

This summer, I interned with Phil Shafer as his studio assistant. Based out of Kansas City, Missouri, Phil Shafer owns his own company called Sike Style Industries, which encompasses his style, merchandise, and his name, Sike. Phil Shafer is a self-taught muralist and graphic designer in Kansas City. He has developed his own style and has built a name for himself in the Kansas City art scene. This summer, I experienced what Phil calls the “Sike Internship” as I traveled to Kansas City to live on my own for six weeks and study under Phil Shafer. My duties as an intern were initially to assist him with murals, studio work, and research. Entering the internship, I was excited to learn to work with a medium that I have been passionate about since high school but never really got the chance to explore. Interning with Phil allowed me to explore a new art style, explore and network the art scene, and experience life as an artist in a new city.

I began my internship in late May, seeing as Phil would go on his annual “Sike Quest”, a week of exploring the art scene in another city, at the end of my internship. I was greeted by Phil’s “half-sisters” who picked me up from the airport and introduced me to various artists at the Kansas City Comic Con. The next day, I met Phil and he introduced me to his day job at the Kansas University Medical Center, where he is the graphic designer, helping arrange and print posters for the medical research students. Here, I conducted research for other projects, research for my own projects, and where he would make sketches for future mural projects. The next day, I assisted in my very first mural at the Schlitterbahn Waterpark in Kansas City, Kansas, where we designed a Kansas City logo and water waves. My days were often different; some were office days, some were studio days, and some days were dedicated to live art or murals. Office

days were dedicated to research, stencil cutting, and experimenting with graphic design. Here, Phil composed bids for future clients; he would create a sketch of the design using Illustrator and include all costs for materials and work hours. Office time allowed me to expand my skills with Illustrator and graphic design. Outside of studio work, I spent most of my time with Phil doing live art for different clients. One of my favorite experiences was a beer festival called Boulevardia for the local brewery, Boulevard. While Phil painted a few canvases, my job was to decorate spray paint cans for donations. The freedom to decorate a can and develop my own style, a little piece of my art that people could take, showed me the possibilities of my career as an artist. It was such an exciting experience to see the places that Phil's work allowed us to see. During studio days, I decorated record crates for a record store called Josey Records based on music genres and themes. It was such an exciting experience to see the places that Phil's work allowed us to see. We were able to attend different office parties; one on the top of a building where you could see the most beautiful red sunset. My last day was even rewarded with a free pass to the Schlitterbahn Waterpark as an outing for working with Phil on the mural.

Kansas City has a unique art scene. Every first Friday of the month, the Crossroads' galleries are open free of charge with exhibits from local artists; shops, bars, and parks have live art and food trucks for entertainment. The whole area comes alive for the love of art. I was able to network with several artists, learn about gallery exhibitions, and explore the city's art core. During this internship, I was able to witness a network of artists who were already established as a brand, and who would encourage and support new artists with tools to develop their unique style and brand; they called it Artist INC. I loved every aspect of the support for new artists and the mentorship programs they developed; I was even able to borrow a camera to continue my

photography from a fellow mentor, Lisa Marie. I used my days off to visit museums and have lunch with local artists like Jose Faus, a muralist and writer whose work is more cultural to honor particular cultures. I was able to express my passion to several artists and receive tips on how to continue my work and develop a name for myself as an artist. I developed my own network based on the artists who shared similar passions and styles. I became involved in community organizing upon attending a vigil with an organization called One Struggle KC. This community connected with several artists to voice their opinions on social issues and injustices occurring in KC.

Living and socializing with artists allowed me to hear about their journey, their mistakes, their successes and how they developed their particular style. I realized my art is not commercial, like Sike's. I loved working with graphic design and murals that embody abstract shapes and form. This internship has granted me full consciousness of my future projects and the type of art I wish to create. Using the techniques and style I learned from Phil, I am determined to further develop my style and career as an artist. I am left with immense inspiration from working with amazing artist, living in an art-centric city, and my own experience to create.