

Reflective Essay

In consideration for the Spring 2014 Hannon Library Undergraduate Research award, I am submitting a two-part project originally assigned in Dr. Noreen's Art of the Northern Renaissance course. The assignment included an in-depth research analysis paper on a work of art produced during the European Northern Renaissance as well as a visual podcast presenting a condensed version of the information in our papers. We were given a select group of works by various artists of the Northern Renaissance to choose from and I chose the option of reviewing a small group of prints by the esteemed German artist of the Northern Renaissance, Albrecht Dürer. A few years prior I had seen an exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts that included a number of Dürer's prints and engravings and I became completely entranced by the intricate symbolism and sense of mystery expressed in his work. After doing some preliminary research on the well-known engraving *Melancholia I*, I became curious about it as I found that there was a substantial amount of debate between art historians surrounding the intended meaning of the work.

To begin my research I accessed the Hannon Library website and used the library catalog's search tool in order to find a few books that would provide me with a broad sense of Dürer's body of work. There were a large number of books in the library's collection on Dürer, but I found three to be particularly beneficial to my research. These included *Dürer*, by Jeffery Chipps Smith, *Saturn and Melancholy* by Raymond Klibanksy, and *Albrecht Dürer and His Legacy* by Giulia Bartrum. In the continuation of my research, I found the Hannon Library online research databases to be the most valuable. In order to search the databases efficiently, I utilized the option of searching by subject, selecting Art History from the Arts and Humanities

section. Other than the books from the library, my sources came entirely from the database search engines JSTOR and EBSCOhost; specifically the subdivision of EBSCOhost, Art Full Text (H.W. Wilson), which I was led to through the Art History research section on the library database search page.

At first I did have a bit of trouble narrowing my research as I was finding a diverse assortment of articles discussing the work but there were a number that did not have a full-text version available or were not from a peer reviewed source. To speed the pace of my research and find only sources that would actually be of use, I selected the boxes on the database search pages that limited the results to only available, full-text articles from scholarly journals. My thesis began developing through the various sources I was finding, but was affected substantially by Wojciech Balus' article, "Dürer's *Melencolia I*: Melancholy and the Undecidable", which required me to go back and search more narrowly using specific key words relating to the argument I intended to make. The library's extensive access to database search engines and the tools provided on the databases proved to be very convenient because I was able to save my searches to a folder on each database and find articles relevant to the others I had already found.

The visual podcast presentation I prepared supplementary to the project was greatly aided with resources provided by LMU and the Hannon Library. The same research was used for this portion, but in learning how to create a successful and appealing podcast the class was provided with a workshop session in the library, during which IT faculty member, Matt Frank showed us the steps and tools necessary for creation. Without this initial lesson and the help of the Student Innovation Lab it is likely that I would have struggled immensely with recording my voice and formatting the sound to align properly with the PowerPoint slides.

The in-depth research required for this project helped me become more familiar with the library's resources and the knowledge I gained from the experience has proved quite useful in subsequent research papers. By using narrow search terms related to other articles I had already found, I guaranteed that my research stayed focused and therefore, developed a unique and concentrated idea from the body of materials I gathered.