As a recipient of the funding from the Arts Internship Fund this summer, I spent six weeks working at Zoli Studio, a private studio and teaching space of sculptor Evelyn Jordan in New Orleans, Louisiana. I spent much of my childhood in this same studio, learning the techniques and practices of working with clay. It was through this experience at Zoli Studio that I fell in love with art making and continued to sculpt with clay throughout my high school years. Because Sewanee does not have ceramics facilities, as an art major I had to push aside my love for clay and focus on the use of other materials for my sculptures. While this allowed me to learn new techniques and modes of working, I still longed for clay.

Through the Powell, my time at Zoli Studio was spent helping out with Evelyn’s clay classes, maintaining a clean and organized studio, and creating my own work. Evelyn taught classes to both children and adults. For these classes, I often helped prepare the materials, assistant teach, and clean-up at the end of each day. I really enjoyed this aspect of the internship because it exposed me to another side of life as an artist and teacher. When classes were through, I spent the remainder of the day working. I experimented with different forms, techniques, and glazes in the creation of my sculptures.

Through the process of working day in and day out with clay, I better learned how to manipulate the material to build sculpturally. I spent the summer working in ways that I hadn’t before—building two-piece sculptures at a larger scale. My goal for my work was to continue working within some of the themes that I had begun to explore in the
previous semester. I allowed much of the process to take place as I built, letting the clay determine the end result. This experience was extremely important to my work as a student. I learned that in order to get to the next step, to succeed, you have to constantly work. I had a lot of failures in the studio and therefore a lot of frustrations. However, it was through these long hours of “doing” and the long line of failures and successes that I was able to learn what worked and what didn’t—I was finally able to produce at least one piece I was proud of. Because of this opportunity, I am entering this Advent semester at Sewanee with a new perspective. I am going to apply the same work ethic and studio practice that I held at Zoli Studio to my time in Nabit. I find this approach to be essential not only because I am still a student and that is what I am “supposed” to do, but rather because I now know what I want out of my life and need to take the first steps to getting there.

This internship helped me to realize that I want to be an artist. I always knew that art would be a part of my life, but this work experience showed me that I want to make a commitment to art making. It made me realize that I want to make this my career, and in order to do that, I have to put my whole self into it. There are too many talented, connected people out there in the world for me to think that this can easily be done. This internship helped me to see how hard it is to strive as a successful artist and also how badly I want to do just that.
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