Lesson I

Master and Apprentice

Learning Skills for the Atelier

(Four 60-minute classes)

In order to test out working collaboratively - each student performing only one task on the final artwork, students need to know what the tasks are and how to do them, to see who in their workshop groups would be best for each job. This IS a competition in the historical sense of art patronage. At least four 60-minute classes are needed for all students to learn each of the various duties and artistic processes of the first commission. The specific jobs for the first commission, designing a small “Art” card are: Measuring guidelines for calligraphy, Spacing and sketching calligraphy and surrounding designs in light pencil, Inking and coloring the designs and calligraphy, Use of gold.

Right away it became apparent that the third grade students couldn’t read the increments of a ruler or use it to measure parallel lines. This careful measurement and spacing is critical to the success of much of the artwork.

Instead of becoming the Royal Patron and issuing a commission, I have begun as the Workshop Master Artist, training my many apprentices step by step, to practice to master a simple but decorative calligraphic art card. This way of working will support further lessons using the “Workshop” model for any artwork.

Class #1

As apprentice measurers, each one was given the task of accurately measuring guidelines for the lettering and making aesthetic choices for spacing them and adding decoration in the rich sense of Mughal style.

Success was based on accuracy, which the master checked by ruler, giving reward coupons to all who succeeded. From this “apprenticeship” approach to guided practice, students will get an idea of where their strengths lie throughout the project steps, and when we do divide up into specific formal workshop roles for future artworks, they will perform them independently with greater personal choice.

To introduce Mughal India a map, vocabulary, exemplars of calligraphy, architecture, carpets, paintings, peacock feathers, plants, rich objects, and pattern are displayed in a specific area. I set up a dais, on which to hold audience and teach from. Two catalogs are located there for students to look through. There is an art timeline that includes the Taj Mahal and what art was being made in other parts of the world at that time up to the present.

Students are encouraged to revisit the area and peruse the displays, which will be updated and expanded. In order to “see” the Mughal aesthetic, students will draw from specific patterns and border designs. Their own ideas about imagery, pattern, color, and spacing will evolve for final work, from the drawing process.

Motivation (Teacher Directed)

Gather students around the display, selected music playing softly.

Ask students to look at the board. Can anyone find India on the map? Share timeline information, that we will be going back about five hundred years; share the images of architecture, painting, pattern and answer questions as students notice things and want to know more. Use this activity to introduce a new culture and way of living (very rich and very poor). Ask how art is made today and explain the Atelier or workshop way of working in Mughal India; that young artists were apprentices to an older master and learned by working and practicing for many years until they themselves mastered each simple step.

Discuss modern versions of the “workshop” or instances where work is divided up into specialized jobs in sequence. Explain that the class will be solving the problem of working in a different way, like the Mughal Indian workshops. The teacher will become the Master Artist and you will be the apprentices seeking to work as artists. Today they will be demonstrating their skills for the master to approve.

Guided Practice

Materials: Rulers, light pencils, erasers, compasses, tag board cards, index cards, or fine smooth heavy paper cut into the right sizes.

Share the idea of workshop/atelier/kitabkhana with students (see Resources) and how work for a miniature painted page (like we looked at) was broken down into individual steps-as-jobs, divided among experts for each particular job, and passed along to the next step. Show teacher exemplar of a decorative card with the word INDIA printed with decorative pattern and gold.

In a workshop apprentices had to first master each individual small step. The first and important step is measuring guidelines and spaces for the lettering and designs. Today we will learn to use a ruler to measure draw parallel guidelines.

Problem Statement

The Master Artist is looking for apprentice measurers. Each group member is to become a master measurer by drawing ruled parallel lines on a small card. If that is accomplished, lightly in pencil, add the letters A R T spaced in a way that is pleasing and then pencil in light designs. (This work will be colored and inked in the next lesson).

All cards should have:

Accurately parallel guidelines

And if time: Neat and clear spaced lettering, with some kind of pattern decoration

Teacher Demonstration

Reading a Ruler

Laying on the card parallel to the edges but marking perpendicular marks for straight parallel lines

Drawing along the ruler lightly, lettering and adjusting spacing

Independent Studio Work (30 minutes)

Students apply and practice skills

Assessment

Lay out cards for the groups and have a gallery walk.

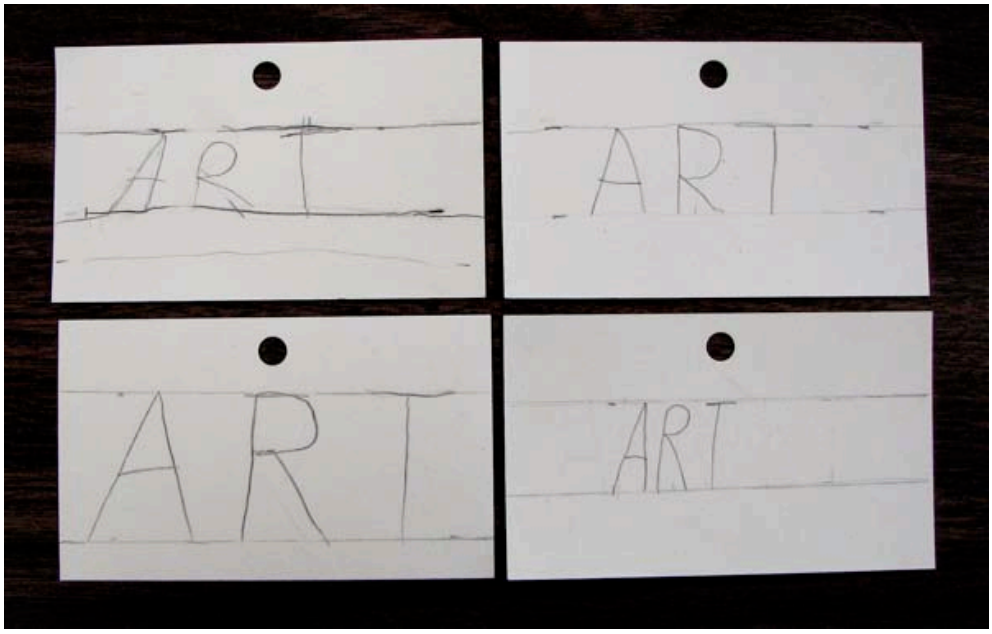
The teacher-as-Master artist can measure the cards and give rewards to those that meet the criteria of accurate measurement

As is custom in Mughal workshops, the chosen artists are rewarded with extra gifts. In this case we use school coupons.

Closure and Reflection:

(This could be made into a rubric to study before working)

1. What did you need to know to succeed in the task?
2. What does that tell you about using this kind of production method? How fast can you work? What are the positives and negatives?
3. How did you make sure it was the best work that could be done?
4. Were there conflicts? If so how were they handled?
5. How is this way of working different from the way we think artists work?
6. Where else could you use this experience for working in class or outside of school? (Sports teams, working or doing chores)



These four and most other students struggled at first to make parallel lines and a uniform lettering style in pencil. As the work progressed they became more controlled and expressive.

This is four weeks' work (by an individual doing all the steps) to learn each process and develop a well-crafted card.

Master and Apprentice Continued

Class #2

Penciling Calligraphy and Spacing Decorative Design

Teacher Demonstration

Model how to use the guidelines that were measured last class, to fit letters within the space, and discuss the nature of calligraphy that allows for words to shape within a space or around a shape. Revisit exemplars to look at the elaborate designs and the subject matter used.

If using colored pencils demonstrate softly layering colors to make richer colors

Studio work

Students have practice paper to test ideas. They use pencil then pen, then colored pencils to make small elaborate design layouts.

Class #3

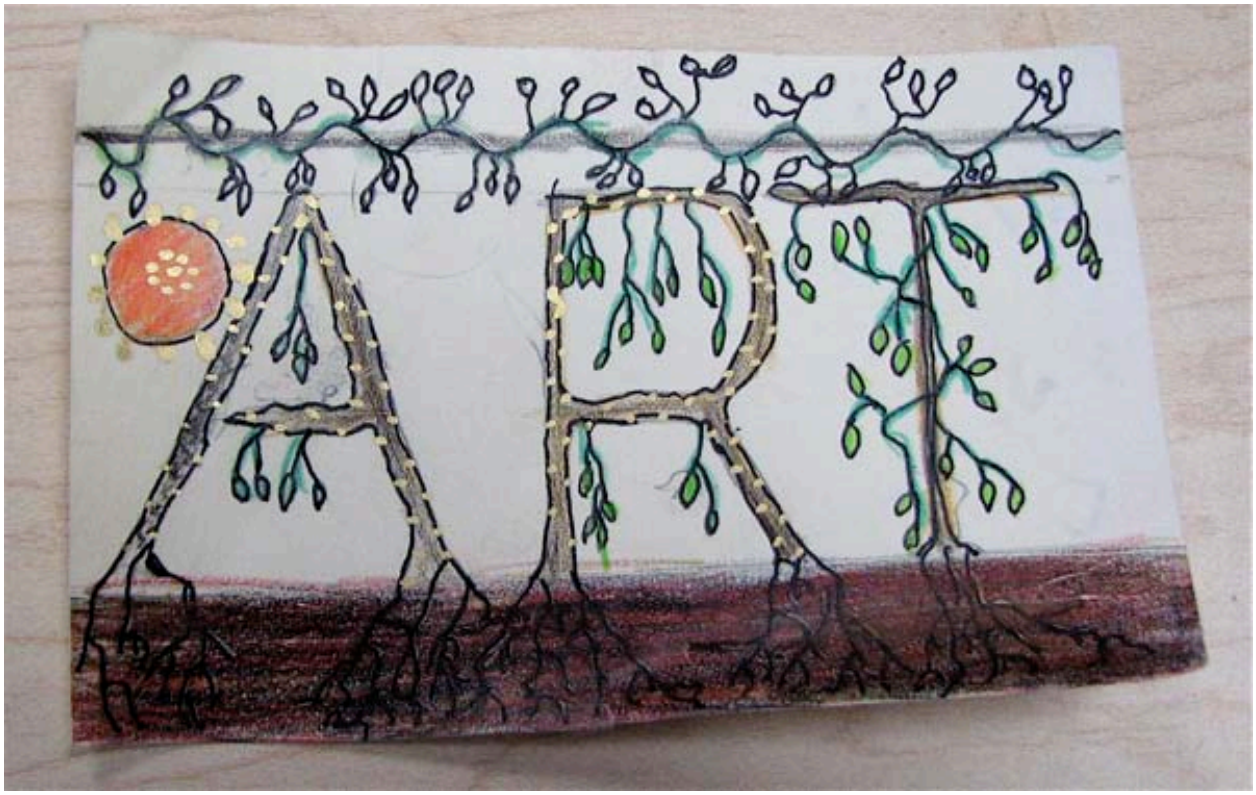
Using color and ink

Class #4

Using Gold as a Detail

The more students looked at the Indian exemplars the more uniquely inspired their work became.

A tip for helping students to use gold sensitively is to compare its use to punctuation marks and look for how little dots, slashes, accents do more to make the work glisten.



Finished cards reflect many images from the Indian exemplars and others bear direct influence of style.

Some are more controlled but the charm of the miniature drawings is present in most of the work.

ART

Inclusion Strategies

For a student with limited motor and cognitive skills, the lesson was adapted to emphasize border pattern with various collage applications. The student used the digital camera to make portraits of his environment, which were framed by the various borders he made.

The student did not like to paint and limited motor control eliminated drawing. A rich elaborate surface was achieved by layering textured crayon rubbing under stamping with gold, and border collage.

Lesson II The Commission

Now that students understand what is needed to perform each step in the process, they can decide among themselves at their table, which will measure, print, use the ink pen and the colored pencils, and the gold.

While the one final card circulates to each artist's job the others practice their particular skill. Each successive artist is depending on the previous one to do his or her best job so the card will look good enough to pass on.

Students worked very well together. They had strong ideas by now from having done all the jobs individually.

Assessment

The following sheet was used to reflect and share the experience with an eye for its value in future classes.

Kitabkhana Workshop 3rd grade

Reflection for Workshop Collaboration

Name_____

List all the jobs in order they were done to complete your artwork.

List your task or job.

What job did you depend on to make yours work (what was right before you)?

What job did you pass your work on to?

What did you do to make your other members feel good about working with you?

What new things have you learned about the way you work or the kind of effort you make during this workshop experience?

If you were to practice a task and become a master, which task would you choose?

Why?