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RESTORATION AND WORLDWIDE TRAVEL AT LDM

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LDM CONTACT INFO

LdM US Austin
 US Enrollment Services
 Academic Relations
 3600 Bee Caves Rd., Suite
 205B, Austin, Texas 78746
 p: 877.765.4LDM (4536)
 f: 512.328.4638

LdM Italy
 Via Faenza, 43
 50123 Florence, Italy

"I hated painting," she told me.

As we walked through the lab, Kylee had just casually shown me the areas of a 17th century oil painting of the Virgin Mary, baby Jesus, and various saints that she had just cleaned and restored herself. I also knew that she had graduated from the Pratt Institute with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts. I had seen her artwork. So how did it all change?

Mystery solved, as she explained that she started in Graphic Design at Pratt, but after her first year, her advisor convinced her to shift her major to Fine Arts. So she fell in love with Painting. I could understand that. But that still didn't explain how a Fine Arts graduate from Pratt Institute had ended up in Florence at Scuola Lorenzo de' Medici in the Restoration department.

"I decided I wanted to continue my studies in Restoration and Conservation after I graduated," she explained, "but when I started looking around—particularly at one of the major schools in New York—I discovered that they required both German and French as prerequisites. I freaked out. That was totally not an option for me."

It seemed an insurmountable obstacle, this dual-language requirement, but the world is a very small place, which Kylee discovered soon after:

"My mother had a women's wear store in Pennsylvania and hung up some of my paintings there. She started talking to a client one day. Fred knew about Lorenzo de' Medici's Restoration program, and so he left his contact information with my mom. That got things started."

"When I got to Florence, it was all so overwhelming. I couldn't believe that I was here. It took a few days to understand that I was actually going to live here. I love it.

"But even better, here at LdM, you actually work on stuff that you wouldn't see back in the States until at least your Senior year. If people back there saw what I'm already doing here, they'd have a heart attack. They really aren't going to believe me when I tell them. I can't even explain it. There's just so much here."

A wide gesture encompassing the entire lab, and my attention drifts for a moment. Wooden sculptures lying on tables. A fresco of Christ crucified. Oil paintings in various stages of restoration all over dating anywhere from the 15th – 18th centuries. I was starting to understand what Kylee meant.

"Lorenzo Casamenti, the Restoration professor, is amazing," Kylee continued, leaning forward slightly, an enthusiastic smile lighting up her face. "He'll help you with anything. He travels all over the world. He's in India right now doing restoration on some churches there. I know he takes students with him on some of these trips, too. But at the end, he's so unpretentious. When I met him, he showed me some of the work here and casually mentioned, '...and this is a Donatello.' I thought, 'Donatello? Really?!'"

At this point, surrounded by all of this history and fine art and with the prospect of traveling around the world to work on frescoes, sculptures and other paintings, I started to warm up to the idea myself. India, Nepal, Argentina, Italy—I already knew that Casamenti had gone all of these places, and that his students had gone with him.

Conversation turned to Kylee's future, which seems brighter and brighter by the day:

"I'm thinking about continuing to the Professional Study Certificate when I'm done, or maybe transferring into the LdM Bachelor's degree in Conservation Studies. It might be good to have both a certification and another Bachelor's degree beyond the one I did at Pratt. Then, when I'm finished, I'd love to move here if I can find a job. In the States, you mostly find conservators.

Here, you don't just conserve art, you actually restore it."



Kylee Jensen, LdM Student



Kylee Jensen, Pratt Institute



Kylee Jensen, Pratt Institute