

Kylie Grow, klg4yc
Outcome report, Miller Art Scholars Mini Grant
January 2015

Results: Opening of “Decadence in Havana, Cuba” on December 4th, 2015.

My photo essay “Decadence in Havana Cuba” opened on December 4th, 2015 in the third floor hallway of Ruffin Hall with help from a Miller Arts Scholars Mini Grant. The costs of the opening included replacement mats for some of the photographs, funds for some refreshments to attract visitors, professional printing of an museum-quality artists statement to place at the beginning of my essay, and PlexiGlass and gallery clip frames for each image. This framing technique turned out very minimal and elegant as the PlexiGlass seemed to float over the images without the borders of a frame, and it was the most cost-effective way to protect and display the photographs.

This grant allowed me to have the experience of my first solo exhibition of my artwork. This is especially unique and important to my development as an artist as I am not a studio art major, and therefore will not have a thesis show in the near future. The show may have been my only opportunity to curate and hang my own exhibition in my lifetime.

By arranging and hanging the images on my own, I learned much about the intensive nature of putting together such an exhibition. Hanging a show is no easy task. I learned about what it takes to prep a wall for hanging, and how to calculate where to place nails on the wall. The whole process took two days, but it turned out lovely and professional-looking thanks to the mentorship and advice of Professor Chan. She alerted me when the wall was beginning to look too busy (the original plan was to arrange 16 images in a linear formation across the wall) and gave me ideas on other configurations to consider. What resulted was the layout shown in the first image at the bottom of this document, consisting of 15 images grouped according to format (portrait or landscape) and content.

I consider the opening of the show to have been quite successful. I advertised the opening on show cards posted around grounds, via e-mails to related UVA listservs and promotion on social media with a Facebook event. At least sixty people passed through over the course of two hours, and many stayed a half hour past the official end of the opening to discuss the images and my process. Many of my professors, close friends, and family members stopped by, along with quite a few people that I did not know previously. Many more stopped by the show during the days after the opening and gave me feedback. The ability to show my work at school to these people really supported the original goal of the project to spark conversation about U.S.-Cuba relations and Capitalist and Socialist dogmatic arguments about economic prosperity. I had more meaningful conversations about U.S.-Cuba politics in two and a half hours than I have had since returning from my semester abroad. I hope I also caused some viewers to question the romanticization of resources and culture in Havana common in today’s media coverage

of Havana. I saw that many of my peers and family members understood more easily the scarcity I have struggled to describe to them over the past few months by seeing my photographs, and following the narrative of my essay.

Thanks to the funds provided for the frames and extra mats, I have been afforded the opportunity to display the entire body of work in the Student Art Gallery space designed by the Student Arts Council in Clemons library for a full year. This is the long-term opportunity that Professor Chan, Professor Rasbury and I spent so much time seeking out during the fall semester of 2015. I was able to confidently apply to show in the library because I knew I would not have to bear the cost of having my images framed. The decision to apply was also made easier by the reinforcement that the UVA community values my work after my show.

My budget requested funds to mat and frame other images from my Cuba negatives that were not included in the essay. I ordered those materials with those funds, and room was made in my budget to order chemistry to support further processing of my negatives in the darkroom. My parents were kind enough to donate food to my opening, so the funds allotted for cheese and fruit trays and money saved on other materials instead went towards more developer, stop bath and fixer to print more of my photos from my semester abroad.

I thank the Miller Arts Scholars for their support of my art opening. The process of creating this body of work and showing it to my peers has been the most grueling, intensive and rewarding efforts I have put towards my art thus far. It would not have been as meaningful and successful without your support. Thank you much, and I am already eager to start a new project. The confidence and professionalism I have gained from this experience are invaluable.



A shot of the full wall of photographs, arranged with the advice of Professor Chan.



Kylie posing with the first photo in the series.

DEC 04 Decadence in Havana, Cuba: A Photo Essay

Public · Hosted by Kylie Grow

Hosting

Friday, December 4, 2015 at 5 PM - 7 PM
about 1 month ago

Ruffin Hall, 3rd Floor

"Decadence in Havana, Cuba" is a 16-image film photography photo essay by Kylie Grow. This body of work was shot, processed in the darkroom and assembled over the course of nine months, starting with a spring semester abroad at the University of Havana. Amongst other subliminal questions, the essay explores the state of social infrastructure as seen on the urban streets of Cuba, and how Marxist-Leninist socialism might impact this state.

The essay will be displayed starting Monday, November 30th through Saturday, December 12th in Ruffin Hall. Please join us for the official opening on December 4th.

Kristine, Brian and 40 other friends went

33	52	158
interested	went	invited

SUGGESTED EVENTS [See More](#)

The Facebook event invitation, indicating interest in the opening on social media. Awareness for the event was raised through e-mail, fliers and show cards posted around Grounds as well.