Senior Thesis, Chairs Award, Travel Scholarship  
**Daphne Taranto, UAE, GFA & Art History Double-Major**

Title: Examining the Art Culture of the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah

A brief narrative about the direction of the student's work and how travel to a specific location is necessary to support it:

My current work is both academic and artistic, as I manage and produce the multi-format publication, YTB, that I founded as a zine along with my twin sister in 2011. I write for this publication in interviews with artists, including Nick Cave and Dana Schutz, but I am now also finishing my art history thesis paper regarding the United Arab Emirates.

My Art History, Theory, & Criticism thesis paper is a 30-page long essay that I have written and edited over the course of the full academic year. The title of my paper is *The Elephant in the Sand: Analysis Between Discursive Extremes in the UAE’s Contemporary Art Culture*. I presented versions of my thesis paper in three symposia this spring: MICA’s 6-person symposium in March, UMass Dartmouth’s symposium *Fusing the Past and Present: Art and Art History in the 21st Century*, and at Armstrong State University’s *Middle East Studies* conference in Savannah.

I decided to pursue my thesis topic after applying for the Fulbright Research/Study arts grant for next year. I was a **finalist for the Fulbright** grant but was ultimately not selected.

My personal roles and responsibilities with the publication YTB, which you will see in my portfolio, involve group organization, creative direction, budgeting and fundraising, graphic design, photography, writing and editing, curatorial practice and commissioning artists, event planning and management, and post-production concerns (essentially, all duties from **start to finish** of the final, finished publication and accompanying exhibition).

**With my developed and varied skillset**, I am prepared to execute my proposal over the course of the next year and would be thrilled to have MICA’s support in the travel that is necessary to continue my research.
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I propose to produce a book of my own design in the UAE in order to gain a comprehensive view of the country’s dynamic art culture and share my findings in the US. I will complete my project with the guidance of my four affiliations, the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF), the American University in Dubai (AUD), the Carbon 12 gallery, and the Maraya Art Centre in Sharjah. The multi-format book will be a personal and documentary account of the Emirates, featuring images and firsthand interviews with artists and culture groups.

I work directly alongside my artist peers as I commission over forty individual artists to create original work for my publication every six months. I am comfortable working in teams to realize the group’s vision, as I collaborate most closely with my twin sister in leading the biannual editions and exhibitions between our current cities of Baltimore and Providence.

What excites me the most about the UAE is the energy and support for artists that I can sense even as an observer. I see that my interests would work well with the country’s active passion for developing and showing contemporary as well as historical art. No matter where I may be in the future, a global perspective is necessary and knowledge of the art culture in the UAE and the Gulf will enrich my viewpoint.

I will analyze the Emirates’ government-supported and independent cultural institutions and will return my research to the United States, adding complexity to the ongoing discussions of the UAE within the contemporary art landscape. I will divide my focus into trimesters in order to study the specific cultures of Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Dubai, while maintaining a base in Dubai. I will also interview a member of each of my affiliations as a starting point of research within their respective Emirates. I have developed a working relationship with each of my affiliations by email and video calls over the course of the last year. Travel between the areas will be reasonable, as they are relatively close together.

Throughout the several months of my travels, I will be based in Dubai where I will study with professor Dr. Woodman Taylor, Chair of the Department of Visual Communication and Associate Professor of Art History at the AUD. I will converse with local art students and enroll in design classes at AUD to gain experience with bilingual graphic design in English and Arabic.

I will examine the current art culture of Dubai on a local level under the auspices of Kourosh Nouri, founder and owner of the Carbon 12 gallery. The gallery is a member of the Alserkal Avenue warehouse district in Dubai’s Al Quoz, an industrial area that in recent years has flourished with gallery spaces, becoming a main art hub of the region. I will familiarize myself with the artists and institutions in Sharjah under the guidance of Dana Al Sadek of the Maraya Art Centre. The Centre operates community and educational programs, artists’ studios and residencies, as well as public exhibitions.

In my final trimester, I will be affiliated with Lisa Ball-Lechgar, Advisor to the Founder and Senior Manager of Publications at the ADMAF. At this point, alongside continuing interviews, my primary task will be compiling my research and producing about sixty artisanal copies of the book. The books will be 100-200 pages, including interviews with leaders of some of the UAE’s various arts-based groups as well as photographs, fold-out maps, and diagrams of my own design depicting the contemporary art culture. I will utilize the studios of the AUD and will find other working studio spaces based upon my affiliations’ recommendations. A larger quantity of mass-produced books as well as a website will publicize my research beyond the UAE.

The arts are an excellent platform for mutual understanding of community and daily experiences between nations, especially because the content of an artwork often transcends language barriers. Thank you for your consideration.
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Budget: Detailed and Itemized


- One-way flight
  - $600 with one stopover

- Food and Housing (this will augment any funds I can provide myself through a job)
  - $500 (a small, cheap apartment to rent in Dubai and some food for the time)

- Printing 150 non-artisanal black & white copies of the 200-page book for public distribution.
  - $500 (approximately $3.25/copy to have professionally printed with a local print/copy shop)

- Website domain name and typeface (font) purchase to satisfy legal rights as public project
  - $75

- External hard-drive to maintain the content of the project safely
  - $50

- Transportation between the emirates (Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai)
  - $50

- Materials to produce hand-made and multi-format editions of the book, as respectful “thank-you” gifts for contributors and interviewees.
  - $225 total
    - Includes screen printing ink ($25), paper supplies ($100), bookbinding ($20), alternative printed matter ($30), packaging ($10), and shipping of final book to participants ($40).
CONVERSATIONS

Ryan McGinley

The much talked-about photographer sits down with Daphne Turner and discusses growing up in New Jersey, getting his first museum show, and getting naked in the snow.

Ok, ask me anything.

Well, talking about graphic design, how did studying that in undergrad influence the work you did afterwards?

I just took photos for my graphic design assignments. I went to Parsons, and I started out in painting, and then I went to poetry, and my parents kind of flipped the script — I don't think they were excited about me going to school for painting, but then I went to poetry and they were like, 'You'll never get a job, never in your life.' So then I kind of had to compromise, and I was interested in graphic design already...

Everybody's parents think graphic design is a good idea.

I didn't know about computers actually, but I knew about silkscreening. And that's how I got into graphic design, because I would lay stuff out to silkscreen. But then when I was in graphic design I just started taking pictures for my assignments, as one does, and I just really loved making
Fifty students contributed two-inch 3D object multiples. One box contains a unique combination of six objects and catalogue documenting all works. Edition of 200 (100 per campus).