

**SABBATICAL REPORT
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ART DEPARTMENT
FALL 2016 SABBATICAL**



Plein-air painting done on site in Rome

As part of its core goals and vision, Santa Monica College strives for leadership and innovation in student learning and achievement. As primarily a teaching college as opposed to research institution, granting sabbaticals is the most substantive way that the college fosters its faculty in the research we need to maintain a leading edge in our respective fields. I would like to thank the Sabbaticals Committee and the College at large for supporting the opportunity to complete my project; to do the research and study that directly informs and enhances my teaching as well as my work as an artist. I was happy to have the opportunity to present some of the results of my project to my students and the campus and community at large in an exhibition at the Pete and Susan Barrett Gallery at the Madison Campus. The show was called “An Invitation to Rome”, and was very well attended. In an effort to over deliver on my sabbatical, I also have a show up currently at the Bakersfield Museum of Art, the show is called ‘Marc Trujillo- Urban Ubiquity’ and will be up until

May 7th, I hope that some of the committee members will be able to see it in person and Grace Smith has included the show in her “Bragging Rights’ section of the SMC newsletter. As the results of my sabbatical are primarily to be shared visually, these shows are where I will bring forward the sketchbooks, drawing and paintings I produced. My sabbatical was also aligned with the College’s Global Citizenship goals as I essentially travelled to Europe to do research to bring to bear on the classes I teach at Santa Monica College.



Installation shot of “An Invitation to Rome”

The “Invitation to Rome” show I curated at SMC featured some artists who are faculty at SMC like David Simon, who teaches figure sculpture with us; and Sean Cheetham, who teaches at Art Center, one of our most popular transfer institutions. I also included students in the show, most of whom were also students at SMC. The students were excited to exhibit work alongside more experienced artists and the inclusive nature of the show was a part of its success. There was also a gallery talk with the artists who will be teaching in Rome this coming summer. The talk was another way to reach out from the Art Department to the campus and community at large. The talk was well attended as was the show opening.



Installation shot of “An Invitation to Rome”

I submitted my proposal under the categories of independent research/ creative project/ field study, professional development, and professionally beneficial travel. As I will outline below, I have successfully met all of the goals I outlined in my proposal.



Plein- air painting from Rome at Pont Sisto

Although my sabbatical was for the fall, I began my travel and study in the summer. Above is a small painting I did in Rome, under the Ponte Sisto, where I began the travel/study portion of my trip. The painting is shown on the easel and this shot includes the palette since organizing the palette is an important part of what I teach at SMC.



Here is a vitrine filled with sketchbooks in my solo show up now at the Bakersfield Museum of Art. Sketchbooks are something I require in all of the classes I teach. Sketchbooks are very important to me; I require all of my students to do them as, aside from helping them learn, they can connect the student's personal lives with what we ask them to learn in class. I have students think through their projects with drawing, the concept of "making is thinking" is vital to my courses and discipline. When you are making something that is primarily visual, it makes the most sense to sort it out visually. This practice can serve students well across many disciplines beyond painting- movies and television shows are storyboarded to organize and coordinate everything that must happen for the director's vision to be executed.



Copy of 'Las Meninas' by Velasquez

Part of the research I proposed for my sabbatical was to do copies of paintings. This is one of the old ways of studying and it's something I ask my students to do. Here in LA, there are copies artists have done in the permanent collections of LACMA and the Norton Simon Museum. LACMA has a Delacroix copy of a Rubens painting and the Norton Simon has a Degas copy of a Poussin.

This semester I'm using this copy as a teaching tool in my painting classes, along with notes about things I learned about this painting, from Velasquez' use of light to his compositional strategies. I make my students do copies of paintings and ask them to also look at the paintings for compositional ideas, my goal is to help my students learn to analyze paintings so that that analysis can inform their own paintings, to start a dialog with the painters of the past. Velasquez uses all of the pictorial strategies in this painting to make a very subjective, dramatic painting from what appears to be straightforward. More specifically, there are elements available to guide or steer attention, placement of the vanishing point (which draws the eye since many lines converge on that spot), contrast, color, and controlled clarity of focus (some of the figures have softer edges on them, like a 'soft-focus' which our attention tends to slide past).



Copy of Vermeer's "View of Delft"

This copy of Vermeer's 'View of Delft' is another teaching tool I made on sabbatical. This painting has had a deep impact on me as an artist and I'm excited to be using it in the classroom to help convey some of the strengths of Vermeer's painting to my students, particularly his sense of light. Light is something that it is difficult to get students to convey in their own work and light is always an important element that organizes all of the parts in Vermeer's paintings. Vermeer also composes his pictures beautifully, which can also directly inform the student's work.



Copy of Caravaggio's 'Entombment of Christ'

While I only proposed to complete two of these copies to be used as teaching tools on my sabbatical, here is a third one, a copy of Caravaggio's 'Entombment of Christ' which I studied at the Vatican collection in Vatican City. Caravaggio was an important influence on many artists, including Bernini and Rembrandt.



Sketch of Costco meat department in sketchbook.

The remainder of my sabbatical was spent on my own work in the studio, above is the initial drawing in a sketchbook for a painting of the meat department at a Costco. The placement of the vanishing point to pull the viewer into deep space and guide attention as Velasquez does in *Las Meninas* as well as his control of focus are informing this drawing.



Grisaille for '517 East 117th Street'

Here is a larger, more finished drawing for the painting- this drawing is what determines the size and shape of the painting, as opposed to the painting being a compromise between the shape of an existing canvas and the intentions for the painting.



Underpainting for '517 East 117th Street'

This is the underpainting for the painting, the Dutch 17th century painters I studied would call this layer the 'dead' color layer. By working in a very limited range of colors, in this case Raw Umber, Mars Black, and Titanium White, I can make changes in the painting more easily. This is useful for the complicated perspective of the space of the Costco interior.



517 East 117th Street, 25x44 inches oil on Dibond panel 2016

Here is the completed painting, which is up now in my solo show at the Bakersfield Museum of Art.



Installation shot from the Bakersfield Museum show

That 'making is thinking' is vital to my own work in painting is a part of the show I have up at the Bakersfield Museum of Art. Above is an installation shot where the working drawing for a painting is shown together with the painting- the iPad has images of the painting in progress from start to finish.

Since I have been at SMC, I have continued to be very active in my field. Creating and exhibiting these large studio paintings has been a vital part of the experience I am able to bring back into the

classroom. Students are very interested and motivated by the possibility of becoming “gallery artists”, that is, artists whose work is shown regularly and taken seriously. I see shows that I have locally as a good opportunity to bring what I do in and out of the classroom together. I bring classes to the gallery and answer questions for them there, helping to foster a relationship between the art community and the college community.

The large paintings I show require a lot of planning and research. I hope this report has helped to make clear what constitutes field research for me, which consists largely of work in sketchbooks and other work in drawing and painting, including studying the great works of the past. This research is work that is more like the underwater part of the iceberg. A lot of drawing and painting from observation helps inform the less direct, more synthetic, studio paintings. Categorizing this work as field research refers to the subsidiary role that these works play, they are a way for me to study light and form, explore, and experiment all of which directly inform and enrich the studio paintings. While they do help inform what I consider to be my primary body of work, they are also done for their own sake, out of enjoyment in looking and painting. This type of work is also much more like what I ask students to produce in my classes and showing it in conjunction with the more finished studio paintings helps convey the importance and utility of what I ask them to do. I also hope this report has helped to make clear by example the substantive way that research from other paintings can be brought to bear on one’s own work. This is a vital part of my teaching as well as my own practice as an artist.

I would like to thank the committee and the school at large again for what has been a wonderful opportunity for me and was happy to have had the opportunity to share the fruits of that opportunity with the school in an exhibition.