

This summer I interned at the Guarisco Gallery in Washington, D.C. The Guarisco Gallery is a large nineteenth and early twentieth century American and European gallery with over 600 paintings and sculptures in their collection. The Gallery represents a wide variety of Artists and paintings from every major school within the nineteenth and early twentieth century, including Romantic, Barbizon, Victorian, Belle Epoque, Impressionist, and Post-Impressionist works. One of the largest nineteenth century galleries worldwide, Guarisco Gallery's selection caters to the seasoned buyer as well as the new collector. They have everything from small watercolors, to large oil paintings, and of all kinds of subject matter including landscapes, portraits, and sporting scenes. Although many artists represented do not have the celebrity status of their contemporaries, The Guarisco Gallery focuses on buying pieces of top quality aesthetics, affordability, and great condition. These works are often believed to be among the best of the artist's lifeworks and tend to be undervalued or overlooked. One of the most unique yet crucial ways in which the Gallery markets its individuals pieces, is through detailed, in depth artist biographies that have been laboriously researched and constructed.

As an intern, my main task was conducting research on the new artists and paintings in the Gallery. It was different than any other kind of research that I had ever done before because there was relatively little information published on these artists. Therefore, I would have to think about the type of work that the artists painted, who their teachers and friends were, where they painting and where it might have been exhibited. These often provided leads or information that would help me piece the puzzle together and formulate a coherent biography. Even though the Gallery has a small private library of its own, I did get a special pass to do additional research in both the Library of Congress and the National Gallery's Library.

Another unique aspect of the Gallery that I witnessed was what they call a Condition Report. A Condition Report is simply a procedure in which the Curator runs a black light over the surface of the painting to see if there are any scratches or in paint, small dots of touch up paint, on the painting. The curator will then map out all of the imperfections on a photocopy of the painting and keep it with other information on the painting for buyers. A Condition Report not only insures the authenticity of a painting or signature, but also helps determine the price for the painting.

Lastly, my favorite responsibility was packaging and shipping paintings. It might sound strange or even boring, but I found it quite exhilarating to personally handle paintings worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Furthermore, just the rush of being so up close and personal with a museum quality painting was amazing. I truly enjoyed getting to handle and to take care of such important pieces as ones by Renoir, Boudin and L'hermitte, and took great pride in my packaging responsibilities.

Like most internships, I also had to do the usual filing and mailing, however I learned that even these seemingly medial tasks are vital to the success of the Gallery. Although my responsibilities at the Gallery were varied, I still believe that I got a true sense of the inner workings of a Gallery. Whether I was personally handling a painting to be shipped off to a client, or quietly researching, each day was different. Since I had no previous experience, I was thankful to be working in such a small environment with only one other intern, and five co-workers. Because of this, I really got to try my hand at a variety of tasks as every one at the Gallery was eager to help me learn as much as possible. I am confident that this experience will help guide me down a future career path, as well as benefit me in the class room here at Sewanee.