in their words
How can you know what VCUarts is really like until you’re here? Well... you can’t. But we thought posing the same 13 questions to students from each VCUarts undergraduate major might help. These students are recent recipients of the much-coveted VCUarts Dean’s Scholarship. There are similarities in their responses, and as to be expected, many differences.

Those who plan to attend VCUarts will find their words and advice enlightening – and we hope – helpful.
JESSICA DECKER » FASHION MERCHANDISING

I knew I could thrive in the environment VCUarts could offer. VCUarts molds and produces me with many opportunities and resources that only the #1 center of a hustle and bustle city setting. I also knew VCUarts would be the right place for me.

There was no other place I would rather be. I wanted to be in the community of friends to meet new people and have new experiences. I can walk around campus and see someone new every day, I'm still amazed. VCU allows me to push beyond my comfort zone.

JOE PAUL » SCULPTURE + EXTENDED MEDIA

VCUarts was one of four art schools that I had applied to and what really made my decision was the positive impression I took from the three-week arts intensive that I had participated in the summer before college.

When I visited other schools, I would ask to see the art department and would be led into a tiny trailer. The students were all crammed together in a dark room and if you wanted to use certain equipment, you had to either buy it or build it yourself! Coming to VCUarts was an entirely different experience, because not only did they have multiple art buildings but many facilities as well. One of my biggest deciding factors was the quality of the student artwork. I said to myself, "I want to study at a school if I want to make what the students are making." Many schools were huge disappointments, but at VCUarts I could see myself at the school and be proud of the work I was creating.

JOEY BROSSEY » ART EDUCATION

VCUarts has an excellent reputation and the variety of programs offered was a bonus since I was still trying to figure out what exactly in art I wanted to do.

ELIZABETH ELDRIDGE » COMPUTER VISUALIZATION

I chose VCU because it had some unique advantages over the other art school I was considering. I loved the diverse population, the variety of majors within the school, the in-state tuition (as I am from northern Virginia). Also, I had attended a summer program at VCUarts, which I absolutely loved.

I was actually planning on going out of state because I was really attracted to studying theater in a big city like New York or Boston. VCU was the last school I visited, and I ended up falling in love with it. I liked the professors, and curriculum a lot more than the acting schools I visited outside of state. What sold me was when I saw the Spring production of Chicago. I knew then that this was the right place for me.

MAGGIE HOBSON » THEATRE

I can't put my finger on exactly what made me choose VCU, but on my second visit to campus it just clicked. I felt really right here. One of the biggest reasons I considered VCU is the fact that it's one of the top art schools, but costs so much less than similar programs.

MOLLY MCMAHAN » GRAPHIC DESIGN

I was originally looking at another school for dance and choreography. In my final two years dancing at the Denver School of the Arts however, I met Scott Putman who is an artist at VCU. He has been in residence at my high school every year since 2008 and was a huge influence on my training and ultimately my college selection. I had never heard of VCU until I met Scott. After visiting the school and having my audition I was quite convinced that this was the school for me. The VCU Dance Student Concert was also a factor, as I liked the fact that the department had a show for students to create their own work.

RIAN SMITH » DANCE & PHOTOGRAPHY

I wanted to be a better artist. At the age of 26 and after 4 years of coloring comics for Marvel I wasn't satisfied with just having a comfortable career, I wanted to pursue my dream of being an artist. After doing some research into art schools, I quickly discovered what a great deal VCU was going to be based on the national rankings and distinguished faculty.

JASON KEITH » PAINTING AND PRINTMAKING

I came to VCUarts because of its phenomenal reputation and its location. The campus has a great feel – urban, yet small and close. While I can walk around campus and see someone new every day, I'm still amazed to see someone I know. VCU allows me to push beyond my community of friends to meet new people and have new experiences.

KELLY McLEOD » COMMUNICATION ARTS

I spent two years at another school as an Art Education major when I took my first Art History course as part of my program requirements. I have finally found something that was instantly a passion and I enjoyed. I transferred my junior year to VCUarts because of the amazing program.

ALEXANDER BARTON » ART FOUNDATION

Both my mother and sister attended VCUarts. Since elementary school, I have witnessed the hard work and creativity VCUarts promotes. At this point, going through Art Foundation was a rite of passage that I have been anticipating for a long time.
I had never realized how concentrated the VCU campus is within Richmond. My only doubt about studying at VCU was getting more city than campus environment but nothing feels disconnected and all my class buildings are relatively close.

ALEXANDER BARTON » ART FOUNDATION

I did not know how great the music scene is. There are plenty of local venues and small festivals that bring great artists through the area.

TAYLOR ROBINSON » CINEMA

My senior thesis displays what I discovered about Richmond, which was its history. Moving to Richmond was a drastic change from the city life in Miami, and all the historical landscapes really captured my attention. I began researching and digging deeper into the history of Richmond and discovered how the present is still affected by its history.

BEREONCA TROFORT » PHOTOGRAPHY & FILM

I had no idea how amazing the Richmond arts community would be. The amount of art galleries, theaters and music festivals is mind blowing for a city this size. I've been extra impressed with the recent RVA Street Art festival and the creation of the upcoming Institute for Contemporary Art.

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JASON KEITH » PAINTING & PRINTMAKING

I had no idea Belle Isle existed until the beginning of my sophomore year! It is a small island on the river not far from campus. It's an amazing retreat from the busy city life and is located right in our backyard! A lot of students go and lay out on the large rocks in the warm weather, or take walks. It is a great contrast to the Richmond's urban setting. Maymont is also a nice retreat from the fast-paced city life. I wish I had visited a lot sooner than I did. It is a gorgeous estate which a Japanese Garden, animal exhibits, and a gorgeous Victorian Mansion. I would highly recommend spending a day there. DH: Don't forget to visit the otters, they would love to perform for you! Carytown is also a great place to spend time outside. It is referred to as the ‘Mile of Style’ and hosts fashion boutiques, vintage shops, athletic stores, and great food. I love to spend the afternoon there on a nice day.

JESSICA DECKER » FASHION MERCHANDISING

The amount of opportunities that the city of Richmond exposes to young artists is incredible. From numerous plays, galleries, and museums, there is an abundance of creative culture and inspiration to explore.

EILEEN HALPIN » KINETIC IMAGING

I love Richmond! Belle Isle was a delightful discovery when I first moved here. This city has such vibrancy and life, the food culture here is wonderful and reminds me of the highlands of Denver back home. I really enjoy the architecture of the old houses through the Fan so well.

RYAN SMITH » DANCE & CHOREOGRAPHY

How beautiful and culture-rich it is here. You have to visit the Dooley Mansion in Maymont, Poe’s Museum, the Valentines Museum, and VA Center for Architecture, to name just a few.

SARAH BRONN » FASHION DESIGN

Before coming to Richmond, I never realized how much this city had to offer! Whether it’s the Ukrops 10k or the Richmond Folk Festival, Richmond is alive 365 days a year. The Richmond community is strong and thriving. This provides for an amazing personal experience. As a student I was able to participate in a variety of events which helped round out my education at VCU.

JESS CASTELLANI » MUSIC

I have developed a true love for Richmond due to its rich history. Richmond is full of culture like no other place in Virginia. There is never a lack of things to do.

MARYLLE PHILLIPS » ART HISTORY

There wasn’t much because I’ve lived around Richmond forever, but I think I was most surprised by how close knit the community here actually was. Whenever I walk through the Compass I am bound to see most, if not all of my friends. Even when I’m at the studio late at night there are still plenty of people I know around. It’s honestly really hard to be alone here, because you’re constantly around the other art students. I definitely didn’t expect bump into so many people I know so often.

JORDAN HICKS » ART EDUCATION

I’ve discovered a really culturally rich community. There are so many great museums and events to go to, so there is never an excuse to be bored. There are also plenty of unique cafes, shops, parks and restaurants to explore. What’s even better is that nearly everything is within walking distance, and on the way to going anywhere you are bound to walk by some beautiful old houses… the architecture in Richmond is charming!

KELLY McLEON » COMMUNICATION ARTS

Everything in Richmond has been a discovery. I had never been to Richmond before coming to VCU so the city was a sort of playground for exploration and inspiration.

RICCARDO HERNANDEZ-PIERRE » INTERIOR DESIGN

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HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU’VE COME TO VCU?

I have so much more to say and so many different mediums to say it in. “Progress” is a Modernist ideal that I believe VCUarts is moving beyond. My education has not been as linear as “progress” suggests. What is happening is a synthesis of different ideas that are spinning a web around my work. Crossroads from different classes occur in mediums, language, and technique, often times in very unexpected and wonderful ways.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?

My space class had to create roller coaster tracks that fit together and encompass an entire critiquing room. I had never worked in wood until this point and it really drew me out of my comfort zone. I can visualize much more sculpturally, which I believe has benefited my drawing and painting. The wonderful reveal of this piece was seeing the diversity of our work become assembled into its own entity. I also gained a lot of confidence from this piece. It was almost like singing in a choir: no one’s piece was louder than another’s and for the majority of us it was a triumph of working in new media.

HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?

I was not expecting the freedom of creativity. I am glad to be growing in an environment that focuses on mastery of exploration over mastery of technique. I believe most technical outlets have been exhausted in art history and only through an emphasis on creativity will we define this point in time for future artists and movements.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?

I am interested in psychology, literature, and travel. I have also enjoyed solving algebra and physics problems. There’s a creativity in both that I think goes unnoticed by those who have not had the right experience or professors.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE YOU GRADUATE?

I would really like to start a portraiture club that is open to all majors. Most of the time it would consist of simply drawing the other members and discussing any engaging examples of portraiture in art history. Even though I prefer working in oil paints, I do not believe that portraiture should be constricted to one popular medium. I would also like to complete an independent study under Daniel Robbins, his paintings capture an energy that is completely unique. I hope one day to be able to capture as much expression in my own figurative work.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?

I would like to move to England and apply for a graduate program in painting, possibly at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. I was born in Salisbury and feel my work will be strengthened by reconnecting to the environment of my heritage.

IS THERE A FACULTY MEMBER THAT HAS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED YOU? HOW SO?

Dr. Heather McGuire has an enthusiasm for art history that is contagious. I had never seen a more clear development of art and its influences before taking her class. It made me very optimistic that even if we seem to be in the doldrums of art, great inspiration is always forming and giving true culture back to society.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR LIFE JUST NECESSARILY ARTS RELATED, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I wish I had played more sports in school – preferably something that exercises arm strength. I had no idea how much stuff you carry as an art student. I would have also liked to see the National Gallery’s Edward Hopper exhibit when it wasn’t so busy. It was the highlight of my ninth grade but I could hardly see Nighthawks because of the crowd. It is always encouraging to see people so interested in art though, so I didn’t mind.

WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU CAME TO VCU?

How the meal exchange exactly works. I was filled with way too much Shafer pizza for the first couple of weeks here.
WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
Continue working on my own individual work (writing, animating, directing, puppeteering) with possible internships/apprenticeships in similar fields on the horizon. Also, learning! One should always keep a hunger for knowledge, because there is always more to learn.

IS THERE A FACULTY MEMBER THAT HAS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED YOU? HOW SO?
I would say Bob Paris of the Kinetic Imaging Department and his eye-opening Critical Issues class. This class has changed my life by opening myself to past, present, and future social issues and has encouraged meaning and thoughtfulness in a lot of my work.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR LIFE (NOT NECESSARILY ARTS RELATED), WHAT WOULD IT BE?
I try to live a life without regret and without shame, because it’s best to accept the past for what it is and concentrate on living in this moment right now.

WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU CAME TO VCU?
Take advantage of the opportunities that not only VCU has to offer, but the Richmond art community in general.

HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU’VE COME TO VCU?
Through guidance of professors, taking a variety of different classes, and working hard, I have grown tremendously at VCU, more than I could have ever expected.

HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?
I wasn’t sure what to expect entering art school but my experience thus far has been exceedingly positive based on the classes, teachers, and students.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?
Reading and writing. I like to write a lot (screenplays, poetry, short stories, stream of consciousness) and even though it is outside of my art discipline it has a direct tie, because my films and animations always have a story tied to them.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?
There have been a lot of memories, but I would have to say the people I have met. It is great to be surrounded by admirable professors and students with similar interests and mindsets.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE YOU GRADUATE?
Completing my final animation project which is sort of a combination of everything I’ve learned here and been working on, and sharing the final with anyone willing to watch!

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
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WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU CAME TO VCU?
Take advantage of the opportunities that not only VCU has to offer, but the Richmond art community in general.
What do you hope to do after you graduate?
I know that I will continue making art. My dream is to create commercial sports work, mixing both of my passions of photography and sports, in order to fund conceptual projects.

Is there a faculty member that has particularly inspired you? How so?
VCUarts has a wonderful faculty members that continue to inspire and push their students, but I have to say that Shane Rocheleau has had one of the biggest impacts on my life here. After getting into the photography department, I had him for Digital Photography, and he immediately challenged us to use our art as a weapon to face our fears, and to photograph what we care about. That has created the biggest turning point in my work because he allowed me to realize the power art expression holds once we display ourselves within our work. He also instilled in me to continue working even when you don’t know what you are doing – to allow the process to create the product. Shane challenges all of his students technically and conceptually and he always reminds us that when you work hard you won’t fail.

If you could go back and do something differently in your life (not necessarily arts related), what would it be?
I would have taken my Spanish classes seriously growing up. I regret not knowing a second language knowing I was given so many opportunities to learn one.

What do you wish someone had told you before you came to VCU?
Funny thing is, I wish someone told me how horrible snow is. My freshman year was my first time experiencing snow and it wasn’t as fun as the movies make it seem. Anything else you’d like to include?
Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.

What has your work progressed since you’ve come to VCU?
I like to believe my work has turned a full 360 degrees since coming to VCU. I look at my past work and I am able to not only see how my work has grown artistically, technically, and conceptually, but my work displays how I have grown as a woman, where the content of images display my emotional and mental growth.

What interests you outside of your arts discipline?
Outside of photography, I love food, sports, and writing/performing poetry.

What is your favorite or best project that you’ve contributed to as a student?
My favorite project that I have contributed to as a student would have to be my “Lost but Not Forgotten” series which focused on missing person cases in Richmond in 1990. Although the content is rather sad, it is my favorite project because it allowed me to become vulnerable within my work. It allowed me to use my art as a way of healing, not only for myself, but for others. Suffering from a missing loved one, this project allowed me to share my story, while exploring other families that have suffered similar experiences.

How is your experience different from how you thought it would be?
I never knew how far my art could take me, and that in itself is different from what I expected. I thought that I would go to art school for four years in hopes of figuring out how to survive as a starving artist once I graduate. I was completely wrong, because this experience has given me opportunities I never imagined, and has shown me all the possibilities of what I can do with my art.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
I know that I will continue making art. My dream is to create commercial sports work, mixing both of my passions of photography and sports, in order to fund conceptual projects.

IS THERE A FACULTY MEMBER THAT HAS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED YOU HERE AT VCU?
VCUarts has a wonderful faculty members that continue to inspire and push their students, but I have to say that Shane Rocheleau has had one of the biggest impacts on my life here. After getting into the photography department, I had him for Digital Photography, and he immediately challenged us to use our art as a weapon to face our fears, and to photograph what we care about. That has created the biggest turning point in my work because he allowed me to realize the power art expression holds once we display ourselves within our work. He also instilled in me to continue working even when you don’t know what you are doing – to allow the process to create the product. Shane challenges all of his students technically and conceptually and he always reminds us that when you work hard you won’t fail.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR LIFE (NOT NECESSARILY ARTS RELATED), WHAT WOULD IT BE?
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Funny thing is, I wish someone told me how horrible snow is. My freshman year was my first time experiencing snow and it wasn’t as fun as the movies make it seem.

Anything else you’d like to include?
Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.
WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?

Never graduate! Be a student for life, no matter what your job title is. If you are not learning something new, you’re wasting your time. I also want to continue to grow as an artist, hopefully showing my work all over the world.

IS THERE A FACULTY MEMBER THAT HAS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED YOU? HOW SO?

Absolutely! The one and only Painting and Printmaking Professor Richard Roth! He’s never taught a student how to paint a picture, or what art even is. But he has taught an amazing number of artists how to think for themselves. He inspired me to see that well-conceived ideas are what create works of art, not necessarily a skilled hand with a paint brush in it.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?

Never graduate! Be a student for life, no matter what your job title is. If you are not learning something new, you’re wasting your time. I also want to continue to grow as an artist, hopefully showing my work all over the world.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?

I like reading about philosophy and psychology, looking at comics and watching movies. People watching at airports, train stations and shopping malls is also one of my favorite things to do when not making art, probably because it combines most of my interests in one activity.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?

Going to New York city during spring break to study Abstract Expressionism with Dr. Robert Hobbs’s Art History class. We delivered presentations about specific artworks at both The Museum of Modern Art and The Met, which was really stressful and caused me more anxiety than I would like to remember. We had studio visits with NYC artists Cecily Brown and Ahmed Alsoudani, and visited Jackson Pollock’s studio in The Hamptons on Long Island. Hands down one of the best experiences of my life!
HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU'VE COME TO VCU?
The progress that I have made since coming to VCU has been astounding. I have been able to refine my horn playing ability to a level that far exceeds what I was originally able to. This has enabled me to diversify my repertoire and collaborate with a variety of musicians.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU'VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?
My favorite project that I have contributed to was when I played Shostakovich’s 5th Symphony with the VCU Orchestra. All the hard work that each musician in orchestra had contributed paid off when the audience erupted in applause. There is an enormous amount of time and preparation that goes into every piece, so that feeling after the final note is played is priceless.

HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?
My experience is different than I thought it would be because I didn’t realize how many opportunities would present themselves. If I want to join an jazz group, a small chamber ensemble, or even a folk band – all of that is possible! Richmond is a hot spot for musicians who want to collaborate and create a new experience.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?
When I’m not focusing on music, I love to read philosophy, especially authors such as G.E. Moore and George Berkeley. I also love exploring Richmond and finding all the nooks and crannies like Belle Isle.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE YOU GRADUATE?
I hope to have an article published in the International Horn Society magazine dealing with misconceptions horn players have toward electronic music. The music professors at VCU have been very encouraging and assisted gratuitously during the research and writing of this article.

WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU CAME TO VCU?
I wish someone had told me to take advantage of everything VCU has to offer. I’m a senior, and I’m just started to utilize all the programs and opportunities that VCU offers. Whether that is getting resume building skills from the Writing Center or finding an internship through Career Services, these services are an invaluable part of your education and success.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO INCLUDE?
Collaborate! This is fundamental in so many ways.
Outside of the classroom, the most meaningful experience I have had was being the co-director of The VCU Fashion Show 2013 Cataclysm. It was incredibly rewarding and allowed me to grow tremendously as a leader, a student and a professional. It was an experience like none I have ever had. It was a blast and an example of how non-traditional materials. We could not use any fabric, buttons, string, yarn, etc. I made a dress with a duct tape underlay adorned with what looked like fabric. It was a blast and an example of how things that I had never imagined existed within the industry and am so excited that VCUarts granted me the opportunity to learn them.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?

Final Four! When the VCU Men’s Basketball team made it so far in their 2010/2011 season, the campus was buzzing! I remember being in the dorm, looking down out of my window and seeing hundreds of students flood the streets after VCU made the Sweet 16, then the Elite 8, and then the FINAL FOUR! No one could deny the school spirit that flooded the air and it was such a neat feeling to be a part of.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?

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HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?

I absolutely love it, live it, and breathe it. Most of my interests do lie within my arts discipline though. I love to be outside in the summertime and enjoy hanging out at the lake. On a normal day you would find me reading, sewing, crafting, or scrapbooking (and of course shopping, which is my favorite of them all). Most of my interests do lie within my arts discipline though. I absolutely love it, live it, and breathe it. I have a girly girl exterior and a tough as nails interior. I thoroughly enjoy sports and have played soccer for most of my life. I love to be outside in the summertime and enjoy hanging out at the lake.

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 HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU’VE COME TO VCU? 
Within my work I jump around many different mediums, which has served well with how the Sculpture + Extended Media department allows students to experiment and extend out into cross discipline practices.

 WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT? 
During the past year and a half I have been developing a feature length film. It’s been my most ambitious project, which has been independently produced outside of the institution. However through the progression of the project I have been receiving a lot of important and constructive feedback from my professors and peers.

 HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE? 
I can’t imagine what I would have experienced differently from developing ideas and creating work. Since becoming part of the Sculpture + Extended Media department I thought I would have been producing more sculptural and three dimensional work, but it has turned more into a focus towards video and musical production work.

 WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU? 
I have made so many great memories. This summer I interned for an artist in New York City, and I participated in Corin Hewitt’s (one of our professors) The Colour and the Landscape course in Vermont, which had ten students create a film in two weeks. Also, last year my band Young Adult Fiction played a Richmond showcase at SXSW, as well as a winter tour up the east coast.

 WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE YOU GRADUATE? 
I hope to complete my feature length film entitled Chopped Dead Ends in May, and hopefully premier it at the historic Byrd Theatre during the same month.

 WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE? 
I hope to create a feature length film trilogy, which Chopped Dead Ends would become the first installment. I applied for a Fulbright to create the second film in Iceland, which I am still awaiting to hear back if I will receive it. If not I will probably move up to Brooklyn and get artist assistant jobs.

 IS THERE A FACULTY MEMBER THAT HAS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED YOU? HOW SO? 
Almost all of my professors have inspired me in some way. Ester Partega taught me to be relentlessly ambitious. Corin Hewitt told me to relay from your influences. Eric McMaster has given me endless amounts of technical advice. Adrian Wong has helped me explore into structuring neo narratess. Richard Roth has said to make a piece in the easiest way possible so that to not waste any more time on it.

 IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR LIFE (NOT NECESSARILY ARTS RELATED), WHAT WOULD IT BE? 
Apply for internships during every summer since becoming a freshman.

 WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU CAME TO VCU? 
That the art school was completely different from the rest of the university.
HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU’VE COME TO VCU?
I feel that my work has really just blossomed. All my life I develop very clear obsessions about things, and the type of person I am is to explore a subject until I exhaust it. The art I was interested in while in high school is art I’ve returned to as a college student, though with much more discerning eye and skilled hand. I think most importantly, I have learned to make the art I want without feeling stupid or betraying who I am. I can make art about fairies, dolls, ghosts, personal issues, and many touchy subjects without fear here because not only is it a safe environment for creativity but I have been taught by my professors how to make art about anything in an intelligent way. In high school I would make art about ghosts, aliens, and demons without really understanding why; in college I make art about all of those and more and can fully write 20 pages detailing why I’m doing it and how.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?
My favorite project is my ongoing one, which concerns doll making. I discovered my passion for it as a sophomore here and the rest is history. Each year I try to make a few, and each time they get weirder and weirder. but I’m still enjoying it and can’t wait to see where I end up with it.

WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?
This might sound bad, but I didn’t think I would enjoy it nearly as much as I have. Three years have flown by and the entire time it has been passionate bliss. Getting up to go to the studio is easy, even at 8 am on a Saturday. In fact I actually miss being in the studio if I stay away too long. It’s definitely a lot of work but I don’t really need to motivate myself much because it’s what I want to do to begin with. So the whole time I’ve spent here has truly been a joy.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?
I have obsessions. And I don’t stop obsessing over them until I can’t anymore. Usually they fizzle out after a while, but here are some that are a constant in my life: studying and creating art dolls, mortuary science, Latin, the paranormal, obsessive compulsive behaviors, video games, studying witchcraft and folk magic as cultural anthropology, fashion (specifically collecting and altering clothing), and many more. I wish I could have a parallel life to fully explore all of these things, but alas.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?
Oh man. I think my favorite memory has got to be Art Foundation (AFO). That entire year was just amazing. Everything was fresh and new and exciting, and I was finally able to create the work I had always wanted to make. It was really the start of my journey here and I remember it as a time rife with possibilities, experiments, and new ideas. I also made a lot of friends, discovered more about myself, figured out what I wanted to do, and had a blast doing it. I don’t know if I would go back and do AFO again but so far it was one of my favorite years here. Everything now seems like an extension of that first year.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE YOU GRADUATE?
I want to begin creating the work that I know I can, but haven’t yet. Usually I am fairly dissatisfied with what I create and strive to constantly do better. So it would be nice to leave school with some dolls I am proud of. I think my next goal is to create a life size one out of clay, but we’ll see how that works out.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
I would love to begin teaching while maintaining my personal art practice. I’m not sure what grade level I would like to teach yet, but I am drawn to elementary and middle school. But who knows, in two years I may be doing something wildly different! But teaching is definitely my primary goal.

IS THERE A FACULTY MEMBER THAT HAS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED YOU? HOW SO?
I feel like I’ve learned a lot from all of my professors, even those who taught outside of VCUarts. It’s really hard to pick just one out of the many who have influenced me. I’ve been changed and shaped by all of them.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR LIFE (NOT NECESSARILY ARTS RELATED), WHAT WOULD IT BE?
I think about this sometimes. I wonder what my life would be like if I could redo my high school experience, just to see what would happen. But I think I’ve decided that it would still turn out with me going to art school.

WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU CAME TO VCU?
I wish someone had told me it was ok to relax. I think my notion of time in freshman year was on fast forward, and now I’ve realized that it’s OK to be slow once in a while. That project doesn’t need to be completed right this second, and it’s OK to take a night off for yourself or another project you’ve been neglecting. Taking things slowly has taken me a while to learn but now I find that I’m a lot less anxious and can really sink into what I’m doing here without just rushing through it.
HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU’VE COME TO VCU?
Since coming to VCU I had improved greatly as an illustrator and learned about how to apply these skills to a career. I also was exposed to working with many different materials which I’d previously had no experience with. This has had a positive impact on my work and opened many doors when approaching new projects.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?
I most enjoyed the projects I did in my Scientific Illustration class. Before, I had never spent so much time researching prior to beginning an art project and this class really made me realize how satisfying it is to learn while you create. It was the most exciting thing to learn so many new facts about a particular organism and then see that knowledge come to life in an image. The leap from knowledge to a tangible object was absolutely magical.

HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?
I had no idea that Richmond is as wonderful as it is. Richmond is such a vibrant, artistic, and intelligent city…a side I had never seen until I lived there. There are so many wonderful events and opportunities to get involved in the community. A perfect example is the First Fridays Artwalk – it was a wonderful way to start off the weekend in the beginning of each month and I learned a lot about what types of art are currently being shown in galleries! I never expected that and it became one of the things I most looked forward to each month.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?
I personally am fascinated by psychology, philosophy, science news, and history. I am curious about everything and I like learning about whatever I can. The more I know, the more I can respond to in my art.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?
My favorite memories of my time at VCU have to be from my experience on a study abroad program. I went to Glasgow over the summer of 2010 and had an absolute blast! It was my first time out of the country and I made some priceless friendships and memories with the other VCU students on the trip. Every day was a new adventure, my classes were really fun and interesting, and I had great company.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
I am currently working as an in-house graphic designer within an engineering company. I hope to eventually work in a design or advertising company as a graphic designer and/or an illustrator.

IS THERE A FACULTY MEMBER THAT HAS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED YOU? HOW SO?
I couldn’t possibly just pick one faculty member who has made the biggest impression on me, in fact there are very few teachers whose work and unique knowledge hasn’t had a profound effect on both me and my work. Within the subject of Communication Arts, there are so many subjects, and every teacher in the department had their own unique style, experience, and skill set to bring to their lesson plan. I appreciated learning each subject being from the faculty member(s) who understood it best.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR LIFE (NOT NECESSARILY ARTS RELATED), WHAT WOULD IT BE?
I would spend more time on my homework and more time reading, less time sleeping and procrastinating. That goes for both high school and college! Another thing...I wish I bought more of the Adobe creative suite while I still could have gotten the student discount!
MAGGIE HORAN  
theatre

HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU’VE COME TO VCU?
My work has progressed immensely since I have come here. As a senior I now feel completely confident and ready to go out into the real world and audition with professionals. The faculty here does such a great job of teaching how to be a professional that once you have graduated, you are ready to take on the business.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?
One of my favorite shows I’ve done at VCU is Avenue Q. I played Kate Monster, which had been my dream role since I was sixteen. It happened in Fall of 2012, which meant it was my last show at VCU, so it was very meaningful to me. I got to learn the art of puppetry as well as work with Patti D’beck and some really incredible grad students. It was an amazing experience.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?
My favorite memory at VCU was when my senior theater class presented their capstone presentations. We basically had to give a gift to the class and each one of my classmates came up with something so unique (for example a song, rap, Shakespeare quote, slideshow, etc.). We all sat in that room crying, laughing, and hugging for hours. It was a really beautiful moment and one that will not be forgotten.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE YOU GRADUATE?
I just hope I feel confident and ready for whatever the world has in store for me once I graduate.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?
Even though I sometimes feel like acting, dancing and singing are the only things I truly am passionate about, I also really enjoy hiking, being surrounded by family and friends, exercising, and going on spontaneous adventures!

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY OF MEETING SOMEBODY IN YOUR FIELD?
I have learned so much from each member of the faculty in the Theatre department that I find it hard to pick out one in particular. However, I would have to say that one of my most inspiring teachers I’ve had here at VCU is grad student Valerie Accetta. She cares so deeply for her students and genuinely wants every single one of us to do well. She is so supportive, talented and kind. She has been a great role model to me these past two years.

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How has your work progressed since you’ve come to VCU?

My writing and research skills are at an all-time high, whereas my love for the arts and learning remain immense.

What is your favorite or best project that you’ve contributed to as a student?

This semester, I’m taking ARTH 489: Islamic Art of Spain with Dr. Schreffler. In May, we’re traveling to the University of Córdoba in Spain for a week. We’ll have the chance to see in person the great buildings we’ve been studying – a chance that I’ve never had before. The paper I am writing for the course now will be my final paper before I graduate, and I’m putting everything I know and have learned into it.

How is your experience different from how you thought it would be?

I definitely didn’t consider having the opportunity to study in another country; it’s the best surprise!

What interests you outside of your arts discipline?

My favorite thing to do in my free time is experiment in the kitchen – I love baking, cooking, and trying out new recipes. I also love exploring Richmond and spending time with my family.

What do you hope to do after you graduate?

I have been considering multiple ventures after graduation; I would love to go back to school for a Master’s and a certificate to teach. I am also interested in Library Sciences and Museum work. Wherever I end up, I know that I will return to school to obtain a Master’s degree.

Is there a faculty member that has particularly inspired you? How so?

Dr. Chapman is not only my advisor, but I also took her German Expressionism course during my semester here. I really love the way she teaches an art history class – I think her style is the way I learn best. She is always willing to listen and seems to have an infinite knowledge of contemporary art, which is my preferred focus.

If you could go back and do something differently in your life (not necessarily arts related), what would it be?

Although I think about this often, I believe that every choice I have made in my life has gotten me exactly where I am now, and I wouldn’t change a thing.

What do you wish someone had told you before you came to VCU?

I didn’t realize how big of a deal VCU is in Richmond – Richmonders really love their Rams!

Marley Phillips
Art History
HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU’VE COME TO VCU?
My work has progressed immensely. When I started here I barely knew what graphic design is, and now I’m ready to go out and work in my field. I’ve also had several internships in Richmond which have helped me bridge the gap between being a student and a professional.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?
My favorite project I’ve done is an independent study. I designed a book about Raleigh Workshop, which is a fashion design studio in Raleigh, NC.

HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?
When you’re just starting out, it’s hard to imagine what the day-to-day life of being a design student is like. It seems like there’s going to be a magic transformation where you suddenly become a good designer, but that’s not the case. It’s baby steps. Every day you learn a little more and get a little closer.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS AFTER GRADUATION?
I want to work in a graphic design studio for a few years. Later in my career I want to be a graphic design professor.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?
First Fridays Artwalks are really great. The one I went to at the beginning of my senior year is probably my favorite memory of my time at VCU. Every time I turned around I saw someone I recognized, and it hit me how cool it is to be a part of this community of artists and designers in Richmond. It’s amazing to live in a city that’s so supportive of the arts.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
I want to work in a graphic design studio for a few years. Later in my career I want to be a graphic design professor.

IS THERE A FACULTY MEMBER THAT HAS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED YOU HOW SO?
Sandy Wheeler and John Malinoski have both been very influential during my time at VCU. Both professors are very good at striking a balance between giving me guidance and trusting me to figure some things out on my own.

WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU CAME TO VCU?
Get out and explore! There are so many cool people and places in this area.

WHAT HAVE YOU DISCOVERED ABOUT RICHMOND THAT YOU DIDN’T KNOW BEFORE COMING TO VCU?
I’ve discovered far too many things to list. Every time I leave my house I notice something new, and I think that’s one of the best things about Richmond.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A NEW VCU ARTS STUDENT?
Don’t hold yourself back by thinking you can’t accomplish something. One of the biggest lessons I learned in Art Foundation is to dream big and then figure out how to make it happen. You’ll make far more interesting art that way.
HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU’VE COME TO VCU?
I came to VCU hoping to find a way to convey my craft in a manner that would help others. After spending three years in the Interior Design department I have been able to not only learn how to use my artistic ability to create healthier environments but also to expand on my conceptual ideas and communicate my design intent. I’ve learned the significant value of communicating your ideas both visually and verbally and I’ve made it my goal to hone those skills while focusing on my craft as well. The department has also encouraged me to explore different mediums such as watercolor, computer and physical modeling, sketching, and even graphic techniques to further develop my skills.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?
My favorite project has definitely been my research grant effort to create RVA’s first Parklet. The grant allowed me to travel to San Francisco to do research on my topic which consists of creating green areas around the city by taking over unused spaces such as no parking zones. I have been able to develop prototypical models as well as collaborate with Storefront for Community Design in an attempt to find someone interested in donating a space to build it on. The project has been featured in R Home magazine and continues to draw positive attention. It’s great to see VCU arts provide resources for people to pursue personal research ideas.

HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?
To be quite honest I wasn’t expecting to fall in love with design as much as I have. Interior Design is definitely a time consuming major because it challenges you to approach a problem in so many different ways and there is never a definite path to follow. Coming into the discipline I never thought I would find this extensive process of exploration so satisfying. It’s gratifying to create a healthy space for your client, especially when designing for the community.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?
I love traveling and learning about different cultures. In fact, I always wish I could travel more often and had the time to learn different languages.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?
My favorite memory would definitely be sophomore year. That year I developed my closest friendships with my classmates, especially since we were all new to Interior Design and there was this big sense of community in our studio. The allnighters we spent together that year were the best bonding experiences.

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WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE YOU GRADUATE?
Before I graduate I hope to get to a point where I can build my Parklet in Richmond. I also hope to have a senior project that showcases all of the skills I’ve learned throughout my undergraduate career and becomes that project that will hopefully get me the job I want. Lastly, I would like to spend as much time with my friends since it’s very likely that we will go on different paths after graduating.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
After graduation I hope to move to another city. I’ve always loved going to new places and I am hopeful that I will find a job at an architecture/design firm where I can continue to grow as a designer. In the near future I would like to continue my studies in grad school.

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WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?
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WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU CAME TO VCU?
I wish someone had told me not to stress out so much. It has been hard to go through art school while working over 20 hours a week and it would’ve been nice to hear that it is doable. Some of us are not lucky enough to go through school without having a job and it would have been nice to have someone reassure it. So here I am telling you that as long as you’re passionate about your discipline you can find a way to balance work and school and still create amazing work.

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HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU’VE COME TO VCU?
I am definitely a more critical choreographer, spending four years questioning my work and that of other choreographers has led me to a greater understanding of my craft. As a performer and a dancer I have changed so much. Purely discussing technique, I have grown a lot since freshman year. The understanding of my anatomy and the control one has over the physical form has been amplified through my time here at VCU. I have a more integrated understanding and way of moving. Dance training is comprehensive and so I have greater understanding of the world as well.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?
I have been given the opportunity to work with guest artists Stephanie Batten Bland and Kate Weare and those were very exciting and trying projects. I learned so much from both choreographers and their dancers. The time they spent at VCU was a taste of the professional concert dance world. Stephanie taught me a huge lesson in self respect and helped me find ownership of who I am through her work. Kate pushed me to expand my capabilities as a dancer, both technically and emotionally. Both processes were huge in shaping the artist that I am now.

HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?
Honestly, coming in my expectations were to dance, dance and get better, dance some more and get a job after school was over. I could say one difference is that when I arrived at VCU I wanted to jump immediately into choreography and define myself by the work that I made; lately however I want to perform and do so professionally. Dancer is how I am defining myself, the title Choreographer can come later. So my prediction of what would happen is falling into place, assuming the transition to NY goes well.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?
My mother is a printmaker, so I have grown up around the fine arts and I love to see new works. I have passion for history and reading and I love to analyze film. I think that video games are a burgeoning new form of art and are beginning to define story telling differently. My roommate is a 3D animator and we often are discussing ways that animation and dance could synthesize to create more believable worlds in both games and film. Never stop reading, there is an infinite amount of information out there to take in and only so much time to do it. Books, whether they are travel diaries, fiction or fantasy have always been a source of creativity for me.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?
My favorite memory here at VCU would be Johnson Hall freshman year, I have never lived with such an amiable group of people. The art colony was a close-knit group that year; we did pretty much everything together. That experience has led to some long lasting friendships which I cherish. It also has spawned collaborations.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
I am moving to NY after I graduate and would really like to find a company job dancing. My long term goal is to not have to work a second job to sustain myself. I want to be a full time dancer and choreographer.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A NEW VCU ARTS STUDENT?
Never be afraid to try new things. Seek the road less traveled and do so with a friend. It is OK to be supportive of your peers. A positive environment fosters better work. Learn from your failures as they often can teach more than your success.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE?
“Tanz, Tanz, sonst sind wir verloren 
Dance, dance otherwise we are lost.”
- Pina Bausch
I was always a pretty strong seamstress, but with the help of VCU instructors I have become equipped with patternmaking skills. I have made huge strides with my illustrations, and that is all thanks to Noelle Rose, and Hawa Samedah.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?
My favorite project is my senior collection. We were given the opportunity to design whatever, and I mean whatever, you want for the last year. I am in the midst of making four complete maternity looks.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?
My favorite memory at VCU would hands down have to be the fashion show last year. It was the first time I have seen my garments on a runway, and to hear people talking about my garments still makes me proud.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE YOU GRADUATE?
Before I leave VCU I want to see if I can be a part of one of the murals that RVA keeps adding to the lovely buildings around the city.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?
I love chemistry, and thought about that as a major, but knew that I would be upset if I was unable to find cures for diseases. Also, I enjoy any type of exercise, especially gymnastics.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR LIFE (NOT NECESSARILY ARTS RELATED), WHAT WOULD IT BE?
I would have taken more art based classes in high school, and have looked into helping more with the costumes for the theatre department.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR LIFE (NOT NECESSARILY ARTS RELATED), WHAT WOULD IT BE?
I wish someone would have told me to make friends with someone with Shafer Dining Hall swipes.

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WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
After I graduate, I hope to move to Seattle and work for an eco-knitwear company or become part of a maternity wear company where knits are primarily used.

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IS THERE A FACULTY MEMBER THAT HAS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED YOU? HOW SO?
It is hard to pick just one! Ms. Lee was the one professor who told me to go for anything, and everything. I would not be the same designer without her, and I would have never gotten the internship of a lifetime.

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SEAN DONLON

craft/material studies

HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU'VE COME TO VCU?
I can’t say specifically but I remember my first class “Drawing” and thinking by the end of it that it should have been called “Seeing class.” I learned so much it change my visual perception of sight. I went from drawing “flat” sketchbook pictures to ending my semester with a 13 foot 3d portrait of a person in a tux riding a skateboard.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?
Just being a student and figuring out life with the peers I met at VCU.

HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?
I went from being a person who wanted to get a degree so they could be done with school as soon as possible, to being a person who finished their degree, received it, and re-registered right afterward as an independent student so I could continue to learn.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU OUTSIDE OF YOUR ARTS DISCIPLINE?
Marine biology, biology, language, communication, travel, business, fishing, snow sports, missing socks, politics, teaching, puzzles, life, social issues, outer space, foreign policy, craft, DIY, hockey, fire, time, blue, PJ pants, comedy, the way a kitten yawns, the meaning of life, etc. I have many interests.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?
Waking up in a foreign country and having the realization that if I had never gone back to school I wouldn’t be at this exact location/spot in life that I was that very moment.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
I remember meeting someone my first semester and telling them that when we graduate we should have a show together. Now this person is a good friend of mine and also my partner in a studio/gallery I opened up this February. We’re actually having our first self-curated show in the spring.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR LIFE (NOT NECESSARILY ARTS RELATED), WHAT WOULD IT BE?
Nothing. I ended up going to VCU and ended up in the right place. Maybe I would try to not graduate as quickly as I did (so I could stay at VCU and learn more).

WHAT DO YOU WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU CAME TO VCU?
Don’t stress out, it will be OK. Trust me.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU’D LIKE TO INCLUDE?
I don’t have any regrets, not one, since attending VCU.
WHAT HAS IMPRESSED YOU MOST ABOUT YOUR VCUARTS EXPERIENCE?
I’ve been impressed by the amount of work and dedication that my classmates and I are capable of. The Cinema program pushes us to do our best, and we have met the challenge on each and every production we undertake.

HOW HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE YOU’VE COME TO VCU?
I’ve learned a great deal about working closely with a team. As a filmmaker, it is crucial to be able to communicate and work well with others. By increasingly spending time on teams with dedicated classmates, we are able to pull off shots and films that we would never be able to do alone.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE OR BEST PROJECT THAT YOU’VE CONTRIBUTED TO AS A STUDENT?
My favorite project occurred the summer of 2013, when I had the privilege of being able to operate the camera on VCUarts Cinema’s first short film shot on anamorphic lenses for an aspect ratio of 2.35:1. It was a challenge but I worked closely with the professors of the department and learned a great deal about camera movement and managing a crew while operating a beautiful film.

HOW IS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?
I never thought that I would want to direct a film when I entered film school; I only wanted to work with the camera. As I progressed, I found directing to be an extremely intriguing aspect of the cinematic process. I am now in preproduction for my first short film ever, without VCUarts Cinema, I may not have ever been willing to try it out.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SO FAR AT VCU?
We had just wrapped on our sophomore film, and a friend and I were driving one of our actors home. It had been a really long night shoot, meaning we had stayed up all night to get night scenes shot. As we drove across the Robert E. Lee bridge back into Richmond, we got to watch the sun rise over the river. We finally were able to relax and enjoyed discussing the shoot until collapsing into our beds at 8 a.m. to get some much needed rest.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE YOU GRADUATE?
I hope to study abroad and direct a film by the time I graduate.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER YOU GRADUATE?
I hope to travel and make documentaries. I’d like to maybe create a small production company and work with a few classmates on small independent projects for a while. Eventually, I’ll head to grad school after working for a few years.

IS THERE A FACULTY MEMBER THAT HAS PARTICULARLY INSPIRED YOU? HOW SO?
Several faculty members have had an enormous impact on my education and life goals. I took a documentary class my freshman year through the honors college taught by a graphic design professor that changed the way I thought about film and what you could do with it. Her class opened my eyes to the true power of the medium of film as a potential means to immerse the audience in someone else’s experience. Knowing that film can do things like that helped me treat my major with greater reverence; film is a delicate yet powerful tool for interpersonal communication.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR LIFE (NOT NECESSARILY ARTS RELATED), WHAT WOULD IT BE?
I would definitely spend more time in other disciplines. I am interested in geopolitics, and interning at the United Nations or an embassy would introduce me to the interworking of contemporary international relations. Perhaps I would eventually become a diplomat; being close to international change is extremely intriguing to me.

WHAT DO YOU THINK SOMETHING HAS TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU CAME TO VCU?
I wish that I had been told to explore the city more. There is so much that Richmond has to offer that lies just under the surface. I wish I had gotten off campus more often, and explored downtown and other parts of Richmond. The more I experience and find out about this city definitely affects the films I make and want to make because I learn more about where I live and how I fit into the world.
1. Be prepared to work hard and open your mind to new experiences and learning opportunities.
2. Befriend your professors. They are wonderful people who can offer you a ton of advice and help when you need it.
3. Do not burn bridges with anyone, including classmates. Who knows? You may need to network with them to get a job one day.
4. Do abroad! Study abroad as much as you can and start early. It’s a fabulous experience and hosts tremendous learning opportunities.
5. Don’t forget that this is FUN!

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**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A NEW VCUarts STUDENT?**

**My physics professor once told me, “if you’re making straight A’s in college, you’re doing something wrong.” I firmly believe this. As an incoming student, don’t obsess over perfection because perfection is a plateau. Give your best and recognize growth as real achievement.**

**ALEXANDER BARTON • ART FOUNDATION**

**Ask a million questions while in school. Having access to people smarter than you who are willing to answer them is an opportunity you will regret not taking advantage of later in life!**

**JASON KEITH • PAINTING & PRINTMAKING**

**Live in the moment and take advantage of all of the neat projects that are offered to you.**

**MAGGIE HORNY • THEATRE**

**The advice I would give to students is to work hard and doors will open. In college it is easy to become distracted, but once you focus on creating art that is true to yourself and work hard towards mastering your craft, the possibilities of where your art will take you is endless.**

**BRONICHA TROJEEE • PHOTOGRAPHY & FILM**

**Take advantage of the AFD program and find and discover what you are truly passionate about! Always make sure your heart is in whatever it is that you plan to do.**

**ALEX GALLUS • LIGHTING DESIGN**

**Don’t take your classes for granted. Your teachers are your teachers for a reason; even if you don’t like the style or subject matter being taught in a certain class, keep in mind you are there to learn and you will become more well-rounded by going outside your comfort area. Learn from your classmate. Even people whose work you may not be impressed with at first glance may have an excellent critique that could greatly improve your work. Don’t ever let pride get in the way of some good advice.**

**KELLY McLEON • COMMUNICATION ARTS**

**It’s simple: Don’t stress the little things, enjoy it while you can, and take advantage of all the resources you have at VCU.**

**MARLEY PHILLIPS • ART HISTORY**

**My advice would be to find what you love doing and dissect as much of it as you can. Once you have discovered all of its parts then start putting them back together while incorporating your own point of view. Definitely be willing to put the time and effort in doing so and in the end your work will convey a unique perspective and become your own.**

**Ricardo Hernandez-Perez • INTERIOR DESIGN**

**Never be afraid to try new things. Seek the road less traveled and do so with a friend. It is OK to be supportive of your peers. A positive environment fosters better work. Learn from your failures as they often can teach more than your successes.**

**Ryan Smith • DANCE & CHOREOGRAPHY**

**Talk. Talk to everyone you meet because you never know who they may become, or how they can assist you with your work now or years from then.**

**Sarah Brown • FASHION DESIGN**

**Work hard, play hard, enjoy the ride.**

**Sean Donlin • CRAFT/MATERIAL STUDIES**

**Do not limit yourself to your major. Take classes you wouldn’t see yourself taking. Push yourself to take difficult classes, and take advantage of general education requirements to work on crucial skills like critical thinking and writing. Put in the extra effort, and you’ll get more out of the college experience, be it academic or artistic.**

**Taylor Robinson • COSTUME **

**Never set limits. You define your own growth and as soon as you set a limit – then you have capped your own growth. If you come in without any limits, the professors at VCU can utilize this potential and take you to new heights.**

**Josue Castellanos • MUSIC**

**40**
The commitment that everyone pours into their art. VCUarts is a community built on hard work and enthusiasm rather than raw talent. I think this is what sets us apart, we do not expect to just do fantastic things… we work until they come to fruition.

JOE PAULK » SCULPTURE + EXTENDED MEDIA

This has impressed me most about your VCUarts experience? Being surrounded by so many talented individuals has impressed me the most about this experience. Through the various programs I have found support systems in different artistic fields that have not only challenged me, but strengthened my thinking and artistic approach.

BREONCA TROFORT » PHOTOGRAPHY & FILM

I would say some of the professors here have been the most impressive, admirable, wise people I have ever met and opened my eyes in a big impact on me.

RYAN SMITH » DANCE & CHOREOGRAPHY

I love my professors, and they truly love me too. The faculty and professors care about their students and push them to be the best they can be. That is so important on such a big campus. It would be so much easier for faculty and professors to just treat everyone as a number, but they do the opposite, which has really encouraged me to do well and be the best I can be.

JESSICA DECKER » FASHION MERCHANDISING

I think the resources available to students are pretty amazing. As a graphic design student, I find the special collections at the library, the letterpress facilities, proximity to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the speakers the school attracts are all really interesting sources for inspiration.

MOLLY McMANUS » GRAPHIC DESIGN

What has impressed me the most is the shear dedication students and faculty have for their chosen majors. In Craft/Material Studies, there is a huge sense of perfection, dedication, and craftsmanship — if your cup isn’t thrown properly, you had better make another one, and another, and another one still, until it’s perfect. And I’ve found that this notion of perfection within Craft is much less daunting and much more inspiring to me, because it really pushes me to make more precise, detailed, and technically proficient work. I think this ideals carry across the school.

JORDAN HICKS » ART EDUCATIONS

I’ve been impressed most by the benefits of having small class sizes. Not only have they allowed for more one-on-one instruction from professors, but also created a tight-knit community between my fellow classmates and me. It is great to see the evolution of the relationships that you build with your peers after spending three years together.

REYMOND HERNANDEZ-PEREZ » INTERIOR DESIGN

The hands-on experience I have received here has been outstanding — from museums and galleries, to my internship at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond and VCU have offered me skills and training that I otherwise would not have had the opportunity to obtain elsewhere.

MABLEY PHILLIPS » ART HISTORY

What has impressed you most about your VCUarts experience? Knowing that my Department has the best faculty that VCU offers, where so invested in your development. They become your mentors and don’t necessarily focus on what you do, but what you are capable of doing.

JESSICA DECKER » FASHION MERCHANDISING

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ALEXANDER bARTON » ART FOUNDATION

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REYMOND HERNANDEZ-PEREZ » INTERIOR DESIGN

The dance training at this school is so stellar. It took going out to festivals and summer programs to really illustrate that for me. In VCU Dance, our teachers are not just training movers and proper technique, they are emphasizing well-rounded artists with creative minds and distinct voices. Outside of the department, I lived in the artist colony at Johnson Hall my freshman year, which is one of my favorite experiences from college. I still live with a few of the guys that I met on that floor and our experiences in school have led to collaborative work in other fields of art. It was an important coming of age moment in my life and the other artists that I lived with had a big impact on me.

RICK PAYNE » DANCE & CHOREOGRAPHY

I am most impressed with the projects that we get to work on. I have had the opportunity to make skirts for trays, be a part of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) Competition, and collaborate with other art disciplines.

SARAH BRODY » FASHION DESIGN

The amazing teachers and faculty opened my eyes in ways I cannot describe. I came with a mindset of what I wanted to do at school, and with the teachers opening my true potential and challenging me, I was able to learn how to exceed that tenfold and am now doing things I did not earlier think possible.

SEAN DONLON » CRAFT/MATERIAL STUDIES

The talent and diversity of both the students and faculty. Hands down, this is the secret ingredient at VCUarts. You do not want to attend an art school where everyone agrees with your views and ideas about art, instead you want to be challenged in what you think art is and how it’s made.

JASON KEITH » PAINTING & PRINTMAKING

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JASON KEITH » PAINTING & PRINTMAKING

The massive amount of support by fellow students and teachers. I am amazed by how supportive, passionate and generous the stu- dents and faculty are. I am amazed by how supportive, passionate and generous the stu- dents and faculty are. I am amazed by how supportive, passionate and generous the stu- dents and faculty are. I am amazed by how supportive, passionate and generous the stu- dents and faculty are.