Antonia Schreier
Graduation Year: Senior
College: Arts & Letters, Business
Major(s): Art History, Finance
Minors(s): None
Scholar Group Membership: None

Did you received other funding for this project?: No
Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No
More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: Modern Patronage - Honors Art History Senior Thesis
Project Location: Houston, United States
ND Faculty Mentor: Professor Nicole Woods
Project Type: Research

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Research/experience necessary for senior thesis or capstone project

Did your funded experience help you:
[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Yes
[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: A Little
[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Yes
[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Yes
[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]: Yes

Tell us about your experience.
With the funding I received from CUSE, I was able to go to Houston to visit the Menil foundation, including the Rothko Chapel, Cy Twobly Gallery and old Byzantine Chapel, as well as the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. I am writing an Art History thesis on modern American art patronage, with a focus on the de Menil family in Houston. I gained a much better appreciation for their aesthetic taste while in Houston, visiting the galleries that they curated. I also had the good fortune to have a contact at the MFA Houston who was able to set up an interview with the curator of the Rothko Retrospective at the MFAH for me. Experiencing the Menil foundation as a space helped me gain a better appreciation of how all of its components interact and are in dialogue with one another. Their are multiple different buildings in the complex, but a common theme runs through all of them which I hadn't picked up on in the past just reading about the different settings. Seeing works of art in a space designed specifically to exhibit them was also a powerful experience. Visiting the Rothko Chapel was the most eye opening, as I was able to observe other people experiencing the space in a variety of manners.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.
The project has continued to raise questions for me about the nature of collecting and why the de Menil family chose to support artists in endeavors that had no future financial benefit to the family. I had hoped to access personal letters from the de Menils to artists however those documents in the archives were restricted. My interest in the Menil family was welcomed by the archivists I worked with and they were pleased to share with me whatever was at their discretion to share, as their life’s work has been compiling information that I accessed.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.
This experienced has helped me flush out my senior thesis in much greater detail. Part of my thesis will include my own visual analysis of the different sites I visited, which would be impossible to complete without the funding I received from CUSE. I plan on presenting my thesis in April, and am considering applying to complete a Master's Degree in Art History in the future, although not directly after graduation. Writing this senior thesis and having completed first hand research will make a more compelling applicant to Master's programs that I hope to apply to in the future.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?
Make sure to set up appointments and reach out to contacts in the area as far ahead of time as possible. I waited until I had applied for and received funding, but I would recommend making appointments under the assumption that you will receive the funding and then backing out, rather than waiting until funding is received and then making plans.