This is a video exploration of Art’s facilitation in the development of higher order thinking skills. More specifically it is an audio/visual rendition highlighting the importance of apprenticeship and mastery in authentic assessment, whether it be a 12th century model or one that is in use today, this video seeks to highlight the importance of the arts in the development and transference of skills not easily taught through lectures or textbooks.

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**Authentic Assessment**

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**Authentic Assessment in the Arts**

**Welcome to authentic assessment 5305G; The Last Assignment...**

For my final project I have chosen to experiment with video, even though as Stephen Novak indicated in his fishing segment, that trying something new for a final assessment is perhaps not the wisest or most common choice, but since I have always been one to push the boundaries that confined me, I will continue with this video exploration of Art’s facilitation in the development of higher order thinking skills. What follows is an audio/visual rendition highlighting the importance of apprenticeship and mastery in authentic assessment, whether it be a 12th century model or one that is in use today, this video seeks to highlight the importance of the arts in the development and transference of skills not easily taught through lectures or textbooks. To demonstrate this, I have turned to the craft guilds, specifically those of the stonemasons to feature in the film, for both its long history in the arts as well as its relevance in today’s society. Like the trade unions of modern day, the guilds protected the standards, production, pricing and marketing of a particular craft and sheltered its members from outside competition. Apprenticeship training is probably one of the earliest forms of authentic assessment, and is not unlike training in the arts today, where a typical class might be structured into three areas of learning; the first being demonstrations, the 2nd is that of students working, and the last segment is the critiques (of one’s own work, that of one’s peers and those of other artists). A student’s or an apprentices’ experiences in viewing discussing, and even emulating great works of art is akin to McTighe’s (1997) suggestion that models of excellence be provided, and for art students these are not only useful for instruction, but can also aid in ongoing assessment for feedback and adjustment of their work. Essentially understanding great works of art provides the apprentice and the art student with a foundation from which to structure assessments of their own work more objectively against public standards, which is also something that Darling-Hammond (1994) advocates in her paper.

Though no one really knows how old Masonry is, we only have to look at the building of the pyramids or King Solomon's Temple to see just how far back its history extends; suggesting that some form of coordination among the stone masons would have begun almost two thousand years ago. In the 12th century the work of the stone mason was difficult; it called for a high degree of skill and required knowledge of mechanics and geometry as well as that of stone-masonry. Since most people could not read or write and books were virtually unknown, these skills were passed down from generation to generation through apprenticeship training. As Madus & Dwyer (1999) state, the guild system was hierarchical, consisting of three levels: apprentices, journeymen, and masters. "In theory a child taken on as an apprentice was trained by his master in the well-kept secrets of his craft until skilled enough to become a journeyman, and subsequently a master himself." Learning the craft through apprenticeship took approximately 7 years, during which time the Master Mason was obligated to teach theory as well as the practice of operative Masonry (that which is devoted to actual building activities). Once the apprenticeship had been completed the conduct of the apprentice was reported, and finally the apprentice was required to prove his skill by producing a "Master's Piece." Only then would he be considered a Fellow of the Craft, which at that time meant full membership in the guild. The Freemasons were the best of the Masons and were able to move from place to place when their work was concluded, although some commissions could take decades to complete. Lodge members met regularly, divided its membership into grades, and admitted members only by invitation. Perhaps Kohn’s (1994) discussion on the sorting of students by age is a derivative from the guild’s division of its members by skill and grade scale as determined by their trade.

In spite of all the training, master masons were not provided with documents since most people could not read, instead they were recognized through secret signs, tokens, or words, and through their mason's mark, which fully qualified masons were given as a way to designate their work from that of others. The craft of building in medieval times was often viewed as a mysterious process, in which secret forms of knowledge were used to produce majestic structures. Unfortunately for the stone masons those mysteries were resolved when Euclid's geometry was rediscovered and published, thereby giving to the public many of the Stone Mason's trade secrets. According to Madus & Dwyer, “the gradual demise of the guild system, began in the 14th century, and was caused by a slowing of trade and the division of labour between the new towns springing up in Western Europe. As well Masters began to hire non-apprentice peasants to produce their wares and both Masters and apprentices began to specialize in smaller tasks, and so a "factory" system evolved”. While these factors brought about a decline in the craft guilds centuries ago, they have nevertheless reclaimed their former power and status, as can be seen in the shape of the Masonic Lodges and the trade unions at work throughout the world today.

**The Arts Today**

To illustrate a real life application of the concept of mastery through apprenticeship we will journey back in time to the Khmer Empire where the art of stone carving reached monumental heights with the construction of the Angkor temples. Imagine if you will the sights and sounds of 12th c Cambodia and observe the intricate details those master craftsmen created in their cities of stone. The modern name, Angkor Wat, means "City Temple"; Angkor coming from the Sanskrit word meaning city and Wat is the Khmer word for temple. Today listed as a World Heritage Site, restoration of these structures continues with the help of workshops such as the Artisan d’Angkor. Like the work of craftsmen from previous centuries, stone carving today is created from sandstone in the traditional methods taught by master craftsmen trained in techniques passed down from their ancestors.

“The workshop is set against the backdrop of the glorious Angkor temples, Artisans d'Angkor is a Cambodian company of arts and crafts devoted to the revival and preservation of traditional Cambodian faire. It provides training to young Cambodians, enabling them to rediscover lost ancient talents and make a living from their skills while working right in their home villages. During their training, craftsmen learn to capture the movements used in olden times and master the traditional tools that they make themselves and adapt to their personal lines of work” (Artisan Angkor). As Newmann & Archbald state, authentic assessment involves producing rather than reproducing a product, which is certainly the type of practice taking place in these Cambodian apprenticeship programs.The artisans in the workshops do not use machines in their craft; rather they start by rough-hewing the pre-cut blocks of stone or wood to come up as closely as possible with the shape of the final statue or carving. The artisan next begins the actual work of sculpturing or ornamentation, using ancestral techniques, right up to finishing the statue. Each artisan has his own way of working, with the result that each piece is truly unique, and is produced not through a mould, but by the patience of an apprentice who becomes through long hours of patient work, a master artist. Since these craftsmen use their skills to sell handcrafted products, as well as assisting with restoration work on the temple site, this project would indicate that these students are as Wiggins states ‘effectively performing with their acquired knowledge.

To further illustrate the power of authentic assessment, I will examine how an accident on the steps of a 16th century palace led to an insightful glimpse into the world of the apprentice/master relationship. Unable to travel further, I enrolled in a miniature painting course in Jaipur, India, which was taught by a local artisan, in an open air gazebo complete with traditional Indian musicians playing in the background. His method of instruction primarily involved demonstrating the painting techniques while we, the apprentice/students followed along, albeit with many pauses in-between for clarification or further help since the instructor’s English was somewhat limited. Although he could not always verbalize his instructions or feedback, he was quite adept in the use of visual language, and what he was unable to explain there was a community of people around that would happily intervene. As well our ‘Master’ understood that we each came with a different set of skills, and so needed to be individually supported along the way. And as Montgomery states, we should be evaluating individual progress relative to each students starting point. With that approach I felt more comfortable in a class of which I had little prior knowledge of. Incredibly, besides successfully instructing me in the traditional painting techniques of the miniature artists, I was also taught how an apprentice would grind semi-precious stones, and then mix the powdered pigments to create vibrant, colourful paints. To teach with such limited verbal discourse is not only a testament to the power of the visual image, but it also says a great deal about an artist who can teach and provide feedback to a group of students whose language he barely speaks.

That experience would indicate that even when language is a barrier authentic assessment practices can cross cultural borders to achieve levels of learning not always attained even when communication is not an issue. From my own training as an artist, as well as that of that stone masons, it is clear that artists have similar “studio habits of mind” as (Winner, E., Hetland, L., Veenema, S., Sheridan, K., & Palmer, P., 2006) calls them, which suggests that as “artists we learn to envision what cannot be seen directly by the eyes, we learn to express mood, atmosphere and a personal vision, students are helped to move beyond their habitual ways of seeing and to notice things that might otherwise be invisible. Students are asked to think about and explain their process, intentions, and decisions, and they asked to make evaluations about what works and what does not work in their own artwork and in that of their peers. As such students learn to make and defend aesthetic judgments. They are asked implicitly and explicitly to try new things beyond what they have done before, to explore and take risks. Students in visual arts classes learn about art history and the practicing world of art today. They discover their own relationship to the domain of art as well as learning about the community of people and institutions that shape the art world such as galleries, museums, curators, and gallery owners” (Winner, et al., 2006). In essence art students are trained to think critically, to evaluate and to problem solve on a continual basis, which is essentially an imbedded part of artistic practice. Do these studio habits of mind transfer across various fields of learning? The researchers believe that the eight habits of mind discussed in their paper are important in a wide range of disciplines, not only in the visual arts. For instance, the skill of reflectionincluding self-evaluation is important in any discipline, as is the ability to see links between what one does as a student in a particular domain with that of what professionals do in that domain.

Authentic Assessment as I have understood it involves real life tasks (or as close to real life as possible), provides continual feedback, and is a work in progress requiring time and commitment, not just a one shot lesson. It is a model that allows students to be assessed based on their own starting point as they learn to analyse, problem solve and seek alternative solutions. Authentic assessment creates a framework from which students can construct their own interpretations and understandings of the course material. As Eisner (1999) states, the arts can teach us to use other forms of expression as vehicles through which meaning is conceptualized and expressed. This also serves to remind us that we all have differing rates of development and excel in different domains of knowledge, yet much of our education is still standardized and uniform. Perhaps it is time for the administrators of educational policies to embrace the arts and it long history of authentic assessment rather than cutting artistic programs in favour of those deemed more important.

I believe it will be the arts that lead the way and provide support for a more visual interpretation of academic text. Our world is not just black and white; I think academia could use a splash of colour!

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Link to video: <http://youtu.be/tznwucUFX1A>