



2011-2012 Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Undergraduate Student Report

Student Name:

Host University: Kansas City Art Institute

Host Country: United States of America

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Sculpture

Semester: Fall

Date of Report: December 20th, 2011

1. OVERALL EVALUATION

How would you rate your exchange experience overall?

Poor

Excellent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 10

Please explain your rating.

I choose the rating of #8 for a number of reasons. First of all, KCAI was a wonderful school in a city with a vibrant and emergent arts community; full of support and some really outstanding artists and people. The facilities at KCAI were very top-notch and it was very easy for students from varied departments to explore and access each of the different kinds of studios. The sculpture building was basically 24hr access and had enough space to let me build the largest work I've done to date. Faculty were very one-on-one and I never had any problems approaching a prof or tech from each department if i needed a hand or advice on my work or troubleshooting. The only reason I probably did not give this experience a 10 was because of the lack of critique space available to the students. This lack was constantly brought up during critiques and frequently made the students ashamed of the work they were showing... because a lot of the time guest crits and faculty crits would end up being more about the space than the work. This was frustrating to me and in the end made a lot of the work seem unprofessional.

Kansas City was a rough town... you really have to be ready for a totally American and tense experience if you want to live there. I often found myself face-to-face with the fall and collapse of America; in some ways this was very inspiring... but in others, it was often upsetting and depressing. Exploring the city can be dangerous and you really have to be on your guard at all times.

What was the most meaningful thing you learned while studying off campus?

That I am capable of really focusing and making as much work as humanly possible when put in a situation or context that is completely out of my comfort zone.

Please share three of your most positive experiences and three of the biggest challenges you faced.

Positives:

- 1) meeting some unbelievable interesting and creative people that really were down to earth and just enjoyed meeting new and exciting people.
- 2) having access to large, open studios and having the freedom to use them in any way i could imagine
- 3) getting feedback from a variety of faculty, artists and curators from the community and abroad

Challenges:

- 1) exhibiting work with a lack of professional critique space
- 2) facing real and threatening racial and class tensions
- 3) experiencing a landscape of loneliness

Why did you choose this host institution? What key factors or issues influenced your decision?

- 1) Kansas City is a very inexpensive city with a low cost of living, perfect for directing energies and funds towards creative projects
- 2) to take on a challenge of full isolation from people and places that I was totally use to... being constantly around people I did not know and who were from all over the country
- 3) my family has roots in the midwest
- 4) KCAI is amongst the top undergraduate art colleges in the country
- 5) Amazing library and information technologies facilities
- 6) Wild City
- 7) very very very exciting arts scene
- 8) Kansas City is kind of a crazy place to explore on your own, vast array of landscapes and architectural undertakings that are all affected by the overall economic backdrop of America
- 9) BBQ
- 10) JAZZ

Please describe your preparation for the exchange, including banking, travel documents and student visa application. In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

Preperations included:

- 1) taking on a minor and dropping a number of my major courses, so that I could do the exchange without affecting my standing as a student at OCAD
- 2) applying to the various schools I was interested in with a portfolio and statement of interest for each school.
- 3) Getting a proof of financial support document, which stated that I would have monetary support if there was ever an incident of needing it
- 4) Getting travellers insurance
- 5) bought ticket to Kansas City, as well as a return ticket
- 6) Got my proof of enrollment and filled out my I-90 form
- 7)Got on bus and left

Probably the main things I would have done differently were:

- 1) not bought a return ticket, as I ended up not using it and could not refund it, so it was a waste of money
- 2) Gotten a Social Insurance Number before leaving for the states, as it was a headache trying to get it down there.
- 3) America is a car country, u wanna be able to drive for sure
- 4) Leave your credit card at home, if this is at all possible

Are there any important items (ie: art & design supplies, documents, specialty foods, health items) that a student should take to your host country?

Take whatever you think is necessary... i guess it really just depends on you and who you are.

2. ARRIVAL

Was anyone at the airport, train station, etc. to meet you? Did you experience any difficulties upon arrival?

I was picked up at the bus station when I arrived in KC

When should students plan to arrive at the host university? When did you arrive? Would you have benefited from arriving earlier?

I arrived a couple days before first classes, this seemed to work out fine for me.

Was there an orientation session offered at your host university? If yes, did you attend and what did you learn?

There was an orientation but I had to miss it on account of finishing a commission job back home.

Is there a coordinating office for international students, including exchange students, at your host university? Is there a staff person you would recommend students approach with their questions?

No there was no kind of international student hang out... that being said, the exchange coordinator was top-notch at her job!

3. ACCOMMODATION

Where did you live during your exchange? Would you recommend your accommodation to future exchange students?

I lived in a house in North Eastern Kansas City with some friends of friends, this seemed to work out swimmingly for me as all the people I was living with were very involved in the art scene of KC and were very kind people. We are all friends now.

Did you have any difficulties arranging accommodation yourself? Did the host institution assist you in finding accommodation?

No help from the institution for the housing I found but they did provide some housing details if needed. I relied on friends.

If you lived on-campus, which residences would you recommend? Are there any that should be avoided?

I did not live on campus

If you lived off-campus, do you have any recommendations for future exchange students? For example, does rent include hydro and other utilities, or are they extra? Which location in the city is ideal for exchange students?

Rent included utilities but KC is probably like the cheapest city with the best art scene. I was paying \$150/Month for rent. Nuff said.

4. STUDIES AT HOST INSTITUTION

To better understand the similarities and differences between academic studies at OCAD and at your host university, please comment on the following:

Level of Academic Difficulty & Challenge:

Although I had little challenges conceptually at KCAI, the studio practice at KCAI was very rigorous. Students would be very critical on the level of craftsmanship that was involved in the making of an artwork. This was good because it was met with a high-level of critical thinking, which meant that the work was looked at from a variety of angles that was really amazing.

Time spent in class (# of hours):

15hrs a week or more

Time spent outside (# of hours):

30hrs a week or more (in studio)

Oral presentations (Individual and Group):

5

Written assignments:

5

Studio-based work:

probably over 30 projects worked on and hundreds finished that did not include my school work

Interaction between students and professors:

VERY HIGH INTERACTIONS, everyone was face-to-face with each other constantly. Very personal art school experience

5. SERVICES

Were there any extracurricular activities/events scheduled for exchange/international students at your host university (cultural visits, trips, workshops, etc.)? Which ones would you recommend?

Yes, we took a trip to St. Louis and one of the clubs I joined did a number of art shows outside of the Art Institute. I would recommend taking on anything you can get your hands on.

What were the libraries and computer facilities like? Would you recommend that students bring their own laptop?

yes, bring a laptop - i think this is a given considering the age we live in - but the library at KCAI is top notch. Very professional and extremely well designed with a vast selection of books on craft and theory.

6. COST OF LIVING

How did you prepare yourself financially for your exchange? Did you pay for the experience entirely out of your own savings? Did you receive student or bank loans? Did you apply for / receive any financial awards (scholarships or bursaries)? Did you have help from parents / family / friends?

I received student loans, some financial awards and used my savings. KC is very inexpensive but I still had struggles with money in the end.

In general, was the cost of living in your host country higher, lower, or similar to that in Canada? Please explain.

Much lower than Toronto, basically I was paying $\frac{1}{4}$ the costs I am paying now. That being said, the public transit in KC is not the best... so u endup taking cabs or getting rides alot. Very different city, I guess the best way to describe it concerning expenses is that u can get by with very little but do not expect to go out at night without spending a bit of cash.

7. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country:

90 cents to the Dollar

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year):

August/2011 - January/2012

Would you estimate that you spent more, less, or the same amount as an average, local student attending your host institution?

I actually spent a bit more than I usually would have but only because I was alone down there and really spent money on my work. I spent alot of money on making art down in KC.

Please complete the following budget to give other students an idea of what they can expect to spend in the host country.

Basic Expenses in Canadian \$

1. **Tuition and general fees:** \$ same as OCADU
2. **School supplies and books:** \$ 1000.00
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ 500.00
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ 50/month
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ 50/month
 - C) **Cable:** \$ 0/month
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month

5. **Groceries (or meal plan) and housekeeping supplies:** \$ 60/month = \$
1. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ 40/month = \$
2. **Laundry and /or dry cleaning:** \$ 6/month = \$
8. **Transportation:**
 - A) **Public (Bus, Taxi, Subway, etc.):** \$ 84/month
 - B) **Private Car (gas, parking, ins.):** \$ /month
9. **Clothing:** \$400.00
10. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$800.00
11. **Extended medical coverage:** \$0.00
12. **Travel / trips in host country:** \$1000.00
13. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$400.00
14. **Student visa:** \$300.00
15. **Medical expenses:** \$
16. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

Estimated Total Expenses: \$4000.00

8. ADAPTING TO YOUR HOST COUNTRY

Did you experience any “culture shock” during your exchange? How did you deal with it? Do you have any advice for students on how to adapt to life in your host country?

KC is a very American city, they get Canadians down there but none from Toronto really. So, in a way it was a shock to go somewhere that was not very far from where I am from and yet feel like a total foreigner. I dealt with this by just diving into my work, I took the opportunity of solidarity to make as much work as possible. I also started seeing a counselor at the school as I began to develop a serious depression. Advise doing the same if you are isolated for long periods of time.

Was there a lot of interaction between local students and exchange/international students? What is the best way to develop friendships with students from your host institution?

Yes, I made some close connections while in KC... though many of the ones I made at the Institute diminished in comparison to the relationships I made outside of school. Especially with my house mates.

Did you have any unforeseen problems? Was there anything that you felt was strikingly different from what you expected? If so, is there a way that you could have prepared

yourself?

9. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

KCAI is a great school for making large work and with the confrontation of a crazy country. You really are in the heart of it all in KC and you can see how it has affected the state of the city and the people living there. The city is a wild one to explore but you have to be careful. Great place to be an artist and make work because of low cost of living. amazing people and totally wild art scene. Check it out, I advise taking the leap into the American void.