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SENIOR PROJECTS 2017

Riley (Tucker) Boyd

For my senior project I set out to learn more about the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Over the course of the year, I researched the movement's origins, the history of Black liberation in the United States, and the contributions which BLM is making to the future of liberation ideology. I distilled my research into a paper in which I attempted to reflect what I have learned.

This was the most challenging project that I have ever taken on. Academically, it required that I motivate myself, work through complicated theory, and think critically about the world around me. These challenges were expected. The challenges that I faced as a person were much greater.

As I reflect on my time at The Academy, what I appreciate most is the emphasis that this institution places on community. This project has made me question myself and my communities in ways that I have not before. I have worked to acknowledge and oppose my own racism, and to consider the ways that racism manifests itself in my school, town, country, and world. I am grateful to this project for requiring me to grow, not only as a student, but as a person, and I plan to continue that growth into the future.

Aiden Brenizer

When I started the year, I was set on learning Portuguese. I wanted to do book work, watch videos and practice vocabulary. Mostly, I wanted to see how much I could do on my own. However, this proved to be extremely hard.

You need someone to communicate with if you really want to get good at it. Yes I learned vocabulary and pronunciation, and I began to recognize the way native speakers spoke. I noticed how they blended words, how they pronounced some letters differently depending on where they were in a word, or how they barely said articles like *o* and *a* (masculine and feminine for "the"). While my language skills improved I began to realize that I also cared about the cultural aspects just as much if not more than the specifics of language. The project did not turn out like I expected back in October. While I still accomplished the goal of being able to speak some Portuguese, I think it evolved to be something much more.

Watching the movie "Cidade de Deus" and reading about the variety of life in favelas opened my eyes to what I had never even dared to believe. For that I am eternally grateful. This year I came to the conclusion that I really want to join the Peace Corps after college. Next year I will continue my education at St. Lawrence University where I will further my cultural experiences and hopefully open my eyes to more life changing experiences. SLU is one of the top schools in the nation for sending students to the Peace Corps, as well as in the top ten schools in alumni relations. I know that this choice will open doors for me and allow me to find my own path, just like this project did.

Maria Assunta (Sunta) Corciulo

I have always thought that everybody should have an opportunity to go around the world and learn about other cultures. I decided to do this project precisely because I wanted people to know that having an exchange of traditions is one of the most important experiences in someone's life. The purpose of my Senior Project is to show how much this kind of experience can influence your life in a positive way. In the documentary, you are able to hear people talking about their experiences, and to learn how these experiences opened their minds. Having this kind of experience at an age when you are still shaping your personality can help you understand more about the world and your needs.

The documentary is structured in three parts:

1. First impressions in the new culture
2. Advice and reflections
3. Changes and memories

Most of the interviewees had a host family, and all of them said that living in a host family is the best way of having an experience abroad. When you leave your country you will not only learn a new language, but also see the world through the eyes of a new culture and find a second family.

This project helped me understand more deeply my own experience as an exchange student and it gave me the chance to know about others' experiences as well. I encourage everyone to have, at least once in his or her life, a cross-cultural exchange. Even when you are old, it is never too late to learn more about the world and all the beautiful cultures.

Hazel (Zell) Goleman

My idea for my senior project came from my love for tiny things and tiny houses. When I was little I made fairy houses and watched *Tiny House Nation*, so I figured I would combine two things I loved. Because of money, space, and time restrictions, I changed my initial plan and built a 1:12 inch scale model. I came up with three different designs between September and November, and my final design was inspired by a tiny house that I saw in Portland Oregon at a tiny house hotel called Tiny Diggs. The design was based on a Roma wagon and the bed was a separate nook instead of a separate room which is what mainly inspired my final design. I also knew that I wanted a fully functional kitchen and bathroom and because of that, I had to make the house bigger and sacrifice mobility. From there I began to build my scale model, first focusing on the walls of the structure, then to the flooring and then to the custom furniture that I designed. The whole time I was constructing my model I wrote down my process so that I could then transcribe it into a manual for people to read and build a structure in the same manner. My final product was a 1:12 inch scale model of my design, a research paper about the tiny house movement including questions and answers to a survey that I conducted, a manual for how to build a similar structure and all of the custom furniture that I designed, and a photo-journal to document my personal process. I really enjoyed working on a year-long project and letting it evolve into the project that it felt like it should be.

Michaela Lindsey

My senior project was an interview-based research project about sex education in local private schools, and how it affects girls in particular. I interviewed several teachers about their curricula, including past and present Academy Health teachers, to get an understanding of what was being taught and, more importantly, what was not being taught. I also supplemented my interview research with research from scholarly journals and books.

This process culminated in a three-part podcast series with installments on Health class at The Academy, sex education at other local schools and across the United States, and sex education's relationship with rape culture and sexual assault. I was disappointed, but ultimately not surprised, to see that many curricula contribute to gender inequality by not informing girls about their own anatomy, their own

capabilities and worth in sexual relationships, and by perpetuating the myth that rape can somehow be prevented by a potential victim instead of a potential rapist. Abstinence-only sex education tends to place the burden of abstinence on the woman in a heterosexual relationship, designating us as sexual gatekeepers with no sexual desires ourselves, and even "comprehensive" sex education often fails to teach girls about healthy, pleasurable, and meaningful sexual relationships. In our current political climate, issues like sexual assault and women's health are taken less seriously because of our leaders' cruel, cavalier, and archaic attitudes about them, so it is crucial to educate young people about science, autonomy, and sexual health. Unfortunately, this is just not happening in many schools.

Yilin Luo

My senior project's end product is a 28-panel graphic novel, *Scavenger of the Void*. The medium is acrylic on Bristol paper. To the audience, my story should be interpretive, but speaking as its author, I transform my feeling of vacancy into visual metaphors, and I think this work demonstrates the angst of the individual in relation to the world, shows solitary feelings that grinds on the most sensitive part of the psyche, and provides a solution to all these dilemmas, which is to embrace the void.

Benjamin Michalak

I experienced my first immersive theater show in August 2015 at Deerfield Academy Summer Arts Camp. Following this, I attended local immersive theater non-stop. I took note of every detail important to *my* experience. All the shows I watched involved the audience member in some way: they targeted their emotions, senses, actions, and fears. The actors within the plays used the audience members to drive each scene, but they did so by exploiting their most basic human functions. It was intimate and refreshing, but diligent and overwhelming. It made me want to do more; thus, I chose immersive theater for my Senior Project.

I began this endeavor in May 2016 researching the origin of immersive theater and the art of directing a show. I knew saving the study portion of the project until the fall would be counter-intuitive, because I wanted to use that time for script writing and casting. I toiled for nights attempting to find a message worth sending, but came up short every time. It took until October 2016 to find an intense and heart-wrenching idea for a show. After I found the concept, I spent three months writing and re-writing a script. Subsequent to its completion, eight actors and I departed on another three month-long journey until our show on April 1, 2017.

I based my script on a poem by Arthur Rimbaud titled "A Season in Hell". The goal for every creator of immersive theater is to create a production that lasts long: not in time, but in message. The immersive experience begins when the audience member enters the play, but it ends when they stop thinking about it. I had this goal in mind when creating *A Season in Hell*.

Emily Nietzsche

I focused my senior project on sports psychology, specifically in equestrian sports. I researched the current use in the horse world. I asked people in my community and across the country to partake in various surveys and answer questions pertaining to my project in the hope of gathering enough information to make informed statements about sports psychology in the horse industry.

I found that this tool is new and underutilized. Various trainers use some sports psychology techniques in their work without fully understanding the connection to the improvement of head game. Others simply do not use any of the concepts for a variety of reasons, the biggest being that they know nothing about sports psychology.

I decided to direct my project to specifically research and test the effects of sports psychology on young riders ages 4-13. I found that most trainers neglected to use any sort of method to improve their head game because they felt as though young riders would not be able to grasp any of the concepts for them

to be useful. I attempted to find the optimal age where the concepts could be taught and absorbed. I found that regardless of the age, each rider was able to grasp onto at least one concept fully depending on the method which it was introduced. I put together a collection of exercises of varying difficulty that I found in the resources I was studying, in addition to the few exercises that I formulated on my own based on my research and previous coaching experience.

At the end of the project, I had a collection of exercises that improve head game, an article on the importance of introducing sports psychology into the early training of riders, and a new mindset going into the competition season this year.

Connor O'Brien

I wrote a series of short stories in French and used photography to illustrate my stories. I focused on making the project entirely immersive

An interesting part of this project for me was watching my French writing evolve with each draft and each story; I found that as my French writing improved, I became more conscious of my English writing. This project also improved my French language skills in speaking, my creative writing skills, and allowed me to exercise an amount of creativity I had not explored before.

Planning and then doing my photoshoot was probably my favorite part of the project. Watching my stories come to life in images gave me a whole new perspective on what I had written. It was exciting to see the community so engaged with my project at Spring Exhibition, and it was very rewarding for me to repeat this presentation—in French—to my triad a month later. When I look back on my senior project, I cannot think of a better way to spend my final year at The Academy.

Benjamin Schocket-Greene

I built a drone from scratch. I had to buy or make all the parts and then construct a four-propeller helicopter drone. I had also planned to program the drone and add features to it, however, I did not have enough time. The most difficult part of the process was finding parts that both worked with each other and performed the necessary functions. I bought many of my parts from Hog Heaven in Sturbridge, MA, and many others online. It was difficult to learn how to use the parts, which often came with little instruction. For this, I watched many YouTube tutorials, and made many mistakes, causing my parts to become damaged. I also learned how hypothetically to program a drone, learning with a flight controller I never was able to use. I eventually put my drone together, however it weighed too much and could only flop around on the ground, despite the fact that the motors were meant to lift this size of drone. Even after I made modifications to lighten it, it still did not fly. However, I do not consider this project to be a failure. The entire process consisted of finding various problems and eventually fixing them, this weight problem was just one which I could only find at the end of my project, for I did not know how much it would weigh before I put it all together. Had I had time to continue, I would have removed this obstacle in the same manner in which I removed all of the others. Its inability to fly was just another step in my project.

Henry Walker-West

My senior project was simple in theory: make jewelry. The what, when, where, and how of it were a bit more complicated. I answered the “what” by deciding to make it Art Deco inspired, an era I chose with the help of my advisor, Mr. Green. I then needed to address the rather pressing “when,” “where,” and “how,” all of which were basically the same. Being a normal person, I did not have a jewelry-making studio in which to work, so I made my own. This took the months October, November, December, and part of January. I spent mid-December, by which time I had gotten all of the essentials, through late April making jewelry. While the project was a good deal more time consuming than I had expected it to be, it was just as fun as I had hoped.

Sam Zakon-Anderson

For my senior project I made a small EP of five original songs. I wrote the lyrics, arranged the songs, and composed with fellow musicians. The overall theme of the EP is about a protagonist making his way through life and taking responsibility for his own actions, while discussing the effects others' actions have had on him. It is all in an attempt to make whatever journey the protagonist may take easier for everyone in his life.

You can listen to the songs [HERE](#), and you can read the lyrics while you listen at my [GENIUS ACCOUNT](#). The great thing about Genius.com is that artists can annotate their lyrics so that others can click on the words and see what the artist means by each line, so please be sure to do that. The first site is a service where artists can upload their music for free and their fans can purchase it. My EP is for sale, so name your price but if you so choose you may have it for free! However all donations are welcome and proceeds will go toward tuning the piano in the school's recording studio - and maybe even a dehumidifier to help it stay in tune!

I'm very happy with the outcome of the project in all aspects. I also want to thank Scott Hoffman for giving me the ability to grow immensely as a person and as a musician over the past year in particular, let alone the past 8 years.