

The the artist vs
craftsman debate, but



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The importance of sharing skills For my essay I am going to look how the sharing of glassblowing skills greatly impacted and influenced the studio glass movement, and how it inspired some of the pioneers of the studio glass movement. Im also going to be looking at how the exclusivity of glass could have meant the way we blow glass would be very different. in my professional life I find that the sharing of skills was not just beneficial on my own outlook towards my work and how I viewed myself in the artist vs craftsman debate, but also on how well my artwork turned out whilst I was creating it. whether that be from the skills I've picked up and been taught or the realization that I was messing up due to something I didn't fully understand or know how to do properly, whenever this happened I knew there was a system in place with a vast wealth of knowledge ranging throughout all aspects of glass and ceramics, whether that be help making a mold or getting the sides of a vessel straight there are always people around to share their knowledge and there experience and their skills.

I personally view the sharing of skills as almost learning from your own mistakes even if you haven't made them yet due to talking to someone or reading the books of a skilled craftsperson or artist who's made those mistakes sometimes decades before you and the meticulously researched and found a solution to the very same problem that's stopping you. By them talking to you or you reading there work and notes you then don't have to do all that research and you can get passed that problem that once had someone at an impasse for maybe months in the length of a conversation or however long it takes to read their notes on

the subject. in the larger scale of glass art as a whole if we didn't have the sharing of skills between craftsmen, artists and people who wanted to learn we would lose access into the glass world.

with out the sharing of skills there would be no university programs on glass blowing as it would still be very master passing on his skills to his apprentice. It also wouldn't be accessible to the wider audience of the general population at places like the national glass center and also corning museum of glass due to the secrecy around it. In my own personal opinion, the skills I've learned from artists and other crafts people often are better than the ones written down in books, manuals and journals because these other artists and craftspeople read the same books and tried those same techniques and then found a better or smarter or easier way of doing it. with out them sharing their techniques, knowledge and skills I would get stuck in the same pitfall that they had and be stuck trying to figure out how to solve it. if that were the case I feel glass as a movement would stall without the knowledge and skills of the pioneers of studio glass art like Harvey Littleton, lino tagliapietra, dale Chihuly and Pino signoretto we wouldn't be where we are today. I feel it's almost like were standing on the shoulders of the artists and crafts people who came before us.

With out the work of those pioneer's and the constant sharing of their skills and knowledge studio glass on a whole would be very different. The sharing of skills through the ages Glass its self has a very long history but it wasn't until 300bc when the first glass blowing pipe was created in Syria but it wasn't long before the Egyptians and the romans also started to use the

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blowing pipes. Unless the Syrians shared their skills and tool making knowledge with the romans and the Egyptian's then only Syria would have been able to blow glass which would have led to the romans and the Egyptians never making the breakthroughs in glass forms, compositions and techniques that they did. Without these skills that they created and then shared with one another I feel that glass blowing whether it be craft with functional vessels and objects or artistic with an abstract conceptual sculpture piece would be at least a few hundred years behind if not more, this just goes to show that in my opinion that the sharing of skill is the most important factor when it comes to learning glass blowing or any discipline through out glass whether that be kiln forming or fusing or even ceramics when it comes to throwing and turning. During the thirteenth century Venice's main export was glass in 1271 the venetian government passed a law which made all of the glass artisans and the glass blowing factory's move to the island of Murano. the government told the public that because most of Venice at the time was made predominantly out of wood the glass blowers furnaces were a fire hazard and a dangerous risk.

But the real reson was they wanted the monopoly on the glass blowing market so they moved all the glass artisans to an island so they couldn't share their skills and techniques, this was made harder when the government in 1293 introduced a foreign travel ban for all glass artisans. some artisans and craftsmen did manage to escape though and they shared their skills and knowledge with other crafts people in parts of Asia and Europe. harvey Littleton was often referred to as the father of

the studio glass movement had studied glass and in 1962 he ran two workshops on glass blowing he then went on to run a university course where Dale Chihuly was one of his students.

Chihuly said in a 1998 article on Harvey Littleton by William Warmus for GLASS Quarterly magazine, "Without a doubt, Harvey Littleton was the force behind the studio glass movement; without him my career wouldn't exist. He pulled in talented students and visiting artists; I used the same concept when I taught at the Rhode Island School of Design. Also, Harvey was a big thinker—if he wanted a special piece of equipment, he would spend the money; he taught us to think big instead of thinking small. Some of that rubbed off on me. (glass is more tina oldknow 08/01/2014) And he encouraged us to be unique—Harvey liked that".

Dale Chihuly then went on to become a very famous glass artist who with his glass sculpture and design broke into the mainstream art world who would then go on to found and run the hugely successful Pilchuk School of Glass. Pilchuk is a prime example of skills sharing is a fundamental building block in the foundation of the glass arts and crafts movement. Going back to what Chihuly said about Littleton he wholeheartedly credits Harvey Littleton with not only his career but also the studio glass movement as a whole he even goes on to state that some of Harvey's personality had rubbed off on him. Another master and pioneer is Lino Tagliapietra born in Murano Italy he became a maestro by the age of twenty he was quite passionate about sharing his skills techniques and knowledge.

“ Lino was developing his own designs by the late 1960’s and early 1970’s and these designs were put into production or limited production at the factories where he worked. In 1977 he became head glass blower, designer and overseer of production at a new company, Effetre International. In 1979, the Italian glass maestro came to the United States to teach at Pilchuck School in the Seattle, at the invitation of Dale Chihuly, thus beginning a long history of sharing his centuries old technical knowledge with American glass artists.

The glass artists of the then burgeoning American studio glass movement were hungry for Lino’s technical knowledge and Lino, in turn, was greatly effected by the artistic freedom and experimentalism he observed in his American counterparts” (holsten galleris n. d) what this quote shows is that lino tagliapeitra has been fundimental in the american studio glass movement with the help of dale chihuly lino tagliapeitra was able to share his vast array of knowledge, thechnique and skill with so many artists and crafts people. In conclusion I feel that without the sharing of skills within the studio glass art movement the glass art movement would be a very different place with a lot of consequences there would no longer be university glass programs like our own at Sunderland university which has kickstarted many young artists and crafts people careers in the glass art world or the studio ceramics world. With out these programes there would be a lot less glass blowers and as a result of the glass blowing and art would be harder to get in to as it would be quite a tight knit group of artisans and crafts people who wouldn’t want to share there skills or knowledge. In my opinion when people share what they know with everyone glass as a whole moves forward.