



3 March 2023

Dear Selection Committee for the College of Creative Arts Faculty/Student Mentored Research Award:

Rebekah Gooding has had a deep and abiding passion for German Art History since she matriculated into WVU in the fall of 2019. Her senior thesis project derives from this generally, but more specifically comes out of her self-directed Education Abroad experience in the summer of 2022. During the height of the pandemic, Rebekah tried twice to do a semester abroad in Germany, but the exchange was cancelled both times. This past year she decided to go on her own. We worked together, and for an Independent Study course she developed a list of objects to see, museums, palaces, and cultural sites to visit, set a timeline, and made all the arrangements. She also applied for and was awarded a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship for the study trip. As part of the course, she journaled regularly and sent observations, connections, and lines of questioning that demonstrated she was processing her experience; that while looking closely at art she was also considering a variety of contexts. While in Berlin, Rebekah studied the third of five versions of *Isle of the Dead* by Arnold Böcklin, one of the works featured in her Senior Thesis. More recently, she went to NYC and saw the second version of the painting. Additionally, she has personally viewed other works by the artist, which adds to her understanding of the artist's style and changes over time.

Her experience in Europe was also important for her fall 2022 presentation at SECAC, the second largest academic conference for art historians in the U.S. Rebekah secured one of the highly competitive spots in an undergraduate panel with her abstract on the German artist, Franz Xaver Winterhalter, who, as she discussed, painted flattering portraits of European women heads-of-state or ruler-consorts. She also used her summer research, as well as work she did during Honors Research in the fall of 2022 as the undergraduate Teaching Assistant (Honors Teaching Practicum) in my Nineteenth-Century course. She gave three lectures, one of which was on German Symbolism, including the art of Böcklin. Rebekah used many of her own images, lectured, and led engaging discussions. She gave clear and cogent historical context, which was necessary since this background was not otherwise covered in the course.

Rebekah is an adventurous scholar. She proposed an original project for her thesis, “Death and the Occult: Arnold Böcklin and the Impact of Western Esotericism on Symbolist Painting,” but as sometimes happens in research, soon discovered that the primary sources and materials available in the U.S. didn’t support that conception of Böcklin’s work. What Rebekah did next demonstrates a maturity and sophistication in her scholarship—she changed course and her current avenue of inquiry is even stronger and more significant. Through examination of secondary, and especially primary sources, including several obituaries and newspaper and journal reviews during and after the artist’s life, she discerned an intriguing phenomenon that is now her thesis, “Kulturheros: Arnold Böcklin and the Image of the “German Hero” as a Reflection of Modern Society.” She’s worked diligently and presented this new research at the Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol (URDC) in February 2023 and has submitted a more fully elucidated version for the College of Creative Arts Faculty/Student Mentored Research Award.

Sincerely,



Rhonda L. Reymond

/ Rhonda L. Reymond, Ph.D. (she/her/hers)
Associate Professor & Coordinator of **Art History**
School of Art and Design / College of Creative Arts
Canady Creative Arts Center / 1436 Evansdale Dr. / Rm. 4057
West Virginia University / Morgantown, WV 26506
