

Molly Farmer  
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For eight weeks this past summer, I interned at the prestigious Guarisco Gallery in Washington D.C., learning, observing, and actively participating in managing, marketing, and selling pieces of art. The Guarisco Gallery, which was founded in 1980, contains a massive inventory, and arguably the largest collection worldwide, of nineteenth and twentieth century American and European art. Their collection includes over six hundred paintings, a wide variety of watercolors, and marble and bronze sculptures from influential and revolutionary artists. A wide variety of subjects including marine, sporting, oriental, landscape, still life, and genre pieces are collected and sold at the gallery. Thus the gallery's extensive collection appeals to many different artistic tastes, yielding a massive, worldwide cliental who appreciate both the significance, as well as the aesthetic appeal, that such art can provide. The Guarisco Gallery only buys art of the highest significance, thus accumulating an elite collection of fine art that primarily caters to extremely wealthy clients. Strategically located next door to the exclusive Ritz Carlton Hotel in Georgetown, the Guarisco Gallery obtains many of their international clients through their location, as many wealthy clients from the hotel view the gallery and frequently purchase their art.

Throughout my eight weeks at the gallery, I had several projects and responsibilities that I was expected to complete. One of the main projects that I had to complete was the writing of several artist biographies and brief excerpts explaining the works' significance. These biographies were written and distributed to potential clients who desired additional information on the pieces that interested them. I was asked to write three biographies/excerpts throughout my eight weeks on several pieces. In order to find reliable information, I went to the National Library of Congress to research the artist and piece, which I thoroughly enjoyed, as I had never been there and was able to

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master the information on certain schools, masters, and artists that I researched. The director and owner of the Guarisco Gallery, Laura Guarisco, explained to me the significance of properly researching, writing, and having such biographies/excerpts for clients in order to sell a work of art. These biographies/excerpts legitimize the piece for the potential client as the biography should emphasize name recognition by stating the artist's association with famous schools, masters, contemporaries, exhibitions, and works in order to make the piece for sale appear historically significant. Such name recognition associated with a work can greatly attribute to the value and prestige of a piece, and thus will make an interested client more inclined to purchase these potential investments.

In addition to writing the biographies, I was frequently asked to put together photo packets of works for sale in the gallery. These packets consisted of three different photos reflecting different angles of the piece, and were given to clients who were interested in the piece shown in the photos. The packets served several important purposes. Firstly, these packets are utilized to accommodate worldwide clients, who can accurately see the piece without physically coming to the Guarisco Gallery. Thus the gallery is able to sell and show paintings to potential clients that otherwise would not have access to the collection from out of town. Secondly, the photo packets played a vital role in record keeping and filing for the gallery. Packets are filed away along with the artist biography and financial information. I frequently filed these packets, and learned the absolute importance of record keeping and organization in order to manage a successful business. And lastly, I learned the importance of presentation in business. Although I did not physically take these photos, I observed the photographer of these photos spend hours perfecting the lighting and coloring of these photos so that the piece was shown at its' best. I became aware through observing this process that seemingly "simple" things of this business, can make a huge difference, which is a very valuable

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lesson. Additionally, I learned the importance of providing accommodations for customers. These photo packets, although a small gesture, combined with the biographies and knowledgeable staff, can make a vast difference in this business.

My internship also consisted of typical “intern” responsibilities that surprisingly taught me basic skills and techniques that I will need for any type of future career. I was frequently asked to print, assemble, and mail hundreds of mailings. I became a regular at the post office and learned the importance of properly and strategically marketing ones’ inventory. Specialized mailings reflected previous clients’ tastes, while “new” customers received a pamphlet illustrating a wide variety of art.

Observation proved extremely helpful and beneficial to my knowledge of the art world throughout my eight weeks. The curator of the gallery would frequently pull me aside to explain to me techniques he would use in assessing a painting. For example, he would use a black light to ensure the painting was legitimately signed by the true artist, as well as to see if paint was added at a later date to the original painting, in which case such additions would show up as red markings under the black light. I also listened to an employee participate in an art auction on the phone, which proved to be a very enlightening and interesting experience, as I witnessed firsthand one of the ways the gallery obtained their art. The employees at the gallery were unbelievably helpful, as they constantly showed and taught me what they were doing so that I could take full advantage of my internship. Books on artists, catalogues from Sotheby’s and Christie’s, and information on purchased inventory were at my disposal, and I was encouraged to familiarize myself with all of these useful and interesting tools.

The combination of these responsibilities, actions, and observations throughout my time at the Guarisco Gallery has provided me with a strong foundation of how to manage a successful gallery. Additionally, I gained significant knowledge of business techniques and art/ artist information that will prove useful to me in my future career in

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the art or business world. I literally could not have asked for a better internship, as my time at the gallery allowed me to pursue my passion for the arts in a welcoming and informative environment.