VAA Alumni at MoMA Reflect on Their Time at NYU
- Carli Beseau , ’13

The Museum of Modern Art will open an expanded museum in 2019 and with it cement its commitment to being an experimental, inclusive, and thought-provoking institution dedicated to its mission of exploring the art, ideas, and issues of our time. Underpinning this incredibly complex endeavor is a staff of dedicated arts professionals, eight of whom are alumna of the Visual Arts Administration MA Program at NYU.
At the heart of MoMA’s strategy is bringing a community of artists and creative thinkers together, - a sense of community that the alumni of the VAA program recognize as one of its biggest strengths. “The professional network that I have as a result of my time at NYU is one of the program’s most valuable assets. It has provided me with points of contact at almost every cultural organization in New York, and many around the world, that have had an indelible effect on my career,” states Nora Webb, ’13, Assistant Director, Institutional Giving, Foundation Relations.

This network begins in the classroom and is strengthened by a team of dedicated professionals who bring together academic training with real-world experiences as expressed by Sylvia Renner, ’08, Assistant Director, International Funding, “The exposure to seasoned, successful working arts professionals teaching our classes and the exposure to fellow students was crucial to my subsequent professional success. The value of a network gained overnight is immeasurable and continues to nourish my career and my friendships.” And again, by recent graduate Juliet Vinegra, ’16, Assistant to Deputy Director, Education, “Many of my professors had been or were working in the field. They provided a much more pragmatic and professional approach to learning than a traditional academic professor.” One such professor for Ms. Vinegra is her current supervisor and VAA visiting lecturer Wendy Woon, The Edward John Noble Foundation Deputy Director for Education, who teaches the course “Education in Art Museums.”

Adding to real-world experiences, the VAA program promotes critical thinking and the ability to examine ideas from multiple points of view. As MoMA plans to add additional programming and a dedicated education center in its expansion plan, both administrative and creative skills will be required. Skills fostered in the VAA program and summarized by Alice Van Arsdale, ’18, Development Officer, Major Gifts, “I would say the most crucial skill I built in the program was my ability to critically engage with materials, readings, exhibitions, and colleagues. The program allowed me to expand my internal map and understanding of the nonprofit field, which I think is a crucial addition to one’s toolkit when progressing through this industry.”

As MoMA focuses more energy on experimentation and the exploration of new ideas, so too must students and arts professionals take the opportunity to be curious and investigate. For current students, MoMA alums have some advice: Intern wherever you can and always make the most out of every opportunity! “Put in the work, make the most of this program, the alumni network, and the time you have to get to know the landscape of the art world – every aspect of it – you never know where your career with lead you,” says Jessica Smith, ’11, Assistant Director, Institutional Giving, Global Partnerships.

CONGRATULATIONS Jun Mabuchi, ’19, recipient of a Fall 2018 VAA Alumni Council Professional Development Grant:

“On September 29th, I attended The Arts Administrators of Color Network 2018 Annual Convening held in Baltimore. The convening started off with a panel discussion: We aren’t Buzzwords which I found was the most relevant to my thesis, “De-centralizing Whiteness in the Museum.” The panel was made up of members of academia and leaders of both nonprofit and for-profit arts organizations. The discussion gently deconstructed the current state of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), a standard of admission within academic, corporate and
cultural institutions. The panelists describe this situation as “Buzzword” and “Checkbox,” similar to “equal opportunity employer.” I came away thinking that for DEI to be more effective and fair to people of color, leaders need to better understand what needs to be changed within their organizations.

Afterwards I attended several breakout sessions including The State of Racial/Cultural Diversity in Arts Leadership; Decolonizing the Arts; and Sustaining: Arts Organizations and Communities of Color. The breakout sessions were also powerful and thought provoking. I met Shruthi Mukund, Group Sales and Grassroots Marketing Manager at Strathmore, who has an M.A. in arts management from American University and wrote about the lack of female leadership in arts organizations. Her dissertation topic intersects with mine and she shared advice on how to conduct an interview with professionals in the field and the importance of getting the right data.

I am grateful to the Visual Arts Administration Alumni Council for giving me an opportunity to attend this convening in Baltimore. I have gained important ideas that I would not have come across if I were home. It was also great that this event happened early in my research as now I feel more confident to attack the subject. And I have gotten a few important contacts that will help me guide through the process. -Jun Mabuchi, ‘19

The VAA M.A. Program Alumni Council welcomes new members: Tritia Lee ’18, recipient of a VAA Alumni Council Excellence Award and Sandrine Milet, ’18, recipient of the VAA Thesis Commendation Award:

Tritia Lee, ’18, Development Assistant, MoMA PS1 Art Center writes, “The Visual Arts Administration Alumni Council Program Award provided me with the resources and support I needed to launch my professional career. Not only did it alleviate the financial stress that comes with graduation, but also encouraged me to follow my true passion, which lies in fundraising for nonprofit arts institutions. I am truly grateful to the VAA Alumni Council for giving me this opportunity.”

Sandrine Milet, ’18, Communications Manager, Public Art Fund, writes, “During my last year in the Visual Arts Administration program, I focused my thesis research on the recent cultural development on the west side of Manhattan, specifically the new cultural corridor being developed that links The Whitney Museum of American Art to the High Line and eventually to The Shed at its most northern tip. What followed was an exploration on the widening socioeconomic gap that has occurred in that area and the ways that these nonprofits are engaging with this transformation. My thesis was a deep dive into politics, real estate development, museum programming, but also an analysis on power and the role it plays in cultural urban development. I am thrilled to have been honored with the Alumni Council's Thesis Commendation Award because it cemented for me that these ideas are worth exploring further and that exclusion in the arts continues to be an important topic today. I'm currently the Communications Manager at Public Art Fund, where I've been working for two years, and my research has helped me analyze what audience and impact means for Public Art Fund. Since writing my thesis, I've continued to engage with my colleagues in the conversations that came out of my research, and this year I'll be initiating a new survey that seeks to understand Public Art Fund's audience better so that we can better serve them.
Conversations with Alumni: This popular annual event was held in the Einstein Auditorium, Barney Building, on October 26, 2018, from 6:00-8:30 PM. First and second year VAA students and alumni gathered to meet our six invited alumni mentors: Helen Chen, ’06, Publisher, id.collector & Archivist, Helen Chen Management; Stephanie Jauch, ’06, Financial Maintenance Lead, ArtsPool; Molly MacFadden, ’13, Development Manager, Brooklyn Arts Council; Hannah Parker, ’13, Private Sales Director, Artspace; Haley Shaw, ’09, Director & Artist Liaison, Salon 94; and Jessica Smith, ’11, Assistant Director, Institutional Giving & Global Partnerships, The Museum of Modern Art.

After a brief networking reception Mary Beth Brown, ’15, Director of Administration & External Affairs, Arttable, Alumni Council Treasurer and event moderator did a great job of keeping the conversation both lively and informal as our panelists discussed a range of topics pertaining to academic, career and professional advancement and shared practical tips with our students and alumni. Jessica Smith advised, “think about the growth opportunities, don’t get hung up on the title. Make yourself invaluable to the organization, be proactive!” Hannah Parker added, “you have to show you’re eager – gain their trust and know all the answers to their questions.” All our panelists agreed that they wish they had taken more business classes!

Alumni News: Career Updates

Noreen Ahmad, ’10, newly appointed Director of Communications & Marketing, Morgan Library and Museum.

Selin Camli, ’14, Partner, Blue Nectar Consulting Services, CA
**Damien Davis,** ’13, has completed solo exhibitions with Latchkey Gallery, The Prattsville Art Center and Broadway Windows (administered by 80WSE Gallery) as well as a solo presentation of work at The Whitney Museum of Art earlier this year. Recently his work was featured in American Craft Magazine and The New York Times. He is currently an artist-in-residence at The Museum of Arts and Design and The Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling. Damien has participated in group exhibitions in New York, North Carolina, Connecticut, Maryland and Italy.

**Hillary Dvorkin,** ’15, Public Art Manager, Times Square Alliance

**Anna Harsanyi,** ’12, recently participated in a curatorial residency in Seoul, South Korea, through the Seoul Museum of Art's Nanji residency program. She spent 3 months meeting artists with participatory practices and exploring public projects taking place in and around the city. In New York, she has organized an exhibition at Baxter St, The Camera Club of New York, 126 Baxter Street titled *Dense Lightness* with works by Ivan Forde. The exhibition opening is on November 8th from 6-8 pm, and it will be up through December 15.

**Noelia Hobeika,** ’18, Strategic Analyst, Tronvig Group

**Katie Hollander,** ’96, appointed Director of the Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles, CA. **Stephanie Brown,** ’10 will serve as her deputy director.

**Bradley Houston,** ’13, is an Art Advisor with C2 Art Advisors, Dallas & Houston, TX.

**Karen Huang,** ’09, was promoted to Senior Director, Individual and Major Giving, Fine Art Museums of San Francisco.

**Sio Man Lam,** ’18, Education and Public Programs Coordinator, Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts.

**Emily Olsen,** ’18, began an internship at Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.

**Hajarah Abdus- Sabur,** ’09, Account Manager, Artex LIC, NY.

**Steven Sergiovanni,** ’90, is an art advisor and teaches Professional Practices at Pratt Institute. He launched a new art advising website this year [http://stevensergiovanni.com/](http://stevensergiovanni.com/) and is a founding member of The Remix, [https://theremix.nyc/curatorial/](https://theremix.nyc/curatorial/), a project-based curatorial program which exhibits the work of underrepresented artists. Steven launched a 15 episode podcast series, hosted by The Remix, exploring the challenges of creating and sustaining a business and career in the visual arts.

**Claire Sexton,** ’07, promoted to Executive Director, Art Center of Waco, TX.

**Cristina Tafuri,** ’13, joined Levy Gorvy Gallery as Exhibitions Coordinator.

**Marguerite Wynter,** ’18, Curatorial Assistant, Chicago Architecture Biennial.
Spotlight on VAA alumna Jill Weinreich, who has made Venice her home since graduating from the program in 2000. She recently sent us a note from Italy:

“I had been living in Italy before I started the Non-Profit Visual Arts Administration MA program in 1998 and upon graduation in 2000, I returned to Venice, Italy and began working in the Venice office of the American non-profit Save Venice Inc. On a daily basis, I used so much of what the program taught me and moved from a part-time temporary position into a full-time permanent position within the first year. I worked for Save Venice for five years. During that time I began to project manage exhibitions for the Venice Biennale and have worked for myself since then. I have worked with the commissioning institutions of six US Pavilions (Robert Colescott, Fred Wilson, Bruce Nauman, Joan Jonas, Mark Bradford and currently Martin Puryear) and consulted with many other pavilions and exhibitions, including the Corban Walker exhibition for Ireland and the off-site exhibition of Victor Matthews and Renée Cox. For the 2019 Venice Biennale my direct contact is VAA alumna Julia Friedman,’14 (!), Senior Curatorial Manager, Madison Square Park Conservancy which is the commissioning institution this year. Venice is a very specific and special city and my role allows me to problem solve and put the pieces of a puzzle together. Each project brings its own unique set of challenges and as an arts administrator, I have the privilege of working through them and creating meaningful resolutions. In addition to exhibition management, I also currently work for Columbia University in Venice, coordinating the restoration of Casa Muraro, a property the university inherited, and I regularly translate materials for the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. Every project I take on is connected to my love of non-profit organizations, and being in Venice has given me multiple opportunities to reconnect and collaborate with program classmates and professors when they are in Venice. - Jill S. Weinreich
SAVE THE DATE: Annual Holiday Party Wed, December 12th

We are pleased to announce that our VAA annual holiday party will be held on Wednesday, December 12th from 6:30 – 9:00 PM at Uprise Art located at 264 Canal St. 4W (near Broadway). Our alumna co-host is Rachel Elliott, ’17, art advisor.

All VAA alumni are welcome! Donations of raffle prizes are gratefully accepted. If you would like to make a donation please contact Vida Schreibman: vs9@nyu.edu. Money raised from the sale of raffle tickets goes to scholarships, Professional Development Grants and Excellence Awards.

Program News:

After over 20 years as adjunct professor in the VAA MA Program teaching the "Appraisal and Valuation" course, Alan Fausel departed in order to have more time in his new role as Director of the American Kennel Cultural Resources. As director one of his first jobs will be to relocate the American Kennel Club Museum of the Dog from St Louis, MO to New York City.

Replacing Alan in the role of teaching "Appraisal and Valuation" is Aviva Lehman, Director of American Art at Heritage Auctions. Prior to Heritage, Aviva was a specialist in American Art at Christie's and assistant curator of Judaica at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

Our own faculty member, Amy Whitaker, is co-teaching the "Art Market Analysis and Investment" course with Sandy Lee, co-founder and principal of Eight Seven Capital who previously worked at D.E. Shaw and Morgan Stanley. Sandy also serves on the board of the Joan Mitchell Foundation. She has a BA in history from Yale University and an MA in the history of design and curatorial studies from Cooper Hewitt and Parsons School of Design.

Several new courses have been introduced into the curriculum over the past year: "Creative Placemaking," taught by Sarah Calderon, Managing Director of ArtPlace America and previously Executive Director of Casita Maria Center for the Arts & Education. "Strategic
Communications" is also a new elective taught by **Alina Sumajin**, ’10. After more than ten years at Resnikow & Associates where she was Vice President, Alina founded her own communications agency, PAVE Communications and Consulting. "Art World Ethics," - also a new and timely elective course, is taught by Stephen Rosenberg who formerly ran a contemporary gallery, Rosenberg & Kaufman Fine Art, following an early successful career as a litigating attorney.

Carlo Lamagna will be returning to teach “Arts Advocacy” in Spring 2019. Welcome back Carlo!

Two new courses have been developed by Amy Whitaker, full time faculty, and have added greatly to the for profit offerings in the VAA MA Program. "Entrepreneurial Projects in the Arts" and "Economic of the Visual Arts" are welcome new additions to our course roster.

**Let’s stay connected:**

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