The International Internship Program at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection

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The Program

Origins

What began in 1980 as an invitation to young adults to assist in the early days of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection has developed into a competitive international internship program, involving the operation of one of the foremost museums of modern art in Italy. It was the first, and still is the only program of its kind in Italy. The work-study program offers an experience as unique and wide-ranging as the museum itself. The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, exhibits masterpieces of 20th-century European and American art. For young people interested in the arts, an internship at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection provides a unique opportunity to profit both from in-depth exposure to modern masterpieces and from involvement in the rich cultural environment of Venice.
Growth

The steady expansion of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection from 1980 to today parallels a comparable growth in the internship program. The number of students participating in the internship program has increased from the initial 6 to as many as 30 students per month. In 2019, of approximately 1000 applicants, 157 from 47 different countries were successful. The program is coordinated by The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in New York and managed by the Education Department of the museum which organizes the daily and weekly activities of the group.

The below chart illustrates the provenance of the international students who participated in the program in 2019.

Provenance

“Other” corresponds to countries with less than two candidates: Albania, Argentina, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Finland, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Morocco, The Netherlands, Pakistan, Peru, Portugal, Singapore, Slovenia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Uruguay.
The Museum

In addition to Peggy Guggenheim’s collection of early 20th-century avant-garde masterpieces, the museum presents works of the Hannelore B. and Rudolph B. Schulhof Collection of post-war American and European art, as well as works that are on long term loan to the museum.

The museum also organizes temporary exhibitions, and in 2019 the following were on view: *From Gesture to Form: Postwar European and American Art from the Schulhof Collection* (26 January–18 March 2019), curated by Gražina Subelytė and Karole P. B. Vail; *The Nature of Arp* (13 April–2 September 2019), curated by Catherine Craft; *Peggy Guggenheim: The Last Dogaressa* (21 September 2019–27 January 2020), curated by Karole P. B. Vail with Gražina Subelytė.
What do interns do?

Tasks

Interns assist in the daily operation of the museum four days a week. They prepare galleries prior to opening, guard rooms, answer questions from the public, sell tickets, and close the museum at the end of the day. Interns also assist the museum staff of various departments, such as public affairs, media and press, membership, collection and exhibition management, library and archive and publications. They may be involved in presentations to visitors and in activities for children, such as guided visits and Kids Days—workshops on Sundays for children aged 4-10. Free presentations to the museum for local school groups may also be staffed by the interns. Likewise other programs benefit from participation of the interns, such as A scuola di Guggenheim, for schools of the Veneto region; Double Meaning: A Tactile Journey through the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, a program for blind and visually impaired visitors; and family activities for Family Card members. In addition, through its ownership of the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, the museum is involved with the U.S. presentations and interns may have the opportunity of assisting in the world’s oldest international contemporary art event.
Discussion, Seminars and Staff Talks

Several times a week, interns meet for discussions and seminars on topics relating to art history and museology. These seminars are conducted by the interns themselves as well as by staff members or visiting professionals. Presentations by museum staff allow interns to gain an insight into the overall management of the museum and into the specific tasks and assignments performed by the staff. In 2019, staff talks included introductions to conservation by Luciano Pensabene Buemi, Conservator at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, who explained the extensive restoration process of Jackson Pollock’s masterpiece, *Alchemy* (1947), and offered the opportunity to view the conservation studio, where other works were in the process of being restored. Presentations were delivered by, among others: Gražina Subelytė and Karole P. B. Vail, curators of the temporary exhibition *Peggy Guggenheim: The Last Dogaressa*; Chiara Barbieri, Director of Special Projects and Publications; Chiara Zanandrea, Events Coordinator; Valeria Bottalico, curator of the accessibility program *Double Meaning: A Tactile Journey through the Peggy Guggenheim Collection*; and Sandra Divari, Collections and Exhibition Manager.

Interns also met regularly with Karole P. B. Vail, Director of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. In addition, each intern presented a seminar on a topic related to modern and contemporary art, or on his/her artistic work, or on a research on previous course work or personal interest. Interns also had the opportunity to meet and learn from professionals: Barbara Cattaneo, Opificio delle Pietre Dure, and restorer of Marcel Duchamp’s *Box in a Valise* (1941), lectured on the restoration of the suitcase; Catherine Craft, the curator of *The Nature of Arp*, offered an in-depth tour of the exhibition; Megan Fontanella, curator of *Guggenheim: la Collezione Thannhauser, da Van Gogh a Picasso*, provided an in-depth tour of the show; and Frederick Ilchman, former intern and curator of the *Tintoretto* exhibition in Palazzo Ducale, gave a seminar on the process of installing an exhibition and the difficulties of transporting artworks in Venice.
Collaborations

Thanks to the collaboration with the Maramotti Collection in Reggio Emilia, three groups of interns were selected to take part in an exchange between the two institutions. On the occasion of the Maramotti Collection’s temporary exhibitions, *Rehang* (March, 2019), and *The Fountains of Za’atari* by Margherita Moscardini (July, 2019), interns had the opportunity to preview the exhibitions, interview artists and curators, and attend the exhibition openings.

Services and Trips

Twice a month visits are planned to view exhibitions as well as cultural and historical sites in Venice and other Italian locations. In 2019, twelve trips were organized in Firenze, Ravenna, Vicenza, Trieste, Pistoia, Milano, Padova, among others. Trips included visits to exhibitions, such as *De Chirico*, and *Guggenheim: la Collezione Thannhauser, da Van Gogh a Picasso* at Palazzo Reale, Milano. Interns also visited the Opifico Delle Pietre Dure in Firenze, the Scrovegni Chapel in Padova, and the Collezione Gori at Fattoria Celle in Pistoia.

The purpose of tours in Venice is to explore lesser-known areas of the city and to visit exhibits organized by prominent art institutions. In 2019 interns visited Venice’s outlying islands, such as San Giorgio, where they viewed two exhibitions at the Fondazione Cini: *Burri. La pittura, irreducibile presenza*, and *Emilio Isgrò*. They previewed the restored *Box in a Valise* (1941) by Marcel Duchamp thanks to the collaboration with the Opificio Delle Pietre Dure. They also visited exhibi-
tions such as *La Pelle - Luc Tuymans* at the Fondazione Pinault, and *Pittura Panorama: Paintings by Helen Frankenthaler 1952–1992* at Palazzo Grimani, both in Venice. Furthermore, interns toured the 58th Biennale of Visual Arts and the pavilions of participating countries on several occasions.
How to apply

For international university students and recent graduates

Candidates wishing to apply to the internship program may request information and application forms at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, or download them from the website. The application must be post-marked by the deadlines indicated and include an application form, an updated CV, a statement of motivation, and two reference letters. Candidates are selected in Venice by a committee of museum staff. Successful applicants tend to be in their early to mid-twenties, speak fluent English and have a solid understanding of the Italian language, are trained in and/or express a desire to pursue a career in the arts—be it applied arts, art history, teaching, gallery or auction professions, museum administration or curatorship. Applicants may apply for one, two or three months. The shared language is English. Applications must be submitted in hard copy to the following address:

Internship Program
Peggy Guggenheim Collection
701 Dorsoduro
30123 Venezia, Italy

For Italian or international applicants resident in Italy

To apply please send your CV to internship@guggenheim-venice.it or contact your university’s internship office.

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection has a series of agreements with Italian universities, allowing the internship to be valid for course credits. The internship program for Italian students is on a voluntary basis and as such is unpaid.

For further information:

Elena Minarelli / Federica Gastaldello
Tel. +39.041.2405.401/444
internship@guggenheim-venice.it
Funding the program

Sponsoring a student entails funding the position of one or more candidates in order to guarantee a place in the highly competitive program. The following organizations currently sponsor students in the program: Alserkal Avenue, Christie’s Education, London, Christie’s Education, New York, Duke University, Guggenheim UK Charitable Trust, Liverpool John Moores University, Manhattan College, Sotheby’s Institute of Art, London, Sotheby’s Institute of Art, New York, The University of Auckland, The University of Melbourne, University of Manchester, University of Michigan, Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien, Venice International University, Wellesley College, and Yale-NUS College. The Peggy Guggenheim Collection is generously endowed with six scholarships: The Liesbeth Bollen Fund, The Veronica M. Bulgari Fund, The Alice Stone Ilchman Fund, The Frederick Ilchman Fund, The Melissa Ulfane Fund, and The Anita Belgiorno-Nettis Fund. Outstanding candidates are selected each year from amongst the successful applicants to the internship program and are awarded an augmented stipend.

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The Liesbeth Bollen Fund

The Internship Program at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection offers a scholarship open to students of all nationalities dedicated to the memory of Liesbeth Bollen, a much-loved member of the staff of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

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The Veronica M. Bulgari Fund

Thanks to a donation by Natalia Bulgari, the Internship Program at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection offers an intern scholarship at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in the name of Veronica M. Bulgari, alumna of 1985. This is awarded to one international candidate per year, of any nationality, in recognition of the excellence of his/her application and motivation to pursue a career in the world of art.

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The Alice Stone Ilchman Fund

As of 2008, the Internship Program at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection offers a scholarship dedicated to the late Alice Stone Ilchman, former director of the Jeanette K. Watson Fellowship. Alice Ilchman was a much valued supporter of the internship program and in her professional roles helped countless young people, supervising them in their professional development. Thanks to a contribution from the Ilchman family, one outstanding international intern each year is selected for the scholarship.
The Frederick Ilchman Fund

Beginning in 2014, the Internship Program at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection offers the Frederick Ilchman Internship, thanks to a second donation of the Ilchman family. Each year a candidate is selected based on his/her academic record, career goals, and above all motivation to pursue a career in art history and/or curatorship, vocations strongly supported by Frederick Ilchman himself.

The Melissa Ulfane Fund

First awarded in 2014, the Melissa Ulfane Scholarship is open to international applicants who study art, art history or museum studies. The scholarship is awarded to a candidate who displays a keen interest in Venice, its unique circumstances, and its obligations to sustain the wider lagoon’s delicate ecology in the face of increased tourism, pollution, and climate instability. Thanks to the generosity of Melissa Ulfane, the recipient of the scholarship will be enabled to participate in the operations of the internship at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, and to carry on a research project for the non-profit association We Are Here Venice.

The Anita Belgiorno-Nettis Fund

The Anita Belgiorno-Nettis Fund towards the Internship Program at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection is a continuation of her dedicated support of the arts. As Belgiorno-Nettis said: “Having lived in Italy, U.S., Canada, Malaysia, and Australia, the relevance of cultural appreciation has always resonated in my life. This scholarship is an opportunity to strengthen this exchange between my country of birth, Italy, and my country of current residence, Australia. I am fortunate to have been associated with such a prestigious art institution for many years now and I am glad that I can offer this scholarship for students so that they may experience the quality of such institution and the magic of Venice.” Beginning in 2020 the Anita Belgiorno-Nettis Fund, provides an Australian candidate per year the opportunity to take part in the internship at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection.
Testimonials

Teresa Heinzelmannt
(August–December 2019)

Becoming an intern at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice was a long-wished dream for me—and when it came true, it was even better as I ever could have dreamed of. Through the variety of tasks I gained a profound understanding of the daily business of an international and renowned arts institution. I enjoyed the multilingual contact with the visitors: whilst handling them their tickets, working in the cloakroom or simply guarding the galleries, I grew a sensibility and a professionalism towards the visitors’ needs and interests. Most beautiful is that you can immerse yourself in the world of 20th-century art, transform your knowledge in an entertaining and accessible talk and tour for the museum’s public. One of the most unique moments surely was the weekly Kids Day, when twenty Italian kids storm the museum and work with us on various topics of the permanent collection. Moreover, the community of twenty international fellow interns, all with different backgrounds but sharing the passion for art, made my four months within the magical alleys of Venice so unforgettable.

Max Howells
(August 2019)

Before I went to Venice, when anyone asked why I wanted to intern at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection I’d dryly recite my cover letter: “To professionalise my academic skillset, and gain valuable experience working in one of the world’s leading art institutions.” While there was certainly more to it than that, I expected the internship to provide the public engagement experience I needed to pursue the career I wanted. I expected to work alongside masterpieces I’d only ever seen as reproductions, learn what it takes to make a museum run smoothly, and perhaps improve my Italian. I’m happy to report that, while none of those expectations was disappointed, they didn’t come close to encapsulating everything my time in Venice would be. I discovered and fell in love with artists and works I’d previously known nothing about. I shared a month with some of the most generous and talented people I’ve ever had the pleasure to meet, and made connections I hope will last a lifetime. I was tested and inspired, and would recommend the experience in a heartbeat.

Venetia Jolly
(August–September 2019)

This internship is unlike anything else: living and working in Venice has changed my outlook on so many things, art related and not. Through staff talks and day to day interaction with the artworks, I was able to get to know the collection inside out, from a totally unique position. This was a privilege and something I will treasure for life. I thrived off being surrounded by a group of like-minded and creative individuals of all ages and nationalities. Their enthusiasm for the art scene was infectious and, particularly being a younger intern, I appreciated their advice on what sometimes seems like a daunting career path.

The range of topics in the seminars is a testament to the range of talent that the internship cultivates. The talks, tours, and the AMATA program (Ask Me About The Art) allowed me to talk passionately about my favourites artworks and challenge myself to learn more about less familiar ones. I engaged with the public closely and loved making their experiences special. Doing so gave me a real confidence boost in my public speaking abilities and knowledge of art.

I feel honoured to have played a part in continuing the legacy of Peggy Guggenheim’s life and collection. I not only have a new-found appreciation for the collection, but also for Venice and its culture, historic sites and contemporary galleries. Although leaving beautiful Venice was hard, it was wonderful to travel together and see more of Italy.
The Peggy Guggenheim Collection Interns Society

In 2010 the Peggy Guggenheim Collection announced the founding of the museum’s alumni group: The Peggy Guggenheim Collection Interns Society, a platform for former interns to meet, get back in touch, network and share experiences. After the success of the first event held at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, on October 29, 2010, former interns are regularly invited to return to the museum for late evening parties for their enjoyment and networking. The last gathering took place May 9, 2019. Dates are intentionally organized to coincide with the opening days of the Venice Art Biennale, as so many ex-interns are now actively involved in the art world. The reunions are opportunities for many alumni to return ‘home’ after many years.

2020 sees the internship program celebrate its 40th anniversary, in this time it had almost 5000 participants from across the world!