

## Julia Rogers Research Prize Reflection

Olivia Robertson

The piece I have selected for consideration is my senior Art History capstone project, “Cultural Tourism, Academic Painting and the Formulation of Breton Identity in late 19th century Brittany.” Research for this project began at the beginning of 2019, when I applied for and was granted the Spencer Award to travel and conduct research on the ground in Brittany. I prepared thoroughly for this. Studying abroad in Paris that spring, I visited local libraries to take advantage of all french-language resources on the subject. When in Brittany, I took notes and made observations that became significant to my argument. When I returned to Goucher, I studied the subject further, engaging with Goucher’s general collection, Inter-Library Loans, the Johns Hopkins Library, and Goucher’s Special Collections & Archives, where I was able to conduct primary research. All of this has resulted in one 38 page paper written in the Fall of 2019 and a complete bibliography of consulted works containing 44 titles.

The Goucher Library was probably the most useful resource to me during this process. I was shocked by the amount of literature on the subject of Brittany that the library had; mostly generalist works focusing on the history of the region, which helped me develop a contextual understanding of the subject. The access to JStor and other online article databases that the library granted me was invaluable as I developed my thesis. Goucher’s Inter-Library Loan system gave me access to additional books which filled in some remaining gaps in my knowledge. These together allowed me to build an incredibly strong foundation of secondary-source research. However, the most incredible thing I gained from the Goucher

College Library was the primary research I was able to conduct using materials from the Special Collections and Archives. I consulted two Travel Guidebooks with descriptions of Brittany, one published in the 19th century and one published in the early 20th century. Tourism in Brittany is an essential part of my argument, which concerns the way in which tourism can influence the formation of cultural identity. Travel Guidebooks are at the core of this: they record the ways in which a region such as Brittany was advertised to cultural outsiders, and therefore the reputation it carried among tourists. My primary source research confirmed all of the theories I'd built around the other secondary source research I'd been doing, and allowed me to develop my capstone project with confidence in the accuracy in my claims.

This piece merits consideration because it demonstrates the full range of my academic abilities at this time, and the kind of work which I can produce if I am given the opportunity to dedicate myself single-mindedly to one subject. It is the product of immense primary, secondary, and tertiary research in both English and French. It is a synthesis of complex and multidisciplinary ideas which touch on issues of class, ethnic minority identity, French history, propaganda, tourism, costume, and the value of art in culture, to name a few. It shows my abilities as an academic writer which I've honed over the course of my college experience. It's the most involved and significant piece of work I have ever undertaken and I believe that it speaks to my ability to, one day, contribute something meaningful to the Art History discourse community. I take immense pride in the work I've produced here, and hope that the committee will appreciate that.

Thank you, Olivia Robertson