



SMITH COLLEGE
MUSEUM OF ART

The Museum as a Vital Partner in an Integrated Campus Learning Environment

The May 2006 Report of the Committee on Mission and Priorities identifies the Smith College Museum of Art as one of the learning communities on campus that contributes valuably to a student's education. Conceived from the founding of the College as a crucial learning resource, the Museum's collection supports the pedagogy of faculty across campus and provides an irreplaceable resource for developing visual literacy through the direct study of works of art from around the world from ancient times to the present.

Increasingly, we find that students are seeking out experiences in the Museum—through work-study, paid and unpaid internships, and volunteer work—to gain an understanding of the constellation of professions that make up the museum field and related fields in the arts. Students have been developing specialized skills and gaining valuable pre-professional experience that is not widely available to undergraduates through internships in the Cunningham Center for Prints, Drawings, and Photographs and the Departments of Education, Collections Management, and Marketing & Membership, participation in the Student Museum Educator Program, and apprenticeships in frame conservation. Notably, many of the Museum's student interns have graduated and immediately found paid employment in museums or successfully competed for training internships. These are significant achievements in a field that is highly competitive and notoriously difficult to break into at the entry level. Recent examples include:

- Jessica Arrista ('05, Neuroscience major, Art History minor) worked at SCMA as both a Frame Conservation Apprentice and a Student Museum Educator. After graduation she became a Research Technician at the Boston University School for Advanced Biomedical Research and volunteered in the research labs at the Straus Center and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston running equipment for pigment and media analysis. This fall she began a paid, pre-program conservation internship at the Worcester Art Museum in preparation for pursuing a Master's degree in art conservation.
- Christine Peterson ('06, Art History) was the '05-06 On-Campus Intern in the Cunningham Center for Prints, Drawings, and Photographs (funded by the CDO). The internship culminated with the exhibition *Larry Clark's Tulsa* (May 5-July 17, 2006), for which she selected the artwork, designed the installation, and researched and wrote the exhibition labels, a brochure, and the press release. The summer before her work at SCMA she had a Praxis internship at the Prado in Madrid. After graduation Christine found full-time, paid employment as a Department Assistant in the Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
- Caroline Roberts ('06, Art History) volunteered as a Frame Conservation Apprentice for 2 years, gaining hands-on training through such projects as the conservation of the original frame for Dwight Tryon's *Evening*. She is now working as a paid Assistant Frame Conservator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

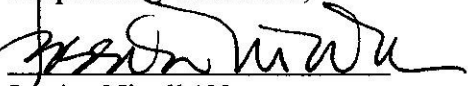
- In recent years, many of our Student Museum Educators and Education Interns have gone on to employment in museums, including: Sarah Chung ('05, Studio Art) who is an Assistant in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Eleanor (Nell) Gross ('05, Art History) who was hired as an Education Assistant by the Seattle Art Museum and has recently been promoted to Associate Museum Educator for SAM's new Olympic Sculpture Park; Krystal Read ('04, Studio Art), who is working in education at The Trammell and Margaret Crow Collection of Asian Art, Dallas; and Jordan Smith ('06, Education), who was recently hired as a Museum Educator by the Museum of the Moving Image, New York.

The success of the first session of the Summer Institute in Art Museum Studies (SIAMS, June-July 2006) is another powerful indicator of interest in this area. Coupled with Smith's historical strength in the arts and the large number of Smith alumnae in leadership positions in the art field nationally and internationally, this interest among students in preparing for careers in the arts is a trend that should be supported. By coordinating existing resources on campus, continuing programs such as the Museum's alumnae symposium in the arts, and strengthening the curriculum and partnerships between the Museum and academic departments, students will be given a clearer roadmap of how to build an academic and experiential foundation for a career in the arts. Possible steps include:

- Augment the curriculum with a course or courses addressing issues of curatorial and critical practice
- Develop a J-term course around styles of written presentation in museums and galleries (exhibition texts, brochures, catalogue entries, press releases, etc.)
- Evaluate SIAMS to determine if it should continue as a summer program or should be integrated into the curriculum at Smith or within the Five Colleges
- Define a concentration of courses in the arts and sciences that would provide an academic foundation for graduate work in art conservation
- Promote a partnership between the Museum and the Smith College Department of Education and Child Study that would provide opportunities for teacher training and curriculum development within the Museum
- Explore ways to expand and strengthen the Museum's training programs and give them more visibility on campus
- Utilize the Museums10 network of museums in the Pioneer Valley to create other internship opportunities
- Help students make connections, through the CDO and the Alumnae Association, with alumnae in the arts to arrange Praxis internships

This initiative will support the strategic goals of strengthening essential student capacities, promoting a culture of research, inquiry, and discovery, and preparing women for rewarding lives in a rapidly changing world. By integrating the Museum more fully into the learning environment we have the opportunity to equip Smith graduates to become leaders in the arts.

Respectfully submitted,



Jessica Nicoll '83

Director and Chief Curator