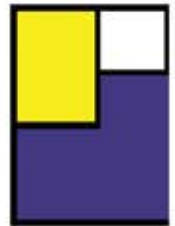


EILEEN ADAMS: AGENT OF CHANGE

in art, design and
environmental education



Eileen Adams



Figure 1 This drawing/collage of a streetscape by a 17-year old student renders the ordinary extraordinary, and the everyday remarkable.

(© The Henley College, permission granted by Andy Pegg)

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in art, design and environmental education

Eileen Adams

Making is central, but art and design should not be just about making things: it should also be about making sense, making meaning and making things happen.

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I thank the small team at Loughborough Design Press. Ken Baynes has been a guiding presence for most of my working life. As usual, he has been a sympathetic and effective editor. I am grateful for his insights and advice.

Eileen Adams

London,

April 2016

Art, Design and Environmental Education

Coton C.E. Primary School
Christchurch C. E. Primary
Cwmrhydyceirw Primary School
Edgebarrow School
Gateway School
Hartcliffe School
Kingsthorpe Upper School
Merrywood Girls School
Newton Primary School
Parliament Hill School
Pimlico School
Priory School
Rotherham College of Arts & Community Studies
Sheredes School
Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera

School as a Learning Environment

Allerton Bywater Junior School
Bassett Green First School
Beddington Park Primary School
Buckpool Comprehensive School
Chatham South Secondary School
Christchurch C. E. Primary School
Cilfrew Primary School
Coombes Infant School
Craigfelen Primary School
Crawley Ridge Middle School

Denmead Primary School
Edwalton Primary School
Eveline Lowe Primary School
Fowey Comprehensive School
Gillespie Primary School
Glan Ely Comprehensive School
Graham Balfour Comprehensive
Molehill Copse Primary School
Parsonage Farm Junior School
Robert Blair Primary School

Learning through Drawing

Batley Parish Primary School
Beech JIN School
Castlevew Primary School
Chenderit School
Clydach Primary School
Dunfermline High School
Eltham College
Eveline Lowe Primary School
Evesham Nursery School
Fortismere School
Gateway College
George Farmer Technology College
Gilnahirk Primary School
Grange Primary School
Hammersmith PRU
Hardenhuish School
Impington Village College
John Ruskin School
Kesteven and Grantham School (Girls)
Le Cateau Primary School

Lilycroft Nursery School
Lonlas Primary School
Maiden Erlegh School
Matravers School
Oakham School
Overton Primary School
Penyrheol Primary School
Pond Park Nursery School
Robinsfield Infant School
St Clares Oxford
The Henley College
The Isis Academy
Tre Uchaf Primary School
Triangle Nursery School
Watford Grammar School (Girls)
Ynystawe Primary School
Sir Graham Balfour Comprehensive School,
Weaverham Forest Primary School
West Denton Comprehensive School
West Walker Primary School
Withywood School



Figure 2 Observational drawing in a 14-year-old's sketchbook, summer school at Castle Toward.

(© City of Glasgow, permission granted by Willie Nelson)

ILLUSTRATIONS

Except where otherwise credited, all the illustrations in the book are taken from photographs by Eileen Adams. Some of these show Eileen's own paintings and drawings, but many show work produced by pupils involved in projects where she was either a teacher, researcher or the director. In the case of the earliest projects dating back to the 1970s and 80s (*Front Door*, *Art and the Built Environment*, the *Working Parties* project) we have been unable to obtain documentary evidence that parents or guardians formally gave their permission for use of the works outside the classroom. We therefore have to assume that the copyrights still belong to the pupils who made the works. All of these young contributors to Eileen's research are now grown-up and, since we do not have their names, we have not been able to trace them or request their permission to reproduce their work. This is highly regrettable because their contribution is essential to this book. We hope that some at least may discover that their work has been valued, preserved and reproduced. If they contact us, we will post a credit on our website (www.ldpress.co.uk) and include their names in any subsequent editions of the book.

We are grateful to a number of organizations that were involved in the original projects which were able to assure us that they had no objection to the reproduction of the images. They include the London Metropolitan Archive (for ILEA); the National Archives at Kew (for the Schools Council); Pearson Longman (who included a number of the illustrations in *Art and the Built Environment* by Colin Ward and Eileen Adams); the Royal College of Art; and the Town and Country Planning Association.

In the case of later projects, for example, *Learning through Landscapes* and The Campaign for Drawing, the organizations involved hold the copyrights and have been able to give permission. They and individual teachers, artists, film-makers, researchers and lecturers are credited in the appropriate captions.

We are grateful to them all.

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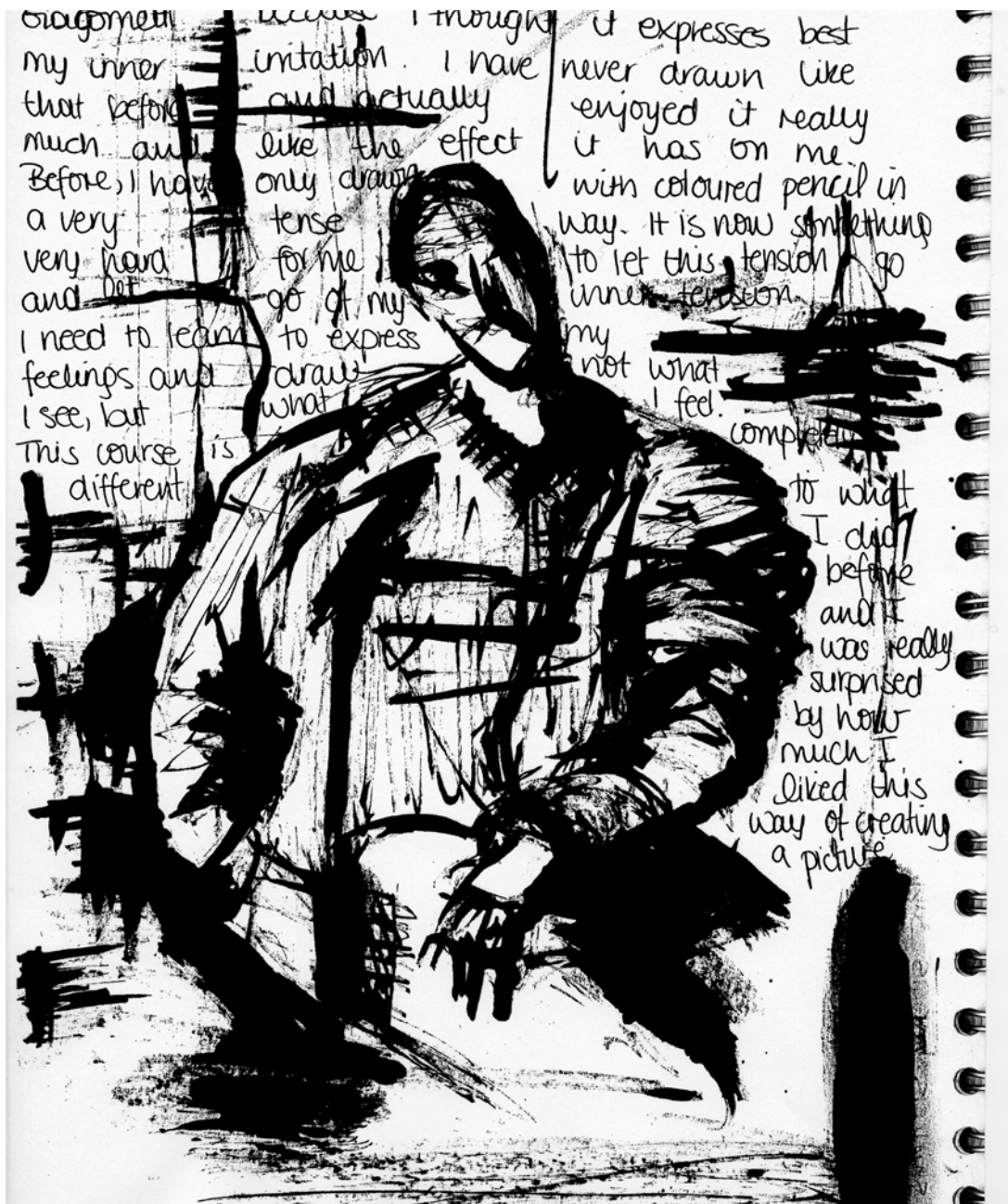


Figure 3 Page from a research notebook: a 17-year old student reflects on the work of an artist.

(© Oakham School, permission granted by Simon Poppy)

THIS BOOK

This book describes projects and programmes in which I have been involved, and shares the thinking that underpinned them. It illuminates the strategies for research and development and identifies some of the influences and drivers in my work, as well as acknowledging frustrations and difficulties that blocked curriculum change and improvement in educational practice. I make policy recommendations derived from 45 years' experience working with teachers and schools.

The writing is autobiographical. Three characteristics of this are: bridging the relationship between the individual and society; interactivity between subjective experience and historical setting; and active agency of the individual player (Forsyth and Weiner, 2011). I have concentrated on active agency, my own and others, and have tried to contextualise that in relation to the times or the situations in which we found ourselves. The writing is necessarily personal, but where possible I have tried to examine my experience and explain the thinking or motivations that underpinned my actions. The narrative is punctuated by analysis, reflection and evaluation, linking practice with theory. The intention is to share, through a critical biography, the experience of prompting change in art, design and environmental education and to strengthen arguments for visual literacy standing alongside verbal literacy.

'... an autobiography will add to reliable knowledge if it makes use of individual experience, theory, and a process of reflection and re-thinking, which includes attention to politically situated perspectives. This is a 'critical autobiography' (Griffiths, 1994).'

I acknowledge many colleagues who have contributed through documenting and sharing their work. Significant change does not happen immediately through the efforts of one individual. It is created by a critical mass of people who share similar ideas and ways of working, and are able to bring their collective energies to bear on particular challenges. This is also the way a body of knowledge can be built up about situations that are dynamic and about which there is little existing theory.

A glaring omission is work developed internationally. This created opportunities to test out study methods to find out if they could be adapted to other settings and situations. The experience of working with sympathetic colleagues in other countries has been a source of encouragement and inspiration, and has had a profound influence on me. I acknowledge this in a separate publication.

This book is intended for policymakers, for those involved in action research, for teachers in schools and educators in other settings, for student teachers, for researchers in higher education and for workers in the cultural sector. It is also for organisations and institutions concerned with visual literacy and should be of interest to those bodies and charitable trusts who provide funds for development, seeking to improve young people's educational experience.



Figure 4 A drawing I made when I was 15 of 'lower school', the original Cardiff Intermediate School for Girls, opened in 1895.

(© and permission granted by Eileen Adams)

1. INTRODUCTION

As a child, I saved things and made collections of toys, books and stones. As an adult, I held on to memories through photo albums and journals. These activities helped me to make sense of my existence. I found it necessary to keep a record of my work to be able to share it with others. My personal archive relating to professional activities now contains thousands of books, reports, files, diaries, correspondence, slides, photographs, photocopies, DVDs, digital images, drawings and other documents. These hold a trace of my working life in teaching, examining, research, advocacy, curriculum and professional development. They have provided feedback, a memory bank, a stimulus, a reference, a means of reflection and a prompt for imagination.

This is the evidence on which I base this book. It traces a personal journey and encounters with fellow travelers. It draws freely on my previous writing to show the origins of my thinking and to reiterate what has remained constant. A personal archive holds tattered shreds of our history and is the basis for a shared collective memory and body of knowledge. It tells us what we did and what we believed. It shows us where we have come from and can point the way we might go. If we do not know who we were, what we were or what we did, how can we go forward? We cannot use our voice if we have nothing to say.

I have attempted to distil what it is that I want to put on record. How do educators learn about the philosophy and practice of art and design education? Are they influenced by their own teachers? Have they had an excellent training in education? Do they improvise, or do professional colleagues impact on their thinking and their practice? Do they attempt to place their efforts in a wider historical context of those who have gone before and those who will follow? What permanent trace will there be of their work? How have they contributed to the development of the field? Have they made a difference? I hope to throw some light on these questions.

In this first chapter, I summarize the chronology. In Chapter 2, I acknowledge some early influences. In the next five chapters, I reflect on projects and programmes for which I have been responsible. Chapter 8 distils the strategies and vehicles for development. Chapter 9 summarizes key ideas that have underpinned my work; policy recommendations look to the future. Chapter 10 lists my publications.

CHRONOLOGY

For the first 15 years of my professional life, I worked in institutional and organizational settings; for the remaining 30, I have been a freelance consultant. As a portfolio worker, my career developed as a rich thread of inter-related and interwoven strands of teaching, researching, lecturing, writing, consultancy, examining and mentoring. Making connections between art, design and environmental education, the particular emphasis has varied: what has been constant has been the drive to change and improve practice and to develop the field. Extending visual literacy in schools has focused on changing perceptions and attitudes, and changing opportunities for learning and teaching. All my work in education has been linked by the notion of participation: participation in the learning process, participation in environmental design and participation in cultural life.

Outcomes have been directed at both educators and policy makers. My work has been characterized by optimism and enthusiasm. As a teacher, I wanted to improve my own practice, to make students' learning and my teaching more interesting, satisfying and relevant. I was practical and keen on learning through doing. I was also reflective and questioning. Supporting the work of others, I have adopted similar approaches, and sought to be responsive and encouraging, while acting as a critical friend, creating a degree of challenge and disturbance.

I began my career in 1970 as an art and design teacher in London. Later, through the *Front Door* project at Pimlico School, I became involved in curriculum development prompted by research at the Royal College of Art. I was then seconded to a national project, *Art and the Built Environment*, funded by the Schools Council. These projects took art and design out of the studio and into the street. They were opportunities for inter-professional collaboration in education, enabling architects to work with teachers. I gained a fresh perspective on learning and started to question the role of the teacher.

In the 1980s, I established my career as a freelance consultant, and developed my work as a researcher through directing the *Learning through Landscapes* project, concerned with the use, design and management of school grounds. I wrote about *Young People's Participation in Environmental Change*. These projects extended my understanding of the purposes and practice of art, design and environmental education and the links between them.

In the 1990s, I initially focused my research on public art. My experience as a research fellow at South Bank University and as an academic tutor on the MSc programme, *Education for Sustainability*, introduced me to research in a range of disciplines in higher education. As a visiting academic at Middlesex University, I understood the importance of publication for the Research Assessment Exercise. As Deputy Chief Examiner (Art/Design) for the International Baccalaureate and external examiner at Glasgow School of Art, the University of Strathclyde, Chelsea School of Art and Manchester Metropolitan University, I learned about evaluation and validation. These experiences reinforced for me the importance of action research and the need to develop theory from practice.

Since 2000, I have continued to engage in research and development through The Campaign for Drawing. Creating *Power Drawing* books, audio-visual material and online resources and supporting others through professional development programmes, has extended learning through drawing in a wide range of settings. The experience highlighted the relationship between a specific development project and a campaign, and the importance of establishing a groundswell of interest and a critical mass to support change.

My work has extended to other countries. Since 1977, I have acted as a consultant and been a lecturer at conferences and courses in many parts of the world. Working with colleagues from different cultures enriched my knowledge of learning and teaching, and obliged me to look with fresh eyes at our work in the UK. It showed me the power of visual communication, and demonstrated the need for educational material that crosses boundaries to develop greater international understanding.

2. INFLUENCES

EARLY CHILDHOOD

My father was a bus driver in Greenock. Sometimes, I would travel with him, viewing the scene from the front window of the bus. My favourite runs were to Bridgend and Ashton, the landscape a series of frames of the Firth of Clyde, rolling hills, glimpses of shipyards, municipal parks and bowling greens, bomb sites and railway embankments, Italian ice cream shops, facades of tenements and back gardens of the big houses on the Esplanade. At the age of five, I probably had the environmental knowledge of a bike-owning 10 year old boy.

I also had a more intimate knowledge of landscape through playing in a variety of environments – in the sand ponds, at the shore, on bomb sites, up the park and in the brambles. At the age of seven, I was expected to run messages and look after Jimmy, my two-year old cousin. This meant that I knew every paving stone, change of level, wall, hedge, stretch of railings, clump of grass and puddle on the way from my granny's to the Co-operative. Roller skates extended my mobility only temporarily, as bits of gravel from the soft tarmac stuck in the wheels, and the straps repeatedly came undone.

The houses in Brown Street had gardens, but my granny had something much more exciting – a back green. The differences were the layout, the ways space was used, the plants that grew, and most importantly, what children were allowed to do there! We thought gardens were boring. Adults walked up and down the paths admiring flowers, vegetables and trees. Or they tired themselves out digging, shifting, lifting, cutting, clipping, tying, sorting, collecting, piling and moving stuff. Our back green was different. Adults only came out there to hang out washing, fetch coal, put out rubbish or sleep in a broken deckchair.

The back green was the children's domain. It served as a setting and a focus for study, providing resources for informal learning through physical, social and imaginative play – earth, air, fire and water. Digging up rhubarb and eating it with a home-made poke of sugar, stringing blankets over the clothes line to make tents, collecting stones, leaves, petals and seed pods for sweets or vegetables in our make-believe shops. In summer, aunts and neighbours were the audience for our back green concerts. Weeding was an excuse to get down and get dirty. We volunteered to cut the hedge so that we could work with dangerous tools, and listen to the shears make a delicious and satisfying noise as they snapped shut. The clackety-clack of the lawn mower was equally satisfying, but it did not last long, as the patch of grass had too many stones, so the blades were soon broken. Sweeping up leaves from the concrete outside the back door in winter, watching the tarmac path melt in summer and burning rubbish in the autumn marked changes in the seasons.

The Anderson shelter was a refuge from the rain, as well as a site of scientific enquiry, where we explored the world of the spider, the effects of water on metal and the magic of plant colonization. The hut, out of bounds when my uncle was around, was a

laboratory, where we conducted experiments with sawdust and oil, an old gramophone and a joiner's vise. We did not have a sand pit – we had something much better – a coal bunker. The back porch, with its meat safe high on the wall, bags of onions, potatoes and clothes pegs and piles of muddy boots that always needed tidying up and organizing, was reserved for rainy days. The spirit of exploration and enquiry was nurtured and skills of experimentation and powers of imagination developed in this loose-fit, loose-parts place, unkempt and dirty, full of possibilities and surprises.

Whatever home we happened to be became the environment for play. In my uncle's single-end, we used the set-in bed draped with curtains as a stage, and dressed up in my aunt's nylon negligee with sateen edging and her feather boa. At my granny's house, we played in the cupboard under the stairs, in the small bedrooms and the space beneath the table in the living room. The maroon chenille tablecloth served as a train pinned onto the shoulders of a succession of princesses. My grandfather brought bits of wood from the joiners' shop at the shipyard, and we would spend hours building structures. When there was nothing better to do, we would squeeze into the larder and reorganize the large sweetie jars with screw tops which stored flour, rice and meal, or else tidy up the drawer in the sideboard with its piles of used envelopes, bits of string and assorted stuff that did not have a place anywhere else. At my cousins' house, the bunk beds served as castle or cave and were where we read comics. I spent most of my time dressing up, choreographing dances in front of the mirror, producing back green concerts, creating dens, playing wee houses or schools, drawing and painting, making models of hat shops in shoe boxes with plasticine, sewing dolls' clothes and making beds for them from Terry's chocolate boxes, or playing the piano. I read anything I could find.

From the age of four, I accompanied my mother to her office, where I played happily with paper, pencils, rubber stamps and typewriters and helped with the filing, developing a life-long love of stationery and card index boxes. It was wonderful when my mother brought scrap paper home and I could draw and paint without worrying about filling the page. A neighbour took me to a fashion show at Port Glasgow town hall at the age of four, inspiring me throughout my childhood to draw parades of women in long dresses. My father's training as a joiner was apparent in his meticulous preparation for any practical activity and his emphasis on the right tool for the job. I have inherited his love of boxes and tins full of stuff that I cannot bear to throw away, as they might come in handy one day. I think that also influenced my approach to research!

I developed an interest in music from listening and dancing to my parents' small collection of records. We did not have a lot of books: *Standard Stories from the Opera*, *The Albatross Book of Living Verse* and *Good Housekeeping's Cookery Compendium*, as well as my prizes from school. Soon I began reading anything I could find. The first adult book I read at the age of eight was *A Dominie's Log* (Neill, no date). My father had been reading and enjoying it, laughing out loud from time to time, as it struck a chord with his own experience as a child. I thought it might be like the comics in the *Sunday Post*, *Oor Wullie* and *The Broons*. I was disappointed that there were no illustrations, but I was able to read the large-print book. I still have it.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

I knew I wanted to be a teacher before I went to school. I thought I had a vocation. It was because of Miss Fletcher, an elderly lady with whom we lived when I was a young child. She told me stories of her time as a schoolmistress in a one-woman school in the Hebrides, firing my imagination and ambition. On my first day at Jean Street School in Port Glasgow, I told Miss Wilson, the deputy headteacher: 'I've come here to learn to read'. She said: 'You've come to the right place! Sit down at that table, open that book and be quiet!' Yes! This was proper school! Art was colouring in templates of cows, making a sampler in needlework and creating tiny models from balls of well-used green plasticine. My most successful project was a table and chairs that fitted into a matchbox. The teacher told me to take it home and my mother put it on the mantelpiece. The plasticine melted. The day I got to play with the wooden construction kit in school, I was stung by a bee, and dropped the pieces on the floor. I was never allowed to open the box again.

When we moved to Wales, at Lansdowne Junior Mixed School in Cardiff, I joined in choral speaking and particularly enjoyed the experience of reciting 'Rats! They fought the dogs and killed the cats, and bit the babies in their cradles ...' from Browning's *Pied Piper of Hamelin*. I played the part of Mary, Jesus' mother, in a tear-jerking playlet that I co-wrote, sang *The Jolly Miller* at an Eisteddfod, and even gave an impassioned, but inaccurate, reading of a bible passage in Welsh at a school assembly. My achievements were acknowledged: highly commended for a painting entitled *The Pet Shop*, and a letter of commendation from the Post Office for a critique of my favourite book, *Oor Wullie*. When it was raining, we danced around, stripping willows and gathering peascods. I envied the boys who were allowed to weave baskets.

The first teacher I loved was Miss Jane Phyllis Thomas, who introduced me to reading, drama, poetry and choral speaking. I was given lots of responsibility: tidying cupboards, being ink monitor, watering plants, organizing displays of flowers, washing up teacups, running errands for the headteacher, looking after classes if the teacher was ill. The first book that I bought with my pocket money in 1953 was about the Coronation and cost 2/6d. More useful was the encyclopædia I bought in 1958, to help me with a project on Leonardo da Vinci. My mother managed to buy half a set of Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopædia* (1910), as she could not answer all my questions. I still have those books, and still love the thousands of illustrations.

At the age of ten, a typical Saturday was to go to Churchill Way swimming baths with my friend, Gaynor, have coffee and toast at Astey's Café, and then, our hair still wet, we would try on hats at the British Home Stores. After we were chased out of there, we would visit stationers' shops, fingering paper and pens, then decide whether or not to go to the cinema, the National Museum or St. Fagans Folk Museum, where we drank tea from mugs whilst chatting to the guardians of the cottages. We were allowed to open cupboards, sit on beds and examine the patchwork. At the age of nine, I received a two-wheeler Humber bike from my parents (with basket and bell, of course), and from the school, a ticket for the Carnegie Library in Canton. This was my kind of town!

TRIAL SCHOOLS 1976-1979

In the first phase of the project, trial schools exemplified different kinds of art departments in a range of geographical locations and social settings. Teachers were expected to address the project aims, but were free to choose the focus for study and study methods. The intention was to develop materials for learning and teaching that could be used in schools by art teachers. They were expected to document their work in art courses and general studies courses. Initially the focus was on students aged 16-19, but it was soon apparent that the ideas and study methods were appropriate for all age ranges. A few examples indicate ways of thinking and the range of topics they contributed.

At Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera, a Welsh-speaking comprehensive school in West Glamorgan, John James, the head of the art department, concentrated on building up an aesthetic vocabulary through sensory experience based on environmental exploration. He was also concerned with a verbal vocabulary to cope with the demands of critical study and create a link between vision and language. Projects included exploration of the school building and campus, the village and locality. Pupils created art and discussed their experience:

'Art teachers will obviously show a strong bias in favour of visual feedback, possessing plenty of creative imagination. The results may be gratifying to the teachers as well as those responsible for the work, but what has happened to the pupils during the process of producing these results? Their experience should not only lead to 'works of art', it should also provide them with a method of communicating their ideas and attitudes developed through this experience, and this cannot be achieved by merely asking them to collect and record information. They should also have opportunities to discuss and analyse their experience as a basis for building a critical vocabulary' (James, 1982).

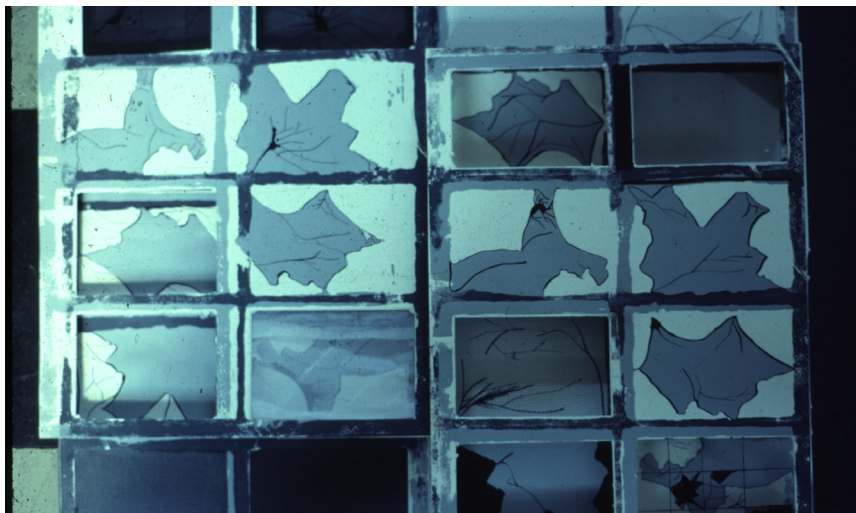
The course *General Education through Art and Design* at Rotherham College of Arts and Community Studies sought to integrate art and design with academic and vocational studies. 70% of students' time was spent on art and design, and the remainder on general education. The course aimed to provide a framework for study within which students could discover and develop their full potential through working in areas normally associated with the creative arts. Students were encouraged to develop a capacity for independent enquiry and an ability to express conclusions based on personal research. The staff hoped to develop students' ability to think and communicate more easily through the use



Figure 16

Artwork by 14-18 year olds revealed a personal, emotional response to place. They might start from what they saw on their way to school , passing rows of houses or waiting at the railway station. They experimented with different viewpoints: looking up at the façade of a multi-storey office building or down the nave of a cathedral.

(Permission granted by Kate Henderson, Town & Country Planning Association)



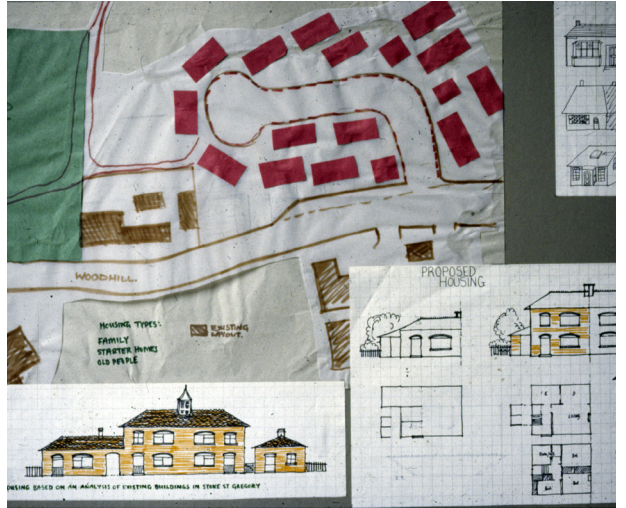


Figure 17

Sixteen and 17-year-olds from the Priory School in Portsmouth made studies of landscape and sense of place on art and design field trips to Stoke St Gregory in Somerset. The village hall served as studio, dining room and dormitory. Students explored ideas about space and learned techniques for analysis and critique. A day working with pupils from the village primary school extended their knowledge of the neighbourhood and a visit to Taunton provided new stimulus.

(© and permission granted by Roger Standen, Priory School)

of spoken and written English as well as visual media of drawing and photography. Study subjects chosen by students included a sensory walk, the home and its environs, the neighbourhood, a study of cemeteries – The Victorian Way of Death, and the Life and Death of Traveling Fairs of West Yorkshire. The work emphasized the use of the environment as a stimulus and source of inspiration for making art: the focus was on image making and the picturesque.

John Morgan at Peter Symonds College in Winchester encouraged a greater degree of critical study. Study subjects included movement, structures, contrasts, barriers, change, minimal buildings. The policy was:

'... more concerned with visual education than the production of works of art. [Teachers] see one of their main problems as breaking down preconceptions of what art is about, and encouraging an inquisitive attitude towards visual problems and ideas through both calculated processes and intuitive reactions. The course is dynamic in that it changes from year to year, but it relies on the primary use of the visual world as a starting point, source and basic vocabulary from which to select specific problems on which to impose personal ideas or feelings. The core is reflected in the studies involving drawing and abstraction, and these, together with an introduction to different processes and techniques, and an investigation of visual language are the essence of the first year scheme' (Morgan, 1982).

Field trips offered opportunities for more intensive study. Students found that time and seclusion, together with the experience of immersing themselves totally in a particular project without the distractions of a busy school day permitted a greater depth and complexity of work, together with opportunities for discussion and debate. Students were encouraged to think more deeply about why the environment looked the way it did. Roger Standen at Priory School in Portsmouth involved students in planning trips to Stoke St Gregory, a village in Somerset, calculating and costing expenses for food and petrol, and organizing materials, equipment and themselves to stay for a week in the country. Teachers planned activities for them to test out a range of study methods to explore the notion of space, such as sensory walks, steeple chasing, serial vision and games to provide a framework for observation, recording and analyzing information. The first few days acted as induction, equipping students with ways of working they might find useful in environmental study.

The final days focused on a design challenge, an opportunity to think about possible changes to the environment. The first year, it was to introduce 24 new dwelling units into the village. The second year, it was to find a new use for a derelict farmhouse. In the third year, it was to redevelop the village pub after a supposed disastrous fire. They were then expected to create visual material and arguments to present their proposals for change to the villagers, who engaged in critique with the students. Villagers were invited to an exhibition of students' work and to respond to their presentations and proposals. The pub landlord had a lot to say!