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Communication Arts

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In Spring 2014 I received a In Fall 2008 Faculty Development Grant in support of an ongoing project I have developed concerning the display of Greek attic vases in major museum collections. This grant funded travel to London, Athens, Spetses, and Istanbul. For this project I took pictures of the backsides of vases on display in The British Museum and the National Archeological Museum in Athens and turned my pictures into unsanctioned postcards inserted into the museum's gift shop. This grant allowed me to conduct on-site research and production for an integral component of this ongoing project. Additionally, I used my time in London to explore future study abroad opportunities for Otis students, making connections at Central Saint Martens College of Art & Design.

For the past two years, I have taken photographs of the backsides of ancient Greek vases (700-300BC) as they are displayed in prominent museum collections. These images, taken using a cameraphone, capture the perspective of everyday visitors in the museum. Many ancient Greek vase collections are displayed with one side rendered nearly invisible to view, creating a kind of positive and negative narrative for viewers, a prioritizing of visible history. Often the "backsides" of these vases are where one can find the libidinal, grotesque, and homoerotic scenes as well as the "mistakes," the missing and fractured half of the vase. I am fascinated by these hidden and disregarded images not suitable for public view because they speak to interpretations of history, illustrations of the past, and projections of visitors imaginations onto what they cannot see.

After I take these photographs I create postcards from my low-res images and insert them into the museum's gift shop to call attention to how visitor's experiences are constructed. I do this without the museum's permission. I am also in the process of creating books of my visitor photographs as alternative catalogs for each institution's collection. I also send a letter to each institution proposing that as my artwork I install mirrors on the backs of all their display cases as a way to give viewers access to what they have been missing. Finally, I am in the process of creating a series of paintings on reflective mylar to illustrate how architectural practices inject subjective image-making into the historical record.

I used my faculty development grant to visit two museums housing some of the greatest collections of Ancient Greek pottery: The British Museum in London and The National Archaeological Museum in Athens. Additionally, I also visited the small Greek island of Spetses to explore first-hand the topographical landscape informing ancient Greek pottery and get the perspectives of a small Greek community on their interpretation of the role pottery plays in Greek history. Traveling to these museums and Spetses was transformative and invaluable, allowing me to substantially enhance and fine-tune the details of my project, and further my ongoing research.

During my travels I was able to photograph the backside of the British Museum's entire exhibited collection of Attic Greek vases (with the exception of one room closed for renovation), as well as the entire exhibited collection of the National Archaeological Museum in Athens. I was also able to make a postcard and insert it into each institution's gift shop (see attached images). I collected valuable research materials and on-site imagery from each site, including fascinating pictures of how the depiction of Greek vases plays an important role in the narratives shaped by tourist experiences. At the insistence of nearly every Greek I met, I embarked on a short journey to Spetses in order to see first-hand, a small Greek village and better understand the world depicted on the Greek vases that fascinate me. This short trip proved very important, connecting me with a strange Greek vase merchant and a small town with a unique perspective on how Greece has been depicted historically and its contemporary place in visual culture.

Additionally I developed professional contacts in London as an artist and writer, and also for Otis College. I am currently writing an extensive research paper about what I discovered during my travels, comparing and contrasting the exhibition methods of each museum. I developed future study abroad and school exchange opportunities for Otis students who want to study in London, solidifying our connection with Central Saint Marten's school in London and mapping out the beginning of a future study abroad trip for Otis students in London.

I plan to share my experiences with my students, specifically Illustration students. I embarked on this journey because of my interest in illustration and how Attic Greek vases act as some of the earliest examples of illustrations of the "Western World." Their importance and influence is undeniable. From looking at thousands of these vases, I have come to see that much of the Western world's representations of human archetypes can be seen in these early depictions on clay. This is no doubt reinforced by the major museums, whose installations impress upon viewers the historical importance of Greek vases as the closest thing we have to understanding "everyday" Greek life. I am also very interested in specific examples of how contemporary archeologists have attempted to "complete" fractured vases in order to complete the historical record. I plan to integrate my travel experience into classroom lectures, as a discursive point of argument for the lineage of illustration as an undeniably important component of visual culture. This may

result in a studio and/or LAS study abroad class focusing on Greco-Roman illustration. I would also like to present a Powerpoint about my experiences to the larger Otis community. Additionally, I plan to publish my research paper in one of a few journals. This publication will no doubt draw attention to Otis as one of the few private arts colleges providing such valuable travel grants to its faculty.

As a full-time faculty with many administrative responsibilities, I rely on grants and opportunities such as this one to advance my career and provide much needed funds and time to conduct important research and production on projects that would otherwise go unfunded. My art practice purposefully eschews white cube exhibitions and the traditional gallery structure in favor of more public, open-sourced works that reach as many people as possible, but don't bring rewards in the form of impressive monetary compensation. Grants like this help artists and educators like me continue our practices.