Calligraphy: A Vehicle to Self-Reflection

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CALLIGRAPHY: A VEHICLE TO SELF-REFLECTION

By

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Abstract

As an auto-ethnographic study, “Calligraphy: A Vehicle to Self-Reflection” was designed to explore the art of Arabic calligraphy and its possibilities. The driving question of this research was: How can understanding calligraphy art, the creative process, and its evolution be transferred by an artist-teacher promoting inspiration to regain self-identity and humanity for young minds? The researcher became the student through studying the history, understanding the theory, and practicing the craft. Traditional work and techniques were investigated as well as modern work. Throughout the study, memos, reflections, and journals were maintained along with photos and videos and each oeuvre created was followed by an artist statement. These sources were analyzed and recommendations made for their use to promote a reflection of belonging, regaining self-confidence, and promoting acceptance of who they are amongst the lost youth of Algeria and other third world countries. Therefore, promoting local craft extracted directly from the milieu was found to be an excellent method to foster the desired self-reflection that would encourage the strengthening of identity, culture, and belonging; furthermore stop the imitation of others and build self-confidence.

Key words: Arabic calligraphy, artist-teacher, identity, humanity, Algeria, self-reflection, culture, self-confidence
Acknowledgment

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
Nelson Mandela

I could not have done this research without the help, patience, and support of my lovely wife, Pat.

It is only natural that I would like to acknowledge here all those who put together this rigorous but wonderful BU program and my classmates with whom I shared papers and met their friendly faces during the Summer Studio on campus. I would like to dedicate this work to my three wonderful children and all those who stumbled upon this little paragraph to let them know that it is never too late or too early to seek more knowledge and be the shiny beacons for a better future.

There is nothing more rewarding than to be educated and educate.

M.T. Boukerroui

“In learning you will teach, and in teaching you will learn.”
Phil Collins

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Chapter One

The Beginning

“Before we can teach others, we have to know as much as we can about art ourselves”  

Background to the Study

Thousands of young Algerians try to cross borders in a quest for a better life despite having everything they need at home. Their self-esteem is very low, their culture is rejected, and their self-destruction begins to take root at the school level. Creating art informed by their own culture, will help young Algerians discover a world of wonder and possibility; a world where they are free to forge their own identity independent of dark influences. Undeniably there is an immediate need for an appropriate teaching philosophy in situations like these that plague schools in this part of the world and it is only natural to try searching for ways to contribute to a better education.

Because of the intrinsic ties to religion, Arabic calligraphy is a traditional art form that is deeply embedded in the Algerian culture and life. Creating art that aesthetically attracts the youth with messages of humanity and self-respect for who they are, will in turn promote a positive environment for these young minds to grow and develop. Even though the entire educational system is in deep need of reforms, this was not included in the scope of this research. However, starting with small contributions are always welcomed beginnings.

Painting, drawing and sculpture are strong influences from the west, but calligraphy, pottery, and so many other arts are practiced without borders. The Beaux-Arts School of Algiers was established around 1848 with the strong presence of the French Academy. When the
colonization ended in 1962, the French influence was still vivid, and unfortunately its doors were more open to the French speaking elite than most of the Algerian population. A few years later, when the school itself finally became independent from the grip of Western influence, the curriculum did not change because of the lack of art educators. The new generation of students entering its doors can now be seen to have nothing or little to do with French culture.

Stankiewicz (1992) warned us by saying that “we must be vigilant as those involved in trying to change educational practices are also aware of the fact that once practices have been accepted into the culture of the school, these practices tend to persist” (p.171). In order to answer to a local population deprived of their own personality, identity, and culture for more than a century, the need for change in the curriculum and teaching philosophy is imperative. Encouraging curriculum derived from the local craft, such as calligraphy and pottery, is only appropriate in providing hope and inspiration to a young generation that desperately searches to belong. Through discovering and teaching these forgotten skills, the traits of humanity can only be strengthened. As an art educator, it is only natural to contribute with knowledge to save minds, as Feldman (1996) eloquently said: “to observe the quiddity of things is not to accept surface appearances passively” (p. 118).

**Proposed Research**

Artists are like “astronomers who try to explain phenomena by ‘making sense’ of the light energy sent in their direction by distant objects” (Feldman, 1996, p. 118). This auto-ethnographic research was exactly like a distant object that bears light and the desire to reach the answer could not be completed without first learning the skills of this old craft which is calligraphy. To begin with, the quest was to become the student in understanding, discovering, and creating calligraphy art; followed by self-assessment of what had been learned, reflection on
the benefits, the cognitive process, and finally drawing a conclusion of its transfer was at the heart of this exploration. Self-confidence was needed to be built from the start before even thinking of transfer as the transfer itself bore a huge responsibility. “As educators we are here to empower and build self-assurance in our students” (Erzen, 2005, p. 185).

Research Goals

As Wiggins and McTighe (2005) expressed: “The work of teaching for understanding is all about: digging deeper, continually asking the essential questions, rethinking” (p. VI).

Digging was exactly the approach that was used to seek answers and knowledge. Also, the intention of this auto-ethnographical study was to not only to understand the craft of calligraphy art, but the driving force of its philosophy throughout the ages and the theory behind it. With a greater understanding of this art form, comes the ability to expand its use and stimulate the youth of Algeria to a stronger self-awareness. Searching for a cognitive process around calligraphy might strengthen self-awareness, identity, and belonging “after all, it is the students who are the seeds of that common ground, and it is our collective responsibility to do the best we can to nurture the planting” (Guay & Gerlach, 2006, p. 187). And in this quest that was engaged, the student and teacher were one in the same.

Research Questions

Wiggins and McTighe (2005) stressed the importance of asking the right questions; “deep and transferable understandings depend upon framing work around such questions” (p. 106).

The following question gave direction to this auto-ethnographic study: How can understanding calligraphy art, the creative process, and its evolution be transferred by an artist-teacher promoting inspiration to regain self-identity and humanity for young minds? Teaching lessons in a humane way is something that every teacher should have in mind and as stressed by Simpson
“by choosing to become a teacher of art you have chosen to teach something about humanity” (p. 327).

The questions for an artist-teacher are well-defined. How can a better program be crafted for learning? How can the audience be convinced of a better way of teaching? And can the research be proven adequate for the population? Given the history of Beaux-Arts School outlined earlier, and the confusion of clashing cultures between western, Middle Eastern and local is a palpable and sensitive one; the question of how to balance and create a curriculum for all concerned becomes important. Simpson (1998) warned us about the confusion of cultures and their transitions by saying that: “anthropologists have stated that discontinuity between one set of cultural practices and another can be confusing to anyone who must make a transition between the two” (p. 65). That is why the need for a better teaching philosophy and well-crafted curriculum designed specifically for that or similar population should not be lightly taken. So, the question must be asked: can this research be the answer to student reflection, to strengthen their identity, and to create a sense of belonging in these modern times?

Specifically throughout this research project the ensuing explorations with analysis were needed to be made: What were the techniques of the traditional art of calligraphy? What forms had calligraphy taken in the modern world and how could it be applied to the researcher’s artwork? Did calligraphy promote the researcher’s self-esteem and confidence? If so, how? Was there a connection between calligraphy and identity? Was there a connection to a place of belonging, religion, and culture? What cognitive process was felt by the researcher in understanding and creating calligraphy art? And finally what would be the benefit in transferring the acquired knowledge into the classroom? A cognitive search of each one of these questions was my quest in the chapters to follow.
Conceptual Framework

Methodology

“Making art is a way of organizing, constructing, and reconstructing, searching, and researching ideas” (Simpson, 1998, p. 333). Thus, the method in reaching goals and answering questions can only be achieved by going through the learning stages, constructing, creating, searching, researching, and learning as attested by Dr. Simpson. The researcher became the student himself reflecting on the entire process and discovering the cognitive side of the craft. The literature and history of calligraphy was examined to understand the journey and the timeline of the craft throughout ages and its use by different parts of the globe. Discovery of the relationship between calligraphy, art, and its teaching was investigated. Examining connections between the visual and the literature helped unlock its secrets as stated by Simpson “making connections between visual statements and verbal information increases perceptual understanding” (p. 333). Calligraphy art was created using different medium such as painting, graphics, and charcoal, at the same time recording the emotional feelings, success, and the frustrations before achieving each art piece. In the process recording the timeline of the creative journey helped to comprehend the benefit and draw a scientific conclusion for its transfer as asserted by McNiff (2009) “you describe what you did, and explain how and why you did it” (p. 15).

Methods of Data Collection

During this learning journey, a reflective timeline recording of the process as memos, journals, notes, and photos was used throughout the progression. Also some audio, video, and PowerPoints were helpful in connecting the dots at the end of the learning process. Photos were taken to document and record the improvement at each discovering stage. Data collection should
have connections to the research questions as Maxwell (2013) asserted “your methods are the means to answering your research questions” (p. 100). Other ways of collecting data from emailing questions to educators in the field such as the Master calligrapher, Mr. Cherifi, were sought. It is only normal to explore different methods of data collection as Maxwell stated that: “using multiple methods is to gain information about different aspect of the phenomena” (p. 102).

**Method of Analysis**

“Any qualitative study requires decisions about how the analysis will be done” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 104). The foundation of this study rested in the essence of calligraphy art and its application. In an attempt to acquire understanding of the art of calligraphy, its process, and philosophy, the researcher had to put himself into the learner’s position. Arabic calligraphy has connections to the discipline of human behavior, used as a therapy to self-discipline, and relates to math and geometry called in the Middle Eastern countries “the geometry of the spirit. It is an artistic tradition of extraordinary beauty, richness, and power” (Oweis, 2013, p. 1). An auto-ethnographic study allowed the researcher to become the focus of research, to experience first-hand, and reflect on the process, outcome, and applications. So, the aim was to explore the possibilities of calligraphy as a tool towards an expression of art and a way to anchor young learners in humanity. Memos were a good way of analyzing data, because they could be collected at each stage. Maxwell (2013) reminds us of the importance of using memos to analyze and collect data by stating that: “you should regularly write memos while you are doing data analysis; memos not only capture your analytic thinking about your data, but also facilitate such thinking, stimulating analytic insights” (p. 105).
Theoretical Framework

Calligraphy is an art form that has been passed down through time within a wide variety of languages and cultures. Each has presented a unique appearance and characteristic that reflects the origin.

Developing the teaching of the calligraphy art performs a well-accepted role in artistic expression that might enhance the understanding and acceptance of their roots for the youth. “We know that happy, well-adjusted persons who understand themselves, have a positive self-concept, are aware of their own feelings and those of others, and who find relevance in their lives are not likely to become one of the statics” (Moskowitz, 1978, p. 7). A teacher’s ability to identify and understand cognitive behaviors and emotions might lead to successful use of calligraphy to guide students to self-esteem and self-reflection. Artists like El Seed, from France, and Nja, a Tunisian well-established calligrapher, Malikanas, and so many others have raised this art form to new heights, but have never explored its use in a classroom. Any educator knows the importance of a classroom and Simpson (1998) confirms that “art classes are the ground where the seeds of imagination are cultivated” (p. 326).

Significance of the Study

This is art with purpose. Calligraphy has deep roots to communications between humans throughout times and reaches the four corners of the globe. Since Algeria inherited a foreign culture that was rejected as soon as independence was won, art education is in profound need of reforms to include culture, identity, and place. Calligraphy can be a very valuable tool to help learners reflect on their own place in the world rather than having their eyes always to the west. The belief of the significance of this study is shared by many scholars in promoting local art. Among them are Alice Lai (2012), Douglas Blandy and Elizabeth Hoffman (1993), S.A. Gradle
(2007), Villeneuve and Sheppard (2009), K. Powell (2008) and many others who have contributed with proof and research that art education should be derived from local culture not borrowed from far places.

As scholars, we should be called upon to listen to previously silenced or oppressed voices and also to analyze the ways in which these voices are interwoven with, speak through, and affect dominant narratives—the ways in which voices ‘live on’ in the traces of our built, material, and visual cultures (Powell, 2008, p. 19).

The field of art is forever developing. Each artist searches to express their messages, stories, and emotions in their own unique style. At times, they follow and are influenced by others, or they devise a new approach and technique, or it might be the traditional arts that inspire their work. In building a deep understanding of the traditional art of calligraphy and its practice, artist-teachers could discover and experiment with its use and purpose in their artwork. “Understanding is multidimensional and complicated. There are different types of understanding, different methods of understanding, and conceptual overlap with other intellectual targets” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 84).

Furthermore with the perfection of the use of calligraphy and a better understanding of its philosophy and practice, the potential of its use in the classroom to enhance student learning may be increased. Through self-reflection on the process used and the artwork produced, the artist-teacher can explore the different prospects it might generate. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) stated that “students need a curriculum that treats them more like potential performers than sideline observers” (p. 122) and what better way to achieve this goal except by first becoming a performer. The outcome could include a number of teacher models to be used in lessons.
Limitations of the Study

Undeniably the major constraint of this study was time. Becoming an expert in the field of calligraphy could take years. The time frame for this study was merely fourteen weeks; therefore there were obvious limitations on the extent of understanding that could be achieved. In addition to time, this study required separating the dual role of learner and researcher while self-reflecting on the results, the significance, and the implication, which required tremendous willpower, discipline, and detachment. After watching again and again valuable young people, rejecting their own culture, ignoring their identity, and turning to other countries in exodus, searching for direction, a longing to help ignited a personal desire. Therefore, this strong connection could also manifest in the form of bias. Yet without an inner attachment and interest, studies such as these might never be done.

Definition of Terms

Auto-ethnographic study – self-examination of artistic practice that involves reflective and reflexive analysis of one’s own artistic practice.

Calligraphy – is the type of visual art related to writing; the art of giving form to signs in an expressive, harmonious, and skillful manner.

Craft – an art requiring specialized hand-made skills

Hijazi: is the collective name for a number of early Arabic scripts that developed in the Hejaz region of the Arabian Peninsula

Maghreb – Refers to an area of North Africa that includes Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco.

Qasida: poem composed in rhyming couplets with a tripartite structure

Reflection – review and go through a cognitive process to understand: what happened, why it happened, and how it might be improved.
Square dots: refers to the measurement used which is determined by the cut of the bamboo or the calligraphy pen.

Understanding – is having in-depth knowledge that allows a person to apply and use this knowledge for a purpose.

Conclusion

Having taught for many years in the Beaux-Arts School of Algiers, teaching art with a purpose except for the craft itself had not been observed. Five years of teaching drawing, creativity, and an introductory art course to the first year students, the researcher had struggled with many young minds denying their own traditions, feeling lost, with all eyes turning to the western culture rather than on their own. Calligraphy is a craft that has had ties to life, human beings, religion, and communications since the cave times. Thus, it has served as a vehicle where respect, knowledge, identity, and life have been deeply embedded throughout generations. Hence, exploring possibilities that could be derived from this heritage was worth investigating.

The study investigated calligraphy as a vehicle to make art with purpose, its adaptation in modern day work, and as a form of expression of identity and humanity. “Works of art or artifacts engage an arena of information that can instruct us about the world and about the experience of making art” (Session, 1999, p. 7). The art of calligraphy was studied and learned along with its many applications and theory. Although the focus of this auto-ethnographic study was on the increase of knowledge, understanding, and performance, it also encompassed calligraphy as a modern day tool to inspire young minds to express identity and the feeling of belonging to a place, culture, and the world.

In summary, by using qualitative research methods to study calligraphy, the intent was to not only increase understanding, but in turn apply the findings back in the classroom. The
ultimate goal was to use a traditional art form to inspire feelings of a strengthened identity and to help youth regain a humanistic approach to life through art.

As with any compelling study a look at what has already been written and achieved in the field was necessary. Therefore chapter two in this investigation deals with literature and efforts made by others that were relevant to this study.
Chapter Two

Constructing personal meaning through art

“The role of the art teacher is powerful. The greater our ability to design situations that provoke students into exploring, selecting, organizing, perceiving, and experiencing the world from a visual perspective, the more we are teachers of meaning and the more we provide the context for learners to construct personal meaning through art” (Simpson, 1998, p. 316).

Research Question

“In many works on research design, research questions are presented as the starting point and primary determinant of the design” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 73). In order to give meaning and direction to this auto-ethnographic study and for the clarity of this chapter, it is essential to restate the research question: How can understanding calligraphy art, the creative process, and its evolution be transferred by an artist-teacher promoting inspiration, to regain self-identity and humanity for young minds? The goal was to learn calligraphy art and to reflect on the process and the links it might have to identity, self-confidence, and belonging. Calligraphy is a powerful tool that can be used to boost one’s expressive message. The first goal, as stated in the research question, was to understand calligraphy art and its core that has thousands of years of profound history. The second was to uncover its evolution throughout centuries and what role it was given in the arena of art beyond the primary function of communications. The third aim was to reflect on the benefits that might be generated while using calligraphy as an expressive tool, such as the feelings, the satisfaction of creativity, identity strength, and the belonging to a place, community, civilization, and humanity. The final goal was to develop and study the probability of its transfer along with its benefits in a classroom. Even though it was not in the scope of this study it is worth mentioning that the latter possibility requires a classroom study comparing calligraphy art
and other popular media such as painting, drawing, and sculpture. Learning, uncovering, and understanding are the aim of every art educator and “research questions state what you want to learn” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 77).

**Conceptual Framework**

The foundation of this study lay in the essence of calligraphy art and its application. The research strategy was to explore possibilities of calligraphy as a tool towards an expression of art and a way to anchor young learners in their own culture and humanity.

Prior knowledge referred to the researcher’s previous experience with calligraphy. Even though bringing personal background to the research might lean towards bias, it could also serve as an inspiration and Maxwell (2013) approves the use of prior knowledge by affirming that: “Separating your research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks” (p. 45).

The beginning of the research was going back to the basics on how the Arabic calligraphy is measured, written, the emotions attached to it, and the material used to achieve the desired script; thus building a solid foundation and increase in understanding of its basics, theory, and philosophy. There are six different styles of calligraphy to learn, which were all discovered between the 10th and 16th century and most of them use the rule of square dots for measurements.

Arabic calligraphy has connections to the disciplines of human behavior, math, and geometry. These areas of research are very important in discovering attachments of the use of calligraphy in shaping and promoting human behavior such as discipline, stability, identity, roots, and cultural importance. Following the understanding of the art was the research strategy which was based on self-reflection of the learning process, reviewing the literature for better
understanding, and comparing creative calligraphy to modern art and geometry. Finally, reflecting on the benefits of its use in the classroom played an important part in promoting the medium itself. These steps helped answer questions and generate reflection about the use of art with purpose.

The following figure of the conceptual framework (Figure 1) was designed to show key points of interest in areas and in strategies of research along with prior knowledge and connections.
Figure 1 – Conceptual Framework

**Calligraphy: A Vehicle for Self-Reflection**

**Prior Knowledge**
- Knowledge of Arabic script and writing system.
- Understanding of the basic concepts.
- Achieved some art works in traditional Arabic calligraphy.

**Areas of Research**
- Traditional use of calligraphy to promote stability.
- Significance of modern day use and forms.
- Cultural importance to build connections to roots.
- Use to promote and inspire self-identity and humanity.
- Determine ways that this discipline can be explored in the classroom.

**Research Strategy**
- Review books
- Interview calligraphy teachers and artists
- Internet web-search
- Museums and libraries
- Journals, memos and field notes
- Self-reflective of the learning process.
- Comparison to modern art and geometry.

**Connections**
- Calligraphy as a tool to teach self-control and discipline.
- Calligraphy and artistic self-expression channeling thoughts and perceptions.
- Connecting calligraphy to identity.
Literature Review

No research is complete unless it is backed up with theory and facilitates the reader’s understanding. In examining the literature of this subject, the research fell into three major categories: calligraphy in the past, present, and future. Calligraphy in the past concentrated on the traditional techniques and practices, the present centered on the modern application and as a stand-alone art, and the future considered classroom relevance.

Traditional Calligraphy Techniques

The manuals for the actual form of the letters are multiple and set by the writing style. The understanding of the different forms of Arabic lettering was essential in order to master the calligraphy application of each form. Rules of Arabic Calligraphy by Hashim is an example of the basic calligraphy manual which lays out the form of each letter with the necessary measurement done in the relationship to the dot/point of the pen. The approach allowed the artist to create well-formed letters of any size dependent only on the tool or calligraphy pen that was being used. ElAraby (1996) explained the tools that are used for calligraphy including the use of bamboo to form pens; “each pen was cut at the top at an angle which varied according to the needed width” (p. 5). He paints a historical story that denotes the origins and development of the Arabic script tracing back from Hijazi, to Aramaic, to Phoenician, to ancient Egyptian. “With the beginnings of the Kufic script, the door was widely opened to artists and calligraphers to develop an enormous variety of calligraphic styles that survived for centuries; some of which are still flourishing” (p. 4).

Calligraphy is also known as a manner of discovering an individual; “to manifest his morality: numerous statements, from as early as the tenth century, make it clear that calligraphies were regarded as impressions of their makers' moral being” (Roxburgh, 2003, p.39). The
practice of studying a master’s work was characteristic of the calligraphy students. Some masters wrote descriptions of how to achieve fine work. Roxburgh examined the work of Ibn al-Bawwab who wrote the well-known Ra’iyya which is “a qasida (a poem composed in rhyming couplets with a tripartite structure). His instructions and advice tend to be telegraphic, perhaps unavoidable given the economy of the poetic frame-work” (p. 48). It is not surprising to have a manual in the Middle East languages written in the form of a poem. Although unusual, if not bizarre for many western countries, it illustrates a metaphor of this part of the world and links the art to the search of a higher understanding of life.

Modern Applications

Different famous artists have produced forms of modern art using calligraphy as their basis. Each artist’s work contains a cultural element to their work. The message may be unique to each artist, but it demonstrates the potential for this traditional art form.

Ahmed Moustafa (1943-present), whose origins are Pakistan although he lives in England and was presented with a special commission from Queen Elizabeth II, “attaches great importance to building cultural bridges of mutual respect and understanding through his art” (Wells, 2012, p. 59). Wells (2012) wrote that his “images frequently have an aesthetic and spiritual appeal to those with little or even no understanding of their meaning” (p. 59).

Hilal Kazan (1960-present) is considered a unique calligrapher in Turkey as she is a woman. Simonowitz (2010) expresses that “like many of their male peers, it is argued, some of these ‘women of the pen’ were, and are, not simply artists or scribes, but in certain respects the virtual equivalent of scholars” (p. 76). The importance given to the art of calligraphy bypasses many biases that might otherwise exist. Simonowitz goes on to note numerous other achievements of women calligraphers and books written about them.
Classroom Relevance

The demand for multicultural educational practices in the classroom is well documented coming from various points of view and locations. To name a few, Gradle (2007) and Erzen (2005) connected to ecology and the environmental aesthetics, Villeneuve and Sheppard (2009) looked close to home in the community, and Lai (2012) emphasized the cultural bond. Therefore it is not unreasonable to search for a connection to calligraphy in this part of the world.

Macaulay, who teaches art at Winsor School in Boston, Massachusetts, designed lessons around a common approach to Middle Eastern art using ceramic tile design and miniatures. Macaulay (2001) expressed that “in over sixteen years of teaching, I have rarely seen a group of students as engaged in a project as my students were with this one” (p. 43). She had obviously done some background studies of her own, which is important for an artist-teacher to do when presenting a new topic. Macaulay had noted that “to express their artistic ideas, while forbidden by early Islamic law to represent human or animal forms in art, Muslim artists became great pattern makers and developed the Islamic decorative style we know today” (p. 30).

Rasouli and Attaran (2012) suggest a collaborative e-learning as a new model for the transfer of the skill in a classroom after testing their method in an Iranian school. They concluded that “the discussion results show that the electronic collaborative learning practices as a supplement to traditional teaching calligraphy in Iran can increase participation and creativity level, problem-solving skills, decision-making power, critical thinking, virtues and moral values, self-confidence and students’ curiosity” (p. 442). Yet their goal was initiated due to certain constraints on students learning calligraphy: many students came from different parts of the country, many places did not have qualified masters who could teach, and speed and time were considered modern life problems.
At the Beaux Arts School in Algiers, Abdelkader Boumala, an artist-teacher and calligrapher, always says that in order for students to understand calligraphy, starting from basics is a must. He teaches his students to appreciate calligraphy, learn patience, and work from the heart if any results are desired. Boumala (October 2, 2013) insists that his students “must cleanse themselves before approaching a paper or a canvas” (personal communication). His success as an educator is a result of promoting respect for what is done in the classroom. As Boumala expresses “if the learner gains self-respect, he is half way to successful art” (personal communication).

Conclusion

Tacit Understanding

The art of calligraphy has a history of thousands of years in human chronicles throughout the world with a connection to religion; therefore it becomes a powerful vehicle for respect. Letters and words connect with the audience, viewers, and learners in a visual work manifestation. Calligraphy art also serves as a connection between tradition and modernity, East and West, old and new, and strengthens the idea of modernism as a continuous, globally interconnected phenomenon. However the power of calligraphy has not yet entered into a classroom to fully deliver its secrets and power. In North Africa, calligraphy still carries the burden of religious vision and most of the time is not perceived as an art medium. Studies and research like this one could, perhaps, serve as steps towards liberating the medium from an old vision.

Theoretical Understanding

Current research supports the use of calligraphy in the classroom from multiple points of view. The question remains with the administration’s understanding of its importance. Whether
the learning takes place traditionally from a master calligrapher, or through books, writings, or manuals, or even through computer technology; it provides benefits and potential to young people of many cultures. The value of this inquiry shows that the study of calligraphy could promote a positive and humanistic means of expression, self-discipline and patience, and a healthy perception of the culture and values of the Middle Eastern world. Hence, it provides a fascinating case for proposing the teaching of calligraphy to enhance self-reflection and self-satisfaction in the young people today.

Chapter three goes into depth about the methodology that was used in this study. The design of the study, the research methods used, and the data collection are examined. An analysis was then done on the findings.
Chapter Three

Before Teaching, Comes Learning

“Concepts are thoughts and notions that develop from a variety of inputs – our senses, feelings, and experiences” (Simpson, 1998, p. 290).

Methodology

The methodologies used in an auto-ethnographic study are unique in each individual study. In examining the design of this study, an exploration of the research methods, along with the way in which the data was collected and analyzed was essential. “As a reflexive genre of writing, auto-ethnography situates the self within the context of a culture, sub-culture or group, and studies one’s experience along with that of other members of the group” (Duarte, 2007, p. 2). In this study, the art of calligraphy was reviewed and employed by the researcher in an attempt to improve his ability and understanding through reflection and application. The end goal was to stimulate self-esteem and acceptance of belonging of the calligrapher.

Chapter one provided an outline of why this research question is important in trying to help young Algerians in understanding their culture and regaining self-respect through self-reflection about identity. In chapter two, a link between the research question and the literature was established, grounding the quest of better art and teaching throughout time and beyond. In this chapter, efforts were deployed to explain the method used in order to reach this noble goal of transferring the knowledge to young minds. “Before we can teach others, we have to know as much as we can about art ourselves” (Simpson, 1998, p. 17).
Design of the Study: Researcher’s Responsibility

“Since the study is auto-ethnographic, the integrity of the outcome is totally your responsibility” (Simpson, 2013, weekly lecture, p. 4). This quote was taken from the weekly lecture placing the importance on the researcher’s responsibility to do a decent job so that the outcome would reflect the effort and yield good results. Therefore, a plan of action was needed to reflect and design the methodology for gathering data. However, the challenges were many, and one of the main constraints of this journey was the pressure of time. Also, as outlined before, selecting a method for the research was a critical task. “The bottom line for any decision about methods is the actual result of using these methods in your study; what would be an excellent decision in one study could be a serious mistake in another” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 87).

As this is an auto-ethnographical study, all the efforts to learn, discover, and understand the subject relied on the researcher’s endeavors to accomplish the goal.

The research question necessitated an attempt to use calligraphy as a vehicle to provoke an understanding of identity, culture, and self-esteem. These are elements that enable individuals to become a part of humanity. Also, an answer was sought to a question of belonging and acceptance, instead of all eyes to the dominant western culture. Gardner (2008) stressed the importance of culture by saying that: “in the absence of supporting cultural context, it is unlikely that anyone could become an artistic connoisseur” (p. 14). This is art with purpose. The important question of how the information would be gathered to respond to the research question was an ongoing process from learning calligraphic skills, to revisiting theory, to making an oeuvre, and reflecting on creative art.
Research Methods: Uncover the Cognitive Process

In selecting an approach to this study, three components had to be taken into consideration. First, there was a need to understand the history of calligraphy, how it was achieved, and the driving force behind it while embracing for what purpose it was used. Second, the researcher needed to learn the skills, such as preparing the bamboo cut pen and the ink as the old masters did. Third, artistic calligraphy pieces had to be created using a variety of media such as ink on paper, acrylics on canvas, and charcoal. “An important issue in designing a qualitative study is the extent to which you decide on your method in advance, rather than developing or modifying these during the research” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 88).

The process of making modern calligraphy art pieces by carefully choosing a theme was the main source of data collection. However, other sources were not ignored such as the theory and interviews with calligraphy artist-teachers. In addition, an extensive search of museums and libraries such as the BU, JStore, and other literary institutions were valuable. “An understanding is best acquired by “uncovering” (Wiggins, and McTighe, 2005, p. 129). The goal was not only to learn and understand the art of calligraphy, but to dig deep and go beyond the visual to uncover the cognitive process, emotions, and benefits. “Knowing through seeing is a serious mode of cognition and a valid way of learning about reality” (Feldman, 1996, p. 117).

The approach to this research of calligraphy art was a qualitative auto-ethnographic method. In devising a unique method that suited this study, the following tasks and processes were used:

- The artwork of calligraphy masters and literature were observed.
- Artwork was created using a variety of materials.
- An artist statement was written for each oeuvre.
- Memos were kept on the techniques used to create each oeuvre.
• Reflections were written on the process, outcome, and applications.
• An ongoing journal was kept on the emotional connections and development of each piece including the success and frustrations experienced.
• Photos and videos were taken of the work accomplished and the creative process.

This documentation and process was followed with:

• The creation of a series of PowerPoints:
  o Processes used
  o Techniques specific to calligraphy
  o Examples of traditional work
  o Examples of modern work
  o Artwork created
• Final reflections on the promotion of humanity

Data Collection: Seeking Answers

Data collection was gathered from the beginning of the process by keeping memos, journals, photos, and sketches in addition to the interviews with calligraphy teachers such as Mr. Boumala and Mr. Cherifi. Videos were made while creating artistic work of calligraphy explaining the processes, materials, emotions, feelings, and frustrations in achieving the work and trying to unearth the connection between the phenomena, identity, belonging, and self-reflection on the culture. In conclusion, the researcher sought an answer to the question of possibilities of the transfer of the medium to a classroom.

Maxwell (2013) refers to the importance of “the process of negotiating a relationship” (p. 90) with the participants of the study, yet in an auto-ethnographic study, the researcher was
accordingly in a relationship with himself in many ways. Therefore it became important to nurture a sense of self-detachment when analyzing the data collected.

The unknown was the time. Due to this restraint, a carefully designed program needed to be put in place to regulate this important task. Having discovered a matrix design helped put together the distribution of time in order to stay on track and avoid panics. The question about the time frame appeared in this task at the end, but in fact the researcher thought about solving the time frame first before attempting anything else. If the time frame allotted to this task was well controlled, the research was halfway mastered. “It is worth keeping in mind that you can lay out a tentative plan for some aspects of your study in considerable detail, but leave open the possibility of substantially revising this if necessary” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 89). Having clearly defined tasks and organized sequencing facilitated maintaining the timetable. Table 1 displays the data collection techniques that were used.

Table 1 – Data Collection Techniques used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Types of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artist Statements</strong></td>
<td>Provided information in response to why the artwork was created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memos on Techniques</strong></td>
<td>Provided information on how the piece of artwork was created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Journals</strong> on emotional</td>
<td>Provided information on the experiences of the artist-teacher and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connections and development</td>
<td>emotions experienced. Feelings of success or failure were expressed along</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for each piece - success, and</td>
<td>with frustrations and satisfactions that were present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the frustrations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflections</strong> on the</td>
<td>Provided the rethinking and contemplations that accompany any complete cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process, outcome, and</td>
<td>of analysis. It also provided a reflection on relationship with culture,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>applications</td>
<td>identity and belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Photos and Videos</strong></td>
<td>Provided visual documentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once the data was collected it was reviewed by the researcher and observational cues were used to indicate: personal reflections, teaching applications, techniques used, and feelings and emotions. To facilitate this marking of the data, these cues were given a symbol and referred to as the “RATE index”.

Table 2 - Observational cues – referred to as the “RATE index”

Data Analysis

Wong (1995) relates “teaching cannot be understood fully from the perspective of an outsider” (p. 25). Similarly an auto-ethnographic study is understood more fully from the perspective of the researcher. With careful, sincere reflection, the analysis of the data collected sent clear messages. However, Duarte (2007) warns that “auto-ethnography has no pretense of objectivity” (p. 2). Stepping outside oneself was not easily done, therefore using memos, journals, reflections, and photos facilitated the analysis.
Using observational cues to review the documentation brought focus to points that might otherwise have been overlooked and lost. The positive aspect of this study was that the researcher would know if he had achieved the desired understanding or not. Yet with this acknowledgement, it also had to be accepted that with an increase of knowing, grows a thirst for more and as we all have experience, learning is a never-ending process.

We know that in any given study the research question is the main focus. Maxwell (2013) warned us by advising that: “the statement of your question is the central part of your proposal” (p. 147). From the beginning to the end of this literature and beyond, data collection, reflection, and analysis was an ongoing process. All of the gathered data helped in answering research questions, sub questions, thoughts, fears and constraints of calligraphy art.

**Conclusion**

Auto-ethnographic writing begins with a descriptive narrative of events and activities that unfold within a particular culture and then develops into a reflective analysis of these events and activities to generate new insights and to enhance the researcher’s sensitivity towards the knowledge gained in the process (Duarte, 2007, p. 2).

With the design and methodologies set for this auto-ethnographic study of calligraphy art, the creation of the artwork along with the data collected offered a means of reflection for the researcher. An in-depth analysis of the findings illuminated the acquired knowledge and provided food for thought for the artist-teacher, and answered questions about the benefits of teaching calligraphy art in the classroom. Also, the data contributed light on whether or not calligraphy strengthens the sense of belonging, self-esteem, and adds an anchor to culture. The
search to gain personal and practical knowledge was found through self-reflection in creating calligraphy artwork.

All of these shaded areas are brought to light in the next chapter as the results of the study are examined and analyzed. Through careful documentation and reflection, consideration was given first to the skills acquired through the creative process. This task was followed by an examination of the emotions and beliefs that had developed from the artwork and the study done. Uncovering emotions, benefits, and the relationship of calligraphy art with self-reflection was an important undertaking and called for careful study. Let this auto-ethnographic research trigger the interest to research for a better way of helping young minds to see the light and hope of their future.
“Things you discover about yourself can inform your future work in the classroom and help you to make meaningful choices about what and how to teach” (Simpson, 1998, p. 19).

Results of the Study

This auto-ethnographic study examines calligraphy art as a means to regain self-confidence, identity, belonging, thereby strengthening humanity. Expectations are placed on the findings of the learning process in order to design a curriculum for the Algerian population in a quest of their own cultural heritage. The hope is to stop all eyes concentrating only on the West and focus on rediscovering local ethnicity and civilization. The research focuses on learning a very valuable craft of place, unearthing its connections to the local population, and this craft’s significance in history and spiritual connection. Significance of the study, bias and validity, analysis of the data are explained in this chapter. However, emphasis is put on the learning process as this was necessary for the rest to follow.

Significance of the Study

Through the revelation and experience of the history, theory, and learning process, this study is believed valuable for young generations to regain their self-confidence, identity, and acceptance of belonging to a culture that has been pushed back by the most powerful Western visuals for years. When applied in a classroom, the study will be considered art with purpose, because students not only learn a skill, but learn to reflect on their own identity and culture where the social intent is to improve an understanding of identity and the love of life. This is a
small step towards implementing local art in the curriculum, and encouraging reflection on self-achievements instead of imitations. The confirmation to the researcher of emotions and cognitive behaviors was beyond doubt while going through the learning process which in turn encouraged motivation to learn more, to create art, and study the history of the craft. “It also provided an array of practical skills to transform surface learning into deep learning, giving me a newly found confidence in my ability to teach undergraduate management students more creatively and effectively” (Duarte, 2007, p.1). Similar to Duarte, notes, reflective journals, and findings all confirmed with consciousness the gain of new pedagogical knowledge and strengthen the researcher’s confidence for the future.

Maxwell (2013) warned that “some validity threats are unavoidable” (p.136) and also some of them will show up during the process which will require a new response. Throughout the study memos, reflections, artist statements, images, and videos were reviewed through the observational cues of the RATE index (Reflection, Application, Technique, and Emotion). Cognitive behaviors as well as emotional behaviors were noted throughout. Categorizing observations with the RATE index allowed the researcher to step outside the inner circle to examine behaviors represented. If given further time between the writing and the review process, further observations would be made. As learning is never finished, the researcher intends to reexamine his writings and images in a year’s time for further reflection. The emotions, observation, notes, and journals showed a strong evidence of the findings. However, this evidence is the beginning of the research not a set end.

The intended purpose, for certain, might look like a wishful dream, but this type of research is the first step in education reform to trigger and enhance reflection on how to start stabilizing the youth of the third world. Giving them hope and self-esteem by learning instead of
copying cultures from far away. “Teaching cannot be understood fully from the perspective of an outsider” (Wong, 1995, p. 25). They need to learn to live in their own skin instead of borrowing from virtual cultures. For the reader it might look and sound like a philosophy or just sowing words in the air, but a beginning is always indispensable and this modest research might be just that ‘beginning’ which is the intended purpose.

**Bias and Validity**

The validity of what the researcher is going through in auto-ethnographic study is always present in the mind. Constantly asking if the research, the learning process, and the outcome of the main question posed is solid and answered in a way that can be understood by the readers as an important finding is ever present. As Maxwell (2013) reminds us to ask: “what are the main ways in which you might be mistaken in your study? (p. 136). In an auto-ethnography study, the researcher works hard to make sure that the study is important, because he can only rely on himself and his findings.

A method of revisiting notes, journals, memos, and exercises was observed throughout the process which in turn generated more questions and answers in deepening the understanding of the craft. The books cited in stage I also served as landmarks for the researcher to achieve some artwork. Despite the rigorous efforts made, there is always the possibility of bias due to the deep feelings of the subject. Therefore a summative assessment was conducted by the researcher in comparing the work achieved against previous master pieces and also by asking surrounding artists and friends such as Abraham, Talbi, Pat, Lydia, Jill, and Boumala to critique the work done furnishing conclusive and positive responses which promoted self-satisfaction.
Analysis Procedure

Throughout this auto-ethnographic study the researcher became the student and object of self-reflection. While well-versed in the Arabic language, the calligraphy forms and techniques of production are unique and set and therefore require a critical observation. In an effort to increase an understanding and awareness of the cognitive processes and emotions that students experience while working with these methods, it was necessary to undergo the process. The sequence of stages were the following: Stage I – researching and learning the techniques; Stage II – reproducing the techniques discovered and the character of different styles; Stage III – creating original oeuvres inspired by the new understanding acquired through stages I and II and a search for ties to humanity; and Stage IV - clarification and description of the progression of the study along with the focuses of the RATE index (Reflection, Application, Technique, Emotion).

Results of Data Analysis

Stage I – Researching and Learning the Techniques of Arabic Calligraphy

The beginning of this study focused on a number of different sources that conceptualized the methods of forming letters to the proper size using a dot reference. Exploring, reading, and consulting available sources at hand were necessary. One great book about calligraphy was written in 1972 by Naji Zine Eddine Al Masraf (1901-1988) called Creative Arabic Calligraphy. Formations of Arabic Calligraphy written by one of Iraq's most prominent calligraphers, H.K Al Zahrawi (1947-2007), and published in 1986 by the Cairo Institute of Arts, proved to be an excellent source. Another great source is Pour une Typographie Arabe by one of my graphic teachers, Roberto Hamm, published in 1975 in Paris. Ralph Cleminson (2006) wrote The Complete Guide to Calligraphy which is published in Canada by Firefly Books. And finally I
will close this list with a great book written by Titus Burckhardt published in 2009 by World Wisdom, Inc. Bloomington, Indiana called *Art of Islam, Language and Meaning* where he refers to calligraphy as the divine art. In these modern times, one cannot forget to mention rich, useful, and free sources are available for everyone online.

All of the sources agreed that in order to achieve harmonious letters, a set proportion was vital to establish a foundation in realizing balanced lettering and spacing. Although there are many different forms used in Arabic calligraphy, considering the time constraints, the researcher focused on ‘Thuluth’ for the work at this point. This style refers to ‘the third’ as the golden rule of the design, which means the cut of the pen’s tip is used as a measure for everything including the spacing, size of letters, and dots.

In addition, the materials traditionally used were examined. For instance, good black ink is achieved by mixing soot, dissolved gum Arabic and distilled water. This ink does not easily fade. Although different types of reeds and inks have been used throughout time, consideration had to be given and a selection made based on the kinds of materials most readily available to the researcher. This seemed a natural and global approach, since historically this has been the basis for calligraphers’ choices. Bamboo was chosen for the pen along with Winsor and Newton calligraphy inks. Following instructions from Boumala, the calligraphy teacher at the Beaux Arts, bamboo pens were cut and constructed according to the original and ancient method. The size and length of the bamboo was determined by the comfort and controllability of the pen. The tip of the pen was shaped with a knife using the curve of the thumb as a guide. Once a suitable form was achieved, the tip was cut at a 35 to 40 degree slant and a fine slit of the tip is cut to allow the retention of ink. Figure 2 illustrates the process followed.
Figure 2 - Process of preparing a bamboo calligraphy pen

1 – Sizing and cutting length of bamboo

2 – Tools needed

3 – Allow for a comfortable place to work

4 – Use a sharp knife to form the tip; cutting away from you for general safety.

5 – Measure the tip against your thumb

6 – Cut the tip on a hard surface to form the diagonal cut
Once the bamboo pens were prepared, the practice could begin. The first attempts lead to a search for paper quality. If the paper was too porous, the ink would bleed and be absorbed in undesired ways as seen in Figure 3. Furthermore, the bamboo pen could not produce a smooth line on a porous surface.
Figure 3 – Attempt on semi-porous paper

A paper with a glossy surface allowed for a crisper line and permitted a clear form of the letters as seen in Figure 4. Therefore, Bristol paper was the good choice.

Figure 4 – Attempt on Bristol paper with a glossy surface

Another point discovered was in the way the inks were used. Dipping the pen directly into a bottle of ink often led to an overabundance of ink on the pen which would result in bolting or over-heavy lines on certain parts of the calligraphy. A method to avoid this problem was by
pouring some ink into a bottle with a piece of cotton or silk threads already in it as seen in Figure 5. This practice allowed a more uniform amount of ink to be acquired.

Figure 5 – Preparation of the ink bottle

| 1 – Place some cotton in a container – preferably a glass container with a lid. | 2 – Pour some ink on top of the cotton. |
| 3 – Tap your bamboo pen so that the ink is uniformly absorbed. | 4 – Check the tip for the amount of ink. |
| 5 – Try it out making a test sample. | 6 – Note that the quantity of ink and the quality of the line improved. |
Another technique uncovered was a method of designing letters that were larger than the tip that could be made on a bamboo pen. Holding two pencils apart at a set distance, letters could be written as seen in Figure 7. The researcher applied this technique on one of his original oeuvres on canvas.

Figure 7 – Designing large letters

Stage II – Reproducing the Techniques Discovered and Styles of Different Calligraphy

Once the techniques and methods were obtained, stage II of the study entailed the application of the skills. Although the creativity at this point was to some extent limited, the practice and training was a necessary aspect to the later creative stage of original works. Without the fundamental basis to build on, recognition of lettering could be lost. As aforementioned, each style of Arabic script is founded in the traditional measure and space of the
letters. For example in the Persian style ‘Nastaaliq’, which is used mostly in the region of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, the letter ‘sin’ which takes the shape of three ‘teeth’ could be seen as one, longer in length and the equivalent of the three as seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8 – Comparison of two forms of the letter ‘sin’ - The first line is ‘Thuluth’ and the second and third are ‘Nastaaliq’.

Therefore the exercise of writing in this form requires great precision and practice. The researcher produced multiple samples of the script using the dot system for measurement as seen in Figure 9.
Figure 9 – Samples created of script

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Note the measurement of five dots for ‘alef’ and ‘lam’ (Equivalent for letters “A” and “L” in Latin). The example written here in red is my name “Tahar”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Note the three slanting dots for the ‘ha’. (letter H in Latin) Certain shapes are repetitive in similar letters and require a consistency in their production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Note the horizontal measure of four dots for letters like ‘lam’ and ‘dal’. (L and D in Latin) The dot system is a clever way of guiding the calligrapher to produce harmonious script.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the astonishing findings is the mood of the practitioner. Being in a positive mood is one of the keys in achieving great results.

**Stage III - Creating Original Oeuvres Inspired by the New Understanding Acquired through Stages I and II.**

The third stage of the study involved using stage I and II knowledge and skills to create original oeuvres. The inspiration for this calligraphy art springs from the motivation and goal of the researcher to open the door of humanity; to promote acceptance, and pride in identity thus strengthening compassion for others and self-esteem. Therefore, in preparation for this stage, a list of inspirational words was made selecting terms that would promote reflection. (See Figure 10)
From these words the creative process and experimentation began. In expanding on the creative process and in an effort to make the work his own, the researcher explored the use of different media. One of the first experiments was done working with white crayon on black paper. Figure 11 is an example of this work.
The researcher felt a certain success with this oeuvre as expressed in his artist statement:
At first, I was hesitant, and afraid of a negative result that would repress and question what I was doing. However, the result of this piece proved me wrong and I was quite satisfied and ready to do more; to explore further possibilities. The feeling was transformed to an open door, to hope and imagination that I could achieve more. In simple language, I could say that I was fired up; yet some questions were still unanswered when considering how to transfer these emotions and discoveries to young minds. Knowing that educating others is a powerful task, yet, it will always be a responsibility that calls for no mistakes. There remained work still ahead in crafting with great care a good curriculum. In this attempt however, I chose special words for those in search of their identity and humanity which were “Love Life”. I wanted to try a simple composition first before using paints on a canvas. Since I liked the result, I even signed at the bottom right.
As a result of the success of the first attempt, and now ready to explore and venture deeper using different mediums, acrylic on canvas was chosen. This approach provided a different set of techniques to be examined. In a determination to retain consistent letter quality, the artist used a safer tactic of writing on paper, which was then cut out, transferred onto canvas, and used as a stencil to begin the oeuvre. This provided a basis for the lettering. A video was made of this start and the researcher voiced his joy and frustrations as he worked. Moments of pure light beamed from his eyes as the painting took shape. Paint was mixed and applied at different tempos and with different tools; brush, fingers, and even an agave plant scrub. Emotions gushed forth as the work began to take shape and brushes were not enough; the artist needed to touch and feel the paint gain form on the canvas.

Figure 12 – Painting process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 – Forming larger letters with a different technique.</th>
<th>2 – Cutting the letters out to create a stencil.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Preparing the canvas with the stencil.</td>
<td>4 – Mixing the paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Working with the stencil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Carefully removing the stencil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Using a square tip brush for lettering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Using an agave scrub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Even using fingers to feel the paint flow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Adding lettering with a bamboo pen and ink.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result could be described as bittersweet only because of the high goals the artist-teacher had set for himself. In his artist statement about this painting the researcher wrote:

This is an acrylic on canvas that I struggled with for two days trying to succeed in expressing myself with one word ‘light’. The composition, the color, the choice of the
theme is somehow an achieved objective. However, frustration of not succeeding in projecting the message to the viewer is still vivid. I wanted the message of light, hope, and inner security to be seen and felt deep so it could reach the hearts. When I was painting, I thought about the work of Thomas Kinkade who characterized himself as the painter of light with his cozy little cottages in the cold of winter, yet a warm golden yellow light can be seen coming out from a little window. That feeling was not reached in this painting, but I am quite satisfied with the composition and I remain confident that anything is possible. I wanted to describe these emotions, hopes, and fears that I went through and echo my message one more time that calligraphy is indeed an art with purpose.

Stage IV - Clarification and Description of the Progression of the Study along with the Focuses of the RATE Index.

As previously described in chapter three, the RATE index was created for observational cues in analyzing the data gathered. Memos, artist statements, journals, reflections, videos, and images were examined and categorized using RATE. Interesting findings were uncovered through this process.

R – Personal reflection.

In review of the comments made under personal reflection, it was evident that certain aspects were needed to produce a good writing script. Specifically a focused clear mind, patience, and self-discipline were noted along with a need to genuinely love and be invested in the task. The beauty and essence of calligraphy is that no two pieces are truly alike as the work is hand-crafted, unique, and personal.
A – Teaching Application.

As an artist-teacher it was natural to consider the usage in the classroom as the work was being created. The evidence was clear how applicable calligraphy is by the flood of ideas that were found in the memos, reflections, and even the videos. Multiple applications were thought of comprising of verses of poetry, graphic designs, logo designs, fashion designs, sculptural tool, ceramics, and painting on canvas. Combination of calligraphy styles or even linking different scripts, Arabic to Latin to Celtic, were contemplated for variations using themes like culture, belonging, self, or community. The possibilities of expression using calligraphy are limitless.

T – Techniques.

Several techniques were discovered and noted in memos, reflections, videos, images, and artist statements. The researcher will use many of the images and videos to create teaching tools such as creating a bamboo pen following the ancient method. Other techniques of shaping the tip, preparing the ink, designing large script with two pencils, or using a flat brush were examined and remarked. After understanding the styles and the dot measurement system, the potentials opened to creativity.

E – Emotions and feelings.

Throughout the study the generated emotions and feelings radiated positive responses. The self-discipline needed produced satisfaction and joy in what was created. The patience, peace of mind, creativity, and diligence that was experienced led to a sensation of belonging to humanity. It was also observed that calligraphy can be linked to spirituality, and conducted a sentiment that it was not only fascinating to study, but it also fun and rewarding. Total liberation was achieved when the researcher realized that imagination is the only boundary.
Inspiration.

Visibly in various places all the way through the memos, journals, and notes, numerous sketches could be found. They were evidence of ideas and thoughts showing a wide range of diverse concepts and designs for original oeuvres. Figure 14 shows a few of them.

Figure 14 – concept and designs for future oeuvres

Analysis Conclusions – Address Research Question

The main research question offered noteworthy findings. Understanding calligraphy art, the creative process, and its evolution was the principle goal in this auto-ethnographical study. It developed the groundwork for the artist-teacher to investigate approaches to encourage a means
of reclaiming self-identity and a compassion for humanity. In order to pass these demeanors on to young minds, it was necessary to acquire them first himself.

**Understanding of the Art**

Through the analysis of the documentation, the findings helped discover responses to many of the questions posed in this study. The researcher-student was able to increase his knowledge of the skills needed to build an understanding of the craft. “The overall intent of the research is to learn” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p. 20).

The driving force of its philosophy and theory was its connection to culture and religion and of course, the beauty that can be achieved in the craft of this forgotten art. With the many possibilities offered by means of its design along with meaningful words, the researcher could experience, express, and produce artistic work with joy.

The process of awareness was initiated from the beginning when the research started. Understanding that the roots of calligraphy go back centuries ago in history helps appreciate the ties that calligraphy has with human spirituality and communications. When calligraphy is experienced through practice and performance, understanding and curiosity grow even more. The fact that words can intertwine to make art is a powerful means of expression.

Being student and teacher at the same time provided an exceptional experience in the effect of discovering, learning, and understanding new skills. Calligraphy has always been here and yet never got the attention that it deserves. These emotions were vibrant and alive during the learning process. However, this time it was with the great awareness of an artist-teacher that the process was discovered. From the beginning learning stages to the creating of an artistic calligraphy work, the student became teacher by understanding the intricate, emotional, powerful, learning, and teaching possibilities that calligraphy offers not only for students but for
teachers alike. A meaningful word or words can be illustrated and turned into beautiful artwork. Anyone in any culture or language can experiment and enjoy the process.

**Examining Ideas of How to Disseminate Discoveries**

Nevertheless a better program needs to be crafted for learning this skill. A program can be valuable and more effective if crafted around a theme such as identity, culture, or place as shown in figure 8 by allowing students to choose their own words of expression. An example of a lesson would be to ask students to come up with the most valuable words that are cherished, hoped, or wanted, and give them the freedom to design and express it using materials of their choosing followed by a written reflection on their word choice. This would be one way of getting away from the traditional art teaching methods such as the French academy, which is still widely used in Algerian schools. “The purpose of the research is to improve the future by acting on the present” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p. 20). The hope is that this research can ignite interest in the education community and offer a better future for students.

The medium of calligraphy is suitable for the Algerian, or any Middle Eastern population because of the bond that is intertwined with spirituality and culture. Algerian youth have always rejected the present culture which is heavily influenced by the powerful presence of western media. Despite breathing European visual pop culture every minute of the day, North African youth do not see themselves as Europeans which results in an emotional state of rejection and confusion. For this reason, calligraphy can in fact answer the pursuit of strengthening identity and creating a sense of self-acceptance. Furthermore, through time, it can generate love and interest of their place. Calligraphy in the classroom can bring new ways of teaching and ignite student’s reflection in discovering their own identity.
Reclaiming Self-Identity and a Compassion for Humanity

In reflection of promoting self-esteem and confidence, it must be noted that during stage 1 of the study outside conditions were not always conducive to allowing the work to be done. Yet once engaged in the creation of the artwork, the focus on form permitted a liquidation of the outside world and complete emersion into the process. The calligraphy form guided the oeuvre with a certain structure and the energy augmented confidence and satisfaction on the part of the researcher. A particular spirituality was experienced which could be identified as self-esteem.

The mixture of words and art allowed an expression beyond expectation. The words shown in figure 8 such as life, hope, love, light, identity, and culture, along with others can be very powerful in the reflection of belonging, regaining self-confidence, and promoting acceptance of who we are. Calligraphy is the medium that permits the realization of a powerful mixture of words and paint on a canvas to produce a highly emotional work of art.

It must be acknowledged that the excellence of the old grand masters was not achieved. However, a connection was made and an aspiration induced to continue to work and improve. Learning is a life-long process and therefore only elementary that the search for excellence continues.

Conclusion: Impact on Practice and Recommendation

In view of the outcome of this study, a look towards the application of the understanding is only natural. The following chapter will go into the personal impact that the study had on the researcher. As an artist-teacher, the logical pursuit was the application in the classroom of the knowledge achieved, thus a unit is suggested. A study of this sort cannot omit a reflection on what improvements might be made in such a study along with the next stop on the journey as
research of this kind should not be closed and finalized, but shared. Caring and sharing is the real purpose and embodiment of art education.
Chapter Five

A Positive Impact

“Art is about more than products and processes, it is about ideas” (Simpson, 1998, p. 307).

Introduction

At the close of any research are the outcomes and results produced by the study. The researcher as an artist-teacher continues self-reflection in this chapter with a discussion of the personal and professional impressions that this study has produced. Naturally thoughts led to inspire the educational application producing a rationale for a suggested unit plan.

Recommendations are made for continued research and advice for the application of the study in the classroom. Looking back at the history, sometimes, is necessary to establish strong foundations in learning, teaching, and even in research. Yet, “teaching and learning are not just for the remembrance or preservation of a past, but also for the creation of a future so that education is proactive and dynamic” (Li, 2012, p. 203). This research is not meant to direct learners in a timeline, but to help them rediscover foundations of their own culture, identity, and belonging. This research attempts to call educators and decision makers to reflect on student roots and help them in their own realities instead of borrowing an established and dominant culture from countries they might never get a chance to see.

Discussion

From a master to an apprentice, the study of calligraphy has been taught over many centuries. However, it is not known and cannot be traced if it was introduced into the regular school systems. Yet its use in light of the present situation in Algeria and similar countries requires a new assessment. In art education it can bring a sense of self-esteem and belonging,
thereby becoming a tool promoting harmony and peace for mankind. The need is great and a response is essential. In fact, in implementing subjects like calligraphy, pottery and many other popular arts, the love of the place and the encouragement of self-esteem can be infused not only in North Africa, but in every country where help is needed.

**Personal Impact of Study**

Improvement in the techniques of calligraphy and understanding of the theory and philosophy was the primary goal of this study. Being surrounded by the vulnerable young people in Algeria whose lives are disorientated and often lacking roots, an overwhelming desire was directed in a search for ways to help. Algeria was a French colony for 136 years. Thus, western culture has been deeply rooted for generations in a population heavily divided where Arabs, Berbers, and Africans intermingle. Learning the calligraphy process and going back in time, the feeling of learning something important by getting connected to history was always present. Consequently many projects came to mind and the desire of learning and pursuing research was vivid. Also, the impact of increasing ability, confidence, and sense of well-being when creating works was achieved. This project was well worth pursuing as it gave the research a strategy to help bring humanity to the forefront through art. In doing this study, I came to understand the power of research and its benefits.

After gaining and discovering the craft, a decision has been made to pursue the research, and develop more artistic pieces for a future one man show. I am empowered to create more projects and reflect on how to transfer this valuable knowledge to the younger generation. The feelings and emotions that I went through were enlightening and strengthened the belief that art should play an important role in all societies, all faiths, and all races. This positive impact was, of course, on my person only, but I have come to believe, if this research is pursued and applied
in the classroom, doors will open for a new kind of teaching where art will play a role in giving back hope to young minds not only in Algeria, but everywhere.

**Impact on Practice**

Bringing new ideas to the area of education in need and helping the young generation bombarded with the powerful western visual culture is fulfilling. It can be very beneficial in rediscovering their identity, belonging, and self-esteem, instead of dreaming of only crossing borders to Europe or the Americas. The study will provide a tool to promote the use of calligraphy in the educational system, and to reflect on what should be included in the curriculum and why. In order to build tomorrow’s generation, the learner and his future should be the center piece.

**Rationale for the Unit of Study**

The process that the researcher went through in conjunction with the positive effects experience provided a rationale for the unit of study found in the Appendix A. Searching for a method to pass on the unquestionable inspiration that was felt, the unit concentrates on promoting a connection between the student and calligraphy, a sense of spirituality while at work, and a means of expression of identity and culture. As Acuffis, Hrirak, & Nangah, (2012) assert “adopting culturally responsive pedagogy establishes a platform for multiple voices to be used in the construction of knowledge at all times” (p. 7).

Images, videos, and artwork found in this unit were all discovered or generated during this learning journey. The unit ‘Discovering Self through Calligraphy’ brings together the craft of old and present while enhancing the standards of the Beaux Arts School. The strategy of increasing the students understanding of the methods and techniques used in the past as a means of connecting them to their roots, and modern techniques allows their expression to flow. “The
challenge to art educators is to find the right curricular mix of old and new media for their students” (Feldman, 1996, p. 118). Through practice and their own creativity, students create original artwork. The combination of calligraphy with identity provides the milieu for asserting distinctiveness and confidence. This newfound confidence encourages respect of self and others around them.

**Recommendations**

Further research in this field is more than necessary if we want to bring a hopeful future for the youth of North Africa and elsewhere. This is a beginning, a small step, or maybe just a spark to ignite new research on art with purpose in our schools. If the study was to be reproduced, the process would remain the same. The research of the craft and its background is a necessary starting place. Practice must be experienced before the creative originals can be done. The major piece missing is time. Once a study of this kind is started, there never seems to be enough time, which is why the researcher will still be creating oeuvres well after the end of this course.

In understanding the need of studies such as this one, many questions started to show that demand to be answered by going deep, clarifying, unearthing, and bringing to light all aspects of the craft. Questions such as: is the subject valuable for all populations including those with different faiths than Islam? Is this subject good only for Arabic speaking populations? And why was there no prior study like this one? Did this occur due to fear or lack of researchers in this region? And the questions continue to flow that necessitate further examination.

Teachers have great opportunities to conduct inquiries such as this one. They can begin by exploring what local art can offer instead of only the French academy teaching and drawing that are presently in place. Art educators need to look closely at the place where they teach, and
closer at their learners to understand where they come from and what they need to succeed. The most essential question that needs to be engraved on the porch of every school: ‘Teach with the purpose of helping pupils not only learn art, but grow to be part of humanity’.

**Further Questions to be Explored**

In researching the modern day calligraphers it was interesting to notice that many of them, although their origins were from countries that use the Arabic script for writing, were either born in or presently live in a western country. A goal of this research was to build confidence in the youth today, that they have a grand heritage at home, and to increase their self-esteem rather than continually looking to the west and trying to go elsewhere. The fact that many of the modern artists discovered in this study have strong connections to the west suggests that indeed the art of calligraphy has not taken its proper place in the educational systems to be used to promote the much needed respect and appreciation.

Many of these calligraphers yet do work for Arab speaking countries. The example of ElSeed shows a French born artist of Tunisian parents presently based in Montreal who did wall murals for Doha, Gabes, Kairouan, Sharjah, and Dhahran. As a child growing up in France he could only speak the Tunisian dialect of Arabic which is inundated with French words and expressions, from a morphological and syntactical aspect. He only learned how to read and write in Arabic in his teens. Those formative years were lost. ElSeed is not alone or unique as the Maghreb immigrant situation in France is centuries old. Why does the practice occur outside these countries and not from home? If calligraphy is highly valued by the outside world, what can be done to bring that pride home?
Teacher Use

When reviewing this study, the hope is that other teachers would be inspired to use the results to introduce calligraphy in their art classrooms. Calligraphy instills a peace in the soul of the student via the concentration and application of the technique. A certain sense of accomplishment comes from the production of stylized writing. If time is of the essence, as it usually is for educators, Appendix A could provide a starting point with the suggested unit plan and the PowerPoints to accompany it are in Appendix B. Of course these are unique to Arabic calligraphy, but there is no reason why it could not be adapted for other calligraphy styles connected to other languages.

Advice to the Field of Art Education

As a result of this study, the researcher intends to share the resources created in the study with the administration of the Beaux Arts School, other calligraphy teachers, and the ministry of culture and education in an effort to promote the use of calligraphy art in the curriculum. One size fits all is never a solution as humans come from different backgrounds, cultures, languages, and places. Therefore, art education based on place ought to be promoted with an open mind in the world. “We need to figure out how to develop lesson plans and activities that encourage learners to reflect on their own identities, experiences, and interests to help them identify project topics that are meaningful and rooted in students' own lives” (Dewhurst, 2010, p. 11).

Advice to Art Teachers

Educators have the sense of curiosity in their blood. They are the essence of life-long learners. As artist-teachers we are endowed with the exceptional talent of creativity. An artist-teacher cannot be stuck in a rut. In the never-ending search for inspiration, this study offers an approach to connect learner to the heart of humanity. And this connection “will enable students
to become future agents who can create meaningful dialogues between and among people and nations/cultures, helping to make the multitude better understand one another and the shrinking world less conflict-ridden” (Li, 2012, p. 203).

**Conclusion to the Research**

The studied experience did yield a great deal of data to the extent of not only understanding the art of calligraphy, but a perception into its spiritual connections to humans in this region. Burkhart (2009) explained these divine connections by writing: “the Pen (or qalamus) is none other than the Divine Spirit or the Universal Spirit, and the greatest title of nobility accorded to the art of writing is the fact that it is like the distant shadow of the Divine Act” (p. 57). The belief that a curriculum can be crafted from calligraphy art is without a doubt an act of education with the purpose of infusing self-esteem, strengthening a search for identity, and forging humane traits.

Calligraphy art has been rooted in the local culture for centuries. It is a means of communication, it is a language, and it is itself a culture. Scholars from around the globe proved through their research in the education field that local art is a powerful means of stimulating the search for identity, love of their community, foster learning, and strengthen the humane trait of young minds.
References


Appendix A

Discovering Self through Calligraphy

UNIT PLAN

Rationale for the Unit of Study

The rationale for this unit was previously discussed in chapter five. One size fits all has never been a solution as humans come from different backgrounds, cultures, languages and places. Therefore, art education based on place ought to be promoted with an open mind to the world. “We need to figure out how to develop lesson plans and activities that encourage learners to reflect on their own identities, experiences, and interests to help them identify project topics that are meaningful and rooted in students' own lives” (Dewhurst, 2010, p. 11). Calligraphy provide the avenue for the younger generation to connect their heritage to their souls and reflect on the direction they are headed.

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<th>Component</th>
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<td>Mohand Tahar Boukerroui</td>
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<td>Descriptive title for the unit:</td>
<td>Discovering Self through Calligraphy</td>
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<td>Goals:</td>
<td>These goals are based on the Beaux-Arts Programme des Etudes. Students will acquire art skills that enable conscience choices of media and techniques for expression. Work is produced and developed from preliminary ideas and sketches. Investigating, comparing and contrasting art from different world cultures is important in developing a world view. Through debate and formulate reasoned responses, student progress in making art judgments and cultivating a personal aesthetic.</td>
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Students should:

**Understand:**
- The basics of identifying and analyzing art and architecture from various world cultures, periods, or civilizations by styles, symbolism, and technological impact. (Cultural Context and Art History 2.B)
- How to compare and contrast works of art according to medium, period, style, and artist. (Cultural Context and Art History 2.D)
- The value of citizenship. (Citizenship and Commitment to the Nation 5.A)

**Know:**
- How to discuss and analyze the purposes, values, and meanings of works of art. (Aesthetics 4.A)
- How to investigate and discuss the use of social, cultural, and historical context as they contribute to meaning in a work of art. (Judgment and Criticism 3.B)

**Be able to:**
- Identify and analyze the uses of typography and calligraphy in graphic or fine arts. (Visual Communication and Production 1.E)
- Produce artworks to maintain peace and prosperity. (Citizenship and Commitment to the Nation 5.B)

**Instructional Concepts:**

| Instructional Concepts | The process that the researcher went through in conjunction with the positive effects experienced, provided a rationale for this unit of study. Searching for a method to pass on the unquestionable inspiration that was felt, the unit concentrates on promoting a connection between the student and calligraphy, a sense of spirituality while at work, and a means of expression of identity. “Conceptual design choices include themes, social issues, and metaphors. All these notions afford developmentally appropriate unit choices at any level” (Simpson, 1998, p. 316). Images, videos, and artwork found in this unit were all discovered or generated during this study. The unit ‘Discovering Self through Calligraphy’ brings together the craft of old and present while enhancing the standards of the Beaux Arts School. Increasing the students’ understanding of the methods and techniques of old leads to the use in modern works today. Through practice and their own creativity, students create original artwork. The combination of calligraphy with identity provides the milieu for asserting distinctiveness and confidence. This newfound confidence encourages respect of self and others around them. “When you choose to question your assumptions, change your attitude, and redefine your purpose, you are embarking on a journey of personal transformation” (Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell Jones, 2005, p. 151). |
### Lessons:

**Lesson One:** Introduction to the art of Arabic calligraphy examining the theory and pragmatics/practice, using PowerPoints: ‘Examples of Traditional Works and ‘Examples of Modern Works’ is discussed. Assignment of reflection on identity through calligraphy is given and students brainstorm in pairs and sketch ideas and take notes in their sketchbook/journals.

**Lesson Two:** Explanation of techniques through the PowerPoint ‘Techniques Specific to Calligraphy’ is presented. Students create a bamboo pen for use following the traditional method, test, and practice following dot measurement approach. The pen and attempts created becomes the formative assessment and are kept in sketchbook/journal. Teacher circulates giving guidance and suggestions. A link to the teacher made video will be made available for motivational purposes and guidance.

**Lesson Three:** Studio time for practicing writing their name in correct measurement. Exploration of representation of personal self-identity. Students are encouraged to ask any questions they may still have. Notes are kept in Sketchbook/journal.

**Lesson Four:** Studio Time - Use personal name in an original artwork to denote self-identity. Example given in PowerPoint. Process Used in Creating ‘Noor’ (Light – Illumination)’. Teacher facilitates giving feedback. Discussions are provoked by the teacher in asking questions about the difference between this medium and other traditional media used in class such as drawing and painting.

**Lesson Five:** Gallery walk with peer critiquing by writing in each other’s sketchbook/journal. Teacher reviews and grades student work. Discussions about emotions and feelings are generated with all students. Sketchbook/journals are turned in for grading.

For PowerPoints see Appendix B.

### Instructional Materials

**Materials:**
- Sketchbooks / Journals
- Pencils
- Paint & Ink
- Bamboo
- Saw & knife
- Paper for drawing, or gouache
- Students are asked to prepare a list of words or phrases that they like and feel some attachment to.

**Exemplars:**
- Dot Measurement Samples
- Love Life
- Noor
- Idea sketches
- As referenced in PowerPoints

**Teacher's process and product visuals:**
- Examples of Traditional Works PowerPoint
- Examples of Modern Works PowerPoint
- Art Works Created PowerPoint
- Techniques Specific to Calligraphy PowerPoint
- Process Used in Creating ‘Noor’ – (Light-Illumination) PowerPoint
- Teacher video for motivation and guidance

**Assessment:**
- Students will be evaluated through: observation, pair work, production, critique, discussions, and rubric.
- Formative assessments include: Creation of bamboo pen and dot measurement samples
- Summative assessments include: Final rubric grading, Final Presentation and Critique

**References:**


**Image References**


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Appendix B

PowerPoints created from research images for teacher presentation in unit plan.

B.1 - Examples of Traditional Works

"Al-Maghrebi" is one of the oldest scripts that has been used in North Africa.

Arabic calligraphy began with a deep connection to the religion and developed into many different styles.

Here we can see an intricate composition designed by the Turkish calligrapher, Savaş Cevik (1994), using a single alphabet letter: "dal" or D.

Calligraphy often took forms such as the lion seen below. Most artistic compositions like these were created during the Ottoman Empire era.

This example of geometrical Kufi is from a sura (verse) of the Koran (Sura VI, al-Anam, The Herds), Turkey, circa 1540. The work is of the famous calligrapher, Ahmed Karahisari (1469-1556) which is on exhibit at the Louvre Museum in Paris. This style is mostly used in Iraq and Iran.
Note here a more traditional straight line of writing. Arabic calligraphy is tied to the religious use most of the time.

Multiple forms of “Basmallah” (In the name of God)

Here the same words are slowly rising to the left.

Here they have taken an oval form with the “alef” and “lam” equally spaced and rising centered.

And here “Basm” is the foundation with “Rahman” and “Rahim” balancing on either side with Allah (God) center stage.

Although the words are the same, the forms can promote aesthetic properties and meanings. Certain liberties are taken with the scripts to promote splendor.
Mirrored calligraphy is used in some decorative designs.

Notice that everything on the right side is a reflection of the left side.

Since calligraphy has religious ties and development, it is also embedded in different cultures where it has been used. Therefore it has a strong relationship to the belonging and place.

In a lecture at the Galerie Montcalm in Gatineau, Quebec the Syrian calligrapher, Khaled al-Saa‘i, discussed Arabic calligraphy saying that although there are over 200 styles of Arabic calligraphy “the average literate Arab would probably be able to read a text in four or more of the common styles”:

“The history of art is filled with artists of distinction who have contributed to progressing and questioning aesthetic sensibilities through their media choices” (Daichendt, 2010, p. 3).

References


Date: November 2010

Arabic calligraphy workshop: http://calligraphy.ca/
B.2 - Examples of Modern Work

Compiled by Tahar Boukerroui

Mohsen Daeinabi

Painting

Nasreddine Zitouni

Ink and Pen

Adeeb Atwan

Jordanian
REFLECTION ON CALLIGRAPHY

Digital art / Typography

Work by Nja-Mehdaoui

Nja-Mehdaoui

Nja-Mehdaoui

Sculpture

Elseed Grande

French (family origin: Tunisia) — studied with Hassan Messoudi and Nja Mehdaoui.
Nasreddine Zitouni

Abdullah Akar's artwork is a display of the Seven Suspended Odes, which he started by painting on ultra-transparent fabrics and then moving to iron, textile and glass.

Parvis Tanavoli

Pink Heech (Pink Nothing)

Farnaz Rabiejah

Parvis Tanavoli

Tanavoli was a central figure in the formation of the Sagakhaneh School—a neo-traditional style of art that derives inspiration from Iranian folk art and culture.

Simeen Farhat

Simeen Farhat captures in her art poetry which exalts freedoms of thought, of expression and of gender empowerment, and which endears spirituality and calm.
Calligraphy can be found in many other environments:
- Curtains
- Wall frescos
- Ceramics
- Furniture

French (family origin Tunisian) - studied with Hassan Massoudy and Nja Mahdaoui.

“Our challenge as educators is to provide appropriate instructional strategies that enable all students to succeed” (Heise, 2010, p. 62).
As done hundreds of years ago, the first task is to make your own calligraphy pen called “Qalam” which is made from bamboo or reeds, and it is the central piece in achieving structure (form), proportions, and aesthetics.

Materials needed – Bamboo, a saw, and a sharp knife

Begin by selecting a bamboo reed and cutting it to measure.

Ok, let’s get started...

Start by shaping the tip
Measure the tip as you go. It should be shaped to match your thumb as seen below.

Shaping the tip is critical.

Cut the tip at a 35 to 40 degree diagonal on a hard surface.

Cutting the slit. Be sure to cut through clearly.

It is essential to prepare the bamboo pen carefully.

With your pen in hand, you are ready to create.
Paper choice is vital. If it is too porous the ink will bleed and the letters will not be properly formed.

A smooth glossy surface is preferable.

Preparing the ink to avoid blotting.

Place some cotton in a container – preferably a glass container with a lid.

Pour some ink on top of the cotton.

Tap your bamboo pen so that the ink is uniformly absorbed.

Check the tip for the amount of ink.
Try it out making a test sample

Note that the quantity of ink and the quality of the line improved.

We need to figure out how to “develop lesson plans and activities that encourage learners to reflect on their own identities, experiences, and interests to help them identify project topics that are meaningful and rooted in students’ own lives” (Dewhurst, 2010, p. 11).

References

All images were taken from memos, reflections, journal entries, and work by Tahar Boukerroui done during his Boston University course CFA AR 890, Master’s Research Project, Fall 2013.

Good luck!
B.4 - Process Used in Creating ‘Noor’ (Light – Illumination)

We need to include in art education curricula themes such as community, place, culture, identity, environment and ecology, but as educators we have to start by enlightening ourselves first. (Dewhurst, 2010, p. 11).

An idea to start

Using the technique of two pencils to create large lettering.

Cutting out the letters to create a stencil.

Prepare the stencil on the canvas.
Mixing the paint for a good consistency.

Start working with the stencil

Carefully removing the mask

Using a square tip brush for lettering.

Using an agave scrub.

Even using fingers to feel the paint flow.
Feelings and emotions are messy at times.

Still using dot measurement.

Including the bamboo pen.

References

All images were taken as Tahar Boukerroui did his work. Slide 1 was taken from his window on the day that he began painting.

Boston University
CFA AR 890 – Master’s Research Project
Fall 2013
B.5 - Artwork Created

"I refer to the general belief that education is a force that can transform society" (Efland, 1990, p. 261).

Work created by Mohand Tahar Boukerroui

Bamboo cut pen and ink

Studies using dot measurement system
Sketches of Ideas for Future Oeuvres
Love Life
White Charcoal on Black

Light and Enlightened Understanding

Noor
(Light)

References

All images were taken from memos, reflections, journal entries, and work by Tahar Boukerroui done during his Boston University course CFA AR 890, Master’s Research Project, Fall 2013.