

Mary Marshall Fariss

Inslee By Design

New York, NY

Inslee by Design is a small business established and operated by fashion artist Inslee Haynes. Inslee started the company her sophomore year of college at Washington and Lee University simply as a hobby and now, just a few years later, it is a successfully run business in New York. The company is built around personal commissions as well as Inslee's stationery and fashion prints which are sold primarily through her website Inslee.net.

While Inslee by Design is a successfully run business, there is a lot more to it than simply selling prints and stationery. The company operates out of a small studio in the lower east side of New York that is shared by Inslee as well as a furniture designer for a company out of North Carolina called Society Social. Amazingly, Inslee runs this business all on her own, the marketing, selling and shipping of artwork, social media, etc, and being the only other assistant, my life as an intern was both challenging and rewarding.

As an intern for Inslee by Design, I was responsible for many aspects of the company, which gave me great exposure to all aspects of a small business and allowed me to assist in more than just one focused area of the company. My daily routine included managing the email account, many trips to the post office and FedEx, invoicing clients, adding products to the website, and much more. I experienced many different areas of this company and feel that I gained skill in areas critical to a successful business that I had never even considered.

The most useful skills I developed this summer I believe are that of processing and shipping orders as well as maintaining QuickBooks and Shopify. In processing and shipping orders as well as in responding to emails I was able to connect with customers and learned how

important it is to be kind and outgoing with every customer you encounter whether on the phone or through email. I can remember receiving an email one afternoon that only said, “ I want a custom illustration. Bye”. After reading this, all I wanted to do was tell them exactly how I was feeling and how they made my job so difficult, but when you are working with a business that has a reputation, it is not the time to do that. After responding in a very kind and professional manner, I received a lovely response from the customer a few hours later thanking me for my time etc. This incident made it extremely clear how important it is to maintain a relationship with your customers because you never know when a loyal client will come knocking in the company inbox! The other valuable skill I learned was how to maintain QuickBooks and Shopify for Inslee by Design. With the Inslee by Design website under reconstruction this summer, it was my job to transfer all of the information from blog posts to stationery, from the old website to the newly constructed one. While this task took weeks, it was extremely rewarding. By the end of the summer I knew how to add and subtract products from the website, set up customers in QuickBooks, as well as send and receive invoices from customers. By taking on these daily tasks, Inslee was allowed time to paint and work on her commissions, the bread and butter of her business. These skills and my experience working alongside a successful and respected artist will be valuable through the rest of my life and someday career.

Though some of the tasks I was assigned were simple, I learned an incredible amount in each one, not only about the business, but about life as well. This experience at Inslee by Design exposed me to so many things. In the simple task of mailing a painting, I learned my way around New York City. In running to the art store for more paint supplies, I saw a riot and learned more about world peace. And, in making daily runs to get iced coffee with extra cream I became a regular at the coffee shop and learned about every form of yoga from the bearded man

at the counter. While I started out annoyed at all these minor tasks, they ended up becoming my favorite part of the day. Some days were great and I was able to run all around the city, meet with incredible designers, and go to amazing stationery stores, things many people would dream of. And other days, I came in and sat at the desk all day responding to emails and packaging prints where I made mistakes and things had to be done over and over again. Even though some days were frustrating, I learned a great deal from these mistakes and came to understand how things as simple as a font can make or break a website, and how picking the right location for a photo will determine the number of customers who will want to buy the print. All things I never would have thought significant proved to be the center of Inslee's company. This internship provided me with many life lessons I will carry with me for my entire life, all the good and all the bad.

Interning for Inslee by Design was an incredible experience and helped guide me toward a career path. Before this summer I had no idea what I wanted to do as far as my career was concerned. However, I left Inslee by Design with a plan that I didn't have before. I now hope to work in the fashion world, whether that is in marketing or design. I am not sure where this path will lead, but with this internship, I have made many connections with designers and businesses that I hope will help guide me in the direction that I want to go for my future.