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HARRY THUBRON: HIS CONTRIBUTION TO FOUNDATION STUDIES IN ART EDUCATION

The Ohio State University

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HARRY THUBRON: HIS CONTRIBUTION TO FOUNDATION STUDIES IN ART EDUCATION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Erik H. Forrest, D.A., A.T.D.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1983

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INTRODUCTION

From the time of the guilds and the early academies of art in Europe there has been controversy about how artists should be educated. Questions of skill, technique, style and content continually arise; answers are suggested, principles and laws enunciated, practices modified. It would be folly to hope for final answers. As many philosophers of art have pointed out, art itself is not a closed concept--what people take to be art, and what they understand by the making of art, varies with time and place. Controversy, therefore, about the training or education of artists and designers is not surprising; more surprising is how few radically different sets of answers have been proposed and how, constantly, the same questions recur.

One of the most revolutionary set of new ideas was that proposed and put into practice by Walter Gropius and his colleagues at the Bauhaus in Germany in the twenties and thirties. That series of experiments, its acceptance or rejection, in whole or in part, has affected all higher education in art since that time.

What follows here is an attempt to describe and interpret one of the post-Bauhaus movements in English
foundation for the education of artists and designers surfaced with some clarity and force. It was a movement that began in the early fifties, reached its peak in the sixties, and continues to exert some influence on the curriculum and practices of English art schools and departments today.

Any vital educational development comes about as a consequence of a conjunction of new ideas and theories, the presence of certain personalities as teachers, theorists and administrators, and the happenstance of a setting—with all of its social, political and economic attributes—which is conducive to change. To chart all of these factors and their interrelationships would, even if possible, be outside the scope of this study. While paying some attention to the richness of the background and setting and to the large number of people involved, the plan is to follow the career of one of the key figures—Harry Thubron. His tenure at the Leeds College of Art from 1955-1964 will be the chief focus of attention and will be used as the basis for further historical description and analysis.

The changes in patterns of teaching, the introduction of new curricula, and the contributions of different individuals and institutions during the period are not well documented. Few written accounts are available and even the practical work has received little critical attention. Where it is possible, for example in the chapter which deals
mainly with the official changes in higher education in art after World War II, official reports and other documentary materials have been used extensively, and these give a reasonably clear picture of the surface changes. In describing the detailed results of these changes and their particular consequences at Leeds and in other institutions where Thubron was employed, I have found it necessary to rely heavily on information gained from tape-recorded interviews with the chief participants and some of their students. These interviews were conducted by John Jones in 1959, by Peter Sinclair in 1974, and by this writer in the period 1980 to 1982.

I was a faculty member of the Leeds College of Art between 1950 and 1962, teaching chiefly drawing and design; much of the description of the developments at Leeds in the fifties and early sixties is based on personal memories. One cannot place total reliance on such memories; the distance in time and the influence of intervening events have unavoidable effects. As a recent educational writer put it; "To the defect of failures in accurate remembering may be added those of retrospective editing, self-justification ... myth-building and a host of other evils." I have, of course, tried to avoid or minimize these defects as much as possible. It would have been safer to stay with written evidence but in this case the body of such evidence was slim. The technique of oral interview may
have built-in defects; the interviewees also are talking of events in the past and their memories may be as inaccurate as one's own. In such interviews however much may be said that the speaker might be unwilling to commit to paper, and spoken statements can be followed up with further questioning. This may reveal aspects of the historical events which might otherwise remain hidden. Even though oral evidence may be somewhat unreliable in recovering the "facts" of the case, it is less facts that are being sought than material to aid explication and interpretation. Questioning may reveal information about "personalities, motives, relationships, atmosphere, contemporary perspectives and concerns, and a host of less tangible benefits." 2 The tape-recordings have been used as much to provide some account of the range of feelings and attitudes surrounding the practical changes and to amplify and corroborate my memories as to give an accurate historical narrative. However, all of this oral evidence and my own recollections are open to the charge of distortion caused by the passage of time. A few of the recordings were made contemporaneously with the events but most were made much later. It will, I hope, be obvious in the narrative where my personal viewpoint is being expressed, but I have no doubt that my subjective reactions, both now and at the time, color my account. Do these memories--mine and those of colleagues, students and administrators--constitute
"evidence" for what happened? "Things," writes Michael Polanyi, "are not labelled 'evidence' in nature, but are evidence only to the extent to which they are accepted by us as such as observers." To the extent that the picture is a coherent one, and that the various accounts corroborate one another, the narrative may be acceptable.

It was not possible to have all the tape transcriptions checked by the interviewees. Partly on that account, partly because many of those being interviewed are "visual" rather than "verbal" people, the quotations contain some less than perfect grammatical constructions, thoughts half expressed and then broken off, and sometimes the repetition of meaningless linking phrases. I have not attempted to correct any of this; in most cases the meaning is clear from the context, and where this is not so I have tried to interpret what is being said without, I hope, seriously distorting the intentions of the speakers.

To some degree this study is an attempt to "set the record straight." In my view Harry Thubron's work as an art educator has been too often lumped together with that of other "Basic course" practitioners. His contributions seem to me to be both more subtle and more wide ranging than those other teachers and to offer still important insights into the difficult questions of art education at the higher levels.
Notes


2Ibid.

CHAPTER I

English Art Schools After World War II

This beginning chapter deals with changes in the schools and colleges of art in England immediately following the end of World War II. These changes are partly a reflection of changes in English society during the period and partly a response to changes in art itself during the first half of the twentieth century. To some extent too the history of art education has its own momentum, influenced in this instance still by the major developments of the nineteenth century—sometimes regressing towards earlier phases, sometimes making bold forward movements.

The nineteenth century had seen an unresolved series of disputes between the advocates of "High Art" and advocates of a practical, vocational education in design. There were difficulties also in how art education should be administered, especially about the role of central London-based authority vis-à-vis the influence of local artists, designers and local industrialists. As strands within these disputes there could be found differing viewpoints about the relationships between art and craft, between art and design, between art and industry, and about
the proper role of industrial tools, machines and material in the education of the designer. The great disputes of the Victorian era were part of an attempt to find one "true" answer to the problems of art education. In the twentieth century, too, we find similarly monolithic claims for particular systems, and in the fifties and sixties many of the Victorian questions are resurrected and subjected to reexamination in the light of changes in art, in industrial organization, and in educational thought.

In this chapter I wish to look at some structural changes in art education at the higher, tertiary level. These changes encompassed the beginnings of moves to grant to schools and colleges of art some independence and some responsibility for devising their own systems of evaluation. This, in turn, provided for the first time the possibility that an individual school might be able to set up an approach to the education of artists and designers that would be radically different from that of its sister colleges.

Although Britain suffered extreme domestic difficulties during World War II, and was at least for a time in great danger of invasion and possible defeat, neither the arts nor education were totally neglected. In spite of food shortages, petrol rationing, inadequate buildings and facilities, and a diminished number of available people to serve both as organizers and performers,
the period between 1939 and 1944 saw an upsurge of interest in the arts. Realizing that morale was as important as physical stamina or good housing, attempts were made to provide mental and aesthetic stimulus and relaxation. In the armed forces themselves commanding officers were given the task of educating and enlightening those under their command; lectures were arranged, debating societies organized and, especially in the latter part of the war, classes and courses were set up which attempted in a small way to prepare soldiers, sailors and airmen for their post-war careers. Various kinds of entertainment were provided, some more serious than others. In 1940 the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (C.E.M.A.) was set up with the avowed intention "to bring comfort and consolation" to thousands of blitz-wracked people in air-raid shelters and emergency centres in the big cities so much affected by German bombing, and to members of the armed forces.¹ I have vivid memories of chamber music concerts at the National Gallery in London when on leave from the Navy; while "doodlebugs" sputtered overhead, soldiers and sailors, some accompanied by girl friends, some dragging their kit bags and rifles with them, many with Polish or Free French shoulder tabs, sat or stood in the aisles of one of the denuded galleries to listen to Bach or Mozart. For many of these listeners this was their first introduction to the arts; thousands of servicemen and women
found themselves exposed to good music, good drama and good pictures, and the seriousness and intensity of wartime seemed to produce a sensitivity to the arts that peacetime had signally failed to do.

For many the war appeared to be an important opportunity, a watershed from which might follow a new start. As the war approached its end there was much political debate and equally serious discussion of the future of education. The chief and most obvious result of the political debate was the overwhelming defeat of the Churchill government in 1945. To many Britons it seemed almost sacriligeous to "turn against" the triumphantly successful wartime leader, but the wardroom discussions that I remember were not of personalities but of opportunities to bring about a new social order, and the Labour party seemed to promise that possibility. "Britain," wrote a leader in the *Manchester Guardian*, "has undergone a silent revolution," and in 1945 that social revolution seemed to be at hand. In education too there was little desire to return to the status quo. In 1942 the Workers Educational Association proposed that education in the post-war period should provide "equal opportunity for every child to develop his personality and abilities," and that these opportunities should be offered "in a system in which social distinctions and privileges no longer play any part." Such ideas were echoed by, among other bodies, the Central
Committee on Post-war problems of the Conservative and Unionist Party Organization, the Trades Union Congress and the National Union of Teachers. In July of 1943 the Government, taking account of the debate and discussion of the previous three years, issued a White Paper entitled "Educational Reconstruction." Intended as a focus for further discussion, the paper stated that the purpose of its proposals was "to secure for all children a happier childhood and a better start in life." It proposed a new tripartite system of secondary education to be followed beyond the age of sixteen by another two years of full-time schooling either in a secondary school or at a "young people's college." It also suggested that local education authorities (roughly the equivalent of School Boards) be given the duty of providing adequate facilities for technical, commercial and art education, both full-time and part-time. A Bill was introduced to Parliament in December of 1943 which followed most of the provisions of the White Paper and it became law the following August as the 1944 Education Act.

The schools and colleges of art had, for the most part, remained open during the war, although many, while continuing to teach courses and to grant diplomas, were compelled to move their location. The Royal College of Art, for example, was "evacuated" from London to Ambleside in the Lake District of Northern England and remained there for
five years. It did not return to its South Kensington buildings until the autumn of 1945. Most of the faculty members of the art schools served in the armed forces but, as the war came to an end and they were demobilized, they returned to their positions.

As an extension of its proposals for secondary education, the Ministry of Education in 1945 issued a Pamphlet, No. 6, Art education, which set out in some detail its suggestions for the future of art education at all levels including that of higher education. 

The major provisions which affected the schools and colleges of art dealt with:

Art schools in relation to industry and to the areas that they serve.

Student choice and selection.

The curriculum and forms of instruction.

The relationships between art schools and local needs had been much discussed during the nineteenth century and this new pamphlet stated quite clearly that "every art school must be adapted to the needs of the area it serves," though at the same time it stressed that art schools also had a key responsibility to develop strongly the "cultural" aspect of life. This restatement of the nineteenth century conflict between "design" and "fine art" brought forth a series of comments from leading art educators, including one from Maurice de Sausmarez, at that time Head of the School of Painting at the Leeds College of Art. "Most art
schools," he stated, "should set out to give fundamental training in drawing, painting, basic crafts and modelling and abolish all commercial and industrial art training not directly connected with local industry." In the developments that followed, and even now in the eighties, no resolution of that apparent conflict between the needs of the artist and of culture on the one hand and those of the designer and the requirements of commerce and industry on the other has been found.

The Ministry recognized that the students in an art school would show differences in ability and talent quite similar to those in any other kind of school; art schools should cater not only for the "genius" but must see as their main business the education of the "average" student. Here there was less likely to be conflict, especially as there existed opportunities for the most talented students to do more advanced work at such schools as the Royal College of Art, the Slade School of the University of London and the Schools of the Royal Academy.

Fine art courses—drawing, painting, modeling and sculpture—were felt by the Ministry to be an essential element in the art school and to act as a necessary basis for future specialization. Even the designer should not be educated in too highly specialized a fashion since he or she might find later need to move from one branch of design to another.
The proposals and provisions of Pamphlet No. 6 met with some general approval. In the Times Educational Supplement a leader writer commented:

The Ministry is aiming high in expressing the view that art schools and colleges should be the centre of art inspiration and artistic activity in the areas they serve; it gives them almost unlimited scope and in order that the highest possible standards of work and staffing may be attained a considerable degree of regional organization and cooperation is recommended.

This was a fairly typical reaction. The proposals were couched in very general terms and art school leaders had no reason to think that their individual views of art school development and the actions that might follow from their implementation were likely to be much restricted by the Ministry's statements.

As a follow up to the Art education pamphlet, the Ministry in 1946 introduced new national qualifications in art; the Intermediate Examination in Arts and Crafts and the National Diploma in Design. These replaced previous examinations which were narrower in scope, and they made it mandatory that students would now have two years of general studies, including work in drawing, painting, anatomy, architecture, modeling, and craft, and then two years of more specialized study taken from a wide range of art and design areas. It seemed from the wide array of possible specializations that the Ministry was anxious to allow scope for individual choice and to take account of the often quite narrow specific needs of local industries.
These examinations were centrally evaluated. Art pieces produced under conditions laid down in instructions sent with the examination papers were packed and shipped to the Ministry of Education in London for external assessment. This assessment was conducted by examiners appointed by the Ministry. Both examiners and those responsible for packing and transportation faced formidable problems; the numbers were large and many pieces were damaged or lost in transit.

Recognizing the difficulties and limitations of this examination scheme, the Ministry in March, 1947 appointed a Committee on Art Examinations "To examine the present system of Art Examinations ... and to consider the possibility of replacing them by a system of internal examinations with external assessment." The committee may well have been established in the light of the high failure rate among candidates in the first two years. In 1946 of the 833 students who entered for the Intermediate examination only 533 passed, and in part of that year's National Diploma in Design examination only 43 percent of the candidates were successful.

When the Committee reported in 1948 (in the Bray report) it recognized a need to establish greater autonomy for the art colleges, for there to be closer cooperation between art, technical and commercial education, and between art teacher education and the rest of teacher education. It suggested that a national committee be established to advise
the Ministry on examination arrangements, approval of courses of study and the appointment of national assessors. That committee was appointed in 1949 under the chairmanship of Mr. F.L. Freeman.

These various reports and committee findings produced an overall structure for higher education in art which was to persist for close to fifteen years. Within that structure many problems persisted. It was seen to be essential that English art education should be upgraded so that it could compete successfully with that of the European continent. Art spokesmen such as Herbert Read felt that English education in design was not of the required standard and that both a more rational basic training and a more professional specialized training needed to be instituted.12

The schools and colleges of art

In the mid-forties the education of professional artists and designers took place in both schools and colleges of art. Whereas the colleges were unitary institutions, the schools were normally attached to or part of technical institutions. The implications of "school" in this context are of, one; smaller size; two, teaching a larger proportion of lower level work; and three, inferior facilities, equipment and staffing.

Most of the large regional colleges--Leeds, Leicester, Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford--had begun as
offshoots of the South Kensington School of Art in London. They were based in large centers of population, most of them in cities grown large and prosperous as a consequence of England's growth as an industrial and commercial power. They were surrounded by factories and warehouses and they existed in a society geared primarily to the development of industrial power and to the making of money. The phrase "muck and brass" was an appropriate one, and while "culture" was by no means absent from these great cities, it was limited in scope. Its sense of the visual was often confined to a limited range of "decoration" whose best examples were to be found in the public buildings and hotels, and in the large villas of the new industrialists. We have found it easy in recent years to find visual interest in the gaunt brick factories and in the powerful forms of cooling towers, canal bridges, and nineteenth century warehouses; but the average Leeds merchant was probably little concerned with the visual qualities of his environment except, perhaps, as an expression of civic pride and affluence. Music was a different matter and had richer, longer-standing traditions. In the Leeds Town Hall, one of the nobler neo-classical buildings of the nineteenth century, the great symphony orchestras of the north--the Halle, the Liverpool Philharmonic, the Leeds Symphony itself--played Beethoven, Mozart and Handel and were often joined by superb local choral societies. The Town Hall
itself was coated with a thick layer of velvet-black soot, the grimy sandstone absorbing rather than reflecting the dull northern light. Its interior surfaces were in the main covered with multi-coloured and multi-patterned tiles, and with Corinthian-topped pilasters and honeysuckle and egg and dart plaster borders picked out in Wedgewood red and gold; the effect was rich but perhaps spoke more of the Leeds burghers' desire to impress with their wealth and public benificence than of their artistic sensibility. In the immediate post-war period such Victorian architecture and decoration was seen as merely vulgar and ostentatious; today its intrinsic merits are given greater weight.

Both schools and colleges of art were under the administrative control of the Local Education Authorities. These bodies were funded chiefly from local property taxes (known as "rate support") although the central government provided some support through "block" grants administered by the Ministry of Education. A bureaucracy of local officials, from Chief Education Officer down to minor clerks, administered the schools and colleges--only the universities were outside this system of local control. Each college had its Board of Governors, men--and occasionally women--whose task it was to oversee the conduct of the college by the local authority. Members of this Board, and of subsidiary boards created for different subject areas--Painting and Decorating, for example, or
Silversmithing and Jewelry—sat on the committee which selected and interviewed candidates for positions on the staff of the college. The Principal of the college and the appropriate Department head were also members of these committees but they did not always get their own way; some local businessmen and industrialists exerted substantial influence on appointments. For the most important positions—Vice-principal, perhaps, or Head of an important department—the Chief Education Officer would be involved in the deliberations of the committee, and, behind the scenes, could have a major effect on the educational policies of the college.

The curriculum

In both schools and colleges of art lower and upper level work went on side by side. Even the upper level work was not considered the complete equivalent of degree level work at the university, in spite of the fact that the art qualification required four years of post-secondary study rather than the three years for a first degree at the university.

The lower level work took various forms. Local industrialists—at Leeds especially those in the painting and decorating trades—sent their apprentices to continue their training. These painting and decorating students learned staining and graining techniques, pargeting, wallpaper hanging; the levels of skill demanded were high.
Apprentices to the printing trade learned typography and the uses of a wide range of typesetting and printing machinery. Workers employed in local advertising agencies and studios took classes in drawing, layout and rendering. There were classes in cake decoration, in furniture construction and in interior design. Occasionally one of these students or an "evening" student, showing greater talent and able to obtain some financial support, would transfer to upper level courses of study. The evening classes were held primarily for the benefit of students in full-time employment; the students ranged from the almost totally incompetent amateur to some highly skilled artists.

The curriculum at the upper level was controlled by the nationally administered examinations of the Ministry of Education. Until the introduction of the Intermediate Examination and the National Diploma in Design, students had had to take the Ministry's Drawing examination before moving on to specialized work in their chosen field. The subjects of the Drawing Examination were broader than the name suggests and included: Drawing and Painting from Memory and Knowledge, Anatomy, Architecture, Drawing from the Cast and Perspective. "Having completed the Drawing Examination, the student normally studied for a further two years before entering for one of the four advanced examinations known as the Examinations in Industrial Design, in Illustration, in Painting and in Modelling. Both the Drawing Examination and
the four advanced examinations were set and examined centrally. So the new Intermediate and National Diploma examinations continued the tradition of a centrally examined qualification while recognizing the need for a broadly based preliminary test and later opportunities for a greater selection of specialized subject areas. Inevitably, central examination led in most art schools to similar curricula also.

In the regional colleges of art there was no post-graduate work. If a student wished to pursue his studies to a more advanced level he or she had to make application to one of the London colleges which offered advanced qualifications. These institutions included the Royal College of Art, the Slade School of Fine Art of the University of London and the Royal Academy Schools. It was not necessary at that time for a student to complete the Diploma studies at the regional college before applying to one of the advanced schools in London. Often the student would apply at the end of his or her second or third year of college study. There were few places available and a large number of applicants; students often applied in each of two or three successive years. The regional college took pride in the success rate of its students at these prestigious institutions. Most of the faculty members of the regional colleges had themselves studied for the advanced qualifications of the Royal College or the Slade School and,
no doubt, personal influence played some part in the selection process. It was normal for a student to study for a further three years at the end of which time he or she would, if successful, gain the Associateship of the Royal College of Art or the Diploma in Fine Art of the Slade or Academy Schools.

Between 1945 and 1949 major changes took place in the organization and administration of the Royal College of Art. We have already noted the return of the Royal College to its South Kensington base in 1946. At the end of 1947 Mr. Robin Darwin was appointed to the Principalship of the College. He made sweeping reforms in the curriculum and in the degree structure of the College. The Royal College became a national college administered by a council with full executive powers and responsible for all academic matters, including the granting of Diplomas. Darwin wanted to emphasize the advanced training of designers, though without abandoning strong fine art elements in the school. He established a new degree, that of Des.R.C.A., Designer of the Royal College of Art. To obtain this degree the student, in addition to approximately three years of full-time study at the college, had to spend a minimum of nine months at work in a suitable industry. In another move to strengthen the level of design education, Darwin reorganized the design areas under professors of high standing as industrial designers.
At the undergraduate level only the Central School of Art and Crafts could legitimately claim to be training designers to a high level over a broad range of subjects. The Central School had been founded in 1896 by W.R. Lethaby and his work at the Central was generally recognized as far ahead of that in most other schools. He was even given credit for influencing much better known developments in higher level art education.

[His] genius as a teacher of design was considerably in advance of his time, for he stood alone in realizing that the future of good design was inextricably bound up with understanding and appreciating the possibilities of machine products. Because of this he was several steps ahead of William Morris, who believed that design was best served by divorce from the machine ... His ideas and teaching methods were early seized on by the Germans ... and the result was the foundation in Germany of the School of Decorative Arts and, later, of Walter Gropius' Bauhaus.14

The same writer saw the changes at the Royal College of Art as also following along the lines first established by Lethaby more than half a century earlier.

The art world of the forties--Continental abstraction and English romanticism

The work of the schools and Colleges of art took place against the background of English society at the time and of particular conceptions of art and its functions. Art exhibitions, galleries, museums, art societies, patronage of the arts--these formed a backcloth against which the developments in art education took place.
English art of the period just before and immediately after the war had two major directions. The first was best exemplified in the work of Unit One and Circle. Unit One was an English movement with Paul Nash the chief figure; Circle was an international movement counting Naum Gabo amongst its chief proponents. Ben Nicholson and the young Henry Moore for a time belonged to the Circle movement. Both of these were based on Continental abstractionism. It was a style of severe, almost total, formalism and had its roots in the notion of "significant form" and in Constructivism and the de Stijl movement. Clive Bell was its chief aesthetic philosopher and critic and, through him, support came from London's Bloomsbury Group.

The second was more typically and more narrowly English. The artists here based their work on visible nature but on a nature transformed by the imagination. Rather than traditional realism, these artists produced a Romantic version of landscape and figure influenced by the Post-Impressionists, especially by Bonnard and Vuillard. The fallen trees and rock landscapes of Graham Sutherland and the architectural landscapes of John Piper add a faintly literary flavour and elements of fantasy to the discoveries of Degas and the Intimists. Paul Nash and, later, such artists as John Minton and Prunella Clough, added an almost surreal element to this originally quite objective style.
Starting from much the same point, another group developed towards visual objectivity rather than Romanticism. Victor Pasmore, William Coldstream, Graham Bell and Lawrence Gowing built on the work of the Impressionists and of Walter Sickert, feeling that "an unprejudiced approach to the objective world was still possible."¹⁵ For a short time they organized a "School." This "Euston Road School" proved highly influential and its effects will be described in later sections.

When I took up a teaching post at the Leeds College of Art in 1950 I found that almost without exception my colleagues in the faculty had been educated at the Royal College of Art. Their work showed strong influences from Sickert and the Euston Road painters. At the Royal College, Carel Weight and Rodrigo Moynihan, students of the Euston Road school, were teaching painting, and Graham Sutherland, John Minton and Keith Vaughan represented there that strain of English romanticism already noted. In the work of my colleagues tonal values seemed more important than color; an overall consistency of spatial representation was evident; subject matter echoed that of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, and there was evidence of much good, solid, straightforward drawing ability. I saw little evidence at that time of influence from Fauvism or Cubism and almost no knowledge of or interest in American painting or in Expressionist painting, in spite of Kokoschka's
presence in England during the war.

**Museums and galleries in the late forties**

Although most of the treasures of the museums and galleries in such cities as London, Liverpool and Edinburgh had been dispersed throughout the country as a safety measure during the war, by January of 1946 token displays had been arranged at a number of places, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the National Gallery and the National Maritime Museum, and by December, 1946 all the museums in London had been partially reopened. Soon after the war ended major exhibitions were mounted in London and the provinces. These included an important show of English painting and a large controversial Picasso exhibition, both at the Tate Gallery in 1947, and later on tour throughout the country. In the private galleries exhibitions continued throughout the war with the work shown coming mainly from the Neo-Romantic and the Euston Road artists. Some of these artists, including Graham Sutherland, John Piper, Paul Nash and Leonard Rosoman, had been official War artists; one of the most interesting aspects of the work in the war-time galleries was the way in which these artists adapted their Neo-Romantic impulse and style to such apparently unpromising subject matter as the debris left after air raids, the crowds in Underground shelters, aerial dog fights, and planes on the decks of aircraft carriers. A number of these artists produced their best work during this
period, the intensity and drama of wartime events seeming to inspire levels of profundity and commitment more difficult to achieve in the mundane uniformity of the immediate post-war years.

Publications on design and design education

In the design area also there were interesting developments. In December, 1948, the Council of Industrial Design produced a series of illustrated essays on the design of everyday objects. Each issue contained twelve photographed plates of "good" and "bad" examples of such objects as carpets, teapots, chairs, cookers, forks and spoons, and window curtains. These folios were widely distributed in schools and colleges. The criteria used to evaluate the objects appeared to be drawn from the simplicities of Georgian design and from the Scandinavian furniture and other domestic articles which began to be available in England at that time. A Finnish journal, Form, led the way in introducing the best of Scandinavian design. Some designers, notably Gordon Russell and Ernest Race, began to find ways to combine some of the simplicities of earlier English furniture design with the new directions from Scandinavia. Early in 1949 an exhibition from the Chicago School of Design was shown in London and Edinburgh. As a post-graduate student at the Edinburgh College of Art I saw and was both intrigued and puzzled by this exhibition. It consisted of a number of large white boards mounted on a
framework of copper tubing; these showed examples of foundation course exercises and of various domestic objects--I remember especially table lamps and tubular steel chairs--photographed on a large scale and mounted, with appropriate captions, on a non-centralized grid system. What I was seeing, though I did not recognize it at the time, were examples of work done under the guidance of Moholy-Nagy and therefore heavily influenced by Bauhaus models. Robin Darwin was reported as having seen the exhibition and to have recognized in it a similar approach to that being pursued at the Royal College of Art.  

There was little evidence immediately at the R.C.A. to support his contention, but within a few years the Industrial Design sections of the college began to produce work of comparable quality and within an apparently similar design philosophy. That flowering was most evident in the Festival of Britain exhibitions in 1951.

With Herbert Read as its chairman a committee took up a project which had been much discussed during the war, that of the provision of a national art center, an institute which would "establish a common ground for a progressive movement with all the arts, organizing experimental exhibitions and performances independently of commercial standards, establishing contacts on an international basis, and enabling artists to cooperate in search of new forms of expression." This center, The
Institute of Contemporary Art (the I.C.A.) was founded in 1948. From the beginning it became a focus for artistic discussion, especially of avant garde ideas and movements; it mounted exhibitions, provided opportunities for poetry readings, and acted as a prime source for the introduction into England of the most adventurous work from the Continent and from America.

**The student body**

Although some private scholarships were available before the War, most students had to pay for their own tuition and support if they wished to obtain an art qualification. However, as the war came to an end, the Further Education and Training Act, 1943 set up provisions for a system of grants for ex-service students. These grants were to enable suitably qualified men and women who had served in the armed forces to attend colleges and universities. "By the end of 1947 over 52,000 awards had been made by the department. Grants under the scheme cover the payment both of fees incidental to the course ... and of allowances, paid direct to the student, to meet the cost of maintenance, including the cost of clothes, books, instruments, travelling and incidental expenses.... 2,645 awards were made for training in art up to December 1947." Also, in 1945, under the Regulations for Scholarships and Other Benefits it was stated that "Local education authorities are empowered to grant scholarships to
enable qualified students to pursue courses of education at a university or like institution, or at any place of further education.... (The local authorities) were urged ... to include in their schemes provision for awards at technical, commercial and art colleges and at schools of music." These grants were discretionary and allowed each local education authority to set up its own guidelines within the Ministry's regulations. This meant both that some authorities were more generous than others in the number and amount of grants awarded and that students with similar backgrounds and qualifications might receive a grant if they lived in one county or city but not if they lived in another.

The grants were not normally very generous, but their availability was one of the chief reasons for the rapid increase in student numbers in the years just after the war. It should be noted that there was not at that time (there is not now) any acceptance of the idea that a student in England could "work his way through college." Classes were organized in such a fashion that a student of necessity was in the college building from around nine in the morning until four thirty or five in the afternoon. Once a course of study had been decided on there was almost no choice about the frequency or times of classes; homogeneous groups of students moved through as coherent "years" from the beginning to the end of their college careers, with only the
break between Intermediate and National Diploma involving any major reshuffling. Some students worked in outside jobs during the long summer vacation but even this was not encouraged; grants were paid for the full year and a student was expected to study outside the institution during these summer months.

Returning ex-service students created a unique situation. Many of these men, and a few of the women, had been serving in the armed forces for as long as five or six years. They included men who, in their early twenties, had commanded tank regiments in the African desert, had led squadrons of bombers over Germany or Italy, or had endured year-long spells at sea as crew members of aircraft carriers or battleships. For many the return to civilian life and to the beginning year of a college course with a group of mainly seventeen and eighteen year olds was a difficult and daunting experience; both their background and their expectations and objectives as students were quite different. The mature students on the whole worked with an intensity and drive unlike that of their fellows straight from secondary school; they were highly motivated to "catch up" time lost and were often much more directly career oriented than their fellow students. Many were married, some already with children, and, although the ex-service grant included allowances for dependents, the combination of study and family life was both novel and difficult. The
young students straight from high school and older students with a diverse background of experiences created a volatile and, to some, a distressing situation. Some of the returning servicemen resented the closed atmosphere of the art school with its old fashioned discipline and its lack of relevance to their wartime experience. Though most adjusted fairly quickly and easily and buckled down to their life painting or design exercises it does not seem to me far-fetched to recognize in these difficulties and resentments a fertile soil for the changes in the fifties and sixties.

Implications for art education

A number of important changes had occurred in art education in this immediate post-war period. They reflected both long-standing controversies about the proper education of the professional artist or designer and the effects of a long and difficult war which, somewhat paradoxically, had given new intensity to the debate about social, political and educational directions.

The debate leading up to, and the sentiments and provisions of the 1944 Education Act, revealed general recognition of the need for more widespread and more equality of access to education at all levels, and for more adequate provision of specialized education and training. The Act required that education be free and comprehensive, at least up to the end of secondary schooling, and that
access to higher education should be made available to all suitably qualified students. As we have seen, the effect of the various grant systems adopted by the government and by the local education authorities was to democratize education to a considerable degree, and in the post-war period the schools and colleges of art, for example, drew a larger proportion of their students than formerly from working-class homes. This was less true for the universities; neither the systems of grants nor the provisions of the Act ensured that desirable equality of access. The public school system remained the chief educational resource for those with sufficient funds and the right connections to take advantage of it, and access to the university, and especially to the more prestigious universities, for most students still depended on influence as well as merit.

In art education at the tertiary level, politicians, educators and students continued to battle with problems of long standing. What is the best preparation for the professional artist? How should we train designers for industry? How specialized should art education be? The dichotomy between the need to educate each person to his or her full potential and the need to select and train the highly talented was clearer at the tertiary level than at the primary or secondary level. As prescribed by the Ministry's Pamphlet No. 6, the schools and colleges of art
continued to try to fulfill two quite different functions: to provide an education in art for the "average" student with a wide range of ability both in general education and in artistic talent, and to train professional artists and designers. There were signs that greater professionalism was being sought, but only under Robin Darwin's influence at the Royal College of Art were there significant moves to ensure a thoroughly professional training for designers.

The effect of the new Intermediate examination was to engage every art student in a wider range of art and craft activities than had previously been required; this appeared to be part of a recognition that some common fundamental experiences were needed for all future specialists in the visual arts. Although the fine arts, and especially drawing, were still seen as valuable and as "basic" to all art and design education, working in other art areas and with a wide variety of materials and processes was now seen as an essential part of the early art education of each student.

The provisions of the National Diploma in Design were less a new start than an enlarged and codified version of what was already being done. The long list of possible specializations left the colleges free to retain their present emphases or to add new special fields. As a junior faculty member at the Leeds College in the early fifties the chief criticism that I heard, in the staff room or at
meetings with faculties in other colleges, was that the new examination encouraged over-specialization, especially in the fine art area. Those teaching, for example, silversmithing, furniture or textile design found the new provisions fitted reasonably well the needs of highly technical areas. At those few art schools more directly tied to local industry--Stoke-on-Trent with the pottery industry, Kidderminster with the carpet manufacturers, Stourbridge with the glass industry--the opportunity for narrower specialization was predictably more welcome. In many of the larger colleges students were encouraged to work outside their specialist area even though this was not required by the examination system. The "Illustration" students that I taught when I first arrived in Leeds spent most of their first year of Diploma study drawing and painting, working in a wide range of print-making media. Only on the second year did they begin to concentrate on illustration projects, and then not to the total exclusion of painting and printmaking projects. My background at Edinburgh had been chiefly in painting and my post-graduate work was exclusively in mural painting under Leonard Rosoman. This proved to be a useful experience. Rosoman was a painter, but he had been an official War artist, a maker of decorative posters for the Shell company, a designer for the theatre, and in 1951 a highly successful exhibition designer. The Head of the School of Design at
Leeds, Eric Taylor, who appointed me to my position there, saw artists such as Rosoman as ideal models for the kind of "illustrator" he wished to emerge from Leeds, artist/designers who could turn their hand to a wide variety of artistic and design problems.

There was the beginning of moves towards greater autonomy for the art schools; the Bray report contained the first recommendation that the faculties of the colleges should be involved in grading the course and examination work of their students. Certainly at Leeds this move was welcomed; there had often been disagreement with the results of external examination and faculty members seemed to see merit in the prospect of greater control over the results of their teaching.

Although no one of the stature or with the influence of Henry Cole arose during this transition period, two names should be mentioned. Herbert Read was not directly involved in any of these structural or examination changes but in his writings, in his endorsement of the newer developments in art, and in his encouragement of individual artists, he undoubtedly affected the course of English art education. His views of the relationships between art, education, industry and society formed an important backcloth to the debate about higher education in art. Among the artists, Victor Pasmore was the outstanding figure. Not only did his artistic work and its unique development influence many of
the best artists of the day but his growing interest in the education of the artist, and his direct involvement with that process at the University of Newcastle, was to make him a major determinant of future directions.

The fact of centrally controlled examinations, the influence of these examinations on the curriculum, and the unwillingness of the Ministry of Education to move quickly towards a granting of autonomy to the art schools, meant that the schools and colleges still faced many of the difficulties that had concerned the pioneers of English art education during the nineteenth century. There were difficulties in the relationships between art and design, between art and craft, between the art of the art schools and the art of the contemporary galleries and museums. The edifice of English art education still maintained its nineteenth century quality, including the virtues of the late nineteenth century developments, but confidence in the old methods and concepts appeared to be slipping. For too many years the precepts of academic art training had exerted an overweening influence. For many new post-war faculty members, and I include myself, the curriculum as a whole appeared somewhat staid, the pedagogical regimen more than a little restricted. In 1950 no obvious major alternative was on the immediate horizon. Many individual faculty members, basing their teaching as best they could on their knowledge and understanding of modern art, made minor attempts to
institute changes. These attempts had both negative and positive features; there was dissatisfaction with the current, chiefly academic, schemes of teaching; there was some recognition that on the Continent quite different approaches had been tried with some success. The next chapter outlines the beginnings of efforts to bring to England some version of the European developments of the twenties and thirties.
Notes

1 The Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts was set up in 1940 with the help of Mr. Harold Ramsbotham, the then President of the Board of Trade. The quotation is from Dent, H.C. *Education in transition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, 58.


3 Dent, op. cit., 149.

4 British Government White Paper *Educational Reconstruction*. London: H.M.S.O., 1943, II. The Paper suggested that children should attend primary school till age eleven, then move to secondary school, these to be divided into grammar, modern, and technical schools, and then "continue under educational influence up to 18 years of age either by remaining in full-time attendance at a secondary school, or by part-time attendance at a young people's college."

5 Ministry of Education Pamphlet Number Six *Art Education*. London: H.M.S.O., 1946. It begins thus: "The pamphlet deals with the whole field of art education, within the national system, in which our task is twofold ... first to raise the level of public taste and appreciation ... and secondly to provide the training required for those who may take up artistic careers."


7 This is from a talk given by Mr. Maurice de Sausmarez at a meeting of the Society for Education through Art, and reported in the *Times Educational Supplement*. April 10, 1948, 237.


   Drawing from life.
Drawing and painting from memory and knowledge.
Anatomy.
Architecture.
Drawing the figure in costume.
Creative design for craft.
Modelling.
General knowledge.

In the National Diploma in Design a candidate was required to take either one subject from List A or two subjects from List B. In 1946-47, the first year after the new examinations were introduced, List A consisted of the following subject areas:

Dress; Furniture; Glass-making and Decorating; Gold and Silversmithing; Illustration; Interior Decoration; Modelling and Sculpture; Painting; Painting and Decorating; Pottery; Printed Textiles (Hand and Machine); Woven Textiles (Hand and Machine); Knitwear; Lace.

List B consists of:
Book-binding; Die-sinking; Embroidery (Hand); Embroidery (Machine); Enamelling; Engraving on metal; Inlay, Marquetry and Veneer; Jewellery; Letter cutting; Lettering, Writing and Illuminating; Light Metal work; Lithography; Mosaic work; Printed Textiles (Hand); Printed Textiles (Machine); Process Reproduction; Stained Glass; Terra Cotta work; Typography; Wallpaper Design; Wood Carving; Woven Textiles (Hand); Woven Textiles (Machine); Carpet Weaving; Cast Iron work; Fabric Knitting; Gesso work; Lace (Hand); Lace (Machine); Lacquer work; Lead work; Leather work; Linoleum; Plaster work; Rug Weaving (hand); Shoe Design; Shop Display; Stone Carving; Tapestry Weaving (Hand); Wrought Iron work.


The recommendations should command general approval in that they should promote greater flexibility, enhance the status of the art schools, strengthen the links between art education and industry, and raise standards of work ... Worthy of commendation also is the proposal that, whatever the future employment they have in mind, all full-time students ... should pursue a common course of basic education.

11 The Times Educational Supplement of October 6, 1945 had reported the Chairman of the Central Institute of Art and Design as proposing to make Britain an art center for Europe.

In addition to a campaign for building international prestige for British contemporary art, architecture
and crafts, the Institute believes there is a need to create an international reputation for our leading schools of art, architecture and design, so that they attract as many foreign students as possible ... In London alone the Royal College of Art, the L.C.C. Central School of Art and Crafts, the Slade School and the Royal Academy School, are fully capable of achieving international status, and the policy introduced by the Ministry of Education of developing regional art colleges in the main centres of population should enable provincial colleges to attain similar status.


14 Times Educational Supplement, May 13, 1949, 313.


17 Times Educational Supplement, July 1, 1949, 444.

18 Times Educational Supplement, February 14, 1948, 95.


CHAPTER II

Early Basic Course Development in England

In this section I will be describing the initial experiments in breaking away from the previously widely accepted structure of beginning art education. Four of the chief innovators will be introduced briefly; from separate beginnings their efforts started to come together and to be mutually influential.

The term "Basic course" is not self-explanatory; many different curricula and methodologies could be so described. The English Basic courses of the fifties were based on the idea that there existed certain "fundamental" activities which were necessarily preliminary to more specialized study, and that there could be found in the art of the twentieth century "elements" and "principles" to guide these activities.

There had always been some kind of sequence to art activities in the art colleges--antique drawing and anatomy before figure drawing; studies in drawing and tonal composition preceding work in color--but "Basic" now had a narrower connotation. The German experiments of the twenties and thirties, with their bases in the Deutsche
Werkbund and in the Arts and Crafts movement, suggested a stricter definition of what was basic or fundamental in the education of the artist or designer.

The beginnings in London and the North

Not until 1940 was there an attempt to set up a preliminary course in England on the lines of the Bauhaus experiment. The Bauhaus, the most famous of twentieth century art schools, had carried out its major experiments in the twenties and early thirties, but in England there was no immediate follow-up of its radical contributions to the education of artists and designers. Thistlewood writes that there was a Bauhaus-inspired course at the Manchester School of Art in 1940. "This was inspired," he says, "by an understanding of the Bauhaus gained from such sources as Herbert Read's Art and industry."¹ Also in the early forties there was a whole range of alternatives encouraged by William Johnstone when, as Principal of the Central School of Art and Crafts, he brought such avant garde artists as Victor Pasmore, Richard Hamilton, Eduardo Paolozzi, Peter Adams, William Turnbull, Alan Davie and others into his studios, giving them free rein to impart "creative attitudes to previously moribund departments of design."²

Johnstone was a Bauhaus-oriented educationalist and had continued the Lethaby tradition of the Central School as the most forward-looking of English art schools. He adopted
the Bauhaus desire to have "fine" artists teach the crafts. The effect of this move was to break down what Johnstone apparently saw as the stultifying influence of conservative craft-oriented ideas; painters such as Pasmore and Hamilton were employed as tradition breakers, as the inspirers of new and revolutionary approaches, as, in Hamilton's words, "spanners in the works."³

In other art schools also there had been some Bauhaus influence. William Scott, for example, with Terry Frost and Kenneth Armitage, had used some formal abstract bases to his teaching at the Bath Academy of Art in the late forties. In none of these schools, however, and not even at the Central School, was there a coordinated structure which would be compared to the Bauhaus Vorkurs.

Gropius had come to England in the thirties when he was forced to flee Germany, but his stay was a short one. Richard Carline recalls attempts to reestablish the Bauhaus in London, but, in spite of discussions with Gropius, nothing came of the attempt. Carline attributes the lack of success to shortage of funds but also to an absence of support in art circles in London at the time.⁴ So Gropius went off to the United States, as did Moholy-Nagy and Josef Albers, also refugees from Nazi oppression, and the opportunity was lost.

From this point on two lines of development may be recognized, one growing out of the Johnstone-inspired
teaching at the Central and one stemming from the pedagogical ideas which began to emerge at Sunderland and West Hartlepool in the North Eastern corner of England.

A beginning in the North East

The two people most responsible for the developments in Northumberland were Harry Thubron and Tom Hudson. They were both born and brought up in that county—an area of coal mines, steel mills, high rough sheep-inhabited moors, and rugged rocky coastlines. The towns—Newcastle, Sunderland, Gateshead, West Hartlepool—were, in the twenties and thirties, places of poverty and deprivation. It was the period of the Depression and of the General Strike of 1926; Jarrow, a ship building town, was the center of one of the worst affected areas and it provided a starting point, and many of the participants, for the Hunger March of that year. With unemployment at record levels and an apparently bleak outlook for local industries, intelligent youngsters such as Thubron and Hudson looked for ways out. "Coming from a depressed mining village," reports Hudson, "one was obviously looking for the opportunity not to go down the mine. In my family, half the family were miners and the other half tended to be teachers. The ones who were teachers were the ones who were looked on as having made it—at least you got a more comfortable way of life."
Their parents stressed the benefits of formal education and both attended the Henry Smith Grammar School in West Hartlepool, though Thubron left to go to the Sunderland School of Art the same year that Hudson arrived at the grammar school. Thubron had achieved something of a reputation at the school because of his success in obtaining a place at a college of art while the bias of the school favored the sciences.

**Thubron—early teaching**

After successfully completing his painting qualification at the Sunderland College of Art, Thubron gained admittance to the Royal College of Art in London and studied there from 1938 to 1940. There, he says, he "learned to draw," giving credit for this chiefly to Percy Horton, who later became the Principal of the Brighton College of Art, one of the livelier English art schools. He dismisses the rest of what was done at the Royal College in his time as "all technique and how to do it."6 During a spell in the Army which followed (1941-1946), he spent much of his time helping to create schools for army personnel. This, his first experience in teaching (he had no formal education as an art teacher), is viewed by him as contributing powerfully to his subsequent career. There was a need to "learn to communicate," and there was a need to find ways to interest a wide range of students, most of whom had little experience of advanced education. He had to
devise ways to generate and sustain interest in groups of students whose background in art was both diverse and, in most cases, minimal. The methods he evolved at that time were to prove especially useful when he found himself teaching in a "secondary modern" school in the fifties.

After the army came a spell as a teacher of painting at the West Hartlepool School of Art and then, in 1950, he was appointed Head of Fine Art at the Sunderland College of Art, where he had obtained his initial qualification. In the early part of his teaching at Sunderland Thubron's ideas and methods still bore a close relationship to his earlier training. A student at the time describes his teaching of life drawing.

Harry would bring in several skirts or accessories ... dress the model up like these Augustus John figures, and spend a lot of time posing the model ... Rather than just having the model stuck up against a trestle, he tried to put it into more of a setting ... he might put flowers around and a sofa and maybe a carpet and other odds and ends so that the model wasn't divorced from the surroundings.

Hudson, who had kept in direct touch, recognizes the debt to Thubron's education in his teaching methods, but sees Thubron also offering something unique.

He was teaching "French" painting, but he was teaching it at a level of professional competence I had never seen anywhere else ... I really admired the way he taught these kids to draw ... It changed from time to time--sometimes they'd be doing something sight size and really measuring; he also developed work on the dynamic axes of things--from the front of the navel to the underside of the buttocks, for example ... There was a great similarity about all of the drawing, but if you looked carefully you could see individual qualities in them ... They were being
introduced to painting at a professional level not common in English art schools at that time ... I think Harry was the most gifted teacher I came across.

Thubron's own work at that period included portrait painting and landscape, and one of his portraits was acquired for the Sunderland Art Gallery.

While still teaching at Sunderland, Thubron met Wendy Pasmore, wife and former model of Victor Pasmore. She was a part-time teacher at the college. Through her he was to meet Victor Pasmore; that proved important to future developments.

Hudson--early teaching

Although Tom Hudson had studied painting at the Sunderland College of Art, as Thubron had done before him, he does not seem to have found himself committed in the same way to "being an artist." He describes his studies at Sunderland as traditional and muddled.

I had been there only a short time when I began to question what we were doing ... I was one of the last people to do the old Ministry's Drawing examination. We went in with our sharpened HBs on Monday morning, got in front of the standing Discobolous and did half-scale drawings from the antique ... There was no teaching done. The war had started and a lot of men had already gone off so there was, for example, no teaching of anything in three dimensions or design developments--it was mainly a drawing and painting school with, for the girls, a certain amount of dress study ... Once every month maybe, a teacher would come round and take over your seat on the donkey and do a doodle on the side of your paper with little or no comment ... The course was totally unstructured; there was very little serious discussion. The library was very limited and only went up to Impressionism, except for one book written in
After two years at Sunderland Hudson too went into the Army. When he returned he finished his Painting Diploma and decided to go on to the University of Newcastle post-graduate course in art education to obtain a teaching qualification. Through the efforts and personal commitment of one teacher there, Diana Liall, Hudson was introduced to the psychology of child development and to working with children of all ages in primary, secondary and higher education. He found the work with primary school children the most captivating. As part of the program, too, he had to attend lectures in the university on educational theory, the philosophy and history of education and so on. "I rebelled against this," he says, "because I thought it was nothing more than academic hoop-jumping." He was introduced to a wider range of studio activities--he recalls writing an operetta for marionnettes and taking all the parts himself--and was encouraged to continue some art historical study. On completion of his teaching course Hudson went on to the Courtauld Institute of Art of the University of London to study the history of art. He left before taking his degree, having decided that he wanted to teach in an art school. His art college and Courtauld background enabled him to get a job as the Painting Master at the Lowestoft School of Art in 1950.
Hudson by then had already travelled frequently in Italy and France; through this travel he had had direct acquaintance with modern works of art, with the Post-Impressionists especially—Cezanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh. He was able to take a run-down situation at Lowestoft (in the Spring of 1950 all the students had failed to pass the Intermediate examination) and raise the work to the necessary level of competence for examination success. Additionally, before the end of the first term at Lowestoft, he had asked Miss Varley, the Principal of the school, if he could take some time to do experimental work.

I was groping in the dark; I didn't know what anybody else had done at all— I knew nothing about the Bauhaus. I just happened to work with things which were there. We'd been picking stuff up on the beach—different types of material, bits of glass from under the cutting table. We had a big enamelled table-top which was white so I gave them pieces of black paper to cut out shapes to put on the white table. Then we made a black table and cut out white shapes to put on that— positives and negatives, things like that. I started to stress more the material developments, because I'd never done anything in three dimensions in my own training. I bought balsa wood, machined materials. We just explored different methods of construction: if a person took some pieces of metal and ended up with a bull, for example, that was fine, but if someone constructed in a purely geometric system that also was all right. So it was very pragmatic.

The claim to know "nothing" of the Bauhaus was perhaps an exaggeration. His interests, he says, were more in "Cubism through into Constructivism and Suprematism ... The link, educationally, was with the attempts by the Suprematists [who] questioned what were the elements of art and came [to]
the idea that you could consider [art] as a language and that they [could] explore some of the fundamental elements."

Through the work of the Suprematists he had begun to recognize the importance of "basic" forms— the circle, the square, the cruciform. This led to an interest in "constructive" systems, but it was a kind of "free construction," not, he says, the "making of Euclidean solids."

Supported by both the Principal of the school and by the local Inspector of Schools, he was given the use of a temporary building with woodwork benches, soldering equipment, electrical hand tools, and began to experiment, especially in a Saturday morning class for local teachers, with plastics and resins as well as with more conventional art materials. He was beginning to develop his interest in three-dimensional construction and in the possibilities and limitations in working with children of different ages. He saw his extra mural work at Lowestoft as "research" into art media and methods and into a possible sure foundation for art education.

London and Newcastle—Richard Hamilton

In 1951, while still a student at the Slade School of Fine Art of the University of London, Richard Hamilton organized an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art with the title *Growth and form*. As Herbert Read states in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, the stimulus
for the exhibition came from D'Arcy Thompson's great book, *On growth and form*. "Knowledge of form," writes Read, "is the key to understanding not only in science but also in art." The exhibition consisted of photographs, drawings and models from nature, from the micro- to the macroscopic, from traces of atomic particles to radiographs of a grey seal flipper and photograms of radish leaves. Hamilton was exploring the "new landscape" as it had been identified by Gyorgy Kepes, and it was a landscape that offered both to artists and art educators a possible identification of a range of subject matter and of methods for exploring that subject matter which revealed truly fundamental structures. "Hamilton," writes Thistlewood, "had selected images which were almost entirely the products of the most efficient extensions of the human form, such as cameras and microscopes and he had used unusual means of presenting objects and images ... all of which were New vision devices for heightening the visitor's perceptual awareness."

Richard Hamilton was one of the teachers Johnstone employed part-time at the Central School. After two years there, in 1953, Hamilton was offered a position at the University of Newcastle in the North of England. His job there, though it appears to have been rather vaguely defined, was to lecture on design and to do some teaching to students who were taking a B.A. degree in Art.

I found myself employed, largely with the textile designers—a kind of oddball artist who didn't know
anything about the technique but at least was able to contribute ideas to what they were doing. The first year [students] came to me every Wednesday afternoon, and I had to figure out something for them to do. I taught them the kind of thing that I'd been teaching at the Central School... ideas... that were related to foundation courses at the Bauhaus.

There was a stronger intellectual basis to Hamilton's teaching than to that of many of his colleagues.

Illustrations of his work at Newcastle show series of developing projects and exercises which, starting from small, even insignificant beginnings build logically towards more and more complex results. The logic and reason of biological form, as revealed in D'Arcy Thompson's work, were paralleled in his student's work in pencil and paint.

Victor Pasmore

Victor Pasmore is a self-taught artist. While still working as a civil servant he joined the London Artist's Association and, as a result of meeting a number of young painters there in the early thirties, his paintings, which he had been doing entirely on his own, began to be exhibited and to be influenced by current trends in English art. The most important influences came from William Coldstream and Claude Rogers, and with them, in 1937, he opened a School of Drawing and Painting, first in Fitzroy Street and then in the Euston Road. The Euston Road School became a title, not just for a school where art instruction was offered, but also for a particular style of painting, a style which
became fashionable and pervasive, and which, through a number of teachers at the Royal College of Art and the Slade School, influenced a generation of art students. Many of that generation became teachers in the English provincial art schools, thus extending the tradition well into the forties and fifties.

Basil Rocke, Chief Art Advisor to the West Riding of Yorkshire Education Committee, was a student of the school, which was private, with no official standing. He describes being set before an all white still life group, his task being to represent to the best of his ability the subtleties of a white plate and a white egg against a white cloth and resting on a white table top. Pasmore and Coldstream saw such exercises as part of a return to the careful objective study of nature, made necessary by the excesses of Fauvism and Expressionism and by the predominantly "literary" emphasis in English painting. Rocke found his studies in the Euston Road stimulating in their concentration, gravity and reticence and in the importance that was attached to subtle color and careful tonal organization: He was impressed by the conviction in these men of the primacy of controlled and balanced perception.

During the following ten years Pasmore painted portraits, still lifes and landscapes, with a continuing measured and almost somber attitude to subject matter which seemed to be the result of an intensive study of the Old
Masters, especially those of the early Renaissance, and of his personal life during this period.\textsuperscript{15} In spite of the objectivity and clarity of subject matter, these early Pasmore paintings have often an almost Chinese emphasis on pattern and subtle two-dimensional organization. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see in some of this work, especially the series of Thames landscapes in morning mist—gaunt linear patterns of branches tracing delicate arabesques against soft still water and wreaths of damp fog—prediction and anticipations of his later abstract work. There was no neat progression in his work, however; he made essays in the direction of Cubism, of Pointillism, of Constructivism—for a time his fellow artists viewed him as not just a maverick but as an artist who perhaps had lost his way and was casting about rather wildly for a personally significant direction. In 1948 he exhibited for the first time a series of paintings and low relief constructions which owed something to Nicholson and Biederman but which also somehow "contained" the results of his previous objective study. Patrick Heron recognized the continuing influence of figure and landscape; "Pasmore's new paintings ... so far from existing in their own right ... exist primarily to register something outside themselves."\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{A combining of forces}

Two years after Hamilton had moved to Newcastle, Victor Pasmore accepted a position there as Painting Master.
He had by then a national reputation and his "new" abstract style was being consolidated. In concordance with his new conception of his own artistic work, Pasmore rejected the idea of an art program with, as Hamilton describes it, "a model in one room, antiques in another room, and plants in the conservatory." He wished to introduce students to the concepts which lay behind the creation of "modern" art. In an article in the Sunday Times he wrote: "The inadequacy of the mirror as a symbol of experience in the light of the modern philosophy of science led to new attitudes in which painting was conceived as an 'equivalent' more than a reflection of a phenomenal world." Since Pasmore, unlike Hamilton, wielded some power in the department, he was able to begin to unify the work of the school in line with the ideas already tentatively and partially put into practice by Hamilton. The then Professor of Art, Lawrence Gowing--an art historian and painter of Euston Road-type landscapes and figure paintings--was not sympathetic to Pasmore's new ideas about the education of the artist. When he left Newcastle a year later and was replaced by Kenneth Rowntree, Pasmore proposed that the first year work should be devoted to a "real foundation year."

By 1954 Pasmore and Hamilton were running a successful foundation year at Newcastle, Hudson was conducting his "research experiments" at Lowestoft, and Thubron, working at the Sunderland College, was starting to
work out a series of drawing exercises "a la Paul Klee" with the help of Wendy Pasmore, Victor's wife. Through Wendy, Thubron met Victor Pasmore, and Hudson too, through the National Committee on Children's Art to which he'd been coopted, met Pasmore who was the chairman of that committee. From this point on some cooperation began between the four innovators.

Thubron's drawing exercises influenced by the work of Paul Klee were sufficiently successful for him to continue to move away from the post-impressionist influences which has underpinned much of his teaching of painting up to this point, and this, with his developing interest in Mondrian, led him soon to base his work much more on these German and Dutch examples than on twentieth century French painting. In 1954 he took part in an exhibition of paintings, sculpture and constructions at the Hatton gallery in Newcastle. Pasmore, Thubron and Ben Nicholson were represented by relief constructions, and Wendy Pasmore exhibited paintings and collages in a similarly abstract style. Hudson, who had been in constant touch with Thubron between 1950 and 1954, discussing their pedagogical ideas and their hopes for art education, showed pieces in steel and plexiglass.

For a number of years the North Riding of Yorkshire Education Authority had conducted a series of summer short courses for the teachers in its area. John Wood was the
Art, Music and Drama Advisor for the Authority. Through Maurice de Sausmarez, Wood was introduced to Harry Thubron and in 1954 he invited Thubron to teach an art course during the summer. Thubron introduced Wood to Pasmore and during the next few years Hudson, Thubron, and Pasmore were involved in a series of these North Riding summer courses. That association accounts, in my view, for much of the quality and direction of later foundation course developments. All three showed, though in different ways, a commitment to "modern" art, and to some important role for that commitment in the education of artists. Wood's courses gave them the opportunity to discuss their ideas and to watch each other put the ideas into practice. They found common ground of great value, both in their views of art and in a shared sympathy with Herbert Read's attitudes to art education. There was confirmation, reinforcement and stimulation. Ideas developed quickly and the interaction spurred the development of the work back in their respective permanent teaching positions.

Herbert Read was a resident of North Yorkshire and knew Wood's work at the summer courses at Wraehead in Scarborough. He often dropped in on a course in session "mainly," says Wood, "just looking, commenting, talking to people." \(^{19}\) Read's ideas, his contribution to the discussions, and his reputation as England's leading theorist of art education were important then and were
crucial later for the work that Thubron and Hudson were to do at Leeds and beyond. When looking at work by students on one of these courses, Read commented; "You must not be under any apprehension; these are not works of art, though some may be near to it. These are essays, trials, experimentations. They are valuable but they are not ends." Wood comments: "Herbert was correcting us, putting us right a little, reminding us perhaps that we were getting a little too enthusiastic about what we'd achieved."  

Late in 1954 Thubron resigned his position at the Sunderland College of Art. He had no other position to go to immediately; he'd thought of just working for a while with the Forestry Commission, but John Wood offered him a term's work at a secondary modern school.

Thubron--a "secondary modern" interlude

At the beginning of 1955 Thubron went as an art teacher to the Joseph Rowntree Secondary Modern school in New Earswick near York. Secondary modern schools catered for the eighty per cent of children who did not succeed in obtaining a place at a Grammar school.  The children were of mixed ability with few academically oriented students, and neither their intellectual nor cultural backgrounds were strong. Thubron accepted the challenge, seeing in it parallels to his work in the Army, and decided to use the term to continue working out some of the ideas and problems he had first begun to tackle at Sunderland. It
was a very special teaching situation:

I was given carte blanche to do whatever I wanted ... I was given the money, the freedom, and the protection by John Wood ... The kids devoured ideas and you always had to have some idea to chuck into the arena for them to work on. I couldn't have survived, I suspect, without the awareness of Klee--the Haftmann and the Pedagogical Sketchbook. I've never had a more exhausting time in my life but it was very successful.22

The roots of the teaching were Klee and neo-plasticism, and the work, in a variety of media--wood, metal, cardboard, paper--was almost exclusively non-representational. Hudson talks of walking into classrooms full of white and primary-colored structures. One can make direct connections between the kinds of work Thubron exhibited in the Hatton Gallery exhibition and the work the children at New Earswick produced. Commenting on this experience, Thubron noted:

It became obvious when one had the divergencies of talent that exist in students between twelve and fifteen years of age ... that it was necessary to widen the reference of what could be called art ... and to make it possible for a student to learn more by himself by means of relative and scientific study on a programme that was schematically evolved.23

The field of reference had to be widened, though without at first a clear conception of what that might entail, but with an understanding, even at this early stage, that more individually-based study was necessary and that this study should be, in some sense or other, "scientific" and "schematic." Working methods too were idiosyncratic. Wood sent the Chief Education Officer of the region to visit the
school and he found Thubron in the middle of a scrum on the floor working on some construction with the children and apparently oblivious to a pandemonium of noise and movement in the rest of the classroom.

At the end of the term, John Wood arranged for an exhibition of the children's work and both Hudson and Pasmore attended. Pasmore was particularly impressed and remarked to Thubron that "it was the most important thing since the work of Marion Richardson." Hudson too saw the New Earswick experience as a crucial one in Thubron's development. "It was a peculiar mixture of the need to do things [both] physically and plastically: that was the key development; he responded to that and tried to interpret that."25

The move to Leeds

While still teaching at New Earswick, Thubron applied for the position of Head of the School of Painting at the Leeds College of Art, also in the North of England.26 Asked to send some examples of his work, he detached some early Mondrian-like canvasses from their stretchers and sent these rolled up in a cardboard tube!

Cyril Cross recalls that both he and Edward Pullee (respectively Vice-Principal and Principal of the College) had heard about Harry Thubron for two or three years before he applied for the vacancy.
His painting school had quite a reputation because of the number of students he was getting in to the Royal College. In the year he came to us (1955) I would think that the Royal College was almost entirely comprised of students from Sunderland. I think that is why Harry Thubron was appointed."

Wood claims to have "engineered" the appointment: "I knew George Taylor, who was the Chief Education Officer there, very well ... What I did was effective--Harry got the job." Thubron arrived in Leeds for the beginning of the final term of the 1954-1955 academic year.

In describing briefly some of the beginnings of the new art education in the art schools and colleges of post-war England, little has been said about either the philosophical or educational premises upon which Hamilton, Pasmore, Thubron, and Hudson erected the art courses they were now teaching, nor about the methods they used in their respective teaching arenas. Before writing about their ideas and methods, and about those of Harry Thubron in particular, something should be said about the situation at the Leeds College of Art in the five years immediately before he took up his position there. I had been appointed to teach at the college in 1950 and so was in a position to observe the results of changes that had taken place after the end of the war. From visits to many other regional colleges of art in England I concluded that the general ranges of attitudes and working conditions at Leeds were fairly typical. There were differences of course, mainly, in my view, the result of the geographical area served by
the college and of the character of the city itself, but the similarities to the work and working methods of other large provincial art colleges far outweighed these environmental differences. In Chapters III and IV I will be describing and commenting on the work at Leeds before Thubron arrived and that during the first few years of his tenure there. Although I was teaching in the School of Design, my responsibility was chiefly the drawing, painting and composition studies of design students, with a particular emphasis on the work of the Illustration and print-making students. Because of this, I had an especially acute interest in what these students studied in their first two years of college work and in what kinds of attitudes they had developed before they began their National Diploma in Design studies in the Design School. Some of my teaching was with students at this level but most of it was with the more senior students. After Thubron arrived in 1955 I continued to teach mainly to the more advanced students but during the two academic years, 1957-58 and 1958-59, I was one of the team of around six faculty members who worked together with the large foundation year class. The descriptions that follow, then, are based partly on direct contact with the people involved and on a personal involvement with foundation year teaching, and partly on an interested observation of what other members of the faculty were teaching and of the results of that teaching in the
words and actions of the students who moved into the Design School after completing the first two years of their college work.

In the final chapters of the study I intend to analyze Harry Thubron's contribution to post-war art education in England. It should be apparent already that there were differences in the attitudes and contributions of the four chief innovators thus far introduced. By concentrating on Thubron I do not want to suggest that his contribution was necessarily the most valuable, although I think that it had certain characteristics which make it of particular interest now. The story of the changes in English art education between 1950 and 1965 is a complicated one, with no easily describable clear direction. All four, and in their own more limited fashion scores of others, influenced developments. The system that emerged was one with multiple series of interactions and complicated sets of interrelationships to which one does something of a disservice if one simplifies too much. Material published so far about "Basic course" developments in the fifties and sixties seemsto me simplistic and narrow. This study attempts to redress the balance for just one of the chief contributors.
Notes

1 That Olive Sullivan might have based her course on knowledge of the Bauhaus gained from a reading of Art and industry seems unlikely. Although Art and industry was first published in 1936, it does not give a sufficiently detailed account of Bauhaus ideas or methods to have done more than provide general stimulation and suggest possible directions. John Holmes, Principal of the Manchester School at the time, had visited the Bauhaus so might well have influenced the introduction and running of such a course. See Jeremiah, D. A hundred years and more. Manchester: Manchester Polytechnic, 1980, which is a history of the Manchester College of Art.


8 Hudson, op. cit.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.


14 Hamilton, op. cit.


16 Heron, P. in the *New Statesman*. November 12, 1949, 547.

17 Hamilton, op. cit.


20 Ibid.

21 According to the provisions of the 1944 *Education Act*.

22 Thubron, op. cit.

23 Thubron, H. in a talk to the students of the School of Art Education in Birmingham in the summer of 1969.

24 The *Times Educational Supplement*, Friday, April 13, 1956 carried a review of the exhibition entitled *Design, colour, imagination*. Thubron is quoted as describing one of the illustrated paintings as "a good example of the imaginative possibilities brought about by having the children work from within themselves rather than starting with the limiting forms of objective naturalism."

25 Hudson, op. cit.

26 William Gear, Tom Watt and Frank Lisle were other short-listed candidates. Gear became Head of Painting at the Birmingham College of Art; Tom Watt remained at Leeds till 1960 and then became Head of Fine Art at the Canterbury College of Art, and Lisle later became Head of the Leeds Branch School of Art when the College was incorporated into the Leeds Polytechnic as the Faculty of Art and Design.


28 Wood, op. cit.
CHAPTER III
Leeds College of Art - 1950-1955

Although there were other major figures in the English developments, I have chosen to concentrate on the pedagogical work of Harry Thubron. Chapter II contained a description of some of Thubron's teaching experiences before he was appointed to the Headship of the Painting School at the Leeds College of Art. I will argue later that Thubron's work at Leeds was both the high point of his teaching career and also one of the major flowerings of "Basic course" theory and practice in England.

As preface to a description of Thubron's tenure at Leeds, there follows now an attempt to picture the situation, and changes in that situation, at the Leeds college in the five years which immediately preceded Thubron's arrival. Thubron's successes and failure at Leeds need to be viewed in the light of the possibilities which existed there. There were inevitable restraints and resistances to the changes he wished to institute. The structures and practices current at the college acted both as barriers and opportunities to the incoming teacher or administrator.
A Northern industrial city

A Harold Gilman painting in an exhibition at the City of Birmingham Art Gallery in January of 1982 shows a piece of waste ground with worn patches of grass, straggling clumps of wild flowers—London Pride, perhaps—piles of bricks, some broken but some still held vaguely together with mortar and thus retaining something of their original form as parts of foundations or ground-floor walls of "back-to-back" houses. Beyond the waste ground, as you would meet them if you traversed one of the worn earth paths leading away from the spectator into the middle distance, lie some intact, rigid, high walls of brick and, beyond these, the stiff forms of factories and warehouses. They are gaunt, dull buildings, almost characterless except for the chimneys, thirty to forty feet high, which rise above the dirty brick and even dirtier fenestration; these are rather elegantly tapered, and the black smoke which pours up from them disperses into violet-grey clouds. Gilman's painting does little to romanticize or idealize the scene, although the coloring is heightened in a way typical of this brand of English post-Impressionism so that one is less conscious of the caked soot on the brick than if one had actually viewed the townscape from the artist's side in 1912.

In the early fifties the streets near Kirkstall Abbey had still the character painted by Gilman. These open
spaces left by the clearing of streets of back-to-back houses or older factories lay among wide acres of still standing early-nineteenth century houses and at the foot of hills where steep streets of such houses rose straight up towards Headingley or, on the opposite side of the river, to the grim battlemented towers of His Majesty's Prison at Armley. Among the houses were small shops—neighbourhood stores which sold everything from newspapers to chocolate bars to bottles of disinfectant, coal merchants, little butcher's shops, even some second-hand and antique shops with cheap Staffordshire china, brass coal scuttles and Georgian and Victorian mirrors and knick-knacks. At intervals, and isolated by small neat grassy areas or small cemeteries, sat dark grey sandstone churches.

Leeds was then, and is now, an industrial city, though now the industry is more diversified and the estates of small, clean, electronic and light engineering factories nestle in the suburban areas outside the predominantly Victorian center. In the nineteen fifties little post-war building had been attempted and, in spite of greatly increased traffic and a few more modern buildings, the center of the town looked much as it must have done in the 1890s. The great black Town Hall, built in the eighteen sixties as a sign of Leeds' industrial and commercial significance, dominated the center; the College of Art, erected in 1903 in a strange mixture of Italianate and Arts
and Crafts movement architecture, including a large mosaic mural by Gerald Moira, stood not far from that center in a narrow cobbled street on the way out towards Woodhouse Moor and the University.

Leeds had long been a center of the clothing industry. Bradford, ten miles away, was the wool marketing town and Leeds the center for the large scale ready-made tailoring industry. Much of that industry was run by Jewish businessmen, and their presence provided a rather exotic richness to the city's cultural life. There had been a new influx of refugees from Germany in the thirties and forties; substantial areas of the city had high proportions of Jewish citizens, many of whom worked in the large clothing factories or in smaller bespoke tailoring establishments.

**The Leeds College of art students**

The students of the College, at that time all undergraduates—though they were not called by that title—lived in Leeds or in one of the large number of small towns and villages in that part of West Yorkshire. A few were from farms—quite prosperous in that part of the country—but most were from middle class families who lived in Leeds, Huddersfield or Wakefield, Barnsley, Otley, Ilkley or Harrogate, and their fathers were likely to be teachers, or civil servants, accountants, bank employees, post office workers, shop keepers, department store managers or assistants, engineers or draftsmen. They had mostly
attended local grammar schools of good academic standard though they were unlikely to have been among the very best students in their graduating classes—these would have gone, in the main, to the university up the road. Students were accepted on the basis of their having successfully completed five or six years at the grammar school and on an evaluation of a portfolio of their art work in school. Most had passed their School Leaving Certificate, though it was not at that time laid down as a necessary preliminary to art school acceptance (as it is now) that a student should have passed in a stated number of academic subjects in the General Certificate of Education.

They were bright students, interested in art without knowing a great deal about it, and anxious to please. Not more than a handful of students saw art as in any sense disruptive of their fairly conventional middle class attitudes and most appeared to look forward to relatively unadventurous though interesting careers as graphic designers or craftsmen or art teachers.

George Waite, who in the early fifties was in charge of the Intermediate course which covered the first two years, makes the point that the chief criterion used in assessing applicants' work was the seriousness of attitude which the work revealed. He was not interested at that point in the "style" of the work, only in whether or not the student had learned to approach art work as worthy of
serious, sustained consideration, intellectual effort and perseverance. Most students had taken art as a chief subject in their school certificate and many had passed at the Advanced level (at eighteen).

**Curriculum and teaching**

The four year course which led to the award of the National Diploma in Design was divided into two main parts. The first of these was the Intermediate course of two years duration, which was seen as a broad general education in art and was almost the same for every student no matter what his eventual specialization. The syllabus consisted of classes in drawing, composition, lettering, sculpture, design and craft and art history. The course culminated in national examinations where some individual pieces of student work, done especially for the examination and completed under quite rigid and prescribed working conditions, were sent to London to be graded with those of students from other art schools throughout the country. With these pieces went also assessments by their instructors of the students' examination work and of their work over the two year period, these assessments being moderated internally to achieve consistency between instructors.

Upon successful completion of the Intermediate examination the student could move on to the National Diploma in Design (N.D.D.) two year course and now he or she was able to specialize within a fairly narrow range of
subjects and with some flexibility to accommodate individual student choice. That course, too, culminated in national examinations with a combination of internal and external grading. While this went a long way toward ensuring comparability between an NDD qualification in one college and an NDD from another, it also put a great deal of power in the hands of the external examiner in London and especially in the hands of the Chief External Examiner for any subject area. There were examples of almost total failure across the country in one particular year in one subject area, the apparent reason being some quite extreme divergence between the views of the Chief External Examiner and those of most of the people teaching in that area. These examiners were appointed by, and the examinations conducted by, the Ministry of Education. It would be reasonable to attribute some of the close similarity between pre-war and post-war attitudes to the conservatism of these government officials.

Instruction in these courses was chiefly in the hands of teacher/artists educated initially in a similar art school but who had, after two or three years of such education, moved on to more advanced work at one of the major art education institutions in London, the chief being the Royal College of Art, the Slade School of Art of the University of London, and the Royal Academy Schools. There were a few instructors educated at one of the Scottish
Central Institutions (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen or Dundee Colleges of Art) and a small number who had either come into art school teaching with no more than an NDD qualification or a combination of an NDD and industrial or commercial experience as artist/craftsman. Many of these instructors, especially those who had completed their Associateship of the Royal College of Art either pre-war or immediately post-war, also had an Art Teacher's Diploma, that is, a qualification in the teaching as opposed to the making of art, but taken in addition to the four year art qualification.

A very high proportion of instructors were Associates of the Royal College of Art (A.R.C.A.) and the overall views of art upon which the structure, curriculum and methods of teaching were based, were largely those formed during these instructors' formative years at the Royal College. It was often not difficult to see, in a specialist area, the predominant influence across the whole country of one powerful artist/teacher from the Royal College, and this was an influence likely to be self-perpetuating. The trained A.R.C.A., who was now instructing at a provincial College of Art, would have his best students apply to the R.C.A. where they would come under selection procedures likely to carry on the same tradition. At various points, of course, the leadership of the Royal College and in different departments changed during the immediate post-war years, and one of
these changes at least was a dramatic one—the appointment of Robin Darwin as the Principal in 1947 (see Chapter One)—but these changes were slow to be reflected in the work being demanded of students in the provincial colleges.

In the work of the ex-R.C.A. instructors and in what they had to say about their work it seemed that the attitudes at the College, especially in the painting, drawing, and print-making departments, were still strongly affected by the very English versions of Post-Impressionism produced in the years between the wars by such artists as Walter Sickert and Harold Gilman. These artists had produced a style heavily dependent on the work of Bonnard, Vuillard and Pisarro. Sickert, especially, had developed, through numerous periods of work and study in France, a style closely linked to that of Vuillard. His work differed from that of Vuillard in being more literary (even if some of the more literary titles were sometimes jokes at the viewer's expense), and in being strongly affected by the color of the English scene. Sickert's paintings were grey, brown, black, ochre, and in a generally deep close tonality, while Vuillard's, though occasionally also somber, used greater areas of pink, lilac, and yellow, and were heightened and lightened by gay patterns of carpet or wallpaper. Sickert's paintings were sometimes humorous—often depicting the vital life of the music hall—but overall he used limited ranges of color and tone
in ways which seemed to fit admirably the English climate and English taste in architecture, dress, and interior design.  

Another strong influence was that of the Euston Road school. In the first chapter I described how that school had functioned, both as a place of instruction and as a common frame of reference amongst a fairly large group of artists. That frame included an interest in local landscape, in particular the less superficially attractive aspects of London townscape—the Euston Road, Camden Town, Islington, rather than Park Lane, Mayfair or Belgravia. With that went an interest in depicting, though not in a highly illustrative fashion, low-life aspects of London society—costermongers, street markets, music halls.

It is important to emphasize that, in spite of the subject matter (and that included much middle-class bourgeois material also), there was little evidence of any desire to make overt political or social statements through these works; the material seemed to be seen as pictorially interesting, offering decorative possibilities—qualities of shape, tone and composition—in much the same way as did the material Degas, Renoir and Manet found in the streets, cafes and music-halls of Paris. In the teaching at the Royal College it appeared that it was the aesthetic qualities of this kind of subject matter which were pointed out and emphasized. However, it was important to future
developments in English art and in English art schools, that there was an emphasis on drawing one's material for art from life around one; aesthetic qualities were noticed and commented on in relation to their occurrence in daily life rather than as abstract qualities divorced from life.

In the Intermediate course especially, then, that is during the first two years of an art student's professional education, a major influence was likely to be an insistence on drawing from life—not just from the costumed or nude model, but also from the everyday life of the city, street and countryside. Work in the composition classes was based on drawings made out of class, and sketch book studies were a required and important aspect of the student's training. Theories of composition applied to work from these studies were mainly based on the work of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists rather than on the work of classical artists.

By the end of the forties, while the Leeds College still contained a large number of dusty casts from the antique, drawings from Greek and Roman statuary were no longer part of the curriculum. Still-life drawing and drawing from the figure were strongly emphasized. There was little or no structured teaching of anatomy but the instruction in life drawing included much informal teaching of figure anatomy and relied on an understanding of figure structure obtained from the study of Renaissance,
Impressionist, and Post-Impressionist models.

There was a considerable degree of rigor in the ways in which both drawing and composition were taught. Most of the students by the end of the two year Intermediate course were able to draw quite convincingly within the stylistic limits set. The work in the sketchbooks was often of a high standard, showing much serious observation and willingness to pursue representational concepts to a high degree of completion. The compositions (usually gouache—most often on paper in the 20" x 16" size) were based on given subjects such as "Market Scene," "Fairground," "Farm Interior," "Crossroads" or on limitations set such as "Three Figures in a Setting" or "The Duo," and again often exhibited characteristics of good design, thoroughly structured and composed figures and objects in naturalistic spatial settings and, less often but still quite frequently, strong individuality in ways of representation, attitudes to the subject matter, color or tonal range.

The picture is of an apparently (in some sense actually) narrow range of artistic theory being put into practice. Many good artists, illustrators and craftsmen emerged from this and from their succeeding two years of specialization. In some colleges or schools of art this was not so true and the success of so many of these Leeds students must be attributed to the quality of their instructors. Operating within these fairly narrow confines
they were, many of them, able to provide an apparently useful basis for future work and to inspire dedicated effort in future studies. Many students were successful in gaining entry into the Royal College or Slade schools and such entry at that time was very competitive. Most of the success came in entry to the painting, engraving and sculpture schools and into such fields as ceramics and silversmithing. A national competition which ran for three years and was financially supported by the Hulton Foundation (publishers of "Picture Post") sought the best graphic design students and offered the winners a year working with prominent London studios or advertising agencies; Leeds College of Art provided about a third of the winners of this competition during the few years the scholarships were offered.

Leeds College of Art in the early fifties was described by John Wood as an institution where "there was a great deal of self satisfaction and contentment with what had been done and (an) uncritical attitude." Perhaps one should not give too much credence to Wood's views on this. Although he knew the administrators in the Education Offices in Leeds, he did not come to work in Leeds until 1957, two years after helping to install Harry Thubron as Head of Painting, so that his knowledge of the work of the college earlier is almost certainly second-hand and biased by his commitment to Thubron's work and ideas.
Eric Taylor, who had come as the Head of the Design School in 1948, had made dramatic changes to that School. The Illustration area, which had concentrated on teaching a very old-fashioned book design with Bewick-type wood engravings, became a heavily drawing and painting oriented course with illustration and print-making coming after a solid preparation in these areas. Taylor had been much influenced by the Vollard books, with illustrations by Picasso, Matisse, Clave, Segonzac and others, and also, in his own work, by the drawing of the Pre-Raphaelites, especially by those of Rosetti. His own drawing was strong (he had narrowly failed to win a Rome Scholarship when he was a student) and he saw good drawing as a necessary basis for work in illustration, graphic design, fashion and even jewellery and silversmithing. His view of drawing was not over-academically oriented and he had an excellent eye for quality in student work. He was anxious to regenerate and modernize the craft teaching in the School of Design and brought in younger faculty members who, for example, saw "furniture" as something more than "cabinet-making" and introduced the use of metal and plastics and the study of ergonomics into their "craft" teaching.

On the fine art side things were more conventional. Maurice de Sausmarez had been Head of Painting and had then moved in 1950 to the University of Leeds to lecture on the History of Art. Richard Macdonald, who replaced him, was a
competent ex-Royal College of Art painter, who had little interest in pedagogy and left the rest of the painting instructors very much to their own devices. When he returned to London to become an art director for an advertising agency, another, older, ex-RCA painter, Francis Helps, was appointed. His influence was minimal. The fine art area was ripe for some quite new sense of direction. "Leeds was pretty dead," says Wood, but it was, in fact, one of the better art schools of its day, sending many students on to the Royal College of Art and the Slade, and many of its design students into successful positions in commerce and industry. There was some sense of disquiet among the faculty members; there was some recognition that, while the college had made some changes, it was still, on the whole, treading water. When Thubron arrived in the Spring of 1955, although it was obvious that there would be some opposition to his regime, it was also not at all surprising that many of the staff would quickly join in his efforts to make substantial reforms in art education.
Notes


4 Richard Macdonald, after moving back to London to work for a number of years as a visual creative designer for television commercials, is now a very successful designer for films. His recent credits include: Far From the Madding Crowd, Altered States, and Steinbeck's Cannery Row.

5 Wood, op. cit.
CHAPTER IV
Leeds College of Art - 1955-1960

After Harry Thubron arrived at the Leeds College of Art a number of changes occurred fairly rapidly. This chapter describes the new patterns of activity as I observed them and as I participated in some of the foundation year teaching. This new picture did not happen all at once and I have telescoped together groups of new projects and teaching methods which were arrived at over a period of two or three years.

A number of other teachers joined the Leeds faculty during this period. Tom Hudson, who had been teaching at Lowestoft, but had participated in the summer courses at Scarborough, came to Leeds in 1956. Eric Atkinson, who had been a student of Thubron at the Sunderland College of Art, arrived the same year, and Thubron was also able to draw on the help of a number of artists who were appointed as Gregory Fellows in the University of Leeds. The Gregory Fellowships were established under an endowment which brought to the Leeds campus for a period of one academic year visual artists, poets, and musicians. They were given a stipend but were not required to teach. Most of them made
themselves available to students of the university in some ways, the artists often opening up their studios for a short time each week and often giving one or two lectures about their work or about what interested them in the world of contemporary art. Hubert Dalwood, Martin Froy, Terry Frost, and Alan Davie were among the Gregory Fellows used as part-time teachers at the art college.

The descriptions of typical curriculum events and sequences are followed by some analysis of the effects of the new regime on students and on the academic life of the college. The changes that took place were not achieved without controversy; some of the objections and counter arguments to the new movement are raised; these came both from instructors directly involved and from interested outside observers. The review of the published material serves to connect the happenings at Leeds with those at other major centers, especially those at the University of Newcastle.

The "foundation" studio

The two large painting studios on the top floor of the Leeds College of Art had been knocked into one at the beginning of the 1955-56 academic year; perhaps they had started out that way as only an easily removable partition wall divided them. The space now formed, about eighty feet by thirty, was lit by large, sloping, North-facing windows--the College had been purpose-built just after the
turn of the century and ideas of the Academy on the appropriate kinds of space for art teaching had still prevailed.

The doubling of the available space now made it possible for all first year students to work together in one room and on a typical working day in the mid-fifties one would find between seventy-five and eighty-five students working in the "foundation" studio, some at easels, some at wooden donkeys, some on the raised platform which ran along the wall under the windows. As the students worked, a number of instructors moved around the room, sometimes talking to an individual student, sometimes getting involved in discussions among three or four. Perhaps as many as five instructors might be available on any day though it was not usual for all of them to be there all of the time; sometimes one would have a commitment to a student working independently in another studio; sometimes a couple of them would drift over to the local "greasy spoon" for a cup of tepid coffee; sometimes there would be informal staff meetings of the instructors involved in first year teaching, although these were more likely to take place in the cafe than in an office or committee room.

Someone observing that first year course might have been hard pressed to discover a logical curricular design in the range of activities that went on, though the work would not have seemed aimless either. On one day, for
example, the students were given a rough-cut block of alabaster which was approximately five inches by four by four. Two sides of the block were planed smooth, the others left reasonably flat but rough textured. The students had been asked to make a unified form from or with this block, but were given only simple penknives or files as tools. Alabaster is a relatively soft stone, nevertheless cuts with an ordinary penknife or work with even a rough file make only a rather slow impression on it. This was a desired effect; it was stressed to the students that they should not "impose" some predetermined form on the stone but rather that with slow modifications they should find some unified sets of relationships between the planes of the three dimensional form or, even better, find some kind of dynamic tension which permeated every aspect of the stone. It would seem to be beneficial that the student would be handling the stone, turning it over in his hands, feeling its weight and mass. (In this respect the project had something in common with some of the early Bauhaus form exercises--the designing of new forms for tool handles, for example.)

In spite of these instructions there were always some students who would attempt to impose a pre-conceived form on the stone. It was one of the chief tasks of the instructors to be alert to this possibility and to guide the students towards a conception of the stone as an organic whole--organic in the sense that the final form was a result
of the living, intuitive process of slowly working with the form, the modifications being a result of sensitive relationships between the student and the stone. The activity of the instructors, then, was chiefly to talk to the students and, through this talk, to ensure their openness to this new experience and to ensure that they relied on their intuitive responses rather than on existing preconceptions about art or art-making.

A similar project was carried out in two-dimensions. The student was asked to make a "composition" of two shapes; the material was newsprint, the medium soft charcoal. It was stressed that the shapes should be "dynamic," have "tension," "energy," just as the three-dimensional forms of alabaster were to be conceived of as having centers from which a dynamic energy pushed out towards the surface; the relationship of the forms to one another was of prime importance; here, too, questions of tension between the forms were paramount--one form swelling out until it almost touched the other--meeting its neighbors with a rigid opposing face or shrinking away from possible contact. The forms were solidly black, and the student was instructed to work out from a center--a dark blob of charcoaled black slowly extending and "becoming" a form--rather than to draw an outline later "filled-in" with charcoal. The emphasis, again as with the alabaster, was based on the model of "organic" growth, on an analogy of a naturally developing
organism, the final shape of which was not predetermined by the student but arose slowly, intuitively, as the two forms grew side by side in an inevitable interrelationship. The mutual dependence of the shapes was emphasized and so also was the negative/positive, black/white character of the work; the white shapes left between the black forms and the white shapes left between the black forms and the edges of the paper were seen as having their own energy content, both as "field" and as shapes which, with the requisite effort, could be looked at as positive against the black as background negative. There was constant reiteration of the notion that students had to "recognize" good qualities as they emerged rather than to "produce" such qualities from an inner mental image.

Again, many of the students, while often professing incomprehension and confusion, did succeed in making compositions with the desired character and quality. The chief difficulties seemed to be a wish on the part of quite a number of students to make either somewhat "rococco" shapes, with elaborate, controlled "coastlines" and curlicues reminiscent of 19th century historic ornament based on plant forms, or to make shapes having obvious denotative characteristics. These were seen by the instructor as being superimposed on the experience from preexisting mental images and as derivative from prior acquaintance with "art" works; a constant concern was to
counteract the effects of previous "unhealthy" or unhelpful art influences, and to guide the student into a reliance on direct response to the qualities of what he was making, uncontaminated by an already acquired superficial aesthetic sense. The results, as may be seen in the illustrations, were interesting and subtle. That they often looked noticeably like pieces by Max Bill or Hans Arp was probably inevitable though there was a strong de-emphasis on style--students were encouraged to forget all that they had previously learned. That prior art education was seen as stemming from sets of restrictive conventions which interposed themselves between the student and the possibilities of genuine form development.

Analysis and synthesis

Alongside these "making" activities were many seen as primarily analytical. Students would take natural objects--fruit, flowers, vegetables, small tree branches--and "analyze" them from specific points of view. A stem with leaves might be examined mathematically, with careful measurements being made of the distances between the leaf nodes and of the length of each succeeding leaf as their sizes diminished toward the tip of the stem. These measurements might be laid, somewhat arbitrarily, as ruled lines on a page, sometimes at angles to one another based on the original stem, though which features of the stem to include varied. A student might examine the ratios of these
measurements as they grew smaller; he/she would be
couraged to look for significant regularities, to compare
them with such phenomena as the Golden Section or the
Fibonacci series. The angles of growth, too, might reveal
sets of relationships of mathematical significance. A
number of stems from different trees might be similarly
examined and the results compared. The student might take
some other aspect—the color, or the range of tones, or the
sets of shapes—to be found in a grapefruit, say, or in the
dahlia flowers, and extract the details as rows of patches
of color, or squares of different tonal values seen across a
section, or as groups of shapes—each shape differing from
its neighbors but all sharing some common features. Norbert
Lynton, describing similar exercises at one of Harry
Thubron's short courses, talks of the ways that Thubron
found to get students to look with intensity and
concentration.

Students were asked to do some color exercise which
started off quite simply (often, perhaps, the
simplicity itself led, deliberately, to confusion—it
was almost as if there was really nothing to do).
Take primary colors; add white to them; see what
happens. In these exercises the student used oil
paint, rather thickly, placing patches of color cheek
by jowl, noting the relationships as well as the
particular intensity of tone, saturation and hue.
After working for a few hours on this Harry came
along and began to comment on the shapes of color the
students had been putting down. It was almost as if,
because of the concentration on color, they had
achieved "good" qualities of shape. Thubron
particularly stressed the intensity of
working—suddenly eight hours work had taken place
and had seemed to pass unnoticed.
The role of the faculty member was to encourage this activity, to help the students to see ways of developing the directions they were taking, to comment on the specific qualities of tone, color or shape relationships, to discuss with the students their reactions to the raw material and to the activity, to enlarge on any principles which might be revealed by the activity, to provide examples of how different artists at other times and places had dealt with these elements and with ways of putting these elements together. There was no attempt to suggest that there was a finite set of elements, or a group of strict laws which governed the making or understanding of art. Rather, there was a continual emphasis both on the "objective" nature of what was being studied—these characteristics were characteristics of the plants, fruit and so on—and on the personal nature of each student's reactions to these characteristics.

Some of the succeeding exercises were more "synthetic" in nature. Having discovered a set of proportional relationships between a set of lines extracted or abstracted from a plant stem, the student might then be set the task of building a "space frame" from lengths of quarter inch balsa wood or from pieces of masonite which used that set of proportions. Here again the emphasis was on simplicity and on a personal organicism of production. Somehow, almost inevitably, and with no great fuss being
made about it, these space frames almost always seemed to be made up of square or rectangular forms; angles, if used at all, were simple and, again with apparently no obvious disapproval being expressed, no surrealistic or literary qualities, such as might have been expected from seventeen or eighteen year olds, were in evidence.

Color analysis was often followed by the construction of color compositions. These often consisted of squares of color making up larger rectangles of colored patches, very much on the line of Klee's earlier work. The patches were of heavily impastoed oil paint applied with a palette knife on thin cartridge paper or thickish newsprint. Oil seeped out around those patches making encircling brown stains. Often students built paint on paint, thickly, as they tried to achieve the desired result. Criticisms of these products concentrated on the dynamic character of colors—the way colors, dependent on their neighbors, appeared either to advance or recede to varying degrees, and on such qualities of color relationship as harmony, contrast and discord. Students were encouraged to try the effect of surrounding one color by a series of different colors or by a series of different tones of color. Again, these studies were carried out in oil paint on newsprint and there was no lack of instructor reaction to the aesthetic quality of the resultant pages as well as to what was being revealed about color. Aspects of color theories were outlined, even at
times elaborated—Goethe and Chevreul might be mentioned— but there was no strictly organized teaching of color theory, no "course" in the theory of color, and all treatment of the theoretical bases of color was contained within an ambience of individual search, the development of individual sensitivity and sensibility, and the making of art products which were as much "art" objects— or at least visually valuable objects— as they were exercises in the learning of color; students looked at the work of Klee, Kandinsky or de Stael rather than that of Ostwald or Munsell. Gavin Stuart, from Edinburgh—a "fanatic" about color— taught quite differently. His approach was much more scientific though he also used experimental methods. He would pin up large sheets of white card to form a four foot by six foot rectangle; on this he would draw a bisecting horizontal line. That line represented the color spectrum— above the line were tints, below the line shades. Students were asked to cull patches of color from magazines and journals and place these patches precisely on this chart. Sometimes half-hour long arguments would develop about exactly where one particular patch of color should be located!

Terry Frost, on the other hand, would encourage students to go out and "collect" say, "reds." Great assemblages of found color would stride across a wall.

A student given, say, a 'thesis in yellow' will discover with complete freedom within yellow
organization, harmony, and discord all allied to proportion and form, which would be very difficult to come by from the study of colour theory alone. Simple things are noted, like the differing greens on leaves or stalks which comes with each differing yellow.

Observation

Analysis, synthesis and observation—all three were seen as necessary in the early education of the art student. The student drew and painted from observation, from still life objects, from the nude model, from landscapes, from townscape. This drawing and painting came after much work in analysis and synthesis; only after the student had begun to develop an individual sensitivity to the qualities of tone, line, color, and to the characteristics of visual images was he/she in a position to recognize these qualities in the world of nature and therefore be in a position to resist the false routes of "copying" or "imitation." The student was now in a position to select sequences of color relationships in the still-life group, to recognize patterns of shape in an assembly of fruits and bottles on a table, to identify the "families of form" in a landscape or in a streetscape of factories and houses, and, at the same time, was in a position to realize that, as marks were made on the paper or canvas that were in some way related to that selection or recognition something new and of individual meaning was being created. The "mark" was an important concept. "Man and his mark," Thubron used to say,
indicating the importance of that externalization of the individual's reaction to the universe; in making that mark the individual was both revealing his understanding of the external world and, like primitive man making his handprint on the wall of his cave, confirming his existence and his unique identity.

Still-life groups were unlike the conventional groups, which, in England at that time, had something of Chardin or Cezanne about them. "Natural" objects were still the main content—flowers, fruits, vegetables—and bottles, plates, dishes of varying types and sizes, but they were usually laid on large tables, often six to ten feet long, apparently randomly and certainly with no attempt to "compose" the group. Bunches of chrysanthemums, dahlias, sunflowers and marguerites were placed in ordinary glass milk bottles or simple jugs; the students were encouraged to draw any sections of the material, or individual pieces; the flowers dried and died, the grapefruits shrivelled, dust gathered, but the drawing and painting went on. Drawing from heads or from the figure went on too, and will be discussed later. No distinctions were made in the approaches, techniques or attitudes in working from these different source materials. Whether a student worked in pencil, charcoal, water color or oil paint, or any combination of these; whether a student worked from the head or torso of a fellow student, from an elaborate still-life group, from the Leeds townscape seen
through the studio window, from the nude model, from an individual dead chrysanthemum, the criteria for successful work were the same—combinations of sensitivity to features of the external world, sensitivity in the mark-making process, sensitivity to and an individual stand in the making of visual objects.

There were also exercises (though Thubron is at pains to reject the word as being too redolent of mechanical procedures and "correct" techniques) in shape development. A number of "basic" shapes—a square and a circle, a circle and a triangle, a triangle, square and circle—would be distributed in some way on a page, again in solid charcoaled black, and the students' task would be to find a number of intermediate shapes between the originals which would reveal an organic change from one to the other; a similar exercise between two colors or between two patches of strongly different tonal values would also ask for regularly spaced intervallic forms of the appropriate color or tone. Or regular-sized spots would be distributed across the surface of the page, the student being required to place those to obtain maximum differences of energy level and apparent movement. A sheet would be subdivided by a series of complete vertical and horizontal lines, the resultant squares and rectangles again suggesting movement or interesting distribution of tension.
Although "language" was talked about, and the concept of a language of visual art lay behind much of what was done ("a certain sort of pattern emerged ... as a language, as an objective kind of language; that, really, was what it was about") Thubron never suggested that any kind of strict "grammar" was either possible or desirable. In his talks with students he stressed the "fundamental" character of both what they were being asked to do and of the attitudes that were being encouraged.

In another part of the building Tom Hudson might be working with students on "industrial design" projects. The quotation marks suggest the idiosyncratic nature of this endeavor, quite unlike those normally carried out at that time in art schools. Students would be asked to find some personal problem in furnishing, lighting or equipment requirement to which a solution was needed, and would start quite from scratch laying out the problem, trying out ideas in new materials or new processes. Hudson introduced, for example, the use of resins and fiber glass and of vacuum-forming and enameling on steel sheets.

Models were used extensively. A typical life drawing session in the large studio would have four or five nude models moving around between the students. The students worked on large sheets of newsprint on the floor; as the models moved, the students were invited to respond, not to individual separate glimpses of a model seen at one
fixed moment in time but instead to the patterns of movement created, to the dynamic of a situation which included both the models and the students and the space in which all of them were operating. Thubron sought a surfeit of nudity, an impingement on the student consciousness of the moving flesh around him; "The quivering arse above his head," as he put it once. A student's perception of the figure was inevitably fleeting and succeeded by equally momentary experiences and his task was to respond to each of these as they occurred, involving himself not only in the dynamism of moving figures against student bodies, stools, walls, floor and so on but also in the dynamics of the mark-making activity itself—involving himself in the world of the drawing; pushing and pulling the forms, identifying himself with the personality and unique characteristics of this messy black object he was creating.

That messiness too was deliberate. Students would work with, say, large sticks of charcoal on huge sheets of newsprint torn from a roll. On their knees atop this sheet, the images they were creating extended beyond the peripheries of their vision--no possibility existed of standing back objectively and exercising the usual kind of drawing control; the drawing, as in Abstract Expressionist painting, became an arena, a battlefield, where conscious control was happily abandoned, where soft charcoal strokes were made—often quickly and energetically in response to
the moving thigh or the swinging breast—and then softened further with the finger, spread into areas of mist-like grey, half erased with the ball of the hand, overlaid with new darker strokes or blackened areas, sometimes extended off the edge of the paper, sometimes made with such force that the paper tore with the impact. The student was "finding equivalences" for his/her sensations and perceptions; and he/she was beginning to recognize the power of the created image to "talk back"; one measure of success was the beginnings of student sensitivity to the marks they had sometimes almost unwittingly created, and their recognition that their reaction to these marks was more important than the imposition of preconceived ideas of what drawing should be—the attempt, for example, to find images "in the mind's eye" and to make these concrete.

Alternatively, the students might work with three or four inch brushes with liquid black paint on large sheets of cartridge paper. Sometimes these bold black and white paintings would be made directly from the figure, sometimes—more often, since physically the brush and paint technology did not mix well with the crowded studio or the moving figures—they were responses to already-existing charcoal drawings. There was much use of polyvinyl acetate medium (P.V.A.) and black powder color; not only could the resultant paint mixtures vary from solid black to palest grey but the PVA could also be used to adhere new white
shapes on top of painted black areas so that a continual
dialogue of black and white was possible.

These large collaged life drawings and paintings
might be, if a further bout of disruption was considered to
be necessary, torn up and then re-assembled in new
configurations. Other pieces of paper to hand—perhaps
newspaper or beige drawing paper—might be added, enriching
the color scheme and adding textural variation.

Students, as we saw, were encouraged to move freely
and easily from two-dimensional to three-dimensional work.
Often the re-assembled life-drawing collages would be once
more cut, this time into the appropriate sizes to cover the
sides of cardboard boxes of different scales. The boxes,
now featuring strong black and white shapes still
identifiable as figure or figure-part related, would be
piled up somewhat arbitrarily and used as the subject matter
for further drawings and collages. Now most of the figural
images were seen distorted in multiple perspectives,
creating new vital sources of figure and shape imagery.

Complementary studies

Not only nude models were used. Sometimes the models
would be clothed, or half clothed. Sometimes some Indian
dancers would be brought in with a couple of musicians
playing an accompanying raga. Interjected between the color
exercises there might be a session, provided by a lecturer
from the university or technical college, on the chemistry
of pigments, or on the scientific basis of perception in optics. After a few days of hectic 9-5 work in the studio there might be a lecture or a group of lectures by someone from the university. Jerome Ravetz, a lecturer in the philosophy of science, gave a series of talks on the mathematical basis of forms in space, Asa Briggs on the history of Leeds, Richard Hoggart on popular culture; Ernst Gombrich or Basil Taylor might come up from London, Gombrich to talk on some aspect of the Renaissance or on the connections between art and information theory, Taylor to provide criticism of work being shown in the private London galleries. (The students were not "ready" or prepared for these lectures; no one provided introductory material, the students did not take notes, the ideas presented were not followed up afterwards.)

One might also find the students listening to a lecture more readily identifiable as a "history of art" lecture. There was no sequence of lectures based on chronological order; Tom Hudson might be lecturing on Suprematism or Constructivism; Norbert Lynton on Paul Klee or the "Blaue Reiter" group; Eric Taylor, the Head of the Design School, on Cezanne or Rosetti. Not only the first year students attended these lectures; so also did students from any other year in the college and there would usually be a sprinkling of faculty members from Graphic Design, Sculpture, Illustration, or Teacher Training.
The major part of the work, however, was carried out in the large first year studio. For a complete academic year, this was "home" to the first years; they would use other studios when special tools were needed, or when they wanted to work with plaster or plastics, say, but their major continuing work was carried out in the rich communal atmosphere of the crowded painting studio.

Ehrenzweig describes a "typical" Thubron-designed exercise:

Harry Thubron sent his students on a search for interesting machine components. They had first to make dead-pan drawings, then select the most significant detail and study it in a series of freely drawn rhythmical diagrams. These diagrammatic drawings were further transformed into free brush drawings that ran counter to the metallic geometry of the original machine forms, yet preserved their essence. In the end these free painterly marks were turned back into three dimensions, this time made in wood. The graphic elements were turned into components that interlocked tightly like the original machine and--more important--like the limbs and organs of a human body. As Thubron remarked, not without irony, this machine sculpture looked more organic and alive than the usually stiff and dead life drawings.

Another project, attributed by Ehrenzweig to Jon Thompson, who taught with Thubron at Lancaster (1964-1965), and later at Leicester, is also typical of a Leeds-developed exercise.

Thompson ... made his students make paper cubes which they covered with camouflaging patterns so that their shape became partly obliterated. Grouping them together again flattened out the cubes into striking all-over patterns. Yet as the students painted this still-life the half-obliterated cubes, pushed out into three dimensions here and there, and created a strangely animated ambiguous space.
In all of these "exercises" or "projects" there were viewpoints being made concrete which concern how students were to be treated and in what ways they were to be involved in the work. The roles of teacher and student were being redefined. The student was, quite deliberately, given little to work on: the project was "elementary," almost "pointless." A bare outline was given of what was required to be done but no directives were provided about how to proceed. The role of the student was to begin to make the required moves, but this did not take him or her far. The crowded studio conditions almost inevitably led to discussion about the apparently ill-defined demands. To some degree, students—discussing their difficulties with one another and with the peripatetic instructors—began to work cooperatively, that cooperation extending to instructors, many of whom were almost as befuddled as the students. In this way the student would begin to realize the essentially "objective" nature of the task, although in the end what the process meant individually was of prime importance. That process was seen as primarily exploratory, a process of inquiry which necessarily proceeded without the enquirer being in possession of all the facts, without understanding fully the material, and without being clear about his aims or objectives.

Thubron devised these methods at least partially as a way of getting students to break away from preconceived
notions of what art products ought to be like. He wanted them to engage with, get involved in, processes which would produce images "born of some kind of experiences ... a live one, never an academic one ... There was an overriding philosophy ... never to take what was within one's experience ... (to) throw that out, tear it up." The final resulting object was important but the ways of getting to it relied not on academic or conventional processes but rather on techniques drawn from such sources as Mondrian and Tantric art; "From 1950 onwards," Thubron reports, "I'd read a lot of oriental philosophy." When asked if these Tantric and Zen ideas did not conflict with the constructivist ideas of the Bauhaus, he replied "I don't think so. I think Mondrian rediscovered ... the geometry that was already in the sixteenth century Japanese house."

There was some ambiguity, almost certainly not intended, between the de-emphasis on the object as the goal of the exercise and an intense concern with the objects after they were completed. Some of the results of the projects were carefully preserved, prized, exhibited, treated almost as "masterpieces." Partly this was a political act; propaganda for the new methods was essential if the necessary support was to be forthcoming.
The critique

After the students had worked on one of these projects for a few days (there was continuous working in the studio each day from about nine thirty to four or five o'clock) there would be group criticisms, usually run by Thubron himself but with the participation of other instructors. These were not only criticisms of individual student work but also general talks about what was going on in the studio and what was going on in, and meant by, modern art. In relation to the first project described, that of the alabaster modification, there might be mention of Max Bill and Brancusi, Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg. The notion of "plasticity," based on "neo-plasticism" as defined by the de Stijl group, might be discussed and attempts made to demonstrate the concept by reference to student work which either did or did not reflect some understanding of the idea. Hubert Dalwood describes how Thubron would talk with the students.

"He asked you," said Hainsworth, a student at the time, "to become involved, like a child would be involved, not self-consciously, [and] out of this would come maybe a poetic idea. But you have a natural instinct to use materials--children have it adults have it, but it gets
rigid, inhibited, self-conscious, as you get older ... it [was] a way of teaching that was to bypass the self-conscious so that these latent parts of a person's character could come through."

Given that for most of these students this was their introduction to such concepts and ideas, as well as to the artist named, it was inevitable that there was some lack of understanding. The degree of incomprehension varied; local grammar schools were schools of high academic attainment and entry to them was highly selective so that the students, almost all of them from these schools, were mostly of above average intelligence; there was undoubtedly greater variation in their background understanding of art than in their capacity for understanding general ideas. Even for the attending faculty members both the degree of acquaintance with the ideas being presented and the amount of sympathy for these ideas varied substantially.

Only to a limited extent were these faculty members "chosen" for this task, and only to a limited extent did they share a similar background in art historical knowledge or in aesthetic ideas. Nevertheless, the most striking features of these sessions to me was how apparently successful they were. Thubron's voice and speech patterns were neither ordinary nor instantly comprehensible and he approached the explanation of ideas often obliquely and tentatively. He made no obvious attempt to make it easy for
his listeners; ideas were not presented in logical sequence nor in any ascending or descending order of importance. His exposition would move, often in a staccato fashion, from description of some existent art work to attempts to explain the necessarily organic nature of form development, and these discussions were often interrupted by criticism of some aspect of a student's work or by a personal story of involvement with or reaction to the work of a contemporary artist--Nicholas de Staël, for example. And yet, over a period of time--often quite a long time, for these sessions could last upwards of two hours--some feeling of comprehension, as Dalwood reports, would occur. How quickly and fully did students grasp the important ideas being presented to them? Some answers come from the work itself; the illustrations which accompany this study reveal a comprehension of many of the concerns of contemporary artists; the talents of individual students varied, but the best of this work invites comparison with the work of good professional artists of the period. It is always difficult to evaluate work done in the peculiar conditions of the instructional studio. Five or six instructors moved around the studio, talking with students and to one another, and reinforced the message with a reasonably complete unanimity. Their suggestions did not remain at a consideration and evaluation of abstract principle but included also direct comment on the physical outcome of the student's work;
variations and modifications were suggested, physical changes recommended.

**The students**

Students on the foundation course were mostly around seventeen years of age and, straight from grammar school, unaccustomed to the communal, informal, busy and visually disconcerting environment of the art school. Their former working situation was mostly within the extreme formality of the grammar school; in most cases the students wore uniforms, the faculty members academic gowns; teachers were addressed as Mr. so-and-so or Miss so-and-so. Students stood when a teacher came into the room, responded to questions when asked, but were in most cases not encouraged to offer their personal views or comments on the work in hand. Often a rather less formal set of attitudes was apparent in the art room, especially if the student had been studying, usually with only a few fellow students, for the Advanced level of Art examination for the General Certificate of Education, but even here the exchanges between student and teacher were somewhat formal.

It was not an unimportant factor in the new teaching situation devised by Thubron and his colleagues in the art school that this formality and reticence in teacher/student relationship was discarded. Some students found the new informality liberating; with others it increased the strangeness of their new situation and was one more obstacle
to be overcome in becoming acculturated to being an art student. Harry and Tom and Ricky so addressed each other and they encouraged students to do likewise (this offended some of the older, more conservative members of the faculty). Inevitably, too, only a small number of students were addressed easily by their first names—normally those who quickly showed both willingness and capacity to produce the kind of work expected of them. A fairly small group of students was responsible for a large proportion of the work which was exhibited as "the work" of the Foundation course.

It is not surprising that some students, especially those who had been at the college for a year or two before Thubron arrived and who had therefore already been acculturated to a different set of viewpoints, were not convinced by the new regime. The influx into the Design school a few years earlier of new faculty members with radically different ideas about the best bases for Illustration and Graphic Design studies was also accompanied by some severe student difficulties and by some rejection of the new range of concepts and methods being used. No attempt was made to elicit or measure student responses and reactions to this new scheme of foundation studies.¹²

Thubron's teaching

Thubron had been given a group of students to work with until the end of the academic year, as in some sense a preliminary work-out prior to the establishment of a
foundation course with the new students who would arrive in September. This group was drawn off from various craft courses that they were already taking—about twelve students in all. One of them, George Hainsworth, describes their work with Thubron as an apparent extension of his work at the Joseph Rowntree school:

He would get you many more materials than previously we had access to, you see; colors and colored paper ... and simply become involved in these elements ... It was a question of becoming involved in an action ... involved in materials and colors. It was quite exciting ... We worked very hard—prepared to put many hours in ... I suppose mainly because you admired the man and what he said ... Most of the day was spent doing things and then in the evenings [there was] a life class, and then people who were keen stayed on later and he would talk and explain things to do with Cezanne and people like that ... at that time, strangely enough, few people were familiar with him—his formal side, the structure in his work ... you gleaned an awful lot of useful information.

Hainsworth, when asked if Thubron generally talked about art historical matters, described the process rather as discussion which arose in the course of the student doing his work, with a continuing emphasis on working with materials and theoretical or historical discussions arising in an apparently natural way out of that working. Barry Ward, taken, as Hainsworth had been, out of a more conventional sculpture course, while also excited by the direct involvement with masses of material, found difficulties in the "terms of reference" upon which discussion was based: "Names like Vantongerloo and ... Gropius ... constant throwing of names at you ... why don't
you look at that or think about that, and the sort of language ... was totally different to what you'd been used to." In the practical work they started with paper--selecting, cutting, assembling and then "went straight through everything, straight into plaster--building things, welding ... modulars."^14

The communal group working--individual ideas, at least for a while, subjugated to the overall demands of the situation--was quite new to such students; it was quite different from the still-life, life drawing, craft regime they had become accustomed to. Other students, including some from other years, joined in as they saw what was happening and recognized the new excitement. In the following September all first year students joined in the "basic course" experiment and over the next few years a group of instructors (a shifting group) was assembled to apply and to reinforce the message of "foundation" study.

The foundation course was not the only interest, although it was the focus of development during the first year or two. There were concurrent attempts to influence--even, in part, to "take over"--other areas of the college. Thubron believed that the mode of art teaching he was developing was applicable to all areas of art and design study and argued the relevance of his attitudes and methods to such diverse fields as textile design, architecture and industrial design. In this endeavor he was assisted by
being able quickly to appoint other faculty members who shared his point of view—Tom Hudson and Ricky Atkinson, for example—and by his ability to find "disciples" among the faculty members already working in the college.

Hudson and Atkinson were appointed in 1956; Hudson, as Thubron rather unkindly describes it "to run the machines," though his areas of interest and influence were in fact very wide and included sculpture in new materials, less formal approaches to industrial design, art history and especially the history of art and design in the twentieth century; Atkinson chiefly to run the Intermediate course, or rather to ensure that—perhaps in spite of the "basic course"—students would still pass the Intermediate examination at the end of their second year.

This period already saw some differences of opinion within this small group. Thubron always resisted the "basic course" designation, and John Wood relates how "as soon as Tom Hudson began to talk about a Basic Course as if it was a thing which was settled ... or Victor began to talk of it as teaching the grammar of art ... Harry used to say 'to hell with that: it's a continuous experience ... a continuous process of experimentation and discovery, and there are no firm points which have been settled and found once and for all.'" This was perhaps the most difficult concept for his assistants and collaborators to grasp or to work within; teachers such as Alf Park and Harold Cove in sculpture or
Gavin Stuart and Tom Watt in painting were prepared to go much of the way Thubron wanted in teaching these basic studies, but their previous contacts with Klee or with Bauhaus and de Stijl ideas were less comprehensive than those of Hudson, Thubron and Atkinson and they had not shared the others' pre-Leeds experience.

Some of the Leeds teaching staff at the time resented and actively resisted the impact of the new forces at work: "I always argued with him," says George Waite, at that time in charge of Intermediate "composition" in painting, "that he was teaching concoctions, not teaching people to express themselves. He was a terrible teacher ... simply didn't grasp what abstract painting was ... he simply encouraged them to concoct shapes and compositions which fitted inside the frame." Waite saw Thubron as unoriginal and over-affected by the influence of Victor Pasmore. In his eyes Thubron was out to "build an empire" and he saw much of what he did as self-aggrandizement. His chief theoretical disagreement was that Thubron did not, in his view, "base his teaching on an initial sensuous experience which moves you to express yourself." Thubron reacted to George Waite as one might expect; "he was all right as a man, but he was a bloody thorn in my side." Some other members of the staff who had been at Leeds for some time, while often recognizing merit in Thubron's ideas, were alienated by his obvious ambition to change things dramatically,
undiplomatically and often quite ruthlessly, and by his obvious scorn for most of what had been going on before he arrived: teachers of Dress, Textiles, Graphic Design, as well as some Fine Art teachers, found that total rejection both insensitive and without adequate foundation. Eric Taylor, Head of the Design department, and Cyril Cross, Vice-Principal and Head of Teacher-training, initially shared that distrust though both were subsequently supporters of the Thubron regime, while often still regretting some of the ways his ideas were effected. Bob Miller-Smith, a graphic design teacher who joined the college in 1958, saw Thubron's courses as

A total throwing over of tradition—so much so that people didn't know the direction they were taking. The staff generally had many misgivings about the Thubron course; that it did not satisfy the requirements when students moved from the foundation course into professionally oriented courses—jewellery and silversmithing, graphic design, textiles and the like which were being taught with much success at Leeds before Harry arrived. It was a great disappointment to me to get to Leeds College of Art to discover that it was not really the place that the art press had made it out to be. It seemed to be evolving around old entrenched art school attitudes and this new wave on its way through.

Miller-Smith's objections are less to the "old, entrenched art school attitudes" than to the "fine-art" nature of these attitudes. He contrasts Leeds' "almost Edwin la Dell atmosphere of the Graphic Design area (La Dell taught a kind of post-Impressionist print-making at the Royal College of Art) coupled with the incredible avant
garde approach of the Fine Art area," with "the highly professional, purely two-dimensional atmosphere of the London College of Printing" from which he had graduated and to which he returned after three years at Leeds. He saw Thubron's foundation course as inept in its teaching of "skills" and, referring this time to the Scottish art school where he taught from 1965 to 1978, said

It was noticeable that the Scottish art school traditions had continued unbroken and tended to produce a superior brand of student—intellectually and craftsmanwise. They also produced a much better balanced practitioner of both fine art and design, simply because there had been no attempt to make them run before they could walk, which I think was one of the great problems at Leeds: the learning of a totally new vocabulary ... the difficulty of contending with the whole new environment they had suddenly been thrust into. [But] it certainly gave a shot in the arm, or maybe a kick in the butt, to traditional art school methods.

Miller-Smith's ambivalence is obvious and it was an ambivalence shared by many faculty members of the college, including this writer.

A strange incident occurred in year two of Thubron's stay in Leeds. At the end of that year the students who had come directly under his influence sat their Intermediate examination and a large group failed. The examination was assessed nationally, with certain individual examiners wielding considerable power. John Wood, now administering further education for the Leeds Education Authority, said, according to Thubron, "'rubbish,' tore up the report (which was critical of the kind of work submitted) and threw it in
their faces." He did, in fact, succeed in having the students' grants renewed for another year, and the following year they all passed and many of them, including Hainsworth and Ward, went on to post-graduate study at the Slade school and the Royal College of Art. Both Hainsworth and Ward eventually returned to the Leeds College as instructors.

The attempts to influence work in the craft areas met with little success, although individual students in these areas found the new movement a worthwhile resource. Work done under Thubron's guidance in the textile and print-making areas, for example, produced some exciting work--wall hangings made by pulling threads out of sacking and substituting colored strips of cloth or metal, prints where "accidental" occurrences were seized on and their merits commended, perhaps exaggerated--but, stimulating though these projects were, their rejection of skill and technical expertise, their overstress on uniqueness and "artiness" ensured their eventual rejection as legitimate modes of educating designers. First-year architects also attended the basic courses for a couple of years but here too the connections with other necessary fields of study and expertise were not explored, and often these other areas were derided as useless, traditional and over-conventional.

For the first few years the foundation course went from strength to strength. Norbert Lynton moved over from the School of Architecture and began to lecture on
contemporary art and on the vital art of the twentieth century; he was chiefly responsible for arranging series of lectures which brought eminent sociologists, philosophers, art historians, musicians, and so on, to enliven the course and to reinforce its all-embracing character and its broad "twentieth century" focus. The studio course itself was always in danger of becoming rigid, but the use of, for example, the Gregory Fellows from the University of Leeds, and especially the influence of Alan Davie and Anton Ehrenzweig, helped to stave off any suggestion of repetition or staleness. Not totally so; in the end, as Barry Ward reports, "it became too formalized ... it lost its impact ... People became very sick of seeing square on square of color."26

An interview with Harry Thubron, October, 1959

Nineteen fifty nine was perhaps the peak year of Thubron's "basic course" and "research" studies group at the Leeds College of Art. That year saw the Developing process exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London and, although Thubron had had some misgivings about holding the exhibition at that time, and about the role of Victor Pasmore and the University of Newcastle group generally, the exhibition had received national attention and its influence was to be felt over the next few years in most of the major English art schools. In that year also, Thubron was
interviewed by John Jones and his answers to Jones' questions give a good contemporary account of his thinking at that period of his pedagogical career.

Jones, a product of the Slade School of Art at the University of London, had come to Leeds in 1957 at the suggestion of Hubert Dalwood, and was teaching at the Leeds Day-Training College, a college of education chiefly for mature students. He had quickly become interested in the ideas and methods being used at the College of Art and had undertaken a period of practice teaching at the college, teaching life drawing one day a week for one term.

The discussion between Jones and Thubron ostensibly dealt mainly with work of the teacher-training colleges and, as an extension of that, with art in the schools for which these teachers were being trained. Nevertheless, many of the fundamental views about art education which Thubron was putting into practice at the art school quickly show themselves. "Training colleges," says Thubron, "are rethinking their curricula because of the impact that Leeds and Newcastle have made." Art school faculty members tended to look down on the standard of work in the training colleges, seeing the role of art there as normally peripheral; "the general teacher in the training college does a little bit of art, and it's very much an appendage," but Thubron recognizes that teaching colleges do have some advantages; in working there he says, "one would have a much
more broad-based impact and one would really have some
effect on the secondary modern schools."

The notion of a "broad-based" art education, one that
did not confine itself to the technical or "professional"
aspects of art training, was one he continually promoted;
"we just don't have the people in art schools to cope with
the situation. What we're doing now is to use several of
the university lecturers to amplify and make up for the lack
in the art schools." He saw the products of previous art
schools as narrowly educated;

Art schools have failed on the social level ... Now
the artist is widening his terms of reference and
there is the beginning of a recognition of that ...
The real problem now in the college of art painting
school is to develop these ideas--to find ways to
live with these developing ideas, which is why we
need people from the university to talk about
psychology or philosophy or the social history of the
industrial revolution. [We need] a greater sense of
totality, of inter-relativity.

Art school education was to be broad-based in the sense that
students were to be exposed to good teachers in many
disciplines other than those of art or art history. But it
was to be broad-based in other ways too. There had to be,
for example, "a considered balance of rational, intellectual
pursuits plus its attendant irrational and accidental;" this
in answer to a question from Jones which suggested that his
kind of art training was often described as
anti-intellectual. And the base was to be broader through
an extension outwards from Fine Art. "One of the nice
things at Leeds, as compared with Newcastle, is that we have an industrial design side, product design too, and a great deal of machinery and equipment... We're finding that the people who are involved there are involved also with the fine arts--most of the ideas come from the fine arts and from engineering; on the other hand the painters find that much of their work is dependent on machine technology."

Machinery and technological processes, then, were not to be considered the province of specialists, of students being trained specifically as industrial or product designers, but were to be part of a broad-based education in art for all students; "we must accept the reality for the industrial side," he says, and there is a suggestion that he sees these moves to have all art students involved with industrial technology as well as fine arts both psychologically and socially important. This was to be done not only at the art school level. In the secondary modern schools (which he saw, with the few comprehensive schools then in existence, as a more hopeful venue than the grammar schools, "limited," he says, "by the silly examinations they take,") one could, and should, use a vastly wider range of materials. In his own short period of teaching in a secondary modern school "I couldn't get any cooperation until I found what suited each individual. Some of the lads for example, were only coaxed into the whole business by having welding and brazing equipment and by work in plastics, metal and so on."
There were more fundamental issues. "Art," he says, is something which [people] don't live with naturally and at ease. They are taught a certain amount but don't have sufficient time to find themselves in art--they don't develop the personal center sufficiently, so they apply art as a removed and detached thing. People who are more involved with art, are with it all the time, find extensions in the way they select objects. They do this with complete, natural ease. [My emphasis]

Two concepts here--those of "involvement" and of the development of a "personal center"--are crucial to Thubron's thinking and to the methods he employed. A deep involvement, sometimes unthinking and almost always not fully rationalized, was the essential precursor to significant work in art. Especially in figure drawing (see the section on the Drawing with the figure film) the techniques the students used and the instructional methods of the faculty members were all designed to discourage objective "standing back" from the process or project; both physically and emotionally students had to submerge themselves in the suggested activities, seeking an involvement where, at deeper levels of consciousness, their true nature would take over. (This was so even at this period which was prior to Thubron's meeting and collaboration with Anton Ehrenzweig). The "personal center" is seen as a "natural" core, something which everyone possessed but which is hidden or suppressed by normal educational processes:
Most people are not capable of doing this naturally; (that is, developing a "personal center") the plastic and tactile side of people, the ability to do things - make things, is very much part of all people, but it is less well "massaged" in education. Other things become dominant; the more physically involved side, which has emotional and intellectual satisfactions as well, seems to me to be less significantly placed in general education - that applies at the university and training college level and, because of that, much is missed at the secondary modern level.

Jones questions whether this "personal center" can be produced by a course in art, no matter how good. Isn't it a question, he asks, of the whole of industrial society having gone wrong? In answer Thubron takes as an example the students he has been teaching at the College of Art since 1955; "In a few years, by being deeply involved in the business of art, you find that they become well educated in the widest sense of the word, through interests that arise out of art." "Essentially," says Thubron, "The dynamic view of things has to prevail—experiment, searching—but it's no good if the teachers themselves don't have this developed center, this plastic sensibility."

Along with these general considerations goes an obvious dependence on the directions and "findings" of modern art. Modern art is seen as the basis from which that fundamental plastic sensibility can be developed. The concepts of Renaissance, Italianate art had been broken down; "Tachisme showed that the accidental mark could be meaningful;" the modern artist had abandoned single viewpoints, perspective, "formats equating to optics."
In running his courses at Leeds, he relied, he said:

On a very broad-based set of individuals but who all agree that modern art requires a different approach—it deals principally with fundamentals. The old art was rather arrogant. It assumed that everyone was a genius. You literally were taught to do things as you mastered skills. Our approach is more humble; if you come to terms with simple elements of form and color and ideas relative to developing possibilities of space and space/form dynamic relative to color and form, you can teach the fundamentals of this very well and thoroughly. It is both rational and irrational, both intellectual and purely empiricist...slowly, people find their own center, rather than taking on a veneer of their master...Modern painting is technique-free...the technique will grow out of one's interests and pursuits.

So modern art too is seen as in some sense "natural," freely growing without the imposition of previously developed standards. "What we've set about doing is bringing ideas and materials to bear where people can participate more directly in the creative act...they find that they can do some little act, that relates directly to them and they are meaningfully involved."

Jones asks about the "methods" he uses.

Method is a word I watch, now...there's no method, it's anti-method, but there is a schema running through it which leads to little plastic possibilities and ideas - their own concerns, their own viewpoints, develop much more rapidly. You don't have to don a skin at the end of it...It required a schema to cover the fundamentals. There is a loosely evolved method but the method isn't limiting...It just opens doors into further possibilities.

Now the essential was to get people involved "out of personal excitement - bringing different aspects of phenomena before the student which he can study on some relative or comparative basis."
The modern artist is the hero; his practices form the basis for the educational schema. Not all or just any modern artist would fit the bill; in the quotations above there are echoes principally of Klee, Kandinsky, Mondrian and Van Doesburg. None of these is mentioned in the interview by name, though Sam Francis and Picasso are, and so also is "tachisme," but the concepts of innate plastic sensibility, of starting from small, personal creative acts, of reliance on a unique personal center of sensibility, stem mainly from Klee and Mondrian.

The educational ethos which emerges is a democratic and anarchic one; the individual in his uniqueness is the model for the educational enterprise; preconceptions and conventions must be abandoned, strict criteria for success avoided, the development of skills and techniques downgraded. Each student is seen as possessing unique sensibilities, though to different degrees, and it is the task of education to uncover and develop these sensibilities through involvement in personal creative acts, no matter how small.

The contribution of the Gregory Fellows

The Gregory Fellows most involved were Alan Davie, Terry Frost and Hubert Dalwood. Davie was the most influential, working with "Basic course" students but also with upper level painting students and even at times with groups of amateurs, housewives, secretaries and so on, who
came to the college one or two afternoons a week for a painting course. They could not have foreseen the kind of teaching Davie would provide, but from my observations of these classes Davie was able to "get through" to this kind of student group. He believed in the widespread powers of the subconscious and believed that his methods for tapping these powers were as applicable to this audience as to any other. Hainsworth describes Davie's approach:

> It was simply becoming involved with materials and, as it were, letting the imagery arrive out of a blind involvement, so that it doesn't become self-conscious...you had elements, colors, which one took as meaningful in themselves and (you) became involved in an area which was the canvas--you could walk into it...you could deface it...It (was) really the battleground.  

And Ward talks of how important it was to him and to his fellow students to have a painter of Davie's stature and international reputation working side-by-side with them, exploring the relationship of their work to contemporary painting and to the Zen Buddhist ideas which were spreading from the "West coast."

Dalwood describes working with almost a hundred students in the enormous top floor studio:

> All the available staff would descend on them...it was supposed to be a programme that we'd worked out before, but it was very difficult. Harry was very vague on organizational things...Terry Frost and I would try to make a fait accompli; we'd say 'look, we're going to get this thing off the ground at nine o'clock'. At nine o'clock he (Harry) wouldn't be there, and we'd start to get things going...and, at ten o'clock, he'd roll in, and he'd put a different slant on it. If it had been anyone else we should have resented it but with Harry we didn't mind
really; it was often better than we'd thought of... eventually the thing would begin to gather momentum.

Dalwood seems to have felt that Thubron rejected the need for art historical studies, though Lynton, brought in by Thubron to provide the "right" kind of art history teaching, would not have agreed. But Dalwood is correct in seeing Thubron as a romantic, putting his faith in the innate capabilities of students rather than in any background of previous studies. As well as his participation in the foundation work, Dalwood was teaching sculpture one day a week at Leeds. The Head of Sculpture, Harry Phillips, a figurative sculptor, often of pieces with vaguely religious connotations (he had started as an apprentice to a "memorial" mason), had not tried to come to terms with the new wave: his reaction had been to more or less abandon the Sculpture school to the "new boys" and to retire to his private studio to continue with his own work. At least partly because of this, painting and sculpture moved closer together so that, although students still took their diploma in one or the other, the studies were both practically and philosophically almost totally integrated. (Another sculptor on the staff who was not in accord with the new ideas found himself soon relegated to the unofficial post of photographer, slide copier, slide curator and film-maker to the basic course.)
Although never quite becoming one of the "inner circle", Tom Watt, (like Gavin Stuart, a product of the Edinburgh College of Art, and an equally sensitive colorist), played an important role as a link—to some extent a buffer—between those students who, while not antipathetic to Thubron's ideas, wanted to preserve a more direct connection to their perceptions of the external world and especially to the figure. "In the one straight talk that I had with Harry he pretty well indicated that Gavin and I were a couple of dead beats that he'd have to carry...He was gracious enough later on to admit that he'd struck lucky with us."\textsuperscript{28}

It was a characteristic of the teaching at Leeds before Thubron arrived that, in spite of national examinations, individual faculty members taught very much from personal conviction rather than from an agreed curriculum strategy of the college or department. This was, however, accompanied by almost constant discussion about art, about the relevance of particular painters or movements, and of teaching methods and the problems of individual students. Such discussion was almost totally informal; staff meetings, at either the departmental or college level, were almost unknown and were not looked upon as important determinants of what was taught or of how it was taught. A small group of the painting staff had a Scottish background, (most of the others were from the Royal
College, the Slade or the Academy schools) and this gave a slant quite different from that in most English art schools. Scottish painting at that time was rooted in Scottish and French post-Impressionist work--Bonnard, Vuillard, Peploe, J.D. Fergusson. At Edinburgh W.G. Gillies painted quiet, sensitive and authoritative landscapes and still-lifes influenced strongly by Braque but with a specifically Scottish flavor: Johnny Maxwell painted flower pieces and figure compositions which owed something to Chagall though they were both more surreal than those of the Russian and exhibited also something of the somber mysticism of Roualt. Tom Watt's painting was heavily French influenced. Subject matter, if present at all, included fishing boats and villages and still life material but this was chiefly an excuse for close-toned and quiet-colored heavily-textured canvases whose chief merits lay in their very personal color relationships. His teaching was almost exclusively one-to-one in a studio setting. There were occasional group criticisms to which other teachers were often invited. What Watt contributed was a sensitivity to materials and to color in its intuitive and emotional aspects. His influence was, without doubt, the strongest in the painting school before Thubron arrived and that influence--though diminished--continued until he left for the Canterbury College of Art in 1962.
Conclusions

Many of the features which distinguished Basic course work from the teaching which immediately preceded it are evident in a description of the work of students and faculty members at the Leeds College of Art in the period 1955-1960. Thubron introduced new methods of study and new notions of faculty/student relationships. He undoubtedly saw merit in communal work situations; large numbers of students working in relatively confined spaces generate energy and useful interaction; groups of faculty members working together with large numbers of students cannot avoid almost constant discussion of their ideas, methods, and techniques of teaching--as the teaching proceeds so do the curriculum ideas develop and change. Most of the teaching took the form of rather precisely regulated projects. Initially to the student there seemed little room for personal expression within the confines of the assignment but they quickly realized that individual contributions could emerge in these circumstances; the tight requirements eliminated easy derivation from previously acquired knowledge of "art" images, and working intensively with the surface requirements helped to release subconscious idiosyncratic responses.

The methods of inquiry ranged from precise observation to totally intuitive response. For Thubron the making of art encompassed "research" and "scientific"
inquiry, mathematical as well as aesthetic analysis, measure and intuition. All of these were essential in the struggle to break down limited conceptions of art and to provide for the students a broad range of possible approaches to aesthetic problems. Therefore projects and assignments were sometimes abstract, sometimes figurative, sometimes loose and relaxed, sometimes tight and measured. Even this sense of polarities was often deliberately rejected; the terms were seen as labeling with often unfortunate effects; rather, painting could exist at any point between abstract and figurative or could contain any kind of admixture appropriate to the particular work. Distinctions, too, between art and design were avoided. These also erected barriers to the desired intuitive recognition of aesthetic quality in whatever object it might be found. Similarly the history of art or other complementary studies were not separated from the work in the studio--integration was sought wherever possible.

Within the described activities the student slowly began to be initiated into particular conceptions of modern art and into an understanding of what, in Thubron's view, it meant to be an artist in the middle of the twentieth century.
Notes


7Ibid., 150.

8Thubron, 1981, op.cit.

9Ibid.


12See Madge, C. and Weinberger, B. Art students observed, for a later research project with art students that did tackle these questions of response and reaction.

13Hainsworth, op. cit.


18 Ibid.

19 Thubron, 1980, op. cit.


21 Ibid.

22 Miller-Smith has been, since 1979, Dean of Design at the Adelaide College of Art and Design in Adelaide, South Australia.

23 Miller-Smith, op. cit.

24 Thubron, 1974, op. cit.

25 All the quotations in this section are from the tape-recorded interview that John Jones conducted with Harry Thubron in October, 1959.

26 Hainsworth, op. cit.

27 Dalwood, op. cit.

28 Watt, op. cit.
There were at the time few obvious avenues for the kinds of work that Thubron, Hudson, Pasmore and Hamilton were doing to be shown and criticized throughout the rest of the country. The only active art education association was the Society for Education through Art, and that organization concerned itself principally with work in the public schools. Members of the faculties of the schools and colleges of art had little opportunity to meet one another on anything other than informal bases; many had known one another at the Royal College of Art and some of these friendships and acquaintances persisted during their teaching careers, but no formal forum existed. There were both art and education journals but there was no tradition of art school teachers writing up their experiences or theories for their colleagues across the country and few read the Times Educational Supplement unless they were seeking a change of job. The Institute of Contemporary Arts in London formed a meeting ground for some of the more advanced thinkers in the arts but there was no easy way for the deliberations of these men to reach a wider public.
Ideas, where they spread at all, spread by word of mouth and by the movement of students from the affected colleges into teaching positions in other schools and colleges. The innovators of the Basic course were aware of this situation and Pasmore especially realized the need to show the country what was happening in the North and North East.

This chapter looks in some detail at the exhibition called *The developing process* which took place in 1959; this exhibition, and the catalogue which accompanied it, had a major impact. For the first time other teachers in art colleges could read statements by the people involved and see the results of their teaching.

In the succeeding five or six years a small number of journal articles considered the Basic course theme and raised some criticisms of the work at Leeds and Newcastle. These are reviewed, and this analysis is followed by some consideration of the short courses which accompanied the full-time teaching. As an extension of that teaching, some of the work was recorded on film. These films were shown around the country and abroad. Reaction to them, and to the exhibitions held at the I.C.A. and in the colleges themselves, were mixed. No strong negative reactions appeared in print. My personal experience was that many art teachers had serious reservations about the bases of much of the Leeds/Newcastle work but that, again, no tradition existed for them to become involved in public debate and thus these
reservations remained within the confines of particular schools of art.

Some written reactions and justifications

The developing process exhibition was held at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in May, 1959. It is described in the catalogue as "work in progress towards a new foundation of art teaching as developed at the Department of Art, Kings College, Durham University, Newcastle upon Tyne, and at Leeds College of Art." Thubron had been skeptical about the relevance and advisability of holding the exhibition at that time; in his view the courses had not been running long enough for the ideas or methods to be sufficiently consolidated to merit public exhibition, but the others felt that the publicity value of a London exhibition outweighed any possible disadvantages.

As I noted earlier, Thubron's ideas about the construction of new art curricula and about the development of new teaching attitudes, although they shared much common ground with those of Pasmore, Hamilton and Hudson, differed chiefly in his greater emphasis on intuition, on flexibility, and on the necessity for a basis in fine art concepts—especially those of neo-plasticism. The exhibition seemed to him too emphatic about the role of science and technology, in particular as that role could be made the basis for a highly structured, stable "course." He objected, too, to what he saw as an over-emphasis on the
work at Newcastle vis-a-vis that at Leeds. For example, in his introduction to the catalogue Roger Coleman, a member of the Newcastle faculty, seems to be suggesting that it was Pasmore who was directing the Scarborough summer courses, and that most of the new basic courses had been built upon the teaching at the Central School where both Hamilton and Pasmore, but neither Hudson nor Thubron, had taught.

Coleman also disputes the necessary correlation of fine art and design activities although he accepts the usefulness of some common teaching in the early stages. Thubron's conception of an art education was inclusive of the artist and designer and was not at all confined to "foundation" courses.

Pasmore's contribution to the catalogue stresses the "dynamic" quality required of any new system; "only the beginning is defined and not the end," and sees the need for both the objective and the intuitive, both the empirical and the analytical, of working both from the abstract and from nature. Thubron, too, in a short statement, recognizes that the strength of the new art education lies in its dialectical nature; the "creative" rather than the "imitative," "personal discoveries" together with working "collectively," "analytical and scientific approaches" but, at the same time, "a more vital and free pursuit of the intuitive and instinctive mark." The illustrations, however, reveal an apparently greater emphasis on the formal
and analytical than on the intuitive and personal. Many of the plates are reminiscent of work from the Bauhaus Vorkurs, under Moholy-Nagy rather than under Johannes Itten. Only in the examples from Alan Davie's teaching is there a strong accentuation of personal mark making. "One must learn," writes Davie, "to have faith in the intuition that 'knows' without knowledge." The student is set "crazy" or "irrational" exercises, is urged to "try for bad composition or illogical placing," and through a mass of such exercises in many media will emerge "a faith in the magical inner creative force" without which the student's work would be merely clever or knowledgeable.

As well as the work of the artist/teachers, the catalog contains some notes and examples from the lectures given by Jerome Ravetz, philosopher of science at Leeds University. These talks dealt with form and structure from a scientific, chiefly a geometric point of view. Exercises developing from them utilized simple co-ordinate geometry and developed concepts of "symmetry," "systems," and "group theory."

In spite of Thubron's disquiet about the show, my view, then and now, is that the exhibition offered a fairly clear and reasonably comprehensive overview of what was going on at Newcastle and Leeds. What is perhaps surprising is the lack of acknowledgement anywhere in the catalog of the part that Herbert Read had played. Nor is there even a
hint of the critical role of D'Arcy Thompson's *On growth and form* which had been seminal in Hamilton's early work and which has been cited by all four in other contexts.

*Motif 8*, Winter 1961, contained four articles under the general heading of "A Visual Grammar of Form." The first was a brief introduction by Maurice de Sausmarez. He quotes Gropius talking about both the general aims of the Bauhaus and, more specifically, about the aims of the "Vorkurs."

For its founder, Walter Gropius, a school of art had "a double responsibility; to make its pupils fully conscious of the age they live in; and to train them to turn their native intelligence, and the knowledge they receive, to practical account in the design of type-forms which will be the direct expression of that consciousness."

As we have seen, only in its aesthetic aspects did Thubron's course attempt to "make its pupils fully conscious of the age they live in." And then; "Practical and formal subjects were taught side by side so as to develop the pupil's creative process and enable him to grasp the physical nature of materials and the basic laws of design."

De Sausmarez chose to italicize "the physical nature of materials and the basic laws of design," thus emphasizing what was, for him, the important message of the Bauhaus. He saw Turnbull at the Central, Pasmore and Hamilton at Newcastle and Thubron at Leeds as people who had adopted this attitude to teaching, though there is little evidence to connect Thubron's teaching at least with the promulgation of "basic
laws of design." He was at pains to elaborate on the flexibility and creativity of the kinds of work attempted, though he accepted a "problem-solving" approach as being self-evident, and to answer those critics who saw this movement as carrying an implicit rejection of the individual's unique expression.

This argument might have some serious weight if there was a tacit rejection of any other work done from the student's own volition, but this is not so. The student is free to do what he wants to do outside the Basic Design curriculum—if, in fact, he does nothing one must conclude either that he is bone-idle or uninterested, or that he has no imagination at all, in which case there is no good reason for him to be at an art school in the first place.

Apart from the surprisingly bullying attitude to a perhaps fairly typical art student, this message ignores the fact that rigorous and prolonged training using specific kinds of problems and stressing only certain limited aspects of art making or designing inevitably restricts both stylistic latitude and "imaginative" response. De Sausmarez is aware of the danger, already present at that time, of the exploitation of the ideas in an only partly understood form: "it is being seized upon by many schools of art, slicked up with inappropriate presentation techniques, and added to the stock of eminently exhibitable products."^4

In the conversation with William Turnbull which follows, de Sausmarez pursues the notion of a "visual grammar of form." "de Sausmarez: This visual grammar of form you would consider fundamental to any sort of art and
you are absolutely unconcerned about how the student makes use of this basic information later, is that so?" Turnbull: Yes. What is learnt should prove just as useful and as valid in examining a piece of baroque art, a renaissance work or a modern painting."5 This has a naivety to it which is perhaps a measure of our distance in time from these events, but it is surely also important to the historical developments that followed that some of the chief practitioners should be so innocent about the likely effects of "basic design" study. The conception of what was being learned as basically "neutral" information hid from many art school teachers that their new approach was often as dogmatic as those it had replaced.

In a third paper Richard Hamilton is initially more willing to accept the limited and limiting nature of the courses: "It should be possible to establish a programme of systematic study of fundamental elements which will provide a coherent grounding for any young artist who will be assimilated into the current art scene."6 But, he too finally rejects "the implication that basic design can teach students to become "Modern Artists," and suggests the widening of the bases of art school teaching to include "correspondence between abstraction and visual appearance" and "the study of material which is dependent on psychological and sociological overtones for its effect."7

Throughout these articles, and the ones that followed
In Motif 9, Summer, 1962, there is a highly commendable concern to find what Kenneth Martin describes as "a new sort of anatomy or perspective." The student, no longer able to develop his ideas on a base of "anatomy, perspective, architecture, light and shade, the study of the antique," must find, or be found, a new set of fundamentals. In most cases, these fundamentals are seen as, one, the basic characteristics of materials and, two, the principles which emerge from the use and manipulation of these materials. There is a repeated emphasis on the "reality" of the work; it is less abstraction than construction; it uses, as Martin puts it, "real things, real elements and real space."\(^8\)

Not all writers are agreed about the usefulness of these kinds of studies for all students of the visual arts. On the one hand, de Sausmarez had written that "it is basic in that it is as valid for the industrial designer as for the painter or for the graphic designer," and Thubron had insisted on architecture students at Leeds taking the course alongside fine art students, but Broodbank in Motif 9 writes that "architecture must always be functional in basis...This is a specifically architectural characteristic and makes any attempt to seek a common basis for architecture, painting and sculpture irrelevant."\(^9\)

In 1964 de Sausmarez enlarged his ideas on the new art education in Basic design: the dynamics of visual form.\(^10\) The book contains no new theory, but the
established basic design theory is now offered on an almost "self help" basis. The typical reader is seen as perhaps having "no access to equipped studios for either print-making or sculpture," so a range of projects is suggested that can be carried out with no sophisticated equipment and, if necessary, without the benefit of expert help. Linking the projects are suggestions about working methods, the use and care of tools and materials, and passages of encouragement to pursue aesthetic development in spite of the difficulties that will inevitably be encountered. The book quite obviously satisfied, and continues to satisfy, a perceived need; it is still in print and is readily available in the English-speaking world.

In 1966 *Studio International* carried a series of interviews with Richard Hamilton, Mischa Black, and Herbert Read under the title "What kind of art education?" The earlier euphoria about "basic design" seems to have evaporated; there is an air of some-what weary sophistication--almost of cynicism--about some of the contributions. Hamilton repeats his desire to produce people who are good "anaylzers," people with "good minds," but he introduces a new note with his view that at least one of the purposes of an art school ought to be "to divert productive activity..(and) to encourage people to work in useless pursuits like art." 

Mischa Black recognizes a move away from the
foundation course seen as "a grooming of one's aesthetic muscles, concentrating on the free-expression aspects of the Bauhaus methods," and wishes to draw a firm line between "fine-art" training and the training of industrial designers and architects: "there are fundamental differences which necessitate a different kind of education and possibly a different place to be educated in." In Herbert Read's view the idea of the basic course had not yet been fully exploited, although he sees its diagnostic role as being at least as important as its basically educative role, "a first-year course which could separate people who had ability for design from those with an ability for expression." Importantly though, "the painter does not have freedom unless it is measured against some standard...Unless the poet or painter has fundamental standards from which he can depart for expressive purposes you get a kind of chaos." Lest one might think that he is suggesting a return to "academic" ideas of standards, he advocates the abolition of art schools and their replacement with schools on the model of Black Mountain College, where painting, sculpture, music, theater and dance all took place cooperatively and, as far as possible, integratively with one another, and where all took place uninhibited by an examination system.

In the October number of Studio International which followed, the debate developed. While there was much
agreement with the views of some of the contributors, especially those of Black and Hamilton, some of the commentators struck a sour note: "The established and entrenched administration of art education in this country," wrote Roy Ascott, "is such as to encourage endless discussion but to inhibit radical change: attitudes can be voiced but vital action is rigorously suppressed."¹⁷ William Johnstone who, as Principal at the Central School, had overseen the early developments of the basic courses, attributed his success there to the fact that he employed "real live artists to teach. It is a sad paradox that Victor Pasmore and William Coldstream should have been more effective when apprentice-teachers (but practising artists) than they are now as figure-heads of an Establishment they are unable to control."¹⁸

If the comments eventually reveal some simple message it is that the relationships between fine art and design were changing fast, and that an appropriate education which would cope effectively with these changes was not yet in sight. There was a recognition of unresolved dichotomies in art teaching between "analysis" and "synthesis," between "induction" and "deduction," between "expressing" and "thinking," and between "freedom" and "standards."

A longer reply was essayed by Tom Hudson in the next month's issue. He reviews some of the alternating views of Fine Art, with brief criticisms of Ulm and the Bauhaus—Ulm
as one-sided, the Bauhaus as too "artistically" oriented. His own view seems basically to be an advocacy of a creativity tied neither to expression nor to personal uniqueness—a negative perspective: "There should be no intention to impale creative capacities on any historical processes or imagery and neither should we cripple with limited rationalism and a childish belief in the efficacy of any kind of technology."\(^{19}\)

**Short courses**

From 1954 to 1968 Thubron's full-time teaching was accompanied by work in a large number of short courses. These began at Scarborough under John Wood but the greatest number, and arguably the most influential, were at Barry in Wales.

The West Glamorgan Education Authority in Wales had organized summer schools at Barry since the end of World War II. Normally these courses were of two weeks duration and were designed expressly to update and upgrade the skills and abilities of the teachers employed by the authority. Art was one of the major subjects involved.

In the period being discussed here, Leslie Moore was the Chief Art Advisor to the authority. He, with some other art advisors and art teachers from South Wales, had attended one of Thubron's short courses at Leeds. Always on the lookout for fresh ideas and new approaches, Moore asked Thubron to come to Barry to teach at least one of the summer
art courses. Thubron raised a number of objections; he would need fairly elaborate equipment and facilities—lathes, power tools, welding equipment; major spaces would be required; large quantities of drawing and painting materials and of wood, plaster, and metal would be needed; he would have to have the assistance of other Leeds faculty members—Tom Hudson, Alan Davie, Ricky Atkinson. Moore was able, through his contacts and influence with administrators in the authority, to accede to all these requests and Thubron, overcoming his reluctance to take his course to such an out-of-the-way and educationally unimportant location, eventually agreed and began a long association with the Barry summer schools.

In the early sixties funds for educational experiment and development were comparatively easy to find; there was a post-war enthusiasm for education, a continuing shortage of teachers, and a strong will to improve teaching in the schools. The remoter parts of Britain, and especially the Celtic areas of Scotland and Wales, had always had a particularly high regard for education as a means of development for their areas and as a necessary foundation for the future careers of their young people both at home and if they emigrated to England or to the dominions or colonies overseas. Local teachers could attend these summer courses without payment of fees and, even for students from other areas, the fees were low and included all the
materials and equipment used. Most of the students at the early Thubron courses at Barry were serving teachers, mostly Welsh, but later, as news of the quality and uniqueness of the courses spread, teachers from other areas and people with different backgrounds began to attend.

It must be already apparent that Thubron, for all his virtues, was not the easiest teacher to employ. He excelled as a teacher—arousing enthusiasm, generating drive and concentration, guiding, leading, inspiring—but other qualities often expected of the person in charge of a course were barely present. In running the Barry courses he needed co-workers and co-teachers who would organize the physical and practical details of studio, materials, models and so on; he needed people who would "protect" him from the administrator or the educational official. Moore was ideally suited for this position; when Thubron turned up one year with two large dogs—and no dogs were permitted in the college—Moore was able to find some acceptable way that they could be accommodated; when a few London models were brought in, he acted as the necessary buffer between them and the more strait-laced local inhabitants. As John Wood had done in the West Riding so Moore at Barry produced a situation where Thubron's unique, even idiosyncratic, abilities could function effectively and cogently. Moore was self-effacing and reticent, finding it difficult to say "no" but somehow capable of neutralizing objections to new and
different proposals or practices.

The Barry summer art courses run by Thubron took place each year between 1963 and 1969. Over the years the proportion of non-teachers taking part increased; the student body began to include local amateur artists, art school students, educational administrators—even professional artists. (John Hoyland, John Walker and Bridget Riley were among the well-known and well-established professional artists who attended Thubron-run short courses.) As in other courses that Thubron taught, he inspired a continuing loyalty and devotion; many students returned to take the course in successive years and, unlike the experience in other courses offered at Barry, no students changed from Thubron's course or dropped the course after it had started, and this in spite of the typical early incomprehension from which most of them suffered.

Thubron used many different collaborators on the Barry courses. These included not only Tom Hudson, Terry Frost, Eric Atkinson and Alan Davie, all of whom were closely associated with the foundation year teaching at Leeds, but also Cyril Cross, Vice-Principal and Head of Teaching-training at Leeds, who had been one of his most severe critics in the early days at Leeds, and Anton Ehrenzweig.

These short courses (at Leeds, Scarborough, Bishops Stortford, Edinburgh and later at Goldsmiths College and the
Glen Byam Shaw school in London) acted as a necessary counter balance to the longer-running full-time art school courses. They provided a test bed for the working out of new ideas, new projects, new combinations of teachers, new methods of organization. Not that Thubron restricted his longer term work at Leeds to fully-proven projects guaranteed to be successful; a continuing and fiercely held conviction was, as we have seen, that no finalized "course" was to be sought or found. But the differences in students, fellow teachers, working conditions, and the concentration made possible by the brevity and conciseness of the short courses, allowed more dramatic curricular events and acted as reinforcement, revitalization and, at times, confirmation for the full-time teaching.

The first summer course at Barry in 1963 was run by Thubron, Terry Frost and Eric Atkinson and was called "Painting; colour-form." There were in fact two courses; Course A was to be "A course in painting, based on personal experiment in colour-form and material, leading to the individual development of images. The course will deal with formal and non-formal values and will include lectures and discussion." Course B would "deal with the latest trends in drawing and painting...Models will be available for specific periods, and discussions and illustrated lectures will take place...Students are required to bring one large tube each of white, red, yellow, and blue oil paint."
There were attempts during the later Barry courses to integrate some of the fine art ideas with Laban-style movement work. The difficulty lay in the nature and quality of the cooperating forces. Thubron had always recognized the importance of interplay between various art forms and had encouraged such integrative measures as seemed possible; movement he saw as an important element to be conjoined with the static visual, but the Laban system seemed intrinsically too rigid and he would have preferred movement projects which were both freer and more rooted in the intuitive and irrational.

The 1967 course was called "The Figure--an investigation into two and three dimensional aspects of movement," and the description talked of "practical sessions in movement, drawing and colour, and work in three dimensions." In attempting to set the practical work within some wider philosophical framework, the leaflet quoted D.H. Lawrence's statement that "The one universal element in consciousness which is fundamental to life is wonder." Then follows a statement by the Thubrons which is worth quoting in full:

Today there is no blueprint for art or the making of art. It is a virtue of the ability to wonder that enables us to identify with the life-force inherent in all forms of being. It is this ability and the confrontation of our own inter-oppositions that place us directly in the state of wonderment and being, essential to any creativity. The icon becomes one's personal concern, whilst our ritualistic needs are fulfilled through our collective forms of endeavour. It is in this link essay of MOVEMENT-LIGHT-MUSIC-
FIGURE that the student's response to scanning and reading the patterns which emerge may, or may not be art: either way it is critical to the development of our self-awareness.  

As, perhaps a necessary corrective to the abstract and philosophical tone of that statement, the notes for the final course in 1969, after repeating the above statement, added "The course will be concerned with the practical aspects of these issues."  

**Drawing with the figure**  

Art Foundation, which also supported many of the short courses, now gave financial backing to the making of a film *Drawing with the figure*, which was first seen in 1963. It was based on a ten day course run during the Winter of 1962 at the Glen Byam Shaw School in London.  

John Jones, who had continued to interest himself in recording Thubron's approach to teaching, was responsible for filming the course work, for the editing and for the addition of a sound track. As a means of developing the spoken commentary for that sound track Jones arranged a tape-recording session with Thubron, Patrick Heron, Anton Ehrenzweig, himself and two of the students on the course. A professional sound recordist was engaged and the session was set up as a series of questions to Thubron which would, it was hoped, elicit responses which could be used with the visual material from the course.  

The film consisted chiefly of a quite large group of
students (about thirty-five at any one time in the life studio) drawing from four models. (The life drawing sessions at Leeds described earlier in Chapter Four were of a similar type). The discussion attempted to compare this kind of life drawing experience with the more usual one at the time, when a model posed in a fixed position and students worked at easels or at drawing horses.

Thubron:

There's nothing wrong with a static life class of the old order; it's what you bring to it...The essay was to realize that these people could bring something to the figure and to find out in what terms they could bring something to the figure...If you are saturated with the old system, it doesn't contain the seeds of creative possibilities simply because boredom has entered into it--habit, and one works in a pre-determined, pre-conceived sort of way. The object was to put people into a new situation where you could tap the inherent sensibility, the inherent rightness that people have to a degree that they seldom realize...What I (tried) to get was this Turkish bath atmosphere--mixed!...One tried to have enough models to infiltrate the people sufficiently so you felt more acutely that you were cheek by jowl with the nude...One wanted this physical involvement...the size of the paper; working on the floor, the paper extended beyond the boundaries of their normal vision.

Asked about the kind of instructions students were given to set them off Thubron answered, "We had to push them by word description...--roughly in a direction and yet not paint the end product." Jones suggested that Terry Frost and Hubert Dalwood, the two other chief instructors, had initially proposed a rather oblique way of "getting at it--starting with (just) marks...relating the figure to the marks and not the marks to the figure." Thubron agreed and described how
"as time went on (the students) realized that the footmark on the corner (of the page) as the model stepped over could pivot and work against the whole of the page."

The course began with the use of moving models and Thubron saw this as having unique advantages.

I think the great thing was to start with movement because they hadn't been in this situation before... We tried to saturate the place with the nude... One of the stimulants injected was the urgency of the time element, the fact that there it was in front of you, swivelling around, one form disappearing in front of the next and coming out the other side... Some started out of sheer desperation, some quite rigidly, but when they've done half an hour, three quarters of an hour, say, they ultimately... relax entirely... They realize that a certain degree of arbitrariness in the way they start, the way they assemble these lines, helps them enormously-- something is down, it's not fixed, it becomes part of the whole. They realized that you can put down three, four, five lines as an approximation... and they do indeed take up the right relationship. In this sense a drawing grew. What they did equally become sensitive to is that this drawing became reality... this life growing under their hands... We were trying to get them to live with the real reality-- what was happening on the paper.

For Thubron this was a vital concept. His commitment to the innate capacity of students, given the right situation, to produce valid, meaningful visual statements was total; teaching consisted in providing a situation which would counter boredom, produce mental and physical alertness, provide stimulus and encouragement to the student's unique responses, and, in some manner not easily describable, contribute to their ability to "recognize" the vitality of the images as they emerged.
From this beginning in rapid, involving activity, in total immersion in a new physical and mental approach to working with the figure, students moved to more considered approaches.

Initially the speed was overly quick—deliberately—to be a counterpoint to the way they'd worked before. In the course of the ten days we did slow down but they then proceeded to work with a more natural ease, not compulsively and without being in any way hurried. This allowed for a more personal solution...Any situation can become dull, static; you've got to do something about it. So, if you move the models—this is new—but if you kept on moving and moving the models then it's quite obvious that just having the model in the corner could have possibilities.

As a counterpoint to this direct work with the models upstairs, half of the students worked in another studio doing what Thubron called "syntheses" based on their prior experience with the figure.

They were using charcoal and pencils upstairs, paint and six-inch brushes downstairs so that the whole activity was different. It was a finding process but with a different rhythm. The two activities reinforced each other.

The work consisted of images which were figure-like, though considerably abstracted—large painted black shapes on white, often with super-imposed college elements.

There were questions raised about the methods employed by the instructors. From Thubron's answers it is apparent that a good measure of control was being exercised. The models were given patterns of movement to follow and

What one did by design was to try to ensure that, in one corner of the room, so that the whole thing didn't go along like a Grecian freeze, one put a
model either crouching or standing quite close to a
group of people on one side of the room, and we tried
to ensure that a model was working somewhere in the
line of vision right the way across occupying the
space too, but in between and in the far distance.
So that scale (relative) did happen...They didn't
worry about perspective vision; they didn't start to
draw things lightly as a means of recession. Whilst
the figures did knit on the surface of the drawing,
the scale gave it this other dimension...Terry
(Frost) talked about the space that was made between
the lights, the furniture, the people, the figures,
and talked very graphically about the reality of the
changing space.

Questions were asked about how some students "who were
catched in a maze of lines" were helped.

perhaps lines appeared on the paper a little
frantically at the beginning. This was quite what we
expected but they can go on adding and adding,
which is quite right, and remain somewhat insensitive
to what is actually happening on the paper...which is
the ultimate reality...It was then that we threw them
another chalk, told them that they could sort out the
life of the drawing...asked them with chalk to cut a
way into this growing mass. We mentioned the need
for space and break and rest so that the tension took
on more significance, the marks a more vital
relationship.

One of the students asked "If there had been time and you
could have used paint and color, would you have suggested
inventing from the figure?"

It would have been a very interesting thing to do.
What was beautiful was the color they arrived at
through charcoal, rubbings, light chalk, raw sienna
chalks-smudgings...wonderfully dense intense blacks;
they really were having a color experience in a range
of color people explore but seldom--black/white/
ochre, black/white/tan, black/
gray/white--these were very beautiful.

What were to be the desired results? What were the
students expected to gain from their intensive ten-day
experience?
Out of the nature of the drawings as they developed, (they) found that (the surface) could be occupied in some dynamic way and not just passively...We didn't want people at the end of the course to say "This is a way, this is a method;" (we wanted) to remind them instead...that the vigor of the whole procedure and the novelty of it was such a stimulus that they themselves had to put themselves in situations whereby they would find that things would work in a better way--more naturally, more creatively--rather than by habit and acquired skills...After all, a drawing is finished when something in you is satisfied by what is going on externally. This is the life force that they recognized.

Out of this thrust into unexpected methods of working, deep involvement in active mark making, prolonged continuous working and reworking, the students would develop a capacity to "recognize" when vitality was achieved, when the "life force" was operative, when an individual dynamic statement had been achieved.

The Drawing with the figure film

The film has been shown widely in England, in Germany, and in the United States. Jones, on a visit to New York University in 1966, discussed the film with Howard Conant, at that time Chairman of the Art Education department. At first, Conant refused to believe that Jones had had anything to do with the making of this film. He described how a "typically English fellow--tall, thin, bearded" -- had come over the previous year wanting to show them the film (the typical Englishman was in fact Bernard Bertschinger, the London-based Swiss industrialist of the Art Foundation). Conant said that they had not been
particularly anxious to see the film but eventually allowed Bertschinger to project it. In Conant's words "it revolutionized art education here." Having seen the film, with its emphasis on a necessary integration of drawing with movement, music and sound, a group of N.Y.U. students had taken over a local church hall, hired a jazz band and had them play as an accompaniment to the students drawing on large sheets of paper on the floor while a number of models—including a black male and a number of females—danced or moved around the drawing areas. "It went on for three days" reported Conant!

When Jones showed the film to a large audience at the Philadelphia College of Art the general reaction was one of indifference; it was taken to be a rather oddball version of some aspects of Abstract Expressionism—interesting but not of any great importance. When Thubron showed the film to graduate students at the University of Wisconsin in Madison that same year the reaction was one of interest, but, perhaps not surprisingly, the interest was more in Thubron than in the film.

The Bishops Stortford films

Following the success of the figure drawing film, it was decided to make another which would concentrate on work with color. In 1962 and 1963 Jones shot another three reels of sixteen millimetre film concentrating chiefly on color analysis and use.
The 1962 material was shot at visual speed only, so was considered to be unusable for a final film, but it is of extreme interest. Much of the beginning section concentrates on details of the visual environment in which the courses were conducted. Bishops Stortford was a rural setting, the studios old barns and disused stables. Jones' camera focuses lovingly on rotting fences, disintegrating brick walls—lichens, peeling concrete infillings—on old barn doors with decaying patches of paint curled back from the heavily grained wood, random patches of cobblestone, efflorescence and powdering paint on courses of brick, criss-crossing bicycle tracks in the mud—sun-hardened and cracking. The camera moves to groups of students kneeling on the grass mixing large cans of paint. The colors of the paint, mostly brilliant reds, oranges and blues, contrast with the green of the grass and the predominantly subtle browns and greys of the buildings. We see large brushes wielded simply, apparently unthinkingly, producing bold calligraphic splodges and streaks on huge sheets of paper resting on the grass. These sheets are torn up, reassembled, pinned on barn doors. Flowers, leaves are pulled apart and strewn on sheets of paper, arranged, rearranged. The students begin to place thick patches of oil paint, one against the other, in groups; the colors have been abstracted and selected from the natural material. Here a sheet is covered with blotches of grey green,
viridian, touches of emerald and then, with a palette knife, a patch of greyed pink or purple is placed atop the greens and smoothed off so that the upper surface gleams in the sun. The colors are beautiful, unconventional, surprising—there is no suggestion of "prettiness;" one can recognize the exploration of harmonies, discords, complementaries, but there is nothing obviously "scientific" nor disciplined about the results. The images (though no external objects are imitated) are brutal; there seems to be a deliberate clumsiness in the way the paint is applied, though the color relationships and sequences are often of an outstanding delicacy and restraint. There are no easels, no work tables; cans with large brushes are strewn across the grass and the students kneel and crouch to work.

The film passes now to shots of Henry Moore talking to the students (there is no sound to this rough cut). The camera follows students around Moore's house, studio and garden, lingering on some of Moore's maquettes, armatures, plaster casts and finished pieces.

We return to the abandoned farm yards. The students are now making constructions from found objects. Most of these are quite simple—barrel hoops with lengths of decaying timber, car springs taken apart and reassembled on a board and painted an astonishing yellow, lengths of rusted iron tied or wired to old blocks of wood. Jones photographs the completed sculptures as strange icons found standing
From high above we look down on three models posed in different parts of a barn while the students work among them. At intervals the models change their pose or move to another position in the barn. The students are working with extended brushes—some four to six feet long—using liquid black paint or drawing with thick stumps of powdering charcoal.

The camera pans around the constructions placed in various parts of the farm. A linear iron mobile is seen against the mossy tiled roof of a shed; a chunky set of pierced beams is viewed against a cobbled yard; the board of yellow car springs is placed against a grey, rotting fence. Sometimes as the camera moves and pauses it is difficult to tell if we are looking at a "construction" or a piece of farm machinery.

In 1963, Patrick Heron joined Thubron, Terry Frost, Norbert Lynton and Alan Green at Bishops Stortford. Color is now even more heavily emphasized. Large sheets of paper are pinned to the sides of barns; an enormous Rothko-like rectangle of brown has a lighter, grayer brown square placed on it; a liquid black daub is streaked on to a group of red and orange patches; a student in close-up rubs out a circle of pale transparent turquoise from a field of deep blue. Thubron is filmed talking to groups of students sitting on the grass; behind him there is a chalk board with a vague
color circle enmeshed in groups of lines and half-erased cryptic symbols. He strides back and forward, looking mainly at the ground and not at the students. Behind him sits a dark brown clapboard barn with black holes of windows and an arched entrance, also black but with patches of dusty grey where some light penetrates. Heron is standing to one side but is also seen against the barn; the effect, with sun striking across the clapboard, is almost Hopper-like. The camera lingers on compositions of barn sidings, doors and windows, sometimes moving back to take in a lighter, sloping roof, sometimes zooming in so close that only an apparently abstract group of shapes can be read.

The film was never completed. It was developed in such a way that the color is intensified beyond its normal range and Thubron and Heron decided against continuing. The images are vivid and revealing and would have formed an evocative background to a commentary on Thubron's ideas on color and art.

The paucity of written material on Thubron's work at the time gives even greater importance to these films as documentary evidence of the ideas in practice. They have the advantage over written material, even over slides or photographs, of showing work in progress and in revealing, in a way surely impossible in words, something of the atmosphere and ambience of the teaching and methods of working.
Notes


2Ibid., 17.

3Ibid., 5.

4Ibid.

5Ibid., 7.


7Ibid.


11Ibid. 18.


14Ibid. 135.


16Ibid. 137-138.


20 From the prospectus for the Summer course at Barry in 1963.

21 From the prospectus for the Summer course at Barry in 1967.

22 From the prospectus for the Summer course at Barry in 1969.

23 All the quotations in this section are from the tape recordings made by John Jones as a preliminary to making the soundtrack for the Drawing with the figure film.
CHAPTER VI
Some Important Influences

This study concentrates on the work and teaching of Harry Thubron. However, that teaching was not conducted in a vacuum, and Thubron was both influenced by and supported by some major figures in the art educational hierarchy. At different times in his pedagogical career one or more of these figures may be seen as having a critical effect on future developments or as being catalytic in some major change.

The three men considered here—Herbert Read, Anton Ehrenzweig and John Wood—were almost certainly the most important influences. Read was the major international voice in art education during the first half of this century. Ehrenzweig, though less well known, met Thubron at a crucial point in the careers of both; though starting from quite different positions, they had reached similar views about the role, purpose and methods of art education. Their concerted efforts were, for a time, especially fruitful. John Wood, administrator rather than teacher or theoretician, proved important in providing the educational
setting and support within which the new developments could flourish.

The major development in twentieth century art education undoubtedly came from the work of Walter Gropius and his colleagues at the German Bauhaus. The extent to which the Bauhaus model influenced Thubron and the other English innovators is open to debate. It seems to me, as it did to John Wood and to Cyril Cross and Eric Taylor, that the influence was strong and readily apparent.

Through the exhibitions, articles, and films, the work of the Basic course pioneers became widely known in art education circles. Many departments of art began to use some of the methods developed at Leeds and Newcastle, though not always with a clear understanding of the principles involved. There was perhaps insufficient recognition of the part played at Leeds and Newcastle by particular personalities. As Quentin Bell writes in *School of design*:

The history of art education suggests that the true value of teaching lies far more in the confrontation of teachers and pupils who, whether they be in agreement or disagreement, may prove mutually stimulating and, through advice, argument and collision of ideas, act upon each other to produce a state of excited interest in which discoveries can be made and personalities developed, rather than in the application of any set of pedagogic exercises, however carefully devised. The educational innovator, whether he be an Alberti or a David, a Gustave Moreau or a Gropius, is of value to his students, not because his ideas are correct, but because he is a man of ideas.
Herbert Read

Read wrote widely on art and design, on art and art education, on the place of art in society, and on the form that art education should take for the child, the artist, and the designer. In diverse other ways also he promoted the activities of art, design, and art education. He was, for example, one of the founder members of the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1948. He was a founder member, and the leading theorist, of the Society for Education through Art (S.E.A.) which was based on his book *Education through art*. That book was also the inspiration for the establishment of an art education periodical, *Athene*, until recently the only English journal devoted exclusively to art education. Through this journal, and more particularly through the *Sunday Pictorial* exhibitions of children's art which he was instrumental in organizing, he helped to introduce the spontaneous and "natural" work of young children to large English audiences. He encouraged and advised Peter Gregory on the setting up of the Gregory Fellowships at the University of Leeds—the first artists-in-residence at an English university. Many of the holders of these Fellowships played an active role in the developments at the Leeds College of Art. Through personal contacts, and through his books, papers, articles, and letters, he conducted campaigns to reform and support the education of artists and designers. More than anything
else, he provided a philosophical framework for pursuing "education through art" at all levels—a framework which achieved a huge following among art educators in England and throughout the world.

The chief tenets of Read's philosophy of art education were; that art should be at the heart of the curriculum in general education; that all education could be and should be thought of as aesthetic education; that, in both general and specialist education, the imbalance between rational and irrational forces—between the Appollonian and the Dionysian—should be resolved; that the works of child art should be seen as a reflection and externalization of experience; that the work of art, the development of the child in art, and the development of the artist, should all be seen as "organic" progression.

His hopes were for a more universal attitude to art at every level; an attitude which would take account of art's importance as an activity which was biologically necessary and, through perception, biologically controlled.

The increasing significance given to form or pattern in various branches of science has suggested the possibility of a certain parallelism, if not identity, in the structure of natural phenomena of authentic works of art. That the work of art has a formal structure of a rhythmical, even of a precisely geometrical kind, has for centuries been recognized by all but a few ritualists ... That some at any rate of these structures or proportions—notably the Golden Section—have correspondences in nature has also been recognized for many years ... But now the revelation that perception itself is essentially a pattern selecting and pattern making function (a Gestalt formation); that pattern is inherent in the
physical structure or in the functioning of the nervous system; that matter itself analyses into coherent patterns or arrangements of molecules; and the gradual realisation that all these patterns are effective and significant by virtue of an organisation of their parts which can only be characterised as aesthetic—all this development has brought works of art and natural phenomena onto an identical plane of enquiry.³

Read wrote that as part of his introduction to a book of essays entitled *Aspects of form*, a book which arose as a consequence of the exhibition *Growth and form* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in 1951. As we saw in Chapter Two, Richard Hamilton was responsible for that exhibition. He had early recognized, as Read had, a connection between the ideas of some biologists on the organic basis of form and the idea that art too might be viewed as in some sense an "organic" product based on an "organic" activity. It is not surprising, then, that Read, through his close association with the I.C.A., and through his profound interest in the parallels between human and other forms of biological growth, should recognize in Hamilton, and also in Pasmore, and in Hudson and Thubron too when they met, exemplars of the new type of art teacher needed to promulgate and disseminate his ideas.

Read met Pasmore in the forties (Pasmore was also a founder member of the I.C.A.) and Hamilton, Hudson and Thubron in the early fifties. As we noted, he was a frequent visitor to John Wood's summer courses at Wraehead, and he and his wife held meetings at his home in North
Yorkshire where artists of all kinds met for informal discussion. Through these meetings Thubron met a number of artists and academics who both helped to confirm the views he had been developing and to give him much needed support from a wider section of society than that of the art schools. Another couple in Leeds, Bernard and Mrs. Gillinson, also held open house during the early fifties for artists and intellectuals. At the Gillinsons Thubron met many leading university figures, including Asa Briggs, Alisdair Macintyre, and Bernard Dobree, and such important political figures as Hugh Gaitskill, a leading member of some of the post-war Labour governments. Many business associates of the Gillinsons also attended and, through them, Thubron hoped to establish commercial and industrial ties between Leeds business and commerce and the College of Art.  

During the early fifties Thubron and Read continued their friendship. Read visited the Leeds college a number of times and was always willing to lend his support to Thubron initiated projects. John Wood was equally aware of Read's help: "When it came to Leeds," he says, "I asked him on more than one occasion to come over, and that was helpful to me. In a snob-ridden society--I mean intellectual as well as social snobbery--you can't manage without some support." Read continued to use both Thubron and Hudson as jury members for the Sunday Pictorial children's art
exhibitions he had founded and for a number of years he involved Hudson in devising a "didactic element" for the exhibition:

The addition of creative photography, machine sculpture, the language of structures, the language of color ... For example, for the color development that we carried out over two years--developments which culminated in ... a twelve-sided building inside the exhibition hall where we had a central, electronically-controlled column with all the projectors beaming out on the twelve sides of the inner structure. Read set it all up; it cost a fortune to do--tens of thousands of pounds.

He used an illustration from Thubron's Lancaster course as an example of the best work going on in English art schools in his *Art and industry* book, and in 1964, having continued to offer his support and encouragement over a number of years, he opened an exhibition of Hudson's pedagogical work in New York.

Through the S.E.A. especially, Read's influence on primary education had been spreading. Many members of the S.E.A. were teachers in teacher-training colleges whose primary function was the education of general primary teachers. Through their teaching, Read's ideas began to permeate primary education, affecting not only the direct teaching of art but affecting also the place of art in primary education and the relationship between art and other subject areas. Alec Clegg in the West Riding of Yorkshire, for example, was able, through the power of his position as Chief Education Officer for the county--and it was one of the largest in the whole country--and through his good
fortune in having a number of excellent art advisors to work with him, to affect quite radically the place of art in a large number of schools. Many of his teachers had their children out collecting wool from the hedgerows, carding and spinning, dyeing with local vegetable dyes, and weaving on school-constructed looms, processes which were used not merely as a means of producing aesthetically interesting pieces of fabric or clothing but as the basis for teaching in local history, science, mathematics, and social studies.

In 1955 Basil Rocke, the Chief Art Advisor to the West Riding Education Authority, invited Thubron and Hudson to come and to talk about their work in the Leeds college to a meeting of the Society for Education through Art to be held at the Bretton Hall Training College in West Yorkshire. It had been Read's idea, and Hudson saw his purpose as getting them "to throw bombs; willfully and willingly to upset." In the morning Thubron and Hudson showed the work of their students, talked about the ideas that motivated them to work in this way, and invited response and discussion. They found themselves involved in an angry debate in which their viewpoints were attacked vehemently by members of this audience, mostly local teachers; in fact, they were almost howled down. Hudson reports that he and Thubron were slapped across the face with rolled-up conference papers by some of the angrier women members present. If Read had intended to startle and provoke, his
subterfuge certainly worked. Thubron ended up telling the audience that they were "just a lot of bloody ignorant yoboos." There were murmurings in the audience that when Herbert Read arrived later he would put these young iconoclasts in their place, and there was an element of surprise, even of shock, when they discovered that Read approved of these new and revolutionary ideas. Hudson quotes Read as saying:

"Whether you like what these people have brought today or not, you cannot go on any longer without recognizing the need for change—you cannot go on any longer paying lip service to the same old philosophy. If you don't face these changes ... you will have to bring about other changes yourselves."

Hudson argues that Read had set them up to illustrate the concept that change had to be faced. "He'd pointed out that we were not there to mock child art or expressionism—we were making critical analyses, critical statements, but it was an extension from Cizek of earlier developments."

Hudson appears to respect the advances of the "new" art education stemming from Cizek and Lowenfeld, but it is not difficult to understand the audience's reaction to the Leeds work and Hudson may be exaggerating the connections between the two. Later in the day, Maurice de Sausmarez spoke in a more conciliatory fashion, calming the audience and attempting to show how these apparently contradictory sets of views might be resolved."
At the secondary level and in higher education, Read apparently saw little evidence of radical change. In 1952 he wrote:

I do not know what proportion of the sixty thousand students attending art schools in Great Britain any one year are taught easel painting; it is certainly a large proportion. Easel painting ... has a prestige and status in art education which is part of the defunct tradition of capitalistic art ... a whole system of academic education is geared up to its obsolete standards. No harm would be done to art, in any vital sense of the word, if all this vast machinery of life classes and antique classes were abolished ... The Royal Academy Schools, The Royal College of Art, the Slade School and many local art schools, are not only perpetuating a defunct tradition; they are luring thousands of young men and women into an obsolete vocation where they can only experience poverty, disillusion and despair.  

That condemnation of a tired academicism was in line with Read's championship of contemporary art forms which had been one of his chief contributions to art criticism for many years. It was also consistent with his earlier expressed views of art education at other levels too. In May, 1947, he suggested a total reform of education which would replace the current "liberal" education of the primary and secondary schools with an "aesthetic" form of education. A secondary technical education should be made available in technical colleges, and then there should be a central university for the arts which "would provide a universal rather than a particular knowledge of design." He recognized that this last could almost certainly be best provided by a radical transformation of the Royal College of Art and he welcomed the 1949 changes already reported. Even these
changes, however, while they did bring the R.C.A. into
closer touch with industry and therefore ensured students a
more realistic form of design education, took little note of
Read's plea for a "universal" approach to design. The work
of Hudson and Thubron, with its emphasis on the
"fundamental" features of art process, must have seemed to
Read a closer approximation to his hopes for art education.

Given that there existed this sympathy between Read
and the instigators of the new "Basic courses," how
legitimate is it to see connections between these courses,
the philosophies behind them, and the theories and sets of
ideas revealed in Read's writings? As a practical matter,
both Thubron and Hudson had worked with children before
coming to Leeds; Thubron at New Earswick and Hudson while
teaching at the Lowestoft School of Art. As the more
theoretically minded of the two, Hudson had worked out a
rationale for the part-time work he conducted with children
alongside his regular art school responsibilities at
Lowestoft. He was interested in finding out whether the
ideas about art that he had gleaned from the writings and
work of the Constructivists and Suprematists had relevance
for young children, and if they could be reconciled with
theories of child art he had encountered at the University
of Newcastle. Thistlewood writes:

He found that if perceptual or constructive
'problems' were framed slightly outside the scope of
the youngsters' abilities they would quickly put
together an experience necessary for coping ...
Hudson reasoned that if the child could be persuaded away from a pre-conceived approach to 'mature' art, it might be possible to prolong the creative, learning-by-doing stage of his development ... into early adolescence and beyond.

Read, in Education through art, had posited three main activities for the child artist:

A. The activity of self-expression - the individual's innate need to communicate his thoughts, feelings and emotions to other people.

B. The activity of observation - the individual's desire to record his sense impressions, to clarify his conceptual knowledge, to build up his memory, to construct things which aid his practical activities.

C. The activity of appreciation - the response of the individual to the modes of expression which other people address or have addressed to him.

Hudson, as might have been expected from the interest he had shown in the work of the Constructivists, was interested especially in B. The English practitioners of the new art education of the thirties and forties, in particular Marion Richardson and R.M. Tomlinson, had put their emphasis on the subjective, the narrative, and the expressive. Hudson and Thubron, on the other hand, believed that a more genuinely expressive art was likely to arise if the child was engaged in "constructive" activities--processes of trial and error, the piecemeal addition of one thing to another, typical of their play behavior and therefore more "natural" than the usual classroom projects and scenarios. As with Read before them, these views seemed to arise from and to be a reflection of some important concerns of modern art: images were sought which existed "in their own right," which were
"real" rather than imitative of or reflective of external images in the environment.

In a 1981 paper Thistlewood argues that Hudson's approach was in some ways more Readian than Read's own. He sees Thubron's teaching, on the other hand, as geared "to bring ... forth the irrational or unexpected result," but this is to underestimate seriously the extent to which Thubron's teaching too explored rational, ordered aspects of the visual alongside, contrasted with, and at times integrated with (as far as that is possible) the disruptive, accidental, intuitive and instinctive. Perhaps Thistlewood overestimates the admittedly powerful influence on Thubron of Anton Ehrenzweig, who undeniably found in the sub-conscious the roots of aesthetic perception.

Thistlewood provides a description of a "typical" sequence of activities in Hudson's (equally in Pasmore's) teaching: That teaching is on the face of it more clearly organized and more rationally sequential than that of Thubron, but the teaching of all three seems to me to have its roots in a common philosophical conception. That conception may be rather readily identified as, in the broadest sense, a Readian one; the notions of "a balancing of rational and irrational modes of creativity," of the "organic" nature of experience and of art; the assumption that the "aesthetic" was a concept of use and value well beyond the visual arts--all of these are recognizably
descriptive of Read's writings on art education and, though of course in different ways, of the teaching of Pasmore, Hamilton, Hudson and Thubron.

Anton Ehrenzweig

Anton Ehrenzweig came to England from Vienna in 1938. In Vienna he had studied law as well as art and psychology, but when he arrived in England it was his artistic abilities which were initially the most useful in finding employment. He was at first employed as a textile designer and in his later writings he often used examples from textile design to show the importance of "overall" perception as compared with the perception of individual motifs. His interest in making use of his psychological knowledge and understanding to interpret and explain the processes of artistic perception and production led him to write a number of articles in the late forties and early fifties which built a theory of art on a foundation of Freudian psycho-analytical concepts. "I tried to show," he writes, "that the aesthetic feeling in our vision served a dynamic function: it counteracted the intense sexual (pan-genital) significance with which our unconscious mind equips any seen form."\(^\text{17}\)

The article from which that quotation is drawn, already contains the chief points upon which, in the Psycho-analysis of artistic vision and hearing,\(^\text{18}\) he developed a full-scale theory of artistic genesis. These points are: the "Gestalt-free" nature of modern art; the importance of
"unconscious scanning" as a preliminary to "conscious surface perception;" the necessity for the artist to concentrate on "invisible form combinations" as a way of counteracting the intrusion and damaging effects of a too-conscious rationality.

Ehrenzweig looked to depth psychology for enlightenment about both the purposes and processes of art, apparently feeling that the dissociation between the conscious and the unconscious functions of the mind—the split between conscious thought and unconscious fantasy—lay at the root of the then current difficulties and failures of art education. He saw the divorce between spontaneous imagery and conscious planned thought as one of the chief causes of mental disturbance and illness but also as causing the main block to creativity. The apparent conflict between rationality and what he calls "the powers of undifferentiated intuition" is seen as the essential dynamic tension which underlies great art and that needs to be continuously generated if the individual's creativity is to flourish: "The close cooperation between precisely focussed reasoning and almost totally undifferentiated intuition has, to my mind, made our time so abundantly creative both in art and science."19 That interest in contemporary art distinguished Ehrenzweig's thought from that of, for example, Adrian Stokes or Marion Milner, Stokes' sympathies lying almost entirely with the art of the
Renaissance, and Milner's with the art of the mentally disturbed.

Ehrenzweig posits the necessity in the early stages of the creative act of a process of "de-differentiation" where the reasoned structures of appearance are broken down and thus become available for new formmaking: "The normal differentiation of time and space is suspended and events and objects can freely interpenetrate." He sees this as a renewal of the "syncretistic" phase which in young children is a natural state, but which for the adolescent has been overlaid with the logic and reason of school learning: "Syncretistic spontaneity ... is easily lost and is not open to a teachable tradition."

The kinds of disruptive practices used by Thubron and his colleagues at Leeds, especially in the teaching of life drawing, fitted well with Ehrenzweig's theoretical position, and when they met in 1960 there was an obvious accord. Thubron describes how Ehrenzweig could take the ideas that he, Thubron, was using and "give them historical perspective, give them theoretical significance." They shared both the notion of a "Gestalt-free vision" and that of an integration of rational and irrational forces in the artist as the desired outcome of a successful art education. In teaching, one has to appeal to the student's interest in ideas behind the pattern, in order to mobilise his syncretistic facilities, which watch over the integrity of the idea as he realises it in different media ... Keeping the final realisation of an idea wide open allows the artist to engage the
whole range of his sensibilities and his whole personality while he struggles with a flexible and unformed vision.

How to achieve that integration is, perhaps, the chief problem for art education. "According to my theory," writes Ehrenzweig, "an initial state of fragmentation and the not inconsiderable (paranoid-schizoid) anxieties attendant on it must be tolerated," and the early work at Leeds (the best example is found in the Drawing with the figure film) seemed predicated on that same theory, even although until 1960 Thubron was not acquainted with Ehrenzweig's work. In The hidden order of art Ehrenzweig considers the teaching of that period and some of its effects:

Then it was only necessary to disrupt existing patterns and cliches in order to demonstrate the emotional and aesthetic power of simpler 'basic' structures. It came as a revelation that it was not necessary to compose complex pictures. Tearing them up and re-assembling the fragments into seemingly accidental collages often produced better results. Inducing frustration in the students was part of the technique of disruption.

Unfortunately, in Ehrenzweig's view, the idea caught on almost too well: "Teachers flocked to the courses fully prepared to be beneficially disrupted," and soon no possibility of "frustration" existed; the exercise could only remain a consistent, sustained search for a personal vision if the tension were maintained, otherwise the sequences of disruption degenerated into devices "for making textures possessing a fake liveliness." One feels that Ehrenzweig is suffering from some disillusion with the
"Basic course" and this may have resulted from his acquaintance with a number of other basic courses which flourished in the mid-sixties but in which the freedom and spontaneity of the Leeds course had been replaced by a new academicism of "Basic design." It is often so: "It was the fate of these movements to produce, as movements do, a few artists of great originality of power, and legions of followers in whose hands the forms are drained of their initial vitality and spirit to become conventions and cliches."27

There might also have been a beginning of a recognition by Ehrenzweig of the over-riding influence and importance of particular teachers; that, perhaps the quality of the teacher might be more important than the structure of the curriculum or the theoretical basis of the syllabus.

Alan Davie once said how easy it was for him to make completely inexperienced, untaught, adolescents ... produce masterworks ... [He], like all good teachers, could draw astonishingly strong and original work from unsophisticated students by putting them into an unfamiliar situation which allowed for no ready-made solution.28

Davie and Thubron had similar success in short courses but with professional artists and teachers of long standing as well as with comparatively unsophisticated art students. For this Ehrenzweig must take some of the credit; Thubron was able to "open their eyes" to new aspects of the visual world and to new possibilities for working in more creative ways, but Ehrenzweig's projection of a convincing
theoretical foundation, and the dialogue, often heated but seldom acrimonious, between the two men must have been important too.

About twelve or thirteen years ago [this was written in 1976] at a Barry Summer School which Ehrenzweig and Thubron were running, there was a quarrel between the two men. Nobody who's told me about it can remember the exact year, but everybody remembers it was a Homeric quarrel. Thubron maintained that Mondrian should have gone on with the figure after he'd discovered the square. Ehrenzweig maintained that the figure and the square were not reconcilable.

Ehrenzweig's contribution came at an important moment for Thubron. The courses at Leeds had been running for five years, the short courses a little longer; there was danger of repetition and subsequent ossification. They learned from one another, and Thubron's philosophical ideas, up to that point heavily influenced by the Klee of the Pedagogical sketchbook and by the more rational elements of de Stijl, seemed thereafter to give greater weight to the "oriental," "syncretistic" strands in his thinking.

For a time the relationship between Ehrenzweig and Thubron was a highly productive one but, after a few years, it seemed that Ehrenzweig began to find the disruptive mode of art teaching less relevant: "cool alienation has to fulfill the function which hot self-expression once filled." This was not entirely a new theme in Ehrenzweig's writing; as early as 1962 he had written:

What is needed is proper integration that will either make professional training more spontaneous (and incidentally also technically more efficient) or else
basic design has to become more professional. Professionalism well taught ought to stimulate the imagination.

In Towards a theory of art education, a paper he wrote while teaching in the teacher education department of Goldsmiths College in London in the early sixties, the emphasis shifts to the feedback that a student gets from his work and on the role of the teacher as an interpreter of what that feedback might mean. His writings after 1967 seem to fluctuate between the psychoanalytical analyses and interpretation which are the main themes of his two major works and a recognition that some "Constructivist" or technical basis becomes increasingly necessary after the shock of disruptive innovation.

The artist submits to the seemingly alien rules of number and geometry. Serialization in music too, seems to explore an external discipline of numbers. In all these cases the seeming unrelatedness of the objective-mathematical or physical factors to any pre-conceived form, will set into motion unconscious scanning which can deal more effectively with such complex and unpredictable factors.

In the late sixties it is difficult to avoid feeling the lack now in Ehrenzweig's career of a close association with some charismatic teacher who shared his developing ideas and who might have been able, as Thubron had earlier, to take the ideas and give them practical and concrete expression. For a time the conjunction of theorist and master teacher had proved extraordinarily fruitful but, as Thubron left Leeds to work in a somewhat different fashion at Lancaster, Illinois, Jamaica, Leicester and Spain,
Ehrenzweig continued to work with some success at Goldsmiths with art teachers under training, and no new theory of art education appeared from his pen.

**John Wood**

Without John Wood's support it is difficult to see how Thubron would have been able to make his contribution at Leeds. Not only his administrative skills but perhaps more important his sensitivity to new movements in the arts and his response to Thubron as a personality—all contributed to Wood's seminal influence on post-war art school development.

In the early fifties Wood was already running short courses for the North Riding Education Authority.

*It was my particular foible ... that all the arts are one and that, if you could get people to come together ... from an educational point of view ... you could give people opportunities of finding out what was of interest to them and using it in their own development ... My primary interest was with the theatre ... I had Pinter when no one knew Pinter at all. We were giving people an experience ... I came to the conclusion that musicians, artists--visual artists--and people studying theatre ... sat at the same tables, they talked to each ... It's part of an education to talk to George Devine across the table and to have [Tyrone] Guthrie walking about the place and organizing all sorts of buffoonery.

I always believed in having a lot of staff. I had more staff than was necessary ... For art I would have Harry and Victor and Wendy and Tom Hudson ... Education is something which may happen if you give it a chance. The less you organize it, provided you pay the people to come, provided that there is a framework which they can disregard if they don't want it, [the better]. [You] bring the horses to the water and hope they'll drink.

Harry passionately believed that ability in the arts was widely distributed—he had a great faith in human beings—he really believed that talent was there to a remarkable degree and that we could be a
seeing nation and a listening nation and an acting nation ... All we needed to do was to give people the opportunity and the inspiration and to let them get on with it. Well, of course, there are limitations to that, and Harry may not always have realised the limitations, but there were no limitations when he was the teacher, when he was the contact.

The emphasis on "inspiration," on the importance of providing that inspiration in an appropriate setting, and then on the necessity of allowing natural and intuitive forces to play an essential role—these are characteristics of Thubron's teaching throughout his career. In Wood he found an administrator who shared his fundamental beliefs in how the arts should be approached educationally, and who reinforced his then somewhat tentative beliefs in the possibilities of integration in the arts.

Wood brought Thubron into touch with important innovators in the other arts but, perhaps of even greater value, he provided in these early short courses a forum for the exchange of ideas between Victor Pasmore, Wendy Pasmore, Tom Hudson and Thubron and, in addition, gave them opportunities to try out their new ideas within limited time periods and with groups of students wide open to fresh experience. Most of the students in the early courses were teachers, usually with an art background and therefore with some art ability, and this allowed technically adventurous projects. Existing prejudices about art activity had to be overcome and that too was an important preparation for the Leeds basic course. As the courses became better known
students came from all parts of the country and from America, France and Germany. These contacts ensured that during the following eight or nine years the work of the Leeds College of Art would find an international following and that Thubron himself would take his ideas and teaching methods to a number of foreign centers of art education.

The short courses by themselves could not give the new art educators a sufficient base for their experimental work. Pasmore, with the help of unique contributions from Richard Hamilton, developed his own version of a basic course at the University of Newcastle. Thubron, after he resigned his position at Sunderland, had no new job to go to. Wood "engineered" the position at Leeds and for the interim period before that job began arranged the term of teaching in the secondary modern school at New Earswick. Wood thought that they could not have sent him to a more unsuitable school, but, perhaps by sheer good fortune, that particular experience proved to be, in Thubron's view, an ideal preparation for the tasks facing him at Leeds and an experience which confirmed his views about the errors being made in the education of the less intellectually endowed adolescents in the schools. "Harry got the worst stream and he did wonders with them." John Wood regrets that talents such as Thubron possessed were not brought to bear on these difficult problems of the "average" child.
In the post-war period we could have changed the face of our country. We built enough fine schools. We got rid of enough, [though] not all our bad schools... we had great achievements in English schools and the new English universities; in the material sense a very considerable achievement. But we never used people like Harry—and there were others in different fields—to break through this didacticism in education. Do you know about Henry Morris? He was the Director of Education in Cambridgeshire... who commissioned Gropius to do the design for the Impington [College]; he was responsible for the Cambridge Colleges and he employed, [for example], Sybil Marshall who [wrote] that book on basic art... He said that... this damnable pedantry of information; this determination to fill kids up with information at all costs... inhibits their development... You kill all except the academic stream, the natural competitors; you kill their interest in anything. Henry Morris encouraged [such] people as Harry and Clegg [but] they have not had a really decisive enough influence. The teachers have rushed like Cadarine swine towards examinations and didacticism.

In addition to his encouragement of Thubron's work in the short courses and then at the Leeds College of Art, Wood saw part of his role as a protector of Thubron and his teaching against those who misunderstood or opposed his ideas. As we have already noted there were areas of art education in England which were actively hostile to Thubron. "People like Claude Rogers were really hostile," says Wood, and that hostility led to the refusal of the Diploma in Art and Design to the Lancaster School of Art. "My daughter," says John Wood, "went up to the Slade and... she said that they would talk about Harry as though he was some kind of monster." Wood recognized that Harry Thubron was not welcomed by everyone in the Leeds College when he first arrived: "Harry had enormous barriers of opposition at
Leeds in the early stages. It [Leeds] was still living in the period of the decadent Slade art; it was terrible. And Harry just came like a bull in a china shop, if you like, or a great uncontrollable force breaking in on the students." Although he recognized that most of the faculty eventually came around at least to some degree to Thubron's way of thinking, he felt that Thubron had to waste much too much energy in combatting this opposition, and that he would have achieved more, and more quickly, if that situation could have been eased.

When I came to Leeds, which I did in 1957, I tried to keep out of it, I tried not to interfere, to get involved with the college, but I couldn't really because of course I knew everybody. Harry had come to Leeds, through my engineering, before I came. Tom Hudson came because I was able to arrange it.

Wood was able to help Thubron to use the Gregory Fellows at the University to do some part-time teaching, and to assist him with contacts in various university departments. "It happened that John Wood was there," says Tom Watt, "otherwise it would not have been possible. The college was getting money it had never had before; there was the opportunity to bring in the Gregory Fellows--Armitage, Dalwood, Davie, Trevor Bell ... The money available to Harry was important--the Indian dancers, multiple models, money for making films, for external lecturers." There were criticisms at the time that to get this kind of special support Thubron "went over the head" of the college Principal to Wood in the administrative office of the local
education authority. It should be remembered that Thubron was only Head of Fine Art; there were other Heads of departments who were officially of equal standing but did not receive comparable support. Wood saw Eric Taylor, the college Principal, as a "weak" character but Dalwood, Cyril Cross, the Vice-principal, Tom Watt and George Waite are all convinced that Taylor, to the best of his ability and with attempts to be fair to other sections of the college, supported the work that Thubron was attempting.

Wherever Harry could have contact with students and not be interfered with, not have a Principal averse to him or ... who's got other ideas or other standards of measurement, Harry achieved wonderful results ... Eric Taylor was a weak Principal--didn't really understand what Harry was getting at. Very few of the people understood what he was getting at ... Because of my commitment to Harry and to modern art ... before I came to Leeds, I tried to keep out of it ... I knew that as administrator, responsible for the college among other colleges, people would have misinterpreted ... so I tried on the whole to keep out of it [but] I had to come to Harry's rescue. 40

Obviously John Wood's commitment to Thubron and to the promotion of his ideas was, to say the least, an unusually strong connection between an art teacher and an administrator. "He responded to Harry immediately," reports Tom Hudson, "always bemused by him but a tremendous affection for him as well. There was a very special emotional relationship between him and Harry, in a way which I found quite peculiar." 41 Peculiar it certainly was in the sense that such relationships are rare, and it is even rarer that a situation arises where such a relationship is
able to give rise to such an important and dramatic shift in an educational discipline.

The debt to the Bauhaus

In discussions with Thubron and Hudson there are many references to the German Bauhaus; in most instances the influences of the Bauhaus on their pedagogical ideas is minimized, and even their knowledge of the Bauhaus at the time of their early pedagogical experiments is disavowed or viewed as unimportant or peripheral.

While teaching at Sunderland Thubron was invited to teach in John Wood's Scarborough summer school.

Scarborough was the first public effort to sustain it [the new view of art education] in wider terms and [with] Victor [Pasmore] [don't think he knew much about the Bauhaus, but he knew point, line, plane] ... we invented exercises in volume, point, line, plane--totally different from the Bauhaus. I wanted to do a German, not a Bauhaus, [but] I wanted to make a school that could support its artists. 42

When Hudson started teaching at Lowestoft and began to do some "experimental" work, he says "I was groping in the dark; I didn't know about what anybody else had done at all; I knew nothing about the Bauhaus." 43

Lynton pointed out how difficult it was to get information about the Bauhaus at the time Thubron and Hudson were starting their teaching careers and how oversimplified such information tended to be. He maintains that the Pasmore program at Newcastle derived just from the title of Kandinsky's Point and line to plane book; "I'm not sure
whether Victor ever read the book."44

There was a Museum of Modern Art book in the middle of the fifties about a Bauhaus exhibition ... which gave a very powerful and politically biased description of what the Bauhaus did. [It] said very little about the Basic course, in fact, had very few illustrations relating to the Basic Course, so that really there was almost nothing on which one could build a Basic Course in any detail and claim it had anything to do with the Bauhaus. I think the Bauhaus became, in fact, a kind of distant symbol, as distant as Buddhism really ... The big difference between Victor Pasmore and Harry Thubron was that Victor felt [the need of] this kind of clear structure ... one, two, three, as a firm ladder up which you moved, whereas Harry started on the same basis [but] very rapidly moved away from it ... Harry was enormously interested in Klee's work and Klee, of course, at no point even in his teaching seems to have gone through anything as mechanical as that ... Klee's Pedagogical Sketchbook, although it looks as though it was a kind of engineering on paper, is obviously playing around with lines and forces in a very poetic way ... Once one gets beyond the mechanistic imagery of it. 45

Richard Hamilton makes a more general comment.

The people that I think contributed most ... were genuinely good individual artists who were intelligent enough to see the Bauhaus, and the people who taught at the Bauhaus ... as a kind of precedent of good artists working in an educational environment ... There was no such thing [in England] as a Bauhaus, being an integrated pedagogical set-up which had a philosophical background which had a great educationalist at its head and a coherent group of teachers teaching craft and the arts, but the people in England that I'm thinking of saw that as the only model that made sense to them and so they inserted their little bit of knowledge of the Bauhaus into whatever situation they found themselves in. 46

John Wood is of a different mind:

They both [Victor Pasmore and Harry Thubron] looked back to the Bauhaus. There's nothing I know of, in the English Basic courses, which isn't just Bauhaus adapted to English needs of thirty years later ... Harry was soaked in Bauhaus ideas ... Harry knew all about the Bauhaus ... he was already using Bauhaus, or reviving or rediscovering the Bauhaus ideas ...
it's not out of character that he would ... disavow the Bauhaus influence. I don't think there was anything there, in either Victor or Harry, which didn't go straight back to Bauhaus originals, and they were aware of it.

Some of the difficulty in defining Thubron's debt to the Bauhaus is a result of our taking "the Bauhaus" as a unitary concept. There were a number of central ideas at the Bauhaus and a variety of attitudes and instructional methods. What Thubron took from the Bauhaus was, as Cross put it, a conception of visual art—not just fine art—as a language, a language which consisted of basic elements which could usefully be studied individually and separately. He was much less interested in the "laws" or "principles" which the Bauhaus theorists saw as operating in art or design, though he did find himself sympathetic to the poetic, metaphorical structures of visual form enumerated by Klee in his teaching and in the Pedagogical sketchbook. In spite of a concern for students and for the disabilities they might suffer coming from working-class backgrounds, he did not appear to share the rather grandiose social, political and humanitarian concerns expressed by Gropius.

If one looks at the illustrations from the Developing process catalogue, the indebtedness to Bauhaus-type projects is clear; John Wood is surely correct in characterizing much of what Thubron did as "Bauhaus ideas adapted to English needs of thirty years later." Unlike Pasmore and Hamilton, however, Thubron took these Bauhaus ideas as
starting points only and resisted demands for a highly structured "finalized" course; some of his other basic ideas were inspired by psychological premises and by oriental philosophy and these did not permit a close similarity between the pedagogical experiments he conducted and those of the Bauhaus. Thubron felt, and people as important and as differing in background as John Wood, Herbert Read, Anton Ehrenzweig, Bridget Riley and Norbert Lynton agreed, that the courses he ran were unique. The English group was anxious to emphasize its independence from the earlier developments in both Germany and the United States.

English art between the wars had been influenced by that of the European continent, especially by French post-impressionist painting, but also to a lesser degree by Surrealism, by German expressionism, and by the work of such sculptors as Bill, Brancusi and Arp. "Abstract art," Lynton says, "was the strong, bold, brave new thing in England ... After the war ... it seems quite natural that artists should have returned to this adventure of the nineteen thirties in order to extend it. There was also a fairly strong move towards abstract art again on the continent." The urge to abstraction then, typified by Victor Pasmore's conversion to abstract painting around 1947, was one of the chief revolutionary aspects of the new movement.

A further aspect, and this came directly from the Bauhaus, was the notion that the visual fundamentals of
art—all kinds of art, and all kinds of design too—were the same, and that ways of instructing in these fundamentals might be developed independently of any particular artistic style.

A third strand in the spinning of the new paradigm was the renewed realization that art and science had more in common than the art or educational establishment of the time was willing to admit or allow. Thubron argued that "experiment," "research," and "inquiry" were concepts as valid for art as they were to science. Partly, again, this was drawn from Paul Klee, partly from the writings of the de Stijl group, partly from a developing interest in post-impressionist painting and the writings thereon which dealt with, for example, the influence of Chevreul on Seurat, and partly from their interest in Herbert Read and d'Arcy Thompson. Although, again, direct influence was denied, the work of Kepes too seems to connect quite directly with this viewpoint.

In Thubron's case further strands included his interest in the intuitive and irrational as exemplified in some oriental art and philosophy, especially Tantra and Zen, and a faith in the importance of the unique individual personality and its innate capacities.
Notes


11. Ibid.


15. Read, op. cit.


20 Ibid., 129.
21 Ibid., 132.
22 Thubron, H., op. cit.
24 Ibid., 147-148.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 149.


33 Wood, op. cit.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
40 Wood, op. cit.
41 Hudson, op. cit.
43 Hudson, op. cit.
47 Wood, op. cit.
48 Ibid.
49 Lynton, 1974, op. cit.
CHAPTER VII

After Leeds

Though I have argued that Thubron's teaching at Leeds was the most important segment of his teaching career, it formed only a quite small part of that career. From Leeds he went on to a number of other art schools, to other teaching situations--each with its own difficulties and opportunities, each with a set of surrounding conditions which made inevitable some noticeable differences in results.

This chapter traces briefly some of these other contributions that Thubron made after leaving the Leeds College of Art. Again, more than is possible in any verbal descriptions, differences are revealed in the illustrated work of students in Lancaster, Illinois, and Jamaica.

Leaving Leeds

During the 1963-64 academic year Thubron had decided to resign his position at the Leeds College of Art. The decision was not a simple one. The foundation course was
now quite firmly established; perhaps it was now in danger of becoming ossified by repetition. The new Diploma in Art and Design was now in operation and it called for more structured approaches than those Thubron favored. An additional reason was that it was in this year that Thubron separated from his wife; the marriage had been under some strain for a considerable time.

In January of 1964 the *Yorkshire Evening Post* carried a report on the Leeds College of Art which said:

The country's leading painters and sculptors are to collaborate in a pilot scheme of informal teaching and research which it is hoped to start in London next Autumn ... One of the chief figures in the scheme is Harry Thubron who is resigning as Head of the Leeds College of Art ... He has played a leading part in the vital force which has emerged in the North East in recent years. This force, Mr. Thubron said last night, is now spent, at least in its original form.

The proposal to establish what was called the *Art Foundation* had been made by Bernard Bertschinger, a Swiss industrialist with a strong interest in contemporary art and in the new movements in art education. The idea was to set up a graduate school of art in London in combination with a gallery for the work of new artists. Thubron was to head the school and other instructors were to include Hubert Dalwood and Alan Davie. As it happened, Bertschinger, although he had obtained some moral backing from important figures on the English art scene, was unable to find the necessary financial backing, although Thubron continued to hope that this project would eventually come to fruition.
The Post further quotes Thubron as saying:

I should have resigned from Leeds in any case, because I feel I am the only one left here now. The Leeds/Newcastle axis is breaking up, as St. Ives has tended to do as an artistic centre. There has been a drift back to London from St. Ives and the North, and I feel that this is where I should be if possible.

The board of trustees for the Art Foundation project included such powerful figures as Barbara Hepworth, Herbert Read, and Philip James, but even with their support, and the support of Victor Pasmore, Roland Penrose, Ben Nicholson and Graham Sutherland, insufficient monies were forthcoming.

As the 1963-64 academic year went along, hopes for the new gallery-cum-research and teaching facility had faded and Thubron applied for the position of Professor of Art (in effect, Head of the Art Department) at the University of Reading, one of the few English universities to have a full-scale studio department.

He [Thubron] was a candidate for the job which Claude Rogers got, the head of the school at Reading ... Harry wasn't well at the time but he damned nearly got the job ... The Vice-Chancellor of the university [Lord Wolfenden] took a great liking to Harry ... They wrote to me privately, and said "What are we to do about this? It's either Thubron or Claude Rogers." Well, I didn't think much of Claude Rogers but I said, apropos of Harry ... "I don't know what you want. If you want the man who is potentially one of the great educational forces of our time, who would be a wonderful influence in any university that would ... tolerate him, give him scope, you should appoint Harry. But if you want an administrator ... if you want someone who will have an orderly arrangement of the school ... it's no use at all; you would have to have someone to look after him."

Claude Rogers was appointed and served as the Head of the art department at Reading until 1980, when he retired.
Thubron applied for, and was appointed to the Head of Fine Art position at the Lancaster School of Art.

Hubert Dalwood is convinced that Thubron should have stayed at Leeds.

He somehow got it in his mind that the Principal of the school wasn't backing him, which I think was absolutely untrue. I think it was a mistake. I think he didn't appreciate that if he was going to do anything he needed a power base to do it ... The way that Harry operates you really need friends ... Perhaps he didn't recognize what a lot of help he had there [at Leeds] ... and also perhaps he didn't recognize the way in which the thing could have grown ... It could have gone on and become ... one of the major art schools in the country.

But Tom Watt, while recognizing that there was "an extreme falling away from Harry's approach after he left," says that "Harry would never [have been] able to operate in the present situation--people from other disciplines, student's own desires, academic boards, boards of study." So, as Dalwood puts it, "he took off for somewhere ... unknown."

Lancaster

The Lancaster School of Art, much smaller than the college at Leeds and based in an area of much smaller population, had applied for but had failed to receive approval to offer the recently introduced Diploma in Art and Design. Only a few of the smaller schools had in fact received such approval and then only if they had some specialism to offer--a specialism often related to some aspect of local industry or commerce. This was not the case at Lancaster; there was little local industry and the area
had no specialty related to art and design. Nevertheless, the school was anxious to be able to offer a diploma in at least one of the four possible major areas. It is apparent that the appointment of Thubron as Head of Fine Art was, at least in part, a move to upgrade the school, or at least its foundation and fine art areas, in such a way that a subsequent application might be more likely to be successful.

Thubron found the new post an interesting though challenging one. The students were less sophisticated and had, in general, a less developed educational background than those in Leeds; the faculty was, in his view, more conservative, and there was less possibility of using part-time or visiting artists or teachers. Certain aspects especially appealed to him; some faculty members had high technical skills in working with wood, metal, and plastics; many of the students had a practical bias which assured a solid base for work in three dimensions. Thubron saw some of the advantages of working with students of a more practical bent; art education here could be less elitist, more down-to-earth, more closely related to the "real" life of the country. (He sees this now as a possible model for today's education of those students, less intellectually gifted or oriented, who need to find creative solutions to their individual problems of how to live, how to--somehow--earn a living, how to occupy their time in a
society where "ordinary" lifetime employment can no longer be looked on as the norm.)

In spite of their relatively conservative and traditional background, the faculty proved cooperative, and Jon Thompson especially proved extremely helpful in getting the initial ideas accepted. At Leeds Thubron had had little direct involvement with the three-dimensional work (Hudson, and later Dennis Harland, had taken care of most of the sculpture and three-dimensional design teaching); at Lancaster he was able to work "through" some excellent craftsmen and the work produced shows convincing evidence of the benefits of that collaboration.

Slides, and a film called *All sherry trifle--and no bread* show clearly the kind of work done and reveal something of the attitudes behind it. The film is chiefly of the work at an end-of-year exhibition in 1965, and is of two main kinds: the first is work in three dimensions--often quite large objects in wood or plastic--which exploit both the subtleties possible in working with quite simple geometric forms or parts of such forms, and the possibilities of simple mechanical movement. One object consists of two different sized hemispherical forms which counter-rotate on tilted axes. Another large pedestal piece is made up of cylindrically connected strips of wood funneling into a more solid center. Both are able to move; the first by pushing the hemispheres in opposite
directions, the second by a simple handle rotation. Though interesting sculpturally, and though they must have presented interesting technical problems to the students, they do not make use of any sophisticated techniques and one wonders why no attempt was made to mechanize them. The aesthetic quality of the form relationships is high but much of the craftsmanship looks basic indeed, even clumsy, and technical solutions seem often only partially resolved. The second kind of work shown consists of two-dimensional pieces—drawings, prints and paintings—which exploit a favorite Thubron concept, that of a "family of forms." In these there are lingering echoes of Sam Francis, of Orphism, of Klee, of Abstract Expressionism. There are passages also of moving colored shapes rotating and dissolving, moving in and out of focus, which give no indication of their source though they are probably originally constructions of wire and colored plastics. A comment is made that the making of the film was itself a matter of creative discovery. The commentary emphasizes the possibilities of fruitful interaction of visual ideas—often fine art ideas—and technological processes. The stress is on "sheer vitality, ingenuity ... there is no striving to be imaginative," and on the "broad-based" nature of the course and its relevance to the needs of contemporary society: the work is "organic" (connecting it again with Read and d'Arcy Thompson) but also "technological."
The question arises, as it does frequently in looking at the work of Thubron and Hudson—even at that of Pasmore and Hamilton, though to a lesser extent—of whether it is possible to marry the notions of organic and technological in this way. Writing of his "basic course" work at both Camberwell and the Central School under Johnstone's Principalship, A.E. Halliwell comments on "an ominous development in the arts which gradually succeeded in corrupting the original aims of fundamental design training." His view is that of the professional industrial designer. "These studies," he writes, "were considered an end in themselves and lost their function to link aesthetic and technological sensibilities." That is the danger; that studies ostensibly devised to develop both the aesthetic and the technical, and to encourage rapport and mutual benefit, are seen and evaluated in the end from a primarily aesthetic viewpoint.

As in many ways an "impractical" man, a man with little facility for "making" things in the technical sense, Thubron may have had an unreasonable respect and an exaggerated reverence for the teacher with technical skills and technological expertise, but, in the end, his aesthetic sensitivities were likely to have been his chief guide. Given his background, it is not surprising that the technological strand, though its importance was often stressed, never appeared to assume the necessary dynamic;
the levels of skill and technical expertise never rose beyond the minimal and, even more important, in spite of the lip-service paid to it, students often came away denigrating the value of technique or skill formation and with only a weak understanding of the part played by these in the making of objects--aesthetic or non-aesthetic. That is, not only did they fail to appreciate the need to learn certain skills and techniques, they also failed to recognize that there is a philosophy of technology as there is a philosophy of art. They did not appear to appreciate that technology, in itself, may be seen as a "good." They did not appear to understand that technology may be viewed as perhaps the most cogent symbol of twentieth century civilization, that the machine may be seen as a powerful model for the way our contemporary civilization works--uniquely structured, logical, cooperative (each part dependent on each other part, each contributory to the whole, the whole greater than the sum of its parts). Even allowing the legitimacy of a primary interest in aesthetic intuition and aesthetic symbolism, it was nevertheless a considerable weakness in Thubron's courses that technology was seen too much as merely the handmaiden to art. Even when developments have grown from his earlier initiatives--film-making at Leeds is a good example--there is still somewhat depressing evidence that technological aspects are seen as subservient to aesthetic ones rather than as contributory at an equal
level.

At the end of the year Lancaster applied for approval for the Diploma in Art and Design-Fine Art. A panel of the Coldstream committee was dispatched to the college and the members of the panel examined facilities, studio accommodation and library provision, and talked to students and to members of the faculty; curriculum outlines and course syllabi were presented and rationales for the new course outlined and argued for. The committee's discussions and deliberations were not made public; the application was once again refused.

Why, given the obvious improvement in the quality of the work now being produced, was the college unsuccessful in its renewed attempt? Without access to the committee's reports any explanation is necessarily tentative and partial. Thubron is convinced that the failure was a direct result of dislike of his ideas and methods on the part of the art educational establishment. Among the panel members were three identified with a strand in English higher education in art which could be said to occupy the opposite end of a continuum from that of Thubron, Pasmore and Hamilton. That strand is chiefly identified with the Slade School of Art of the University of London. There had always been a strong tradition at the Slade of "objective" drawing, and during the forties and fifties this tradition became narrower and more extreme under the guidance of
William, later Sir William Coldstream. Patrick George, a teacher of drawing and painting at the Slade, was a devoted follower of Coldstream. In 1960 he wrote an article entitled *Painting what you can see from a single viewpoint.*

If you like what you see then it seems natural to try and describe the thing you like. Painting is an expedient way of doing this.

But why from a single viewpoint? When I notice something I stop to look at it. It has always seemed to me that my way of looking corresponds to a series of single views, and I do not think they are views seen in the round—my visual experience does not correspond to the experience of free standing sculpture, when there is more round the other side than I expected. I believe I see in high relief, for instance the angle between the pavements and the houses is opened out more than 90°. Also because it is the particular relationships from a single view that are interesting. It is usually from just somewhere that I am struck by what I see and nowhere else will do or be the same. At once my position becomes significant, and the longer I stay there the more important my position becomes. The subject holds me fast by radiant lines to my eye like guy ropes to a tent pole.

One more reason is that it is the only way I have found of making a representation of what I can see and so being able to catch some indisputable facts that do not simply depend on my own opinions.

Nothing could be further from Thubron's ideas about drawing than that statement, and it was a statement of a viewpoint widespread at the Slade. George's paintings are controlled, intellectual, measured, obedient to the discipline of the eye, objective, unemotional, and convinced of the "reality" of the external world and of the importance to the painter of sensitive and rigorous perception of the world's physical features. The other Coldstream followers on the committee were Claude Rogers, who went on to become Professor of
Painting at the University of Reading (the post which Thubron had also applied for) and Andrew Forge, at that time a teacher at Camberwell and an art critic.¹⁵

In spite of the obvious differences in their philosophies of art and art teaching, the panel was, according to Norbert Lynton, on the whole sympathetic and aware of the advances that had been made. Their chief worry was that the quality of the work that they saw was too dependent on one man, one strong personality--Thubron himself--and that, if he were to leave, the higher standards now in evidence would not survive. In interviewing Thubron, panel members tried their best to get from him some indication that he might be likely to stay on at Lancaster. They did not, could not, insist on an undertaking that he would stay; the most they expected was some admission that he might continue for at least another year or two. With a rather typically Thubronesque unwillingness to commit himself, or perhaps even to dissemble a little, he refused to give even the vaguest of undertakings. His view was that, having "trained" some of the faculty members, the courses could now run successfully without his presence and direction. Dalwood's opinion is that no such continued success was likely.¹⁶

Thubron, at the instigation of Hubert Dalwood, who had just spent a year there, was invited to work at the University of Illinois-Champaign for the 1965-1966 academic
year. The invitation had come first in February; Thubron ignored it; another arrived in March and yet another in May; each time the offered salary was raised, though this had not been the aim of Thubron's reluctance to accept. Finally he agreed to go, and he and Elma travelled to Illinois for the start of the Fall semester of 1965.

The University of Illinois-Urbana

Thubron, as has been noted, did not find it easy to fit into new situations without considerable backing from his colleagues. The difficulties that might well have been expected in his moving to any new position were exacerbated by the differences between the English and American educational systems. The Illinois department welcomed the input of fresh ideas that someone from another background was likely to bring, while the system itself—credits, grades, overall degree requirements—was so different from anything that Thubron was used to that an efficient use of his potential contribution was rendered almost impossible. Members of the Illinois faculty found Thubron, and Dalwood before him, abrasive personalities. "Harry did some outrageous things, but I felt that it was a good thing." Thubron refused to give grades, or he gave everyone A's. He had rebelled even against the much looser organizational requirements of the English art school so it was not surprising that he was unwilling to go along with the tight bureaucratic procedures at Illinois. He is remembered as
having surprised both students and faculty with his use of "found" objects (collage was a favorite medium for his own work). Typically, just as later in Spain he would use the detritus of the rural environment in which he was working as his medium of expression and communication, so in Illinois he used cornstalks and corn leaves.

His work at Urbana was chiefly with the foundation studies department and with graduate fine art students.

There we dealt with systems ... perhaps the best thing we've ever done was the machine course there--the most complex and beautiful machine course ... The woodwork we did there, the constructive woodwork, was better than anything we did at Leeds or at Lancaster. The painting was very proficient ... based on optics and color and movement and systems.

The plates show foundation year systems work which is energetic and lively, influenced perhaps by similar work at the Bauhaus or Ulm but with an emphasis on "systems," the impetus for which may well have come from Thubron's work at Barry in the previous year with Kenneth and Mary Martin.

With the graduate students things were not so easy. Both Thubron and his wife (she was doing some teaching also) felt that students were coming to graduate school all having done fairly similar courses in their previous universities, and with no very clear idea of what they now wanted to accomplish. Thubron found their decoration of the cubicles in which they worked more interesting than their paintings, a viewpoint which accords closely with his emphasis on the importance of the intuitive and the sub-conscious in the
making of art.

Thubron gave some talks and workshops in other art departments during the 1965-66 academic year, often showing the Drawing with the figure film. ¹⁹

It was apparent in talking to Illinois faculty members who had been in the department that year that nothing of Thubron's previous reputation had been known to them. (A similar ignorance of the status of the Illinois art department would have been found in faculty members of English art departments.) These faculty members valued the foreign input without seeing anything fundamentally new or important about it. They rather resented the fact that, while Hudson, Dalwood and Thubron had all been invited to teach at Illinois, no reciprocal invitations to teach at Leeds or other English art schools were forthcoming.

Leicester

On returning from Illinois Thubron took up a position as Head of Painting at the Leicester College of Art and remained there until 1968.

There were important connections between Leeds and Leicester. E.E. Pullee, the Principal at Leicester, had been the Principal at Leeds when Thubron was appointed to his position there. He moved to Leicester in 1955 and in 1959 appointed Tom Hudson to organize a foundation course there. John Wood describes Pullee as "a likeable old ruffian, but his art was absolutely conventional and he was
happy, completely happy, with it so," but Pullee must be given some credit for being willing to employ these innovative but often creatively disruptive new teachers.

Thubron found his colleagues, especially the Head of Fine Art, unsympathetic to his ideas. The effects of Hudson's organization and teaching in the college had been, in his view, disastrous. He found some of the work he did with students (especially that dealing with aesthetic uses of light) interesting and productive, but he found little opportunity to develop his educational ideas in this setting. His methods appeared to work best when he was in charge of a team of like-minded but individually highly creative artist/teachers; he found it difficult to be in a situation where conflicting ideas were being presented to students. Unlike Hudson or Atkinson, he needed other people to assist him in the day-to-day organizing of courses, and he needed administrative support. Such support was not strong enough at Leicester to allow him to change the curriculum substantially and his contribution was often in conflict with that of other members of the faculty. "It really didn't work [in Leicester] ... because there were some pretty strong in-fighters there, looking at their career prospects and with an entrenched view of what art ought to be."22

Spain

In 1968 Thubron received an Arts Council grant which
allowed him to continue with his own work in painting and collage. Through the Hon. Alistair Boyd (now Lord Kilmarnock) he and his wife had begun to form a connection with an International School in Spain. At first this had consisted of teaching short courses in the summer but in 1968 they went to work in this school on a more formal and full-time basis.

The school was situated in Ronda in Andalucia. It had been set up chiefly to teach languages to students of eighteen to twenty-five, often as a preliminary to entering the Diplomatic service. It also attracted other students, both English and American, who either disliked or did not fit easily into more conventional educational institutions.

The setting was a splendid one—the fifteenth century Moorish Palacio de Mondragan. Elma Thubron taught both art history and some studio work while Thubron himself taught studio and worked on his wooden low-relief sculptures and assemblages. The physical setting, both natural and architectural, suited him, and the teaching was stimulating and not overly demanding. Half of the students, he says, were drop-outs; "The parents would say 'you're not doing much at Eton,' and pack them off to Spain ... to learn Spanish [and] to do O levels or A levels."23

Jamaica

In 1969, through Lilian Somerville, Thubron was invited to take the position of Director of Studies in the
Fine Art area at the Jamaica School of Art in Kingston. Both Thubron and his wife taught full-time at the school. The students were, on the whole, hard-working and deeply involved in the new range of studies that the Thubrons instituted, and this in spite of the fact that social conditions in the city and in the rest of the island made their attendance financially difficult with a consequent high rate of absenteeism. The work was, nevertheless, of high quality, with the most obvious influence from modern art being that of Matisse, especially the Matisse of the late paper cut-outs.

In a discussion with Alex Graddusov Thubron elaborated on his conception of art education, with some attempt to link that conception with his current Jamaican experience. The notion of "working from within oneself" reappears strongly. He sees the twentieth century artist as having been given important new freedoms, freedom to enquire and to make without recourse to conventional stereotypes, a freedom which would inevitably lead to more creative efforts, though not necessarily to "art." He is adamant that "style" is no longer important, and talks approvingly of "unrecognized Rastafarian [sculpture]" which he sees as African-based but as having succeeded in "breaking away from the African to a new, more genuine statement."

The work illustrated does show quite distinct characteristics from that done at Leeds, Lancaster or
Illinois; there are obvious African influences but the chief emphases are still on "systems" and "languages"--"games" Thubron calls them--which he used as "grids of possibilities" upon which and within which individual inner potentialities could emerge and find expression. There are some "surreal" elements not encountered previously; these may be attributed to the Thubron's recognition of the different cultural and racial backgrounds of the students. Some of the work, in Thubrons' view, "owed much to the fact that the carver's forebears, art-wise, probably were African. It owes a hell of a lot to a dream world--which they would say was a real world--of Ethiopia, as a stimulus."

Living conditions for the Thubron family were not easy; cost of living was high and street crime rampant. Although the initial contract had been for two years they decided against continuing for the second year and returned to England.

From 1971 until 1982 Thubron taught part-time at Goldsmiths College in London. Deteriorating health and eyesight made these years difficult for both his teaching and his own art work, but he has continued to make collages and prints, to exhibit these occasionally and to participate within the past year in a portfolio of prints being produced in London.
Atkinson and Hudson—later developments

Eric [Ricky] Atkinson had been one of Thubron's students at the West Hartlepool School of Art. From that school he had gone on to post-graduate study at the Royal Academy Schools in London. On completing his Diploma in Fine Art there, in 1956, he was appointed by Thubron to a position at the Leeds College of Art.

Prior to Leeds, Atkinson's painting consisted chiefly of landscapes based on the docks and other industrial areas of Sunderland and West Hartlepool. He was especially fascinated by the repetitive patterns of silhouetted cranes against the grey mists of these harbor towns. The paintings were small-scaled, sensitive and emphasized the formal attributes of the subject matter while being still concerned with the evocation of particular space and atmosphere.

Atkinson's role at Leeds had a number of facets. He was given a good deal of responsibility for ensuring that the younger students passed the Intermediate examination. He had an unofficial liason role with the members of the faculty who had been in Leeds prior to Thubron's arrival. His easygoing personality and general articulateness allowed him to play a substantial part in helping to avoid conflict and in convincing people, both inside and outside the college, of the merits of the new regime. People liked him; his charm influenced many of the more conservative teachers to at least give the new system a chance, and his
organizational skills and his capacity for working "with" rather than "against" people influenced many people including Eric Taylor, by then Principal of the College, and Cyril Cross, the Vice-Principal.

When Thubron left for Lancaster in 1964 Atkinson was appointed Head of Fine Art in his place and he continued in that position until he took up a post as Head of Applied Arts in the Fanshaw College of Applied Arts and Technology in London, Ontario in 1969. He is now Dean of Applied Arts in that school, a school he modeled after his Leeds experience and which in many ways retains a quality and atmosphere closely related to Leeds in the sixties. During the first year or two of his tenure he brought some faculty members from Leeds as well as two invaluable technical assistants.

The prospectus of the school reveals a "philosophy" of art education close in spirit to the Leeds of the Thubron era.

The studio is the place where art students experiment with innovative concepts and new materials. It is a growth experience [through] which, whether painting or printmaking, the artist discovers himself though "the activity of making."26

"While I was Head of the Fine Art department at Leeds," he writes, "a continuous reassessment of the courses enabled us to provide a visual education in which the process was more important than the end result."27 He talks of the Leeds college as being involved with a "Visual Basic
Research Unit to enable the student to fully explore plastic and pedagogical possibilities ... Explorations were of a scientific and analytical nature yet dealt with the instinctive mark and with primary sensations." He attributes much of Leeds' success to Herbert Read's support and, certainly, there are echoes of Read in these quotations. In common with Hudson, Atkinson is concerned to show that art schools are not there just to produce art or artists; "The education of the individual is far more important," but, apart from vague references to "personal discovery" and to the developing of "individual potential" that notion of the education of the individual is left largely unexplained.

Allowing that there remain unsolved difficulties in the definitions of fine art and applied art, the Fanshawe school does appear to offer a more integrated approach to art and design education than did Leeds in the sixties. Atkinson has gathered around him a team of competent artists, designers and technicians and there is evidence that, while the development by students of a proclaimed "creative attitude towards their work, themselves and their lives," (see the later criticism of this view) is seen as the most important objective in the work of the college, Atkinson has recognized that "creative attitudes" do not exist unaffected by knowledge, skill and technical expertise—all of these are needed if attitudes are to be
bodied forth in worthwhile careers or are to be made concrete in objects of practical or aesthetic worth.

* * * * *

Hudson, now Dean of Art at the Emily Carr College of Art in Vancouver, has moved further away from the original ideas which inspired the work at Leeds, especially the ideas of Thubron himself. In Thistlewood's view, Hudson's ideas on art education lie closest to those of Herbert Read. While still at the Cardiff College of Art, Hudson had written:

> It is necessary in education to free people from the inhibiting aspect of formal technology--this can only be done by freeing the mind, by training in adaptability, simultaneity of thought and action, what might be called the technology of immediacy or instantaneous processes.

Hudson seemed always to have had this ambivalence of attitude to technology, formal or otherwise. Possibly he has resented the earlier association in people's minds with the "new machines," "new materials" aspects of basic course work. Since going to Cardiff his pronouncements reveal a concern to play down technology and technological expertise and to emphasize instead his psychological and philosophical aims.

From his earliest teaching days (John Wood describes his extra-curricular theatrical offerings at the Scarborough summer courses) Hudson has been interested in "performance." While teaching at Cardiff he had been able to get a theatre built within the art school and had his students combine
aspects of drama and of social and political comment with visual statements. These interests have continued in Canada. Rather than the typically English combination of "studio" and "complementary studies" (often an ill-digested mixture of art history, sociology and philosophy) Hudson has developed educational studies based on concrete experience—"making" rather than imagining, "construction" rather than expression—but with a wider scope than "fine art" or "design."
Notes

1 Thubron was, in fact, Head of Fine Arts only, but this assumption was a common one and was fostered by the publicity put out by Thubron and his immediate colleagues.


3 Ibid.

4 John Jones describes a visit to Quentin Bell's office at the time. Bell was then Professor of Art at Leeds University. He is the son of Clive Bell and had grown up in the Bloomsbury circles to which many Slade School painters were attached. With a note of horror in his voice, Bell asked Jones: "Do you know who's applying for the Reading job?--Harry Thubron!"


8 Dalwood, op. cit.

9 Thompson also taught with Thubron at the Leicester College of Art and later, when he was Dean of Fine Art at Goldsmiths College, employed Thubron in a part-time capacity.


12 Ibid.

13 John Wood, in his taped discussion with Peter Sinclair, confirms the existence of such dislike and disapproval influential quarters.
and a national institute of art in Kingston.


27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

Although Thubron sees his work in art education as a single-minded and consistent attempt to force a particular radical change on English higher art education, and therefore sees his teaching at Sunderland, Leeds, Lancaster, Illinois, Leicester, Jamaica, and Spain, and in all the various short courses and workshops, as all contributory to that attempt, the period he spent in Leeds seems both the most radical and the most influential portion of his teaching career. In accordance with his theories of art education, that, for example, no fixed course is desirable, the results achieved in the different institutions where he taught varied according to the needs of the students at that moment and to the specific educational and pedagogical circumstances. The illustrations reveal both something of these differences and also some evidence of changing interests on Thubron's part. At different periods in his teaching career he has found the work of certain artists especially heuristic and cogent. From a major early reliance on the work of Mondrian and Klee, he was successively strongly influenced by Theo van Doesburg,
Nicholas de Stael, Kurt Schwitters, and by the late work of Henri Matisse. However, the major tenets of his teaching and educational philosophy remained constant and are best revealed in his work at the Leeds College of Art.

The Leeds enterprise—virtually the total re-forming and re-structuring of a large college of art—was, on the face of it, a massive and immensely complicated task, requiring new theoretical stances, new organizational structures, new teaching strategies, new teacher/student relationships, new connections with the worlds of commerce and industry outside the school of art, new teacher to teacher relationships, and new connections with the educational authorities which controlled and governed the college. People at different levels, from that of student and teacher to that of college Principal or Chief Education Officer, had to be convinced of the merits of the enterprise and of its contribution and likely success; without the co-operation of staff and students, administrators and businessmen, without an influx of money, new staff and of enthusiastic students, the initiatives would have been stifled and the movement still-born. For there to be any chance of success most of the students, staff and administrators involved had, within a rather short time, to be convinced that they were involved with a major change of direction which merited their support. That success was achieved, though the period of success was not a long one,
and I would argue that the gains made then were neither sustained nor fully developed.

Why did this movement succeed where others failed? Why did this change happen, and produce its range of extensions, modifications and, eventually, corruptions, where the Olive Sullivan courses at Manchester, for example, and even the comparatively long-running course at the Central School, either succumbed after a brief flowering or stayed within the confines of a particular school and within the teaching methods of a small group of teacher/artists?

Some reasons have already been discussed: the presence of John Wood as a fairly powerful figure in the hierarchy of the Education Office; the support of the Principal of the College, Eric Taylor, even though that support was given only grudgingly in the beginning; the "ripeness" of the situation for change—the college had been for quite a long period in a rather static state—and the post-war hopes and desires for reconstruction and socially progressive development. These, or similar conditions, must have existed in many other schools or colleges of art throughout the country, yet in none of them did comparable changes take place. It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that the presence of one particular personality—namely Thubron—was the factor which, more than any other, brought about successful radical change. The kind of change that was brought about depended on his
educational philosophy, and that philosophy was, in turn, dependent on his particular views about art and about himself as an artist.

Thubron as an artist

Although Thubron’s own art work, mostly painting, collage and assemblage, is known to his fellow artists in England, it has never gained him the kind of reputation attained by some of his colleagues involved in the development we have been considering. Artists such as Alan Davie, Terry Frost and Hubert Dalwood, who participated in the teaching at Leeds, all have at least a national reputation—in Davie’s case, an international reputation also. The same is not true of Thubron: “Relatively few of the many who have worked with him as students and colleagues would have been aware of his unceasing activity, painting, assembling and constructing.” It was not wholly, as is often the case, that the energy that would normally have gone into his own artistic activity was instead devoted to his reconstructive work in art education; the making of art objects was, as Ms. Drew writes, "unceasing," although one could well suppose that greater developments would have taken place if the work in art educational reform had not been pursued so energetically. But perhaps not; there was, and is, in Thubron's case, an apparently necessary connection, or set of connections, between the "private" art work and the public art endeavors. One could speculate
about the direction and progress of the work if, say, a private income had enabled Thubron to work at it without the "interference" of his teaching duties, but there was never the feeling among those who know him that the teaching and the painting were separate activities; the ideas discovered in the artistic processes of selection, collage and assemblage spun off immediately into the teaching; the pedagogical discussions with Ehrenzweig or Davie and the recognition of developing events in student working fed back directly into the private works of art.

Many of these works of art arose from activities identical to those he recommended to students, especially those on short courses. At Bishops Stortford, for example, a student described "working in very decrepit old stables full of junk, rotting wood, bits of old matting."² The students were encouraged to select from this material which lay abandoned all around them, and Thubron too describes walking along lanes near his school in Spain, picking up pieces of wood weathered in a farmyard in which he had "recognized" just the right qualities for a current assemblage. "For himself," writes Shuttleworth, "in his own work, what he's sought has always been somewhere on the other side of what he's already discovered."³ This is also a constant theme in his teaching; reaching beyond the already acquired, reaching beyond knowledge in a blind instinctive fashion. It is a process which requires
deliberate and conscious rejection of that acquired knowledge and its substitution by an openness to knowledge still unknown and beyond easy acquisition. "Very often the artist is on to it long before the scientist, but he's got to be properly thick ... go look for it as an artist, not as a theorist. He must trust the evidence of his own eyes."  

"His implication," writes Norbert Lynton, "is that beauty surrounds us, that everything is valuable, and that all we need to do is to open our eyes." To use the word "beauty" when talking about an artist and art teacher apparently devoted to the destruction of old aesthetic concepts of "art as beauty" may seem willful if not absurd, but Lynton is adamant; "It seems almost improper to speak of beauty in connection with art these days, but Thubron's reliefs and free-standing objects are certainly beautiful." The work is not, of course, beautiful in any conventional sense, and no one insensitive to twentieth century art would so label it; the beauty arises from Thubron's unique ability to take impersonal materials like spun metal, resin and weathered wood and make something both personal and with an unexpected vividness of life and expression. As with most abstract art the difficult question to answer is why these assemblages of found material, often little altered or modified--just put together--are more than merely decorative. Martin Shuttleworth, in an introduction to a retrospective Thubron
exhibition in 1976, suggests that it may be an impossible question to answer, or a question that should not be asked:

Thubron has each time let his eyes tell him what to do, worked away with his head, heart and hands till the eyes were satisfied: satisfied because his sense of language was satisfied ... and what's a sense of language? Something fathomable or unfathomable? reducible into other terms? Pictures are for leaving hanging, so are certain questions.

So the pictures can not be "explained" except perhaps in metaphorical terms and with a necessary acceptance of what Davie called "faith in the intuition which 'knows' without knowledge."8

There is a "faith" involved in Thubron's own art activities which is reflected in or paralleled in his actions as an art teacher. In a letter he writes about "rubbish, shaped by the passing of people, on foot, mule or by lorry, shapes which man's ingenuity could not fashion, unified by a covering of blond dust."9 Once again, the stress on "discovery," on "recognition," on the "rightness" of qualities which have happened "by accident," whatever that might mean. It is an "Oriental" attitude which must have had its roots in Thubron's early interest in Tantra art and which was later reinforced by the upsurge of interest in Zen and in those aspects of Abstract Expressionist painting attributable to Zen Buddhist ideas.

It is also, in twentieth century terms, a "modern" attitude--one which vigorously, almost contemptuously, casts off the trappings of Renaissance or academic ideas; which
sees in collage or assemblage a tradition to displace the outworn traditions of "painting" and "sculpture." Schwitters, for instance, was not only an influence; he was seen as a quintessentially "contemporary" artist who had recognized in the detritus of our civilization its most characteristic aspects, that is, had seen our civilization characterized by its least civilized, least articulated products.

Even paint, and many of the works of the fifties and early sixties were paintings, though often with collaged elements, is used less to cover a surface with a particular tone or color than as a material which, often applied thickly and brutally, stands just for itself—a discrete element just like the torn ticket, the brass hub or the barrel stave. In his later work in Spain, as shown in the illustration, Thubron returned to a tradition closer to classical sculpture: working with a Spanish craftsman in wood and stone, he produced a series of "woods," carved, shaped, still in low relief, where the raw material has been transformed to fit some image in the artist's mind first translated into a pencil or charcoal sketch. Here, there is a greater degree of idiosyncractic imposition of mental image on relatively neutral material, though the innate and "natural" qualities of the wood are still respected.

Thubron the artist and Thubron the teacher share concern for the intimate qualities of materials, respect for
individual intuition, reliance on processes of organization not wholly worked out and adaptable to varying circumstances, rejection of old-fashioned concepts of art and, with that, a conscious desire to be "modern"—eulogizing the twentieth century while selecting only those aspects of the twentieth century which fitted with certain quite specific ideas about art. Technology, for example, was embraced, but only in so far as technological processes could be used to serve the ends of art. No one in the circle, with the possible exception of Tom Hudson, was willing to see that technological advancement carried with it social and political implications, some of which were inimical to the status and position of the individual artist as they conceived him.

Pasmore and Hamilton, too, saw their own work as closely bound to their teaching, but Thubron was unsympathetic to the way in which Pasmore especially related his work to that of his students. "Victor had everything looking like Victors ... it helped him enormously in his work." Was part of the difficulty that Pasmore, and to a lesser extent Hamilton also, received recognition as artists that Thubron quite signally failed to do? Lynton suggests some reasons for that failure:

[His] constructions and collages were always done slowly, delicately—never run-of-the-mill stuff. But there was no easy, consistent, identifiable style or message which the critics could seize on and write about—an all-white painting next to a turned brass piece. [He was] not given to the kind of social
behavior which might have endeared him to critics or administrators.
Notes


4. Thubron, H. Quoted by Shuttleworth, M., op. cit.


6. Ibid.

7. Shuttleworth, op. cit.


CHAPTER IX
The Thubron Contribution

Harry Thubron's work, at Leeds and in other art departments, was just one example—and, indeed, a late example—of the turning away from so-called "academic" training in art. That academic training, though now with little direct connection to the work of the contemporary artist, lingered on well into the twentieth century. I remember my high school art teacher in 1940 describing to me his experience as a student at the Edinburgh College of Art in the twenties. He showed me drawings of an arm and of a male torso; each had taken more than three months to complete to the satisfaction of his instructor. His task had been to imitate as closely and reverentially as possible every tiny variation of light and tonal value on the arm or torso set in precisely that position and that lighting. This was surely a perversion of the teaching of the seventeenth and eighteenth century French academy, but such perversions had a still powerful influence up to and, as we have seen, even beyond the period of the second World War. That impure academicism proved astonishingly resilient and was able, in its fashion, to digest many of the most
disruptive modern art movements. That digestion was less an accommodation to new subject matter—life drawing, antique drawing and the study of perspective continued—as a transfer to contemporary art modes of a debased academic attitude; Ehrenzweig writes of "academic art teachers ... happily teaching a kind of post-cubism."\(^1\) Basic design teaching in the post-war English art schools suffered from much the same treatment. The fundamental idea of a foundation course had been worked out in some detail in the Weimar Bauhaus. That idea included the formulation of a set of elements, principles and laws which appeared to offer permanence, stability, and regularity to the beginning teaching of the intending artist or designer. It was not difficult for many teachers in English art schools to adopt these and to teach them in an authoritarian manner, finding in them a recipe for teaching contemporary, that is abstract, art.\(^2\)

Thubron, while enormously influenced by the work of the Bauhaus and of Paul Klee, fought against that rigidification and inflexibility. For him the new movement was to be characterized by its lack of repetition, by its avoidance of the cliche, by the institutionalizing of continuous change. In this he differed from VictorPasmore whose aim always seemed to be the construction of a course which would, in spite of its encouragement of creative attitudes, have a proven structure and some permanent
features. The history of the Western art academy shows similar divergencies. When these academies were young and innovative such subject matters as anatomy or perspective must have possessed a freshness and vigour valuable and significant in the education of the young artist. Only with their constant repetition, refinement and codification during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did they become stultifying influences.\(^3\)

With the help of a number of excellent teachers as colleagues and with the support of Ehrenzweig's elaboration of a theoretical basis for his pedagogical practices, Thubron's work, at Leeds and in other schools, showed changing features and changing emphases. Some root principles persisted but the attitude of flexibility and of necessary revision was never abandoned.

1. The process of change is one of the themes which assume particular significance in a consideration of Thubron's contribution. The period of his most productive efforts in art education encompassed a time of rapid social, political and economic change in England; his views on art education stressed the changes from previous sets of ideas and methods; within his teaching the notion of change was central—projects were often set up on a series of discontinuous stages, each stage dependent on but radically differing from its predecessor.

2. Thubron was concerned with language, not just the
language of abstract art but with the whole idea that visual art may be looked upon as a language, that visual art is language-like, that there is merit in using the notion of art as language as one of the chief bases for teaching art.

3. His work evolved in a politically volatile time. Was there a political dimension to that work? The Bauhaus, for example, arose, flourished and died in a rapidly changing political situation which rather dramatically affected the results. The teaching there had political ramifications; Gropius saw the Bauhaus as leading social and political, as well as aesthetic developments; the art of the Bauhaus was to be a powerful source of philosophical ideas and of social change.

Some elaboration of these three ideas—change, language, and political effects—may retrospectively aid in assessing and understanding Thubron's role and the extent of his contribution.

Change—art, science, and art education

Do different disciplines change in the same way? Is the concept of change sufficiently unitary for a general clarification of processes of change to be applicable alike to art, science, and art education? Is there sufficient similarity in the ways in which a new art style replaces an old one to the ways in which one scientific "paradigm" is replaced by another, for the kind of explanation offered, for example, by Kuhn and Barnes to be useful here?
Kuhn argues that change in science--revolutionary change--is a change in the researcher's view of the scientific enterprise itself and not merely a development forced on the scientist by the uncovering of new phenomena or by the results of new experiments. Science changes radically as the scientist views differently the nature of scientific evidence, the relationships between theory and practice, the role of observation and participation, and, in this century particularly, the nature of reality itself. In the place of a view of science as exploration of an ultimately objective reality waiting to be discovered by the researcher, Kuhn puts diverse views of the present scientific enterprise as a way, but only one way, in which the world of science may be organized.

During the Renaissance there had been close relationships between artistic and scientific change. Sometimes the artists too were scientists and both disciplines shared in the excitement of new forms of enquiry. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while the structure and philosophical foundations of the disciplines had grown apart, both artists and scientists began to be affected by radically different views of their relationship to the external world. For the artist, the concept of the "innocent eye," closely paralleling the notion of the scientist's view of himself as the discoverer or uncoverer of already existent entities, phenomena, and
natural laws, was rejected in favor of systems of aesthetic structure—affected no doubt by the world external to the artist—which were primarily products of individual sensibility and creativity.

**Change in art**

What leads the artist or scientist to feel the need to modify a symbol scheme or to come up with a new scheme? Why might a painter or scientific researcher feel discontent with the way he/she presently works, and wish to change to another? What leads to the attempts to break away from present styles and methods and replace them with something completely different?

No simple answer is likely to be satisfactory. Afflicted with some feeling of general dissatisfaction with earlier or current symbol schemes or symbol systems new possibilities are erected, new alternatives proposed. The present system is no longer adequate; the explanations it provides are no longer convincing; the predictions that stem from it fail; the representations created by it seem no longer to capture the essential element; the solutions found by the system's procedures are too complex, or do not appear to cover the required ground; the system is too unsystematic, too rough, or, alternatively, that it is too systematic, too neat, removes too many of the rough edges; that observed or understood similarities between phenomena are not covered by the system, or are not well enough
covered; that a desire is felt to integrate significant, dominant symbol systems that already exist in the culture (perhaps now seen as aspects of a further, more comprehensive symbol system); that a present perspective begins to seem disordered, chaotic; that we feel the need for greater economy. Added to these specific reasons is the more general one that our culture primes us to expect and to strive for more rightness, more security, more truth, more happiness.

Given these perceived restrictions and inadequacies in the world, what kinds of things will enable us to see the world differently, that is, enable us to devise new aesthetic and scientific schemes which are less prone to the faults and the difficulties just listed?

1. When Cezanne became dissatisfied with the schemas of the Impressionists--their attempts to organize their world through the organization of "bits" of reflected light, their use of ephemeral and shifting patterns in an attempt to capture the fluidity and transitoriness of perception, to suggest within the stability of the picture frame something of the movement and impermanence of our visual experience--he moved to find or to invent a new structural scheme by taking the "units" of Impressionism and structuring them anew. The process was one of decomposition of the Impressionist schema into its constituent parts, the acceptance of only some of them (chiefly the separate
color/touch sensation and the heightened color schemes) and their reconstitution according to some aspects of some much older schemas. From Poussin and, in general, the art of the old masters, he found ways of recomposing the atomic and shifting elements of Impressionism into forms which satisfied his desire for permanence, stability, and universality.

When Seurat, also, wished to make something more permanent of Impressionism, he moved outside the "frame of reference" of the visual art of his time and, by using the work of Chevreul directly and much other work of his contemporaries in science less directly, re-composed and re-ordered visual phenomena on his way to a new personal synthesis.

Paul Klee, as an alternative to attempts to copy or imitate the world, tried to go beyond the visible world to its underlying principles of growth and structure. Once found, these principles could be used from a personal, even an idiosyncratic viewpoint, to create an alternate world.

In all these cases principles of innovation are to be seen. Artists are going through processes of decomposing of accepted schemes, of re-ordering the elements revealed and of re-composing these into new schemes seen to be, in some ways, more relevant or more appropriate for their purposes.

2. Constable, perhaps the first truly modern artist, who saw painting as "[a science] of which pictures are the
experiments, 5 took over many of the elements of previous pictorial schemes, but found it necessary both to think, as the quotation suggests, of the artist as a different kind of person than previously he had been, and to weigh differently some of the elements he was still prepared to accept. Color was weighted more strongly; a certain freedom of composition was favored over stricter classical rules; direct observation of nature was stressed. The Impressionists, too, emphasized color and de-emphasized tonal values, much as the Venetians had done in the eighteenth century. Kandinsky de-emphasized literary content and gave greater weight to the formal aspects of paintings conceived of as abstract compositions. A new weighting is a way of forming a new scheme.

3. The Cubists used processes of deletion and supplementation to arrive at their new artistic synthesis. Removed was the concept of the figure or still-life or landscape viewed from a fixed viewpoint; discarded was the necessity to find transitional tones of subtlety and complexity between major areas of tonal change; added were multiple viewpoints and multiple perspectives; imposed were processes of fragmenting and reassembling.

4. Not only do artists give different weight to different elements, and order the elements of their art differently, they also use distinctive and personal methods of deformation and distortion. When Modigliani or El Greco
stretch and elongate figures and their surroundings, when Picasso in his "Greek" period evolved a kind of heavy-limbed, heavy-breasted figure type, when Golub suggests significance with massive weight and limited detail, when Henry Moore distorts the figure to reveal its elemental connection with the rock and cliff structures of Yorkshire, processes of distortion in the service of new schemata are taking place.

These are but some of the ways in which artists create new worlds, "a new world which is the work of art. Each work originates just as does the cosmos--through catastrophes which, out of the chaotic din of instruments ultimately create a symphony, the music of the spheres. The creation of works of art is the creation of the world." So, somewhat grandiloquently, writes Kandinsky on innovation.  

The adoption of a new "frame of reference" has been noted. It is worth emphasizing how often that new frame is borrowed from another world, another discipline. Very often, the creation of a new vision comes, as Kandinsky puts it, from "a thundering collision of different worlds." As Seurat used the viewpoints of Goethe and Chevreul, so have other artists looked to optics, to psychology, to politics, to biology, to sociology, either for new material or, more often, for a new viewpoint from which old material and old methods might be reassessed. Malevitch writes that "nothing in the objective world is as serene and unshakeable as it
appears to our conscious minds. We should accept nothing as pre-determined—as constituted for eternity. Every firmly established familiar thing can be shifted about and brought under a new and, primarily, unfamiliar order.” It is this phenomenon, more than any other, which leads us to view each epoch as characterized by a Zeitgeist, or at least as having some important shared characteristics in different media and across different disciplines.

Sometimes the new emerges from, almost, total rejection. Alan Davie, teaching in England in the Fifties, and very much basing his teaching on his own practices as an "Abstract Expressionist" painter, would have his students make a mark on a piece of paper, decide on the next appropriate mark—and then do the exact opposite. "I always encourage the use of irrational or crazy ideas and the result of intuitive action will always be distinct and positive." That doing of the contrary for the sake of its surprise value, or just as a means of breaking down the conventional response, is one obvious way of seeking the innocent eye, the new approach. To work out of a method untried and therefore unpredictable is a way of generating unorthodoxies, some of which might well be heuristic.

The development of new technical resources can lead to new visions. The artist's first use of a vacuum-former—to make art rather than picnic trays—the availability of styrofoam as an alternative to wax for the bronze caster,
the use by the contemporary artist of the bulldozer and the crane, the use of plastics and new alloys, all of these are likely, if not in the beginning at least after a period of adaptation, to lead to new forms, new conceptions of artistic possibilities, new boundaries of the aesthetic. We have seen how Hudson's use of the vacuum-former, of resins, of new processes of enameling, contributed to new aesthetic developments at Leeds.

Neither should one neglect the effects of chance; not only the rational use of the irrational or the accidental as in the works of Cage or Duchamp or in the methods of some Systems artists, but also the truly accidental--what might reasonably be called the production of "mutations," some of which at least provide the artist with a new stock of possibilities. In these cases the attempt to find something new, to look with an innocent eye, becomes rather an attempt to look with an ultra-sensitive eye, an eye which is able to pick out from the naturally generated randomness of the artist's ways of working these few aberrations which appear to have future usefulness. One definition of the innocent eye might be that openness to random experience, that ability to work and observe not knowing what new weightings, orderings, deformation and so on might arise, that flexibility and resistance to closure which ensures that accidents are seen as not necessarily unproductive.

Quotation from some other symbol scheme within the
visual arts, or even from some scheme outside the arts, may aid the development of a new scheme. Consider the following examples:

1. Take a seventeenth century Dutch flower painting: A fly is painted resting on one of the flower petals. The painting is a "realistic" painting, that is, it sets out to depict a vase of flowers on a shiny wooden table with as much sense of the quality of visual experience as the painter's abilities allow. But the painting is housed in a heavy gold frame and is hung on the wall, and there is no attempt by the artist to fool anyone into believing that one is seeing anything other than a painting of flowers in a vase on a table; the painting is carried out in a consistent style which any viewer of the painting would be familiar with and would readily accept. The fly, on the other hand, is meant to "fool the eye," is meant to deceive the viewer into thinking that the fly comes from another visual system--the system of ordinary visual perception; the fly is painted lit in such a way as to appear not to belong to the painting system--the fly casts a shadow on the surface of the painting.

2. A Rauschenberg "combine" or "assemblage" often includes not only paint on canvas but also different materials--cloth, plastic, newspapers--glued to the canvas. Others go further and have spaces cutout of the canvas in which, for example, a row of Coke bottles is set. In one
the space is occupied by an old radio: the radio is turned on, and music or speech can be heard, that is, quoted within the work of visual arts.

Given these ways in which new possibilities might arise, we also need criteria for evaluating the new, in our own work and in that of others. The forming or newly formed scheme might be worth pursuing, or worth valuing, on the basis

1. that it seems to better fit, or perhaps more clearly define the differences between, relationships that hold between the groups that make up society, or between individuals and the institutions of society, or between one individual and another.

2. that it seems to better fit some new sense of the relationships between the past and the present, that is, fits better with some sense of tradition.

3. that it better fits a new conception of the future.

4. that it seems to fit into a perceived pattern of schemes, that is, fits between recognized patterns of old sequential schemes and projected future schemes.

5. that it better reflects a new position of the artist in society.

6. that it better removes or deals with perceived anomalies in the given data; in the particular case of art, that it better allows the artist to deal with needs not able
to be coped with under existing schemes.

But these are just examples. Depending on the kind of symbol system we use, criteria will have to be found to fit them.

The degree to which any criterion is satisfied is another matter. No numerical measure is likely to be possible. We will be flung back on levels of economy, simplicity, coherence, as such concepts can be found to apply to the criterion in question. For each symbol system applications will be different: what we would take as economy of expression in a Mozart symphony will not be the same as what we take to be economy of expression in a piece by Boulez; in the one case, a delicacy of melodic line and clear simple harmonies; in the other, the isolation of single notes surrounded by their envelope of silence and subtle harmonics. So, too, with all and any other applications of criteria.

**Change in science**

The artist tries to invent or discover methods of image production and transformation which, according to one or some of the general schemes for change outlined above, fit better his conception of a contemporary view of the world. The scientist too, though adhering more closely than the artist to roots in "fact" or "reality," revises the scientific enterprise to account more adequately for the world as it is revealed to him.
Kuhn argues that the normal work of the scientist is encompassed by a framework which "defines a coherent research tradition. This research tradition is controlled by sets of presuppositions--both conceptual and methodological--which find their expression "in the 'standard' examples through which students learn the prevailing theories of the field." These examples set the norms for what constitutes "good" science; set out for the student not only what he is expected to do as a scientist but also what kinds of questions are scientific questions and can therefore be raised legitimately in a scientific context; and what kinds of answers would be acceptable. There are paradigmatic examples of these which are easily brought to the student's attention and which, not only by overt teaching but also by a rather subtle and pervasive presence, define for the student of science the limits within which his work will take place. Additionally, the student has set before him examples of established scientists at work--the ways in which they work, the "network of commitments, conceptual, theoretical, instrumental and methodological" which informs their work and act as an initiation for the student into the practice of science. In these ways the embryonic scientist is inducted into the profession. Some of the concepts which form the basis described do stress the need for the scientist to be open to new experience, to be willing to
abandon old patterns of thought if his observations or experimental results are to reveal something new, but his early indoctrination into the accepted modes is likely, in all but the rare cases of genius, to put limitations both on what is seen and on what interpretations are made.

The current paradigm is, in Kuhn's view, highly resistant to change, and when change does occur it tends to occur "all at once" and not "step at a time, forced by logic and neutral experience."12 Practitioners of the discipline are not gradually convinced but are "converted" to the radically new point of view. Kuhn writes that

[Each revolution] necessitated the community's rejection of one time-honoured scientific theory in favor of another incompatible with it. Each produced a consequent shift in the problems available for scientific scrutiny and in the standards by which the profession determined what should count as an admissible problem or a legitimate problem solution. And each transformed the scientific imagination in ways that we shall ultimately need to describe as a transformation of the world within which scientific work was done.13

Kuhn describes a major change in science as a "Gestalt switch;" small changes tend to be resisted until the evidence for a quite new set of approaches becomes so overwhelming that a sufficient number of important scientific researchers is convinced of the "truth" and efficacy of the new model and then, quite suddenly, the old perspectives are abandoned and the new one adopted. In science, as in the arts and in art education, the conversion of some important or particularly vocal or charismatic
practitioner is likely to produce a "band wagon" effect, with large numbers of previously indecisive workers in the field finding the conversion of the leading figures a convincing reason for dropping their objections; doubts are erased or stifled, misgivings forgotten or recognized now as an unnecessary clinging to the security of older methods.

Change in art education at Leeds

The changes that were instituted at Leeds by Thubron may also be usefully characterized as "paradigm shifts" or "conversions." Initially both Thubron and Hudson started their new projects and activities with a desire to organize some kind of defined program based on their feelings of disillusion and dissatisfaction with their own art education and with what were the current practices in higher art education. With these went a desire to accommodate within art education their beliefs in certain aspects of modern art.

Hudson: I went with great fervor to the Sunderland College of art [but] after only a short time I began to question what we were doing. I was one of the last people to do the old Ministry's Drawing examination. We went in with our sharpened H.B.s on Monday morning and got in front of the Discobolus and did a half size drawing from the antique. The whole academic prescription was that European tradition that began with the Caracci brothers in the High Renaissance.

Later he says about his meetings with Thubron in the early fifties:
I used to tape my thoughts and ideas and take them up with him. We talked about having to break things down into two and three dimensions. We were attacking the teaching situation generally--openly by
that time ... He wanted to carry out a whole development at Leeds based on neo-plasticism. Thubron confirms this point of view. He was trying to work out some evolutionary course of training; "re-thinking things from scratch for myself." Cyril Cross, too, saw as the only common factor among the exhibitors in the Developing process exhibition their dissatisfaction with current modes of teaching.

By their own account they were rejecting the bases of the teaching to which they had been subjected as students. Such ideas as "the academic tradition," or the "Renaissance" were anathema to them. To describe a drawing as "Italianate" became a derogatory dismissal. In place of these they embraced some principles of modern art, these being drawn chiefly from Cezanne, Mondrian, Klee, and from Constructivism, Suprematism, and Neo-Plasticism. "The link educationally," says Hudson, "was with the attempts by the Suprematists questioning what were the elements of art and [with] the idea that you could consider [art] as a language, and the idea that they explored some of the fundamental elements." They rejected, as Gropius at the Bauhaus had rejected, any suggestion that they were teaching a style. (It is surprising that neither Gropius nor Thubron recognized, first, that the work of their students fell within narrow stylistic limits and, second, that this was an inevitable result of the narrow range of projects used and of the philosophical basis of their teaching. They
apparently believed that no style was being taught, but it would have been a strong student indeed who could have avoided the stylistic implications of, for example, Gropius' stress on the ergonomic foundations of industrial design or Thubron's eulogies of neo-plasticism.)

Cyril Cross has this to say about the early years:

The basic course was never worked out in the theoretical sense as the Bauhaus was. I think that its contact with the Bauhaus was in its general assumption that art was a language, a kind of language with its own grammar. The other thing it shared with the Bauhaus was its fundamental enthusiasm, which swept everything before it. 19

From Thubron's point of view it was "one step in front of another;" 20 what he was doing possessed, in his view, built-in mechanisms of rectification and development. Through his teaching, and through the almost continuous discussion with his colleagues, it was to be, like Mao-tse-Tung's China, a society in perpetual, continuous revolution.

These ideas were not clearly formulated at the time. There was little articulation of the ideas by the chief protagonists. Most of the instigators of the new ideas contributed to the Developing process catalogue in 1959; some of Herbert Read's writings provided a general framework; mostly, though, the ideas spread by word of mouth, by descriptions of their experiences by students from Leeds and Newcastle, and from the short course at Scarborough and Barry, and through conversations and
discussions between instructors.

The paradigm to be replaced still exhibited considerable strength. Although the more radical European movements had affected such artists as Moore, Epstein, Hepworth and Nicholson, the art education establishment either ignored or gently derided what they saw as destructively revolutionary changes, and the effects of these movements in the art schools were minimal. The accepted paradigm, with the whole weight of the nineteenth century behind it, allowed most art educators to recognize but resist anomalies—to see them as no more than minor irritants which could be accommodated within or assimilated to the accepted range of permissible work, or set to one side as being of little consequence. Two chief views of the more adventurous art work of the period were possible; the more traditionally minded could see in the work of Matisse, Braque or Picasso those features which still connected them with the acceptable post-impressionist work of Cezanne or Bonnard; the more radically minded could recognize and assert that those features were the less important ones and that an artistic revolution, best exemplified perhaps by Picasso's Les demoiselles d'Avignon, had already begun. The discontent produced by growing numbers of art educators of this latter persuasion, who were also influenced by new psychological attitudes to art, finally made it inevitable that a dramatic new alternative would be sought, and that,
when such an alternative was seen to be operationally successful, a majority of teachers in art schools would be prepared to drop the old paradigm and welcome the new. The sense of crisis, which seems to be a necessary feature for a paradigm shift to take place, seemed to start soon after World War II (possibly, as we saw, as a consequence of radical changes in political attitudes), and the development of that sense of crisis proved to be the essential element which allowed teachers such as Pasmore, Thubron and Hudson to bring to bear on art education practices a quite new set of assumptions and presuppositions.

In Kuhn's view the paradigm shift encompasses not only a change of conceptual foundation but also a change in operations and a change in the criteria used in the judgment and evaluation of work produced. The new art educationists were recommending quite new ways in which this new material should be used, and new ways in which the results of this use would be categorized and evaluated. In Kuhn's account "observations" are argued to be paradigm-dependent. The closest equivalent in the visual arts was to argue that observations had now a different relationship to the art objects which, in some way or another, resulted from them. The accepted view of drawing, for example, as a faithful attempt to record existing visual characteristics of the world--characteristics which could be viewed as "real" attributes of the world--was minimized. Probably that view
had never been as important an aspect of the Renaissance artist's conceptual framework as the "Basic" course group believed, but in its place Thubron put a view of seeing as primarily a process, not of looking and observing with the consequent emotional response, but of analysis and enquiry. The analysis was to be of both visual and non-visual characteristics. The mathematical relationships between parts of a flower or plant; the dynamic relationships existing within a moving system—a mechanical toy, a machine, the spatial relationships which could be understood whether or not there was direct visual evidence for them—all of these were to be explored by the student in a spirit of, at first, disinterested enquiry. Not that the student was to remain uninvolved; as in the case of the scientist, the commitment itself had its emotional components, but he/she was constantly to recognize the universality of the discoveries and was abjured from wallowing in any "self-expressive" reactions. The artist's sensitivities were being called forth, extended, sharpened, but he/she was to be spared, or cajoled to avoid, excesses of self-indulgence of a Romantic kind; sensitivity was to be the sensitivity of both the machine and of heightened perception—sentimentality was to avoided at all costs.

The data of art education were now to be considerably extended. Not only the still life, landscape, figure or cityscape, but also the internal processes of the machine,
the philosophical viewpoints revealed in the anecdotes of Zen or visible in the actions of Indian dancers or in the patterns of the "raga," became data for the artist. The "momentary" and "fixed viewpoint" elements of normal drawing exercises were rejected; the still life drawing of a group seen from a fixed point and in a single moment in time was replaced by, for example, a series of drawings of, say, a number of chrysanthemums in an old, waterless paint pot—as the flowers slowly faded, dried and died the drawings revealed, sequentially, processes of aging and decay. In life drawing the use of multiple models, working on the floor among the models rather than at easels distanced from the models, working on large sheets of paper with broad brushes or thick sticks of charcoal ensured no fixed viewpoint or isolated frozen moments. The student participated, drew inside the actions of the moving figures; the cool, objective, uninvolved attitudes of the life room were replaced by engagement, participation, involvement, cooperation.

**Objectivity, drawing and versimilitude**

There are, of course, major differences between art and science which a too strict comparison between Kuhn's account of scientific change and the processes of artistic change might blur. Basic to Kuhn's arguments, and much discussed in criticisms of them, was a rejection of the "objectivity" of scientific truth; alternative scientific
paradigms are seen as incommensurable, as context dependent, as based on differing ideologies and not as progressive approximations to some ultimate reality. Science is not, Kuhn is saying, some unitary closed endeavor but something open to redefinition and restructuring. "Some old problems may be relegated to another science or declared entirely unscientific ... And as the problems change, so does the standard that distinguishes a real scientific solution from a mere metaphysical speculation, word game, or mathematical play."21

In spite of a quite dramatic change in artist's perception of the relationship of art to nature from around the eighteen seventies, art schools continued to base much of their systems for evaluating drawing on notions of "lifelikeness" or "verisimilitude." This view envisaged drawing, if not as merely copying then certainly as a replication in some way of visible characteristics of the object being rendered though art schools had already moved a long way from the photographic "stump" drawings of the period between the wars, when a student might well have spent six months on one figure study, in the process becoming more and more skillful at making accurate renderings of the finer and finer tonal gradations which he found in the figure in front of him and imitated to the best of his ability.
The notion of an "innocent eye," of a naive "direct" view of visual reality, has a long history in English art education. "The whole technical power of painting," writes Ruskin, "depends on our recovery of what might be called the innocence of the eye; that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify—as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight."\(^{22}\) It would not be difficult to find fault with Ruskin's statement: we know from many recent researches (especially those of Van Senden)\(^{23}\) that what the blind man sees when his sight is miraculously restored bears little relationship to Ruskin's description. We know too that childish (childlike?) perception, even if it is an innate endowment, and that too has been disputed, can hardly be characterized as innocent in the sense that Ruskin is using. Only at a late stage in childhood, if at all, is a boy or girl able to see beyond the predicated world of objects to the kind of world of object qualities and characteristics that "flat stains of colour" suggests. Gombrich has criticized the innocent eye concept as "demanding the impossible: The innocent eye is a myth,"\(^ {24}\) he writes, though he keeps returning to a conception of art as being, in some sense at least, an attempt to match an image with reality. If that were a valid conception, the innocent eye model would retain some appeal—what, other than an innocent eye, could recognize
the failure of an image to match reality, could see that the received schemata of representation failed to fit the world of observation? Even Goodman, though agreeing with Gombrich that there is no innocent eye ("the eye," he writes, "always comes ancient to its work") suggests that, all the same, an artist may often do well to strive for innocence of eye. There is some contradiction here, though one may recognize the usefulness to creativity of attempts to see beyond accepted conventions.

There seem to be two concepts involved. One is the difference between sensation and perception. The concept of the innocent eye rests on some conceived ability to be open to raw sensation; to see, as it were, without perceiving. The artist is seen as a neutral observer acting only as a vehicle for the transmission of visual sensations unordered by perception. But, of course, while the having of visual sensations is a necessary basis for perceiving, we have no means of dealing directly with these sensations. "Nobody," writes Gombrich, "has ever seen a visual sensation, not even the Impressionists, however ingenuously they stalked their prey."

The second is the notion that all of our sensations and perceptions, while giving us some knowledge of the world, fail to penetrate to that true reality which lies behind all the experiences we have so far encountered. There is a suggestion that, if only we looked harder,
observed more accurately, took greater care, discriminated more finely—finally, looked with greater innocence—then we might catch at least a glimpse of that real world. And this is accompanied by the parallel conception of an art which seeks—over centuries or millennia—to match more and more accurately the world perceived, where the world that might be so perceived is thought of as the world that is. On this view, our perceptions of the real world are at least partially obscured by the sets of conventions we use in making images; rather than these sequentially giving us a clearer and clearer sense of how the world really is, we may be trapped by them into accepting, even into believing in, a particular set of conventions as providing a "true" mirror of the world: only the innocent eye will enable us to break out of this stranglehold.

Most individuals ... will, consciously or not, epitomize the features of that epoch and milieu. A few—the most advanced, or precocious, or troubled—will come to see the world with an innocent eye, to think of the medium in somewhat different ways, and hence to effect breakthroughs to fresh views, unanticipated graphic ploys, and even new stages.

Opposed to that viewpoint is that of the relativists, of whom Goodman is perhaps the best known exemplar. Goodman is especially persuasive in arguing that there is no one true world which either lies behind or is only partially revealed by the "versions" of science, art, psychology, sociology and so on. The world, according to Goodman, just is these versions: no innocent eye can reveal a true world
since there is no world apart from that we find in our various conceptions of it.

Might it be possible to posit some revised version of the innocent eye idea which would help us get a handle on innovation? One direction to take might be to consider the contrast we often pose between innocence and sophistication. The naive painter, for example, is not so much the painter seeing the world in any raw virgin sense, or with some ultimate truthfulness, but rather the painter from whom layers of sophistication have been stripped away, or who has avoided the contamination of a sophisticated vision. Goodman's striving for innocence of eye might then be viewed as the attempt to divest oneself of accepted visions, conventions, and stereotypes, in the hope that, at the least, this now less sophisticated artist might be less prone to finding his work over-influenced by his past, his education, his particular Zeitgeist. But we must accept that the stripping away is limited and finite--no bare bones, no virgin forms, no fundamental reality will be revealed; all we could hope for is the kind of innocence sought by the hermit withdrawn to a place far removed from the sophisticated world of books, technology and machines--a less crowded milieu and a less cluttered mind.

At Leeds, even before Thubron arrived, a naive view of drawing based on an "innocent" rendering of a virgin perception had already all but vanished, and there was some
recognition of the new modes of seeing suggested by the innovations of modern art.

The notion that nature is somehow unequivocally there, available to be seen by anyone and then imitated in the "correct way," is directly antithetical to the contemporary views of art in which different or even unique representations are especially to be prized. A view of the arts as somehow mirroring physical properties of Nature or the World emerges as either simple minded or useless.

The teaching of drawing in the college was not "simple minded;" there were superficial obeisances to the "look" of modern art, but the criteria for evaluating drawing still owed more to degraded academic ideas of correct proportion and accurate anatomy than to the ways that Matisse or Picasso viewed the world or to the ways in which they approached the problems of transforming their views of the world into images.

John Wood describes Leeds as teaching "a debased Slade [kind of] drawing," but my experience suggests that the Slade influence was not especially strong. There was a general acceptance of drawing as a "representational equivalent" as opposed to a sheer imitation, but to meet with success in his teacher's eyes the student had to confine that equivalence within narrow stylistic limits—influences of Blake or Sickert or Rosetti were acceptable; influences of Matisse, Gaudier-Brzeszka or Schmidt-Rotluf would almost certainly be frowned upon.
There are again similarities here to the controversy raised by Kuhn and his followers about the relationships between science and reality. Barnes, for example, parodies the notion of science as a disinterested, objective mode of cognition which distills objective truth or some closer and closer approximation to it when he writes of a "Manichean cosmos where truth, validity, rationality, objectivity are seen to be among the white apparelled children of the light; error, irrationality, custom, convention, and dogma and many others dressed in black." To some degree art teachers had continued to think of the teaching of drawing, in addition to interesting but finally less important questions of styles, as primarily a teaching of ways in which the student could approach closer and closer to some reality beyond himself. Sometimes that reality was seen as lying behind or beyond the purely visual characteristics of the model or the still life or the landscape but it continued to be a reality outside the student, one which he could learn to grasp, or at least come close to grasping, by practice, perseverance, and with the assistance of a good helping of natural talent. With the development of the basic course this changed. Drawing was seen as a tool of inquiry for the artist, as a way by which the student could, in digging beneath the surface aspects of the object being studied, find himself or herself rather than some objective reality beyond. Conjoined to that idea was a new interest
in the importance of the "mark." The quality and meaning of the marks were as important as what a drawing revealed about the inner structure of the object (see discussion of the Drawing with the figure film).

What had caused the break up of the old paradigm in art education and its replacement now by another was less, as it appears to be in science, the fact that a large and increasing number of anomalies could no longer be accounted for, as a general dissatisfaction with the capacity of the old paradigm to result in works of art or movements in art which reflected contemporary life either in its fullness or in its new contributions to "culture." A culture changes; its moral standpoints, its recognition of psychological depths and intricacies, its changing views of social patterns, its new conceptions of the individual or of the individual's relationships to society, all, or at least some of those, need to find their equivalent in the work of the artist and subsequently in the practices of art education. Somewhat paralleling science, for a time old aesthetic viewpoints and methods may be able to stretch and distort to accommodate change; for a time art and art education can avoid dealing with important cultural developments and changes, but in the end the old ways are found wanting and their place is taken by ways more appropriate to and more sympathetic with the contemporary ethos.
We may seem to be laying an enormous burden of "newness" and "difference" on these early basic course developments and, looking back, it is possible to see some retentions of the old which were not evident at the time. But the new regime at Leeds certainly appeared revolutionary and gave rise to initial and sometimes prolonged anxiety as well as to enthusiasm and whole-hearted commitment on the part of many of the Leeds faculty members. Over a relatively short period of time the majority of these faculty members, and almost all of those in the fine art area, were "converted" to the new regime.
Notes


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. See also Pevsner, Academies of art. New York: Macmillan, 1940.


11 Ibid., 104.


13 Ibid., 6.


15 Ibid.
16 Thubron, H. Taped discussion with Erik Forrest.
    December, 1980.
17 Cross, C. Taped discussion with Erik Forrest.
18 Hudson, T., op. cit.
19 Cross, C., op. cit.
20 Thubron, H., op. cit.
21 Kuhn, T., 1962.
22 Quoted in Gombrich, E., op. cit., 296.
26 Gombrich, E., op. cit., 298.
29 Wood, J. Taped discussion with Peter Sinclair.
    October, 1974.
30 Barnes, B., op. cit.
CHAPTER X
Art and Language

Not only Thubron and Pasmore, but also many of the other artists who worked with Thubron at Leeds, posited the existence and importance of some kind of art "language" which they saw themselves as uncovering and developing. The articles under the title "Visual grammar of form" in Motif in 1962 and 1963, as well as the Developing process catalogue, were among the attempts to make explicit that concept of a formal language of art.

The notion of a "language of art" has a long history; even Reynolds in the Discourses writes of "the language of painters" though the language he recommends is based on and is confined to that of the art of the High Renaissance. It is tempting to put forward the idea of a language of art which might be in some major respects like a natural language: The teaching of art would become a simpler task if we could find in the discipline of art some of the structures that we find in natural languages. Analysts of language seem to be agreed on a number of major concepts within which their subject can be studied, researched, and taught; the breakdown into concepts of vocabulary, syntax,
grammar, and semantics has enormously aided those whose task it has been to study language formation and acquisition; finding equivalents to those concepts in the field of art would make processes of teaching and research in art simpler also.

Is visual art a language?

The question "Is visual art a language?" does not admit of a ready or conclusive answer. If one took it to be the same kind of question as "Is Pidgin English a language?" or "Is Kwakiutl a language?" then there is little doubt that the answer would be negative. However, it is fairly obviously not that kind of question, and the person who asks it is likely to be seeking a different kind of answer than a simple negative or affirmative.

We can find statements, sometimes by philosophers of art, more often by art educators, which appear to rest on perceived likenesses and similarities between art and language. A small selection:

The visual arts are a language through which people express their ideas, feelings and understandings of things they see in their world.

People who plan to become artists must study the language of art just as future composers must study the language of music.

Art is another kind of non-verbal language ... this language can usually be understood by people from different nations.

Form does constitute a language. And mastery of that language can be gained, both from the standpoint of using it as a mode of expression and reading it as a
mode of communication."4

If we were to use the term "language" to apply only to natural languages, the task would be a relatively simple one. In this primary sense, English or Spanish or Arabic may be taken as paradigm cases. The functions of a natural language are reasonably clear. In language we communicate our ideas, feelings intentions and purposes to others; through language we are enabled to share with our fellow creatures (other people, animals, perhaps) what we think, how we feel, what our needs and desires are, what we intend or propose, what our concerns and attitudes are. One might argue that many of these same functions can be accomplished by other means. There are, however, distinguishing features of a natural language. Take the following:

Language is bound by truth, and by the requirements of truthful expression. Hence it must have an underlying semantic structure, dictating the grammatical transformations that are permitted in ordinary speech. In particular, language is bound by logic; without logic the dimension of truth and reference would fall away.3

That notion of "truth" and "logic" is not confined to systems of communication which have a direct semantic reference to the world as observed empirically, but natural language rests also on an agreed syntactical basis. In this sense art is not a language; while there are semantic and syntactical relationships to the world of observed "reality," these are shifting and fluid and, to a much greater extent than in a natural language, individual and
The concept of language includes the notion of structure, both the deep innate structure predicated of language by Chomsky et al. and the surface structure of discrete components, syntactical and grammatical rules for sentence construction and systems of symbolic logic which control truth, falsehood, validity, reliability and so on. "The well-formed sentences of a language are specified in terms of certain kernel sentences and a set of re-write rules."6

In art too there are structures and rules, but the nature of those and the way they are used or applied differ fundamentally from usage in a natural language. It is not that a natural language is a set of closed structures which do not change their form; there is a history of language as there is a history of art. And it is not that art has no rules, but that the rules are not accompanied, as they are in a natural language, by systems of correct application, or by agreed procedures for correcting a wrong piece of art. The application of the concept of right and wrong is quite different from the application of that concept in a natural language. We sometimes say of a work of art that it looks "right" but we do not mean correct according to something like a rule of grammar. We can say of some part of an internal system in a painting that it is "wrong"; if, for example, we see a Renaissance-type system of perspective being used in a painting, a deviation from that system might
be termed "incorrect," though even here incorrectness within the system might still be "right" for this painting. One must concede at this point that users of natural languages too sometimes take liberties with so-called rules of grammar, and one's appreciation of the work may depend on recognizing both the rule and its temporary neglect, and that, especially in some art of the past and of some countries—that of India and of Egypt in the dynasties of the Pharaohs come to mind—artistic conventions sometimes come close to being fixed and immutable rules. I would still argue that the visual work of art depends for its aesthetic quality, much more than does the work of literature, on personal, even idiosyncratic use of the medium. This is especially true of contemporary works of art, where both the system in use and the way that system is used depend quite substantially on individuality and uniqueness rather than on subservience to established convention.

Natural languages can be seen as tokens of the same type, as examples of a single phenomenon with clearly describable features and characteristics: we feel able to translate from one to the other, while recognizing the difficulty—even the impossibility—of total transference of all shades of meaning. It is possible, at least very often, to convey the same information in two or more of these languages. If I say "Lassen uns zurückgehen" or "Let's go
back" the same suggestion or request is being communicated. This is true at only the more mundane levels of communications; however, we still think it worthwhile to translate a Pushkin poem into English, or a Scott novel into Russian, even though the translator is conscious that he or she is producing no more than an approximation, and is often attempting to convey qualities, characteristics and flavors of the original without any strict scheme of one-to-one correspondence. The translator would argue in defence of his work that the essential elements and character of the original are preserved, though we could always disagree with his judgment or ask for justification of particular moves he has made. In a strict sense Hamlet in German is not a performance of the original play, though many performances or versions in English might not be either; in each case--translation or edited version--arguments may take place about closeness to or deviation from the original (to the extent that the original is known) and the conclusions of the argument are matters of judgement and not of fact. And there are phrases, even single words, in each language which defy translation; to translate "Weltanshauung" or "Weltschmerz" into English might demand long-winded explanation.

Additionally, in translation, difficulties multiply as we move from translation between languages from areas whose historical and cultural roots are similar to
translation between languages whose cultural and historical roots are significantly different—the difference between translating from English to French, or from French to German as compared with translating from English to Yoruba or from Chinese to Afrikaans. The differences arise from the necessary contextualist basis for meaning in a natural language; each language is rooted in its historical development and a specific social milieu—one of the chief reasons we learn a foreign language is to gain insight, obtainable in no other way, into the society of which it forms a part. In this respect, again, visual art is not, and could not be, a language. We could not conceive of "translating" a Rembrandt painting into English or a Duccio Madonna even into Italian. A closer parallel to verbal translation might be the rendering of a visual work of art from one medium to another. When the seventeenth century wood engraver cut a block from a Durer drawing, or an English craftsman of the nineteenth century produced a small steel engraving from a large oil painting by Turner or Frith, we might wish to describe their work as translation. Art critics would argue that much more is lost than in a verbal translation; the "same" poem may be presented to us visually in different type faces, on different paper, bound within different covers, and in these circumstances we lose little. Even in a translation between languages the fact that the poem does not depend on its physical embodiment
ensures that much more is retained of the original than in the case of the engraved version of the painting or the chromo-lithographed version of the water color.

There are some more obvious similarities between visual art and a natural language. "Consciously controlled expression of emotion," writes Collingwood, "is language--language in a broad sense which includes any activity of any organ which expresses in the same way in which speech expresses." In that weaker sense not only visual art but also music, dance, mime are languages and it becomes reasonable to talk of "body language" or the language of gesture. "The word 'language' ... is used here as a term applying to everything which serves the end of expression and communication." Here there is no dispute; the languages of drawing or painting or sculpture are seen clearly as functioning like these others to communicate and express. But the concept of a language is being extended with possible dangers of misrepresentation and of misconstruction of its uses.

McKinney, a philosopher of language, writes:

Language, because of its function as the instrument of communication between individual and individual, is not a self sufficient 'thing in itself.' It is only what it is by virtue of its function, that is, by virtue of its content, the meanings that it communicates.

To pinpoint, as McKinney does, the functions of a language may be a useful direction for analysis. A natural language allows, primarily, the making of statements and propositions
which convey verifiable meaning and are related logically, but it is also used to command, to persuade, to cajole, to describe, to further or inhibit action, to recommend, and so on. Might visual art's resemblance to a language rest on its capacity to do like things? Scruton argues that

Art is at least like a language, a mode or presentation of human ideas and is significant only on account of the ideas or experiences which it expresses. Appreciation of art involves understanding a system of signs and this understanding is a cognitive capacity rather than a capacity for any kind of feeling.

That art is a way of knowing has been attested to by many writers, notably by Rudolf Arnheim and Louis Arnaud Reid, but they differentiate, as Scruton does, between what is known and the status of what is known. Works of art may be thought of as systems of symbols which convey meaning to us, but what is conveyed, while having much in common with the kinds of things that a natural language conveys, fails to be like those since no principles exist for their verification outside the art system itself. Reid goes an important step further when he differentiates the role of the "medium" in art and language. "Aesthetic meaning," he writes, "is not separable from its embodiment as the meaning of a proposition is separable from the symbolic sentence in which it is expressed."

Implicit in what has been said so far is the notion that language is a symbol system, but while all languages are symbol systems, not all symbol systems can reasonably be
thought of as languages; there are points where the concepts touch and merge and points where they drift apart.

Symbolization ... is to be judged fundamentally by how well it serves the cognitive purpose: by the delicacy of its allusion; by the way it works in grasping, exploring and informing the world; by how it analyses, sorts, orders, and organises; by how it participates in the making, manipulation, retention and transformation of knowledge.

One way in which symbol systems differ is in the degree to which there exists what Goodman calls "character indifference." Character indifference exists in all natural languages, in computer languages, in, for example, the languages of maps and architectural drawings (the technical kind, that is, not the "esquisse" or rendering), but it does not exist in the visual arts. Not only is the medium, as Reid argues, an integral component of the work of art, but also the "symbols" which works of art contain are historically delimited; "identifiable works of art constitute a historical, not an ideal, set." The symbol in a work of art operates, not only within its possibilities of literal transference of meaning, and of one-to-one metaphoric connection, but individually and historically as a unique presence in a unique object.

Is it possible at all to give sense to the notion of art as being like a language in having a vocabulary, a syntax and a grammar? Certainly attempts have been made.

There are fixed laws which govern and point to the use of the constructive elements of the composition and of the inherent relationships between them ... [My] main purpose is to examine the rudimentary
forces brought into being through graphic marks, dimensional relationships, juxtaposed colour etc. It is the counterpart to mastering the elementary signs of a language.

The ubiquitous teaching of the "elements" of art and the "principles of design" seem to rest clearly on a parallelism or analogue with language. The elements are seen as building blocks, basic units, as "vocabulary" (though whether analogous to letters of the alphabet, individual words or sentences is difficult to determine). These units are seen as being put together on the basis of design principles which, in some sense or other, parallel the concepts of grammar and syntax. If this were merely an attempt to set out a group of standards and principles having relevance to a particular mode of art making and art experience its effects might not concern us, but in the education of artists this is not the case; rather these ideas of vocabulary and grammar paralleled in the elements and principles of art and design have been seen as a necessary foundation for working in art—any kind of art—and particularly stress has been laid on the universality and all-embracing nature of the designated laws and principles. De Sausmarez writes of "the predominantly analytical and dissective methods which have successfully isolated the component factors and elements of pictorial and structural expression."\(^{17}\) Bauhaus writings are full of references to the "laws" which govern both perception and aesthetic expression.\(^{18}\) The idea is an attractive one,
especially to the teacher of art, but the parallels exist at only a superficial level. What are considered to be the elements varies, but normally includes point, line, plane, shape, tone, texture, color. It is obvious that none of these has a direct correspondence to the letters of the alphabet or to individual words that we would find in the dictionary, nor to some kind of paradigm sentences. Any component of a painting—and even to decide what in a painting can be considered to be a component is difficult, and rests on a "world view" of painting selected from many alternatives—is likely to include many of these so-called elements used in such a way that their "elementary" character is quite lost. A shape which represents a head or an apple—even one that has no outside reference—is a colored, toned, textured shape; only in a quite different sense from that of spoken or written words are the elements of art discrete or discriminable: it is part of the shape's being the shape that it is that it is colored, textured and toned—these are not different elements but different aspects, and the shape can be considered an adjunct of the color just as the color can be considered an adjunct of the shape. These different aspects can be thought about separately, that is, it is not absurd to consider the textural qualities in a painting, or the color characteristics of a painting, or the linear aspects of a drawing, but these aspects are not separable from the total
work in the way that words are separable from their specific use in a sentence. A sentence is made up of a number of separate words whose order may be changed (though not without, in most instances, changing the meaning) and whose individual meanings are independent of their meaning within that sentence. The colors, tones, textures and shapes are, on the contrary, not quite meaningless outside this painting, but certainly derive most of their meaning from the context of the painting and from the medium in which they exist. Learning about shape or color or tone is not like learning the meanings of individual words. We can learn the meaning of words ostensibly or by definition, although the meaning may not be apprehended without considerable experience of the word in use. We cannot learn the meaning of red in this way. (We can, of course, learn the meaning of the word "red" in the same way as we learn the meaning of other words.) To learn what red means as an "element" or "aspect" of painting we must resort to looking at how it has been and is being used by artists and, perhaps even better, gain some practical experience of working with different reds in artistic media. We could conceive of a student or embryonic artist examining the way color is used in individual paintings, mixing colors to become familiar with their combinations, trying out different color groupings in his own paintings, looking at the "color" of paintings rather than at their tone or texture. The analogy
here must be with how one learns to understand a concept rather than with how one learns to understand a word. "Vocabulary," then, is not an appropriate concept in the understanding of art unless its meaning is stretched such that a vocabulary of art, or an artist's vocabulary, consisted of a group of relevant concepts which could be argued for as underlying artistic practices. The stretch is too great; used in referring to art, the burden of the original meaning is likely to cause unnecessary confusion and distortion. What the relevant concepts are is, as Wollheim says, historically, and we could also say culturally, determined. Certainly color, texture, tone and shape are likely to be among them, but so too would certain techniques, stylistic approaches, preferred subject matter and semantic content and so on. Perhaps we are saying no more--but no less--than that the conceptual stock-in-trade of the art critic also underpins the practices of artists, though the way the "relevant concepts" are learned will not be the same.

A major disadvantage of seeing the described elements of "point, line and plane" to use Kandinsky's phrase, as basic units like the words of a language is that such a view leads, apparently inevitably, to an emphasis in the making of art on the "formal" aspects of the activity and to a diminution of interest in the representational and semantic aspects. It is a point of view with a long history, with
its more obvious formulation in the writings of Clive Bell and Roger Fry. Bell's dictum that the representative element in art is "always irrelevant" has its obvious dangers. "As a matter of fact [the representative element] is so relevant," writes Edgar Wind, "that whenever we ignore or misunderstand a subject we are likely to misconstrue the image by putting the accents in the wrong place."

In any art some kind of syntactical structure is involved, though there is nothing which corresponds closely to the concepts of grammar or syntax in a natural language. The notion of a "schema" which functions as a kind of model around which variations are permitted, is familiar to us from the work of those art educators who study early development in children's art (Lowenfeld, Read, Eng are good examples). Drawings which are identified with a particular schema have some structural characteristics in common, though there seems to be no easy way to account for what is or is not reasonable deviation. When Gombrich contrasts two paintings of an English landscape, one by an English and one by a Chinese artist, he characterizes the differences as emanating from different sets of learned schema employed by each artist. The Chinese artist has learned from Chinese art, past and present, certain ways of "seeing" trees, certain ways of articulating landscape, and these act both as filters for perception and as organizing schemata for his painting; he is able to see "only this" or to see "in this
way only" and this applies to both the painter and his native audience; what the artist can do and what the spectator can apprehend is seen as limited at any one time and place by the availability of only certain modes of perception and of artistic style.

All symbolisation, in whatever medium, and using whatever special devices, requires the imposition of conventions that are arbitrary, in the sense of being only contingently determined by given human purposes and the customs and traditions in which such purposes are manifested; they are not required by some independently existing subject matter that is to be "copied" or "reflected" or "imagined." Hence all pictures, whether "naturalistic" or "non-representational" and all symbols without exception, need to be "interpreted" with the aid of appropriate conventions: all symbols must be read.

There are, too, iconographic codes, traditional and conventional symbols and images used at different times in art, often coincident with but sometimes stretching across more than one stylistic boundary. In somewhat crude ways these iconographic codes tell the artist what is permissible and what is enjoined, though even here the range of allowable variations and combinations is far wider than any set of rules and syntactical practices in language. There are some codes which are based, and are necessary because of this basis, on the physiological nature of perception. These set limits to what the artist can do and still communicate his representations to others. Here too the boundaries, while strict, leave open to the artist wide possibilities of individual experiment. (In these respects
art functions more like a series of languages than as a "universal" language, and the existence of these codes is a strong argument against the universality of art or music or dance. It is not true that we do not have to learn, at least to some extent, the "language" of Chinese art if we are to appreciate its qualities or understand its meanings.)

The "principles" of art, whatever they might be, seem to have little in common with the rules of grammar. Syntax and grammar "enable" meaning; word order, parts of speech, inflection, control the meanings which can be realized from sentences in a spoken or written language. The principles of art which are usually presented, such as "symmetry," "rhythm," "contrast," could again be more accurately described as relevant concepts for study in either the making or viewing of works of art. There is no principle which says that, given a, b and c (other features of the work of art), a symmetrical composition would be correct and an asymmetrical composition incorrect. While some kind of rhythm (analogically, of course) is usually a characteristic of a work of art, there is no set of rules about the use of repetition or of rhythmic antithesis which would guarantee successful communication in a work of art or design--lack of strong rhythm might be a virtue in one work, possession of that same strong rhythm a virtue in another. When one considers other factors in art which seem to involve sets of standards and principles, the ways in which the principles
apply are quite different from the use of principles in natural language structures. Much of Renaissance and post-Renaissance art, for example, seems to have underlying mathematical or geometrical principles which are used as structuring and unifying devices. The use of perspective by Uccello, Ghiberti and succeeding masters might make one want to postulate adherence to or deviance from some perspective scheme as similar to the writer's subservience to a set of grammatical rules. There are two objections to this; one, a deviation from a perspective scheme might be just the note that the artist wants—an iconoclastic element to point up the otherwise regular composition; two, even the use of regular schemes of perspective can be considered to be a "symbolic" rather than a "grammatical" device. 

The Florentines were extremely proud of this invention which they thought (wrongly as it turns out) was unknown to antiquity, and it remained part of an artist's training right up to 1945. But has it anything to do with civilization? When it was first invented I think it had. The belief that one could represent a man in a real setting and calculate his position and arrange figures in a demonstrably harmonious order, expressed symbolically a new idea about man's place in the scheme of things and man's control over his own destiny.

Similarly, there are principles of color use, of ways of composing figures in pictorial space, of the use of different kinds of lighting effects, all of which function in the dual roles of useful controlling devices which to some extent keep the artist "on the right track," and as symbols of particular attitudes to the world. Consider the
use of chiaroscuro in Mannerist painting, figure placement
in the Rajput miniature, tone and color restriction in the
paintings of Cezanne or in Cubism, or, quite differently, in
a Mondrian. These could form a language only if they
consistently defined and predicted what artists did.

What people chiefly seem to be doing, then, when they
talk about art as if it had a vocabulary, syntax and
grammar, is to be recommending to us that we pay attention
to certain features of works of art, namely the formal
features, and are emphasizing that the concepts upon which
the formal aspects of the work are based are worthy of our
serious study. Sometimes they are doing more, and are
saying that the formal features are the most important and
the most fundamental aspects of the work of art and are
thus, despite often stout denials to the contrary,
recommending some kinds of art over others. This may be
concealed by the analogy with language: the structure of
language truly is "basic" and "fundamental" to speech or
writing, and the study of the vocabulary, syntax and grammar
of a natural language does not favor one kind of poetry over
another, although an over-emphasis on "correct" usage may
hinder development and experimentation.

Language, too, is seen as the instrument of thought,
even sometimes as the medium of thought, though Ryle, as we
shall see, finds this latter unacceptable. Can we find a
parallel in visual art? Is it possible to "think" in
artistic symbols or through the use of artistic conventions? We may answer these questions in the affirmative only if we are prepared to reject a definition of thinking as the putting into words and phrases (or into some other symbols) of "ideas" which exist prior to the thinking itself.

Wollheim, paraphrasing Collingwood and Croce, writes that

> Parallel to the conception of the artist as the man whose head is crammed with intuitions though he may know of no medium in which to externalize them would be the conception he possesses no language in which to express them. The second conception is evidently absurd.\(^2\)

He goes on to make another distinction, saying that, while a characterization of thinking as "talking to ourselves: is reasonable, "we cannot make works of art to ourselves."\(^2\) Should not the analogy be between "talking to ourselves" and "probably experimentally, visualizing combinations of lines, shapes and colors to ourselves." That words or other symbols are likely to be involved in thinking is not in dispute, but we narrow the concept of thinking too far if we insist on these playing a necessary *a priori* role.

Ryle argues, and it is the constant theme of his later work, that thinking is not an activity that is separate from what one is thinking about; rather it is a word that is used to describe the ways in which one is doing what one is doing--carefully, heedfully, paying attention to the way that one thing follows from another, and so on.

Take the will-be orator composing his speech. It is to be a speech in English, so of course he has tentatively and experimentally to think up English
words and phrases, consider these, reject a lot of them, modify others, string together the selected or provisionally selected candidates into sentences, paragraphs and finales. His speech, when made, will of course be in English. Perhaps while composing his speech the word 'apolaustic' occurs to him, so he considers it and rejects it as too pompous, or because he is not sure what it means. He thought it up, thought about it and scrapped it for a reason. But surely we cannot say that his thinking was 'in' this rejected word? What of the phrases and sentences that finally constitute his speech? Had he thought in them while composing? Obviously not. He had then been searching for them, and his searching could no more be described as in its objectives than prospecting could be described as being done in diamonds or nuggets of gold. In some cases then, it makes no sense to say that even the thinker who is indeed saying things to himself in English or French words and phrases is thinking in these words or phrases—or anything else instead."

In this perspective, an architect say, playing on his desk top with building bricks or doodling diagrams on a note pad as part of his coming up with new plans for an auditorium is "thinking" his way towards these plans; an artist scribbling some marks on the back of an envelope (with care and deliberation) or noting down color sequences or tonal groupings as some of his moves towards the production of some new paintings is thinking. He could be observed doing these things and not be thinking--thinking implies that the actions are tied to what he is trying to accomplish. Things that one does in thinking are, as Ryle puts it, often "'on appro' as things quite likely, but not certain, to come to nothing; not told but experimentally mooted." The necessity in thinking is that the activity is heuristic. In this respect the languages of art and of words are similar; both
the artist and the writer think; the kinds of associations, combinations, structures that they try out may be associations of words or sentences, or of colors and shapes, of sounds and rhythms, of patterns of movement, and so on. Natural languages differ from the language of art in having both a written and a spoken form just as music has both a written and an audible form and dance a written and a visible form.

In what respects works of art function like pieces of a natural language would be a matter of empirical observation; what might be true of art at one time and place might well not be true of art at another time and place, that is, the analogy of function is again context and culture bound. Herbert Read has suggested that there might have been a primitive language of images that preceded the ordinary language of words; "The major difficulty is to see how these so-called languages could fulfill the basic demands of social life without in fact approximating to language as we have and use it."26

Art is not then, in any strict sense, a language. In some situations and in some ways it does fulfill some of the functions of a language; in Soviet Russia, for example, there is a propaganda function for painting, poetry and music as there is for newspaper journalism; in this country and in Europe much city center architecture can be seen as communicating messages about the values of the corporate
business structure, and one could find instances where a painting or a piece of music had inspired social or political action. Art, metaphorically, makes statements and conveys information, but an identification of art with language, or a conception of art as a language is likely to be misleading, especially in the teaching and learning of art.

In a paper given as the Maurice de Sausmarez Memorial lecture in 1971, Richard Wollheim demolishes the crude analogy between natural language and art in the context of "The art lesson" and suggests that

While what goes on in the art lesson cannot be described, as I'm sure it cannot, as imparting or transmitting something like a language, it now looks as though it might be described in this way: as imparting or transmitting a way of making something like a language. In an art lesson, the pupil does not learn the elements of art: but he learns to make elements out of what he studies.

This is a considerable improvement on the cruder manifestations of the art as language hypothesis, but Wollheim's conclusion—that what the student learns in "learning to make something like a language" is learning to make "a style, his style"—is less convincing. Wollheim may be criticized too on the grounds that learning to make "something like a language" leaves us still too closely tied to the cruder versions of art as a language. Even if the elements are not provided by the instructor but rather discovered by the student, to characterize these discoveries as "making a language" still tempts instructor and student
alike to see the kind of structuring that goes on in artmaking as analogous to the kinds of structuring apparent in natural language construction and usage.

Thubron echoed Klee in seeing "elements" in art and "principles" of element production and association, but he resisted the attempts--by Pasmore and also at times by Tom Hudson--to press the language analogy in such a way that notions of vocabulary, syntax and grammar might begin to be applied to art in an over simplified fashion. He objected especially to De Sausmarez's Basic design: the dynamics of visual form. He saw this as an example of the simplistic use of the language analogy. Wollheim's notion of style, on the other hand, accords well with Thubron's views. Thubron rejected the idea that the basic course taught any particular style, and an often repeated assertion was that any kind of art, any personal style, could emerge from his teaching and that of his colleagues. Wollheim's proviso is that, to be able to form a style, requires the student "to have some general knowledge of art ... to have a concept of art." The student's "learning to make elements" is dependent on some overarching concept of art which enables him or her to define these elements as art elements.

Thubron operated within a quite narrow concept of art and his teaching reflected that concept directly. For Thubron a special breed of twentieth century artist was the model for art education: the "language" he encouraged in his
student's work was the language of neo-plasticism, the language of Klee and Matisse, the language of Schwitters, De Stael and Mondrian.
Notes


10Scruton, R., op. cit., 169.


13Ibid., 132.

14Wollheim, R., op. cit., 118.

16 Ibid., 11.
17 Ibid.
22 Wollheim, R., op. cit., 99.
23 Ibid., 100.
25 Ibid., 91.
26 Wollheim, R., op. cit., 87.
29 Ibid.
CHAPTER XI

Thubron and Today's Art Education

During the last few years there has been a renewed interest in the ideas and methods of the "basic course" advocates. Their work has been criticized as politically naive, authoritarian, and insensitive to the commercial and industrial needs of society— in the sixties and at the present time. They have been accused of so breaking down previous training in art skills and techniques that a generation of visually incompetent art graduates has been inflicted on English society.

The following sections review some of these criticisms and attempt to assess their validity. It is necessary now to question the extent to which, in the light of these criticisms, the revolutionary movement in the art education of the fifties and sixties has relevance for today's art education. Did Thubron's teaching philosophy and methods of organizing art and art education experiences have relevance for just a brief period post World War II, or might a considered view of his ideas, concepts and practices reveal some important attitudes to art education which are applicable also to present concerns and to the concerns of
the immediate future.

If one accepts the basic tenets of Thubron's philosophy and methodology of teaching, one is certainly not committing himself to a view of art education as a fixed and immutable discipline; one is however suggesting that art education is more than a series of fads and fashions and that there are some features of art education which have a life, limited certainly, but extending over more than a few generations of art students.

Art education, 1977 - a political dimension

Critics of art education practices have usually confined themselves to commentary on the historical, theoretical and practical aspects of art teaching--in whatever political circumstance it might take place. There may at times be asides which attempt to relate in some fashion what is being described to the social and political factors involved, but seldom have there been serious attempts to view art education primarily from the point of view of the ways in which the political setting or the political constraints and pressures might have shaped a curriculum or a movement in art education.

In the period looked at here, faculty members and especially Principals of art schools were certainly aware that the various committees set up to reorganize and restructure their enterprise were government-appointed and that His Majesty's Inspectors, and particularly the Chief
Inspector for Art—Ministry of Education appointees—were exercising a strong influence on the jobs and teaching duties of instructors and on the likely development of art schools educationally: there is no evidence that they saw these influences as aspects of greater political forces at work. This a-politicism was to a large extent true also of the art history and art criticism of the time. There were notable exceptions in, for example, Arnold Hauser's *Social history of art*¹ and *Philosophy of art history*² (Hauser was teaching at the University of Leeds in the late fifties), and in the writings of Ettlinger and Klingender. In the debate over the future of education in art political voices were hardly raised. Most of the people involved saw post-war educational developments, and art education developments also, as facets of a generally liberal socialist countrywide movement evidenced chiefly, as we have seen, in the victory of the Labour government in the election of 1945.

A recent work by two young sociologists, Rushton and Wood, makes amends. It is treated here in some detail for two reasons: one, it provides a quite different and, in my view, a valuable perspective on the events and, two, because it contains, if accurate, a devastating critique of the situation at the Leeds College of Art (by then, the Faculty of Art and Design of the Leeds Polytechnic) in the late seventies—a situation that must be in some respects a
result of the earlier developments. It is of particular interest since many of the faculty members involved either taught at Leeds in the fifties and early sixties or were students in the college at that time.

In their first paragraph the authors make quite clear the basis of their criticism.

Art education, to its denizens on both sides of the staff/student fence, usually connotes a range of ideas falling solidly under the umbrella of individualism—'creativity,' 'self-expression,' and the business of 'finding yourself;' with a sense of learning 'skills' additionally prominent in the case of design departments. This individualism however constitutes less an examinable historical tradition than a social condition in art schools.

The authors see art schools as "historical institutions" and their role as primarily a political and social one; their evolution, say the authors, is neither "natural" nor "autonomous," but an evolution significantly moulded by the state--the "bourgeois" state.

In 1945 post-war educational reform was already embodied in the Butler Act of 1944, and developments in art schools were seen as sharing the same fundamental aims as developments in the school of general education. These changes opened up the art schools to a range of students from a wider class background and began a process of greater autonomy. Rushton and Wood see it differently:

The various shifts in art education, from N.D.D. technical college/craft level, to the eventual formation of a 'university equivalent' sector, the Dip A.D., have to be placed in this struggle to secure the managerial section as well as its vocational adjunct--technicians with skill but
Throughout, the art schools are seen as being reorganized in order that they should fulfill a quite narrow function within English society: they, just like the universities, public schools (English variety), technical colleges and so on, are characterized as places which educate, or mis-educate; their students to "take their rightful place" in society and not to "rock the boat" or indulge in revolutionary criticism of existing society; to "secure" as the authors put it, the continuation of the political and social status quo.

The authors are scathing in their criticism of pronouncements by the then important figures in art education, although interestingly they never "take on" Herbert Read, the most important of these figures. They scorn especially these statements which express administrative attitudes not shared by students. Ronald F. Brill, for example, at that time Principal of the Kingston School of Art, is quoted as follows:

> When a student is admitted to a College of Art he becomes a member of a community which exists to serve the development of artistic culture, the advancement of artistic knowledge and the exploration of visual experience.

It was just that sense of community which seemed to these writers not to be apparent in the Schools of Art although I would argue from personal experience that, while Brill's statement is couched in overblown language, art students,
rather more than university or technical college students, did at that time feel some sense of identity with their fellow students. The causes may have been quite simple ones—the smaller scale, the all-day studio working—rather than shared intellectual or social beliefs. Nevertheless, some students in the post-war period claimed to have opted for an art school education less for specific technical or artistic training than to participate in a more liberal education than they thought they would find in a university.

(It is interesting that among the people who contributed to the image of "swinging" Britain in the fifties and sixties were many young men and women from art schools, though often their contributions were in other fields than art. The most obvious were the Beatles, ex-students of the Liverpool College of Art. Leeds contributed members of the Temperance Seven, Frankie Vaughan, and a number of well-known jazz musicians. Within the world of design itself came Mary Quant and Terence Conran—mini-skirts and Habitat.)

At one point Rushton and Wood deal directly with Thubron and Hudson. Thubron is quoted as saying:

What we have been involved with over the past four years at Leeds has been simply Basic Research... The real freedoms are those directly related to the individual spirit and imagination... explorations are of a scientific and analytical nature and yet deal with the instructive [sic] work and primary sensations. Most of the implications of a Bauhaus [mis]-influenced cryptoscience of art education can be drawn from these remarks of Thubron.

Hudson was quoted extensively from Technology and Junk:

We aspire towards a true psychological orientation of
the individual. We must therefore concern ourselves with the world of 'internal' necessity and the world of 'external' reality ... The student can be taught to design for machines he hasn't seen before.

Hudson rejects any "ideological" basis for art education;

Rushton and Wood respond:

The managerial-level designing for hitherto unseen machines; the fear of "collective control"; the technological detailing; the jargon of 'systems'; the low status accorded to ideology; the vaunting of "personal development and individual expression:' these are ideological.

Rushton and Wood are surely correct in their assessment of Thubron and Hudson as being, on the whole, much more interested in personal than in social development. But not just personal development; many of the examples quoted earlier show that they saw as an important objective some kind of movement beyond personal development--development of the imagination and the powers of the "individual spirit"--to more objective, more scientific outlooks less dependent on idiosyncratic individual differences.

The criticism of "misplaced" Bauhaus influence finds a ready echo in the work of other writers. Speaking of the developments of foundation courses after the National Diploma in Design had been replaced by the Diploma in Art and Design (in 1960), Hannema writes:

The supreme irony is, perhaps, that in the Vorkurs the Bauhaus provided art educationalists with a ready-made means of replacing the time-worn academic formulas with a free and novel approach to the training of painters and sculptors. We might say that the experimental Vorkurs--initially not
unaffected by Dadaist ideas, was isolated from its context and blown up, grotesquely, into three and four year art courses. It amounts to a contradiction of all that Gropius stood for.

The grounds of objection are different: Hannema is less concerned with the Foundation course's lack of concern with the political genesis and outlook of the Bauhaus and more with the inconsequentiality and lack of intellectual rigor of courses ostensibly based on the Bauhaus. As he sees it, the instructors have misappropriated exercises and projects from the Vorkurs, developed them in a spirit of neo-Dada, and altogether ignored Gropius' insistence on the funding of that work in craft, logical structure, community concern and social accountability.

First year students in the Leeds College of Art and Design were set a project in which they were told to express their alter ego. The same group of students spent an incredible two weeks painting by candlelight ... One wonders about the maturity of staff members on one basic course whose end-of-year project with students consisted of a room hung full of contraceptive devices.

Possibly Hannema is being less than fair: to take individual projects out of context is likely to be misleading, and a thorough piece of descriptive research of present-day teaching of fine art in English art schools would need to be carried out if we were to be able to assess the long-term influence of either the Bauhaus or of those courses in England which had their beginnings under the sway of Bauhaus-related ideas.
My own observations, again by no means comprehensive and mostly confined to roughly biennial visits to the Leeds Faculty of Art and Design fine-art area, confirm many of Rushton and Wood's criticisms. A section of their book takes the form of conversations between the writers Green, Strohmeyer-Gartside, and Tom Soviet and faculty members and students of the Leeds fine art area in 1976 and 1977. (It is indicative of the directness and forcefulness of the writers' approach--no punches being pulled--that some words and phrases had to be blacked out for fear of prosecution for libel!)

"The most creative, unpredictable, passionate and witty ..."--such supposedly was fine art at Leeds at the time of Patrick Heron's 'Murder of the Art Schools,' wherein the same department was described as "the most influential in Europe since the Bauhaus." The course to which Heron referred was Eric Taylor's 'Basic Research': the 'murders' were occurring as art schools throughout the country were being absorbed by polytechnics. After the mergers the Leeds fine art department maintained its prestige in virtue of its bent towards performance/zany antics--such as the department buying twenty pounds of baked beans for one moronic attempt at a spectacle. The dog-end of this silly-bugger soft option petered out just over a year ago as the last gaggle of petty-bourgeois starlets left the stage with their B.A.'s to pick up their Arts Council grants and after rag-week capers in the streets of any city seeking self-aggrandizement and a reinforcement of their [cultural] hegemony in the guise of an 'Arts Festival.'

The language is, predictably, both volatile and jargonesque, but the descriptions and recorded interviews that follow, if they are at all accurate, present a picture of sloppy educational thinking, inadequate staff/student contact, and
an all-round incoherence about the aims and objectives of a higher education in art, that almost justify the high-flown phrases.

At Leeds there is little or no discussion or criticism ... "the staff don't criticize why you're doing it, or what you're doing. They criticize ... well ... the old argument about 'the blue in the top left hand corner.' All I've learned at the end of three years is what's wrong with art education—not about the history of painting, or art, or culture, or anything like that. You just learn what a mess this is."12

Among the instructors criticized by this student were George Hainsworth and Geoff Teasdale, both students with Thubron in the fifties and early sixties. When I talked to Harold Cove, who was teaching as one of the basic course instructors in the late fifties and who still teaches at Leeds, he described Thubron's departure in 1964 as necessary since, as he put it, "Harry wouldn't have been able to cope with the new developments."13 One wonders what developments he might be referring to; the new organizational difficulties created by the need to work closely with scientists, sociologists, technical educators and so on, or the moves in the direction of a new, perhaps somewhat mindless neo-Dadaism? One of Thubron's ex-students is quoted as saying that "Leeds is the opportunity to make mistakes and change your mind," and Teasdale's contribution to a contemporary course leaflet includes the following description of what is going on:

Research into the means by which the basic supposition of a static and immutable reality might
be undermined, and to attempt to elevate 'things' and place them so their banal significance disappears under a new condition created for them.

The hand may be detected here of another instructor at Leeds at that time, Jeff Nuttall who, in 1968, had written a book called The bomb culture whose approach was both nihilistic and anarchic.

It is easy to feel that these authors, convinced of and sub-servient to a particular ideology quite alien to the laissez-faire attitudes of the current Leeds fine art instructors, are carefully selecting comments and quotations which best confirm their case. If things were quite as bad as their review makes out, one begins to wonder why any students at all chose to attend the Leeds fine art department; after all, there were many other fine art departments in the country and nothing prevented students from applying to other centers.

[The students] are not wholly innocent—they prefer to ignore any crucial social or political issue—dealing with which might interfere with the hedonistic production of pathetically crass and moribund art works. They are incapable of rooting their activity within history.

The stridency of tone and the authors' apparent inability to see any worthwhile qualities in any student work suggests that, at the least, their sense of "correct" ideology and of historical relevance have overpowered any aesthetic sensitivity they might possess. They write of "the repressive character of art colleges [which] is responsible for the remarkable ignorance, indolence and pathetic
helplessness of art students," but it is difficult to believe that among these students, all of whom had cleared the hurdles of five 'O' and two 'A' level passes in the General Certificate of Education, completion of a year of foundation studies, and highly competitive selection for entry into a degree course, there was a total lack of intelligence, talent and industry.

What had caused the change from Thubron's "analysis and scientific inquiry" to the kind of intellectual free-for-all described by these authors? Hannema offers a possible explanation:

A number of its ideas (Herbert Read's Education through art)--that activity of the imagination should be encouraged, that lessons should take the form of play, that the teacher-pupil relationship should be one of mutual cooperation, that moral persuasion should replace discipline imposed from above--were lifted out of their original context and infused into Dip.A.D. teaching, with results that can easily be imagined.

A very different message from that of Walter Gropius who in a 1967 lecture had said

There must be a passionate search for an answer in which all relevant factors, social, visual, technical and economic have been brought into balance. It takes a long and systematic training to achieve the habit of seeing all factors simultaneously.

A continuing process

In March of 1981 the Institute of Contemporary Art in London mounted an exhibition devised by David Thistlewood entitled A continuing process. Thistlewood has a long-standing interest in the "new" art education of the
fifties and sixties and wrote his doctoral dissertation on Herbert Read's philosophy of art education. As a student at Leeds in the late fifties he had early become interested in the teachings of Hudson, Thubron, Pasmore and Hamilton. The sub-title of the exhibition was *The new creativity in British art education 1955-1965*, and in his introductory essay Thistlewood attempts to place the 1955-1965 development within the larger context of English art education as a whole, to describe the contributions of the chief innovators, and to point to the relevance of these ideas to our present situation. (The "British" in the sub-title is a misnomer; only in England were there visible and important effects of foundation course ideas during that decade.) The essay is strongly affected by Thistlewood's commitment to the work of Herbert Read. We have already discussed the relationships between Read's viewpoints and those of the basic course innovators; in the view of this writer these were neither so close nor so important as Thistlewood would have us believe, though Read's personal influence and support were crucial.

Thistlewood and Thubron quarrelled about the content of the exhibition, and especially about the balance of the different contributors; in the end Thubron withdrew from the show and refused to allow examples from his teaching to be included. The effect was to distort the exhibition's picture of these past events and to slew the overall
impression in the direction of a more considered, more worked out, more logical set of changes than was actually the case. This is evident from the very beginnings of Thistlewood's commentary; his first paragraph emphasizes the "revolutionary" dimension of the new art education through what is, in my view, a badly distorted description of what it replaced.

The aims and objectives underlying a post-school art education in this country have changed utterly during the past twenty five years. Principles which seem today to be liberal, humanistic and self-evidently right would have been considered anarchic, subversive and destructive as recently as the 1940s ... What prevailed was a system devoted to conformity, to a misconceived sense of belonging to a classical tradition, to a belief that art was essentially technical skill. I have tried to show that, while much of the above might be a reasonably accurate description of some teachers and their methods in the art schools of the forties and early fifties, it was by no means true of them all; at the Central School, at the Bath Academy of Art, and in pockets at many other art schools, including Leeds, teaching was going on which, while it paid little heed to the Bauhaus or de Stijl, yet took account of many other major developments in the art of the twentieth century.

Thistlewood's analysis of the work of Hudson, Pasmore and Hamilton is encapsulated in the sentence; "the notion 'Art Education' should be replaced by 'Creative Education'--a total development of sensibility and intellect." He repeats that Thubron's approach will be
dealt with in a future exhibition though that now seems unlikely, and there is no question that an exhibition of Thubron's pedagogical work would run counter to the notion of an "Art Education" replaceable by a "Creative Education." While of course he wished his students to act creatively, Thubron attached an overriding importance to the art object and the art process; these were seen as possessing distinctively different characteristics from those of other kinds of objects and processes. The idea of a "creative" act divorced from a specific discipline or disciplines makes little sense. There have been attempts over the last two or three decades to explore the characteristics of creativity and of the creative personality; these have not been totally unsuccessful, but in all of these studies creativity, at least at the professional level, appears to rest on a base of knowledge and understanding within a specific disciplinary area.

Thistlewood describes the work of Pasmore, Hamilton and Hudson, concerned as it was with combining facets of both intellect and intuition, as having relevance to a wide array of artistic activities—-from "the smallest creative act" to "architecture" and to "performance art." He argues that they were concerned with "the minutest technicalities of grammar," a view not shared by Thubron and not totally in agreement with the expressed views of the three exhibitors either.
In summing up the influence of The developing process and the pedagogical work that contributed to it and stemmed from it, Thistlewood recognizes that "its chief drawback was always the ease with which it could be adapted to uninformed use." As we saw in the last section, that was not the only drawback; the danger existed, and there is much evidence that this did happen, that the emphasis on the "creative" in general, rather than on appropriate creativity in art in particular, would lead to an art education divorced, not just from traditional skills and techniques, but from an awareness of the necessary place of some kinds of skill and technique, divorced, that is, from the practice of art itself or tied only to a narrow contemporary art mode--that of conceptual art.

Later critics have become increasingly concerned that some important features of an education or training in art might disappear as the conceptual side of art-making grew in importance. During the period of the National Diploma in Design, while there were significant limitations to the kind and range of work produced, "any fine art student acquired a range of skills and techniques which could serve as the basis for future development and different kinds of work." That basis was lost to a greater emphasis on "attitudes." "We believe that studies in fine art derive from an attitude which may be expressed in many ways." Nicholas Pearson points out that the
logic of this is "that fine art is not what you do; it is what you think, or what you think about what you do or might do." If that thinking had been rigorous, systematic, comprehensive and logical it might have produced a generation of art critics and practitioners who would have elevated the status of art in the country and contributed to a new role for art in community life; instead, Pearson alleges, "the questioning has all too often been an unfocused, open-ended, and rootless invitation to half-baked philosophizing, imitative and shallow visual experimentation, and inflated claims for elementary soul-searching." 

The Continuing process's view of the work of Pasmore, Hamilton and Hudson has also been attacked directly: Andrew Brighton writes that "Rather than the humanism that Thistlewood attributes to the art educational innovation celebrated in A continuing process they were prompted by scientism, that is, science as an affected style of language and pedagogy ... Previously art school teaching was essentially concerned with skill ... Now art school training taught an ideology, the fine art attitude." Brighton puts much of the blame for this over-emphasis on attitude on the shoulders of Herbert Read. He blames Read for a too-easy equation of the aesthetic and the moral, and disputes Read's view that there is a "natural" form of aesthetic education which will lead with some inevitability
to a more morally aware person and a more morally aware society. For Brighton Read's arguments are based on an illogical view of the aesthetic and of the "natural, formative principle discernible in the evolution of the world." From a practical standpoint he finds that "a generation or so of school children have undergone forms of art education which have been heavily influenced by Herbert Read" and that little evidence can be found that these students "exhibit an instinctive knowledge of the laws of the universe."

He mounts an equally severe attack on Robert Witkin, whose book *The intelligence of feeling*, first published in 1974, appears to be the most popular art education text in English art education departments at the present time. Witkin argues for an education in freedom produced by "a vast sequence of creative moments." Like Read's "logic of form," Witkin's "education in the intelligence of feeling" is seen by Brighton as evidence that the dominantly "cultural" basis of art has been ignored and has been replaced by a view of art as totally "natural" and "expressive"—therapeutic and psychological rather than social and cultural. His claim that art educators in England have "institutionalized anti-academicism" is a strong one, but there is some evidence to support his contention. A recent criticism of a wide-ranging exhibition of British drawings described a dominant impression "of creative energy unleashed and careless of any too
restricting sensibility," and talked of "a rampant individualism ... Few artists mediate subjectivity with perception."31 "Individualism," "creative energy," "rampant individualism"--these concepts have dominated art education in recent years. It is unsurprising that calls are heard for a return to an education in the skills and techniques of the artist.

Art and technique

But what are those skills and techniques? Most of the writers quoted above are not artists or have had only a minimal art training. Brighton, Hannema, Pearson and Witkin come from psychology or art history or art criticism and have little direct experience of the teaching of art. There is no agreement among art teachers about the appropriate types and levels of skill and technique required in the college or department of art or in the world of art and design beyond higher education in art. Bernard Williams writes of "the problematic quality about what form of technical knowledge is essential to acquiring the art [of painting] anyway, in a sense that certain traditional academic skills may not now be held so important in the formation of visual artists as they were in the nineteenth century."32

Given that the "academic" tradition was seen to be no longer fulfilling the purposes of art education; to be, if not totally inappropriate then certainly a tired tradition
with little direct applicability to the needs of the mid-twentieth century, innovative art educators had to develop new philosophies and devise new strategies. There was an association drawn, perhaps illegitimate and, looking back on it, possibly unwise, between that academic tradition and the development of certain skills and techniques. Not only was that association a cause for the denigration of the particular skills and techniques in common use, it became also a cause for the denigration of skills and techniques in general. There seemed to arise the assumption that art and design was first—and perhaps this was a position that could be defended—not primarily a matter of skills and techniques and that consequently art and design education should not be primarily an acquisition of skills and techniques, and, second, and this seemed to arise naturally from the first, that skills and techniques were of such little importance that they could almost be ignored.

Partly this was a result of new attitudes to the relationships between art education and general education. Whereas until World War II art education had been seen chiefly as a "practical" education, a "professional" education, it had now, as we have noted, begun to be looked upon as a new and admirable kind of general education. This general education—the studying and practice of art—would, in a similar fashion to reading philosophy or English at Oxford, prepare the student for particular kinds of thinking.
which could be applied in many different future fields of activity. This was a point of view shared by both incoming students and their instructors. An art school instructor is quoted as defining "professionalism" in art as "something like finding a long term involvement; a long term engagement with an activity which tends to make some sort of sense of one's life. It's not ... necessarily related to earning money ... It's really related to trying to make sense of one's life."\(^{33}\)

The National Diploma in Design structure, which began in 1946 and continued until the early sixties, was the last art school structure in England which could reasonably be described as having a strong basis in the acquisition of skill and technique. It was this system that Thubron, Hudson, Hamilton and Pasmore rebelled against. While they had to work within it they tried to ensure that the application of their ideas did not conflict too radically with national requirements. (We have seen how Thubron employed Ricky Atkinson at Leeds specifically to ensure that students did not fail the current national examinations.) Nevertheless they were quite opposed to the traditional emphasis on a technical and manipulatory skill basis for art education. Attitudes were more important than skills or technical expertise in the use of media. That emphasis had some extreme consequences; there developed in many art schools courses where any kind of practical work was frowned
from the processes and experiences involved in making them. The Scarborough courses, however, were much more directly a reflection of Thubron's ideas than of those of Hudson or Pasmore.

In an essay entitled "Disciplined irrationality: a process-dominant art education," Thistlewood attempts to show that Herbert Read's views on children's art and art making should be important to us still, that the new views found expression in the "drastic changes [which] affected British art school teaching in the 1950's," and that the "developing process" invented by Pasmore, Hudson and others provided "an example of the countless ways in which it ought to be possible to put Read's principles to good effect." The most important principle is the primacy of the character and quality of experience; the works of art which resulted from the experience being seen as merely "the means of such development [caused by the experiences] or rather the residual evidence of its having taken place."

The essay concentrates on the contributions of Pasmore and Hudson, largely ignoring Thubron's role, partly perhaps because Thistlewood's post-graduate work was conducted at Newcastle where Hudson had been a student and Pasmore the Master of Painting, partly since Thubron's work as a teacher and artist did not fit so neatly the argument he is advancing about Read's influence. To have observed Thubron at work is to realize that no such division as
upon, denigrated, and sometimes classified as mere physical activity with no redeeming intellectual features. It led too to the "Art/Language" movement which has produced some of the most obscurantist art writing in this century. Practical information about how an artist might survive in the outside world was ignored.

- How to find and pay for studio space and meet the cost of materials and equipment; how to publicize their work and interest galleries in it; understanding how commercial galleries operate and what arrangements should be sought between artist and gallery; how to find part-time teaching work; the position of a self-employed person for income tax and national insurance purposes.

All of this was quite neglected, even actively derided as being a set of enquiries beneath the dignity of art school study.

Herbert Read must bear some of the responsibility for this change in attitudes. He, admittedly alongside many other theorists of art education, consistently affirmed that it was not the making of art objects that was important in art making. The sole importance of this activity, to him, was in the experience gained. Thistlewood suggests that not only the work of Hudson and Pasmore but also the work of the Scarborough John Wood summer schools was based on these Readian principles. About Hudson and Pasmore he may be right, although the close connections between what Pasmore advocated for art education and the changing foci of his own work are indications that Pasmore drew as much from "objective" qualities in his paintings and reliefs as he did
Thistlewood is suggesting between experience and the object of art was seen by him as valid. While he wished often to focus a student's attention on the processes of making, Thubron gave great value to the aesthetic qualities of the completed work; these qualities were not to be predetermined but unless they were recognized by the student the project had not fulfilled its purpose. Certainly it was essential that in bringing the work to fruition, intellect and intuition were both brought to bear and were exercised in a "creative" fashion, but creativity was seen, as a developing process indeed, but as a developing process which consisted of strings of "experience"--"work of art"--"experience"--"work of art": both were necessary; recognition of qualities in each called for growth in sensitivity and understanding. This was a means of self-development, surely, but it was also a contribution to the development of art and of a particularly twentieth century kind of art. On the face of it that idea did not carry with it implications of a particular "style," only of attributes and distinctions which Thubron saw as "of" the twentieth century, rather than of previous centuries. Without that conception of "art" as something bigger than the work of any one artist or group of artists, and as having cultural importance greater than the development of any individual, Thubron's educational ideas would have more closely followed those of Read. They might then have been in danger of being dismissed as
irrelevant to the education of "artists" or "designers"--the chief function of the colleges of art. The "liberal education" aspect of the work of the colleges of art was understood, but it was not seen to replace that of the education of the "professional" artist or designer.

Thubron's relationship with Read's ideas were not consciously worked out: his understanding and view of the mutually reinforcing quality of art object and art experience was an elemental conviction in his own work. The extension of that concept required to truly appreciate the differing functions of the work of art and the work of design was missing from Thubron's educational philosophy, almost certainly since his own work was so firmly rooted in fine art. (It is a failure not unknown in the history of English art education in earlier times). In Thubron's case the major element was his conviction that the kinds of attitudes, precepts and procedures that he was teaching were, in some sense, "fundamental" to all work in any field of art and design. This was a conviction differing from similar convictions in the nineteenth century in that its bases had been reinforced by twentieth century psychological study and by the educational philosophy and practices of the Bauhaus. Thubron chose to concentrate his attention on only some aspects of Bauhaus teaching--especially that of Klee and Kandinsky--and to ignore the work of Moholy-Nagy or Herbert Bayer, men who had seen the need to adapt the
"humanistic" or basically fine art ideas of those others to the needs and opportunities of commerce and industry. John Wood recognized the effects of that narrowness of outlook.

Harry really did believe at one time that we were going to change the visual scene ... This is one of the partial failures ... one of the places where I think Harry deluded himself. What we never succeeded in doing is taking the Basic Course forward in some sort of measurable controlled degree to the later stages ... we didn't produce the designer/artists whom everybody thought would be the end product of what we were doing. It's the national failure still that we haven't done it ... We never managed to place many students in industry.

Wood includes Herbert Read in his criticisms, and saw Read too quite as incapable as Thubron of understanding what it means "to translate the aesthetic into the practical object." 39

Of course, it does not follow from this relative failure that Thubron might not be right in stressing the fundamental nature of basic sensitivity to formal elements and the importance of training in the intuitive recognition of aesthetic quality. It would be difficult to argue that some such bases are not fundamental, though many other things might be also. What is seen by Wood to be missing are effective means to develop and build upon these fundamental bases in directions necessitated by the restrictions and requirements of engineering, marketing and so on.

If we extract from the possible meanings of fundamental or basic that of "being essential" rather than
that of being the required groundwork upon which future work is necessarily built, we would appear to be on safer ground. It may be argued that "formal" qualities at least—the point, line and plane of Kandinsky; the "elements" in Klee's pedagogy; the exemplars of "significant form" in Bell—are "essential," perhaps even the only essential aspects of art; that art works, as compared with works of science or of history or of philosophy, can only be separated out by virtue of their visual, formal qualities. If that argument is persuasive, the place in art education of training in the use of and the sensitivity to formal characteristics of visual works of art is assured, though, of course, how that training might take place is open still to a variety of interpretations. Rejection of the need for such training (arguably as a reaction to the rigidification of post-Leeds basic courses) has sometimes had disastrous results. In many cases it was replaced by requirements of pre-image verbal justification, conceptual defence, poetic literary idea, unique and idiosyncratic expression—these taking precedence over any purely aesthetic qualities the work might have.

**The purpose of higher education in art**

The question of what is "fundamental" is part of a larger dichotomy affecting art education. The twin horns of that dilemma relate to the purposes of higher education in art and especially in fine art, still the focus for the
majority of students in higher art education.

Those who teach and are taught think of the art school as existing for one purpose [self-discovery] while those who regulate and administer the system from outside think of it as being for quite another [the preparation of students for an examination which in turn leads to some professional qualification.]

If it were accepted that the art schools were offering an alternative mode of general education rather than a professional education, the difficulties described above might disappear, but while there was some recognition during the sixties of that at least alternative purpose in the art schools, the major function continued to be the professional one, and only that function was recognized by the bodies responsible for the qualifying examinations.

In Thubron's views some kind of reconciliation can be seen to be taking place. His teaching, and the teaching he advocated for the whole of the art school, was seen, first, as fundamental to all art and design activity, second, as rooted in the "best" practices of the best contemporary artists and therefore the best possible preparation for becoming a professional artist, and, three, as a set of activities—or rather a mode of activity—directly rooted in fundamental biological form-making processes and in basic psychological intuition, this last guaranteeing a fundamental efficacy for general education also—an education for life. That set of beliefs led him inevitably to his distrust—even abhorrence—of national examinations.
It led to his intolerance of differing viewpoints and to an arrogance in his relationships with other members of the faculties of which he was a part and with the administrators with whom he worked. In the early sixties it led him to support the concept of the Polytechnic as the preferred new home for most art schools, though his concept of the relationship between art and the other departments in the Polytechnic was not one that had much hope of realization.

There were, then, both personal and philosophical difficulties in the way of a full realization of the kind of art education that Thubron envisioned. He never sufficiently realized how essential it was to gain the cooperation and to encourage the personal contributions of faculty members and administrators he worked with. Even many of those who disagreed with the methods he used were sympathetic to his basic ideas. Among Thubron's weaknesses were his suspicion of people who appeared to be giving less than total allegiance to his ideas, an unwillingness to build slowly towards his goals, and an often abrasive reaction to overt criticism. He appeared to expect total support, immediately, and if neither that support nor an almost instantaneous flowering of student work occurred, his response seemed to be to abandon that situation and look for another where all these conditions might be met. Such appears to be the explanation for his resignation from Sunderland, his leaving Leeds in 1964, and his unwillingness
to stay at Lancaster for more than one year. It may be that the possibilities and expectations raised by the Bertschinger Art Foundation idea, which seemed to promise the ideal set of circumstances for the kind of work he wished to pursue, had a destructive effect on Thubron's career. Without that Shangri La on the horizon he might have been willing to battle on at Leeds in spite of the difficulties; although Hudson had been replaced by Dennis Harland and Tom Watt had moved to Canterbury, Leeds was still a major art school, one of the best known and best supported in the country, and in the years after 1964 it, in common with other major schools, was able to appoint many new faculty members and to re-equip its studios and workshops to a high level. At the same time new organizational structures of the art schools, and especially the incorporation of most of them into Polytechnics, produced difficulties many art educators found unacceptable. Eric Taylor resigned as Principal at Leeds; Tom Hudson resigned his position as Director of Studies at the Cardiff College of Art; in 1969 Eric Atkinson resigned as Head of Fine Art at Leeds (a position he had taken over from Thubron in 1964) and moved to Canada.

In 1960 foundation year work was separated from the three year studies for the new Diploma in Art and Design (the Dip.A.D.). This new diploma course began to show evidence of the effects of the new movements of Pop art and
Conceptual art. An American who visited the Leeds College of Art in 1969 wrote: "Over the years, a painstaking reassessment has produced an educational experiment at once humanistic, anarchistic and far-reaching in its ramifications, in which the process is more important than the end result." The notion of a "process-dominant" art education was then and remains an important concept in English art education. The description of the work at Leeds as "anarchistic" was new, though a development in that direction does not seem incompatible with Thubron's contribution. But the "fine art" basis, or at least a fine art basis predicated on the work of major artists of the first half of the twentieth century, seems to have disappeared.

There is, on the face of it, something outrageous about an art college that doesn't care whether its students ever paint, that cares less about the eternal riddles posed by art than the development of the human potential. But, on examination, the concept is not as far-fetched as it might appear.

The days when art could be defined only in terms of sculpture and painting, or even as the unique work of one man's hands, have disappeared.

It follows that art schools which continue to think of their goals in terms of producing painters and sculptors are out of touch with the contemporary mood and that what is needed is a school which will encourage the individual to develop his talent in whatever direction seems most inevitable. 42

A far cry from the faith in art which lies at the root of most art education through the centuries: A "contemporary mood" which encourages us to think of our task in such weak terms as that of developing talent "in whatever direction
seems most inevitable" is surely a thin basis for the education of the professional artist or for art seen as a creative mode of general education. Thubron was sympathetic to the notion of developing individual potential but would hardly approve of the total abandonment of the role of the making of art as a basis for higher education in the school of art.

Thubron's teaching rested on a unique blend or amalgam of certain features of art and art making. It appeared to combine a strong emphasis on the role of intuition and of innate ability with a commitment to "fundamentals" as conceived of by Klee and Gropius. It differed from the teaching of most of his compatriots in its unusually integrative approach. He was interested in the ways in which students might draw upon and develop their innate and natural aesthetic capacities. Fundamentals were not, at least most of the time, singled out for separate attention; rather the work of art and working in art were viewed as integrated systems within which instinct, intuition, knowledge and experience of artistic phenomena, "scientific" enquiry, and some limited kinds of technical mastery, all contributed to the finished product--the work of art and the emergence of the mature artist. This goal was more important than devising and teaching a "grammar" of art, as Pasmore was inclined to do, or than teaching technical methods for making art objects. It was a goal
limited by his constant allegiance to a "plastic" sensibility, the evidence for which could only be found in art objects themselves. That notion of the plastic was derived from the study of the works of some modern artists as well as from his own work as a maker of paintings and collages—a study of the works rather than the ideas, although he had, for example, read the Jaffe *De Stijl* book and had discussed its content with David Lewis and Norbert Lynton. In Mondrian, in Klee, in de Stael, in Van Doesburg, he found images and ways of manipulating a "real" plastic space. These exemplars, together with similar aspects found in Matisse (the drawings and late paper cut-outs especially), in Picasso, sometimes in Abstract Expressionist painting—Pollock, Rothko, Gorki, and Francis—formed a complex paradigm of art making. It was a paradigm drawn from his experience of the work; theoretical stances were superimposed on or developed out of that experience of the work—the work itself was the solid core upon which his teaching rested.

It was this vital aspect of Thubron's teaching which in the seventies appeared to lose favor with art school instructors. As we saw in the "1977" section, art schools--Leeds in particular--relied less and less on direct experience of works of art and of the visual world.

It seems unlikely that art education could now return to a nineteenth century concept of the development of
necessary artistic skills and techniques. The influence of post-sixties art—minimalism, conceptual art, performance art—and of vigorous anti-art movements, seems certain to ensure that, if there is any reinstatement of techniques, these will be fundamentally different from those current in English art school teaching between the two World Wars, or at the least that they will be reinforced with other studies based on the psychological and psycho-analytical research of the past forty years. While recognizing the value of studies in perception, in art criticism, in aesthetics, to the education of the artist or designer, we should be aware of the possible dangers of divorcing these studies from the practice of art and design itself. Thubron's pedagogical efforts differed from those of his compatriots chiefly in his insistence on the artist as the ultimate model and arbiter of art education practice. The question now is whether art educators can find new ways to maintain that connection while paying a necessary attention to related studies, or whether art education will continue to move further and further away from a base in the practice of art.
Notes


4. Ibid., 8.


10. Ibid., 108.


12. Ibid., 45.


17. Ibid.


21 Ibid., 46.

22 Ibid., 30.

23 Ibid.


25 Ibid.


27 Ibid., 22.


29 Ibid.


32 Williams, B. A portrait of the artist as professional lodger. The Times Higher Education Supplement, May 9, 1980, 9.

33 Pearson, N., op. cit., 7.


36 Ibid., 46.
37 Ibid., 30.


39 Ibid.


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APPENDIX A

A Thubron Interview

Harry Thubron in conversation with Patrick Heron, Anton Ehrenzweig and others about the Drawing with the Figure film. 1963

J.J. What is the point of figure drawing these days? What do you think we did on this Drawing with the Figure project? Give an account of it.

Scot. It looked a very novel situation, as opposed to this dead sitting at small donkeys. Whether is has anything to do with the models I don't know. It's the situation that's interesting.

J.J. Novelty is not enough, though -- there is something behind it.

Woman. This was a ten day course; could it be sustained for a year or two years?

Scot. I used to like drawings by Kokoschka, fuzzy lines etc. but now I like drawings by Ingres; it's a reaction against this freedom--I like the clarity of an Ingres drawing as opposed to this previous stuff.

H.T. There's nothing wrong, really, with a static life class of the old order - it's what you bring to it. If it's in the curriculum, day-in, day-out for most of the week that isn't enough for students. The essay was to bring something, to realize that these people could bring something to the figure, and to find out in what terms they could bring something to the figure. They were confronted with a new situation; that's what we designed it for.

J.J. Did you find people with some experience, who'd done life drg. before, got away faster on it?

H.T. They're the ones who wanted to slow the whole business up. If you are saturated with the old system, it doesn't contain the seeds of creative possibilities, simply because boredom has entered into it--habit, and one works in a pre-determined, pre-conceived sort of way. The object was to put people in a new situation where you could tap the inherent sensibility, the inherent rightness that people have to a degree that they seldom realize. It grew out of the sort of work we'd done like this before.
J.J. How do you do that?

H.T. The students ran from professional, semi-professional and others. In other schools, you see the model stuck in a corner and everyone slaving before it. So we had to get the antithesis of that. What I did try to get was this Turkish bath atmosphere - mixed! So that on tried to have enough models to infiltrate the people sufficiently so you felt more acutely that you were cheek by jowl with the nude. You were sitting in along with nudes rather than all of your surveying at a distance one solitary figure. One wanted this physical involvement. We tried with the size of the paper - working on the floor, the paper extended beyond the boundaries of their normal vision so that they were in the center of the paper and therefore whatever happened had to spread outwards and they had to find their way out into this. It was a physical involvement on the floor and the room had this also. Beyond this there was the moving figure, set moving deliberately, that heightened the process of finding. It stopped them drawing in the habitual sense. They found that speed was a factor that heightened the finding process.

J.J. What sort of instructions were they given at the beginning? Anything very specific?

H.T. They were specific in an indirect sort of way. We had to push them by word description of what they were about - roughly in a direction, and yet not paint the end product. We didn't want any answers that you wanted; we wanted their own solution. So it was only a fractional encouragement about drawing longer and working with such a speed whereby a natural rhythm prevailed; they couldn't sustain slow deliberate process; they couldn't freeze in any way what they saw or even recapture by remembering so that they had to respond immediately and work much more naturally. They were able to relax in this situation. And yet they were alert - that was important.

Scot. Was there any change when they came in the next day? Did the initial attitude remain?

H.T. I think the great thing was to start with movement because they hadn't been in this situation before. When they got the idea that this was an exploratory situation, then we were able to slow the model and they were able to look at the figure--the static figure--with purpose from their own point of view.
Betty. In the assembly part, some of them seemed to get away from the figure completely. Were they able to get back to it again?

H.T. They were making marks analogous to the figure but somehow that weakened the figure work upstairs. Downstairs was a finding process—it allowed for finding. Upstairs they'd already got this idea but what it did, I think, was to give a certain competence and surety—they were working much more naturally. Initially the speed was overly quick—deliberately to be a counterpoint to the way they'd worked before—in the course of the ten days we did slow down, but they then proceeded to work with a more natural ease, not compulsively and without being in any way hurried. This allowed for a more personal solution.

J.J. Terry and Nibs (Frost and Dalwood) initially proposed a rather oblique way of getting at it—starting with the marks etc.

Betty. Are you constantly varying speeds and objectivity of viewpoints?

H.T. In this course we started with the moving model.

Betty. Do the two things interact?

H.T. You can't use the models racing around like greyhounds forever. You've got to leave the students to themselves. All these things you employ in the early stages of a course primarily to let people find out more about themselves and what in fact they can do. Then you've got to give them a long time to sort themselves out and you've got to come back now and then—in any institutions boredom is the enemy and the inability of people themselves to do anything about it. You can change the way you enter a situation so that people will become alert, remain alert, and in being alert they see more, respond more instinctively to things. Any situation can become dull, static; you've got to do something about it. So if you move the models—this is new—but if you keep on moving and moving the models then it's quite obvious that just having the model posed in the corner could have possibilities. What happened in the course of the week is that it was a process of finding; once they saw that they could use materials for their own sake and build with, for example, the marks that charcoal can make, then they could enter into the static figure from a creative, from an
imaginative point of view, rather than from a dull, externalized reproduction of just how it looks optically. to this degree they moved into the figure.

J.J. Relating the figure to the marks and not the marks to the figure. Nibs proposed that at one stage.

A.E. The best work had somehow obliterated the figure.

H.T. I think a lot of what is done with the figure is done by avoiding the figure. The way is to go towards the figure, to have some feeling for it, move through it and beyond it on the basis of some understanding. In a sense you know it will turn up some very interesting drawings, but you don't really know to what degree the drawing of some significance can emerge.

Betty. Does this help your initial question about the value of figure drawing?

Scot. Partly, but I still feel it could be done with cows if they were sufficiently domesticated; you'd get the same reaction.

H.T. What we were really trying to get them to do was to live with the real reality--what was happening on the paper.

A.E. But the confusion of space that the figure and, let's say, the backsides--the confusion became creative and did not remain an isolated thing.

J.J. The models contributed a lot themselves; into making the confusion.

A.E. Perhaps you can say, Harry, something about how the models contributed to the situation.

H.T. They'd never done anything like this themselves before. They asked to be told how to move. One had to give them some rough instructions how they might take three or four points. They helped directly--their black foot marks were often good points of departure! It certainly gave people courage to make even more brutal marks. They were grubbing around, involved directly in the process of doing, which was critical; it cut off the top level of thinking, so they were thinking in the best sense which (is that which) goes along with doing.
didn't worry them that someone's foot was by their earhole and that their behind was in fact immediately in front of them. There was a model still further through and we asked them to use the figures that were drawing with the models, not to separate these out, though some indeed did so; so that the participants became part of the whole moving scene.

Betty. Could one use this approach with people who hadn't done figure drawing before?

H.T. Well, some of them hadn't done figure drawing before. Frequently, they were superior to some of the trained art masters of old who were so self-conscious for such a period of time, and so afraid to let their hair down, that they clung rather desperately to mechanistic devices that were the cliches that they'd always used, whereas the people with little or less experience tended to jump in—which was a good thing.
APPENDIX B
An Interview with John Wood
Transcript of a Tape Recording of John Wood
Talking about the Basic Design Course, 14.6.74.

I.

John Wood. These are (early?) Thubron things, you see. That's Harry at his Japanese influence. That's his Matisse influence.

(Gives me copies of Basic Research, & Ex. Cat. Malerei und Plastik aus Leeds.) It relates, a lot of the exhibts, you see were students, we insisted on sending, we sent a lot of students work this was really Basic Course.

I recognize some of the stuff there, you see, I didn't, I'm at fault there, I never dated this. This is some exhibition at Scarborough. (Some?) of the stuff I recognize, also occurs in that Newcastle thing (Developing Process). That's Terry Frost at Leeds.

That's the great days of the Basic Course where ... was Harry, Terry, Riki Atkinson, Tom Hudson, the sculptor (Harry) ............. Philips .........................

These I found I still had a few of, there extremely nice. These must have been Scarborough, one of the Scarborough Courses, student work, that, I think or almost identical occurs in that Newcastle

55 I would say, or 56 or 57, one of those years. Students work.

But obviously enormously influenced by Victor. That was the sort of stuff which particularly the related forms - absolutely Harry influenced of course.

I: Yes, you say this is influenced by Victor and this is influenced by Harry. It seems that Harry's work is more organic, less formal.

John Wood. Yes, I think that would be a fair generalisation. I'll talk to you about that in a minute.

You see, I was interested; I was the assistant for Further
Education in the North Riding, for, well, I mean, back into
the thirties, I was, I worked in the North Riding 20 years. And
after the war, during the war, but after the war, particularly,
we began to promote a series of summer schools at Scarborough, and
they were open to anyone, they were not directed exclusively at
teachers, but the greater proportion of their students who went
were teachers, from various forms of institution, about a 5th of
them, perhaps, or a 6th of them would be our own North Riding teacher:
the others came from all parts of the country, and as it became
... we got the height of the period of the co-operation of Victor
& Harry, they came from all parts of the world, so they came from
America, France & Germany, and, intended, as I said, for teachers
... It was my particular toll, or my particular ambition was the
very simple idea, that all the arts are one, you see, and that
if you could get people to come together, particularly if you could
in an educational, from an educational point of view, if you could
get people to come together informally, some education being a
smuttling process...

Mr. A smuttling process. I don't know what that means.

John Wood. That was the famous saying of the one time...........

Mormon who was the Professor of Education at Leeds here, some 30
years ago. He was the father of the present Bishop of Rippon
P.W. Mormon. He said all education is a smuttling process. Well, the
Yorkshire people understand what that means. Sait, or smear is the
paint pigment you put on sheep, to show that you put on sheep to show
that they are yours, you see, and when the sheep. And when the sheep
rub, one against another you see, something rubs off one sheep onto
the other, and you get a common pinky color, or browny color or
whatever the, smit the name, smit or smittle. So Education is a
as a 'Basic Course. As soon as Tom Hudson began to talk about a Basic Course as if it was a thing which was settled, you see, or Victor began to talk of it as teaching the grammar of art, you see, Harry used to say 'To hell with that! It's a continuous experience, it's a continuous process of experimentation and discovery, and there are no fixed points which have been settled and found once and for all. So to that extent, you see it would be, it's not out of character or out of experience, that he would perhaps disavow the Bauhaus influence. But I know, you see, I was in it from the beginning. I know that the Bauhaus was the... I don't think there was anything there, in either Victor or Harry which didn't go straight back to Bauhaus originals and they were aware of it. And Herbert Read, you see, Herbert came, I remember, I think he thought he was correcting me, I mean he was correcting me. He said, you see, we had the students work put up on the wall, which we always did at the end of a course, you see, giving them the pleasure of seeing their work, and giving us the pleasure too, and giving us all, the common pleasure of seeing. Herbert looked at it rather severely, you see. And said 'You must not be under any misapprehension, these are not works of art, although some of them may be near to it, or seem to go near to be thought so, but they're not works of art, these are essays, they're trials they're experimentations, they're valuable. But they're not ends, you see. So I think Harry would have agreed with that although Herbert said it, I think correcting, putting us all a little, reminding us all of us that we were perhaps getting a bit too enthusiastic about what had been achieved. I've an amusingly salutary story about that. Guy Rodden, once was at one of my courses with Maurice de Saussurez. And we got some people from
smelling process. I believe that education was not a thing that you could, this is before I knew Harry. Harry was a great formative influence on my own thinking. But I really believed that there wasn't very much that you could usefully teach. But you could give people opportunities of finding out what was of interest to them and using it in their own development so that we had summer schools of art, music & drama. I did even have, we had at the beginning, I even had Marine Biologists so that we all went on the shore, but I gave that up as being too much of a diversion. And at first my art was formal, orthodox. I had people like Maurice de Saursaures, who was, Maurice was a good painter but a very orthodox painter, I mean he was no, he didn't set the pace. But it was through Maurice that I got to know Harry. And Harry was at that time at Sunderland, that would be in the early fifties and I formed an association with Harry. And Harry was my patron, always with the summer school at that time & until 57 when I left the North Riding. And then I came to Leeds and did two winter schools which were the counterparts of the summer school, and still had Harry. And through Harry I got to know Victor, and I got to know Victor, my association with Victor is interesting because I, as it were, picked up Victor, if it's not modest for me to say that I picked him up, but I did, I picked Victor up when he was at his lowest ebb. He'd, it was just after the war, 49 or 50, he'd had a bicycle accident, gone over his handlebars and had his leg in plaster, he was hobbling about and he had never done, he'd already been asked to go to Newcastle and was in fact going that coming September. But he'd never
done any real teaching of people who were not artists. It was quite a new experience for Victor. And my first experiences of him he was extraordinarily diffident, he didn’t, wasn’t by any means sure that it would be his line of country, and indeed, I don’t think, initially, pedagogically, Victor learnt from Harry. artistically Artistically, Harry learnt from Victor, though Harry was already a power in his own right, and of course they both looked back to the Bauhaus. There’s nothing I know of, in the English Basic Courses, which isn’t just Bauhaus, adapted to English needs of 30 years later.

Mr. Really.

John Wood. Yes, I think that’s true. Does that surprise you?

Mr. Well it’s a controversial point, and I’m interested that you said that because Harry said that the only contact he had with the Bauhaus, was reading Werner Haftmann Paul Klee.

John Wood. Um. That isn’t true, you see. Harry was soaked in the Bauhaus ideas. Harry was a very strange fellow. You never saw him reading. But Marx he’d read all sorts of things, and certainly, Harry knew all about the Bauhaus, and he knew all about the work, I mean he was thoroughly, he was already using Bauhaus, or reviving, or rediscovering the Bauhaus ideas. I mean I went to see Messrs Hies (van der Rohe) in America and, I mean it was at Harry’s suggestion, and that was very early on. No, you see Harry, between ourselves... Shall we talk about Harry first of all? Harry was, I spent my lifetime in education, you see, and I’d been particularly associated with education of teachers, although I was an administrator, I really was, I was often main stream in my work and what I was able to do, you see was, I was able, as an administrator, I could provide the situation if the forms of these summer schools and in the form of influence with authorities
first in the North Riding and then in Leeds, where people like Victor and Harry and Tom Hudson and all sorts of others could do what you see, I mean I could give them a free hand. I could see that they had money and that they had students, they had promises they had everything they asked, you see, to work and, complete freedom. I was not an artist or ever considered myself an artist...
believed that ability in the arts was widely distributed, and
that all it needed was to, that he was a great fix, he had a great
faith in human beings, you see, he really believed that there was
talent was there to a remarkable degree and that we could be a
seeing nation and a listening nation, and an acting nation, if,
all we needed to do was to give people the opportunity, and the
inspiration and to let them get on with it. Well, of course, there
are limitations to that, and Harry may not always have realised
the limitations, but there were no limitations in his, when
he was the teacher, when he was the contact. Other people of
course, well, Victor, you see had not had experience of this sort
of situation, . He'd taught at, wherever he'd taught, Camberwell
, he'd done some teaching, but he was not a natural teacher. He
was one of the worst speakers of course that the world has ever
known, public speakers. You've got to listen to Victor very
carefully to get the idea out of his rambling speeches. But
Wendy was a very good teacher. And the amusing thing. I went
to see Victor. I didn't know anything about Wendy, you see,
but it was perfectly clear that it was either Victor and Wendy,
or nothing, you see. Victor couldn't make a journey without
Wendy and Wendy turned out to be a great advantage, because
she had a very great gift. Victor was naturally shy, naturally
diffident, and naturally dogmatic. But he used to go round
looking at students work. He'd say 'Ugh u bub ub a ugh you
dont really mean that do you, I mean , you dont really think that
any damn good . 'I'm mean ugh ugh ugh what are you trying
to do' and so on. But he did learn very quickly. He learnt from
Harry and from Wendy. He tumbled to this idea of forming an
informal relationship with a student in which they were
encouraged. As I said, he learnt everything that Victor knew
about the teaching side of their... 

basic ideas of training... I don't think it was training of artists really, you see, I mean, that wasn't the sort of experience I had with them; primarily, although, when I came to Leeds, which I did in 57, because I had very close contact with the college, I tried to keep out of it. I tried not to interfere, to get involved with the college, but I couldn't really because of course I knew everybody. Harry had come here to Leeds, through my engineering, before I came. Tom Hudson came because I was able to, I was administering the college, and Harry said he wanted Tom, he wanted Niki Atkinson. When it came to using the Gregory Fellows, you see, that was a very interesting example of Harry's audacity. He got, it began, I think with, I think, I don't think any of them taught in the college. Alan Davis, I think, I don't remember whether Alan ever taught in the College, although he gave some informal talks, but, anyhow, we had very close contact with them. Terry Frost, of course, Terry Frost, Terry Frost, virtually, unofficially, although he was a Gregory Fellow, and getting some sum of money which, it sounds ludicrous now, but he was getting £400 a year was thought to be a lot, you see, as a Gregory Fellow. He came and taught a great deal in the college, and he got a lot more money teaching part time in the college, than he got, as a Gregory Fellow. And he was a great influence. And Harry was, you see, very welcoming in that respect. He made contacts with Ravetts, who was a scientist. He had him in, talking to the students, and actually teaching informally in the college and, you could never tie Harry down and certainly he was never tied down to a Basic Course. His Basic course was a developing Basic course. He didn't, I don't know what he says now, but he would never admit that there was such a thing...
as a Basic Course. As soon as Ion Hudson began to talk about a Basic Course as if it was a thing which was settled, you see, or Victor began to talk of it as teaching the grammar of art, you see, Harry used to say 'To hell with that! Its a continuous experience, its a continuous process of experimentation and discovery, and there are no firm points which have been settled and found once and for all. So to that extent, you see it would be, its not out of character or out of experience, that he would perhaps disavow the Bauhaus influence. But I know, you see, I was in it from the beginning. I know that the Bauhaus was the... I don't think there was anything there, in either Victor or Harry which didn't go straight back to Bauhaus originals and they were aware of it. And Herbert Read, you see, Herbert once, I remember, I think he thought he was correcting me, I mean he was correcting me. He said, you see, we had the students work put up on the wall, which we always did at the end of a course, you see, giving them the pleasure of seeing their work, and giving us the pleasure too, and giving us all, the common pleasure of seeing. Herbert looked at it rather severely, you see. And said 'You must not be under any misapprehension, these are not works of art, although some of them may be near to it, or seem to go near to be thought so, but these they're not works of art, these are essays, they're trials they're experimentations, they're valuable. But they're not ends, you see.

So, I think Harry would have agreed with that although Herbert said it, I think correcting, putting us all a little, reminding all of us that we were perhaps getting a bit too enthusiastic about what had been achieved, I've an amusingly salutary story about that. Guy Rodden, once was at one of my courses with Maurice de Saussure. And we got some people from
APPENDIX C

Bibliographic Data

Harry Thubron


1946-50 Teacher of painting at West Hartlepool school of Art
1950-5 Head of Fine Art, Sunderland College of Art
1955-64 Head of Fine Art, Leeds College of Art
1964-5 Head of Fine Art, Lancaster College of Art
1965-6 Visiting Professor, Fine Arts Department, University of Illinois, USA
1966-8 Head of Painting, Leicester College of Art
1968-9 Art Council grant; visitor and adviser to International School in Spain
1969-70 Director of Studies, School of Art, Kingston, Jamaica.
1971- Part-time teaching, Fine Art Department, Goldsmith's College, London
1976 Awarded Arts Council Bursary

One-man exhibitions

1961 Frauenfeld, Switzerland
1963 University of Leeds
1964 Lords Gallery, London

Mixed exhibitions include

1955 Hatton Gallery, Durham University, Newcastle upon Tyne
1962 Lords Gallery, London
1964 Queen's Square Gallery, Leeds
The Teaching Image, City Art Gallery, Leeds
Louisville, Kentucky, USA (with Elma Askham Thubron)
1966 Krannaert Museum, University of Illinois, USA
1967 Queen's Square Gallery, Leeds (with Elma Askham Thubron)
1974 British Painting '74, Hayward Gallery, London
1975 Source and Image, Camden Arts Centre London College, Angela Flowers, London
Public collections include

Gulbenkian Foundation; Arts Council of Great Britain;
British Council; Contemporary Art Society

Other Activities


Publications


Films

Drawing with the Figure 1963 (copies with British Film Institute, American Universities, Museum of Modern Art, New York, etc); All Sherry Trifle - No Bread 1965 - a pedagogical essay in fundamental structures; A 45-minute film of course work at Jamaica School of Art, made by Jamaican Information Services and shown on television 1970.
Lectures

Lectured widely throughout Great Britain and the USA (Harvard, Yale, Chicago, Kansas City, etc.) 1965-6

Commissions

Large composite panel in polyester-polystyrene for the Branch College of Science, Leeds, sponsored by Shell Chemicals as a research piece (included student work) 1963-4;
1. Leeds College of Art
2. Drawings from the Leeds Foundation course
3. Drawings from Leeds College of Art
4. Drawings from Leeds College of Art
5. Drawings from Leeds College of Art
6. Drawings from the Leeds Foundation course
7. Foundation work from Leeds College of Art
8. Color work from the Leeds Foundation course
9. Color work from the Leeds Foundation course
10. Three-dimensional work from the Leeds Foundation course
11. Three-dimensional work from the Leeds Foundation course
12. Three-dimensional work from the Leeds Foundation course
13. Three-dimensional work from the Lancaster School of Art
14. Three-dimensional work from the Lancaster School of Art
15. Work from the University of Illinois
16. Work from the University of Illinois
17. Paintings from the Jamaica School of Art
18. Paintings from the Jamaica School of Art
19. Work by Harry Thubron
20. Work by Harry Thubron
21. Elma and Harry Thubron in Jamaica
22. At the Jamaica School of Art