

DMA Internship with the Bowling Green Arts Council

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My internship for the DMA program at BGSU took place with the Bowling Green Arts Council (BGAC). While it would only officially start on May 16, 2020, I had the privilege of participating in the Arts Council's activities starting on February 11th. In this document I will discuss the activities which I found to be the most worthwhile, the shortcomings of the experience, as well as suggestions for improvement.

In general, I found all the activities in which I participated to be worthwhile. In general terms, they consisted of attending BGAC monthly meetings up to the beginning of the CoViD-19 quarantine, running the Instagram page for the Arts Council for advertisement purposes, and organizing Art in the Park 2020. In the monthly meetings I was able to experience the inner workings of a non-governmental association dedicated to promoting local artists. I found it interesting that there is a general format or outline which is followed in every meeting, regardless of the topics being discussed. This script allows the members to discuss administrative affairs, new ideas, ongoing needs, and even conflicting opinions in an organized, respectful fashion.

From the very beginning of my internship I was happy to be included in the discussions about how to optimize the reach of BGAC advertisement. My observation is that, while the BGAC is doing a fantastic job at using local newspapers, radio stations, and television networks, these are not necessarily media that are followed by community members and students 30 years of age or younger. I found this reflected in the age of the people attending the 50+ Shades of Grey event. While the event itself promotes artists older than 50, I think the artwork displayed

should be appreciated by viewers of all ages! However, this requires an adjustment of the advertisement strategies. Throughout the Spring semester, I was responsible for advertising events on Instagram and Facebook. The first event I promoted widely was the Art Walk. This was also the first event to be carried out online due to quarantine. Polls for best artwork amounted to over 600, compared to the usual 60-70 votes registered for previous, live versions. While it was not possible to estimate the age of participants, I think it is safe to assume that using social media played a big part in increasing the breadth of reach of the advertisement.

The other activity I did for my internship was organizing Art in the Park in an online format. This was by far the most rewarding and unexpected aspect of my internship. When the quarantine started in March, it was assumed that the BGAC events would be cancelled or at least postponed. When it was suggested that Art in the Park be done in an online format, Jacqui Nathan and Dr. Shrude asked if I would be willing to organize it. While I have no background at all in web design and have shared my dislike of computers with Dr. Shrude multiple times, I was happy for the opportunity to organize an event and we started talking about how we would make this happen. We agreed that we wanted the experience to be a dynamic one, as opposed to having a gallery of artwork photographs, like had been done for Art Walk. To achieve this, we asked participants to submit videos in addition to photographs whenever possible. In the meantime, I started learning how a WordPress website works, how to design a page, and trying to develop how the event page would look. I eventually settled on having a map created by the design intern, Sara Oates, over which I would place map pins. Each pin represented a location in the park where artists would have been stationed if the event were to happen live. By clicking on a pin, viewers could navigate through each of the locations, seeing the work of the artists

“stationed” at each one. At the request of Jacqui and Dr. Shrude, I also added a list of participants, as a second means of navigation to view each artist’s work.

The benefits of working on Art in the Park were twofold. In the first place, the skills I learned while studying to create the event page were very useful in crafting my own website. I learned that all it takes to have a beautiful website is a bit of patience in doing the necessary research. Secondly, the experience I gained from being the organizer of Art in the Park is invaluable. Not only did I have to create the event page, I also had to oversee the work that Sara Oates was doing for the event, in addition to formulating the call for participation and forms and contacting participants. The latter was possibly the most frustrating aspect of organizing the event. In the beginning it was difficult for me to articulate to them what I was asking for and how they could provide the links to their artwork. It was also the one of the most interesting aspects as well. I got the chance to connect with artists who are creating some amazing artwork!

If I had to mention a shortcoming of this experience, I would say that it was the working relationship I had with the designer. This is not in any way her fault. It is simply the result of the gap in age and experience. While she is a very talented artist and was wonderful to work with, the relationship was very much one of boss/employee or client/service provider, whereas I kept hoping for a relationship of cooperation and co-participation. I think that if the designer were a graduate student this “co-worker” style of relationship would have been possible. I am not a designer and have no idea what works visually and what does not. So, I often had to make decisions and request design changes based on my own instincts and best guess. Possibly a graduate student would have had the experience, and therefore the confidence, to be more assertive in the decision-making process, allowing for a more collaborative relationship where design aspects are concerned.

Finally, I have two suggestions for improvement. The first would be to plan to have at least one doctoral student from the music program serving as an intern each semester and be more active in trying to get students to do it! Maybe something along the lines of “We have an internship opening with the BGAC! If you don’t know where to do your internship, think about doing it with them!” I might be wrong, but I don’t think that many of us have particularly strong feelings about where to do our internships. For me at least, location was one of the most important factors. I think there might be a few students each semester, or at least each year, who might be interested in doing an internship with the BGAC. I would certainly recommend it! The second suggestion would be to keep having the events online even when the quarantine is through! Online events have a wider geographical reach than *in loco* ones do. For instance, the analytics of the BGAC website say that since June 26, the launch date for Art in the Park, there have been 417 new users during 630 sessions. Of these users, 327 are from the United States, reaching at least 25 states. In addition, users residing in 14 other countries viewed the event page, 53 of which are from France, and 26 from Brazil. That means that artists from Bowling Green – OH are now “on the radar” of viewers throughout the US and around the world thanks to having an event be online! That is very exciting! I certainly hope that the BGAC will work towards having an online presence for their events alongside the post-quarantine live versions!