

MOBILE LEARNING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF FINE ART EDUCATION

Written by Jake Jackson

When Freud referred to the writer as “the dreamer in broad daylight” in his 1908 essay entitled ‘Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming’ (*The Freud Reader* edited by Peter Gray, 1989, p. 436) he was attempting to explain the psychology of creativity, with a particular emphasis on a disposition possessed by poets, storytellers, novelists and playwrights. Roland Barthes in his short story entitled ‘The Writer on Holiday’ (*Mythologies*, 1972) also found it necessary to place emphasis upon certain qualities he felt were intrinsic to the life, and mindset, of a writer. By using analogy Freud and Barthes have both, in their own way, managed to comprehend through erudite articulation an understanding of a state of being - a ‘calling’, one that for many makers can often be very difficult to fully express in words: it simply is, an unspoken way of life. However, instead of the written word many visual artists have long chosen a variety of different mediums as forms of language in order to better express themselves, their ideas, their work and their lives. The education that art schools provide helps nurture, encourage and support alternative forms of expression however, for any new art student the very specifics of an art school education/experience means that Mobile Learning can only be implemented once a clearer understanding of what this calling really means and entails. Therefore, what is proposed in this document will begin as a professional practice pilot project specifically designed for third year students that, if successful, could form the basis of a new MA programme that has the potential to be a model for all schools within art school including, the School of Fine Art, the School of Design and the School of Architecture.

It is possibly unfashionable to say that an art school education is a vocational training, or a form of apprenticeship. However, what is detailed in this document will help support this claim, and will strengthen the argument that the education provided by our arts institutions continues to be relevant, life wide, and life long. Similarities can be drawn from Peter Alheits interpretations on ‘lifewide’ learning, as discussed in his essay ‘Biographical Learning – within the new lifelong learning discourse’ (*Contemporary Theories of Learning* edited by Knud Illeris, 2009, p.117) and explained in the following quote that also can be used to describe how we teach, and what is experienced and learnt throughout art school education.

“The ‘lifewide’ dimension brings the complimentary of formal, non-formal and informal learning into sharp focus.”

By its very nature an art school education is very specific, and can provide one with an experience that allows for the assimilation of all that has been learnt throughout an Undergraduate course to become a way of life. However, for a large proportion of arts graduates the reality of leaving the safe confines of art school is a bewildering experience, primarily because putting theory into practice relies heavily on skills that are rarely tested out (in the real world) whilst studying at either Undergraduate or Postgraduate level. This is a troubling statement, but I believe what is illustrated in this proposal will help address this issue.

It is an undeniable fact that looking towards the future is of paramount importance as 21st Century educational developments increasingly rely on, amongst other things, new technologies as learning tools. However, when considering Mobile Learning as a new approach to art student’s education it slowly became apparent that parallels could be drawn from a model that has been a way of life for craftspeople since medieval times. Given the vocational training qualities inherent in art school education, the idea that the Wandergeselle (the Journeyman), and Wanderjahre (the Journeyman Years), could be starting points for a technology driven contemporary educational model started to make sense. For that reason, the guiding principles, along with the fundamental structure of this traditional practice, will therefore form the basis of this proposal.

Undergraduate Mobile Learning Project

This professional practice pilot project will mirror the Erasmus (term long) exchange programme that many institutions participate in at year three level. One of the goals that drives this project is to encourage and expand who institutional exchange partners are, and for the specifics of art school education, these collaborators will include Galleries, Museums, Artist Residency Programmes, Artist studios, City Councils, Publishing Houses and Arts Organizations. This project will have an emphasis on a number of pertinent institutional concerns, and will address the following; flexible learning, the changing needs and demands of our student body, the use of mobile technology as learning, communication and making tools, the expansion of professional practice skills and finally, institutional employability objectives.

Postgraduate Mobile Learning Masters Degree

This Masters Degree course will take the form of an on-line, off-site, Postgraduate professional practice based programme, and for those who choose the Peripatetic Practitioner Pathway, the making will also be technologically driven. One of the benefits of this MA is that it will allow for greater student choice. Therefore, there will be four pathways to choose from that will cater for arts graduates who are looking to expand their skills by selecting appropriate areas of interest that are suitable, and specific to, their creative dispositions.

FOUR PATHWAYS

1. THE PERIPATETIC PRACTITONER – a nomadic worldwide residency programme.
2. THE URBAN PRACTITIONER – arts organisation placements, artist assistants, curatorial assistants, publishing internships, council run initiatives and education and outreach opportunities.
3. THE CORPORATE PRACTITIONER – introducing lateral thinkers to the boardroom.
4. THE EDUCATION PRACTITIONER - use already existing exchange institutions as sites for this pathway that allows for students that are interested in education to gain accredited teaching experience.

Part of the teaching on this course will take the form of a “roaming faculty” as discussed by Clementine Deliss in her essay ‘Roaming, Prelusive, Permiabile’ (*Art School Propositions for the 21st Century* edited by Steven Henry Madoff, 2009, p139). This approach will rely on specialist faculty that will, for the purpose of assessment, periodically visit students in situ.

The logistics, funding, credit scoring and the finer details for both the Undergraduate project and the Mobile Learning MA degree will clearly need thorough consideration in order for them to be in anyway viable as a legitimate and validated courses however, for the purpose of this document these detailed specifics are, at present, not included.