

This summer I worked at the Columbia Museum of Art in Columbia, South Carolina, as a summer camp intern in the Education Department. The internship began June 4th and ended August 10th, running Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Throughout the summer, I was expected to complete a wide variety of responsibilities ranging from overseeing pick up and drop off of campers to being an active assistant to the teachers during class. More specifically, these responsibilities included: creating a roster for each camp, confirming the receipt of required forms, conducting and overseeing sign-ins/sign-outs to both the morning and afternoon camps, facilitating the “Lunch-Buddies” program offered for children staying through lunch to attend a full day of camp, assisting camp instructors during class, including both setting up and cleaning up of the studio spaces, along with many other responsibilities. This summer, the Columbia Museum of Art offered over 25 different camps, with ages ranging from 4 – 18 years old. Some of the camp subjects that I assisted with this summer included alchemy in arts, ceramics, glassworks, sequential arts, paper making, drawing, mixed media, furniture design, and photography, as well as a variety of themed art camps that taught basic art skills.

Having previous experience working at a summer camp as an assistant pottery instructor, I was well prepared for many of the basic responsibilities of this internship before the summer began, which really gave me the opportunity to further improve my skills of working with children, even teenagers, in a creative environment. One of the most challenging tasks of the summer was learning how to interact and connect with the campers, regardless of their age and general interest in the subject. I had the most difficulty with the younger campers, such as the camps with 4 – 7 year olds. Having only worked with older campers in previous summers, it amazed me that I was teaching children how to hold scissors the right way, rather than teaching them how to cut along the line. Or that painting solid-colored stripes across a large sheet of paper could be a full-day activity. At the beginning of the summer I felt very uncomfortable in

these younger classes, but as the summer progressed I was able to improve my ability to interact with the younger kids.

There were many class subjects that I found extremely interesting. The very first class I helped with this summer was Alchemy in Art. Throughout the week, the campers learned about some of the scientific factors behind art and they had the opportunity to make a variety of different paints. As an Art major with a concentration in oil painting, it was extremely interesting to learn how oil paint was made, and even to watch 10-year olds mix their own oil paints. In each of the camps, including the Alchemy in Art camp, the campers are taken on a gallery tour through the permanent art gallery in the museum. In this particular camp, the gallery tour focused on certain pieces to explain the processes and components of how paint was made throughout history. Other camps, such as a clothing design camp, used the gallery to point out patterns in clothing, color combinations, and other design techniques that were used to inspire the campers in their work.

Another camp I really enjoyed working with was the glassworks camp, which had 8 – 12 year olds. In this camp, the campers were taught how to use a soldering iron and how to score and break glass into shapes. Even as an assistant instructor, I had to relearn the techniques of soldering and was given a quick lesson on scoring and breaking glass so that I could be of assistance during the class. The ability of the campers to learn these skills and utilize them to successfully create art amazed me, seeing that even I had struggled with soldering when I learned it in college, and I had never cut glass before that class. In certain classes such as this one, where the campers were given the opportunity to learn about and use potentially dangerous tools taught me how to balance my desire to help them with the tools versus allowing the campers to make pieces of art completely on their own. It was exciting to see how happy and accomplished a camper felt after successfully using a soldering iron, or successfully breaking a piece of glass along the scored line.

The jewelry making class was very similar to the glass works camp. Not only was I quickly taught how to use a jewelry saw to cut metal, or how to create a rivet, or how to create a chain-linked bracelet before the classes began, but I was able to gain a lot of knowledge of how to successfully teach challenging skills to a group of children and trust that they will be able to absorb it and execute it without getting hurt.

One camp that I was given the opportunity to really teach was a paper making camp. I studied paper-making and book arts when I studied abroad in Italy the summer before and luckily was assigned to assist in that camp. After talking to the instructor about my previous experience and knowledge of the subject she allowed me to teach many of the lessons on my own, including several experimental lessons regarding making paper. One of the days, I brought in a book of sample papers that I made in Italy and gave a brief talk about each paper and how they were made. At the end of the week, I helped teach the campers a simple binding-method that they used to make their own sample book of the papers they made during the camp. This camp gave me the experience of being an actual teacher, rather than simply a teacher's assistant, which was a great opportunity.

Initially my internship was supposed to be a part time internship that I had extended for the funding, but I now realize why it is supposed to be part time. Maintaining a positive attitude, keeping my energy levels high, and always being eager to be of assistance, whether it is to a camper or the instructor was extremely challenging and exhausting. Half of the weeks of camp had a "Lunch Buddies" program where some campers could stay through lunch and attend morning and afternoon camps. One of my responsibilities this summer was to pack my lunch and sit through lunch break and watch a children's movie with these campers until the next camp started. I never realized how much I enjoyed and appreciated a lunch break during a workday until my first week of "Lunch Buddies." These weeks really taught me how to balance my energy throughout the day and how to maintain a positive attitude, even at times when all I wanted was an hour to myself.

Throughout the summer I was able to more clearly define where I want to go after college. I realized that I was much more comfortable teaching the older campers, opposed to the younger ones. Due to the fact that I enjoyed my internship this summer, I have not ruled out the idea of being a teacher after college, however I do not want to specifically plan to take my career in that direction. With graduation approaching, I have been considering graduate programs and art schools. After this summer I have decided to look more strongly towards getting my Masters in Fine Arts opposed to a degree that is more catered towards art in education. After working with a variety of different instructors and hearing about their career choices, I was given tips and advice about how to be successful with an art major and also created many valuable connections with artists around Columbia. Overall, working at the Columbia Museum of Art was one of the most productive and enlightening summers I have had regarding my future, and I trust that the experience and knowledge I gathered will benefit me as I work towards graduation and for the real world that comes after.