

Anthony Derouin

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Architecture

Major(s): Architecture

Minors(s): International Development Studies and Education, Schooling, and Society

Scholar Group Membership: No

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: Hope for Architecture Apprenticeship

Project Location: Carlton Landing, OK

ND Faculty Mentor: Steven Semes

Project Type: Internship

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

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Very Much

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Very Much

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Very Much

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Very Much

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:Yes

Tell us about your experience.

For just over two weeks this summer, I worked at a job site in Oklahoma truly practicing the concepts of what I have been learning for the past three years as a Notre Dame architecture student. The context of this project was learning about how organizations promoting architectural classicism, which uses traditional construction methods and materials and is often viewed as a limited, expensive, niche practice that has no real application in the modern world, can be applied as a more holistic approach to solving modern social crises, more specifically the construction and design of refugee settlements that follow the best practices of classicism to produce nurturing buildings, spaces, and communities. An interesting aspect of this project was that it was seeking to diversify the demographic cross section of Carlton Landing, a new city being built along the coast of Lake Eufala in Oklahoma.

When talking about masonry construction, architects are referring to brick and stone construction. The first part of the work done on site involved learning the technique necessary to working with these types of materials. This involved learning numerous, essential, tricks of the trade. These mostly revolved around mixing mortar to the correct composition, laying brick properly, staging the

construction site, and implementing design elements that served a structural purpose and contribute to the aesthetic appeal of the building. The work was physically intense, but immensely rewarding. The encouraging thing about masonry construction is that you can physically see the progress made at the end of every day. Our daily quota was two feet of new height everyday. In total, we moved, stacked, and laid some 15,000 brick to build a two story, 700 sq. ft. "artist loft" home. Given that the scale of this project was so small, it was a controlled learning environment where I was fully able understand the entire process of building a home, and it was a good size for the team that we had to work with. Another note about the scale of the building is that it challenged the current value system placed on square footage. Re-thinking the square footage value system and building this example of a relatively small house that is perfectly functional and beautiful was a big learning experience for me.

In my original grant proposal, I mentioned Robert Adam's three fallacies of classical architecture. They are classical architecture is just one style, classical architecture is based on ancient precedent and therefore no longer relevant, and classical architecture physically cannot be built due to a lack of skills or the expense of the decoration. My training as a Notre Dame architecture student has been centered on proving that these three statements are indeed fallacies. A big takeaway from this experience for me was proving what I have learned to be true. Classical building is extremely financially and materialistically practical, expressive, and can be built even by students who have essentially no training in brick laying. I learned that this type of construction is very teachable and learnable. This is incredibly important when one considers the construction of a refugee settlement using masonry instead of the more conventional options that you see today.

A large component of traditional architecture is the idea that design is locally constructed using local materials. This allows for local expression, experimentation, and adaptation. Locals are always the experts in living where they do. Therefore, they should have a hand in the construction of their homes. When considering displaced populations, giving the opportunity to refugees to assist in constructing their own homes and personalizing them to their aesthetic and cultural preferences is huge. It also brings up the idea of motivation. As a student, I approached the construction of a home as a scholarly pursuit. I enjoyed building because I was intellectually and experientially invested in the endeavor. A refugee would approach building their own home with passion and zeal because they need a home that they can connect with. They want a community that they can feel safe in given their cultural and historic norms.

This project allowed me to have a hands on experience with masonry and feel the natural, human element imbued in traditional architecture. When architects choose natural materials and sealants like stone and lime based mortar, the materials work better together because their expansion and contraction cycles are really similar, which means there is less potential for cracking and damage to the structure over a longer period of time. It was invaluable to understanding the art that goes into building something that lasts and truly resonates with people.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

The impact of doing this work on me as a student scholar was that it provided me with a little more clarity regarding the type of career that I would like to pursue in the future. Knowing that this work is possible, economical, and beautiful makes learning architecture worth while and exciting. I am more excited for the life I will lead after my undergraduate studies at Notre Dame. It's extremely empowering to know that I am pursuing a degree that is now more valuable than ever to me as a student. Additionally, this project gave me a clearer understanding of how masonry structures are actually put together, designed, and work. That is invaluable in creating designs that are actually feasible, constructible, understandable and inhabitable. Essentially, I learned that Robert Adam's three fallacies are indeed fallacies. This is big for me because it means that my love for traditional architecture can be translated into a career that aspires to what I believe architecture should and can be for the service and benefit of mankind.

I think the biggest impact that we had on the people that we worked with was being able to show them that students who had never built with masonry before could be successfully taught the proper techniques for constructing in masonry in a short amount of time and then be trusted to execute those techniques with little to no guidance to actually build something substantial in a short amount of time. One of Clay's big goals is to show that solid masonry construction is incredibly teachable. One of his big initiatives is to get out and work with others to show them how easy this kind of construction really is. We were able to show him that that is a possible dream.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

A big aspect of this project was beginning to address the question, how do I want architecture to be used in my future career? At this moment, I am interested in utilizing my architectural training to design for marginalized populations like low income populations in cities, refugees, and displaced peoples. There are few designers today who specialize in this area of the practice, so there is some individual research that needs to be done in order for me to understand the concept of how a settlement works, what needs are present, and how architecture can serve the people living in the community present at the settlement. Ideally, I would like to take what I learned from this apprenticeship and apply it to my future research and work. I believe that this was a remarkable first step on a path towards working in a capacity that I will truly enjoy in the future.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

If you are thinking about doing this far enough in advance, I would look into coordinating with faculty and Clay to making this experience into a 1 credit experimental class. I think it has the makings to supplement what we learn in the school really well, and it would diversify the school's already numerous summer field trip options. It would also be a good insight into how a university develops its curriculum and approves classes.

Another thing I would recommend is reaching out to Clay and getting all the details of what you

would be building before you apply. It's a lot easier to talk about what you are going to be doing if you have a concrete understanding of the scale of the project beforehand.

I acknowledge that this form has been filled out truthfully and to the best of my ability. I understand that this information will be shared with many different CUSE constituencies. As such, I have provided as much useful information as I was able. I understand that CUSE will not complete my award disbursement until this form is successfully completed. If I have any questions or concerns, I will contact CUSE before submitting this form. To illustrate that you understand all of these points, please enter your Notre Dame email in the box below.

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