

The Adult Learner

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Design and Production *Language*

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*Understanding Men's Passages: Discovering the New Map of Men's Lives
(Gail Sheehy)*

Imagining tomorrow: adult education for transformation (Marjorie Mayo)

Editorial Comment

This issue of the Adult Learner is concerned with the topic of the Arts and Adult Education in Ireland. For some time, those of us involved in adult and community education have been aware of new initiatives in which people were exploring the process of addressing educational and social deficits through engagement with various branches of the arts. This is particularly true of what are now referred to as community arts programmes. What we did not realise, however, was the extent of these programmes, the new and exciting ways in which individuals and groups are approaching learning and using drama, music and painting to acquire knowledge and skills, to make connections and to have fun.

And what names they have too! The Smashing Times Company Limited is an interesting project which is challenging the exclusive and elitist nature of formal theatre and is encouraging women in their own communities not just to explore and enjoy drama but to write and perform their own work. Peter Hussey is well known in community education for his innovative approach to tutoring and to facilitation. Here he gives an account of a special VTOS project with which he is involved in Newbridge. Eilish Kelly reflects on twenty years' involvement with community arts, chiefly with drama and the visual arts while Ann O'Mahony provides a fascinating account of a personal voyage. CAFÉ has for a number of years now been to the fore in encouraging participation and making the arts accessible – it is what it says, creative energy for everyone.

The more formal sector, too, is becoming engaged and the Irish Museum of Modern Art has been proactive in running projects and programmes with a view to stimulating interest in and promoting an awareness of artwork. Likewise, the National Gallery in recent years has developed education programmes aimed at fostering an appreciation of the art treasures housed there.

All of these dynamics are underpinned in an article from Gary Granville of NCAD who approaches the much discussed Green Paper from the interesting perspective of art and design and highlights the importance of developing visual literacy. On the same topic of the Green Paper, Leo Regan, an Arts Organiser based in Sligo, is not impressed and takes the framers of the Paper to task for their failure to address important issues in the area of art and culture. Yes, and one point that emerges strongly, particularly from the pieces that deal with community arts, is our continuing neglect and our failure to support in any meaningful way projects and programmes in the arts that are more successful in achieving their educational objectives than many hours spent in formal education settings. Read and enjoy.

Again my thanks to all contributors, to Celia Gaffney and to the editorial team for their efforts in ensuring that the Adult Learner is born again.

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Art and Design Education in the Learning Society

Gary Granville

This paper attempts to connect two fields of educational debate. On one side is the domain of art and design education, where a number of contentious issues have tended to preoccupy those involved - issues such as the perceived marginalisation of the area in general education and schooling and the perceived tensions between excellence and participation. On the other side is the burgeoning concept of lifelong learning – a concept that, fully understood, is the most radical and innovative idea in education - indeed in society - as we reach the end of the twentieth century.

Adult and continuing education, as part of the development of a learning society, is at last getting the priority recognition that it deserves. However, it will be important not to replicate the failure of formal schooling within the development of lifelong learning systems. Specifically, the tendencies to view arts education as peripheral to the central project of education, as less important than the allegedly more utilitarian aspect education, must be avoided from the outset.

In addressing the role of art and design education in the learning society, this paper considers the processes of adult education and the role of literacy within this domain. The potential of arts education within community education projects is then discussed and finally, the implications of this development for third level art and design education (specifically the National Collage of Art and Design).

The Process of Continuing Education

The government Green Paper on adult education¹ provides the immediate context for discussion of adult education in Ireland today. The Green Paper summarises² the key role of adult education in three processes:

- *a compensatory process*, designed to provide second-chance access to the skills and qualifications necessary for full participation in an increasingly credentialist society;
- *an empowering process*, enabling participants to take a more active role in decision-making and other processes which impact upon them and to address the forces of exclusion in their lives;
- *an upgrading process*, designed to enable people to cope with and manage the rapidly changing technology and the impact of international forces and to contribute to the strengthening of individuals, families, communities and industries.

These domains of activity provide an exciting agenda of work for all involved in education. It is gratifying in particular to see an official document adopt the language and values formerly associated with dissent, if not subversion! The concept of empowerment, when applied to individuals and especially to communities, is a powerful force, one that will not easily be contained and channelled by the political, social and cultural establishments.

The three processes described above as a rationale for concerted investment in adult education are each sustainable in their own terms. The compensatory and upgrade processes are perhaps representative of a different orientation to that of empowerment, that they appear to be driven by the concerns of the establishment, as reflected in qualifications, credentials, skills, technology and by implication, the functioning of the economy. By any yardstick, however, it is clear that they are important and sustainable points of departure.

It may be argued that a fourth process is missing, one not driven by market forces or by external pressures. One might argue for the inclusion of *an enrichment process* as part of the tradition of general liberal education - education for its own sake, to express it in traditional terms, education as a means of reaching self-fulfilment. This is closely related to empowerment but may not be interpreted as exactly the same. The differences may be nuanced but lie primarily in a less technical interpretation of personal development. Enrichment may not be power-related but it has a greater focus on personal satisfaction and fulfilment.

The established values of arts education, in artistic and aesthetic development, apply as much to adult learners as to younger students. The learning society is not the marketplace; learning does not always have quantifiable product, whether measured in personal skills or social applications.

The Centrality of Literacy

The Green Paper is most impressive in its commitment to tackling the issues of literacy among adults. "Tackling the low literacy/numeracy levels must rank as the primary Adult Education priority in Ireland".³ It is gratifying to note also that this task is interpreted as more than the need to address the skills of reading, writing and numeracy "but also to promote self-esteem, self-confidence and positive self-image amongst the learners".

This broader understanding of the meaning of literacy approaches that of Elliot Eisner who defined literacy as "the ability to express or recover meaning in patterned forms of communication",⁴ a definition which has particular resonance for the arts. Literacy from this perspective is a deeper concept, contributing to the process of self-actualisation of the learner. The role of the visual and other arts in this process has been demonstrated to good effect in many literacy-related projects in this country and elsewhere.

The work of Paulo Freire and others has always utilised the power of visual images in their own right as a means of communication and of defining the self.

Two points can be made in relation to art and design education and literacy. Firstly, the importance of *visual literacy* in today's world is becoming widely recognised. In discussion of adult literacy, visual literacy can often be seen as a luxury, a flourish to emboss the more grounded realities of traditional literacy and numeracy. In practice, however, an area such as media education can be as practical and liberatory as other elements of functional literacy. More importantly, the discovery of the visual code can liberate in the learner an ability to communicate where none existed before.

Secondly, education in art and design has a particular potential for finding and releasing talents in individuals, which may otherwise be unreached. The potential here is not just to develop self-image and self-confidence, though it is uniquely positioned in respect of these qualities. There is also a potential in the experience of art creation to find and express meanings that have an individual integrity beyond functional literacy. More importantly perhaps, the recognition of the concept of "multiple intelligences"⁵ as applied to education programmes in recent years points to a variety of ways of knowing. In other words, the visual arts can be as valid a route to achieving personal, social and cultural literacy as more traditional approaches.

The most imaginative approaches to literacy tend to incorporate elements of experience traditionally associated with the arts. A survey⁶ of Youthreach Co-ordinators, dealing with early school-leavers, for instance indicated that some 14% of participants were described as "capable of exceptional work" in specific areas: the domain of applied arts (including video, photography, drama - puppetry, mask-making and street spectacle) was cited. Many of the experiences of achievements by young people - or not so young - can be identified as occurring in areas where the participants had no learned inhibitions.

Community Education and Community Arts

The concept of community may be interpreted in a number of ways. In terms of adult education, three forms of community may be described:

- *The ethnographic community*, the human, social and geographical "parish" into which people are born or assimilated;
- *The chosen community*, the pre-existing organisation, association or collective into which people choose to enter, for reasons of employment, recreation or other such involvement;
- *The created community*, the group awareness and identity that may be developed among people in a specifically educational setting, where that setting is the dominant, if not the only binding element among participants

The capacity of arts education and visual art in particular to contribute to these communities has been hugely undervalued. The visual arts provide the learners with a means to address and define, individually and collectively, the community of which they are a part and their relationship to it.

The late Lar Cassidy, Community Arts Officer with the Arts Council, identified two main "discourses" in the arts. The first he defined as the fine arts discourse, which he associated with the renaissance view of art in emphasising the "product". The second discourse he identified was the community arts discourse which "concerns itself with the historic moment, with the circumstances - political, economic and spiritual - of the society out of which and for which art is made".⁷

Community education has usually been taken to mean education undertaken in an informal setting with participants drawn from a particular area, connected through social and geographic considerations - the demographic community. Often such community education will be concerned with the development of communities in areas of deprivation, of high unemployment and of multiple disadvantage. In this context, the potential of community education to act as an empowering process is immense. Successful and ambitious projects in this regard are well documented: the work of area-based partnerships in particular sets a standard for such developments. An example of such an initiative was the recent "Place Present" exhibition of work by Chris Maguire in the City Arts Centre in Dublin, reflecting on the artist's personal involvement with his community.⁸

There is considerable but neglected potential in the second type of community - the *chosen* community - as a focus for education. In particular, the sense of belonging which many workers consciously or unconsciously feel in relation to their job - the people they work with, the tasks they carry out, the traditions associated with the job - offer a rich pool of potential in terms of visual art application. Many people have an unexpectedly deep-felt sense of identity with their job. The opportunity for workers to make representational or abstract pieces of work which manifests their experience of work can be an important tool for self expression and, significantly, for staff development. Public and private management personnel are likely to find this an area of rich potential in human resource development.

Education in general can contribute to the *created* community in a unique manner. Thus, some courses provided in a certain area can in themselves create a sense of community. In this sense, what Cassidy and others have referred to as "hobby classes" or "Sunday painters" can be disparaged as unambitious in its educational objective. However, the capacity of such courses to be empowering and certainly to be enriching, should not be underestimated. For instance, the experience of participants in one small painting group⁹ in north Dublin has been one of positive self-affirmation within the apparently limited demands of a simple painting class carried on in

traditional and unchallenging terms. In Cassidy's terms, this group would be characterised by an emphasis on product as distinct from process. Yet the value of the painting class itself, in contributing to the growth of a range of qualities and dispositions beyond painting skills - to a sense of community and to a sense of individual growth - is impressive.

Lifelong Learning, the Arts and Art College

The Learning Society as a concept and as a way of looking at education and society extends far beyond traditional models of adult education. It constitutes a fundamental reorientation of educational practice. The EU commission White Paper on Education¹⁰ in adopting the term "learning society" as the principal objective of education policy located education at the centre of the transformation of society. The Learning Society provides a common ground for education approaches emanating from quite distinctive interest groups. Thus, business interests and economic commentators have come to recognise the importance of the individual's personal and social skills, attitudes and dispositions as ultimately the most crucial source of economic growth. Professionals involved with pre-vocational education have consistently identified the alienating effects of the traditional school curriculum on underachieving students. Adult education specialists have found the increasing demand from adults for continuing education often arise from frustration with the inflexibility of the traditional model generally and with the content of the school curriculum.

Lifelong learning carries with it a number of significant implications for educational policy and for educational institutions, including -

- *continuing education for all*: the learning society assumes that ***all citizens***, as a matter of course, will be engaged in continuing education, in a variety of forms. Some of these forms may be provided by institutions but increasingly, education will be self-directed. Furthermore, all organisations will be engaged in a continuous process of renewal.
- *New modes of access*: current models of access, especially to third level colleges, are dominated by very inflexible requirements defined by traditional school curricula. There is a need in the learning society to provide for and recognise a variety of modes of entry to continuing education, appropriate to age and experience.
- *Recognition of experience and prior learning*: in order to open such pathways as well as to recognise the integrity of various life experiences, it will be necessary to formulate criteria for recognition of prior learning without the requirement of certification for all such achievements.
- *Variety of teaching and learning styles*: the traditional school system has long been dominated by a narrow range of teaching and learning styles and those who have been unable to adapt to these have been

designated as educational failures. Current research indicates the inadequacy of this tradition.

A key feature of lifelong learning is its distinction between education and schooling. The approach to be adopted in community education, in adult and continuing education is a model that recognises the value of experiential learning. The challenges for educational institutions is to develop forms of accreditation and paths of access which recognise and build upon such learning.

The National College of Art and Design is the leading national education institution in the area of art and design. At present the College operates an extra-mural programme through its centre for Continuing Education and Educational Research (CEER).¹¹ The College is currently embarked on a review of its policy and practice in this programme.

The review will address a number of issues, including the following:

- *Community education:* the potential for innovative interchange with individuals and groups in the local inner-city community remains to be fully tapped. The College has prioritised development of community education initiatives in its immediate policy development. The form of this support may include outreach work as well as College-based educational initiatives.
- *Access:* like all third level educational institutions, NCAD is conscious of the low proportions of working class students and of mature students registered, full-time or part-time. An aspect of the current review of CEER will also address how both courses can be provided in such a way that these needs can be met. The Green Paper references to "short-term access and orientation programmes" and to "demonstration programmes related to modularization and distance learning" will be among the options to be pursued.
- *Credits:* current programmes in CEER classes carry no accreditation. To that extent, their appeal to students resides purely in their own terms, as an enrichment of personal experience. For some this may continue to be satisfactory. For other students, however, there is likely to be an interest in some form of structured progression from one course to another with the option, if required, of entry to full time education. Such entry would build on experiential learning, specifically through the accreditation of prior learning.

The current view of NCAD policy in continuing education will address these and other issues.

The provision of continuing education in the visual arts should do more than contribute to the national initiative in lifelong learning. It should also establish art and design education as a central component in the provision of adult education on its own terms and as a means of achieving the national objective of a learning society.

Professor Gary Granville is Head of Faculty of Education at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. He is also overseeing a review of NCAD Continuing Education and Educational Research (CEER).

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- 7 Cassidy L., Community Arts, lecture at NCAD, 1986
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- 9 Poole, C., Dip. ADT Dissertation NCAD 1999
- 10 EU Teaching and Learning Towards the Learning Society, Brussels 1995
- 11 Currently more than 800 students are engaged in evening part-time courses under the auspices of CEER. These courses are provided on or near the NCAD campus in Thomas Street in the centre of Dublin. The courses are offered in evening classes (Monday to Friday) with day courses provided at Easter and in the summer months. The college also provides education courses to prisoners in various locations around the country.

Access and Engagement: Adults and the Irish Museum of Modern Art

Ann Davoren

The Museum and the Public

Access is not just coming into a building like this, access is about being able to participate... for cultural democracy to exist, cultural policy must include the creation of a condition in which the people as a whole participate in the articulation of meaning and values. Art is political, it isn't neutral - and it does have a responsibility.

(Rita Fagan, Co-ordinator, Family Centre, St. Michael's, Inchicore, 1996)

The Irish Museum of Modern Art at the Royal Hospital, Kildmainham, Dublin opened to the public in 1991. A national institution concerned with modern and contemporary art, its aim is to foster within society an awareness, understanding and participation in the visual arts through exhibitions and programmes which are both innovative and inclusive.

The Museum operates on the principle that knowledge is socially constructed and that the viewer or museum visitor is an active participant in the cultural process. This model seeks to give primacy to relationships and interaction and constructs art as a social practice. The Director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Declan McGonagle, describes the Museum as a meeting point between artmakers and various publics. IMMA seeks to empower people to construct their own readings of artworks and to make and remake their own meanings. The Museum, therefore, emphasises multiple perspectives and the viability of multiple interpretations of artworks.

Reflecting this philosophy, art education methodologies and curricula at the Museum approach teaching and learning in visual art based upon an aesthetic of interconnectedness, enabling the active, participatory engagement of the learner with artworks and artists.

Art Education

There has been much debate about the goals of art education and the rationale for including art education in school and community development curricula (Gardner, 1990). The essentialist (non-instrumentalist or intrinsic-value) argument holds that art offers access to knowledge, insights and types of meaning that are not available elsewhere. Art provides a unique learning experience and therefore should exist in the curriculum for what it provides, not for its subordinate or contributory purpose in advancing non-art kinds of

knowledge. Another rationale for art education is that the study of art promotes attention to perception and expression and thus contributes to the building of language and communication, critical thinking and problem-solving skills and to the development of self-esteem and personal and social empowerment. This is the instrumentalist (utilitarian or extrinsic-value) conception of art's role in general education and community education (Dobbs, 1998).

Both the essentialist and the instrumentalist views have legitimacy for art education in the context of a museum. Art is important both for the distinctive and unique contributions it makes to learning and for the ways it serves general educational goals. The Museum's education programmes for both adults and children include both goals.

Adults and the Museum

Education programmes at IMMA are developed as inquiry-based experiences that engage learners in making art, critical and historical investigation and aesthetic inquiry. Adult groups are invited to view and discuss the artworks on exhibition, meet with artists and discuss the art-making process. They explore the artist's interests and concerns and approaches to moving from an idea to a finished piece of work. They explore art materials, tools and techniques and their own ideas, values and interests to make work themselves. Art-making, art criticism, art history and aesthetics each provide a different lens or perspective from which to view and engage with artworks and the world in which art objects are created. There are many different ways of knowing and ways of learning (Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, David Kolb's experiential learning cycle) and these perspectives provide different ways for people to explore how, why and in what context, artworks are made.

Art-making may be described as the process of responding to observations, ideas, feelings, and other experiences by creating artworks through the skilful, thoughtful and imaginative application of tools and techniques to various media. By experiencing the art-making process, by striving to visually communicate an idea, feeling or concept, by exploring and working with a variety of materials, tools and techniques, learners are better able to understand how artistic processes work.

Learners are encouraged to draw on their own ideas and feelings, their experience in the world and the works of artists in order to know, understand and create complex objects called works of art. Such an approach nurtures creativity and the imagination; a suppleness of mind, a tolerance for ambiguity, an attention to nuance and an ability to frame things in ways that reveal the world in different ways. It does so while developing competence in perception, communication, judgement and social understanding. Engagement with art and artworks also develops problem-solving and higher-

order thinking skills (analysis, synthesis and evaluation), which can lead to the acquisition and exploration of language skills and the development of visual literacy (O'Donoghue and Davoren, 1999).

The Museum's commitment to involving people in art-making stems from the view that the art-making process is empowering, enabling individuals to quite literally manufacture elements in their own lives (Benson, 1989). The act of engaging in making creates ways of understanding, forms memories and binds people together through modes of communication which are uniquely their own. (Benson, 1989).

Museum educators (artists, mediators, curators and education staff) working with tutors, group leaders and teachers, formulate inquiry-based tours, talks and discussions that support learners to have more active experiences with artworks. They seek to create a learning community by encouraging participants to spend time with and to revisit artworks; to examine the relationships of artworks, artists, appreciators, art culture and its institutions and society (art criticism); and to raise and examine questions relating to the nature, meaning and value of art (aesthetic inquiry) and to the historical, social and cultural contexts of the artworks (art history).

The aim is to stimulate a process of inquiry and response to art as a basis for developing understanding both of the art and one's responses to it. This approach acknowledges the importance of learners constructively and actively working on the growth of their own knowledge -from the experience of encountering an artwork, to reflecting on that experience and discussing the experience and reflection within the group. The aim is to uncover the nature of the encounter as one in which a person's previous experience may play as much a part as the material evidence of the artworks themselves.

The role of the educator is recast as a facilitator or enabler who situates the learning in a context in which the learner can engage in sustained exploration.

Certain elements have been identified that are central to a learning environment that encourages people to actively participate in the means for creating their own artistic and aesthetic experience. These are:

- Personal relevance involves both how and why the learner becomes involved in the learning. It connects the content to the learner's everyday life and experiences as meaningful contexts for developing knowledge. It values art making from personal narrative.
- Critical voice depicts the importance of interaction and autonomy in the learner's experiences with the content, the educator and the other learners. Critical voice is essential to developing self-directed learners who critically analyse their own learning and the learning environment.

- Complex, ambiguous and learner-centred tasks require complex, conceptually- framed content rather than simply declarative or procedural knowledge. Engagement with the ideas and values surrounding artworks and art making goes beyond the transmission of skills and techniques. It involves work of a skilled, personally demanding sort (Benson, 1989).

The educator in such a setting is not the expert dispensing truths but the resource person and facilitator, adapting activities and helping to connect content with individual passions and shaping experiences that can provide meaningful learning. The educator and the learners form a learning community, where the group engages in a process of learning that interactively draws from the knowledge and experience of the participants. The dynamic process of socially constructing new forms of knowledge through the learning community promotes both individual and collective growth and serves to empower learners.

Projects and Programmes at the Museum

Creating opportunities for artists and people to engage with each other and work together is at the core of the Museum's policy and central to the projects, which have been developed with adults. Artist Ailbhe Murphy (1996) describes her relationship with participants in one such project:

based on the sharing of experience, knowledge and skills and a strong commitment to collectively investigate and develop the appropriate visual language... This network of conversations was woven into all aspects of the project and formed the basis of the working relationships which were based on a belief in the validity of each other's experience and in the potential to find the appropriate ways of articulating those experiences.

This artist-participant relationship is reflected in the partnership model, which the Museum has developed with community development and adult organisations, agencies and groups. A key project which emerged from one such collaboration was *Unspoken Truths* (1991-1996) which brought together thirty two Dublin women, their community development projects, the Family Resource Centre, Inchicore and the Lourdes Youth & Community Services, Sean McDermott Street, Ailbhe Murphy and the Museum. It set out to create a new model of art practice in Ireland based on the principles of community development and arts education. The women came together to explore their life experiences and creative potential, both individually and collectively and created fourteen artworks which were exhibited at the Museum and at other venues around Ireland. *Unspoken Truths* created change for all partners in the process:

The way I've changed during this project would be the confidence I've gained in my ability to interpret art.
(Marie Harding, participant, 1996)

I feel Unspoken Truths has changed me, in a sense I am more sensitive to other women's feelings and more aware of my own and other people's past situations
(Mary O 'Keefe, participant, 1996)

This has been a major influence on the development of the Museum's programmes for adults.

Unspoken Truths tests and examines the values and benefits of collaborative practice... and created a forum for a dialogue on issues. Unspoken Truths has shaped my thinking and informed my practice in relation to the Museum's policy in the area of community access.
(Helen O'Donoghue, Senior Curator, Education/Community, 1996)

The partnership with the Family Resource Centre, Inchicore, negotiated and developed through *Unspoken Truths*, continues to strengthen and grow. It facilitated the introduction of local women, men and children to many of the Museum's programmes and to artists visiting and working on site. It led to *Once Is Too Much* (1995 - 1998), where women from St Michael's Estate and friends worked with Irish and international artists to produce artworks exploring issues of violence against women and children. The process and model of practice were based on the same principles as those of *Unspoken Truths*; partnership between community development and arts education practice; collaboration, consultation and consensus; working towards excellence; and support for the people involved, the process and the practice.

We don't believe art can change the fundamental issue of violence against women and children. However, we do believe art can contribute to debates and discussions which raise awareness about the issue and to the changing of attitudes which could lead to the key issues of prevention, provision, protection and protest.
(Rita Fagan, 1997)

Another key Museum programme, involving older people, has also been informed by community development practices and by the Museum's partnership with Age and Opportunity, a national agency set up to change negative attitudes towards ageing. At local level, the Museum is working with a core group of older people who are engaged in making artwork and facilitated discussions with artists, curators and educators. Reflecting on her work with this group, artist Ailbhe Murphy (1999) feels that these participants simply love art. They love its possibilities, the critical reflection necessary for the journey into making with all its uncertainties and ambiguities and that exploration and subsequent resolution of ideas. In describing her experience

with the group, artist Sally Douglas (1999) felt there were very deep understandings happening, a great openness which altered her creative trajectory and led her to reassess her own creative practice.

Nationally, the Museum, in association with Age and Opportunity, develops programmes during the May Festival, *Bealtaine*, which promotes the involvement of older people in all aspects of the arts and cultural life.

As an introduction to the Museum, *Focus on...* is an ongoing initiative, which aims to address the needs of groups visiting for the first time. Through the provision of a structured studio and gallery programme, focused on a particular theme or aspect of the Museum, *Focus On...* aims to encourage independent access to and participation in wider Museum programmes. Adults, individually or in groups can also access the Museum through a comprehensive programme of tours, talks and visit artists working on site through the Artists Work Programme. These programmes are developed with the intention of creating and increasing access to the visual arts as well as engagement in their meaning for the broadest possible range of people (McGonagle, 1996).

Conclusion

The Irish Museum of Modern Art seeks to develop a partnership process with adult groups, adult learners and community-based agencies. This reflects the nature of the relationship between artists and non-artists as participants in a cultural process, which the Museum strives to promote throughout all of its programmes. The adult programmes referred to above aim to facilitate genuine and meaningful relationships between viewer and object and participant and process. They aim to encourage people to move beyond reminiscence into reassessment and revaluation of their own lives; to move from reflecting on the past to examining the present and to questioning the future.

The questions faced by IMMA as a museum at the end of the twentieth century are shared by other museums throughout Europe and the world. These questions relate to how society as a whole is benefiting from the investment that it makes in museums. IMMA is currently involved in an EU funded project, working with The Victoria & Albert Museum in the UK and Stockholm Education in Sweden to explore the potential of museums as places for lifelong learning. An evaluation of adult programmes at these three sites - IMMA's Programme for Older People, the V&A's Young Adult Programme and Stockholm's City Workers Programme - will contribute to a growing body of reflective museum practice. These and other opportunities to form learning communities within the family of museums and within the field of adult and community education facilitate museums to work towards defining the terms of their contract with society for the twenty first century. For the Irish Museum of Modern Art, this contract is orientated towards dynamic participation rather than passive, anonymous spectatorship and deals with art as a social practice based on the interconnectiveness of self and world.

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Community Arts and Community Development

Eilish Kelly

Having initially begun with amateur and creative drama, I have been involved in community arts, chiefly drama and the visual arts, for the best part of twenty years. In this article I am seeking to relate the lessons I have learned through community arts to adult education.

As the impact of long term unemployment began to bite deeper in the 1980's, community development emerged as a local response to the sense of hopelessness that was engendered. A key objective of community development is the empowerment of individuals at local level to seek to have the needs of their communities met rather than passively accepting whatever is visited upon them by those with other interests. This is easier said than done, as many are not educated in the ways and means of local and national government. They are often living in disadvantaged communities where frustration turned in on the community manifests itself in internal conflict. In addition, many are affected by the failure of the education system itself to provide them with the means of articulating their experience or communicating it to others - I am referring here to literacy, the arts, communication, media skills.

At about the same time that community development was taking root, I became involved with community arts, which at that time was also emerging in Ireland. Community arts involve the whole spectrum of the arts (art, drama, photography, creative writing, poetry, film, video, music, dance) with a specific focus on empowerment. The arts can be seen as the most important symbol systems through which individuals and communities make images of themselves and of their world and thereby give meaning to their experiences. In providing a creative experience for participants, they can allow the individual to get in touch with their own ideas and feelings, give expression to them and provide an objective means of dialogue with them. The arts can be very effective in communicating complex messages in an accessible way to the onlooker or audience. With a skilled facilitator they can also be utilised as a means of resolving conflict. Community arts can therefore fill the gap which other poor communication skills have left vacant.

The Pilot Project

It was soon realised by the Combat Poverty Agency, which grant aided hundreds of small projects, that community arts was clearly having a significant impact on community development. The Agency therefore decided to run a four-year pilot programme which would test the impact of

community arts on community development and which would recommend the types of structures and support that these activities needed. I became involved with this project and moved from working directly at ground level to formulating policy at national and European level with the Combat Poverty Agency, CAFE, the Arts Council and the EU Horizon programme. One result of this was the Report on *Poverty: Access and Participation in the Arts* produced jointly by the Combat Poverty Agency and the Arts Council (1997).

Five projects were funded at local level: Pléaraca Teo (Conamara), Balcony Belles (Sheriff St), Parents Alone Resource Centre (Coolock), Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group (Dublin, Tullamore and Ennis) and Knocknaheeny/Hollyhill Arts Project (Cork) . The projects involved a number of examples of arts responses to disadvantage in order to allow for a spread of results. PARC, the Balcony Belles and the DTEDG took place within the context of well-advanced community development programmes. They involved drama, art and traditional music. Knocknaheeny, emerging out of local conflict which had caused the community development programme to collapse, was concerned with oral history and used video, song, music, story and poetry to link the experiences and learning from the past with those of the present. Pléaraca in Conamara related to a geographically wide region (50 miles radius plus the Aran Islands) characterised by decline of the language and widespread emigration. The arts model employed there was based on traditional craft activities and the culture of the region but also included more contemporary approaches such as painting, creative writing and pantomimes

The arts employed in these projects were not just concerned with arts activities but with using those activities to access other kinds of education. For example Forum Theatre (or Theatre of the Oppressed as it is also called) raises issues which are of concern to the participants and then permits the audience to try out a number of solutions in drama before taking specific actions in reality - in other words a rehearsal for reality. The issues involved could be personal or political. Drama, art, percussion, photographic activities and oral history were used to raise issues leading to a social analysis thus allowing new ways of examining how our society works in order to change it.

Reflections

The pilot programme made a number of things clear. The provision of arts education across Irish society has not been comprehensive in any sector, let alone disadvantaged areas.

"Every person has the right through the educational process to at least acquire a range of skills and experiences which enables them to contribute to society... Arts education can equip the individual with the critical faculties necessary to allow him/her reflect upon and derive personal meaning from life experiences.... It is our view that access to

quality arts education is vital in life-long learning, as a pathway to accessing the arts for life”

Given the failure of the education system, community arts are an important point of contact for accessing the creative potential of large sections of the population.

The fostering of creativity and self-expression actually increases awareness of the importance of creative activity for everyone. The arts play an important role in empowering those affected by poverty and also those whose primary and secondary education (regardless of class) has been inadequate. They aid the development and regeneration of individuals and communities. They provide important creative media by which issues of disadvantage, poverty and exclusion can be explored and highlighted. They are able to make a major contribution to the development of more imaginative and wide ranging policies and programmes to address these.

The arts can be a powerful educational tool in understanding cultural and/or sexual differences and similarities - for example, the One World Aids Quilt (with which many of the participating projects in the pilot programme were involved). In the pilot programme, settled people and travellers came together to work with drama, art and music and dispelled many misunderstandings and misperceptions in the process.

Elitism and Exclusion

Coming in contact with the arts can also open up other issues for adults concerning education, elitism and exclusion, which pertain to more than the arts. It has been my experience that accessing the arts from an agenda of empowerment not alone opens up the arts themselves, with all that that implies, but also becomes a significant gateway to examining issues of exclusion and elitism. The arts themselves are already riddled with these issues and can be seen therefore as a microcosm of other such issues across society. To access the arts at all defies and demythologises many aspects of elitism and exclusion while allowing the mechanisms which sustain such practices to be experienced and examined.

The banking model of education supports such positions - this is where the educator is assumed to have all the knowledge and “banks” it into an “empty” student. The fatal flaw, of course, is that this method gives the educators power and control over information and therefore can be selective in what is imparted. It is a simple step from this to presenting education and views of society in such a way as to reinforce existing prejudices and injustices. Adults in particular are not empty vessels -they bring a range of life experience and dormant creative possibilities to any activity. These should not be dismissed as irrelevant to the learning process.

Empowerment and Personal Change

In providing training for facilitators, artists and community leaders, the pilot programme distinguished the many activities that can be labelled community arts but which rarely keep the focus on empowerment. Arts projects or educational programmes may emphasise personal or group development. They may be amateur activities with the focus on the "best". They may be concerned with acquiring specific skills in painting or performing. They may promote a professional arts activity concerned with "excellence" in the sense used by the Arts Council. All of these are led from "above" and "poured" into the student. Many reinforce existing prejudices, albeit unwittingly. However, empowerment is about personal change whereby those affected determine what is important to them and what skills they need to acquire to make their visions possible. This is as true of the arts as of any other subject.

This is not the Chinese version of dispensing with the professors and replacing them with politically aware students. I do not dismiss skills-led education. I merely acknowledge that adults are in the best position to determine their own educational needs. In addition, it is my experience that adults when approaching a new subject, unrestricted by the "right" way of doing things, can bring an astonishing level of creativity, insight, imagination, originality and innovation to the task when given the opportunity. This is particularly true in a group setting if the energy of the group is harnessed in the enterprise. Results like this are in themselves very empowering and have a significant effect on every aspect of the participants' growth and development.

If an educational programme begins with imparting skills, it usually automatically reinforces positions of dependency at every level. When you are being educated in a skill, you also absorb existing attitudes and prejudices. You learn the system, become part of it and never learn to question it. What you need first is to experience your own unique contribution, value it and then determine what skills you need to acquire. There is always a place for skill and knowledge but it is used to best advantage when the adult student has had the opportunity to discover what he/she can contribute first. As I understand it, this was the original meaning of education - to bring forth/out what is already there.

The Learner Centred Approach

As a result of the foregoing, the community arts pilot programme developed a specific community arts training programme suited to the needs of adult participants. This has a relevance to other adult education programmes. The type of training needed for the delivery of community arts programmes, and by extension adult education, includes considerations that are not just concerned with the arts or the subjects themselves. What is needed is an experiential and therefore learner centred approach with the teacher/facilitator modelling this method throughout. In adult education in

particular, teachers have almost no training in such approaches. Even skilled artists who work in the community do not particularly understand these methods. There is a need to share common educational concerns both by the teacher and the student and build trust in the process so that existing prejudices and old patterns of failure are not reinforced. The participants need individually or collectively to set goals with all that that implies in terms of the values that are actually practised as opposed to those that might be given lip-service. The participants need to undertake actions and tasks to meet the goals and to contribute to the kinds of organisation/communications required to achieve those. Evaluation needs to be ongoing throughout any course by regular reflection and also after the course is finished.

All of this challenges the roles that are usually played by participants and teachers alike. The pilot programme provided training for a substantial number of people around the country and had a very significant impact on the working practices of the teachers, facilitators, educators, community workers and artists who attended. Many felt very challenged by it but also reported back that it had greatly enlarged their working methods and increased their creativity and enthusiasm for their work, as the results were so positive.

I am sure many reading this will be horrified at so utilitarian an approach to the arts. A community artist friend of mine is fond of quoting one of our more famous writers as having said, "All art is useless" to which he adds - "and so much the better for it!". Picasso is said to have stated that "I do not develop, I am". I fully accept that the arts do not need to have a use to justify their existence. There are thousands of people who have been failed by the education system, from all classes, who are bright, intelligent and clever. All I am asking for is the opportunity for these people to get to the place where they too can decide to make "useless" art for themselves.

Eilish Kelly is a community artist and art/colour therapist. She facilitates arts work with disadvantaged communities; provides support to community artists throughout the country; contributes to arts policy on access issues; trains educators and facilitators in the above working methods and uses the arts as a tool in organisational development. She also works in private practice as a therapist. References:

- 1 *Poverty: Access and Participation in the Arts* - Jeanne Moore, 1997, The Arts Council/Combat Poverty Agency.
- 2 *Creating Change* - 1997, Combat Poverty Agency
- 3 *Unspoken Truths* - 1996, IMMA.

Arts and Culture in the Green Paper

Leo Regan

An analysis of the Green Paper from the perspective of arts education for adults reveals a surprising deficiency of proposals. At best, the Green Paper recognises the value of cultural life and creative and artistic expression in section 5.5, *Personal and Social Development*. The position is stated as follows:

“The dynamism of Irish Society is reflected in a wide range of areas other than the purely economic. The area of the creative arts in Ireland is particularly striking in this regard. The quality of a society’s cultural life and its capacity for creative and artistic expression may in the long run be more fundamental to the long-term sustainability of that society than any other aspect of the society’s life. The current vibrancy in Ireland of artistic forms such as film, theatre, literature, music and dance not only enhances the daily life of Irish people but enables the society to achieve a stronger sense of cultural identity and defines a unique Irish contribution globally”.

(Green Paper on Adult Education, p.91)

In many respects, this assessment of the value of cultural life in Irish society was articulated in the Government White Paper on Cultural Policy, entitled *Access and Opportunity*, published in January 1987. In Chapter One, *Culture and the role of the Government*, the following position is stated in section 1.5.

“The challenge for cultural policy now is to offer greater enrichment and fulfilment to people in their lives so that passive consumption of cultural products and reception of ideas can be balanced by the encouragement of opportunities for dynamic participation in the creation of culture and personal engagement in the search for meaning and purpose in life”.

(Access and Opportunity, p.12)

Referring to economic development, the White Paper on Cultural Policy, adopted a more radical position than any statement in the Green Paper on Adult Education. In section 1.9, the following position is stated:

“Public investment in art and other cultural activities produces a return for society, which cannot be directly measured in money. Increased well being and the growth of creative and intellectual activities are, for example, directly related to diminishing the social disparities for which society, and perhaps particularly Irish society, pays so high a price. Neither does a high standard of economic

development automatically lead to a high standard of cultural development. Certain economic processes may even exert a strongly destructive influence on cultural development, for example, in encouraging the passive mass consumption of resources, if they are not accompanied by an active, creative cultural policy”.

(Access and Opportunity, p.14)

The White Paper on Cultural Policy also recognised the central importance of the education system in development of culture and the arts in Section 5.5.4 where it states the following position:

“The education system holds the key to future cultural and artistic development in Ireland. The educational process will have considerable influence both on our emerging artists and their potential audiences and therefore the successful implementation of the cultural policies proposed in this White Paper will depend to a considerable extent on the degree to which our education system can respond to the objectives outlined”.

(Access and Opportunity, pp.51-52)

In the intervening twelve years since the publication of the White Paper on Cultural Policy, the Department of Education and Science has not responded substantially to the objectives at any level. The Green Paper on Adult Education recognises the "valued tradition" of adult course provision "usually encompassing a comprehensive range of pursuits in the cultural, artistic or craft areas", (Section 5.5 p.91). However, criticism of the limitation of this tradition is made because "the majority of participants involved tend to be those who achieved success within the initial education system" (*ibid*). The self-financing directive from the Department of Education and Science, which applies to this "valued tradition" is not mentioned as a disincentive to the financially marginalised or disadvantaged persons who are targeted throughout the Green Paper.

In contrast to traditional self-financing arts courses, community arts and cultural programmes for disadvantaged communities are considered as a means of re-integrating adults into a system which has failed them at primary and post-primary levels. In the Executive Summary, a requirement of the Community Education sector includes, " a specific recognition of the importance of non-vocational, artistic and cultural programmes of day time and night class Adult Education provision as part of the Back to Education initiative," (Green Paper, p. 10) This must be read in the context of the statement made in section 1.4.4 under the heading *Community Development in Disadvantaged Areas* where it is stated:

“Whole communities have become excluded, not only from the labour market, but also from the establishment. As a result of generations of multiple disadvantage and a sense of powerlessness to influence and change the conditions in which they and their children live, many have concluded that the State-run education, training and guidance

programmes are not relevant to their needs." (Green Paper, p.2)

The economic basis of the Green Paper in its emphasis on development with social justice and equity as a secondary consideration, must, in effect, undermine the objectives of "creating a more democratic and civilised society by promoting culture, identity and well-being", (*Green Paper, p. 6*). Although references are made to the changing cultural environment, particularly in the "historic challenge of moving to the learning society" (*Green Paper, p.43*) there are no proposals for cultural education of benefit to adults in adapting to the information age and multiculturalism. Despite the lip-service given to the fundamental importance of cultural and artistic education for adults (*Green Paper, p.23*), there is neither priority nor structure proposed in the Green Paper to provide the means for its development.

The opportunity to specify arts and cultural education as a priority for the proposed Local Adult Learning Boards, with specific budgetary allocation to expand provision beyond the restriction of the self-financing directive, has been lost to the authors of the Green Paper. As it appears that State funds from the Department of Education and Science for adult education are to remain completely inadequate for any comprehensive service to address the general needs of tax-payers, the priorities suggested proceed from political expediency rather than substantial analysis of benefits and costs.

It is unreasonable and insubstantial to argue that the entire population is capable of or interested in acquiring the skills and attitudes necessary for economic growth in a technological society. The failure to address this central problem in its consequences for a growing minority of the population undermines the agenda of the Green Paper. Consideration of community education in its requirements of empowerment and inclusion is limited in its benefit by the very significant problems of accreditation and qualification for the mainstream. In this sector, the direct cost of £300 million in 1997 for Community Employment continues a false economy of state (EU) support for unsustainable employment. This so called "social economy", which has been operating for at least a decade with state support through Community or Social Employment, has singularly failed to provide sustainable employment apart from direct State subsidy. The linkages between Community Employment and Community Education developments have not been examined in this Green Paper in terms of the sustainable economic basis for activity in this sector.

The inherent contradiction between Community Development for sustainable employment and its dependence on State funds from various agencies pursuing the National Anti-Poverty strategy has not been recognised by the Green Paper. Indeed, it appears that identical values and rhetoric have seized this opportunity to advance the causes of equity and social justice while disdaining the majority who have engaged at their own cost, apart from tax contributions, in the adult education tradition.

This serious defect of the Green Paper demands critical revision in the interests of real and substantial lifelong learning for the adults of Ireland in the next century.

Only in this context can cultural, creative and arts education be developed as an essential element of adult education for social, community and democratic engagement necessary to challenge global technological economics and culture. The Green Paper on Adult Education fails singularly to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing society because it identifies the State's interest too closely with economic factors; whether of competitiveness, sufficiency of labour force in numbers or quality or the poverty problem. When the distinction is made between the State, in its economic interests, and the people of the Republic, in their general needs for lifelong education, the consequence for this Green Paper is critical failure.

In a recent book entitled, *How the Mind Works*, Steven Pinker describes the mind as a naturally selected neural computer. In the eighth chapter, called *The Meaning of Life*, he attempts to examine the arts religion and philosophy from the perspective of evolutionary biology. He begins:

Man does not live by bread alone nor by know-how, safety, children or sex. People everywhere spend as much time as they can afford on activities that, in the struggle to survive and reproduce, seem pointless. In all cultures, people tell stories and recite poetry. They joke, laugh, and tease. They sing and dance. They decorate surfaces. They perform rituals. They wonder about the causes of fortune and misfortune, and hold beliefs about the supernatural that contradict everything else they know about the world. They concoct theories of the universe and their place within it.

As if that weren't enough of a puzzle, the more biologically frivolous and vain the activity, the more people exalt it. Art, literature, music, wit, religion and philosophy are thought to be not just pleasurable but noble. They are the mind's best work, what makes life worth living. Why do we pursue the trivial and futile and experience them as sublime? To many educated people the question seems horribly philistine, even immoral.

(*How The Mind Works*, S. Pinker, Penguin, 1997, p521).

The Green Paper on Adult Education seems to me horribly philistine, even immoral, because although it recognises the essential value of arts and cultural education for the well-being of individuals and society and acknowledges the challenge of globalisation and increasingly rapid technological change, it offers no substantial means of addressing these needs, whether by analysis, policy, priorities, personnel, organisational structures or financial resources. The impact of this failure by the Department of Education and Science will reduce further the capacity of individuals and communities to resist multi-national corporate media control of cultural

products and the conduct of political analysis. The Irish nation, as a whole, will increasingly feel marginalised and alienated from the media establishment, in some way similar to the disadvantaged communities who are powerless to influence the culture in which they and their children live.

Perhaps this concession has already been made by the establishment whose only concern now is economic growth and management of social disadvantage for political expediency. There will never be enough resources except for crisis management, trying to plaster over the past failures of the Department's policy and systems. Budgetary restraint imposed by the Department of Finance has probably rendered policy development redundant in the Department of Education and Science if additional expenditure would be required without generating equal tax revenue in return. I would suggest that the culture of economics and management has triumphed at the core of the establishment and these values are essentially expressed in the Green Paper, with a veneer of regard for the disadvantaged as an acknowledgement of the OECD report on adult illiteracy. As the Department of Education and Science has not defended or been able to defend the essential interests of adults for lifelong education in the arts and culture, responsibility must be transferred to a different agency, such as the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. Only when there is specific structure and funding will arts and cultural education achieve its potential to enhance the lives of individuals and society. The Constitutional duty upon the Government to "promote the welfare of the whole people" demands a fundamental and radical appraisal of the Green Paper on Adult Education.

Paper delivered at a conference on the Green Paper - Adult Education in an era of Lifelong Learning organised by County Sligo VEC on 12th March, 1999, in Sligo.

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The Creative Journey: Reflections and Waymarks.

Ann O'Mahony

My creative journey is an ongoing spiralling pilgrimage, sometimes joyous, full of adventure and hope, at others passing through barren landscapes wherein dwell confusion and doubt. This article is concerned with my journey into creative expression as a way of being, my effort to live out of a deep intuitive conviction that I was born to weave my own web of meaning both metaphorically and literally. What follows seeks to identify significant waymarks on this journey.

My pathway to creativity is best described by the metaphor of weaving. Weaving involves wool-gathering, spinning of threads, finding a basic support structure (loom) on which to create the cloth, carefully warping the loom with the support threads and finally laying in the weft. I am a literal and metaphorical weaver, a ceramic sculptor, a teacher and a devotee of the ancient crafts of the hands. As I see it, I am passionately engaged in the process of weaving the disparate aspects of my life into a coherency that will hopefully bring balance and harmony. The root of the word harmony means to fit together, to find the connections. My deepest longings are concerned with interconnectedness, between light and dark, past and present, feminine and masculine, mythic and mundane.

My inheritance as a craftswoman and artist moves through my maternal and paternal lines. My mother, Ellen, grandmother Sarah and grandaunt Mariah were prolific craftswomen. My maternal grandfather, granduncle and uncle were blacksmiths and farriers and my father Brendan was a skilled plasterer and roofer who built our house. Like his father and grandfather, he was also a traditional flute player. My grandfather's forge was located close to our house. The ring of the anvil, the wonder of bellows, glowing iron and the smell of anxious horses blended with acrid, hissing steam of horse shoes plunged into stone water trough to cool, are childhood memories that evoke a stab of pain. Even to a child my grandfather's sadness was palpable as he mourned the passing of Vulcans trade as motor car replaced horsepower and electric welding the ancient craft of forging. This was the 1950s. He died, my mother believed, of heartbreak (the medical diagnosis was cardiac arrest) as his craft declined and fewer and fewer horses came to be shod.

On the domestic front the round of the year was marked by a flurry of making and baking. Clothes, quilts, rag rugs, curtains, knitwear, home-made books, toys, Christmas decorations, cards, cakes, bread, were made and remade in our kitchen. My sister and I were always included and my warmest childhood memories are intertwined in these activities.

From early on I was acknowledged as being "good with my hands". However, in the educational system of the 1950s and 60s in a small town in the West of Ireland, art was not available as a subject and my path led to university, graduate and postgraduate qualifications in the social sciences and a career in social work and social policy research and teaching. None of this I regret, as those experiences opened vistas of the mind which otherwise might have remained closed. All along the way a persistent inner voice called to me (with hindsight I have termed this "the spirit of the ancient crafts of the hands"). In the late 1970s, after completing a M. Sc. degree, I learned to weave and spin. In the 1980s, I studied sculpture and ceramics through VEC and NCAD adult education courses and with Henry Flanagan, OP of Newbridge College, an inspired sculptor and musician. In the 1990s, I completed 3 years of an RTC ACCESS programme in the history of art and painting. That is the bone of my journey. In what follows I have attempted to describe some of the challenges I was faced with as I sought to bring creative expression into an ever more central focus in my life.

Reflections and waymarks

Reflecting on a personal journey where the linear progress beloved of the everyday world seems elusive, to say the least, certain distinctive points can be identified. These I have termed 'waymarks', an old biblical word signifying the stones that marked the pathways of the ancient world, confirming for the traveller that she was indeed on the correct path. The 7 waymarks set out in what follows have been critical points in my own creative journey and from what I have observed, colleagues and students have also been challenged to name and work with similar tasks. One's engagement with these challenges or waymarks is ongoing. The spiral is perhaps the best metaphor to describe their continuing presence as ground to craft/art work. There is no question of coming to a satisfactory conclusion for once and for all. Rather their resolutions have to be made and remade on an ongoing basis. Only at one's peril (the proverbial artistic block is often the result of ignoring these challenges) does one refuse to grapple with them. They are in essence divergent problems, which present and represent on the creative journey. If the craft/art worker fails to engage with them or ignores them, giving precedence to the acquisition and honing of the techniques and skills of the particular art or craft discipline, an impoverishment of creative expression will surely ensue. The waymarks are: a room of one's own; claiming inner and outer creative space; overcoming obstacles to creativity; transforming the inner critic; protecting the fledgling artist; building a supportive lifestyle; dismantling a fatal alliance; and developing the imagination.

A room of one's own claiming inner and outer creative space.

Although, perhaps, temporarily disappeared from the mainstream belief system of a culture which upholds the cult of the individual artist and the mystique of talent, there is embedded within the Western tradition from Plato to Blake, through William Morris, Edward Johnson, Bernard Leach, a belief that the artist is not a special kind of person, rather every person is a special kind of artist. Modern day anthropologists and psychologists tend to confirm this time-honoured belief that many of us are alienated from our essentially creative selves. Frederick Frank in his profoundly wise book, *The Zen of Seeing*, states that our creative core is often "choked by schooling, training, conditioning until the artist shrivels up and is forgotten". A child will spontaneously and naturally make shapes and images and, unless shamed or invalidated, will continue to do so. The function of image making arises as naturally as speech. Yet by the time we reach our teenage years how many of us continue as image-makers? As a result of harsh words or ridicule, our inner artists become frozen and retreat into our unconscious minds. Our innate creativity does not develop and we remain alienated from our essentially creative selves. Our most basic challenge on the creative journey is to claim artistic expression as our right and to take the necessary steps to enshrine this as a part of our lives.

In my own case, claiming a private space, a room of my own, dedicated to creative work was an important first step. A wooden garden shed and of late a converted stone barn as a studio/study has been a vital ingredient in my development as an artist. The importance of a private space, however small, where we can honour and nurture our creative expression without fear of intrusion, censorship, 'helpful' advice that halts our initial faltering creative steps in their tracks cannot be over emphasised. The challenge of this waymark is to create an inner (by reclaiming our birthright to be creative persons) and an outer (a private space, however humble, dedicated to creativity) environment which allows our creativity to flourish. In other words the task is to weave our creativity into a more central and honoured position in our lives.

Overcoming obstacles to creativity.

The second waymark poses challenges of building an inner environment supportive to our innate creativity. To successfully negotiate this challenge a number of tasks must be engaged in. We have, for example, to grow into an understanding of the mindset conducive to creativity and how this differs from our usual goal centred linear thinking. Assisted by colleagues, a California Institute of Technology psychobiologist, Roger Sperry, in 1968 confirmed what had been long suspected, that is, the dual nature of human brain functioning and cognition. The insights provided by Sperry's work laid the foundations for our growing understanding of the nature of creativity as developed, for example, by Dr. Betty Edwards. Sperry and his colleagues

demonstrated that the two hemispheres of the brain each have their own specialisms with the corpus callosum, a network of nerve fibres sending information back and forth between the two. For 90 per cent of the population (those who have the right hand dominant) the left side of the brain is the alert, aware, logical-rational, thinking part of our brain that remembers names, analyses in a logical stepwise fashion, is the location of verbal and mathematical skills and controls the motor activity of the other side of the body. Much of our educational system and modern day living demands that we predominantly use what brain researchers term our L (Left) Brain mode.

R (Right) Brain mode on the other hand is neglected and undervalued. The right brain is the location of intuition, knows through images not words and can process many kinds of information simultaneously, making great leaps in insight. Right brain is also linked to the limbic system, the area of the brain, which registers emotions. Spatial and visual skills are located in the right brain as is our ability "to respond to music, to understand imagery and metaphor, to fantasise and to accept paradox. Our spiritual functions as well as our artistic functions all belong to the right brain. The human brain should work in partnership, the right brain mode underpinning and complementing our left brain linear thinking. However, the tragedy is that we live in an historical era, which overvalues L mode. Our left brain centred educational system rewards logical thinking, retention of facts, mathematical skills. The child who daydreams, makes up stories, i.e.. who lives in her R mode, is often discouraged from doing so and exhorted to adopt L brain mode. Just as muscle will atrophy from lack of use, so our creativity also suffers when it is not encouraged or used. The challenge to the adult reclaiming her creativity is to enhance and support her R mode functioning, to give herself permission to daydream, to slip into the less focused, yet aware, state of being conducive to creative expression.

Transforming the inner critic

A second obstacle to be transformed is the inner critical voice. Very early on in our efforts to express our creative urges (to make art), a negative disparaging inner voice tells us: 'you can't draw, you are no good at art, and this is a waste of time'. The inner critic stunts our creative growth through perfectionism, unfair comparisons, competitiveness and belittling. Premature judgements of our creative efforts are one of its most devastating weapons. While there is a genuine critical faculty that enables us to evaluate and critique and which contributes vitally to the learning process, much of this inner commentary comes from a subliminal level of our minds, from old tapes that we replay from childhood and early schooling experience. Many of us were given the message explicitly or implicitly that we lacked artistic talent and this became a self-fulfilling prophecy. This deprives us as adults of the joy and excitement in our lives which creative expression undoubtedly brings. But the inner critic is a set of learned attitudes which, with effort and

vigilance, we can unlearn. As we become aware of the critical voice, we can learn to control it and thereby dilute its negative effect. Gradually, we can transform our inner critic into a voice that makes helpful suggestions as to how we can improve/progress our work. Only then will the inner artist emerge and flourish.

Protecting the fledgling artist.

Allied to the task of dealing with the inner critic is the necessity to protect one's emerging artist from the cold winds of well-meant but unhelpful criticism. The danger to one's inner artist can come from either within or without, from oneself or from others who do not understand the creative process or whose own inner artist may be frozen. New life begins in the darkness of the womb, needs time to gestate and premature exposure to the light will destroy it. I think of my garden in this connection, where the earth enfolds the new seeds in darkness and protects new shoots with leaves and the debris of winter until the Spring when they will suddenly emerge strong and vigorous. It is vital to protect creative beginnings from adverse comments.

Building a supportive lifestyle

As one progresses further along the creative path, it is imperative to establish patterns of living and thinking which support and honour one's creative expression. This demands the courage and commitment to own one's inner creative dreams and wishes where previously, as in my own case, much of my energy had been expended in supporting others. The first challenge of this waymark is to recognise the connection between our physical energies and craft/art work. Our culture has valued the rational above all else and as a result often times our energies are focused in our heads, our thoughts and our fantasies. We are not truly present to our physical reality. We define ourselves as thinkers who inhabit a physical body. Often we are disconnected from the grounded experience of being in our bodies. This is a situation, which can lead to serious blockages of our artistic energies. We create from and through our physical bodies.

The emerging science of psychoneuroimmunology convincingly demonstrates the intricate mind/body linkages. Dr. Joan Borysenko of Harvard Medical School speaks of the body/mind as a rich and intricate two-way communications system. The important point for us, as artists, is that our thoughts, beliefs and emotions do not only influence our creative energies, they can also be blocked or diminished by our not being truly present in our bodies. We can have wonderfully creative ideas but fail to manifest them in reality. We live in our heads, in our intellects and our creative ideas are not realised on the physical plane.

As artists our challenge is to become grounded practical people in addition to developing our imaginative sides. Indeed we can only successfully develop and harness our imagination from a well-grounded base. Our task is to build a lifestyle that supports a healthy flow of energies. Walking, cycling, swimming, dance, on a regular basis are, in my experience, the best and most easily accessible ways of grounding our energies. Attention to diet and yoga exercises have also been very important for me. This can all be summed up in the concept of self-nurturing, which means having the courage to pay attention to our own needs. It means treating ourselves with good will, understanding and compassion as we allow our inner artist to grow and recover. This is a daily challenge, which inevitably requires a process of detachment or withdrawal from life as we have lived it up to now. We have to let the old self go, the self who invested its creative energies in the dreams and hopes and lives of others. Julia Cameron says that when we begin excavating our buried dreams we need to repossess our often extended and misplaced energies back into ourselves to fuel our own artistic recover. Often this involves feelings of guilt from within ourselves and blame from those with whom we share our lives. We have to learn to say NO! to the demands on our time and energies that keep us from our creative work. In addition, we may experience feelings of sadness and regret for wasted years. But in George Eliott's words "it is never too late to be what you might have been". This was the motto of my late mother who at the age of 75 took up oil painting for the first time.

A telling exercise, which I use myself from time to time and also recommend to my students, is to list the people, places, things and activities which nourish and support feelings of harmony, connectedness and well-being and which reinforce the creative spark within. I now invite you to make such a list.

On a clean page write: What nurtures Ann.....(your name) at the top. Going through your list of nurturing people, activities/things and places, think back to last week. Write opposite each how much time you actually spent on those activities, with those people, in your nurturing places. Carefully read over what you have written. What does it tell you about your lifestyle? How supportive of your creativity is the way you allocate your time? What lessons has this to teach you? What changes can you make right now to support your inner artist? Record your conclusions and resolve to act upon them.

Another vital aspect of a lifestyle supportive of creativity is reclaiming the free spirit of spontaneity and plays which only lives within the heart of the child. We have only to recall Picasso's wonderful childlike drawings to recognise the wisdom that lies in this belief. As adults we need to recover the joy, energy and sense of fun which our children possess in abundance. We need to enshrine within our lives those childlike qualities of vivacity, playfulness, a sense of wonder and interest and the power of imagination. Each of us has

those energies within. We only need to allow them a more central role in our lives. This usually involves shedding a little (or a lot perhaps) of our adult seriousness and heaviness of spirit.

Dismantling a fatal alliance

In order to create, artists need a feeling of expansion, growth, a sense of plenty and abundance in our lives. In Julia Cameron's words, "art is born in expansion, a belief in a sufficient supply ..." (p. 105). In my experience, three negative attitudes combine into a fatal alliance to block our creativity and we will not flourish as artists until such time as we work on transforming them. These are productionism, perfectionism and privation or poverty.

Productionism is an attitude of mind which insists that we produce - paintings, poems, sculptures, plays, novels, pots - we become product oriented. This syndrome usually involves setting ourselves impossibly tight deadlines, which freezes our energies and withers our souls. As fledgling and recovering artists, we need to free ourselves from the obsession with the final outcome of our artistic efforts. The challenge to us is to integrate the universal truth that art making is a process rather than a production system.

Productionism can and frequently does combine with perfectionism into a strangle hold on our creative energies. We desperately want to make the perfect sculpture, paint the perfect picture before we have given ourselves the necessary time, opportunity, training. In other words, long before we could reasonably be expected to have learned our craft, our ego demands that we write a best seller, be accepted for the Royal Academy Summer Show and win a special merit award.

Privation or a sense of poverty in our own lives is regarded by Julia Cameron as artistic anorexia. When this attitude holds sway in our lives we refuse to nourish our creative longings. All too often we attribute the lack of creativity in our lives to shortage of money -no money for art classes, no money for art materials - but if we courageously and honestly examine our spending patterns, we see that the way we allocate our financial resources may not reflect our deepest values. In Julia Cameron's wise words, we fritter away cash on things we don't cherish and deny ourselves things we do. To be artists we need luxuries. Empower yourself by making wise choices in your spending that will bring a sense of luxury to your life. This I hasten to add does not require outlandish expenditure. It may involve as little as the cost of a bunch of fresh flowers in wintertime or a special candle for your studio/creative space. Ask yourself what would give you a sense of luxury in your life. It may be a pottery bowl, some hand-made paper, a hand-woven rug, a piece of sculpture to enhance your home or, perhaps, a year long subscription to an artists' magazine. The challenge is to nourish one's inner artist with a sense of luxury, abundance and beauty.

Developing the imagination

Deepening our connection with the inner wellspring of creativity demands that we build bridges linking our inner and outer worlds. Imagination is defined as the creative faculty of the mind and the challenge of this waymark is to enhance this function. Over the centuries artists have recognised the special role of myths and symbols. Our great human inheritance of mythic stories and symbols that have persisted over aeons still exerts a powerful fascination on us. Our theatres stage lavish productions of old myths and our visual artists, poets, filmmakers rework the themes and concerns of these ancient stories. The systematic study of the ancient myths and symbols undertaken by modern depth psychology, particularly the work of Freud and Jung and their followers, has shown that the explanation for the persistence of ancient themes and symbols lies in the fact that they are in fact expressions of archetypes. Jung defines the archetypes as archaic or primordial types, that is, universal images that have existed since the remotest times.

The ancient myths persist as part of our cultural heritage because they reflect archetypal themes, which are versions or aspects of the universal human dilemma. The myth and symbols of old continue to enthral us. They have been handed down to us over hundreds and thousands of years and their archetypal images and themes find their way into our modern day paintings, sculptures, poems, drama and ideas. It is the challenge of each new generation of artists to work at the mythic level to find images and symbols that express the particular concerns of the age. Nourished by the myths and symbols of old, our imaginations will create images that reflect our deep inner well of creativity. The root of the word symbol is the same as disc or circle and that conveys the basic function of symbols, which is to make complete, to make whole, that is, to heal.

Tom Chetwynd, in his highly acclaimed dictionary of symbols, makes the point that symbols have from remotest times been regarded as a means of releasing energy from the unconscious. They have been honoured in both sacred and secular contexts from the Palaeolithic era, 30,000 years ago, to the present day. The power of ancient symbols such as the spiral symbolising the great chain of being, the double helix of which forms the structure of DNA, the snake signifying the eternal renewal of life, the tree of life as the symbolic representation of the interconnectedness of all that is, are still evidenced in the work of modern artists and crafts people in graphic design and in advertising.

Once one becomes aware of symbols it is surprising how often one encounters them in modern life. Symbols express the deep connections without which life can seem empty, meaningless, fragmented. The works of mythographers Joseph Campbell and Marian Woodman, archaeologist Maraja Gimbutus and artist/author William Blake have been rich sources of imagination for me. The resources are endless. The challenge is to begin to explore this magical realm of creative joy.

Deeper purposes

One of the most disabling beliefs that prevents us from accepting our innate creative abilities is the talent myth. The talent myth works thus: we project on to special people a mantle of talent, bestowed on them from the moment of birth. Others, not ourselves, are seen as creative, talented and artistic. There is no doubt that predispositions do exist. Certain people can instinctively identify Middle C or have the right body shape for dance or gymnastics. But predispositions are only a starting point and modern psychology supports this view. Endless hours of practice, dedication, discipline, nurturing, a supportive environment are all equally important. We hide behind the myth of 'no talent' oftentimes as an excuse for not trying and not persisting in a disciplined way to practice our art, music, drawing, writing, weaving. Our refusal to allow our creative instincts to prosper is seen by M.C. Richards, that most fascinating of educationalists (she is supported by numerous other social commentators in this belief), as directly responsible for many of the ills of our age. She attributes the deep angst and uprootedness of modernism as resulting from work devoid of the opportunity of creative expression and what Paula Allen terms the demise of participatory folk art tradition and the rise of spectator recreation.

Reclaiming our birthright of craft/art work offers our beleaguered hearts a glimpse of Eden. Let us use our artwork to strengthen this vision, to remember our heritage and shape our future. Practising our craft/art work can, I believe, contribute to new agendas that will promote a life enhancing culture. Re-envisioning each and every person as a special kind of artist will help promote a world view which sees humans as part of the great cycle of being, where masculine and feminine energies are balanced, where the animals have an honoured place in the scheme of things and where the gifts of the earth are considered sacred. The advice of Martha Graham, diva of dance, leaves us in no doubt of our individual responsibilities in this.

*There is vitality, a life force; a quickening
that is translated through you into action,
and because there is only one of you in all time,
this expression is unique.*

*If you block it,
It will never exist through any other medium
and be lost.
The world will not have it.
It is not your business to determine how good it is;
nor how valuable it is;
nor how it compares with other expressions.
It is your business to keep it yours, clearly and directly,
to keep the channel open.*

*You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work.
You have to keep open and aware directly
to the urges that motivates you.*

*Keep the channel open.
No artist is pleased.*

*There is no satisfaction whatever at any time
There is only a queer divine dissatisfaction;
a blessed unrest that keeps us marching
and makes us more alive than the others.*

This in effect amounts to what M.C. Richards calls a moral re-imagining of the artist's vocation. This is our ongoing challenge. Your pathway no doubt will differ in many respects from mine. What matter is that you have the courage to weave your own web of creativity and joy.

With beauty may you walk.

Anne O'Mahony holds a M.Sc. degree and worked for many years as a research sociologist. In 1980 she was introduced to sculpture by the late Oisín Kelly. She has since trained in figurative sculpture and life drawing and has designed personal development courses, which work through the medium of the arts. Her ceramics are inspired by nature and the landscape underpinned by an intuition of the archetypal feminine principle which, although largely ignored or actively debased in Western post modern civilisation, has from time immemorial been revered as the creative force ensouling the creation.

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CAFÉ and the Learning Wheel

Nuala Hunt

CAFÉ (Creative Activity For Everyone) was established in 1983. Core activities include: advocacy and lobbying, support for and development of community artists, the development of an active membership, education and training and organisational development

The main focus of this article is to provide an introduction to current themes in community arts education and training, to outline the role of CAFÉ (Creative Activity For Everyone) in relation to this and specifically to give an account of the issues arising as a result of devising and delivering the Learning Wheel, an accredited course providing training for community arts trainers in 1996/97.

I feel I should state early on in this article that, in choosing to use the written word to communicate, I am reminded of the many times community arts trainers participating in the Learning Wheel course lamented using the written word as the primary means of documenting, recording and assessing learning. In short, for many arts workers and trainers, the written word would not be their first choice to convey meaning or messages. Rather the voice of this group is often seen heard and expressed through a variety of creative media and artforms such as: imagery, painting, movement, voice, drumming, drama, colour, pageantry or poetry. There is then a need to welcome and recognise a range of approaches to communication which are equally valuable.

Recognising the value of creativity and creative approaches to learning and personal development is critical at this time of change in adult education. As a co-ordinator of training in community arts, I have found that creativity is a powerful and challenging way to communicate, generate dialogue and progress the debate around the tensions and differences that exist between provision of education outside of mainstream and what is currently provided through traditional education institutions.

Before looking at what community arts is and does, it is useful to establish the key issues/questions facing community arts education and training at this time.

- The provision of community arts education and training is characterised by short-term pilot initiatives
- There is an absence of providers of education and training in community arts (currently no third level College, University or VEC is providing a full time certified course in this area)
- Accreditation routes for community arts are limited (what exists is an

NCVA pilot Level 3 Award in Community Arts and locally devised modules at Level 2)

- There are significant skill gaps at a number of levels in community arts
- There is a lack of a structured co-ordinated approach or strategic response to issues facing community arts education and training
- There is an absence of policy in relation to community arts or education and training in this area
- There is no agreed definition of community arts
- A difficult question to address is: who is responsible for providing community arts education and who will pay for it?

Some options which could be explored to address the issue of provision include (a) the integration of community arts into existing mainstream courses; (b) the development of stand alone certified courses in community arts; (c) the establishment of regional networks for community arts education which will identify regional providers of training and develop a partnership approach to delivery.

The Development of Community Arts

In Ireland community arts was recognised as an identifiable tendency at the end of the 1970's and throughout the 1980's community arts continued to evolve. This evolution accelerated with the establishment of a number of community arts and arts organisations such as CAFE 1983, Wet Paint Arts 1984, Macnas 1985. All of these organisations were to develop education programmes and deliver training, albeit with limited resources. In 1989, the ACE report, *Art and the Ordinary*, was published. It opened up the debate on community arts, challenging Arts Council policy on art, artist, artform and access.

The 1990s witnessed a significant growth in community arts in Ireland as community arts began to integrate with areas of health, justice, education, youth work and community development. Increasingly community arts became a tool and approach in tackling issues of exclusion and disadvantage. Coinciding with this wave of activity on the ground was the development of models of community arts practice and principles of practice. Linked to this was a growing demand for training and education courses from community arts workers.

My experience of community arts has revealed a vibrant, expressive and developmental process, which challenges definitions of artist, art and creativity. It involves a hybrid of art forms, though it is disputed whether it can be called an artform at all. It can be used to engage and empower a wide range of groups in the exchange of ideas, the making of art and the shaping of cultural identities. It reasserts creativity as a force for change (personal and social) with the ability to fashion questions in difficult contexts. It does so through a variety of media and methods and in many places. It is

distinguished by collective, collaborative and creative approaches to making and doing art.

While it has been difficult for the various constituents to reach consensus on definitions of community arts, what has proved more useful is to establish what community arts does and particularly to describe it in terms of the creative activities and experiences which characterise the nature of its practice. These include 'arts festivals, touring exhibitions, arts and drama classes in community centres, murals in community locations, exhibitions or shows that have large numbers of participants or which take place in free public venues, art as a therapeutic activity, art with a social message and art as a tool for development' (Cullen. 1995. p.3)

Some initiatives have taken place (1996-98) which are slowly beginning to address the problems facing education in community arts. These include: CAFE education teams participation in the Community voluntary Accreditation Forum and the Teastas task Force on Community Arts, Arts Council meetings on community arts practice and the Learning Wheel model. Finally through Adapt, CAFE established a Meitheal which investigated the idea of a Lead Body in Community Arts Education and Training. A short report on a way forward was produced which identified the Lead Body in a strategic role linked to a practitioners' forum and liaising with education and accrediting bodies. However it is possible that the issue of provision of education will remain in a cul de sac, unless a mechanism to drive the issue (such as a Lead Body) and an organisation to support the initiative can be identified.

Arising out of this initial activity CAFE developed a more integrated approach to training. There followed a series of short-term courses based in the community for specific target groups, including Arts Action for disadvantaged groups using arts in conjunction with community development and secondly locally based arts workers courses.

Learning Wheel

It is within the developing context of community arts education that the Learning Wheel project was conceived. Learning Wheel was a training for trainers project devised by CAFE. The core aims of the project were to develop and pilot an accredited system for community arts trainers. The project was funded by Adapt (ESF), the Arts Council and CAFE. The Learning Wheel proved to be very successful; participants and tutors rated it highly, while the operations team successfully negotiated dual accreditation with NCVA and Maynooth.

The course was designed around a series of monthly workshops taking place between October 1996 and September 1997. Each residential workshop was three or four days long and involved an in-put from each of the core tutors in sequential format. The training was delivered at three rotating venues -

Dublin, Birr, Killaloe- to accommodate participants travelling from around the country. The course content focused on group work, organisation management, social analysis and adult learning.

An outline of aspects that distinguished provision of training delivery in this instance includes:

- The use and development of creative methods and approaches
- An integrated approach to course design, content and structure
- Building in regular tutor meetings to further consolidate linkages between subject areas and to provide support
- Ability of tutors, operations team and participants to be flexible
- Course was participant centred
- The relevancy of the course to participants needs and the practical focuses of inputs to the workshops
- High level of commitment and motivation demonstrated by all key players
- Participants, tutors and operations teams' willingness to challenge and take a risk
- The high level of interaction between participants and tutors and the operating team
- It was a pilot - an experiment - which drew on individuals' commitment and energy to create something new.

"I can't say my response in words", Learning Wheel participant. When conventional approaches to assessment are inadequate alternatives must be explored.

While on-going provision of education was an issue central to the Learning Wheel, a major theme to emerge was the impact of assessment on participants. Though accreditation was important, its impact on the group was perceived in terms of assessment. Learning Wheel participants questioned the purpose and function of assessment as well as conventional written approaches to doing assignments. They wondered why this mode of assessment could not be changed. Participants' response to the situation is characterised by; their need for recognition, the importance of challenging the existing situation and the opportunity to develop creative responses in keeping with practice. As participants worked in groups using creative methods and were learning through creative means, why not respond to assignments creatively? They wanted to approach assignments in a creative collective way but also, where possible, to make their assignments exist as art works.

Key questions which participants posed in relation to assessment during the Learning Wheel include:

- What alternatives are there to written assignments?
- Is this process/methodology appropriate to a community arts context?
- What is the value of exploring alternative routes of assessment?
- How do you communicate learning creatively?
- How does the assessor know you have learnt?
- Why mark or grade assignments?
- Are standards important?
- How do you assess creative responses fairly?
- Is assessment inherently subjective?
- How do you balance the learning process with assessment?
- Does assessment have to be an end goal?

Wider issues which were raised include: identifying ways and means of valuing/validating prior experience; developing appropriate criteria and methods of assessment that are responsive to learners' experience and capabilities; the need for rigour and reliability in approach to assessment, if standards were to be established; the need for technical support structures and a co-ordinating mechanism for community and voluntary organisations to assist in the provision of quality education.

Insights and Lessons

"the long essay is not the only way to measure learning" M.B.Kelly.
(Learning Wheel Guidebook p.4)

The implications of accreditation within the context of the Learning Wheel were significant. It emphasised the need to begin the process of negotiation accreditation some time in advance of delivery, an option that is not always open to small community groups. It demonstrated a weakness within existing certification systems, which places an emphasis on conventional approaches to assessment, that is, on producing individual written assignments. For this group of learners, this approach and method were inappropriate to their learning experience and practice. In response to this, the accrediting bodies were forced to consider alternatives and provide options. Equally, the challenge for the community arts sector was to develop approaches, criteria and standards appropriate to their practice. As a result, participants presented assignments collectively and creatively. The creative responses were accompanied by written statements.

Clearly what was identified here is part of a wider debate which needs to take place around the differences between learning outside of mainstream and inside the formal system and how this is valued, assessed and accredited.

Collective and creative approaches to learning are dynamic, inclusive, invigorating, and holistic in that they address a variety of intelligences and emotions at a number of levels. Doing and making art is a powerful form of self-development and learning which needs to be recognised and valued by

mainstream education at all levels within the system. It is possible to develop ways of assessing this learning that is in keeping with learner needs and work practice and which satisfies accrediting bodies.

How unhealthy, limiting and lacking in vision would any education system be if it did not invite and encourage participants to think and learn, using a variety of intelligences. To think critically and learn creatively has the potential to challenge at an individual, group and community level. This difference in approach was described by one of the Learning Wheel participants in the following way,

"I was taught to value only linear thinking, and have vehemently resisted any type of creative approach to learning, about project management, or even just learning for myself. Now I find myself programming my brain, learning to learn, having faith, pondering positive wave effects, and listening, opening, hearing choosing".

(Learning Wheel Guidebooks, 1997,p.4)

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The Jesus of Rio Syndrome

Colonisation tendencies in arts and education

Peter Hussey

The last five years in Ireland have seen a phenomenal growth in community arts practice and also in the number of adult and community educators working in the country. In addition, on any given weekend there will be at least two job vacancies for project leaders, project coordinators and community education or arts workers in the Sunday papers. It looks as if this area is the fastest growing sector in Irish industry, helped in no small way by the influx of European capital funding to the country, and especially to the regions, over the past six years.

Taken together with the facts that there are now in excess of thirty (mostly new) arts centres in the country and that training programmes in facilitation, community work and community arts are more numerous, it all paints a picture of a vibrant, socially-conscious and dynamic network of community development. This implies that there is a growing, equally dynamic and socially conscious network of amateurs and facilitators at work in the field. This there is. And it is now more relevant than ever to stop and ask ourselves what exactly we are doing.

In workshops given since the early nineties to trainers in the adult and community education field and to trainers in the community arts sector, I have asked participants to describe how they see themselves at work and to move towards a depiction of their vision of their role. The depiction is done visually by sculpting another participant into an image representing how they see themselves. By far the most popular image sculpted is that of a person standing, feet firmly grounded, head held high, with warm smile and wide, outstretched, inviting arms. It is an image full of energy, depicting the animated joy of working in what is perceived to be a loving and giving capacity. It reminds one of the Jesus of Rio, high over the city, arms inviting the populace to come and to be saved.

That such striking similarities occur between an essentially secular image and an overtly religious one, I feel, is not a co-incidence. It points to perhaps the greatest danger facing community artists and educators in our sector. Underpinning the philosophy behind the religious image is the notion that an individual has to make the great leap of faith and trust and thereby place his or her possibility of redemption in the hands of a greater force than themselves, specifically a divine one. In adult education and in community arts, there is much the same notion abroad, though it is not often articulated in such clear-cut terms, nor is it indeed even consciously felt. The self-image most commonly expressed by trainers is one inherent in which is the idea

that they can empower, offer a form of salvation, redeem, or even cure and solve. And this vision is not limited to trainers alone. Funding agencies, project evaluators and project commissioning boards regularly judge a person's suitability for community development work by the extent to which the artist/trainer has managed to solve or cure a problem, or by their track record of empowering others in the past. The project is most usually deemed successful if the aims and objectives of the project organisers have been met. And in most cases that usually means evidence that a group has moved from one way of looking at themselves (their own) to another way (the project organisers!). Rarely do we stop and ask such fundamental questions as:

- How can I empower anyone other than myself?
- What does it mean to usher in a new concept of living and of self-evaluation to a group who have not used this way of seeing before?
- What am I doing in the name of personal development? Is there implicit in my practice of personal development the idea that the person needs to be fixed or cured and that they are stuck in a bad or wrong place to begin with?
- How much of my work is designed to encourage the person to adapt themselves to society? (Solution: closed/product focused).
- Should my work be designed to encourage the person to adapt society to themselves? (Revolution: open-ended/process centred).

There is a real danger in community arts and in adult and community education that we, the practitioners, will end up the agents of a subtle colonising regime, working with love and compassion to mould Irish society into one model of Irishness - a liberal, middle-class, well schooled, dependent culture with values drawn from the well of ownership and property and norms based solely on the idea of progression and success. That we follow models of practice, which give importance to one form of behaviour over another is evidence of this. Drug related crime is only drug-related crime from one particular point of view. From another point of view it is generating income. Unemployment can be seen as simply another phrase for not paying taxes. It doesn't necessarily mean not working, paid or otherwise.

There is no doubt, however, that there are marginalised communities and individuals in Irish society. There is no doubt that personal and community empowerment is a worthy ideal. It becomes a suspect and altogether different matter, however, when that empowerment is defined only in terms of removing the status of marginalisation by means of adapting to the wider community and accepting the wider community's norms and values. I don't think there are many adult educators or community artists who would actually subscribe consciously to this philosophy. There are many though who unwittingly put it into practice. It becomes a problem when the educator/artist/trainer imagines that they are 'empowering' when in fact they are not. And to be fair to ourselves, most of us do this in ignorance operating

with the best will and intentions in the world.

By giving so much of the self to work, by acting from what is thought to be love, the educator can become locked into the trap of creating a paralytic dependence in the heart of the learner and so assist the forces, attitudes, systems and institutions which have already oppressed them. This is the least of the damage. It can be further compounded by the educator or artist forcibly leading the learner into a system which will instantly reject them once the educator/artist leaves and returns to 'save' another client. Such an instance occurred to me in my practice. I fuelled in unemployed adults the desire to go to college, filled out their forms, helped them through copious mock interviews, didn't listen and assured them they'd be fine when they said they wouldn't be. I even went so far as to promote a graduate lifestyle at the expense of other ones (explaining that doors would open, opportunities would flock, money could be made if you attained an academic qualification). The reason I did this was (a) it had happened to me, and (b) I thought I wanted the best for them and, since this had been the best for me, it would surely benefit them. In other words, I became the Jesus of Rio, saying place your faith in me and the kingdom of third level shall be thine. They did. It wasn't. Most of them left after three months. Only those who could cope with the lifestyle and knew the language in which to operate came anywhere close to succeeding.

Reflecting upon this, I realised I had encouraged enormous dependency amongst my students. By doing this I had neglected to stimulate independence. Encouraging independence can be frustrating for an artist/educator, especially if you come from a different background to the people with whom you work. They might want to remove you. Challenge you. Revolt against you and yours. It is almost always 'safer' to absorb them into your own world and let them make the best of it. And some of them will succeed brilliantly, thereby justifying your practice, methods, function and sense of self worth. Is it morally acceptable to use groups or individuals from backgrounds different to yours in order to make you feel good about yourself? Perhaps it is, if that's what your morality is. At the end of the day, one must always be honest.

The clearest example of empowerment gone wrong is often shown in the least remarkable acts and attitudes of groupwork. Take for example the various methods of introduction. Most projects start with the artist/educator arriving at the venue, hall or room in advance of the group. There they set it up according to what they think will best suit the particular activity planned. Most of us have long since moved away - in righteous horror - from the 'rows of desks and chairs pattern' of seating. We prefer today, in our enlightened ways, to form circles and remove barriers such as desks and tables. (I am regularly staggered by how Freire's complex notion of the culture circle has been sadly reduced to simply meaning the way one arranges one's chairs). We may even stimulate comfort by providing scented candles, cushions and

background music. (If this sounds wildly exaggerated, I can vouch for the fact that not only have I experienced it but, sadly, I often used to practise it). All of this is an effort to make the group feel like they can relax and belong comfortably to this place, where in sessions from now they will begin to exercise their own empowerment. When the group arrives, they will almost always sit where seating is indicated and so, apparently, justify our arrangement.

However, in this activity, can be seen the actions of subtle and perhaps unintentional colonisation. We are arranging the geography of a place to suit our own vision and have not consulted firstly with those whom we seek to help. Often, a group arriving at a pre-ordered scene like this will move on automatic pilot into a role of subservient dependence. Implicit in the ordering of the place by the facilitator, no matter how enlightened, is the notion that they know best, thus reinforcing the Banking Model image of trainer/educator from which we are usually at pains to distance ourselves. It is better - and harder - by far, not to go near the room or venue and all arrive together. All enter together and all shape the environment together. If this means that the desks and chairs are aligned in force and that there is no sign at all of a circle well then so be it. This is the group's statement of where it sees itself. It can be challenged, of course. But it might remain.

Five Stages of Colonisation

In examples like this it is clear that colonisation is hardly ever obvious. If it were it would be easier to react to. Kevin Collins, in his remarkable analysis of cultural colonisation (*The Cultural Conquest of Ireland*) identifies five stages of colonisation. It is helpful to briefly describe them, because they become hugely pertinent when applied to education and community arts work. In talking about nations, Collins identifies the five stages as follows:

- 1 *Physical Conquest*: where the colonising nation subdues the native in a short and forceful campaign
- 2 *Inhibition*: where the coloniser prohibits the native from expressing her/himself via their own customs, language and laws
- 3 *Dualism*: where there is eventually a two-tier society composed of a superior class (the coloniser) and an inferior class (the native)
- 4 *Mimicry*: where the native realises that the only way to survive in the new order is to adapt to it and so begins to mimic the codes and conventions of the coloniser
- 5 *Alienation*: where the native has become so far removed from his/her own culture and at the same time is never fully accepted into the coloniser's one that he/she is in a state of alienation.

I have found it useful to add another stage to this called Revival where the native tries (at first in vain) to revive her own culture. They have usually come so far away from it that initial attempts are false and meaningless, being

almost always defined in negative terms against the coloniser (e.g., not English). It is only when they incorporate their own present culture with that of the coloniser's that they can hope for some form of meaningful identity. It is tempting to view Ireland in the 1990's as arriving at a strong postcolonial identity - whether this is the case or not remains to be seen.

The model outlined above is a very convenient framework for discussing any form of oppression. It can include material ranging from the concerns of feminism, to something as intimate as our own personal relationships - we have all been 'swept off our feet', have 'fallen' in love with someone forceful and vibrant. And we have all adapted ourselves at some stage, to become more like the person who 'swept us off our feet'.

In an educational environment, the model draws attention to the ways in which we can colonise our students, groups, participants.

- 1 *Physical Conquest:* We might sail into a community or group full of enthusiasm and energy, brooking no objections to the difficulty of the project ahead, and effectively overpower the learner or group with our energy.
- 2 *Inhibition:* We could then inhibit the learner's expression by putting down their methods of seeing themselves and their ways of regulating their lives. Nothing, for instance, colonises quite as effectively as grammar, accent and speech. Rules and regulations regarding correct group procedure can often be used to inhibit. Favouring one person's ability, articulation over another's is also an effective method of inhibiting (in this case the person not being favoured).
- 3 *Dualism:* By promoting the lifestyle we lead, the attitudes and moral values we hold at the expense of those of the group we are putting into place a dualistic system. We often do this unconsciously. Working with offenders, people with addictions, the unemployed, can place us into temptingly self righteous roles where we implicitly indicate that our value system and codes of behaviour are model ones and have kept us out of the kind of trouble they've found themselves in. This is particularly tempting for artists and educators who have never been offenders, addicts and unemployed (in the usual sense of the terms). Again, this kind of thinking is rooted in the philosophy that the people with whom we work have a problem, which needs to be cured or fixed. If that is where we are coming from as educators, then naturally we will want to offer solutions.
- 4 *Mimicry:* Rewarding those who respond to our methods and promoting them as examples of model behaviour can often serve to instil mimicry.
- 5 *Alienation:* Leaving the learner/participant to cope on their own, in an area which we have assured them is safe to do so (but which isn't) can result in the learner feeling abandoned and lost between two

barely recognisable systems. A good example of this from the theatre is Willy Russell's play *Educating Rita* where Rita is not fully accepted into academia because she's the wrong age and at the same time she is viewed as a freak in the world she came from.

In arts work as in education, a long project can provide the moratorium for the participant to undergo enormous change. It is fairly critical that we facilitate independence of thought and action here so that the change, if it arises, is managed and developed within boundaries which the participant has established for themselves and not ones which we have led them to believe are there. Most of us will not be around when the project is over and there is no use planning to be. This serves only to further encourage dependence.

A Personalised Learning System

Many arts workers and educators are well aware of the dangers outlined above. They have several years of practice where they learned the hard way to work from the bottom up, putting Freire's ideals into motion in a variety of astonishing work. One of the most interesting methods of combating the potential pitfalls of the Jesus of Rio Syndrome is the personalised learning system, developed in France and being piloted in Ireland. Under the banner of Leonardo, the EU fund for training and development, the department of Education and Science liaised with Co. Kildare VEC to pilot the personalised learning system in two Irish VTOS programmes. It is called the Made to Measure project and briefly, it focuses on (a) Finding Work Experience in the Performing Arts: a personalised guide (Newbridge) and (b) Becoming Computer Literate and IT Fluent (Abbeyleix). Its partners are located in Finland, France and Italy.

A Personalised Learning System is one which provides materials for the students use in such a way that the learner can choose the method of learning best suited to their needs and advance at their own pace and their own level through it. Crucially, the tutor / community artist here is seen as another resource, albeit the most important resource (among others such as information technology, manuals, databases, other learners). The educator's role is not a leading one in the sense as depicted above. They are available to the learner as a resource when the learner feels that they need the tutor and not the other way around. This does not imply that the educator/artist is at the learner's beck and call, however. In much the same way that many resources are not immediately available (the library may be closed, another user may be on the computer with the Internet), so neither is the tutor always immediately available.

He or she works to a given timetable and is available during that period for consultation whenever the need arises. Artists and workers in less structured environments have been doing this for years, moving, for example, from

painter to painter when the need arises. So too, after a fashion, have Montessori teachers and community development workers. There is a certain amount of intervention required, especially when the educator or artist senses a learner is having difficulty attending programmes, workshops or projects. In these cases, the question asked by the personalised learning system is 'How can we change the programme/ project to personalise it to your needs?' rather than 'Why can't you try a little harder to be active on this programme?'

The programme of work is agreed with the learner before the project commences and reviewed periodically by both. The system is used in education to encourage the development of equality of relationship between all those involved and to encourage independence at all stages of the work. The greatest difficulty facing the artist or educator is accepting the fact that they will not be needed in the same capacity as they are needed in other systems. And ultimately, realising that they have succeeded when they are not needed at all. It is a form of educational anarchy (the system which teaches best is the system which teaches least).

If we are to deal adequately with the challenges facing us in the growth of the community arts, community development and adult education sectors today, we have to begin to put into place systems of learning and of working which are focused not on solving problems but on assisting revolution. Realising that we cannot empower others, whether we are using arts or training is critical to our development of the sector. For years, the community arts movement has been stating the primacy of process over product and emphasising the importance of individual growth according to the individual's own yardstick. Getting in the way of this is the promotion of the model that we are here primarily to redress social ills, shorten the dole queues, rehabilitate offenders and addicts and make our society a better place in which to live by the fixing the wrong-doers. Personalised Learning Systems ask us to focus instead on changing the system and leaving the learner alone, pretty much as they are, to learn within the new system.

However, assisting revolution is always difficult. The place where it will get the least amount of support is from the state. Experience the way state funding is divided between community arts practice and professional arts practice in Ireland to see how strongly the balance is weighed against revolution. It is refreshing therefore to see state support for Personalised Learning Systems such as the Made to Measure project. Jesus of Rio is, for a change, taking a leap of faith into the arms of the people.

Peter Hussey is Artistic Director of Crooked House Theatre Company. He is also an adult and community educator, working with NUI Maynooth, Co. Kildare VEC and freelance around the country. He specialises in community theatre and creative methods of facilitation.

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Brook, Peter: *There Are No Secrets: thoughts on acting and theatre*, Methuen, London, 1993

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CAFE 'Café News', Vol ii No 7, December 1998

SWITCHED ON – ESB Accessing Theatre for Women

Margaret Toomey

Smashing Times Theatre Company Limited was founded by a group of women who met at Focus Theatre. These women were interested in challenging the elitist position that drama sometimes occupies in Irish society. They also wanted to provide access to drama in communities where theatre is not readily accessible. From time to time, the company has toured with a piece that contains a social or political message and after the performance, the audience was invited to comment. The board members were interested in using drama as a tool for social change and it soon transpired that many of the women attending performances were themselves interested both in devising plays and in performing them. This interest led to the development of the Community Arts Programme which is called Switched On – ESB Accessing Theatre for Women.

The company is committed to presenting classical and contemporary plays that explore and celebrate the diversity of women's experiences. The company is also committed to exploring new art forms and innovative styles of theatre with a view to challenging the boundaries of what constitutes the female perspective. They are interested, too, in expanding theatre audiences and guaranteeing equal access to the arts by touring nation wide and by promoting drama in the community.

Through the community arts programme, sponsored by ESB, they worked with ten community groups last year. Six of these groups were from Dublin and four from Northern Ireland. Professional drama facilitators were provided to conduct long-term drama workshops and intensive theatre weekends with each group. The policy of the company is to allow these courses to take whatever direction or pace each individual group feels is appropriate. As part of this programme, Smashing Times Theatre Limited provides professional directors and additional back up services for the community groups who wish to present plays in their local areas.

As part of the programme, the Company organises a one day annual event called Switched On '99 Drama Day to provide the groups with the opportunity to perform for each other and to celebrate their achievements. The drama day also gives the groups an opportunity to meet each other, renew old acquaintances and establish new ones.

Through the Company's presentations of professional productions throughout the country, the founder members came in contact with individuals and with

community groups who expressed an interest in drama but who had difficulty developing their interest. Drama was not accessible to them in their own area. The Company began to respond to the demand for day and weekend workshops but it soon became clear that these groups were interested in and could benefit from a more long term programme.

The company at this stage, having made contact with groups in Northern Ireland, hoped, through drama to develop a cross border communication of skills and life experiences, with the support of ESB, FAS, Dublin Corporation, The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Co-operation North and the Combat Poverty Agency. The Company worked closely with Community groups to develop a long-term programme of drama workshops.

The Company was and is committed to providing a programme that works in the local area so that it is easily accessible to the women and especially to those who have children. The Company is also committed to devising an individual programme with each group so that the group can determine the pace and direction, which they consider to be appropriate for them. The groups involved from September 1998 to June 1999 were:

- St. Andrew's Resource Centre, Dublin
- Playhouse Women's Drama Group, Derry
- Fall's Women's Centre, Belfast
- The Drop in Well Creative Learning Centre, Ballymun, Dublin
- Voyagers Community Drama Group, Kilbarrack, Dublin
- Far Side of the Moon Drama Group, Shanty Education Project, Tallaght, Dublin
- The Watersedge Drama Group, Ringsend, Dublin
- The Shankill Community Theatre Company, Belfast
- Strabane Arts Advisory Committee Community Group, Derry

The Importance of the Programme

One of the most satisfying achievements was the fact that performances were written and devised by participants in the workshops. The knock-on effect of these performances has been that the Ringsend group, Voyagers and the Far Side of the Moon Drama Group have been asked to perform at other venues. Connections have been made between groups across the North-South border. Established groups have benefited from new skills gained in workshops and

in turn have contributed to the North-South dynamic of the programme.

Other groups such as the St Andrew's Resource Centre drama group have recently had their first public performance and the Strabane group want to move on from faster workshops to a more focused approach with a group in Sawel.

How much does the Switched On programme matter? The overwhelming majority of the participants spoke of the positive effect that drama had had on them. These feelings were reiterated at the drama day in response to one of the questions asked in the morning session about what participants had gained by being part of the Switched On programme. Hosts also recognised the benefits and quality of the services that Smashing Times provided. From their responses, I can say that the main benefits that participants felt were most important were:

- Increased confidence and self-worth
- Increased participation in other social events in the community
- Enriched social life, new friendships
- New skills, better communication skills
- An outlet for personal expression, as a way to self-discovery
- The fun and excitement of performing and pride in achievement.

The objectives that were not met such as having last years drama day in Belfast rather than Dublin was due to lack of resources. Similarly, lack of resources meant also that Geraldstown House and the Derry Playhouse Women's Drama group did not get the services that Smashing Times thought they could provide at the beginning of the programming year. Without a significant increase in funding, the drama day for all groups cannot be held in Belfast in 1999 and it may be necessary to think of alternative methods of strengthening the links between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland's groups.

Community employment funding is essential for the Switched On programme to pay for staff and their training. The main difficulty for Smashing Times is that they cannot afford to keep on these staff when they are no longer eligible for funding after a one or sometimes two year period. It takes a long time for facilitators to build a good working relationship with a group and a change of facilitator can put the group back or the groups could be easily lost altogether. The wages of those on CE are low which has led to staff, particularly office staff, leaving as soon as they find a better-paid job. The constant change of staff can be disruptive to the programme.

The ESB and Dublin Corporation have helped towards alleviating this problem by funding Smashing Times so that they can pay for a community liaison officer and for one of the facilitators, Paul Kennedy. It is interesting to note that the two groups that Paul has been working with have made

significant progress this year and they are very closely knit groups. However the problem is far from solved.

There are numerous possibilities for programme development if the Northern groups could apply for funding from appropriate funding bodies in the North -for joint projects, for example. There will be an increase in demands on resources as the groups become more ambitious. St Andrew's Resource Centre hope to perform and the other groups such as the Drop-In-Well may become more ambitious in seeking out audiences. The network that has now been developed by Smashing Times Theatre Company between groups is starting to look for action as groups are now seeking to fulfil their potential. All of these developments will require additional funding. The challenge for Smashing Times Theatre Company next year will be to keep the momentum of the project going.

Margaret Toomey is a founder and board member of Smashing Times Theatre Company Limited. She began her career as a teacher of English and she worked for two years in Africa. She trained at the Gaiety School of Acting and at Focus Theatre under Deirdre O'Connell. She has performed in a number of plays, both in the theatre and on television, most recently in Louis Lentin's drama documentary *Dear Daughter*.

There is a lifetime of exploring art at the National Gallery

Marie Bourke

One of the oldest museums in Ireland is the National Gallery which houses an extensive collection of paintings, drawings and prints, sculpture and objets d'art collected, cared for and displayed for everyone to benefit from and enjoy. Established by an Act of Parliament in 1854, the National Gallery first opened its doors to the public in 1864 with an original design by the Irish architect Francis Fowke. It was extended in 1903 by Thomas Newenham Deane and there was a further extension in 1968 by Frank du Berry of the Office of Public Works. The Gallery went through a major phase of refurbishment in the mid 1990s carried out by the Office of Public Works and already in 1999, work has begun on a new wing adjoining Clare Street, designed by Benson & Forsyth, an Anglo-Scottish firm of architects, to be completed by the year 2000. While visitors are attracted by the impressive façade of the Gallery on the west side of Merrion Square, once inside the building they become quickly aware that the Gallery is the repository of a major collection of European old master paintings, the national collection of Irish art, the new Yeats museum and the National Portrait Collection.

Visitor Access

Since the early 1990s the National Gallery of Ireland has received over one million visitors per year. While attracted by the superb collections and exhibitions on display, many come to take part in the extensive range of programmes and activities offered year-round by the Gallery's Education Department. Interest and awareness of the Gallery 'countrywide' is conveyed through an outreach programme of talks, art courses, exhibitions, outreach residencies, adult and children's drawing workshops. People are interested in the Gallery for all kinds of reasons, apart from looking at the paintings. For instance, they may come to hear a seminar or a lecture, to listen to a concert or try out the multimedia, to take part in a children's project, to colour a worksheet, follow a tour, join a family activity or visit the shop, they may just want to have lunch or meet friends. Whatever the reason for visiting, everyone is equally important at the National Gallery.

My Role at the Gallery

My role at the Gallery is Keeper and Head of Education. As Keeper I collaborate with the Director in managing the day to day affairs of the Gallery. We determine the core strategies to be placed before the Board, in conjunction with other senior staff. The post requires supporting the Director's Office, servicing the Board/assisting with Board papers and

providing documentation for Government Departments. I deputise in the Director's absence in consultation with the Head of Administration/Finance and, if necessary, liaise with the Chairman of the Board. At times it can be very hectic and demanding. As Head of Education I am responsible for the Education Service which effectively provides all the public programmes for the Gallery. While the Department generates income through many of its own courses and events, it needs ongoing support in the form of grants and sponsorship to enable the extensive range of programmes and activities to take place. Regular contact is kept with a wide range of cultural and heritage bodies and close links are also maintained with overseas museums and galleries and the Department is a member of several international art/education organisations.

Personal Development

Lecturing is an aspect of the post of Keeper/Head of Education that is most satisfying, whether participating in conferences, public lectures or outreach venues countrywide. It can involve talking on a specialised subject to an art society, a review of career options to arts or heritage graduates, explaining the development of Irish Art to Senior Cycle teachers or speaking on fun subjects like art and the environment to a group of enthusiastic children from a disadvantaged background – it is all grist to the mill and I greatly enjoy it. For personal development, time is set aside regularly to research and write. Irish art is my chosen field and I have published new material on Frederic Burton, Hilda Van Stockum and Charles Lamb. I also publish frequently on art/museum education related topics in journals and periodicals. It is important to keep abreast of developments so I make a point of attending relevant courses on subjects such as languages for EU meetings, IT or museum management.

Mission

Education featured as one of the core functions in an address published by the Board of Governors at the Irish Institute of Education in 1854, ten years before the Gallery opened. Education policy and programming, therefore, derive from its stated mission which is to: *“ensure that opportunities exist for the largest number of individuals to find their own level of intellectual, physical and emotional involvement with works of art in the national collection”*.

The Department stresses that: *“Active participation in the services provided, including community access and outreach initiatives, encourage expansion of the skills of appreciation, understanding, interpretation and analysis”*.

Key of the Department are to:

- create awareness of and interest in the national collection
- stimulate enquiry into the aesthetics and meaning of works of art
- develop knowledge and understanding of the history of art
- encourage innovative approaches to interpreting the collections

- foster skills of observation, critical analyses and appreciation
- encourage skills in art and design with all ages
- be accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities and special needs
- enhance interest in the collections through provision of programmes open to all ages
- monitor, assess and evaluate programmes, activities and initiatives on an ongoing basis

These objectives are achieved through a comprehensive Education Service comprising: The Public Programme, Continuing Education/ Lifelong Learning, Young People's Activities, Community Awareness and Outreach Programme, Education Resources/Publications.

Philosophy

The philosophy that informs me is the fundamental belief that art enriches and enhances every facet of life. Without the arts we have the mechanisms enabling us to live but not the means to nourish the spirit or soul. I try with the means available to me to make art accessible to everyone. By this is meant providing a variety of ways whereby people from all backgrounds can gain entry to the world of art through the widest range of activities from the simple to the complex. These can involve school programmes, practical art courses, talks on art, children's drawing workshops, academic courses, family EyeSpy activity sheets and publications on art. I am particularly concerned with the promotion of our national school of art. In this connection, the Gallery is planning a Teacher's Resource pack called Discover Irish Art (book and slides) in addition to a series of three posters on Irish Watercolours to be distributed to all primary and post-primary schools in 1999.

Administration of the Education Service

The Education Service involves the combination of annual programmes and occasional one-off events. In the majority of cases we undertake an evaluation of the event in order to assess audience satisfaction and to research ideas for the future. This can take the form of questionnaires being distributed and returned by post or surveys completed through interview. This practice is essential because it allows for a rapid assessment of an event and enables the planning and implementation of changes of the public programmes. At present a year-long survey is taking place to research public interest in a planned Education Centre. In conjunction with many museums world-wide, the Gallery has a straightforward system of dealing with enquiries and comments. A Visitor Comment Form is provided at the Information Desk and the forms are monitored on a weekly basis and answered by a relevant staff member. The Department has a 'hands-on' policy of dealing with any problems or difficulties.

During the 1990s three target areas were identified:

- 1 outreach – a range of events outside the Gallery countrywide
- 2 families – activities involving adults and children
- 3 people with disabilities – exploring new services for this sector

As the millenium approaches, a new audience is being identified – *lifelong learning: people over the age of 40*. Suggestions will be welcomed to assist in helping to find new ways and means to address this growing sector of our population.

A Vision for the Future

Future Plans at the National Gallery include the construction of an Education Centre by the year 2000. This will dramatically expand the institution's ability to cater for all ages. Supporting this initiative is the recent recognition of Gallery Education achievements such as Exploring Art Project 1997/98 in the form of 'Best Museum Education Award' in 1998 and 'Interpret Ireland Award' in 1999. The Centre will be designed as a venue to initiate, host and promote high quality innovative options in museum programming open to adults, young people, families and people with disabilities. The aim is to provide an accessible, stimulating art experience for visitors through the Education Centre's multi-purpose facilities and programmes. The Centre will be the ideal way to introduce people of all ages to the Gallery and to help direct them towards the most appropriate and enjoyable programmes and events. A key feature of the Centre will be the ability to cater for people over the age of 40 and its ultimate goal will be to provide the highest standard of museum education. The Education Centre is part of a greater National Gallery of Ireland millenium project, the highlight of which is the building of a new millenium wing on Clare Street with major exhibition facilities, a restaurant, shop, multimedia, galleries and other facilities to open later in 2000.

Marie Bourke is Keeper and Head of Education at the National Gallery of Ireland

Further information on the National Gallery of Ireland may be obtained from Gallery guidebooks ranging from the simple to the more detailed available from the local library and the Gallery Shop.

Some Useful Titles on Museum Education

- E. Hooper-Greenhill: *The Educational Role of the Museum*, Routledge, 1994
- G. Durbin (ed): *Developing Museum Exhibitions*, GEM London, 1996
- G. Hein: *Learning in the Museum*, Routledge, 1998
- E. Hooper-Greenhill: *Initiatives in Museum Education*, University of Leicester, 1989
- A. Coles (ed): *Positive Thinking – creative approaches to museum & gallery education*, Museums & Galleries Commission 1996

- 6 I. McCarthy & G. Granville (ed): *Design in Education*, NCCA, 1997
- 7 D. Anderson: *A Common Wealth, Museums & Learning in the UK*, 1997
- 8 H. O'Donoghue & A. Davoren: *A Space to Grow*, IMMA, 1999

Book Reviews

No Room for Adults?

A study of mature students in University College Dublin

Tom Inglis and Mark Murphy

Social Research Centre and the Adult Education Office, University College Dublin, 1999

This report by Inglis and Murphy looks at the experiences of full time mature students in U.C.D. It charts the process by which mature students gain access to full-time higher education in U.C.D. and what their experience of being a student is like. In effect, it investigates and languages the reality of being a mature student in U.C.D. today. It sheds light on the experience of a small number of students and raises huge issues about access to higher education for mature students, not only in U.C.D. but throughout the higher education sector. As the title of the report suggests, being or becoming a mature student in U.C.D. is not without its difficulties. This report investigates the issues involved.

The report is based on a survey of five different student groupings: those who applied but did not gain entry; mature students registered on full-time undergraduate degree programmes; students studying part-time for the Modular B.A. degree; mature students who had completed their degrees; and mature students who had withdrawn from their degree programmes. The range of categories surveyed is very comprehensive and lends great substance to the report findings. There is particular added value in including the experiences of those students who were unsuccessful in their entry attempts and those who withdrew before completing their degrees. While these samples are small, experiences are particularly valuable when trying to gauge the full gamut of reactions to the overall U.C.D. admissions procedure for mature students. In addition, a further 'focus group' methodology was also employed where a sample of up to 10 people from the different groupings were brought together to discuss their experiences. The combination of hard statistical evidence and individual comment makes this report accessible, readable and riveting.

The contextual framework for the report is set out in Chapter 2 which looks at comparative literature on various aspects of mature student participation in Higher Education in both a national and international context. Measured against the evidence available from other countries the situation for prospective mature students in the Irish situation can only be described as dismal. While the participation rates in other countries have increased at spectacular rates, mature students account for only 5% of full-time students in Irish higher education. British third level institutions by comparison cater for five times more mature students. U.C.D., the focus of this study, currently has 142 full-time mature students on undergraduate degree programmes. This

represents only 1.2% of the total full-time undergraduate student population and is in effect one of the lowest intakes in the university sector. The report highlights the fact that much of the early research in this field was focussed on issues of access, attempting to influence the number of places available to mature students. Equally important, however, is the issue of accessibility, the need for institutions to become more adult friendly and facilitate the concept of lifelong learning in a real way. **No Room for Adults** is concerned with both these issues, equality of access and equality of outcome. It takes a detailed look at mature students experiences of and in U.C.D. against an institutional framework which, through its own language of elitism and exclusion, advises applicants not to "rely on special consideration for mature years as this privilege is granted only in a limited number of exceptional cases" (p.9).

It is against this background and without any clear college guidelines or criteria that prospective mature applicants set out to become fulltime undergraduate students in U.C.D. Chapters 3 - 6 chart this journey, presenting the core quantitative and qualitative data about who applies to become mature students, what they do to increase their chances of entry, who gets in, who doesn't, what its like to be a mature student. The profile of each of the different groups is looked at in relation to the usual socio-demographic variables (for summary see pp. 84 - 85), their preparation for applying, their experience of the college, their experience of the programme and their current situation as appropriate. There are some interesting findings.

The main barrier facing mature students trying to access U.C.D. is the low level of acceptance - only one applicant in seventeen is successful. There is a high demand for very few places. Unsuccessful applicants are likely to be young, single males working in low wage jobs. For most, the process of application is time consuming and premised on the damaging assumption that places are available. This, the report suggests, creates an over optimistic view among prospective applicants. The 13% of applicants who felt they had no hope of getting a place were, in the final analysis, adjudged to be the most realistic. The lack of any clear guidelines for applicants leads to feelings of anger, disappointment, devastation and resentment. "They did not know why they were rejected, they did not know who rejected them, and it did not seem there was much they could do about the situation" (p.25) In the absence of any feedback many blamed themselves and set about doing other courses in the belief that it would improve their chances the next time. Ironically, the evidence suggests otherwise.

U.C.D.'s response to this problem over the years has been to encourage mature students to do the modular B. A. However, this is not what adult students want and is, in any case, only available to those who can afford to pay fees. This discrepancy has arisen since the abolition of fees for full-time courses. Thus, the U.C.D. response has been responsible for contributing to rather than reducing social inequality.

Paradoxically, those who were successful with their applications were equally mystified as to why they had been accepted. Full time mature students make up a tiny percentage of the undergraduate population with 58% of them taking Arts and Social Science programmes. While mature students do as well as non-mature students at college, those who gain entry are more likely to have had previous experience of higher education and more likely to have done well in the Leaving Cert. Less than 3 in 10 had done access courses. The single, male profile was also dominant and while there was general satisfaction among students with degrees, their problems related to study techniques and essay writing skills together with the absence of a guidance and counselling service. The small number, age difference and different life experiences served to isolate the mature student groups with 1 in 5 withdrawing. This high rate of withdrawal is both an indication of the complexity of life for mature students and their ability to balance this with "college knowledge" - knowing the demands and expectations of the system and learning to meet them.

The focus on the Modular B.A. students lends an interesting insight into this arena of mature student participation. The B.A Modular is adult friendly in the sense that it is modular, flexible and part-time. It is fee paying and the application process is straightforward and explicit. The profile of students is interestingly older, female, married with children. For these students, full time study is not an option as 58% work during the day. They feel somewhat remote from the College and as one student put it, there is a "lack of care in the college for modular students". This feeling of being second class students in turn translates into a sense that their degree is also second rate. In all respects it carries an exclusionary tag.

Another group of students surveyed were those who graduated. In 1993, 47 students enrolled as full time undergraduates, 10 withdrew. As mature graduates they express varied views about their experiences of U.C.D. While they enjoyed the learning process and their subjects, they echoed the feelings of full-time and part time students in their dissatisfaction with study guidelines and advice and support. They also had mixed feelings about the benefit of their degree. Perhaps the most telling comment came from one of the students who says, "One thing that annoyed me so much could have been made so much easier with just a little bit of thought, maybe a 20 minute chat, and so many things could have been made easier. "(p61) However, it seems that U. C.D. is not in the business of making things easier, putting such withdrawals down to natural wastage through exam failure and, perhaps, family commitments.

Where things are currently at in U.C.D. is made most explicit in Chapters 8 and 10 which offer some reflections from a number of faculty Deans and looks at mature student policy and practice. While there is agreement about the need for some more defined access criteria and an information and advice service, there are clear signals that the small number of places

available to mature students is not universally regarded as problematic. The Dean of Science regards 8 science places annually as about right. It is apparent that the policy in U.C.D. is exclusively designed for standard entry applicants (i.e. Leaving Certificate students) and all mature applicants are measured to a greater or lesser degree against this barometer. While some are in favour of exploring the options of out-reach, modularisation and pre-university programmes, others regard it as outside their remit and that of the college. Perhaps the strongest statement of resistance which U.C.D. as an institution makes is in its refusal to accept its own Return to Learning students. The refusal to make explicit current procedures and to formalise and standardise alternative access routes is seen as a loss of control by the university over admissions policy and is, one suspects, considered as a dilution of standards. In this context problems are seen as individual rather than institutional.

This report is based on the experiences of people who apply for places as full time mature students in U. C.D. These are ordinary people who want a second chance. Their story is one of determination, struggle and sometimes success. In real terms very few get places, even fewer complete their courses. Their experiences are manifestations of a struggle against a system which systematically and continually excludes them. Ultimately, educational policies and institutions are run by people, people who have power, people who control access, people who determine who should go to college and who should not, people who exercise control over what programmes people can choose, people who do all this without making clear the criteria by which applicants are excluded, people who wish to retain control. Is it right that this should be the case, indeed, in the current climate of economic change is it sensible? Where stands the notion of a learning society in all of this and the belief that free higher education should be available to all? Is higher education about self-aggrandisement and the maintenance of social inequality?

These are the big questions which this report raises and is it appropriate for U.C.D. to say, "it has other demands and briefs to fulfil at present"? (p.97). To take on some of the recommendations of this report would be a step in the right direction and recognition of the positive contribution which adult students could make to the fabric of academic and social life in U.C.D.

This report is clear, direct and insightful. It manages its data without losing its message. It should be mandatory reading for those of us who work in adult education and encourage mature students to seek college places. We must continue to ask why this kind of exclusion is happening and why such elitism is being allowed to continue and until such time as things change, the clear message from U. C.D. is - **No Room for Adults!**

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**Understanding Men's Passages: Discovering the
New Map of Men's Lives**

Sheehy, Gail, 1998, London: Ballantine Books, pp. 352, paperback £8.66.

Greetings brothers! If men age faster than women, get grey hair sooner, lose their sexual drive earlier, rise to anger or frustration a lot quicker and frequently experience the shock of change - such as unemployment - a lot harder AND die younger, what's gone wrong? It's not looking good brothers!

Many questions suggest themselves. If we are going to live longer, what will those bonus years be like? What is life like for the rest of men? Why do men rarely read books about their health? What are the concerns of my brothers in middle-life, in the forties, fifties, sixties and beyond? How does sexual potency change across the life span? Our sisters have embraced change and growth; have engaged in personal development with enthusiasm; have become significant wage earners to the extent that one third of working wives in the US now earn more than their husbands. Hilary Clinton and Cherie Blair are the wage earners of their families. The implications for men need some attention. Is there a male menopause? What is it? How do men experience it? What learning needs to be done in order to support a longer life?

If men are looking for good news then Gail Sheehy certainly introduces the "stars" of the male world. She introduces stories of men who are bold, feisty, imaginative; who have discovered what was missing in their lives and forged a new direction to invigorate the second half of their lives. In this International Year of Older Persons the people in Sheehy's book share their secret: Hey, I'm not as old as I used to be.

Her earlier book, **Passages** (1976), set in motion a debate about how adults change throughout their lives. **Silent Passages** (1991) was identified by the Library of Congress as one of the most influential books of our time and informed a generation about menopause. If **New Passages** (1995) showed how 'Wonder Woman Meets Menopause' and identified male menopause as the 'Unspeakable Passage,' this latest work from Sheehy goes on to outline MANopause as the passage to a Fearless Fifties; an Influential Sixties and even a Lusty Winter of the seventies. The future for men is bright if... if they engage in continuous redefining of self that is in tune with a post-patriarchal world.

The theme is upbeat. The author highlights the "stars," these new men among the regular guys and public figures of America who have made it into an adulthood which is positive, bold, feisty and imaginative. In this is both the strength of the book and its weakness.

Sheehy confronts the reader with two kinds of research. The first takes us into the statistics of research institutes which clearly show that important changes are taking place in families and at work as a result of people living longer. Secondly, she presents in detail, through interviews, the men who are making it in this modern world. What are men doing with this longer life? These stars are finding a softer side to themselves; a side more concerned with care (of themselves, their partners and their children) and relationship. The book, because of its brash and bold statement, is difficult to ignore. The serious questions it poses for men caught in traditional roles of work and distancing from intimacy are well identified.

This book attempts to understand the developmental changes or passages that men go through after the age of 40, and then outline within this new map how the journey can be travelled with greater awareness and with permission to change and renew oneself at each stage. To Sheehy, the mind matters as much as the body! But in her preoccupation with male potency she clearly identifies the mind as the source of both the problem and the solution. The makers of Viagra please note!

But the makers of Viagra have noted that there is a problem. It is called male impotence. The causes, consequences and solutions are well outlined by Sheehy. If as many men are impotent, as Sheehy believes, then it does merit the attention she has given the problem. Men have, in general, made some bad choices in life about work, about competition at work and play, about the priority of family. Sheehy believes these bad choices are making men impotent. Brothers this cannot be good!

Men have not been taught to ask questions about their health, their sexual life-cycle or their psychological well-being - until disaster strikes. The traditional man is now dead or at least impotent! Traditionally, men were taught that life was like this: if I work hard and achieve certain things I will be happy. Then when such external things do not provide meaning to life, the result is often anger and confusion. This problem has no name. It is like Betty Friedan's "problem that has no name" (Friedan, 1963) but it has taken men more than thirty years longer to discover this men's problem "that has no name". Sheehy hints that if we are this slow, it may explain why we die younger! Men are so preoccupied with winning in the first half of life that we miss the signals that can prepare us with a winning strategy for the Second Adulthood. Life begins at forty.

Sheehy's men begin life at forty. The danger is the slow slide into the second half of life - a life of depression and a clutching onto outmoded definitions of masculinity. This book presents a brighter outlook. The result of redesigning the rest of one's life is that one becomes a better lover, a better father, is truer to oneself, freer to express feelings and exercise creativity, more influential, more collaborative, more spiritual (1999, p. 8). All that is needed is a mind open enough to take on board these new ideas.

The forties for men are presented as a challenging time for facing some disturbing realities including greying or losing hair as a metaphor for losing control, the first glimmer of mortality. Listening to inner voices might prompt one to ask: what will one do for the rest of one's life? She is interesting when trying to discuss how to be a man when there are no rules for how to be a man today! The danger is that too many men live trying to avoid succumbing to one's feminine side on the one hand or on the other extreme of affirming masculinity through repeated acts of aggression or self-destruction.

The fifties, sixties and seventies are outlined as offering new opportunities to redefine one's masculinity. Each stage is presented in the context of statistics and data from the census and research agencies. She offers a general framework in which the themes of the decade are outlined and this is interwoven with lively quotes from the ideal "stars" of her male world.

If this positive spin on ageing is upbeat, this is also the problem. The individualism of the humanistic approach to development and of American society raise serious questions about this work. To reach ones' full potential is an admirable goal but she is blind to a number of issues, mostly of a social and some of a psychological nature. She is so positive that to live longer becomes almost the possibility of living for ever! There is mention of death but never of oneself. Others are dying, family and friends, children and grandchildren; one is even reminded of losses or "exit events." But one's own death is a subject of deep denial. Preparing for death is not part of her life map.

On the social, Sheehy, like the humanists, is a blank. She seems to be of the view that if one gets one's mind in order and gets one's inner life sorted with positive attitudes and orientations then everything will be fine. This is a great confidence trick. The fallacy of all psychology and counselling from Jung to Adler (and since) is that it suffers from social amnesia (Jacoby, 1975). The social, in the form a capitalist system, still remains intact at the end of the lusty life portrayed by Sheehy. Her way of thinking gets people well again to take part in the capitalist economy and its social relations but with a different mind set. Unfortunately, it leaves unchanged the social system which is the cause of the developmental stagnation in the first instance! The divisions of labour are both out there and in our personality. To change one without the other is false consciousness.

Such blind spots are of enormous consequence for adult educators, in Ireland too. The predominant model of adult development practised in Ireland is informed by the same naive asocial and ahistorical psychologism as Sheehy. To change one's mind is the solution of Sheehy and many in adult education. To change both mind and society based on a sound understanding of the interactions between the two is a more holistic and radical position.

Unfortunately, male potency and a full life may not be possible in an unjust world. In spite of this, much of Sheehy is worth reading and brothers will find this book a wake-up call to a better middle age, even a lusty winter in the seventies but most importantly an invitation to expand current definitions of manliness.

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Imagining tomorrow; adult education for transformation

Marjorie Mayo

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When deciding to review this book, I have to admit I was initially attracted by the title more than anything else. Perhaps it's because it brought to mind the immortal words of John Lennon: "... you may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one..." and others within his classic *Imagine*. It is probably also because the book nourishes many of my own biases about the need for us to look at alternatives to the predominant approaches to education, economics, politics, health and so forth. Frequently in my classes at Kimmage, I quote Albert Einstein when he says, "imagination is far more important than knowledge." I believe this little book echoes that view and goes some way towards clarifying why it is so important.

Given the area in which I am working, my interest in this book is held because of the comparisons Marjorie Mayo makes between the so-called 'first world' and 'third world' in respect of adult education provision and approaches. However, in terms of the readers of the Adult Learner I wondered who might read this book, and would they find it useful? I will return to these two questions at the end. First, let me say what I found interesting about **Imagining tomorrow: adult education for transformation** – aside from the title!

The book provides a very broad sweep across the universe that is adult education. In doing so, it challenges us to move from purely personal learning (a common trend in the developed parts of the world, which favours self-development and individual progression), to think about people learning collectively, (the emphasis in the less-developed parts of the world) not just in small, local groups, but the learning that can and does take place at regional, national, and even global levels. Attempting to draw so many different strands together is a potentially cumbersome project but Mayo manages to pull these together very well. She weaves her way between real life, local situations – understandably focusing a lot on UK examples – and makes good use of international comparisons, both from the North and the South.

Marjorie Mayo is undoubtedly coming from a very definite political stance as she emphasises the political nature of adult education throughout the book. She reminds us of the key question asked about all education – as articulated by Paulo Freire – which asks whether it is domesticating or liberating. This question is placed in the context of the world today where market-led approaches to economic development predominate and in which Mayo highlights the failure of such approaches to adequately cater for the social needs of communities as a whole. To be fair, the author attempts to offer an even-handed objective perspective on this question – acknowledging that 'eloquent and persuasive testimony of the advantages of market-led ideas in a free society' exist elsewhere. Nevertheless, she unswervingly advocates the need for a type of adult education that is not domesticating or 'taming'. In adopting this approach she is faithfully adhering to the advice she quotes later,

Freire has reflected upon the importance of maintaining the distinction between political education and political propaganda.... [Freire] has also emphasised that adult educators should not be in the business of giving people political 'lines'...Freire has, however, argued that the adult educator has the duty to make political issues explicit, in critical ways. 'I have the duty to say that there are five, six, seven parties' he explained. 'I have the duty to discuss the ideology and the political choices of these different parties. I have also the duty of telling them which is my choice. I do not accept the neutrality which is to have a kind of hypocritical posture to the world. What I cannot do,' he

concluded, however, was either to lie, 'or to impose my choice upon them'.

Besides Freire - who appears as a consistent thread, (as one might expect given the orientation of the book and the great man's seminal influence on approaches toward education for transformation) - among other key thinkers cited are Gramsci and Gelpi. Gramsci's ideas are clearly influential in terms of the critical questioning towards the dominant status quo and which provides a basis for some strategies explored later. He appears as the 'soul mate' of Freire, when Mayo reports Freire as saying 'I only read Gramsci when I was in exile. I read Gramsci and I discovered that I had been greatly influenced by Gramsci long before I read him.' Gelpi's work with UNESCO, wherein he developed a global perspective on lifelong education and analysed links between oppression in the first and third worlds are also illuminated and illuminating.

In addressing the subject of oppression, Mayo offers practical examples of responses that adult educators or community educators can make to such situations. Models of social analysis or participatory action research (PAR) undertaken by adult and community educators are examined. Through such approaches, it is suggested, we all can undertake PAR and enable ourselves to more effectively challenge certain policies, decisions, and even myths about how we might live our lives. For instance, in chapter 4, Mayo provides a useful checklist for compiling a local community economic profile. Similarly in chapter 5, she highlights approaches that may be used to obtain a social or community profile. Such approaches were used, for example, in response to impending redundancies within areas dependant upon one or two major manufacturers. The caveat was added that these didn't always succeed in creating new employment for the most vulnerable members of the community but they did at least offer alternative perspectives on possible solutions and a solid base from which future policies - which might otherwise ignore the most powerless - could be contested.

A real strength of the book stems from its very broad nature, in that it reveals just some of the inter-connections that may exist between a wide variety of groups in society, e.g. between women's groups, youth groups, anti-racist groups, aged-persons groups, and so on. However, the author stresses the fact that raising consciousness alone is not sufficient to bring about transformation. Rather, we should be aware that structural and material conditions must be changed too before any genuine transformation can be effected. Another cautionary note is given about the problem of sectarianism in all its forms. For example, quoting Allman, Mayo poses some of the dilemmas around 'identity politics',

i.e. how to be conscious about one's oppression and to organise around this, without letting this degenerate into the narrower position of organising 'around your own interests?' How to address the

processes by which one type of oppression is played off against another, so that people are led to focus on their own specific form of oppression rather than understanding how one form links with another to constitute a structure of oppression?’

We are left with these questions, rather than answers which, of course, is in keeping with the nature of transformative education.

Finally, the book works as a very accessible introduction to the wide range of areas connected to adult education and provides a valuable reference resource to all who might wish to explore further any of the subjects that are (in the author’s own admission) only touched upon here. Overall this book is an overview of just a few of the many different strands that comprise the adult education universe. It is a rather optimistic and encouraging read which, I am sure, others in the field will find provides an interesting panorama of different perspectives and ideas.

To return to my original questions, who is the book for and will it be useful? If you are an adult learner wanting to get a broad perspective on the ‘bigger picture’ – beyond the Irish adult education scene; if you are keen to know how certain traditions and approaches of education and training were developed; if you are interested in the links between the worlds of work and learning in the community; if you would like to know more about the distinctions between domesticating and liberating education; if you have queries about what education for democratic citizenship is about; if you are intrigued about the concepts of ‘useful knowledge’ contrasted with ‘really useful knowledge’; if you wish to get some insights into the huge variety of ways in which people can act to challenge and, hopefully, change their life situations, then, I have no doubt that you will find Marjorie Mayo’s book very useful indeed.

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