

Final Post from Mexico. Sniff Sniff.

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My experience interning at SOMA was most valuable in that it helped clarify what I want and what I don't want in a future career. This knowledge will certainly serve me at the remainder of my time at Tulane and also influence the trajectory of my professional and perhaps personal life. First of all, this summer I realized that the visual art scene is not a sphere of life in which I want to work or live. This realization, however, strengthened rather than undermined the lessons I learned working at SOMA. I firmly believe in the value of knowing what you don't want, and I think it

was worth going to Mexico to make this realization alone. Of course, I learned many other worthwhile lessons about what I do want as well, lessons that expand past just the eye-opening experience of living in a different country. Through working at SOMA I have come to better appreciate the impact of creative solutions and art in all fields of work. I realized that I'm more interested in incorporating artistic ideas in spheres that are not strictly dedicated to art than I am in the "art scene."

After completing my internship with SOMA, I am interested in returning to Mexico and learning more about this culturally rich and diverse country of which I only got to know a sliver. And of course, I have more drive now than ever to go live in another Spanish speaking country and learn the unique nuances of the language.

If I were to give advice to a potential SOMA intern, I would say that the experience is what you make of it. A plethora of lessons and diverse experiences are available to you through SOMA, but it is up to you to take initiative and pursue them. If you choose to only do the tasks assigned to you, that's your prerogative, but in this organization you have the freedom to define your own working experience and you will learn far more if you do. Carla (your potential supervisor) is extremely receptive to feedback, so if you have an idea pertaining to anything at SOMA, tell her, make it your own project, and she will be happy to guide you through it. Given SOMA's fluid structure, there are plentiful opportunities for you to make your mark and take a real hand in improving the organization and summer program. This freedom Carla gives you to initiate your own ideas will teach you be responsive to your environment, trust your gut, and take yourself and your impressions seriously.

I'm not sure that SOMA itself changed my philosophies or ideal around gender. Women hold all of the upper-tiered positions at SOMA, and men hold the lower-tiered positions. To contrast that, however, every single one of the visiting lecturers were men. Not one woman came to speak in the two months I was at SOMA. There is certainly food for thought in these dynamics, but what I thought about more through the lens of gender was Mexican society, where machismo and chivalry are both very much alive and are two sides to one coin. I noticed I was permitted certain privileges for being a woman. For example, some man would always offer me his seat on the metro even though it is quite evident that I am young and healthy and capable of standing for three stops. While (most of the time) I do not doubt that these chivalrous men had good intentions, it did make me slightly uncomfortable, and I am still marinating on the gendered significance of these interactions. Speaking of the metro, during rush hour, there are separate metro cars allotted exclusively to

women and children. There are even police officers making sure no men get on these cars. Again, while there are surely good intentions behind this, namely to keep women safe, where are we if we need segregated metro cars? Put within the context of the brutal femenicides that have been occurring in the northern city Ciudad Juarez since 1993, I find this segregation unsettling. I would be fascinated to do in depth research on gender relations in Mexico. Perhaps I will have the opportunity to take a stab at some of the questions I developed in the woman writers in Latin America class I am taking this coming semester.

As discussed in my previous blog posts, every day at SOMA presented a unique and fluid set of tasks and challenges. Consequently, I learned to solve problems as they came, think on my feet, and trust myself. The diversity of my experience at SOMA, a theme I have emphasized throughout my posts, helped me build confidence in my ability to address a constantly changing landscape of challenges. What's more, the art lectures I attended at SOMA taught me to approach challenges with a supple mind, and to look for solutions where one might not typically think to look.

I had an amazing time in Mexico with SOMA, I truly feel like a different person, and I would recommend this experience to anyone who might be interested in Mexican culture, practicing Spanish, the visual art industry, or the craft of eating tacos.

Here I am at the top of the the Pyramid of the Sun, the tallest pyramid in the pre-Colombian city Teotihuacan. Gotta love the medium of photography for not visually translating how hard I was panting from climbing all those steps!

Thanks for reading,

Cora