



So You Want To Work in Social Media?



Interview by CAROLINE COX
Junior at McKinney Boyd High School

Cassandra Emswiler Burd and Caroline Cox snap a photo in the Nasher garden.

Caroline Cox, a Junior at McKinney Boyd High School exploring arts careers, spoke with Cassandra Emswiler Burd, PR and Social Media Coordinator at the Nasher Sculpture Center.

CAROLINE COX: Where did you go to college and what did you major in?

CASSANDRA EMSWILER BURD: I started out school at SAIC in Chicago getting my BFA in painting and drawing. Then I had to return home to be with my family in Texas my sophomore year. After winding my way around North Texas and figuring out if I really wanted to stay with art, I ended up at UT Dallas and I got a BA in art and performance and focused on studio art. And then there was an opportunity to live at CentralTrak, which was UTD's artist residency for graduate students and visiting artists. So I got my MFA there and I predominantly focused on installation and working with objects. I switched over from painting and drawing into the world of tile.

CC: How does that apply to what you do now?

CEB: Because I work at a museum now, my history of making art and writing about art and thinking about art is extremely helpful. After I finished my MFA, I had a number of opportunities to write for some local publications like *D Magazine*. I did art reviews for a little while and I taught. Dealing with language or dealing with the need to describe art and communicate about it prepared me for all of the writing aspects that go into my job. My fine arts background helps with the photography that I

have to do constantly for all of the social channels. Also, a deeper appreciation for artists and art making and the true meaning and purpose of the museum I think is a really invaluable perspective.

CC: What does an average day entail?

CEB: My average day entails posting at least once to our three main platforms which are Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. It involves a lot of monitoring our channels, searching around through art news websites for relevant content about our current exhibition artists and artists from the past that are a part of our collection articles that people might find interesting. The other half of my job involves a lot of public relations support. So I help with press releases and media alerts and maintaining all of our lists of contacts. Our external affairs team works very closely together, so sometimes I am jumping in on other projects. We are always collaborating and discussing what's down the road. No day is really exactly the same and there is always—whatever I think I'm going to post on a given day—there is always news or new events or happenings that often end up changing my plans, so I have to be pretty flexible.

CC: Do you post the same things on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook?

CEB: I try to mix up the posts. I usually don't want to post exactly the same thing. I might post about the same subject in different ways if that subject is especially important and relevant for that day, but generally I try to provide different content on those three feeds in a given day so there is a variety.

CC: What are some of the most difficult things that you are responsible for?

CEB: One challenge is striving to be original and offer fresh perspectives on a fairly small collection (compared to many other museums).

I am always looking for ways to see the works here differently and in fresh ways. Some of the live broadcasts that we do— especially for the Nasher Prize Dialogues panel discussions, where we travel and we broadcast these talks on social media— there are a lot of moving parts and timing involved, and they can be higher pressure events. Also, a challenge is keeping up with what's new and relevant. I'm in my 30s now, so I have to constantly be willing to adapt to things like Snapchat that might not come as naturally to me because of my generation and life experience.



CC: And the most rewarding things that you do?

CEB: I love taking beautiful pictures. And I love it when I have time to research the image that I want to share a little more deeply and find a beautiful quotation by the artists or something that can help people connect with it a little bit more. It's really rewarding when I see people responding to a post and commenting and engaging with it.

CC: What would be some advice that you would share with someone looking into your field?

CEB: You definitely want to have a strong writing background. I tend to compose most of my posts on the fly and you want to have a super strong attention to detail because what goes out needs to be perfect and I need to be able to edit my own work and double and triple check and kind of be my own fact checker. So writing is a huge strength to have for social media. And a strong sense of composition in photography and just curiosity. I'm genuinely interested in the artwork that is here and the contemporary art world at large so that makes it feel very natural to want to research and learn new things about the collection and the artists we exhibit

CC: If you could change one thing that have you done or experienced so far, what would it be?

CEB: Well, I can say right now because I am an art maker outside of this job, it's something that I'm working on right now but I'm trying to find a better balance between art making and working for the Nasher. Trying to find that time outside of work to continue taking my art as seriously as I used to is challenging, so that is something I'm actively trying to change.