

Masters and Apprentices of Textile Craft

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This article describes how the craftsmen at the workroom at Handarbetets vänner, Stockholm, learned their craft skills during the years 1948–2012. What this knowledge consisted of and how the apprentices' knowledge grows into skillfulness. Interviews with 15 weavers and embroiderers who have worked during the time period form the empirical material. The period of time was chosen according to the informants' times of employment.

The strategies for learning are affected by dialogue between the craftsmen, both a verbal and a silent dialogue. The dialogue is an important part of the learning even though the making is central. The workroom forms its own way of making textile art, a way of doing that is learned from master to apprentice. In this situated knowledge, the different masters have their own ways of for instance mixing color and material, all corresponding with core values. The learning is also affected by the artistic leader and the artist.

The learning within the workroom occurs in the making of objects, but never at the cost of the quality of the objects. The core values of the establishments, and the fact that there is a strive to be profitable, makes the circumstances. The collaboration with the artist in creating unique textile art is the primary goal; the learning is something that is taken for granted in order to withhold the competence in the establishment.

Keywords: textile craft, master and apprentice, craftsmen, textile art, workroom

Introduction

The craftsmen at *Handarbetets vänner* produce textiles of the highest standard. Textiles for public spaces, churches, and private customers are produced in close collaboration with artists. Color, material, and technique are chosen on the basis of creativity and experience, and are adapted to a specific design and according to the artist's vision. In this process, the craftsmen's primary aim is to make a textile more unique and beautiful than the sketch; the transformation into textile must add something that gives the transformation a purpose.

The aim of this article is to present how the craftsmen learned their craft skills during the years 1948-2012, what this knowledge consisted of, and how the apprentices' knowledge grows into skillfulness worthy of a master of embroidery or weaving. Primary questions have been: How do the informants describe situations of learning and what do they describe as important strategies? What conditions played an important role in the learning situation and how did these affect the situation? Fifteen craftsmen verbalize their experiences of learning, how they were taught and how they, in turn, taught others.



Picture 1. Yarn ready to be used in a weave, the colors are mixed specially for this piece of textile art.

The learning takes place in a sealed environment, the workroom at Handarbetets vänner in Stockholm, Sweden, and is thereby not a general study of the learning of crafts skills. The study draws on sociocultural theory (Dreyfus, 2004; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2000; Lave, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 2011; Lindström, 2004) and theories of practical knowledge (Molander, 2003; Schön, 1983; Winbladh & Bengtsson, 2003) as a framework of interpretation. The interest is particularly in how the apprentice knowledge grows into the knowledge of a master. An earlier study of Handarbetets vänner (Danielsson, 1991) has provided knowledge on the historical background and organizational conditions of the establishment.

Historical background

Handarbetets vänner was founded in Stockholm in the spirit of national romance and the emancipation of women in 1874. The aim was, and still is, to preserve and develop the Swedish textile craft tradition and to make it possible for women to make a living in the textile craft by offering education and employment (Danielsson, 1991, p. 92). This implies that the business had several different parts from the beginning. The most important parts are the school, a principal education in textile craft, as well as the workroom, which consist of one department for embroidery and one for weaving. Finally the shop, which was situated in the center of Stockholm for many years, played an important role in promoting the establishment.

The workroom was an active part of the establishment right from the start, and Handarbetets vänner participated in international exhibitions as early as in 1876. Their partaking generated an honorable mention and led to commissioned work. The establishment thereby earned a reputation of being an important participant in the world of producing textile art. At this time, 60 women were employed,



Picture 2: Two craftsmen in the process of weaving Yggdrasil by Gunnar Hallström 1905–1906.

working as weavers, embroiderers and staff in the shop (Danielsson, 1991, p. 109). Picture no. 2 is an example of how the work was conducted during the early years. The weaver used a high warp loom and wove with the reverse side towards her. Despite images of success, the economy never showed the same picture, and the establishment was depending on donations from the state already from the beginning (Danielsson, p. 100).

During the time described in this paper, the activity in the workroom changed due to changes in time and the succession of artistic leaders. An example of this is the focus on production of fabric in a functionalistic spirit, and at times of war, during Greta Gahn's leadership 1931–1951. When Edna Martin was appointed artistic leader in 1951, the work within the business changed towards the modern and, expressive, and more explicit artistic goals came to dominate the enterprise (Handarbetets vänner 100 år, 1974). This spirit was kept alive until the end of the 1990s, when the businesses, due to economic circumstances, adapted the production to the change in demands.

Another thing that has changed during the years is the number of employed craftsmen. In the beginning of the study, there could be fifteen craftsmen in the workroom, and today there are five.

Methods

Fifteen craftsmen, all women, have been interviewed. The emphasis in this article is on showing how they learned their skill. The overall focus, and my personal ambition with the interviews, is to visualize the craftsmen's skills and unique work. How the work is conducted, the interpretation of the sketch and colors, choice of material and technique and why (or if) these aspects change over time, are central aspects in the interviews. The learning within the workroom is an indisputable part of these aspects, and not always easy to discern. Introductory, exploring and indirect questions were asked in order to lead the conversation in the right direction, and the interviews thereby were semi structured (Kvale, 1997). The informants' personality and story were important, and thereby controlled the interview. The recorded interviews were transcribed into written manuscripts; since the length of the interviews varies from 45–90 minutes, extent of the written manuscripts also varies from 17 to 37 pages. The informants' personality reflects the length of the interviews. In retelling stories there is always a possibility (or probability) of the informants changing their stories to fit the context (Mishler, 2004, p. 23). This can be done without awareness, with a purpose to make their experiences explicit and sensible. This fact has been dawned attention to in the process through an wakefulness; both in the interview and in the analysis. However, it is important to state that the interest in this study is the craftsmen's personal knowledge and unique experience.

In the process of analyzing the transcribed interviews, information about how the informants learned their craft skills formed a joint picture. This was done with an intention to make patterns and differences visual. In this work the craftsmen's unison experience became clear. Independently of when, during the years in focus, they work the craftsmen stories are similar. Quotes are thereby often used without reference to time, a use that also contributes to an aim of maintaining the informants' identity anonymous.

The informants have all been active in the trade for at least 10 years; the only exceptions were made for the craftsmen who are now active in the workroom, some of whom have been employed for a shorter period of time. The choice of informants has been made with an aim to exclude the many short termed employments that have been common in the workroom. By striving to interview craftsmen with a long work experience, all craftsmen have worked in different constellations of masters and apprentices, and with different artists, which gives a broad base of experiences and knowledge in craft. The timeframe is set on the period from the late 1940s until today. This long period of time is chosen on the premises of the informants' times of employment. A logical conclusion of this is that the larger part of the research material consists of memories from a time long ago. This is compensated for by the fact that there are always at least two informants describing the learning. One exception to this can be seen during the years 1948–1951 when only one informant was employed.

When making a study of the learning of a craft, a possible method is to make a learning study; this was also considered in the beginning. Taken the activities in the workrooms into consideration, the current lack of work leads to only a few, if any, possible learning situations to study, meaning this method would not be productive. Today, the craftsmen are few, and many of the more experienced workers have either retired or moved on to other careers. This limits both the amount of possible learning situations and the quality of the learning. It is also important to state that, in this study, I had a possibility to see things from a specific position, since I have worked four years at the workroom. This has made it easy to contact the craftsmen, and I have good knowledge about their working conditions, the studio and its history. My knowledge in textile technical aspects was of great importance since the informants knew I understood these aspects, the knowledge made them feel safe and resulted in extended discussions. We had what Mishler (2004, p. 27) calls a "mutual tacit understanding" and this led to a calm and informative situation. A negative side of this feeling of mutual understandings is if the informants do not deepen their reasoning and stories since they do not

think there is a necessity to do so. During the interviews I thereby tried to balance this situation and encourage the informants to tell me more, to develop their reasoning.

How the craft is conducted

To understand the learning of the craft, the manufacturing process will be described briefly. This description is based on the 15 informants' information. Since the core of the process hasn't changed much during the times of interest all informants' stories are relevant as a source. The workroom has two lines of work, they produce new textiles and they repair old ones. While repairing textiles, the craftsmen need craft skills. Carefulness and being true to the original are the main components. These are skills which are honed within the workroom.

When a new textile is produced, the contact between artist and craftsmen is essential, and sometimes, the customer is also part of the initial process. The craftsmen all express the importance of being sharp and sensitive to the artist's intentions; they point out this quality as the most important one to have if you want to be a good craftsman in the workroom. During the weaving or embroidering, the artist visits the craftsmen and the work is carefully analyzed with an aim to make a unique textile using a technique adapted to the sketch. The sketch, the artists' visions and the craftsmen's skills set the conditions when technique is chosen.

The chosen sketch is transformed into a photocopy of the right size; this way, the craftsmen know that the proportions will be right. To get the right colors, the material is dyed in the dye workshop; this is required to get the best result. Lack of colors in the selection of yarn on the market also makes dyeing an important part of the production. Picture 1 is an example of how nuances in a color are used; many different blue nuances together form the desired blue color.

The work is then conducted with great patience and consideration toward the artist, sketch and co-workers. To get an idea about how much patience the work process takes, I can mention that when you weave a tapestry, it is not unusual to weave 3 cm a day. Taking this in to consideration, it is important to state that the workroom is a business, and supposed to be financially independent.

Knowledge base

The craftsmen all had some kind of education, or skill, in the textile craft when they were hired at the workroom. Most of them have been students at Handarbetets vänner's own school, or obtained a similar education and, thereby, have knowledge of weaving, embroidery and design. The base in the education is knowledge in craft. The informants employed between the 1940s and the 1970s started as trainees and were often supposed to work in the workroom for a short period of time to get the required experience for higher education. Some of the informants stayed and worked at Handarbetets vänner for their entire work life instead of the planned three months.

Through their education in craft, the craftsmen were trained within a culture of heeding accuracy and manual skills. The ones trained at Handarbets vänner's own school was also already integrated in the culture, tradition and history through visits to the workroom and showrooms. The simple fact that they were educated in the same house as the workroom made a difference. Yarn being dyed in the basement, the sound of looms and worn out steps in the stair give an awareness of deep tradition. The knowledge, in traditions as well as in craft skills, when the craftsmen were employed at the workroom gave them what Dreyfus and Dreyfus called competences or even skillfulness when they enter the work-life (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2000, p. 68–73). This means they never entered the work being novices in the craft. Using Dreyfus terminology, the newly employed can be categorized as

advanced beginners, or sometimes even as competent, depending on their former background. The differences between the two stages are due to the apprentices' ability to act independently when it comes to creating their own strategies in sorting the presented methods and actions in the making. This ability is crucial when the apprentices' knowledge grows and as they might start to feel overwhelmed, the apprentice must learn to handle such a situation. Or as Stuart E. Dreyfus writes:

There are, in fact, more situations than can be named or precisely defined, so no one can prepare for the learner a list of types of possible situations and what to do or look for in each. Students therefore must decide for themselves in each situation what plan or perspective to adopt without being sure that it will turn out to be appropriate. (Dreyfus, 2004, p. 178)

The craftsmen also needed to be good at interpreting a sketch and turn it into textile. One of the informants describes it in the following way: "I had a feeling for transforming a picture into textile, whatever it was I could make something out of it. It didn't have to be a fancy picture, whatever it was I could make something textile of it." The informants name this skill as important, and this is one of the talents that made craftsmen suitable for employment. Another important aspect was an interest in producing textile art from other people's visions; i.e. not having a focus on your own creative process.

Strategies for learning textile craft in the workroom

In the following section, all the informants' stories about how they learned their craft skills are analyzed in thematic aspects that describe the cores of learning at the workroom. The themes *Dialogue*, *Knowledge within a culture*, *Different masters*, *Different knowledge*, *Adjustment of the work*, *External effects* consist of both descriptions of learning situations and facts that affected and changed situations. Themes became visual when all the informants stories were analyzed, similar experiences and ways of learning led the way. Quotes are used to make the result come to life, to let the craftsmen themselves have a voice in this article.

The education in the workroom is conducted within a business model. New craftsmen are taught by experienced craftsmen during the production of textile art. The experienced craftsmen have the role of teachers, and are masters of textile craft. The informants regard the education as a natural part of the establishment, everybody knows that their time to mediate their knowledge will come and takes this for granted. The craftsmen know that there are few carriers of the knowledge culture, and if the culture shall survive, everybody must contribute in the mediation. On the other hand, there is no guidance or discussion about how the process of teaching ought to be conducted. As one of the informants put it: "Suddenly you are a teacher!"

Dialogue

The craftsmen describe a learning situation which is characterized by the fact that it is not noticed for its specific content or methods. The apprentice is supposed to learn during the production and the master might not give obvious instructions on how to do so. Experiences are mediated when a thread is lifted or while a fabric is pinned on. The knowledge is primarily mediated by sight, but this does not mean that it is a tacit process; reflections over work are mixed with small talk. The craftsmen consider it important to have a dialogue where the work is discussed, the knowledge as well as the process of creation thereby has a possibility to develop. It is important to point out that the dialogue is a tool that you can use when there is a need for dialogue; there is also a need for silence and concentration. The description of dialogue corresponds to Schön's (1983) way of defining reflection, as being an action with an aim to develop and deepen the skills in an area. The possibility to have a dialogue has been influenced by different ways of communicating throughout time; several informants express the fact that it was more difficult to have an open and unprejudiced discussion before one was allowed to drop the titles. Hierarchy also had an effect on the conditions for dialogue; the managers of the two

different departments (weave and embroidery) with a responsibility towards the management had, to a certain degree, a superior position. Despite these hindrances in communication, an informality and lack of hierarchy and prestige characterize the informants' stories. It is a spirit of acceptance and awareness of different people's weaknesses and strengths that leads the work and communication.

The dialogue during the learning of the work process is described by one informant as taught through a constantly ongoing dialogue, though this dialogue sometimes is silent: "There are a lot of feelings in the profession, in some kind of way you have a silent transformation of feelings and the feelings grow." The informants' description shows that the transfer of knowledge between master and apprentice is sometimes conducted without words; skills needed in craft can be mediated in silence. When two people sit and work next to each other and collaborate on a task, you can sense each other's feelings and thoughts. For example if something is difficult, demanding, or even boring, you cannot avoid sensing it and this affects your joint work effort. Molander describes knowledge in a craft as something that isn't objective; it is alive and full of feelings, attention and presence. It is also important to be sensitive and open to all forms of learning and development (Molander, 2003, p. 13). This description of knowledge and the informants' stories paint a picture of the practical knowledge as something personal and specific for the kind of craft that is being done. The apprentice thereby has to be open-minded during the learning process and let herself be a part of the masters' and the artists' world, be present in someone else's way of thinking and perception. It is also essential for the master to communicate the importance of feelings, not only in the work process, but also the feelings connected to a specific task. Feelings of commitment and joy in a process increase the possibility for a good and challenging interpretation of transforming a sketch into textile art. The time consuming and challenging work process also simply gets more difficult and uninteresting without positive feelings and active participation. Several of the craftsmen talk about how they initially didn't like a sketch and how they, after some time, learn to like it, and even defend it in discussions. The focus on a specific sketch and a specific expression develops the craftsmen's emotional experience in their collaboration with the artist.

Learning craft skills in Handarbetets vänner's workroom could be defined as tacit by the fact that its structure and content is not discussed within the group of craftsmen. They do not exchange experiences about learning and different methods or strategies that are used. But this is not due to unawareness about the learning process, rather an indication of the fact that the informants think that the process is clear and does not need to be discussed. Despite this way of doing things, one of the informants suggests this lack of discussion and problematizing can lead to missed opportunities of developing the learning and, in the long run, the products produced can be affected. Continuous dialogue and reflection when the work is conducted is a possibility of verbalizing and visualizing the knowledge and learning. This informant's statement shows that, despite of unity in answers, the informants have different thoughts about this angle. These differences might be due to the personality or individual experiences of the informants.

Knowledge within a culture

The workroom is a private and closed environment. The exchange of experience between workrooms with a similar type of production has according to the



Picture 3: The craftsmen have specific ways of doing things; these methods are not easily changed.

Here one example, every craftsman is responsible of 50 cm of the wefts when it is being wound onto the warp beam. This is a procedure done in the same way for many years.

informants been modest or non-existing over the years. There is a long tradition of making textile art, which means the knowledge and experience are connected to the personnel, working materials, tools and samples. Collaborations with outstanding artists and use of the best materials are parts of the culture within Handarbetets vänners´ workroom. The craftsmen are aware of this and know that they are chosen to be a part of this unique sphere. At the same time, the culture is not vain, and the craftsmen do not act as if they were (or are) superior. Instead, the daily work takes up their time and is the focus of discussions. The joy for their employment and unique task is rather something which the retired women talk about when they look back on their work life. But at the same time, one of the informants describes her feelings when she started her employment as: “It was good but at the same time it was obvio....this is a production, we have working hours so this is a job, it’s not only like heaven!”

In the craft culture and its surrounding context, the learning takes an obvious part. Therefore it is assumed that the transferred knowledge is situated according to Lave’s assumption about learning as a situated activity (Lave, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991, 2011). The craftsmen learn to mix yarn in the right quality and shape a stitch which is as doubtless and vital as the tradition and culture demands. Unspoken rules about the visual and material quality for textiles produced at Handarbetets vänners are transferred from master to apprentice through visual impressions, discussions and action while the craft is produced. Since several projects were often produced at the same time in different parts of the workroom, an environment with several possibilities for learning was created. This was, and still is, a possibility to learn not discussed or required, it was something to study on the way to the coffee break and provided an extended base of knowledge without participation in the actual work. The apprentices are supposed to take an interest in all textiles produced without being told to. Dreyfus and Dreyfus maintain that it is “wrong to believe that the social environment, in the meaning communities of practice are essential in acquiring a skill or crucial to understanding learning from a master” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2000, p. 85, authors translation). Only if the understanding of the social aspects of performing a craft is a part of the practice the practice community is important, if these conditions of knowledge are a part of the culture. I would like to say that the work and learning process within the workroom are controlled by something that can be described as social traditions of often unspoken learning. Therefore, the social environment and culture are of importance for the learning.

An example of this is how sketches are transformed into a weave and how the technique is used; a three-dimensional surface was often created and when two wefts met, they hooked into each other. This can be compared to the workroom at the Alice Lund studio, Borlänge, Sweden, where the workers almost always create an even surface and seldom let the weft hook into each other, all in accordance to the traditional tapestry tradition. Weaves produced for the artist Helena Hernmarck is not taken under consideration here, these weaves are produced in a technique Hernmarck herself have created and use in her own production.(Lindberg, verbal, 2012). Also, at Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh, Scotland, whom evolved from William Morris Craft Studio, a different method is used, where the weft are sewn together so that no slits will arise. (Hedlund, 2010, p. 43–46; Robertson, verbal, 2012) These two examples of workrooms with similar production show Handarbetets vänners´, if not unique way of doing, at least different and flexible way of solving the meeting of the wefts.

When a craftsman was employed in the workroom, the informants don’t remember getting any explanation of the existing culture; they were just expected to be a part of the context. The newly employed apprentices were placed in the culture without introducing the rules or expectations. Many times, the work could be conducted singlehandedly and then, it was important to be keen and sensitive to subtle signals and tutoring. What were you supposed to learn from the woman on the other side of the table?

We sat at a very small table and there was not a lot of space [...] we, two new girls, sat at a table. The experienced embroiderers Alice, Inga-Lill and Fina also worked in the same room so it was rather crowded. [...] You saw what everybody worked on and the leader of the department, Britta, was there to show us how to sew and to make sure the work was well performed.

This informant talks about the conditions of learning in the mid-1950s, when a lot of craftsmen were employed and the hierarchy was clear. The two young girls were placed in an environment of making textile art, where norms of accuracy and professionalism were learned by being and acting within the culture in the room. Nevertheless it is important to state that the learning was an active process; the girls must listen and watch what was said and done in the room. All informants state the importance of being willing to learn in all possible situations. The craftsmen mentioned in the quote have worked a long time in the workroom and one of the women is described as a storyteller, she told the girls about the old days. The transformed knowledge is a part of Handarbetets vänner's history and culture and can be seen as the establishment's ethos.

Different masters, different knowledge

In the traditional definition of learning in a master – apprentice situation, the learning from different masters is essential. Journeymen's travelling from one workroom or town to another has been the traditional way of broadening their competence (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2000, p. 82–83) In this way, knowledge of different techniques and use of material were spread and developed.

Several masters have been active at the same time during the period from 1948 until the beginning of 2000, which means that the apprentice had the ability to learn from different masters without changing workroom. The masters have different experiences from working with different artists, techniques and materials. Experience, as well as personality, influences the skills that the masters can pass on to the apprentice. How you interpret color, what can be seen as three-dimensional, and how a sketch can be transformed into textile art are examples of skills that are affected by personality. Some masters are considered to create interpretations where the colors are sharper, while others use contrasting colors to a high extent (see picture 5). Some let their work take time while others have a more pragmatic work method. There are also different technical specialties; some have a long experience of producing ceremonial textile, while others have a deep knowledge of embroidery made with sewing machine. The informants recount an awareness of the different masters' specialties. The apprentices also knew what specific knowledge the masters could give, even if this was not outspoken, or at least not said out loud.



Even when there is an awareness of different competencies, the assignments are not always divided according to this. The fact that it is a business and that there is a limited amount of craftsmen available often makes the choice of which craftsmen should work with an artist a self-regulating process. The informants do not talk about any strategic choice of masters for the apprentices; the need of a workforce is the primary concern. This might have been a discussion between the artistic leader of the workroom and the leader of the department, but this is not something that anyone refers to.

Picture 4: This master is very good at using a sewing machine creatively. Even if the craftsmen all had capability to work in different techniques or expressions they all have their own specialty. The use of different materials and methods is performed with accuracy and skillfulness.

The different knowledge of each master comes together to shape a culture of knowledge that, despite the masters' different ways of performing the craft, is all consistent with the core values of the workroom. Through working with different masters, often for a long time, the master's different skills and personal interpretations became a part of the apprentice's register of knowledge. From these different registers, the apprentice can form her own way of conducting the craft. Their own strategies and lines of action where the learned skills are combined with personal conditions form a personal knowledge base. When the apprentice has reached this way of working, the advanced novice has been transformed into an expert, who can make subtle and refined choices within the working process (Dreyfus, 2004, p. 180). As Lars Lindström writes: the expert has a goal and an idea and has already worked through the process before they start (Lindström, 2004, p. 195–197). It is this awareness that the apprentice must aim for and has a possibility to get from working with different masters.

Adjustment of the work process

All informants describe their learning as learning in action, they learn by being part of the production. Despite the fact that several apprentices were sometimes employed at the same time, and thus, possibilities of specific tutoring opened up, this has almost never been arranged. Recently an opportunity for tutoring was arranged. Two apprentices were educated how to mount a pillow and a spectacle case by a retired craftsman. This learning situation is different from the ones at the school, which is located one floor below in the same building. In school, the students learn by making their own designed craft and engage in classroom education.

The apprentices' first tasks were chosen from given assignments, the sum of craftsmen was regulated by the amount of production and thereby which tasks the apprentice should work on was given. The apprentice had to work where she was needed. However, the choice of artist or technique wasn't adjusted to the fact that it was a new situation for the apprentice, but the task could be somewhat adjusted through assigning the easiest part or a smaller part of the work to the apprentice. One of the apprentices in embroidery describes her first work experience:

Straight to the point! That's the way it was, it was very... .."matter of fact". This is the way it is and then we will do like this and like this. It was a very good training in the craft. I started with the basic, to draw and prick and pounce... and to sew easy things first, things that weren't complicated. We worked with machine embroidery... I made the oars! The oars should be braided with each other and then sewn to the background fabric.

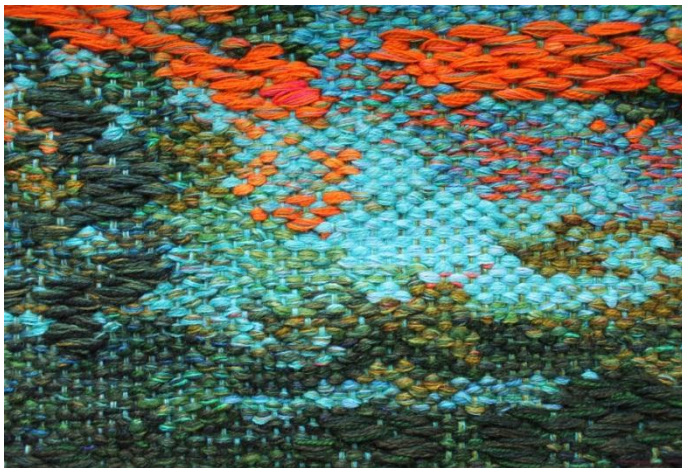
The quote tells us about an adaption of the assignments, but at the same time, it tells us about apprentices' being a part of the daily production. The appliques from the story of Röde Orm, by the artist Jordi Arkö, were not made in a technically demanding technique, despite this, the experienced craftsmen made sure that the apprentice was given a part of the work foremost consisting of straight seams. There is a danger of the fabric twisting, thereby increasing the risk of the embroidery not being even when the parts applied have complicated shapes. The different fabrics must lay flat and the directions of the threads in the different layers of fabric must correspond. At the same time, it is important to point out the fact that the apprentice took an active part in the production from start to end, thereby learning how the experienced craftsmen worked through the whole process.

When textile art is created, there are, as previously mentioned, always easier or more difficult pieces of the textile. The difficulty can be due to the chosen textile techniques, -material, or color. All of these choices are made by the craftsman in collaboration with the artist with the aim to produce excellent textile based on a sketch. An example of one problem that might arise is when different techniques or qualities meet in a weave, it can be difficult to make this work; there is a risk of unevenness and a less beautiful result. Another example of difficulties is how to use the right color, a color that corresponds with the sketch and intensifies the wanted expression. To make this the

craftsmen combine several threads and use them as one; the warp and weft thereby consists of numerous threads. The informants state that the choice of how many threads to use or which colors to use is made according to the craftsmen's taste and way of doing. To manage these different difficulties or skills is important since this indeed affects the result.

She mixed the colors and I watched her do it... I mixed my threads the same way. As I mixed my threads, I discovered that I saw color in different ways than her. When she looked at the sketch and mixed yarn for the weft, I discovered that the color wasn't the same as the one I saw on the sketch. I remember I experienced this as a problem with the work process.

The apprentice in weaving describes how she learned to mix colors the same way as the experienced master did; she had worked as a weaver earlier, so the technique wasn't a problem but the diversity in how to see and use color constituted a new experience. This shows the important role that the masters' individual experience forms in the craft and learning, i.e. the individual interpretation forms the result. An important part of what the apprentice is supposed to learn is connected to the fact that she must adapt to another craftsman's way of working, learning how to twist the yarn, how to make an interpretation of a sketch and how color is seen. Through imitation, the apprentice adds new methods to her base of knowledge. One question that arises is if the apprentice's own experience does not have any significance on the work, if part of the assignment is to unconditionally follow someone else's interpretation.



The stories that have been previously referred to about the importance of dialogue and of maintaining an open mind, tell us that some kind of dialogue around the work is currently ongoing. The craftsmen claim that an open mind is important, yet the fact remains that the master initiates the work and therefore, her interpretation of the sketch is the predominant one.

Picture 5: Here is one example of how playfully and personally color can be mixed. The turquoise treads are mixed with treads that are pink and orange, the dark green treads are mixed with treads of deep blue. When the craftsmen are weaving this textile, the apprentice can be assigned parts not as difficult as this one.

External effects

In the work with producing textile art, the artist and the chosen picture set the conditions for the work process. When an artist comes to the workroom and participates in a conversation about the work, the artist obviously affects the process. The artist's demands and visions provide the craftsmen with challenges and thereby force them to progression. The craftsmen are experts in the craft, but, by being exposed to external impulses, where knowledge in the craft is not a necessary part of the frame of reference, new solutions can arise. An example of this possibility to push the boundaries of how to make textile art is the craftsmen's collaborative work with Olle Bonniér in the making of his sculpture *Vildhundens hjärta*. The art historian Beate Sydoff writes that, by this sculpture, *Handarbetets vännen* shows its possibility to produce anything in the workroom, since their craftsmen don't see any limitations (Robbert, 1991, p. 56). Since the master is striving for excellence and creativity in her work, this affects the apprentices learning, meaning that the apprentice is learning to always develop and challenge her knowledge.

The artistic leader has an influence on the learning in a similar way as the artists. The artistic leaders have varied during the investigated years, and each one has had different visions for the establishment. Åsa Bengtsson, leader 1978-1996, describes her aims as a leader as: being sensitive to times shifting demands, being able to take care of coincidences, and being part of a creative group, all of which she describes as important qualities in her work (Robbert, 1991, p. 9). Despite a varied production, and a demand of different skills and thereby learning processes, the overall picture is that the artistic leaders had, and still have, great trust in the craftsmen's skills (Ibid, p. 9; Stavenow-Hidemark, 2006). A possible contradiction or conflict in having a situation of learning in a production is that this probably might slow the work process with regards to the artistic leaders' responsibility towards the client and the establishment's general finances. Despite this fact, the artistic leader must be as aware of the need for training new craftsmen as the craftsmen themselves. Without the workroom being provided with new craftsmen, the establishment is at risk.

Conclusions

The result shows that the craftsmen have a joint picture of what knowledge in the workroom consisted of and how learning took place. It is important, according to the craftsmen's statements, to establish that the learning occurs within the production. Difficulties and tasks while you weave or embroider lead to authentic situations of learning, and the apprentice thereby learns about the whole process. The learning is affected by the fact that it is situated (Lave & Wenger, 2011), and the apprentices are by this means formed into craftsmen worthy of the historical heritage and reputation. The knowledge is mediated both by sight and dialogue. Both a silent and a verbal dialogue provide a possibility to reflect (Schön, 1983), and thereby increased learning possibilities. The reflection can also be *in* the craft: continues testing in strive for the perfect interpretation gives a reflection through craft which leads to extended learning. What can be learned and how the learning is constructed is affected by the masters' knowledge and personality. This is also affected by frames, and challenges, given by the artistic leader and the artist. Despite the fact that the masters have different specialties (and the artists and artistic leaders have varied), there is a community of practice, a practice built on the fact that the knowledge is situated.

The learning of craft skills in the workroom at Handarbetets vänner is a manual process, a manual skill transferred from masters to the apprentices through participation in the production of textile art. In order to let the knowledge develop, beyond being a manual skill, reflection and consideration must be a part of the work process. A conclusion when all different aspects of the learning are being considered is that the work and learning must be allowed to take time to mature. One of the craftsmen describes how she, in the production of the textile (curtain) "I hear your name (the cave)" processes how work should be conducted even when she wasn't at work.

Sometime, we got stuck and didn't get any work done, neither him nor me, then we had to let it rest. You live with it, especially when you have been searching for your way, groping for expressions, how he wants it to look and how to solve that expression in textile. Then I process this on the way to work, how I shall do to solve this, that's the way it is, it's a lot of commitment. Not only in the craft but also in the mind. (Wedin, 2004, p. 24).

The craftsman gives an example of how important reflection in and over the process is. In this reflection, the skills are developed and extended and this way of working leads to a never ending learning experience. This learning is the same if a craftsman works alone or if a master works with an apprentice, the learning never ends since every new assignment is taken on as a challenge. The work in its constitution is a never ending learning process, even if you have 40 years of experience. This is the most important reason for the craftsmen's joy over their chosen work. The craftsman as an expert

(Dreyfus, 2004, p. 180) is thereby an expert who always progresses in her base of knowledge. Through constant strive for excellent performed craft and new artistic challenges methods and use of material an color change, and new knowledge can in that way be passed on to the apprentices.

Even if this paper covers a long period of time, changes in the learning, due to this, are few or none. The informants describe a learning process where the knowledge is transferred from the experienced to the learner within situations of production. This is a traditional way of learning a craft and can be seen in many different lines of work, such as shoemaker, bookbinder and hatter (Winbladh & Bengtsson, 2003, pp. 22, 28, 38, 52). Visual changes in the transformation are due to changes in time, or development within tools or materials. Examples of changes due to time are more obvious regarding hierarchies within the workroom, or in society in general. The learning was affected when you did not know how to address the artist, or if you felt great respect for the masters. Differences in the production also affected the conditions for the work. The time until 1960 was dominated by work that was carried out singlehandedly. When weaving piece goods or embroidering small artifacts, the learning can easily consist of direct instructions without much possibility of reflection. In the production of textile art, transforming sketch and visions, the learning is a long process. A process which is ongoing during the whole process and what is learned is dependent on the product. Sometimes, color is a challenge and another time, it is the technique. In the studied time period, different expressions in art have been dominant, and this has affected the production, and thereby the learning.

The informants do not see any big differences in what their own learning consists of and situations where they trained others. In the event of differences, they are primarily due to the masters or apprentices personality. It is important to state that the informants strongly believe that these differences are important, but the masters have a common technical and artistic ground in their work. This fact points to a strong community of practice, in which it is important to heed how the learning should be transformed and important issues are understood without always being spoken out loud.

An important issue is the workroom as a closed, specific environment. As I stated previously, the workroom has a community of practice of its own, which has a large impact on the produced textile art. The way of learning and which knowledge the apprentices are supposed to obtain are shaped by the practice in the workroom, and are thereby situated. The historical heritage and a position, as the oldest, still active workroom in Sweden, give the craftsmen methods, material and mental strength to develop skillfulness. An important result of the apprentices learning is their self-confidence as competent craftsmen, a competence deeply connected to the workroom. A question closely connected to this is the formation of the group of craftsmen. How many craftsmen must be employed to keep the learning of craft skills active? Since every craftsman has an own way of interpreting a sketch (which affects for example methods, the choice of material, and color) a base of several craftsmen is important. Few craftsmen give a limited amount of interpretations; thereby undermining the knowledge that is given. To solve this problem, the informants talk about the importance of being flexible and being able to work both as a weaver as well as an embroiderer in times of recession. In this way, a few craftsmen can uphold several competences. A risk with this solution is obviously a mainstream knowledge and loss of the specific, deep experiences.

As a final statement, it must be said that the learning within the workroom is in the making of objects, but never at the cost of the quality of the objects. The establishments core values, and the fact that there is a strive to be profitable makes the circumstances. The collaboration with the artist in creating unique textile art is the primary goal; the learning is something that is taken for granted in order to uphold the competence of the establishment.

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Verbal sources

- Interviews with 15 weavers and embroiders, currently or previously employed at Handarbetets vänner, Stockholm. August 2011 – May 2012.
- Lindberg, F. Alice Lund Textilier AB. May 2012.
- Robertson, N. Master Weaver, Dovecot Studios. June 2012.

Pictures

- Picture no. 1, 4, 5*: Photos taken by the author. Samples from the production at Handarbetets vänner.
- Picture no. 2*: Nordiska museet, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Picture no. 3*: Picture of the work with weft to “Memory of a Landscape” by Elisbet Hasselberg-Olsson. Photographer: Anders Qwarnström.

Anneli Holmberg, PhD in Textile Studies at Uppsala University, Sweden in 2009. The focus was educational history and changes in the practical education of Teachers of textile craft. Her current Post-Doctoral project concerns the craftsmen in the workroom at Handarbetets vänner, Stockholm. Interest, and work experience, in textile craftsmanship and slöjd education lead the way in the research. How textile craft takes its form and how it is taught are issues of interest.