General Curatorial Responsibilities and Timeline:

The Curatorial Fellow is required to work 5 to 10 hours/week on the various aspects of the project in close relationship with the museum director. A weekly oral status report and meeting is required. Strict observation of mutually agreed upon deadlines is mandatory. Periodic meetings with the faculty advisor are made by arrangement.

Budget/funding/grants ......................................................... early fall
Research of the permanent collection ....................................... fall
Exhibition concept and preliminary check list ................................... end fall
Exhibition thesis, title & design, final checklist ..................................... mid winter
Press releases, invitation design, poster design, mailings ............................ mid winter
Essay, labels, wall text ........................................................... late winter
Installation .......................................................................... mid spring
Opening reception & gallery talk (podcast, virtual tour) ........................ mid spring

General Purpose:
To guide, teach, and enhance understanding of curatorial practices in a museum setting.

Duration:
Two semesters, typically one academic year.

Description:
The Curatorial Fellowship entails all aspects of an exhibition including research of the University Museum of Contemporary Art’s permanent collection, conceptual development of the exhibition, an accompanying essay, educational texts, and exhibition labels. Additionally, marketing strategies such as press releases, printed invitations, and social media tools are utilized. A gallery talk at the opening reception introduces the project and the exhibition to the public.

Candidates submit a letter of intent and are selected by the University Museum’s director in consultation with the Art and Art History faculty. Criteria will include the feasibility of the proposed project and strength of the proposal. During the year-long course the museum staff supports the curatorial fellow on all aspects of the project while the academic advisor provides conceptual and theoretical guidance. The candidate agrees to the curatorial responsibilities of the fellowship in a signed statement and is subject to a final grade by the academic advisor. The fellowship serves as a thesis, the culminating project of the graduate’s final year.
Questions:

I am specializing in Renaissance art. Does the Fellowship make sense for me?

Absolutely. All museums work in similar ways and the process is the same whether you display a Greek Cylix, an illuminated manuscript, or an Andy Warhol.

I know my art but I have never worked in a museum. I am not sure I can do this.

That is the point. The practical experience will give you the chance to move from the theoretical to the practical realm of the art object. The museum staff will help you every step of the way to become comfortable with the process and will expose you to all aspects of museum work: from condition reports to press releases, from sightlines to label placements.

I am planning to teach Art History. Why should I apply for the Fellowship?

It gives you a close and personal understanding of museum work and will hone your conceptual awareness beyond the work of art. As art works are most commonly found in museums, it is that context you will be much more familiar with.

What is there to an exhibition other than hanging the works on the walls?

A lot more. At UMCA you will get the unique chance to choose the works that will form the basis of your premise. That by itself is not a straightforward process. You may have to work with loans and make do with compromises.

How about funding your exhibition?

With the support of the museum staff you will be introduced to the art of fundraising and working with a very tight budget.

And who will see my work once the exhibition is up?

You will do the public relations aspect and will design your exhibition invitation. An essay will explain the ideas behind your choices. And finally, you will get to practice your public speaking skills in a gallery talk. All of this will amount to a year-long experience that will give you a wide range of museum practices and deep satisfaction.

I had no idea the University Museum of Contemporary Art had a permanent collection.

The UMCA has over 2600 works on paper, prints, and photographs from the mid 20th Century to the present. You can access the digital database of the collection online by visiting http://museums.fivecolleges.edu or contacting UMCA to make an appointment to see the permanent collection directly.

Will this have an impact on my career options?

Without a doubt! It will give you EXPERIENCE. No matter what kind of career you are pursuing, this thesis project will give you a lateral set of skills that will propel you beyond the beginning stages of any job. You will have a portfolio, including letters of recommendation, which will clearly demonstrate the breadth of your training and exposure to a variety of practices.