Gigi Ruppel, C’18  
Hometown: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Guarisco Gallery  
Washington, D.C.

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

The Guarisco Gallery is one of the largest and leading 19th and 20th century art galleries in the country. Selling both paintings and sculptures, the gallery is stocked with a wide variety of items. This summer the gallery was in the process of consolidating into one location, rather than two, in D.C. and opening another location (out of state). All of this movement created a wonderful opportunity to transfer all hard files of research and information on every artist and piece that has been sold, and will be sold, onto a large external hard drive. This process, while tedious, gave me a wonderful insight on what it means to complete a large project in the work force. Along with this project, there was plenty of insight into the world of selling art. I assisted in framing, restoring, hanging, and handling the art. I also assisted with clients and acted as an assistant on the floor.

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?

I accomplished the LARGE task of transferring files, giving me without a doubt A+ proficiency in scanning. The completion of this project means that now files can be much more easily accessed at a much quicker pace. I grew professionally by seeing and experiencing what it means to go to work every day (sometimes weekends) and work until the end of the day. This is something that is important to understand, how things will really be. I was able to gain skills pertaining to dealing with clients and helping them have the best experience possible.

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?
Working in essentially retail, there is not one specific problem that is greater than the other, every day felt like there were small challenges or problems that needed to be solved. My education at Sewanee has strengthened my confidence to voice my opinion and take charge. Sewanee has also helped me to work in small groups and use discussion skills. All of these things allowed for me to complete all the little problems and challenges that would occur.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?
My teamwork skills strengthened by learning that teamwork does not necessarily mean working together. I had to work with my fellow intern to complete our large scanning project. We found out that dividing up the work and working separately provided a much quicker outcome than scanning together.

How did your internship affect your career plans?
My internship gave me a wonderful look into the world of selling art and provided me with the answer that this is not what I want to do. It is a commercial business, as it should be, but not something I wish to pursue.

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?
I encountered people of different backgrounds, both as clients and fellow employees. In both cases it seemed that taking time to hear what they had to say, whether it was regarding buying the art or teaching about "to dos" around the gallery, and then execute based off of what they have said. I learned that it is always best to listen first, act second.

Words of advice for future interns (housing, transportation, etc.)?
D.C. is EXPENSIVE, but so is every happening city so just enjoy it. There are also TONS of free things all over, especially during the summer. And Trader Joe's is super cheap.