

**2020 Summer Undergraduate Research Experience Information Sheet**

*first page of proposal*

Faculty Mentor:

Name: Keely Heuer

Department: Art History

Student:

Name: Cara Whitehorne

Major (minor): Art History

Expected start date: Late May/Early June, but dates may need to change due to access to libraries and museums.

Note: this information is needed for budgeting purposes (to enable funding of as many proposals as possible). Provide the most accurate date possible. This information will not affect proposal ranking!

1. Does this work involve human subject? No

If yes, has the IRB been notified? n/a

2. Does this work involve recombinant DNA? No

If yes, has the IBC been notified? n/a

3. Does this work involve non-human vertebrates? No

4. List the faculty mentor's other funding sources (approved and pending): n/a

5. Preliminary supply budget summary: (cannot exceed \$1,000 including delivery fees)

Please provide a general, preliminary list of items and associated costs: n/a

Total amount requested: n/a

Does the requested budget cover all expenses related to the proposed work?

If not, explain the sources of funding that will be used.

No. Cara will apply for a Student Association Research Project Line award to cover the costs of visiting the Egyptian art collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Penn Museum, Harvard Art Museums, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, as well as use their research libraries. Of course, the timing of these trips will depend upon these museums reopening due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

### **Question 1) Title**

Representation Matters: Non-Royal Women in Ancient Egyptian Art

### **Question 2) Literature Review and Background Information**

Forty-five years ago, Sarah B. Pomeroy's book, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*, revolutionized the study of the ancient Mediterranean by focusing for the first time on women's lives in the Classical Greek and Roman world. Her study, fueled by the feminist movement, inspired many archaeologists and historians to explore the female experience in contemporary ancient cultures during the following decades, including Egyptologists such as Christiane Desroches Noblecourt (*La femme au temps des pharaons*, published 1986) and Gay Robins (*Women in Ancient Egypt*, published in 1993). These excellent and thorough studies have primarily concentrated on the female members of the pharaoh's immediate family. Such a bias is understandable because these women's lives are the best documented in the historical, literary, and archaeological record. Because of their position, they are mentioned in texts, written on a variety of media including papyrus, clay tablets, and stone, and their privileged rank gave them access to precious and durable materials that were used for objects buried with them. It is only within the past decade that scholars have turned their attention to the lives of non-royal women in Egypt, for example K. Donker van Heel's *Mrs. Naunakhte and Family: the Women of Ramesside Deir al-Medina* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2017) and Jeanette Li's *Women, Gender, and Identity in Third Intermediate Period Egypt: The Theban Case Study* (Routledge Press, 2019). However, these studies have in large part centered on understanding female status within Egyptian society through textual and epigraphic evidence rather than representations of women in visual culture.

### **Question 3) Purpose of the Project**

Cara's project will examine the evolution of the image of non-royal women in ancient Egypt from the Old Kingdom to the end of the New Kingdom (ca. 3100 – 1070 B.C.E.), a straightforward, chronological analysis of which currently does not exist. She plans to answer the following questions:

- In which guises are non-royal women depicted in Egyptian art? Do these roles change over time or do they remain constant?
- When and how often are portraits of non-royal women identified by name?
- How is the appearance of non-royal women distinguished from that of their regal contemporaries?
- As royal women become more visually prominent during the New Kingdom, does a similar phenomenon occur in the representation of non-royal women?

### **Question 4) Methodology**

To contextualize her study, Cara plans to begin her project by focusing on secondary sources regarding the images of ancient Egyptian queens and princesses. She will then create a database of representations of non-royal women in Egyptian art by combing through published collections, searching museum websites and online databases (e.g. Leiden University's Deir el-Medina Database), and visiting collections of Egyptian antiquities in New York (the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum), Philadelphia (Penn Museum), and Boston (the Museum of Fine Arts and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Harvard University). Cara will then use this dataset to draw her conclusions in consultation with her faculty advisor, information drawn from modern scholarship on the status of ancient Egyptian women (especially that derived from primary texts), and curators at the aforementioned museums. Cara has had an overview of Egyptian art through her Art of the Western World I course, which she is taking this semester.

### **Question 5) Role of Requested Budget Items**

N/A

### **Question 6) Expected Outcomes**

Because of the originality of Cara's project, her findings would be an ideal fit for a conference talk either at the annual Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Conference on the Ancient World sponsored by NYU's Society for Ancient Studies or the Princeton Undergraduate Near Eastern Studies conference. Other venues for disseminating Cara's work would be the SUNY New Paltz Undergraduate Art History Symposium and the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of

America, the latter of which has a session dedicated to undergraduate papers and will be held in Chicago in January 2021.

### **Question 7) Education Beyond the Classroom/Major Requirements**

Conducting Egyptological research at an undergraduate level can be quite challenging because excavation seasons are generally in December – February each year, which does not mesh well with the United States’ academic calendar. SUNY New Paltz is fortunate in that it is located in relative convenience to some of the finest and most extensive collections of Egyptian art outside of Egypt. However, travel to these rich resources in New York City, Philadelphia, and Boston, especially more than one, is impossible in a regular course as these museums do not allow groups of students into storerooms and archives due to security concerns. Thus, it is only through independent research projects, like the SURE program, that Cara would have the opportunity to investigate thoroughly her topic of interest. Ideally, Cara will be able to see these ancient objects in person, but should travel be limited due to the spread of COVID-19, she can explore these collections online through these museums’ extensive digital collection archives and can communicate with their curators electronically. Cara’s findings would also give her material to publish in an undergraduate art history journal and submit as an original research sample for graduate school programs, making her a much more competitive candidate for top ranked MA and PhD programs.

### **Question 8) Faculty Mentorship**

I will collaborate with Cara to put together an extensive bibliography of modern secondary sources prior to the start date of her SURE project, so that we can assure her speedy access to these materials, either through the Sojourner Truth Library’s holdings or via Interlibrary Loan. We will meet on a weekly basis, ideally in person, or online via Webex, should the COVID-19 status require self-isolation, to follow up on the previous week’s progress and outline her goals for the upcoming week’s work. Conditions permitting, I plan on taking to Cara at least to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to explore its Egyptian art collection and will connect her with curator colleagues of mine at this institution as well as at the Brooklyn Museum, the Penn Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. As I have done with previous student recipients of this award, I will arrange for Cara to do a dress-rehearsal of her SURE presentation in front of fellow faculty members in the Art History and Ancient Studies program for feedback and encouragement.

### **Question 9) Past SURE Work Outcomes**

All three of my former SURE program students (Miquael Williams, Dan Hulseapple, and Sophie Cooke) used the research they conducted as the basis for their subsequent Honors Program theses. Miquael Williams (class of 2017) submitted her Honors thesis for her acceptance into the MA program at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, one of the top-ranked art history graduate programs in the United States. Dan Hulseapple’s interactions with the curatorial staff of the University of Pennsylvania’s Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology during the SURE program led to a summer internship there the following year, during which he studied Greek Bronze Age pottery. A portion of Sophie Cooke’s thesis has recently been accepted for publication in *Asterisk\**, the undergraduate art history journal of Yale University.

X  I accept responsibility for the conduct of this project and assure that the information in this application is correct.

*Student Statement*

**Question 1: State your role in achieving the goal(s) of the proposed project.**

I am the only researcher to work on this project, and thus I am responsible for all data collection and interpretation thereof, under the advisement of Professor Heuer.

**Question 2: State the specific methodology you will employ in carrying out the proposed project.**

Before the start of the SURE program, Professor Heuer and I will compile an extensive bibliography of scholarship on women in ancient Egypt and relevant catalogs of Egyptian art. By searching through these print sources, online databases, and museum websites, such as that of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I will gather examples of examples of non-royal Egyptian women that I will record in an Excel spreadsheet during the first six weeks of my SURE project. If conditions permit, I will visit the Egyptian collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where I will also meet with their respective curators. I will spend the final two weeks of my SURE project analyzing the data I collected to determine trends in the representation of non-royal women over time between the Old Kingdom and the end of New Kingdom and answer my main research questions outlined above.

**Question 3: Provide a description of your qualifications to participate in the proposed project.**

As an art history major with a 4.0 grade point average, I am very interested in the ancient world, particularly Egypt. I am currently taking Art of the Western World I, which has provided me with a substantial overview of the visual culture of the ancient Mediterranean.

**Question 4: Describe your plans to meet with your mentor in person for guidance.**

Professor Heuer and I will compile a bibliography of resources and will begin accessing these materials through the Sojourner Truth Library and Interlibrary Loan prior to the start of my SURE project. We will be in contact weekly to discuss my progress and upcoming research goals, as well as confer on any issues that may arise. These meetings will take place in person or online through web conferencing software, should we need to social distance continue into the summer. If the conditions allow, Professor Heuer and I intend to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art together, and we will arrange a dress-rehearsal for my SURE presentation in the fall.

**Question 5: Describe the expected outcome/product of your work.**

My plan is to create a lucid and succinct discussion of how non-royal women appear in Egyptian art between ca. 3100-1070 B.C.E., a topic that has not been addressed at any great length in modern scholarship. I hope to be able to demonstrate whether any changes in these depictions over time are connected with similar developments in the contemporary portraiture of the female members of the ruling pharaoh's family.

**Question 6: Describe your plans after graduation and how your involvement in the proposed work relates to these goals.**

I intend to transform this project into my senior thesis, which will be my writing sample for applications to Master's programs in Art History that I will submit during the 2020-2021 academic year. These highly competitive programs require that I demonstrate an ability to produce in-depth, original scholarship at a level beyond that of the typical upper-division course's research paper. Receiving a SURE grant would allow me to engage in such an intensive research project and would be an important, distinguishing credential on my resume.

**Question 7: Describe your plans for presenting the results of your research, in addition to the Fall presentations that are required.**

I intend an abstract to the SUNY New Paltz Undergraduate Art History Symposium and the Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Conference on the Ancient World at NYU, both of which will be held in spring 2021. With the guidance of Professor Heuer, I also plan to submit my findings to an undergraduate art history journal, such as Yale University's *Asterisk*.

X I accept responsibility for the conduct of this project and assure that the information in this application is correct.

X I will present my SURE project work in the Fall as required.