Internship Report

University of Groningen
Art Culture and Media

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12/12/2017 to 30/01/2018

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Grey Noise
When the opportunity came up to go for an internship, I jumped at the chance as I am a practical learner, I absorb information faster in a workspace. This precisely why took the chance to go on an internship during this three-year program. I wanted to get hands-on experience in a professional workspace before stepping into the job market; however, I also wanted my internship to benefit my learning and help guide me in my career path. This internship program was the perfect opportunity to refresh the knowledge I have gained in the past few years at the University of Groningen. I wanted an internship program that is still related to the art field.

My interest in the arts field grew rapidly after the History of Arts course in my first year's program. This internship has also given me an idea of what path I want to pursue in regards to my career after I complete this degree program. I already knew I wanted to do my internship in Alserkal Avenue, I went through their list of galleries. While fielding through multiple internship options, Grey Noise stood out to me most, as I have a great passion for contemporary art. I have great respect for its exploration, and technological advancement. Its diversity into different methods, materials and its growth past the traditional boundaries that art has set itself earlier. I appreciate the lack of consistency, as my understanding of what art appeals to precisely this area, it's subjective and free.

Grey Noise is a contemporary art gallery located in Alserkal Avenue. Alserkal Avenue is Dubai’s leading arts hub it was founded in 2007 to strengthen and expand the region's flourishing contemporary art scene. Grey Noise represents an art practice whose main focus goes towards contemporaneity, and with great emphasis on distinct, often experimental content. Not limiting itself to geographical representation, the gallery exhibits both emerging and established artists who demonstrate a defined conceptual premise in their oeuvre.

Situated in al quoz a hidden treasure, Dubai’s industrial area. The Avenue is a collection of warehouses which is home to bring together the diverse number of art galleries, cafes, shops, theatre spaces, media spaces. This little square of galleries is greatly expanding and highlights the potential UAE has to dive into the art market. The United Arab Emirates being only 47 years old has already shown its creativity, we can only expect a lot more great things to come.
1. introduction

During my time at Grey Noise, I was involved in a variety of different areas of work. I handled the job descriptions of the gallery assistant such as opening the gallery in the mornings, greeting the visitors, explaining the meaning of different pieces of artwork. Whether it was the Michael John Whelan video piece “The Good Soil” or the Fahd Burki Exhibition of “Momentary Structures and Five Intervals”. Making sure the gallery is set up correctly throughout the day and handling the closing for the evening.

I handled Administrative work tasks such as checking emails, managing phone calls, pick up and drop off artwork. I also had the role of a supervisor for the de-installation of Michael John Whelan exhibition. I was provided with a checklist of specifications which I needed to supervise. After completing the de-installation, I was given the role of a content builder for the new website. I managed the new website and uploaded to the new site being built. This job consisted a lot of administration of heavy files of images, press releases, artist bios and learning new software.

For seven days I was solely responsible for opening/closing, administrator and gallery assistant.

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<td>Gain insight into the art industry of Dubai.</td>
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<td>Apply relevant theoretical knowledge in a professional setting.</td>
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<td>Ability to assist in exhibitions being held at the gallery.</td>
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<td>Ability to oversee and assess my performance and time management.</td>
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<td>Applying knowledge and Insight to working with the galleries represented artists.</td>
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<td>Ability to open prepare and close the gallery for the day for the specific exhibition being.</td>
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<td>Acquire the knowledge to express the meaning of specific artworks at the gallery.</td>
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<td>Have the full knowledge of all the represented artist and previous exhibitions.</td>
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Summary of results:

This internship program has taken me out of my comfort zone and placed me into a work setting that is both hectic, difficult but has also grown me into an individual that is now ready to step into the work environment. Working five days a week and 8 hours a day has helped me better understand what the working environment is like. This will help me in the future to select a job which would fit my working habits, is both a supportive an environment that both the company and I can benefit from. This experience has made me more selective in choosing a company for the future.

I have also learned to deal with different personalities, strict and specific job requirements. A work environment that can at times feel tense. This programme has brought out qualities of patience, and the ability to work under pressure. The skills to foresee problems that could occur in the future and to avoid them. This has given me the confidence to work independently and to find solutions to problems first, before asking for assistance. This made me more self-driven and had given me the ability to rely on my own choices.

2. Description of the placement-providing organisation

Alserkal Avenue a cluster of warehouses located in Al Quoz, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. This avenue has an expanding number of distinct art galleries. The area consists of over twenty-five contemporary art galleries and art spaces. This is one of the most popular art locations in the whole region while being an attraction for artists it is also a space for cafes, events, and has numerous activities for children, upcoming artists, musicians, collectors and tourists.

The art gallery which I chose for my internship programme is Grey Noise. This space is very specific when it comes to selecting the work which is exhibited. The director Umer Butt born in Pakistan and now living in the UAE is the founder of the Gallery. This gallery has twelve personally selected represented artist, (Caline Aoun, Fahd Burki, Charbel-joseph H. Boutros, Raja'a Khalid, Mehreen Murtaza, Lala Rukh, Stéphanie Saadé, Mariam Suhail, Iqra Tanveer, Hossein Valamanesh, Michael John Whelan,
Lantian Xie). The nationalities of the artists are distinct; India, Ireland, French, Pakistan. Every artist is diverse with their artworks. The use of material varies between all; it may consist of sand, plastic, electronics, paper, tears, glass rubber. The potential to see something utterly rare in this gallery is high. Grey Noise is a one of a kind space in Dubai and exhibits work that cannot be seen anywhere else in the country.

These artists are directly prompted and exhibited in numerous art fairs worldwide such as Art Dubai, Berlin Art fair, Liste, ACROmadrid, and Indian art fair. Grey Noise was originated in Pakistan and was brought to Dubai in 2008. It is run by two partners Umer Butt and Hetal Pawani who also owns another gallery called JamJar which is also located in Alserkal Avenue.

The staff of the gallery are shared between Grey Noise and Jamjar. The employ list consists of six members; accounts, installation staff, Cleaning, Gallery assistant and two co-directors. During my time at Grey Noise, I interacted with all the staff members and worked together with each individual.

Grey Noise stands out amongst the other Gallery in the sense that it stands unique to its name. The gallery interacts with collectors, advisers who have been chosen by the director. This gallery has a different approach to its involvement in Alserkal Avenue events such as art festivals, as it picks only specific functions to be apart of which fits with the criteria of the gallery.

The Gallery does not have a constant specific layout. What is unique about this gallery is that it changes its space according to the exhibition that is being held the walls can be taken down to widen the area. It is a warehouse that can be transformed according to the artist's wishes. For example, the two exhibitions that were held during my time at Grey Noise had two completely different approaches.

When I arrived at the gallery, we were exhibiting Michael John Whelans artwork The Good Soil. The gallery was pitch black, black walls, black carpeting, black chairs which were pointed towards a televisions which played a video on loop. There were specific spotlights that lit certain writings on the wall. However for Fahd burkis exhibition Momentary Structures and Five Intervals, the gallery was painted white, carpets were removed, and all the lighting was changed to fit the new pieces.

This is precisely what makes this gallery special, as it provides its artists with the freedom to mould the gallery to fit the work, which they are displaying. It does not bound the artist to fit the space; the gallery space is used to enhance the work.

Here is a description provided by the organisation:

“Grey Noise represents art practices with a focus towards contemporaneity, and an emphasis on distinct, often experimental content. Not limiting itself to geographical representation, the gallery exhibits both emerging and established artists who demonstrate a defined conceptual premise in their oeuvre.”
3. A description of the work placement itself: assignment, activities, results:

On my first day, I met with the director Umer Butt, who I discussed with my learning goals for my time at Grey Noise. Later I was introduced to the gallery assistant Jean Jimenez. She gave me detailed instructions on how to operate my upcoming tasks. I visited the surrounding galleries in Al Serkal Avenue and provided an introduction to who I am, what I am studying, and which gallery I’m working with. This was a great networking possibilities and also helped me with my communication skills, to meet other people who are interested in the same field as me, expand my horizons and introduce myself as a part of the team, as Grey Noise works together closely with Jam Jar and other team members in the district (Al Serkal Avenue).

At the beginning of my internship, we were exhibiting an artwork called “The Good Soil” video still, single channel 4k video, colour sound, 34 mins. The artist is Michael John Whelan from Ireland Dublin. During my first day, I assisted in the exhibition process. I welcomed guests to view the piece and directed them to the viewing area and instructed them to the information wall, if anyone had questions I clarified their doubts.

During the next few days, I shadowed Jean as I’ll be taking over Jean's role as the gallery assistant from (21st till 3rd of January) to get an overview of all the aspects of running the gallery. I arrived early to open the gallery together with Jean. She instructed me through the opening process, which light system to use for this specific exhibition, the electronic equipment used for this art piece. Keeping up to date with the emails and who to be in touch with while she is away.

**Gallery Assistant Role: assignment, activities, results:**

From the 22nd December until the 2nd of January it was only me in the gallery for seven working days, Jean had instructed me to task for while she was away this included the following.

I manage the pickup and drop-offs of artwork at the gallery, I signed off on forms and checked if all the listed artworks have been dropped off. I Opened up the gallery, set up the lighting system and the gallery for the Michael John Whelan exhibition. I Set up the electronic system and prepared the gallery for the visitors to arrive.

I handled the office work such as phone calls and kept up to date on any urgent emails and greeted visitors of The Good Soil exhibition from 22nd -30th December. I had a specific list of instructions given for the following dates that are shown below during this period I was the supervisor while still running the office.
Supervisor:

December 30, 2017:

- de-installation of the current exhibition, The Good Soil.
- Request Venkat from JamJar to head the installation from 12 pm onwards.
- Request him to bring assistance (minimum two additional people) as the tv is big and heavy
- The carpet needs to be removed and should be disposed
- The gallery should be clean and ready for the wall paint works

January 02, 2018

- Painting starts
- Walls should be painted white again.
- Kindly remind the painters to cover the floor first with plastic before painting.
- Return the loan form and the equipment borrowed for The Good Soil exhibition to Art Jameel
- Replace the two cables

Job specifications for Admin/Content builder:

- Inquired flights for the upcoming artist Fahd Burki. Make a list of flight from different airlines from Lahore to Dubai and from Dubai to Karachi. Prepared the timings and prices for the dates 5th and 9th of January.
- Review the previous exhibitions held in the gallery from 2012 to 2017 to prepare folders for every art exhibition and every art fair that has happened during that period. Highlight the press release for each and pick all the high-resolution images. This was in preparation for the content building of the new website.
- Met with the website designer Nenmanja from Mini Web Lab who gave me a tutorial on the software Squarespace, which we were using to build the new website for Greynoise.
- My task from then on was to use the software Squarespace to build the content for the new website. Create the Exhibition files from 2012 to 2017 this includes the press release, artworks, installation images for each exhibition and to form the links between the webpages. Create a the represented artists content this consists of the artist's bio, CV and artworks.
- Helped prepare for the Fahd Burki opening on the 9th of January.
- Gathered CVS of potential candidates for the gallery assistant position.
- Handled the handing over of official certificates over to Art Jameel of the new pieces they purchased and got documents signed.
- Learnt the necessary skill for using photoshop while working on images for the website.
- Updating Artlogic which is the archive of all the artworks, contact details, and images
- Forming visa documents for the gallery director
Results:

During this process, I was able to build the entire content for the new website, which broadened my knowledge on website design. I will include images of my work at the end of this report. I learned how to use a whole new programme in a limited amount of training. Nearly all of the work I conducted during my time with Grey Noise was completed independently. My communication skills were broadened during the constant interaction with potential customers, tourists and artists looking for the possibility to show their work. I acquired more patients and time management skills. I learned how to work in a professional setting and to work together with the team of Greynoise.

I learned the tasks of an administrative office assistant during the sevens days of running the gallery office on my own. I gained a lot of knowledge from the training from Jean who took the time to teach me how to form condition reports, loan forms, packing and shipment of artwork. She showed how the documents such a invoices, loan forms, artist CV’s are archived and how to use photoshop for necessary requirements.

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<th>Demonstration</th>
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<td>Built a strong understanding of the company Grey Noise their organization and practices (how they operate, exhibitions and art fairs they take part in, and the types of artists they work with).</td>
<td>Through my work with the website, I conducted research on the software when I ran into problems. This gave me a more extensive knowledge on the web building software Squarespace for future use.</td>
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<td>Demonstrated and acquired effective communication skills verbally and in a written form.</td>
<td>Gain self-discipline when it comes to working in a professional setting working 8 hours a day five days a week which was a drastic difference from university life.</td>
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<td>Participated well both as a team member of Grey Noise and independently.</td>
<td>This experience gave me a good understanding of what career path I wish to follow in the future and what kind of working environment suits me.</td>
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<td>Self responsibility as during most of my internship the team members were working on their own task most of my work was completed independently and I had to research issues and manage my own time.</td>
<td>Gave me the ability to multitask such as going from greeting visitors-working on website to taking phone calls and accepting deliveries.</td>
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4. Evaluation

During my time at Grey Noise, I experienced a completely different working environment compared to previous jobs I had in Dubai which had a lot more interaction. The social part of office space was considered very vital. The integration at Grey Noise was challenging as it's a small company, with few members who are regularly travelling or out of the office which meant most of my work was done independently. However, that aside I did achieve my learning objectives when it came to challenging myself to get things done, to go out and research on new software and find the solution, this increased my problem-solving skills. The objective of working in a professional setting. In a field which I’m interested in, this gave me the opportunity to see first hand what it is like in Dubai, and how far they have come in the art scene. Exploring Dubai's art scene is something of importance to me, as I wanted to gain insight into the UAE art market. I got the chance to meet three very talented artists who are represented by Grey Noise, which helped me acquire networking skills. These factors prepared me for my career in a substantial degree as it gave me an immediate experience. I got the chance to learn the ins and outs of the Gallery through administrative work, website building and be apart of two exhibitions during my time here. Over my short period with the gallery, I was able to absorb a lot of information and acquire a set of skills which I would not have gained anywhere else.

My internship took place during a period which was not a busy time for the art gallery. However, the team found a way to keep me engaged in a variety of different tasks. One which I handled was a heavy, tedious and repetitive workload, which consisted of content building. This involved transferring all the data of the old website to the new one and gathering, high-resolution images. I believe this will save the gallery a lot of precious time during March and February when the gallery is involved in a lot of festivals. This helps Grey Noise have the website online faster, in this sense, I trust that my work added value to the gallery as the transferring of the content took me a month to complete. My academic knowledge and skills helped me with; 1) self-discipline: organising my workload and meeting deadlines, 2. Understanding of art: Having the vocabulary to explain to visitors about the exhibition taking place. 3. Multitasking: Through handling number of courses at the university. I was able to complete my workload and balance time to finish documents needed. Though I stepped into the internship not knowing the software (Squarespace, Artlogic, the archives of Grey Noise). I quickly managed to learn how to find files and information I needed.

After finishing this internship programme I have decided to expand my scope and search for a career path that is more involved in performance focused art or media related. During my first few days, I realised quickly that I had noted down the wrong person as the supervisor for my internship. As the guidance and support promised during the meeting on skype was not the case once I arrived by the promised supervisor. The gallery director Umer Butt informed me he has a very unpredictable schedule and does not follow the normal opening hours of the gallery. Once I arrived at the gallery, he soon took a leave and a trip for an art fair. The person who ended up training me was Jean Jimenez she gave me an orientation of how the gallery is set up, how it runs, what they do and what I’ll be doing. She worked with me side by side and ended up being my mentor.
Bibliography


Aboobacker, Musthafa. “Good Soil”. Grey Noise. 8th December 2017.


Appendix

Images of my work for the Grey Noise website

Description: Here you can see the sections I created for each represented artist. These I linked individually to their own pages which show their biography which I inserted which is shown in the image below. For example for Raja Khalid:
Description: From Raja Khalid’s biography I link the page to her artworks by clicking on the words “works” I listed 6 of her latest pieces.

Description: This section shows the artworks for example the image above shows Raja Khalid’s UberNeon piece from 2017. I resized each image displayed on the website I used photoshop to fit the criteria of Squarespace. I added captions for each artwork which describes the (title, date of production, material used and the editions as shown in this image.)
Description: Here I listed each year and linked all the exhibitions that happened during this period.

Description: From the exhibitions I linked a page for each year, the image above is an example of the 2016 exhibition list. This includes all the art fairs, exhibitions and solo shows of artists, that took place that year.
Description: From the exhibition list I directly link you to the exhibition of your choice. This page includes the press release and an attached pdf version in the bottom which also includes the words “view show”.

Description: By clicking on the words “view show” you are directly linked to the gallery which includes images of the artworks and installation shots.

Note: I also linked the pages to the back button which takes every page back to the previous one.
Installation shots of exhibitions which took place during my internship, which I assisted in.

1. Michael John Whelan - The Good Soil
Fahd Burki - Momentary Structures and Five Intervals