

Art Attack!

Morgan G. '09, Destiny M. '09, and Laura S. '09 were beamed into the orbit of *Life On Mars*, the 2008 *Carnegie International*, during its launch last May. The vehicle? ***Zero Gravity***, a groundbreaking new internship program at the Carnegie Museum of Art.

“I absolutely *love* being in the galleries so much and meeting so many incredible artists and people,” says Morgan. “It raises so many questions.”

In many ways, the ***Zero Gravity*** internship is a backstage pass to one of the most stunning contemporary art shows in the world. Each week, interns immerse themselves in art, analyze it, then write, blog and talk about the show with each other, their peers, and the public at large. Along the way, they interact with artists, curators, critics, journalists, even the *International* participants themselves.

“We also host events that attempt to bring the high school audience of Pittsburgh into the museum and get them excited about art,” says Morgan. “It makes people, kids mostly, realize that there’s so much more in art that they can be into, that’s right up their alley and in their culture.”

Jordan Crosby, the museum’s school and teacher programs specialist, adds, “We wanted to learn how young people want to experience contemporary art, how they respond to it, how it can play a significant role in their lives and if it can speak them in a meaningful way.”

New Frontiers

The most revolutionary part of ***Zero Gravity*** takes place online, where blogs and other resources for students and teachers abound. “Blogging about artworks, where you’re forced to express higher level thinking skills, is a natural connection to persuasive writing skills,” says Crosby. “This is how young people today organize themselves. This format appeals to them and is intuitive to them.”

Blending dollops of technology with dabs of old-fashioned human interaction, ***Zero Gravity*** sends contemporary art appreciation and awareness soaring.

Laura S. says, “Getting lost in a work by yourself or with others is by far the best part. When you look at a work extensively, silently, mini-epiphanies sprout again and again ultimately leading up to a major revelation. Once I reach revelation-level, an eternal relationship with the work is formed. Even if I do not see the work for a few weeks, when I return, it is like catching up and reminiscing. When discussing with a group, a relationship forms not only with the work, but also those with whom you have discussed it. That type of dynamic truly makes the internship what it is.”

Continuing Connections

Morgan says, “I’ve written essays inspired by the gallery, or I’ll make references in class, like, ‘That’s just like that art piece!’ – even if it’s a science class. That’s the thing about the *International*: It connects to every kind of course or curriculum that you have, because there’s technology, there’s symmetry in numbers and math, and science. There are historical references everywhere. I think that this is the gift that the Carnegie, in being so close, has given to Winchester: You realize that everything can be looked at with an artistic eye.”

Infinite Inspiration

The *International*’s influence reaches teachers, too. North Campus Lower School art teacher and Department Chair Sally Allan, and Upper School English teacher Jill Kazmierczak, helped Crosby develop multidisciplinary *Life on Mars* lesson plans through their work on teacher advisory teams.

“Trying to examine a work from the perspective of a scientist or a social studies teacher wasn’t easy to do, but with each attempt, I found myself thinking of these works in entirely new ways,” says Kazmierczak. “If a classic in literature is one that can be returned to again and again, with new understandings and insights emerging upon each return visit, then I would say that the *Life on Mars* exhibit also warrants such close scrutiny.”

Soon, everyone at WT will feel the *International*’s impact. Student publications, such as *Plaid* and *Voices*, may echo its themes, and students from City and North campuses in grades PK through 12 are creating response pieces to the exhibit. Plans are underway for a reaction show in January 2009. More information will soon follow, but for now, some tantalizing details emerge: “We’ll do an installation. It might be a group piece or individual pieces, and we’ll probably include literary works as well,” says Allan. “It will be more than just the gallery; it will be spilling into the halls!”