Internship Final Report:

Guarisco Gallery

This summer I was given the opportunity to intern at Guarisco Gallery, a leading commercial art gallery in Washington, DC. Guarisco Gallery is one the largest and most prominent nineteenth and twentieth century galleries worldwide and boasts a collection of more than 600 paintings, sculptures, and watercolors. The gallery was founded in 1980 and has flourished and thrived in the art market ever since, even expanding to a second location in Georgetown just a few years ago. Guarisco Gallery’s buying philosophy is perhaps what has kept the business so lucrative despite worldwide economic hardships and recessions over the past few decades. The team at Guarisco Gallery focuses on buying works by great artists who may been underrepresented or overlooked in the shadows of the big name artists that dominate the current art market, but whose best works are still attainable and affordable and of the utmost importance, beauty, and quality. The buyers at Guarisco are very confident in the fact that the great works by these such artists will increase in value and prominence in the very near future. Furthermore, by honing in on such a artistically varied and revolutionary period in the history of art (the nineteenth century), Guarisco is able to represent many different schools and movements. Guarisco Gallery retains works from Academia, the Impressionists, the Post-Impressionists and even some works from Modernist artists, so there truly is something for every client’s taste.

My role as an intern varied greatly from day to day. Some days I was working at the primary location and other days I was stationed at the secondary location. I would also frequently be sent to the other gallery with different files, tools, or supplies, then return to the primary gallery.
Many days were spent creating spreadsheets for marketing purposes. This involved researching to find potential new clients, collecting their contact information (via WhitePages) and entering it into an Excel file in order for the information to become available in the greater clientele database. After I researched these potential clients, I would reach out to them by sending a handwritten letter and a Guarisco Gallery catalogue. I also helped the marketing team by compiling different “packets” filled with images for established clients based on their artistic interests, which would also be sent via mail. I often helped to arrange and restock the gallery’s filing system which holds printed copies of all the works in our collection as well as information sheets on each artist, therefore printing out images of the works in the collection was another big part of my job. A great deal of my time was also devoted to organizing the office and running various errands for different employees, as well as cleaning and sweeping the office.

The staff was extremely helpful and kept me occupied with new and interesting projects for the majority of my internship. I really appreciated their guidance and wisdom throughout the process. Perhaps my favorite aspect of the internship was how pleasant and uplifting it was to be surrounded with such beautiful and important art work on a daily basis. A huge highlight of the experience for me was assisting the curator, Randall, place a coveted Renoir landscape piece into new frame. It was truly an amazing experience to be exposed to that caliber of artwork. In addition I also discovered a new favorite artist, Jean-Pierre Cassigneul, whose works were displayed in the gallery.

I certainly learned a great deal about the gallery business and about the sale, upkeep, and preparation of artwork during my internship. It was very interesting to learn about the conservation and preparations that each painting undergoes in order to get it in top condition for
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display and sale in the gallery. It was also very fascinating to learn about the different and complex methods of shipping and receiving works of art. This exposure to the inner workings of the commercial art world was not only fascinating, but also very informative. I am sure that I have built up knowledge I would be able to call upon if I end up working in a similar setting someday. In addition I learned many new “office skills”. I have never worked in an office setting so I was able to learn many basic office skills relating to office organization and upkeep. Learning how to refill ink cartridges, take phone calls, assemble mailings, and organize the filing system were very helpful real-world experiences that I will surely carry with me into my future professional workplace.

Overall the experience definitely informed many of the choices I will make in the coming year with regard to what career path I choose pursue. Although I very much enjoyed my time at Guarisco Gallery, I think that I would prefer a more dynamic work environment, which perhaps I could find at a gallery or museum that is just a bit larger in size. I also realized that I would probably prefer to work in a museum rather than a gallery, as the commercial and marketing side of the internship wasn’t nearly as gratifying for me as the actual interactions I had with the art on a daily basis.

I am so thankful for the funding I received for this internship this summer. It allowed me to take on this opportunity and learn much more about the commercial art world and also helped to give me some great new professional connections and relationships.