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EUROMED HERITAGE 4 Workshop

28th-30th June 2011, Beirut, Lebanon

Session III: Apprenticeship and education: Methodologies, credits, recognition and remuneration

Preamble

I'd like to thank everyone involved with the EuroMed workshop for inviting me here today to speak with you about traditional craft skills in the UK – a talk which includes an outline of the key challenges facing the sector, and the emerging strategy to resolve this through the establishment of a new national apprenticeships framework.

I'd like to introduce myself by providing a little information about my background and my interest in this area.

I come from a traditional building craft background. I grew up in a family of traditional artisan builders, often working on site with my father from a very young age. By my mid-twenties I was *informally* apprenticed to my father, who in turn was apprenticed to his father and him to his, which makes me 4th generation. It is a line of continuity which I value greatly – and which came to inform my interest in traditional crafts and intangible cultural heritage, more broadly.

I have also completed a Degree in Furniture and Decorative Arts Conservation and Restoration – a field which today follows many of the guidelines and principles that historically evolved within the fields of architecture, fine arts and archaeology – all of which rely on traditional craft skills to a greater or lesser degree.

I am also a trained hand-cut *marquetarian*.

My experience of both 'informal' and 'formal' education (so-called) has done much to shape my views about the ways in which cultural heritage is formed and transmitted and acquires its specific cultural meaning.

Many craftspeople in the UK believe that a decline in traditional apprenticeships since the end of the 1970's – which was largely replaced by formal institutional training – i.e. by the technical college and/or the university – has been a major contributory factor with regards to the current challenges facing the sector, including (I would argue) the loss of much intangible heritage.

I will briefly illustrate the point being made here by my own personal experience, as follows:

During my apprenticeship I worked for on average 40 hours per week during which time I received one-to-one training; over a 50 week working year that amounted to c.2000 hours per year; over five years it amounted to over 10,000 hours one-to-one training. Typically, this was the *basic* training needed to qualify as a Journeyman *in whatever craft*. It took another four to five years to become a Master craftsman. This amounts to around ten years overall.

By comparison, during my Degree I worked in a group of 18 in a University College. We received about 16 hours per week *group supervision* from a trained craftsman. That equated to less than one hour per week one-to-one; over a 30 week academic year it amounted to less than 30 hours; over the full three years duration of the course, the total one-to-one, hands-on training 'at the bench' was about 90 hours – a little over two weeks work to a traditional apprentice and somewhat short of 10,000 hours overall.

Yet had I continued for just one more academic year I would have gained my MA Degree and thus 'qualified' as a 'Master of Art'.

And therein lies the problem – a virtual breakdown in skills transmission (arguably) brought about by a decline in



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traditional apprenticeships.

This understanding informed my subsequent PhD studies which – in a nutshell – explored the relationship between material heritage and non-material heritage – as nowadays identified by the terms ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’, respectively.

I continue to write about this in relation to culture and sustainable development within the context of globalisation, and I am a founding member of the Heritage Crafts Association, UK – a registered charity founded in 2009 which works to resolve the key challenges facing the UK traditional crafts sector – and which forms the substance of this talk entitled:

***Towards a Coherent Strategy for the Safeguarding
of Traditional Crafts Skills in the UK:
the case for Apprenticeships***

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Introduction

In thinking about devising a nationwide strategy for the safeguarding of traditional craft skills it is important to recognise the ways in which these skills tend to be manifested in the following core areas:

- Traditional Building Craft Skills (concerned with the restoration of immovable heritage)
- Restoration Craft Skills (concerned with the restoration of moveable or portable heritage)
- Traditional Arts and Crafts Skills (concerned with the making of new artefacts in traditional designs and techniques, and with mostly natural materials)

These areas are used here merely to indicate the various *contexts* within which traditional craft skills exist – each one of which faces different kinds of skills-related challenges (some of which I understand have been discussed in previous EuroMed workshops).

This presentation focuses on Traditional Arts and Crafts Skills, or simply, Traditional Craft Skills.

It is, nonetheless, important to recognise that many traditional craftspeople work in *all* of these areas, often simultaneously on multiple projects and commissions; hence why many of the skills-related challenges in this area also apply to the other areas.

Traditional Arts and Craft Skills (traditionally made artefacts)

As a registered charity working in partnership with Government and key agencies, the Heritage Crafts Association provides a focus for craftspeople, groups, societies and guilds, as well as individuals who care about the loss of traditional crafts skills, and works towards a healthy and sustainable framework for the future by supporting and promoting traditional crafts as a fundamental aspect of the UK's intangible cultural heritage.

It does this in the following ways:

- Surveying - researching the traditional crafts sector, identifying those crafts in decline or in imminent danger of being lost, and addressing the issues to ensure their continued survival
- Advocating - communicating the vital importance of traditional crafts to Government, key agencies and organisations
- Celebrating - raising awareness and raising the status of traditional crafts with the wider public through a programme of public relations, communications and showcase events
- Safeguarding - working in partnership with key agencies in the educational and learning sectors to



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identify and support new and innovative ways to ensure that the highest standard of traditional skills are passed from one generation to the next and, where necessary, recorded for posterity

- Supporting - supporting traditional crafts through a range of means, including information and advice, networking, training and access to public and private funding

The Heritage Crafts Association recognises that many of these crafts are in real danger of dying out in the UK. In many cases the skills and techniques are practised by only a few, in some cases only one.

Yet when one traditional cooper had press coverage saying it was sad that his trade was dying out, he received over 1000 unsolicited letters requesting to be his apprentice!

He is, of course, a true Master of his art who is willing to supply his knowledge to a new generation – hence why an in-depth understanding of the sector is necessary in order to establish a coherent nationwide skills strategy to meet both supply *and* demand.

In this connection, as part of its engagement work, in May this year the Heritage Crafts Association held its annual Skills Forum in London which brought together over 100 delegates representing a broad cross section of the traditional crafts sector – including craft practitioners as well as chairs or representatives of various independent craft guilds and associations.

The purpose of the event was to ascertain the status of the sector with regards to skills transmission – as voiced directly by those who work in it.

Delegates were asked the following three key questions:

- What is working in craft skills training?
- What are the problems with current skills training?
- What needs to be done to address these issues?

The full report is available at:

<http://www.heritagecrafts.org.uk/HCA%20Skills%20Forum%20summary.pdf>

The responses demonstrated the complexity of the sector – with many delegates expressing wide ranging views from diverse perspectives.

However, if the meeting could be summarised in just one sentence it would be that the emphasis of craft skills training and funding in the UK needs to move away from bureaucratic training organisations back to the craftspeople and the craft guilds and membership organisations, and away from the formality of the classroom back to the informal practicality of the workshop.

The most important aspects to address in craft skills training as proposed and chosen by delegates were expressed in the following terms (in their words):

Sector-lead skills development

- Craftspeople or crafts organisations to take the lead in organising apprenticeships and their funding
- Simplify the support structures, routes to public funding and access to information to ensure that small organisations can deal with them
- Strengthen the Heritage Crafts Association in its role as the main advocacy voice for the sector and encourage it to work with like-minded bodies in the Heritage and Crafts sectors

Workplace focused apprenticeship and informal adult learning

- Funding to learn a specific craft for adults over 20 years old returning to education or changing career
- Support informal learning including non-accredited, as well as provision for those over 19 years old
- Craft training for all ages (not just 16-19 year olds)



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- An introduction of serious, properly funded 3-5 year apprenticeships for young people

Primary and secondary education

- Making skills to be part of education at all levels – particularly primary and secondary
- Specific crafts to be re-introduced in schools at all levels
- Craft skills to be embedded in education from an early age – from primary school onwards
- Establish a national curriculum to ensure that crafts are included

Change in the public perception of crafts

- Government to change perception of crafts so that schools and parents see it as a worthwhile career
- Improve the perception of crafts and technical skills by inclusion in the education of young people
- Increase exposure and publicity for the crafts through local and national initiatives
- Celebrate craft excellence from schools to national masters

As a direct outcome of this meeting the Heritage Crafts Association has set up a Working Group for Craft Skills which will serve as a focus for ongoing work and press for action on the above recommendations and the numerous other challenges highlighted – some of which are detailed as follows:

Key challenges with current skills training provision

- Traditional craft skills training is relatively expensive
- There is a lack of quality training, assessment and accreditation
- There is a lack of opportunities for the young – provided, in particular, by schools
- There is poor public perception and appreciation of traditional crafts
- The sector lacks governance, leadership and strategic vision
- There is too much bureaucracy
- There is a serious lack of funding
- There is a lack of information available from the right sources

Various ways in which these challenges can be overcome

- More targeted financial support
- More effective governance and leadership with minimal bureaucracy
- More information from the right sources
- More training opportunities and better assessment and accreditation
- Improve public perception and appreciation of crafts

Importantly, it was noted that craft skills can be effectively transferred in a number of ways including short training seminars and weekend courses, internships, distance learning, regular meetings, events and demonstrations.

However, the overwhelming preference was for apprenticeship-based training which many believe should form the basis of sector- or employer-lead skills development across the UK to resolve many of the core issues.

In this way a national accreditation framework and qualifications strategy can be devised for the crafts sector as part of the Government's wider national skills agenda stemming from a key Review published in 2006; the so-called Leitch Review.

Available at:



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http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/6/4/leitch_finalreport051206.pdf

As a result of this Review, a number of independent, employer-lead organisations called Sector Skills Councils were set up and are regulated by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills to address the skills shortages and productivity needs of various sectors, as well as deciding how training is delivered and funded throughout the UK.

Their business model is based on the creation of Sector Skills Agreements which involves five key stages, as follows:

- Assessment of current and future skills needs sector-by-sector
- Assessment of current training and learning provision currently available in each sector
- Analysis of the gaps and weaknesses in current workforce development activity, based on stages 1 and 2 above, leading to agreed objectives
- Assessment of the scope and level of collaborative action and commitment of resources by employers
- Development of an action plan with key delivery partners

Creative and Cultural Skills: the Sector Skills Council for the Creative and Cultural Industries (or CCSkills) is responsible for overseeing the skills needs of the Traditional Crafts Sector, UK.

Information available at: <http://www.ccskills.org.uk/>

The Heritage Crafts Association is currently in discussion with CCSkills about the possibility of devising nationwide Creative Apprenticeships specifically tailored to the needs of individual crafts.

The Creative Apprenticeship is a flagship project of CCSkills which is already operational in a number of other sub-sectors and constitutes the following:

- A technical knowledge qualification designed to demonstrate achievement of the technical skills as well as knowledge and understanding of theoretical concepts, the industry and its markets relevant to the skill or occupation to which the framework relates
- It is based on three levels: Intermediate, Advanced and Higher Level
- It can take between one and four years to complete depending on the level attained, the apprentices' ability and the type of skill or occupation

The real benefit of Creative Apprenticeships is that they provide opportunities for young people to work towards nationally recognised qualifications while at the same time earning an income.

The apprentice also gains the opportunity to develop specific skills by working alongside experienced craft practitioners.

This is combined with day release college-based training for the more generic 'cognitive' aspects.

The first stage of the qualification is a Certificate in Creative & Cultural Practice, which equips the apprentice with the basic knowledge and understanding needed to work in the sector.

This learning is classroom based and completed on a day release basis according to the requirements of their employer.

The Learning and Skills Council is the body responsible for funding apprenticeship places for young people.



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The intention is that by the end of year 3 the project will be self-supporting through the establishment of formal working with a Further Education College acting as a Learning and Skills Council Assessment centre for the purpose of funding in the longer term.

The minimum salary during training is estimated to be around £3.00 – 6.00 per hour. However, many apprentices earn significantly more than this.

Newly qualified apprentices can expect to earn around £12,000 to £16,000 per year.

Currently there is no Creative Apprenticeships framework for the Traditional Crafts Sector.

However, discussion is ongoing with some indication that a small number of pilot projects may be organised jointly by the Heritage Crafts Association and Creative and Cultural Skills.

Developing a coherent nationwide apprenticeship framework is a significant challenge which involves:

- Establishing National Occupational Standards for the traditional crafts sector
- Which feeds into a Sector Qualification Strategy
- Out of which Creative Apprenticeships can be developed based on the specific needs of each skill or occupation

This is a daunting task given the diverse nature of craft practices in the UK and the subsequent difficulty of producing a detailed demographic profile of the sector.

Despite the difficulties, the Heritage Crafts Association, in dialogue with its members, craft guilds, associations and industry representatives, has already contributed to the drafting of National Occupational Standards which aim to provide a clear description of what a person needs to know in order to be able to do a job successfully.

The Standards consist of individual units, each one focusing on a particular task or element of knowledge, which are used to produce a 'suite' of elements based on a particular skill or occupational area.

In April 2010 Creative and Cultural Skills published its National Occupational Standards for the Craft sector.

Document available at:

<http://www.ccskills.org.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=9KBWe6J96Tk%3d&tabid=837>

It is an 83 page document detailing 59 units; just *three* examples of which are provided below which I have chosen for their relevance to the different core areas noted at the beginning of this talk.

For brevity, the wording used here is a shortened version of that used in the unit description, as follows:

Unit CR13: Select and use techniques, materials, tools and equipment for craft

Unit Summary

This unit is about selecting and using techniques, materials, tools, and equipment for craft and is part of the design and making process.

It may include choosing and using one method of working over another, such as throwing a pot on a wheel versus making a coiled pot in ceramics; selecting and using a different material such as, vellum instead of paper for calligraphy; choosing a different tool such as, a knife or a chisel in wood working; selecting a handloom over a foot propelled loom in textile making.

In order to select and use techniques, materials, tools and equipment effectively you will need to have working knowledge and understanding of their various properties including their advantages and disadvantages.



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Performance Criteria

You will be able to:

- Identify techniques, materials, tools and equipment you might use
- Conduct research to inform the selection and use of techniques, materials, tools, and equipment
- Set up a safe work space
- Develop techniques, materials and tools for work
- Record or document the use of techniques, materials, tools, and equipment
- Evaluate or gain feedback on use of techniques, materials, tools, and equipment
- Store tools, materials and equipment safely

Knowledge and Understanding

You will know and understand:

- The importance of understanding the use of techniques, materials, tools, and equipment
- How to identify techniques, materials, tools and equipment required
- How to research techniques, materials tools, and equipment
- How to obtain tools, materials and equipment
- How to set up a safe work space
- How to prepare tools, materials and equipment
- How to select techniques required to produce the work
- How to modify techniques, tools, materials and equipment
- How to record and document the use of techniques, tools, materials and equipment
- How to evaluate outcome
- How to store tools, materials and equipment safely

Unit CR28: Share knowledge of craft

Unit Summary

This unit is about sharing knowledge of craft skills, techniques and experience with, for example, friends, colleagues, trainees, assistants or students.

You may share your knowledge informally through conversations, or more formally through demonstrations, networking, publications, teaching, talks and lectures.

It is important to share your knowledge of craft for the benefit of individual crafts and the wider crafts community particularly in areas where skills, knowledge and experience may be lost such as traditional and heritage craft.

Sharing knowledge of craft is often part of being a wider advocate for the crafts sector.

Interlude...

I would add here that this is also central to devising a strategy for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

This unit is suitable for those who are self employed, working as freelancers or working within an organisation or company.

Performance Criteria

You will be able to:



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- Identify what knowledge it is appropriate to share
- Identify who could benefit from the sharing of knowledge
- Decide the amount of information required and when knowledge could be shared
- Determine the most appropriate method of sharing knowledge
- Conduct research to inform knowledge sharing
- Evaluate the success of sharing knowledge

Knowledge and Understanding

You will know and understand:

- The benefits to others of receiving information, and the benefits to craft
- The benefits to you of sharing knowledge
- What knowledge can be shared
- Where and how knowledge can be shared
- Who would benefit from your knowledge and their needs
- The amount of information which should be passed on
- The most appropriate method of sharing knowledge
- How to conduct appropriate research
- How to communicate knowledge
- The importance of gaining feedback and responding to questions

Unit CR52: Restore, conserve and reconstruct work in craft – which I will only summarize in brief here – addresses the restoration, conservation and reconstruction of craft work.

This can require the application of skills and knowledge that are related to the creation of new work, but will also require the development of additional specialist approaches and techniques.

Some artefacts will require conservation (i.e. the preservation of structural integrity *as found* and the prevention of further deterioration), whereas other items are required to be restored to a fully functional state.

Fundamental considerations include the assessment of the condition of the artefact, and developing a rationale in approaching the work.

This unit may be especially useful for those looking to grow their craft-*making* business in other market areas.

These examples provide a sense of the way in which the UK traditional crafts sector is being re-configured – piece-by-piece – to hopefully one day form the basis of a coherent national skills strategy – which is still in the making.

The real benefit of developing National Occupational Standards in this way is that the various units are devised in consultation with the sector itself – i.e. *by listening to craftspeople*.

This means that craftspeople can select the units that, in a sense, they themselves created and which (therefore) most benefit their particular business, and then use this to form the basis of their offer to take on an apprentice.

In this way they can be customised to meet the specific needs of diverse craft practices, thereby increasing the likelihood of running a successful business.

For example, some apprenticeships might be formulated in such a way that places greater emphasis on design and creativity, or business administration and marketing; whatever is needed so long as it meets the criterion of the suit of units that forms the basis of the apprenticeship.



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Crucially, this is not a top-down, bureaucratically-heavy model; it is a bottom-up, participatory model which places the craftsperson – i.e. the employer – at the centre.

Piecing it all together for an entire sector is certainly a complex and time consuming process.

But once the units are created, a coherent and sustainable strategy can emerge as new crafts businesses continually add to the assemblage.

To complement this ongoing work in National Occupational Standards, in May this year Creative and Cultural Skills published its Sector Qualifications Strategy for the crafts sector which states that it will:

- Prioritise the development of qualifications that support the development of skills for traditional crafts
- Emphasise the value of including enterprise, freelance and portfolio working skills within qualifications, and explore the need for Continuing Professional Development programmes that also support this
- Support the demand for Apprenticeships (currently progressing in Jewellery)
- Work with stakeholders to compile a business case for Craft occupational qualifications and Apprenticeships
- Scope the opportunity to develop National Occupational Standards to cover other areas of the sector to inform long-term development planning

More information about the currently emerging situation available at:

<http://www.ccskills.org.uk/Qualifications/SectorQualificationsStrategy/tabid/135/Default.aspx>

To complete this work will require detailed research into the sector, including an analysis of the sector's contribution to the UK economy.

Such information can be used to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of and the challenges faced by different craftspeople in order to establish appropriate strategies tailored to meet their needs – which might also lead to a more informed understanding of their reliance on allied industries such as, for example, tourism.

Now, much of what has been discussed so far in this presentation has focused on skills transfer issues with an emphasis on their contribution to the UK economy – stemming from the Government's national skills agenda, as noted earlier.

What we can learn from all this is that the industry itself has made it clear that it sees apprenticeship training – in whatever form this ultimately takes – as a primary means of sustaining and revitalising the crafts sector as a whole.

However, more work needs to be done with regards to the broader relevance of traditional crafts to UK *culture*.

In many ways, this means bridging the political and ideological gap that currently seems to exist between the Heritage Sector and the Crafts Sector in the UK – which, in my view, are wrongly construed as if two separate 'water-tight' entities.

This can be achieved by establishing a more appropriate policy framework out of which a new skills strategy can be devised based specifically on the needs of crafts widely considered to be of cultural importance and in real danger of being lost.

In this connection, sadly the UK Government did not ratify the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003) – which came into force in 2006.

As a result, the UK Heritage Sector still broadly operates under the political and ideological auspices of the *UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* – also known as the 'World Heritage Convention' initially drafted in 1972 with subsequent amendments – the primary concern of



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which is tangible heritage.

This has led to a somewhat lop-sided notion of cultural heritage which does not necessarily reflect public opinion.

For example, a recent unpublished survey of around 2000 adult members of the public showed that 77% felt that traditional craft skills were an important part of their heritage (unallocated source).

Accordingly, there is a need to develop a more inclusive, balanced and sustainable heritage outlook which in many ways entails re-evaluating our understanding of the relationship between the tangible heritage of the past and the cultural life of the present in which we find living expressions of the intangible – *which is so much more than just a skill*.

As part of its ongoing initiatives, the Heritage Crafts Association recently completed a survey of every local authority in England (well over 300) in order to ascertain if they had any provision for safeguarding traditional craft skills.

It confirmed that currently only 17% of local authorities that responded to the questionnaire employ a representative responsible for overseeing the traditional crafts under their jurisdiction.

Full report available at:

<http://www.heritagecrafts.org.uk/HCA%20Council%20Survey%202011%20report.pdf>

The Heritage Crafts Association remains in dialogue with Creative and Cultural Skills about the possibility of establishing a national apprenticeships framework, and also the Department for Cultural, Media and Sport with regards to the safeguarding of these skills as a legitimate expression of the UK's intangible cultural heritage in which apprenticeships can surely play a significant role.