
My CIAO experience: 2013

The *Centre for Introduction for Architecture Overseas* (CIAO) combined two of my favourite things: architecture and travel. There is nowhere better to learn about architecture and the skills it takes to become an architect than in one of the most architecturally interesting cities in the world. CIAO utilized our surroundings in Rome and taught us how to incorporate that into our design project.

When we first arrived in Italy we stayed for a week in Trastevere, a beautiful part of Rome close to the big tourist attractions. I enjoyed visiting the Forum, the Colosseum and many more sites my visit to Italy would have been incomplete without. As we explored and sketched these sites I became fascinated by the work and skill that must have been needed to construct these masterpieces. Gail was excellent at giving us the history of every place we visited and helped us to understand the 'story' behind the sites.

We spent the second two weeks in Capranica, a beautiful part of the Roman countryside near Rome. I felt that it was in these two weeks I learned the most about Italian culture- I attended an Italian play where I could sit and see the stars, ate the best home cooked Italian food I have ever had and spent two days with university students from La Sapienza university. The La Sapienza students impressed our group with their approach to architectural problems. They were all very skilled and helped us improve our own project by offering new perspectives and solutions we would never have imagined!

For the studio we were assigned a project based on a real site in the city- we had to remodel a bridge into a visitor's centre. I thought the project was excellent because it reflected upon the Italian culture of preserving their historical sites while planning new buildings. Jeff and Robert were excellent teachers who guided us through the challenging project and were always willing to help. By the end of the two weeks I had managed to make a sketch up drawing of my centre, floor plans, and elevations ready to present to the mayor of Capranica as well as a piece of work I felt proud of.

Because of the small size of the group the course was tailored for each of us. For example, another student and I were interested in visiting John Cabot University in Rome and Robert helped to make that happen. Robert and Jeff paid attention to each of us in studio and helped us in areas we were struggling (for me it was sketch up)! Jeff in particular talked with us for hours about our choices regarding university and I cannot express how much this has helped me feel more confident.

I cannot recommend CIAO enough. It has taught me more about architecture and Italian culture than I could ever have imagined possible! It has motivated me to pursue architecture and given me the skills I will need when I begin my studies. I believe it is the best high school architecture program available and recommend it to any student interested in studying architecture.

Silje Howard