

02 March 2024

Dear Mentored Research Award Committee,

I am pleased to offer this letter supporting Riley (Red) Klug's research for their project, "*Los Desaparecidos: Photographing Memory and Violence in Post-Dictatorship Argentina.*" Red first conceived of this project in the spring of 2023 as they wanted to explore it for their Senior Capstone with me the following spring (2024) and develop certain aspects of it in my ARHS 393: History of Photography in the fall of 2023. They also worked with Professor Leight and me in crafting an abstract that was selected for one of the highly competitive undergraduate slots at the SECAC Conference in October of 2023. SECAC is the second largest professional Academic Art and Art History conference in the U.S. It is significant to note that Red has conducted research on three separate but related phases of this project rather than just repeating or rearranging the same information and using the same artists and images. Additionally, they will be presenting their research coming out of their ARHS 401: Senior Thesis, capstone work, in San Diego in April 2024 at the National Conference of Undergraduate Research (NCUR) in Long Beach, California with the WVU Honors College.

This past fall in my History of Photography course, Red brought their research into alignment with their social justice goals and passion for studying Latin America. In their photobook project, "*Post-Conflict Photography in Latin America: The Cases of Argentina and Chile,*" they investigated memory and loss both at the time and through later photographic work of both Argentinian and Chilean artists who expressed the trauma and loss felt by families of "The Disappeared." The ramifications are ongoing and are still being grappled with in contemporary art as Red demonstrated through first-hand knowledge. In the midst of the semester during the Fall Break, they went to Chile and visited various exhibitions, which they brought into their well-researched project.

Their photobook thesis argued that although photographic artists in both countries were bringing attention to the injustices perpetuated upon citizens, Argentine artists used more representative photographs while Chilean artists created more abstract references. Ultimately, the importance of the individual was stressed as a way of mitigating against erasure, even as they were detained, exiled, or disappeared by their own governments.

For their SECAC paper, Red concentrated on the work of three Argentine photographers, Julio Pantoja, Marcela Brodsky, and Graciela Sacco. Red highlighted the poignancy of the losses by Pantoja in his series, "*The Sons and Daughters, Tucumán. Twenty Years Later,*" stating, "Pantoja's works seek to memorialize the parents of the sons and daughters in each photo, perhaps for the first time having a photo with their parents." Red also studied the photobook, "*Buena Memoria,*" Brodsky produced, "Through this photo essay, Brodsky tells the stories of the victims and survivors he knew, memorializing them through the publication and visibility of the disappeared and their stories." All three artists documented the aftermath of the dictatorship as it impacted the lives of the families of *los desaparecidos*.

Red is currently extending their research in my capstone course and pushing themselves to find primary sources, which they are translating from Spanish. They have done a tremendous amount of work, following up on single image located through numerous Google searches to learn about the artist, diving deeper to find exhibitions or even a single notice of about the artist's or documentarian's work.

In anticipation of a trip to New York City, Red located a treasure trove of copied documents in the Museum of Modern Art archives and has been translating them to shed light on what was happening during the dictatorship and Malvinas War and how photographic artists responded. Red is just over the halfway point in their thesis and has written fourteen new pages thus far for this last phase of their project.

Not only has Red’s research into Latin American photography related to political dictatorships and memorialization been commended through acceptance into two conferences but it was also a factor in their being endorsed by WVU for the Rhodes Scholarship. In addition to being an Art History major, they have a second major in Anthropology, and three minors, and have maintained a 4.0 GPA while also being an Honors’ student. Additionally, they have participated in two field study programs, one in Italy and one in Belize, and have earned the Global Mountaineer Certificate. As of this date, they have been accepted into two MA programs in Latin American Studies and are waiting to hear from two others.

I met Red Klug before they even matriculated into WVU, and it’s has been gratifying to work with them and watch them mature as a scholar and student, and I look forward to hearing about their work and career trajectory in the future.

Sincerely,



Dr. Rhonda Reymond

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February 28, 2024

Dear CCA Mentored Research Awards Selection Committee,

This letter accompanies the CCA Mentored Research project submitted by my research student, **Riley (Red) Klug (800313656)**. Red will be graduating in May 2024 having maintained a 4.0 GPA during their time at WVU, which is quite an achievement as a double major in both the College of Creative Art's Art History program and the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences Anthropology program.

I have worked with Red during the past four academic years at WVU in the Art History program with the School of Art and Design. Most recently, Red was a finalist for the Rhodes Scholarship and worked with the WVU Aspire Office on their application. Red also received the prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship to go to Belize during Summer 2023 to work with an archaeological team at Blue Creek as a field archaeologist and laboratory.

Red has also received the Valerie Canady Award for a Foreign Language the past four years with the College of Creative Arts for their coursework in upper-level Spanish. This scholarship has aided their educational goals of working in Central America. Red used the most recent application funds from the Canady award to pursue educational opportunities related to a trip to Chile in November 2023 over the WVU fall break, which is related to their thesis work on political photography in post-dictatorship conflict memorialization in South America.

For the CCA Mentored Research Award, this project was an early iteration of their Art History thesis project. Red submitted an abstract to present at their first academic conference this past Fall 2023 at the annual South Eastern College Art Association (SECAC) conference in Virginia. The paper was related to the History of Photography course offered with Dr. Rhonda Reymond this past fall term.

Rhonda and I worked with Red to edit the abstract prior to submission for SECAC. We went back and forth a few times to work on phrasing, clarifications of ideas and focus of the future paper, and to fall under the maximum character count.

We had a run-through of the talk on Tuesday, October 10, 2023, where Red presented the current iteration of the paper and accompanying slideshow ahead of the October 13 deadline for submission. We discussed the length of the paper, the timing of the slides, and how to manage a 20-minute talk. We also had shared other strategies related to numbering pages, printing the talk, and highlighting text whenever you need to advance a slide. There was consideration of the length of the history of the violence in Argentina versus leaving enough time for the photography to be the focus of the discussion/presentation.

Rhonda accompanied the undergraduate and graduate students to the SECAC conference in Richmond in late October 2023. Red successfully presented this work to an academic audience, and by all measures, has had some additional successes in the months following.

Red continues to be interested in the Latin American history, which has allowed them to take coursework beyond Art History at WVU focusing on offerings in Anthropology, History, and the Latin American Studies departments. Red has been applying to graduate programs and has received two offers to date with full funding from Boston University and the University of California San Diego to work on Latin American geopolitical issues as part of their continued interest in these fields.

In closing, Red has been an exceptional research student for us, and I am delighted to support their submission for the CCA Mentored Research Award as one of our highest achieving students in many years in the Art History department. So, it is with this letter of support that I highly recommend Red's project for the 2023-2024 award cycle.

Sincerely,



Megan Elizabeth Leight
Teaching Assistant Professor of Art History
West Virginia University