Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

This summer I had the great opportunity to work with the world-renowned artist Ashley Longshore. Ashley is a painter based in New Orleans, Louisiana, and is famous for her pop-art style work that tackles and occasionally mocks topics such as femininity, wealth, and a modern high-society. I worked as a part of a fantastic team that Ashley has put together. My tasks included running errands for the gallery, moving and re-hanging paintings, applying resin to paintings, and “bedazzling” (applying multi-colored gems and glitter) paintings under Ashley’s direction. Ashley also asked me to use my interest and experience with photography in order to conduct a month long “behind the scenes” series of her studio and gallery.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

Working with Ashley allowed me to better enhance my attention to detail. Her paintings are so special because of the thought and care she puts into each piece. She will work with her clients on color schemes and other specifics in order to ensure that they are completely satisfied. When I began my internship, I felt as if everything was running together. Red gems all looked the same, the sizes of the different stones did not matter, etc. However, that all changed once I began to listen to those around me and pay attention to what they were doing and thinking about as they worked. I soon began to notice myself being very precise with each stone I choose, frequently asking for the opinions of others for the most minute details. This attention to detail also translated well into my photography. My shots were more thought-out as I paid attention to the light, the subject matter, and all of the other details that go into making a successful photo.
Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

With only a week and a half remaining in my internship with Ashley, the unthinkable happened. Due to Tropical Storm Cindy and the old New Orleans building that we worked in, part of the ceiling collapsed at 8:00 AM on a Wednesday morning. Luckily, no one was in the building when this occurred, and none of the artwork was irreparably damaged. We immediately began to work on cleaning up the mess. A professional team was hired to safely dispose of the damaged ceiling, we cleaned the dirty artwork and furniture, the ceiling was repaired, and then the floors and walls were repainted to look better than before. All of this happened in one and a half weeks. I have never seen so much positivity in a team. Of course, everyone was upset that it happened, but we made due and got to work as quickly as possible. The ability to work well with a team is a skill that has grown from my time at Sewanee. The small classroom setting, my experience with different themed houses and residential life, and my job at Stirling’s have all given me many opportunities to be a part of a strong, well-rounded team.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

The ceiling catastrophe greatly strengthened my teamwork skills, but so did the everyday work we did leading up to the mess. We all worked together to move paintings, bedazzle paintings, make lunch, and clean up at the end of the day. We also used one another as sounding boards for decisions on what stones and glitter to use for the paintings. I never hesitated to ask for help, and I always received it when I asked for it.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

Working with Ashley solidified the idea to become a studio artist, at least for a good portion of my professional career. I thoroughly enjoyed the creativity that she was able to use in every decision she made. I also look forward to being a part of a team in the future. Working with others is an amazing luxury, especially when the team is as dedicated and kind as the team I worked with.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons’ perspectives?

Ashley’s entire team exudes female empowerment. During my time there, I was the only male, and it was a wonderful learning experience. Being surrounded by such powerful women was amazing. They are all simultaneously savvy business women, creative geniuses, and strong movers and lifters. They operate as tight-knit unit that works well without the help of a man. Many of the clients and suppliers Ashley encounters are men, but she does not allow her gender or theirs to dictate how they conduct business with her. She demands respect from everyone, and she gives it in return. Being there, I realized that I was in a room where the glass ceiling had been shattered. My gender was irrelevant and did not give me a helping hand over the other members of the team. They run a very successful business year-round without any direct male presence. Leaving the team, I was inspired by the amount of female strength and empowerment that I was lucky enough to witness.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

Thank you so much for the opportunity that you have afforded me. I am very grateful for the experiences I have had, and I owe it all to you for making my dreams come to life.