Internship Report

My summer with the Guarisco Gallery was a hands-on internship experience unlike any I have had before. Admittedly, my previous summers have been spent in a cubicle, but nonetheless my summer working at a late 19th/early 20th century commercial art gallery will be a time I will forever value. Perhaps this was due to the fact that this internship was an internship which aligned more with my interests and area of study. This summer I not only enjoyed myself, but I also developed marketable skills, networked with interesting individuals, and was pointed in the direction I want to go career-wise.

Of the skills I developed, some of them include research, writing, communicating, and organization. One of my primary duties as intern was to update the filing system. The walls of the gallery are beautifully lined with wooden filing cabinets which are filled with images of the gallery’s inventory, information of the works’ monetary value, and biographies of the artists. Each day the other intern and I would file away newly-acquired information into their respective file. One of our large projects was to ensure that each work’s file had a substantial supply of image packets. This heaping project required us to learn how to operate new software. We used Photoshop to size images taken by the gallery’s photographer to ensure the format was compatible with the printer. The project also presented an opportunity to exercise organization skills. The other intern and I used Microsoft Excel to make charts of the necessary items which ranged from the work’s genre to the type of image missing in the files. The gallery staff gave us enough freedom to get a sense of ownership of the project, while also ensuring it was completed efficiently and on time.
Other projects I was given more freedom with involved research. The gallery tends to acquire artwork in waves. Fortunate for me, one of those waves occurred during my internship. While much of the art that was newly acquired this summer were by artists previously housed in the gallery, some of the pieces were by artists who had not previously been featured in the gallery. Researching these new artists was an exciting project. I worked with the gallery’s curator to perform research. He has an extensive library in which I spent a lot of time sifting through for information. I also learned how to use a handful of online databases which provided information beyond the pages of the library. Usually, these artists were not familiar to me from my studies at Sewanee, but upon conducting research I soon found that many of them were contemporaries of famed artists I had spent a great deal of time studying at school. I found it interesting to look at these artists from the perspective of knowing their contemporaries, and I feel like my repertoire of art history has expanded as a result.

During my time at the Guarisco Gallery, I not only grew professionally, but also personally. The staff at the gallery put in the time and thought to ensure a rewarding summer for both its Sewanee interns. One instance was a trip to the Library of Congress. Much of the research I conducted was limited to the resources of the curator’s personal library. As a result, a team of us took the short trip to the Library of Congress to carry our research further. Being a non-native to DC, I found this particularly exciting. I had not previously been to the Library of Congress, and now because of my internship I have a library card I carry around in my wallet admitting me access to the Library’s resources for the next year.
The gallery staff made themselves readily accessible not only for questions regarding my intern duties, but also for career advice. As a recent graduate, I was extremely appreciative for this. The staff were all excited to share their career path, offer advice, and even help me network. They told me what it was like to work in the art industry and the different avenues that could involve. Within my first week, I had already been given names and put in contact with other DC area galleries as well as different types of organizations such as non-profits that I might be interested in speaking with. They were very helpful with letting me be flexible when it came to my job hunt. They even helped me set up an interview! When I had interviews they were forgiving and understanding about needing to extend my lunch break or leaving work early. It is through my time at the gallery that I was able to take the next step into the “real world” by being in contact with the right people. I have found myself at the conclusion of my internship with a position lined up with a DC area performing arts center. I would not have been able to get that position without the guidance of the staff at the Guarisco Gallery. I have benefitted from this internship and would urge any Sewanee student with an interest in working with art to apply.