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By Kylie Williams

Throughout life, the amalgamation of opportunities I experience, helps shape the person I am to become. Among the greatest and most influential is the experience of working for the Midtown Kingston Arts District (MAD). Catering to connections in the community, MAD works to expose local Kingston N.Y. residents to a vibrant assortment of the arts, through creating workshops, presentations, exhibitions and events. During my time at MAD, I have had the privilege of working with amazing artists and people, making connections that will allow me to prosper into the future of the arts.

Prior to working at MAD, I was overwhelmed with the feeling of hopelessness. After applying to an array of internships and fellowships in New York, and being turned down by all of them. I had asked Lara Giordano for help. Despite the lack of availability and short notice for summer employment, Lara offered me an internship at MAD. During this time I volunteered at various collaborative events put on by MAD, such as the 9th Annual Celebration of the Arts EXPO and the DRAW-a-thon. After my commitment to these events, Lara offered me a position as Pop Up Gallery Group intern in the fall of 2023.

MAD has transformed my perspective on what it means to be a part of the arts community. Before working there, I believed that occupations in the arts were primarily only for commercial artists or graphic designers. However, through my experiences, I've learned that there's more to the arts than just creating it. MAD has helped me become a well rounded and professional individual. Allowing me to experience all avenues of arts administration. Within my time there, I have had the privilege of learning curatorial, marketing, journalism and event production skills.



Hanging the Teaching Artist Exhibition

As an art history major with a minor in business, I was quickly introduced to the profession of art gallery curation for the D.R.A.W. Gallery. With the help of Beth Humphrey and Lara Giordano, I was made a member of the gallery committee and introduced to all the administrative duties of gallery curation. Beth worked with me, teaching me how to plan, manage and hang a professional gallery, all while encouraging my opinions and allowing for my enjoyment in the process.

Along with gallery curation, I was also responsible for helping with publications at MAD. I've written countless formal advertisements and press releases about the organization's events. I have also had the privilege of sharing my opinion, creating articles about local galleries and events for the *Pop Up Gallery Group Blog* and local Newspaper *The Kingston Wire*. Within this, I was helped by Chris O'Neal and Lisa Kelley, who guided me on formality and clarity, all while allowing me to express my truth as an opinionated artistic individual.

Lastly, I was allowed to produce a major community event, The 10th Annual Celebration of the Arts EXPO, which took place on July 13th, 2024 at the SUNY Ulster Kingston Center. After working at MAD for a year, Lisa Kelley had invited me to become the Producer of the Celebration of the Arts EXPO. The EXPO is a community-wide event that is free to the public, with the intention of exposing the Kingston residents to our astounding local artistic talent, through hands-on workshops and activities. Working alongside Lisa Kelley, we were able to produce an event that had over 30 different scheduled art classes and events and 250+ individuals in attendance.



Clay room from the 10th Annual Celebration of the Arts EXPO

Among these different skills I learned while working at MAD, I found that the most important asset a person can have is the ability to be well rounded. While at MAD I had been asked to do anything from formal written press releases, to data entries, to creating social media posts, to producing a major event and even the most mundane task of painting a gallery white. MAD taught me the importance of being open to new tasks and responsibilities, all while encouraging me to have new ideas and valuing my input. I had been given the opportunity to grow and flourish, providing me with the experience of helping to run a successful gallery and organization. Although I am leaving MAD, I will never forget the connections I

have made and the experiences I have learned. Therefore, I say **thank you, Lara Giordano, Lisa Kelley, Beth Humphrey and Chris O'Neal** for helping me become a well rounded and confident artistic individual. I encourage MAD to continue to teach young artists that there is more to the arts than just creating it, giving them a chance to express their ideas and creativity in an administrative setting, just as you did for me. Thank you.



Prepping the Gallery for the Teaching Artist Exhibition