor underlying all of our successful residencies has been a clear notion of why we wanted a particular artist and an equally clear agreement between us and the artists about the purposes and objectives of each residency. Their work was built into rather than 'tacked on' to our course. The pupils and the artists were engaged in careful preparation, which included both reassuring pupils and encouraging artists.

We see in the interaction of pupils, artists and staff that an environment can be created in which we can be mutually fulfilled and enriched in the learning process. ■

3 Projects: Barr Beacon School

Tim Hanafin, Head of Art at Barr Beacon School, Walsall

Barr Beacon School is a comprehensive community school situated at the eastern tip of the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall in pleasant open countryside. It has a large, well-equipped art department consisting of four studios and 3.5 specialist staff.

The department has built up a strong reputation within the authority and been involved in national initiatives such as the 'Arts Education in a Multicultural Society (AEMS) Project; the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) and the Arts Council/Crafts Council project, 'Resourcing and Assessing Art and Design Education at Key Stage 4'—to which this report refers.

Over a five year period the profile of the subject has been raised within the school, transforming it from a minority interest subject to one of the most popular option choices. This has been matched by greatly improved examination results both at GCSE and A level, a high proportion of the students going on to art and design foundation courses as well as specialist degree programmes in art history and architecture.

The art department enthusiastically supports the PGCE course run by the University of Central England School of Art and Design Education, working with both individual students and groups. The Head of Department contributes to the course tutorial programme.

PROJECT 1

In June 1990, at the start of the AC/CCP, two BA Fine Art students in their second year of study were released from college to undertake a two week residency in the department. Helen Sheppard was studying painting and Pete Hardisty, sculpture. This time in the term can be difficult as the college studios are vacated and prepared for the degree shows. These two students were therefore grateful for somewhere to work and happy to meet the one condition that they must be prepared to talk with the



pupils and discuss their work, should they be approached.

Both were excited by the change of working environment and fully explored the school buildings and grounds. Helen was attracted to the ornamental lily pool and Pete found new and interesting discarded materials which became the starting point for a piece of sculpture. He was a very friendly outgoing personality and quickly became well known to both staff and pupils. He particularly endeared himself to the P.E. staff when they found him about to slice up their hockey posts with a hacksaw!—they had foolishly been stored near the rubbish skip.

Helen worked outside making studies of the lily pool, while a group of year 9 pupils also made pastel drawings, concentrating on the layered effects of reflections in water, plants and fish. Back in the studio, Helen began to make a painting which used thin glazes of colour to build a subtle, complex surface which was overpainted with images of fish and weed and then varnished. Meanwhile, the pupils worked in paint, pastel, and tissue and paint, using their observed drawings as a starting point. Helen talked to the whole

group at regular intervals, describing her own work processes and commenting on how the work was progressing. Great interest was generated throughout the school and the students frequently called in during the course of the residency to see the work in progress.

Pete's first construction utilised discarded metal chair frames. Unfortunately the scrap metal men made off with this work of art in its early stages and it was not seen again! His next piece used discarded metal conduit and aluminium reflectors, producing a striking spider-like creature. Great interest was shown and with his open and friendly personality he made quite an impact on the school and the initial residency was extended by a further week at the visiting students' own request.

Some weeks after the residency, when the pieces were completed, they were displayed in the school library along with examples of pupils work, photographs and notes.

An original aim of the project was to produce a collaboration between BA Fine Art students in their second year and PGCE students on main block teaching practice. Though this had not been possible, it proved to be a valuable exercise both from the students' point of view and that of the school. The former found the change of working environment stimulating, enjoyed working alongside the children and solved their accommodation problem. As a school we benefited from having practising artists at work in the department which helped to raise the profile of Art. Helen's work in particular, directly enriched the work of a

group of pupils and the idea of 'student artists' working in school was established with the school managers.

PROJECT 2

Our second residency involved Liz Hall who was in the final term of her PGCE course. During this part of the course students negotiate placements of their own choice and Liz elected to spend two days per week in our art department as an artist in residence. She chose as her starting point the woodland which forms part of the school grounds and we identified a year 10 group which would work in parallel to her using the same starting point and exploring similar elements.

Liz produced a series of studies in the woods which examined the particular light quality she found there. This is due to its hilltop location which means that with its dense leaf canopy much light is able to penetrate the sides of the wood. Liz was able to describe her interest to the pupils while they were standing in the wood, pointing out these complex effects. Many of them became interested in working from this same stimulus.

Then followed several sessions working in the wood and both Liz and the pupils began to develop ideas. Liz began to work on three large, related collage panels using torn coloured paper and discarded hording posters. The pupils developed their ideas in paint, pastel and collage. At regular intervals Liz stopped and talked about both her work and that of the pupils—although we agreed that she would not become involved in 'formal' teaching. Having just completed her main block teaching practice she had no difficulty in establishing a good working relationship with the group and, I believe, enjoyed the opportunity to work with pupils in a different capacity from that of a teacher. Being large, colourful and unconventional, her work aroused a great deal of interest.

It so happened that a small group of pupils were not very excited by the work from the woods and broadened its scope to include the built environment of the school, focussing on architectural features as well as small details of fittings and furniture. However, they were still influenced by





Liz's work and produced work in mixed media, collage and print.

On completing her stay at the school, Liz kindly allowed her three complete pieces to remain and these have made a welcome impact to an otherwise drab dining hall.

PROJECT 3

This project successfully brought together a BA Furniture Design student with PGCE students. After canvassing interest amongst BA students, Tom Davies, the PGCE Course Director, partnered John Cherry, the third year Furniture student with two PGCE students, Tess Hills and Corinne Neville, who were to do their main block practice at Barr Beacon.

A week's residency in the autumn term was arranged for John which would coincide with the week of teaching practice preparation in the department for Tess and Corinne. An early meeting with John established a good basis on which to proceed.

At the beginning of the residency John claimed an area of one of the studios as his own, displaying some of his recent design work and making a work area. On the first day he familiarised himself with the school and its site and he too was attracted by the school woods and began to work in there with found natural materials somewhat in the manner of Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long. Early constructions were quite elaborate such as the 'staircase' built at the base of a tree. The most striking and interesting constructions consisted of straight twigs wedged horizontally in the

forks of trees, linking the split trunks. These had the effect of lacing the tree together. This practical manipulation of materials fed into the furniture design brief which John had brought with him from college. He experimented in the studio, combining wire, string and wood and producing strong curving three-dimensional forms from straight lines. Fruitful discussions took place between John, Tess and Corinne and a scheme was devised for A level pupils which would focus initially on the work of Goldsworthy and Long, using slides, books, exhibition catalogues etc. This would be followed by practical sessions in the woods which would be recorded in photographs and in sketchbooks. The final stage would be to develop a piece of three-dimensional work.

Tess and Corinne continued informal discussions in the first week and were pleased to have a firm basis for the work that they would undertake with the A level group.

John continued to work throughout the week and this was extended to a second week by mutual agreement. At the end of each school day he returned to college to work through the early evening to maintain contact with his course. John was very excited by the project and determined to return for a week in the second term when the project would run.

During January, Tess and Corinne ran the scheme jointly with a group of eight lower sixth pupils, launching it with an illustrated talk about the work of Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long. The next

session was spent in the woods working with found natural materials. This was somewhat problematic as it was mid-winter, but the lack of a leaf canopy concentrated attention on the structure of the trees and bushes and some interesting work developed using fallen branches and twigs, dead leaves, bracken and moss. The pupils reacted to the materials with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Some became involved quickly and with great interest. Others wandered aimlessly, achieving little at first. Rachel Shuker laid out a geometric pattern of branches and twigs on a sloping grassy bank at the edge of the woods. This she filled with leaves of various colours. Amanda Lloyd constructed a fragile arch of woven bracken between shrubs over the main pathway. Helen Cook hung a series of variously shaped pieces of timber on a broken and partly fallen tree. Rachel Parker made concentric circles of leaves in a shallow 'crater' some eight feet across, only to be rearranged into a spiral with a mound in the middle. Hannah Maybank made a fragile woven hanging of twigs, leaves and bracken installed on a prominent branch. Emily Watson made small 'pictures'—arrangements of twigs and leaves with twig frames, while Lisa Robinson threaded leaves together to frame a hollow in a tree.

In all, four sessions were spent outside making and recording these works. There followed a series of sessions where ideas were developed in cheap paper and card to explore possible forms before more substantial models were made.

Rachel Parker developed a candelabra using organic forms and motifs from nature. Hannah Maybank designed a ceremonial

chair of fern-like forms developing her own technique of wire construction coated in generous deposits from a hot-glue gun to produce a beautiful, organic form. Simon Clayton produced an interesting model for a chair or recliner which used a thin shell built on expanded sheet metal mesh and plaster set on a cork-wrapped metal frame resembling bark-covered timber and a curving leaf. Both Lisa Robinson and Rachel Shuker produced decorated mirrors, Rachel combining natural found materials with painted formed wire, while Lisa used fabrics, felt and other soft materials in hers. Amanda combined card, wire felt and cotton to produce a model for a substantial chair decorated with motifs of leaves. Emily Watson produced a hanging rather than a three-dimensional piece based on a figure combining decorative elements from the woodland studies. Helen Cook developed an intriguing construction of timber and cane wrapped in a fabric then painted, combined with faces of foam and fabric reminiscent of her favourite illustrator, Arthur Rackham.

The projects took half a term to complete and were all finished, with the exception of Emily's hanging. Once the project was running, the pupils were excited, interested and fully involved. Unfortunately, due to the pressure of work at college, John Cherry was unable to join us for the further week during the term that the project ran. All of the pupils produced excellent sketchbook work and mounted boards of supporting studies. They gained a valuable insight into the work of a contemporary artist without access to the actual works of art. John Cherry was delighted with the experience and formed a lasting association with the department. We were delighted to take our students to visit his degree show when he assured us that his residence had produced the strongest piece of his course. The association of BA students and PGCE students proved to be a most stimulating and productive arrangement, well worth repeating in the future. In general terms, the placement of second year BA students in the department was a valuable addition to our visiting artists provision in that year and produced benefits on both sides. ■



Shireland Art Trail

Val Jones, Head of the Arts Faculty, Shireland School, Sandwell

From September 1991 to July 1992, Shireland High School employed five artists in residence to create an art trail throughout the school. The funding came from Sainsbury's as part of the Sainsbury Awards for Arts Education.

THE SCHOOL

Shireland High School is a mixed comprehensive for 11-16 year olds in Smethwick, an industrial town between Birmingham and the heart of Britain's manufacturing base—the Black Country. The area is rich in industrial history and cultural traditions and draws upon a diverse population from Britain, Asia, the West Indies and elsewhere. All these influences are recognised and celebrated in the school which is well known in the area for its delivery of the arts to all students, regardless of ability, ethnic background or gender. Each young person pursues at least one arts subject to GCSE level.

Prior to the project described here, numerous residencies had already been experienced by the school in both art and drama. Following recent environmental improvements, the school had for the first time in its history, areas of greenery amidst the Victorian brick, mortar and iron railings. The Creative Arts Department wanted to create an *Art Trail* through the grounds of the school, with sculptures, murals, reliefs and stained glass windows which would reflect the rich cultural traditions of Smethwick.

Five resident artists offering different specialist skills were to be used to work with students throughout the age range of the school. Each would reflect a different culture, tradition or industry of importance to the town—from the Chance glass factory (a major source of employment in the area), to the influence of immigrants from the Indian Sub-Continent.

This proposed project—the Art Trail—was one of only twelve in the country to be awarded funds by Sainsbury's. The maximum award, £5000, was divided into



£1000 per project, with between £600 and £800 being paid to each artist. The balance was used for materials.

ARTISTS & CRAFTSPEOPLE

During the summer immediately prior to the projects, artists were contacted by means of a letter outlining the purposes of the project. Those who applied were interviewed by the Art staff.

In September the scheme commenced with two simultaneous projects for Year 7 (a mosaic relief) and Year 11 (stained glass). Two artists, Hattie Coppard and Nick Bayliss (a local stained glass artist) were involved.

YEAR 7—‘SMETHWICK IS THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE’

This project involved all seventy year 7 children. They worked with the artist Hattie Coppard and Shireland art teachers, Oliver Leggett and Gill Pugh to sculpt life-size mosaic bodies.

The pupils worked in small groups to create a body each, first by drawing around a person lying on the floor depicting an agreed action or mood. Next, the whole group crayoned into this outline, shapes, patterns and colours of personal interest. The emergent drawings were translated into mosaic by setting diverse materials (coloured tiles, pieces of mirror, small personal possessions etc.) into coloured cement spread out into the cut out polystyrene body shape. Pupils brought in small toys, tapes of their favourite music and photographs. One girl even brought in her first tooth! All these were set in the cement to form mysterious mosaic bodies which float around in their own universe created on a painted plaster wall outside the art department.

YEAR 11—‘EYES ON SMETHWICK’—STAINED GLASS

All thirteen pupils taking part were studying for their GCSE examinations, therefore their work had to be individually assessable as well as completed early in the year. For this very unusual and demanding

project they used lunch times and the ‘Personal and Social Education’ periods for ten weeks. In all, the equivalent of one full day per week. The pupils were also helped by four postgraduate students from the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design.

BASIC SKILLS

The first few weeks were devoted entirely to the acquisition of essential skills. Each pupil learned from Nick Bayliss how to cut, paint and lead glass and were taught about sandblasting and etching. The PGCE students gave presentations focussing upon various glass designers. These provided a valuable contextual background for the pupils’ own designs. A large window containing 23 panels at the top of a staircase in the school was chosen as the site for the finished stained glass windows.

The theme was ‘Smethwick Life’. The individual designs were inspired by religious symbols, music, friendships—even the weather! Using all the techniques they had learned, the pupils, the art teacher, the Polytechnic students and Nick Bayliss himself, each designed panels for the window. These were then unified by a border of ‘eyes’. All the processes were carried out by the pupils, from the intricate task of cutting the glass to the final leading and soldering. The project was enormously successful—and skills learned by the staff are now being used for other pupils. What



is more, some pupils now go to Nick Bayliss' workshop for work experience.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

In the second term we ran only one project as we also had a theatre group in residency. Keith Brocklehurst, glass artist was employed for ten days, to work with a total of twenty four pupils. Actual contact time was only half a day per week—the rest was spent on preparation and planning. Working together with art teacher, Ollie Leggett, the pupils transformed over twenty windows around the school, including the whole of the entrance area. Their ideas for glass panels were based either upon different aspects of community life in Smethwick or on their dreams and aspirations as individuals. Glass was cut to size and coated with plastic film which the pupils drew directly onto. This protective coating was cut and peeled away in places to reveal the glass which was then sandblasted.

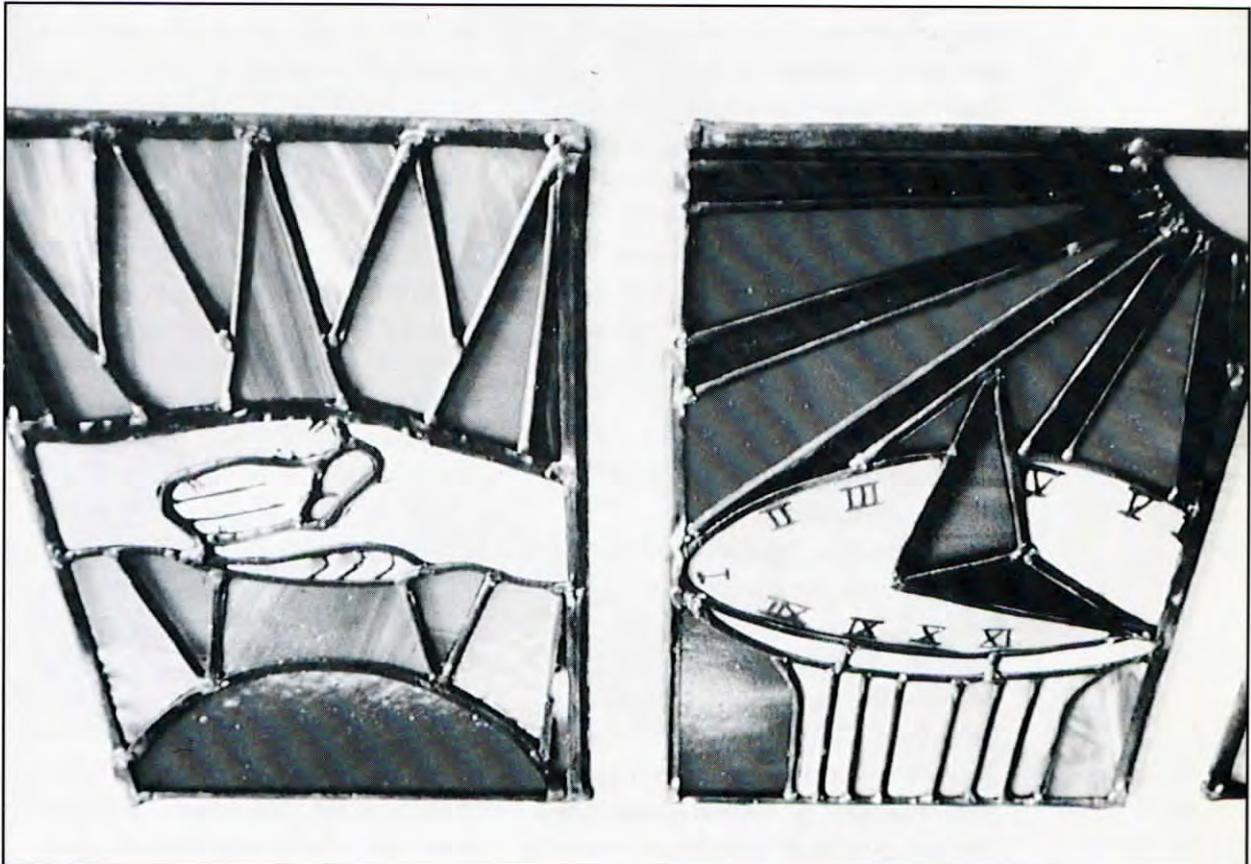
The windows have been fitted around the school, often replacing glass of over a hundred years old, as a future reminder of a generation of Shireland pupils.

YEAR 10—'TREE OF FACES' WOODCARVING

In the final term of the school year the remaining two projects were started. Ten pupils studying for GCSE Art, together with wood carver, Graham James and art teacher Gill Pugh, began researching mask forms and the sculptured heads of a diverse range of cultures. Stimulated by these images, they drew their own abstract faces and modelled ideas in three dimensions. Throughout the project, carving skills were developed, as everyone selected a section of a poplar tree, stripped off its bark and tried to shape their ideas in wood.

The work was physically very tiring and at first a couple of pupils were having difficulties in getting to grips with it. However, due to the perseverance of all concerned the pupils eventually realised their designs in wood and achieved immense satisfaction with the results.

Having stained and finished off the pieces, they have been united by creating a group composition around the remaining branches of the poplar tree.



YEAR 9—‘CONTRASTS AND COMPARISON’ STONE CARVING

Because of timetable constraints, the only possible way that we could complete a project with year 9 was to take them off the premises for a week. So, after negotiation with other subject areas we travelled to Ingestre Hall, a residential arts centre owned by Sandwell Education Authority, 40 miles away in the Staffordshire countryside. This enabled us to conduct an intensive week’s work with stone carver, Michael Farrell, Ingestre Art tutor, Darrell Wakelam and Shireland’s Head of Creative Arts, Val Jones.

The beginning of the week was spent on drawing, using shapes and textures from the environment. Drawings and rubbings were then brought together using collage to form a design for the final stone sculpture.

Pupils worked individually or in pairs to carve blocks of Cotswold stone. The carving, which took place over a day and a half, was much easier than we had anticipated. This particular stone being a far softer material than poplar wood. The finished pieces are now exhibited in the school’s quadrangle.

In July, a few days before the end of term, we officially launched the Art Trail with a presentation by pupils to parents, governors, headteachers, the press, Sainsbury representatives, Birmingham Polytechnic tutors and many other interested parties from education, business, commerce and the local community. During a slide presentation, pupils, together with ‘their’ resident artist, outlined their projects. This was followed by a guided tour around the trail and a celebration with food and drink.

All this was a fitting end to a year which had been filled with a rich diversity of cultural experiences.

Nevertheless, there were still problems to be overcome in using artists in school:

1) TIMETABLE CONSTRAINTS

Every teacher knows that the National Curriculum makes it very difficult for pupils to be withdrawn from other lessons in the timetable. As Art was located within ‘Creative Arts’ staff in the department were

flexible enough to ‘lend’ us time which could be paid back later. We also used tutorial time.

2) EXAMINATION CONSTRAINTS

In years 10 and 11 we had to be able to assess pupils work for GCSE Art. We therefore tailored our projects so that pupils worked on individually assessable pieces which could be brought together to create a unified project.

3) FUNDING

As we had quite generous funding from a private source, this was not a major problem—but even so we overspent, in spite of being rigorous in our costing and acquiring many materials for little or no cost.

4) THE POSITION OF ARTISTS IN THE CLASSROOM

It must be recognised that artists are not teachers. We always worked alongside the artists using their expertise and insights, even when working with small groups. Artists will not necessarily be able to take control of a group of pupils and anticipate their particular needs. One confessed that as it was the first time he had worked in a school since leaving one, he hadn’t slept the night before the first session!

The Shireland Art trail will remain a lasting testament to the pupils’, artists’ and teachers’ commitment to art and design. However, the experience has produced more than the glass, mosaic and sculptures which now enhance the school. It has brought working artists into the classroom, thereby familiarising the pupils with the world of professional artists and designers. Many of the projects have demanded a great deal of teamwork and a high level of cooperation. Group motivation has been fundamental to their success.

Pupils and teachers have both been introduced to new skills, exploiting materials and techniques not often used in the classroom. The newly acquired skills and techniques have now been applied in other projects. It has demystified the aura that surrounds the artist and the art process and enabled pupils to have a different kind of relationship with an adult other than that of teacher/pupil. One recurring comment from pupils was the enjoyment they got

from the relationship with an adult they could address by their first name.

As a result of the project we have longer term relationships with local artists with one of the spin offs being work experience placements. It has led us to the question of the arts as a viable career for pupils and we are hoping to initiate together with other local schools, a

workshop/conference which will bring musicians, dancers, actors and artists from all areas of the arts to show the way into arts related employment.

Above all, this work has proved beyond doubt the importance and value of art and design in schools and the effect such a project as this has upon the values and maturity of all pupils. ■





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