

SE04EP06

Hillary Crawford

Internship at Tate Britain

H: Welcome to Noles Abroad, a podcast by Florida State University International Programs! I'm Hannah

Z: And I'm Zoe! And we are your hosts. On this podcast we'll talk about study abroad from the perspective of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni who make it an experience worth sharing. We'll also bring you travel tips and fun facts from around the globe.

Z: On today's episode we talk with Hillary Crawford, an FSU alum who interned at the Tate Britain Museum in London, England. She talks about what inspired her interest in art and museums, what it was like living and interning in London, and how that experience impacted her career. Let's go to our conversation with Hillary now.

Z: Hi Hillary, how are you doing today?

Hillary C (HC): I'm good Zoë, how are you?

Z: Good, doing well! We're excited to interview you and talk to you today about your experience abroad but first off can you just introduce yourself to our listeners?

HC: Absolutely, my name is Hillary Crawford and I'm originally from South Florida but I've lived in Tallahassee for awhile, moved up here for high school and then went to Florida State. I graduated, well I actually went to FSU twice, I graduated in '97 with a degree in Humanities and then in 2002 I got a Master's in Arts Administration and a graduate certificate in Museum Studies and I interned at the Tate Britain in London as part of International Programs study abroad. And I am currently the Grants Manager at COCA which is the Council on Culture and Arts in Tallahassee and that serves as our local arts agency.

H: Awesome, so from your brief introduction we can obviously see that you have a lot of experience and interest in arts and museums can you tell us what sparked your interest in that?

HC: Absolutely, I think from a very early age I just really liked the arts in general. I took you know Suzuki violin, piano, voice, things like that. But my love for museums really came from when I was in the 4th grade at Lake Park Elementary, I was in Mrs. Pivnicki's gifted class and we did a project on the Aztec Indians and one of the like culminating factors, and it was kind of a humanities based program where as now they kind of do you know they gifted as like more math but, which would have been bad for me because I'm not really a math person. But in my day that was humanities and so we did these sand paintings and they were actually hung at the Four Arts Museum and I remember my dad came to get me in our, we had a Delta 88 Oldsmobile and we drove over and I got to see my sand paintings on the wall and it was super exciting and I just really you know fell in love with the museums. I love the fact that there are all these amazing things that everyone can go and see. You know, it's not like somebody just has them at their house but they are you know these wonderful things that talk about all the different cultures and we all have access to them.

Z: That's so wonderful. I love hearing about your experience in the 4th grade and just how your journey has gone from there. But can you tell us a little bit more about your background in art and what led you to doing an internship in London, specifically?

HC: Sure! So, you know, my dad collected kind of like vernacular folk art, he and his partner, and you know going back to really a pretty young age we were really involved in the museum in Fort Lauderdale, the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Fine Arts, his partner's mother actually was a docent there for years and years and was friends with Duane Hanson who was a sculptor that was out of the Fort Lauderdale area. So I was very interested in you know just the visual arts in general which led to me taking a lot of art history classes as part of that humanities degree. And I had done a humanities trip as an undergrad, a Europe kind of like an overview trip and really loved traveling. And when I was in one of those art history classes there was a young lady from the Museum of Fine Arts at Florida State that came into one of my classes and she said you know we need volunteers at the Museum of Fine Arts, so I signed up and started volunteering. At the time I was working with the preparator in actually hanging the shows but I just really loved it and one day I was speaking to this volunteer coordinator and I said you know this is, I want to do this, like you know what do I need to do to be able to do this as a job? And she at the time was doing the Arts Administration program at Florida State and the Museum Studies certificate was just kind of out and so she told me you know about the program and I made an appointment with Charles Dorn who was the former head of the program that week, and went over and talked to him and talked to Susan Baldino and got on board for the certificate. And then when I found out about the London study program I was like this is combining all the things you know I love traveling, I love you know the fact that I even had the opportunity to go work with the museum like the Tate so that was really you know it was something that I couldn't not do. And it was a requirement for the Master's degree so as soon as I kind of found out about that, I put that on my radar as a goal and just kind of worked towards that.

H: I love hearing about people's experiences in college I think it's one of those things where like you don't know what you're going to get into or fall into when you, sometimes, when you start college and that it was like a presentation one day and you just went after it and went and met with people and dug into different opportunities and I love hearing those stories of students and how they make the most of their college experience just by asking questions, like just by getting involved. So I think it's so cool that you found your way through that and where it's led you today. Shifting gears a little bit, we want to talk now about your time at the Tate. So during your time at the Tate you worked on a few different projects and initiatives including one where you worked with children with disabilities, can you talk about those different experiences?

HC: Oh yeah sure. So the education department of the Tate is amazing, first of all. The way that they structure the program is they actually work with artists who come in and work as educators. So they kind of build a catalog of programs based on what's up at the time. And so one of the things that I did as an intern was kind of tracked you know what was up at the time, when things were going down, as things were moving so that the artist would kind of know. I remember the Pre-Raphaelite were up while I was there which that was a thing that I just really loved, being able to go in a room and had to hang out with them, but through that they have a program that's called Tate Access. And what's cool about that is that it's a program that's easy for people with all varying types of abilities to come in and to be able to experience, enjoying that - I can't think of the word - but like having that education experience of being able to see and literally like hands on. So there's a touch tour that's offered for people that are visually impaired, so they actually have you know at the time there was like a Hepworth sculpture that was up so they have like rocks that are made out of the same material so that they can actually you know touch the materials. Also for kids who kind of had sensory issues or maybe were a little squirmy know and wanted to be able to touch it, you know that was an opportunity for them as well. And so we would go through

and we would talk about different things in the galleries with the artists kind of leading the discussion and then going back they had a room, like a big classroom, and we would usually make something so they would have something to take with them. And so it was everything from those kind of structured things where we had classes in, but coming in all the time. And then there were also things like there was an art trolley program that I worked on, so those were little like for families when they would come on the weekends they could come in and find an activity for an age range that was based on something that was up in the gallery. And they could actually go sit in front of the work and look at it and there were little worksheets that would ask them questions and kind of like that whole going back to the discipline based - so it's like you know a little bit of art history, a little bit of theory, a little bit of criticism, and also production which was kind of a big thing at FSU in that time period.

Z: That's very cool, it's awesome that you were able to get that hands on work experience as well while you were there.

HC: Yeah it was a great, it was a great experience.

Z: On a different note, when you weren't working at the museum what did you do for fun around London?

HC: Gosh, what didn't I do? I really tried to do everything. One of the things that's really cool about the way the program is structured, or at least it was then, you know they would get things like ticket for plays so I was always going to the front desk to kind of see you know we will get free tickets or even reduced like student price tickets. So often I would come home from work on an evening and go right back out and go to a play. I saw, at the time Mama Mia was big, and I like love ABBA, I'm obsessed with ABBA, so I went to see that I don't even know how many times, a lot of times. And I had friends that would visit me and like we would sometimes go on the weekends and like dress up because at the end you know everybody would dance in the in the aisles and it was really fun. And then there was another play that was called The Donkey Show and it was an adaptation of Midsummer Night's Dream but it was on roller skates and set to disco music but it was so much fun. And then we also just I mean we like dancing, I was lucky because my suite was comprised of all people that were interns and we were a little bit older than the other crew so we did a lot of traveling together. But I mean I would go, I did stuff by myself you know I worked at the Tate but the British Museum is right down the street and there's you know like almost 200 museums in London. I went to a session of parliament where you can just go in. So they do arrange a lot of things for you and I think that with the kids it's a little bit harder maybe when they're studying you know because they have maybe a more structured program whereas since I was working and I only worked so many days a week I was able to, you know ,just kind of make up my own schedule a little bit. But there definitely was a lot of facilitation through the site, the study center, with us you know for things to do locally.

H: Awesome, it definitely sounds like you took advantage of London in ways that were things that related to your, what you're studying for your master's degree and what you wanted to do with your career, but also other things. Which is such a fun thing about studying abroad, you can do things that are related to your major and then also just experience things that are just fun.

HC: Well the other thing that was cool for me is because I worked with people so I got to meet people at work that just lived there, that were just people. So like you know we would even have barbecues and we would go to somebody's house for the weekend and hang out. So I got to see all kinds of different

neighborhoods too I think you know the area because you know I had colleagues that worked all over. So that was kind of it's kind of like you know how they say it like they say live like a local or travel like a local or whatever that thing is, like you know I felt like I was able to do that because I was there for an extended period of time and I had access to you know people that did that did live there.

H: That's such a good point that kind of is the distinction between traveling and studying abroad. I mean students say when they study abroad they really feel like a local they get to live there. It's like that extended period of time, you're living right and I mean in London you're living right in the heart of the city in the study center so you really do get to know the area and all the different neighborhoods for those haven't been to London like there's so many different areas and so many different neighborhoods to explore. And to get to know people that actually live there I'm sure you had like even cooler access to those places.

HC: Yeah for sure. And some of them lived, I couldn't believe like how far they came every day on the train. You know when I did go to visit them and I was like I'm so spoiled because it's like a hop here and then a hop there and they were you know going like once we got out of London you know it was like 20 more minutes for them to go all the way up to the end. So very fortunate in that way.

H: Yeah absolutely we are so, so fortunate where our city center is located, again for people who haven't been to the study center in London, it is wild how central the study center is –

HC: It's West Central London!

H: Yah and to be able to live in that neighborhood, I can't imagine what that would be these days but to have the opportunity to study there and to live right in the heart of the city is just incredible.

HC: Yeah and you can actually walk like just down the National Portrait Gallery and the V&A are both within walking distance and the British Museum, so there's just so much to do. I mean I could just, I mean if I could go back I would totally go back. I think that that's like the thing that I would stress the most is like if you have the ability to go, just do it because it's like as my 45 year old self sits here and it's like you know you never have the opportunity, I mean I even remember at the end being like oh I'm going to come back and I'm going to do this and I'm going to do this and it's like you know then when you're married and you have children and it's like you know you just I don't think you ever have another time to just go and do something like that for yourself it's all about yourself.

H: Absolutely, absolutely. Changing gears a little bit here, we know that 9/11 happened not long after you returned home from London, and this was before many of our students today were born, so can you talk a little bit about like how the world and travel changed after 9/11 and how that impacted your life personally?

HC: Yeah so, so actually the towers fell two weeks after I came home. I have some family and friends in Scotland so I was lucky I got to stay for a bit afterwards but I did I totally had a plan I was like I'm coming right back. And so yeah I came home thinking you know that I was just you know right back out the door, you know back across to London and I just you know the towers did fall and it did for me it changed a lot of things. I think that it was, there was like a sense of nationalism I think that came that I didn't necessarily have before. I saw moments of that when I was actually in the UK because like for example 4th of July happened while I was there and you know to them that's just a day. So I remember a bunch of us went to, there was like a Tex-Mex place over in Trafalgar Square that we went you know to kind of

have our 4th of July. But it wasn't like you know 4th of July here, certainly. But also just you know travel was much freer I think you know before 9/11. You know we didn't have the same restrictions, which I mean of course now, you know we've become accustomed to them it's been you know 20 years. But you know, it was, it just, I I just can't even, it just changed everything. Like it's one of those definitely moments, I've heard, I remember my parents talking about like you know the JFK assassination and I remember as a kid you know the Challenger thing and so 9/11 was one of those kind of instances like that. So definitely I mean the way that I would just like hop on a plane on a weekend and you know I utilized a lot of RyanAir so I would fly to Venice for the weekend, go to the Peggy Guggenheim, fly to Paris for the weekend, you know and I don't know and of course I wasn't there after that but I mean I know just from the way things changed in the States, I can only imagine there you know what that was like would be added security.

H: Absolutely did that event change anything for you like career wise or any like plans that you had?

HC: Yeah so I was well pre - I was going you know because I did say that eventually I was going to come back to London but I had, my original plan was once I finish was to move to New York City. I had some friends that lived there and you know if you work in the arts that's a great place to go, there's lots of museums. And so yeah that was foiled by that of course. But also I think perspective wise, I think I just wanted to be closer you know my parents are in Florida, I had a grandmother that was like dying of cancer at the time so I kind of was like I'm going to wait on that. I did eventually end up moving to North Carolina I went to work at the Center for Craft in Asheville and then at Western Carolina University Fine Art Museum, so I did get you out of Florida but yeah I mean I think it does, you know family is one of those things that you know when things like that happen it kind of changes your shift and now it's like you know I remember a long time ago I said well when I get old you know I'll just go move over you know and live in Scotland, like in the country and have a bunch of sheep, but you know now that I have a 13 year old and I'm like well wait a minute like you know he's if he gets married and has kids and you know like I can't just be a sheep herder in Scotland you know with grandkids in another country, so yeah life happens.

Z: Yeah absolutely, well we want to hear more about that, you know what happened after that. How would you say that your experiences abroad and your time working at the Tate have influenced your career and what you do today?

HC: Well definitely I mean I've stayed in the arts. I will say that having the Tate on my resume was definitely a conversation starter and I actually met an artist who had been a short runner for the Turner Prize years and years ago but it was like you know he was like oh you were at the Tate, he was a trustee at the Tate so you know its just one of those things. And I know other people that have done the program through FSU at other times and so like we kind of know the same people. But also just definitely having that on my resume I think just sets you aside a little bit for that experience these people are like "oh you were at the Tate" and you know it definitely solidified that that was what I wanted to do and I have kind of grown through what I do. I mean I've moved from working in a museum to I was at the state arts agency facilitating funding for organizations through them, and now through COCA you know working on funding for arts in our community but you know it's still part of you know arts administration and I love it. And anytime I go anywhere to travel, I always go to a museum, that's the first thing I figure out where the museums are that are closest to where I'm staying you know if it's a wedding or whatever it is I kind of make my own little, go off and do what I need to do to get my art on.

H: I love that it's so much a part of just who you are, it's not just your job. I mean for you to do that on your free time, on your personal travels, like to seek out museums it definitely makes it obvious that this is part of who you are and not just a job for you. This is kind of like a little bonus question but now that we know that you have a son I'm curious, has he gotten involved in any type of museum stuff or any interest in it at all?

HC: Well so he is really good, so he draws like little cartoons. So he gets a lot of joy out of that. We have gone to museums, you know the thing about kids in museums is they're kind of, well kids and also museum professionals like if you ever been to a museum conference you know it's like they're just like flying through, and I'm one of those people like I totally nerd out and I will stand in front of something for like 20 million hours I mean people are just like "oh god she's still looking at it," and I'm just like "yeah I'll just meet up with you later." I actually have a friend that lives in Atlanta and I mean I go to the High all the time and I mean I look at the same stuff over and over again and I just I don't know. I once had like what I call a spiritual experience at the Rothko Chapel in Houston and it's just like if you know what Rothkos look like they're basically like color studies and so there's not a lot going on but you know I just nerd out on that kind of stuff. But yeah so he does like, he plays the saxophone and he draws cute little cartoons. He's very, it's funny though because he's very like self conscious about his drawing - which I was never an art production person, but I know what it feels like to have that like you know perfectionism where it's like almost getting your own way for sharing things. But he makes cute little like birthday cards for his friends and birthday cards for me, he draws little cartoons and things and it's cute.

H: It's very cool to have like the balance of like the artist in the family and then like the arts administrator. That's very fun.

HC: But he does love to travel. We went to Washington DC I guess like Thanksgiving of '19 and we went and we had so much fun because you know I mean the mall is like, there's everything and I mean we went he really loves history so like we did the African American Museum, then we did the Holocaust Museum. Which if you ever go, don't do both of those in the same day because it was a very heavy day so after that I was like let's rent scooters and eat hot dogs because it was just like super - the Holocaust is a little heavy. But I mean he loves that stuff and so you know we went through and we did all the museums that we could and he really liked it. So I think that he will you know grow up to be a tourist that you know tries to tour like a local or whatever that saying is.

H: Yeah or maybe even a future study abroad student?

HC: That would be amazing! Well he does talk about travel so I hope that he has a bug.

H: Awesome that's so great to hear. We have one final question for you today and we ask this question to everyone who comes on the podcast so it's fun to hear everyone's answers - but what advice do you have for students who are considering studying abroad?

HC: Do it! I mean I think if you're, if you have the ability and the means to do it I definitely would do it. Like I said, it's just it's not an opportunity that you'll ever get again. And it's a way you know as speaking of like post 9/11, and you know safety and things like that, you know now as a parent you know it's a really safe way to do that. You know where you're not necessarily you know backpacking with a rail pass in the middle of nowhere and nobody knows where you are, right. I mean you do have that level of connection to you know adults and assistance if you need it, and it's a place to stay, you know you're not like

navigating from hostel the hostel or whatever. But also it's just it's an opportunity that you will never have again and I just can't say enough great things about it. I have friends that did Florence and I actually visited them and it was a great time and I just I think it's a wonderful service.

H: Awesome.

HC: I'm ready to go again.

H: Gosh, aren't we all? Agreed. Well thank you so much Hillary. Thank you for your time and your story and just getting to hear about your career and your passion for art and your study abroad experience, or your intern abroad experience! It's just been really wonderful, thank you so much.

HC: Thank you! Go 'Noles!

Z: Thank you!

Z: Before we disembark, let's talk about museums!

When you travel, visiting museums is a great way to get to know the history and culture of the location you're visiting. Whether you're interested in art, history, or science, there's something for everyone! Many museums offer free admission, discounts for students, or special holiday pricing, so be sure to check it out before you go!

H: If you're new to Tallahassee, visiting the local museums here is a great way to explore the city. You can explore the planetarium at the Challenger Learning Center, peruse the artwork at the FSU Museum of Fine Arts, see a mastodon skeleton at the Museum of Florida History, learn about Black history through the Black Archives' locations, and more!

Z: Thank you to Hillary for talking with us, and thanks to each of you for listening.

H: This podcast is a production of FSU International Programs. The music for this podcast was composed by John Bartmann. Our logo was designed by Vanessa Guirey, who also does our sound engineering. Editing, transcription, and research is done by us, Hannah Meister and Zoë Crook.