

Katrina Boniewski
Dallas Museum of Art: Arts & Letters Live
September 1, 2010

Powell Internship Report:
Arts & Letters Live at the Dallas Museum of Art

Throughout my time at Sewanee, I have been introduced to new experiences, which have piqued new interests in subjects to which I had not been exposed formerly. An English major from the start (nearly from birth), I thought I had “the plan” worked out, but of course, Sewanee catapulted me into the liberal arts education. The Humanities sequence particularly led me to take an art history survey, and I was hooked. Suddenly a double major, I found myself routinely singing to myself, “What do you do with a B.A. in English... and Art History?”

As my interests broadened, my ideas for careers seemed to narrow. What career could incorporate my variety of passions rather than sinking me into monotony? As my senior year loomed nearer, I decided an internship could at least help me decide whether I loved or hated a career. Ever since I was a young student in beginning art classes, I had always entertained a tiny fantasy of working in a museum—a notion probably partly derived from the novel *From The Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. I figured I might as well just go with my gut, and thus I applied to several art museums throughout the country.

The internship at the Dallas Museum of Art, however, stood out from the others. While the other internships emphasized curatorial work, the Dallas Museum of Art called for an intern for Arts & Letters Live, a literary series. The TigerNet posting seemed heaven-sent, as it explained a particular desire for an English major with an avid interest in the visual arts. ‘That’s me,’ was all I could think as I submitted my application materials. This internship just seemed to... fit.

Katrina Boniewski
Dallas Museum of Art: Arts & Letters Live
September 1, 2010

And fit it did. My days at the Dallas Museum of Art were certainly varied; each project brought out a new side of me—a new skill to sharpen, a new fear to be conquered. While some aspects of the internship were routine—the daily checking of the phone messages and navigating the ticketing system, the weekly gallery talks, the biweekly reading sessions, to name a few—each task brought about something new, whether an idea to pursue or a lesson to be learned. I was rarely at my desk, and when I was, I was engulfed in researching upcoming authors, creating event flyers, keeping track of ticket orders, or creating a survey for museum visitors. Happily, though, my time away from the desk was spent interacting with a number of departments outside of Arts & Letters, such as Public Programs, Development, Imaging, and Curatorial. The constant movement was one of my favorite aspects of the internship; I noticed that while many interns of other departments spent most of their time in one location or with one supervisor, I was able to interact with a large number of interesting, talented people, all of whom furthered my understanding of the museum field.

One such event that involved a great amount of collaboration is Late Night, a monthly event in which the DMA remains open until midnight while providing a huge amount of entertainment—concerts, open mic events, guest speakers, and classes, to name but a few. At the June Late Night, Arts & Letters welcomed Jake Silverstein, the editor of *Texas Monthly* and the author of *Nothing Happened and Then It Did*, as a guest speaker. A couple of weeks before the event—only a few days into my internship—I was told I would be given the responsibility of introducing Mr. Silverstein. Admittedly, this struck fear into my heart, as public speaking is not my forte. In the days leading up to the event, I wrote and rewrote my introduction as visions of

Katrina Boniewski
Dallas Museum of Art: Arts & Letters Live
September 1, 2010

ridiculously humiliating catastrophes (a la *Bridget Jones' Diary*) repeatedly played in my mind. Inevitably, Mr. Silverstein arrived, and I found myself walking up to the podium to read my introduction, my stomach filled to the brim with butterflies. I had typed my introduction using a large font, so I would be able to read it easily, and I felt I knew the book forwards and backwards (as one of my absurd visions involved Mr. Silverstein brutally quizzing me on his work). I began my introduction, and my excitement grew as I realized that I was speaking about a book that I immensely enjoyed and a writer whom I greatly respected. I finally registered that many members of the audience shared my enthusiasm. This epiphany allowed me to finish my introduction without a hitch (or at least nothing compared to Bridget Jones' predicaments). Afterwards, I received praise on my introduction, not only from DMA employees, but also from audience members and Jake Silverstein himself. While only one experience on a journey of many, this night granted me a newfound confidence.

My reading list for the summer was certainly not limited to Silverstein's *Nothing Happened and Then It Did*. Arts & Letters produces a series entitled Texas Bound, in which short stories by Texans or about Texas are read by actors with a connection to the state. One of my greatest responsibilities was the collection of stories for the series. Early in the internship, I e-mailed well-known authors for submissions, and remained in contact with some of them as their stories were filed for consideration. I had the wonderful job of reading through a large portion of these stories, not only considering each work's literary worth but also how it would fit into a program. Stories I particularly enjoyed were presented in reading sessions, in which the director of Texas Bound would read the story aloud and our small group would discuss its merit.

Katrina Boniewski
Dallas Museum of Art: Arts & Letters Live
September 1, 2010

As the summer progressed, I learned how to determine whether a story read aloud would affect the audience of *Texas Bound*, and I became more and more outspoken during our reading sessions.

My confidence only grew throughout the summer. If asked on Day One how I felt about the internship, I would have replied, *overwhelmed*. My first day was not only a First Tuesday (in which museum admission is free to all visitors, resulting in thousands of guests, most of whom are young children), but also culminated in an event with Annette Gordon-Reed, author of *The Hemingses of Monticello*. I spent the day organizing tickets for Will Call, printing out signs for reserved seats, and assisting with the post-event book signing, all while attempting to remember people's names and at least look like I knew my way around the museum. However, by the end of the internship, I experienced a much more involved event—Emma Thompson's visit to promote her latest film and book, both titled *Nanny McPhee Returns*. Not only were we given an unusually short amount of time to promote and prepare for the event, as Emma Thompson's "people" contacted the museum instead of vice versa, but we had to remain flexible as her schedule was extremely tight. Never would I have guessed the number of details involved in preparing for such an event. A few of my tasks were acquiring the appropriate chair for an interview (which was more difficult than it may seem), sending out several drafts of a very long operations request, checking the status of the books to be delivered for the book signing, and generally dealing with a very enthusiastic public. The work was hard, but it was certainly worth it, and I now annoyingly bring up Emma Thompson in regular conversation with friends and

Katrina Boniewski
Dallas Museum of Art: Arts & Letters Live
September 1, 2010

proudly display my signed book, a physical reminder of the perks that come with working at the DMA.

To be honest, I believe Late Night generally sums up what I loved about my internship at the DMA. Late Night hosts a wide range of artists, from ukulele players (who perform in front of the Jackson Pollock works!), to high school students wishing to share their poetry, to resident artists demonstrating their crafts. Moreover, Late Night also brings together a varied audience—artists making connections with other artists, children taking pride in their own scribbled designs, students swapping Facebook information so they can share original music, book club members coming together to meet an author, and the 9-to-5 businessmen looking to the art galleries for relaxation. There is music for dancing, artwork to discover, poetry to absorb, books to discuss, and people to befriend; and for a moment you feel you will pass out from exhaustion until you are whisked away to something else, because the one thing you cannot do at Late Night is simply sit at a desk, oblivious to the world around you. While perhaps not quite as whimsical, this was my life at the DMA. The people with whom I worked at the museum possessed such varied personalities and passions; there was never a dull moment with them. The visitors and volunteers were also engaging as they brought unique opinions to the events, and I was lucky enough to establish relationships with some of the regulars. The projects on which I worked were so varied that I was never bored for long, as an entirely different task would pop up at almost any given moment. My internship at the Dallas Museum of Art gave me hope that I will find my place in a career that fits my passions, keeps me moving, allows me to interact with

Katrina Boniewski
Dallas Museum of Art: Arts & Letters Live
September 1, 2010

interesting people, and surrounds me with creativity of all types. My mother once told me to find a job for which I will happily get out bed in the morning rather than one that causes me to dread my alarm. My internship with Arts & Letters at the Dallas Museum of Art satisfied that requirement, reassuring me that with hard work, my future need not be so daunting.