



Relazione di fine scambio

Scuola del Design

Istruzioni

Indicare di seguito tutte le informazioni che possano essere utili ad altri studenti che parteciperanno a uno scambio. Preferibilmente in lingua inglese, lunghezza min. 2500 parole + possibili immagini, file di max. dimensione 2 MB in formato PDF. Questo documento sarà pubblicato nel sito web della Scuola.

Informazioni generiche

Anno Accademico di Scambio:	2019/2020	Nome della Sede in scambio:	Thomas Jefferson University
Cognome e Nome:	Zagatto Beatrice	Stato:	Pennsylvania, USA
Matricola:	941661	Codice Sede:	USA PHILAD02
Corso di Studio:	Design for the Fashion System	Tipo di scambio: (Semplice o Doppia Laurea)	Semplice
Anno di Corso:	1 LM	Semestre di Scambio:	Secondo
Email:	beatrice.zagatto@mail.polimi.it	Docente Promotore:	Colombi Chiara

Racconta la tua esperienza di scambio:

I decided to attend a semester at Thomas Jefferson University after hearing some good feedback from the students that had this experience a couple of years before me.

I sent the application one year before the departure, it consisted of my CV, a motivational letter, and a portfolio of my previous work. After I got accepted I had to prepare many documents required by both Polimi and Jefferson. This has been the most boring part of the exchange and already a bit challenging. The most important documents are of course a Passport and an American Visa. You then need to have a full health history document complete with vaccinations that are mandatory for living in the dorm.

Three people, including myself, were accepted for the exchange but after some issues, I was the only one to eventually leave for the States. This was initially very scary for me, it was my first time studying abroad, and leaving my family for a longer period. Doing it without anybody else gave me a lot of anxiety, but thinking about it now it was the best thing that could have happened.

I left Italy on January 11, 2020. I got on a plane from Milan to Frankfurt and from there I got a flight to Philadelphia. It was the longest journey I had ever done (especially on my own) but it went very smoothly. Since I was alone one of my professors actually went to pick me up from the airport and drove me to the hotel I had booked for that night. She helped me to check-in and gave me an appointment for the next day to help me check-in in my dorm room, she even gave me a set of bedding, a throw, and a pillow. She showed me around campus which is located in East Falls, a residential neighborhood of Philadelphia. It's very quiet and surrounded by nature. It's a 15/20 minutes car ride from Center City. Not having a car makes things a bit hard, I had to ask for rides or take an Uber to be able to leave East Falls. It's easier if you are a group of people so you can share costs or take the bus/train. Being on my own I wasn't feeling

comfortable taking the bus or the train, also because I didn't really know where I was going. Philly is a very nice city. It's big but not huge. Center City is great and full of history.

I was living in an apartment-style dorm called Independent Plaza. I shared an apartment with three American girls, but I still had my own room which was fairly big. At first, it was very dirty so I spent a lot of time cleaning but then it became a nice space. The apartment had a kitchen, a living room, a bathroom, and three bedrooms (two singles and a double).

I left Italy with a suitcase with clothes and some essentials so the International Office gave me lights, a blanket, and some kitchen utensils left behind by the Polimi's students from the past years. I bought some things I was missing but it wasn't much. My roommates already had many of the things I needed to cook with.

My roommates were nice but they weren't very keen on making friends so we didn't spend much time together. The only issue I had with them was that they never cleaned the apartment so it was a bit frustrating.

As far as food goes, I had purchased a 5-meals-per-week meal plan so I had meals to eat in the common thread. At first, I had the idea to make them last for all of my meals as some students from the previous years did, but I didn't really like the food there so I ended up having lunch (salads were my go-to but they had all the traditional American food) in the cafeteria but cooking all my other meals in the apartment. Food shopping wasn't the easiest because all the shops are quite far from campus, so I usually went with friends or my roommate.

The International Office organizes an orientation day for International students. They showed us around campus, gave us all the information we needed and this is where I met my first friend. One of the aspects that really surprised me was the fact that everyone was super nice, friendly, and they genuinely wanted to help.

A couple of days after my arrival classes started. I attended four courses: Building Brand Identity, Textile Design and Approval Processes, Strategic Design and Merchandising, and Design Studio I-B (Knit Design). All my professors were truly amazing, they are great professionals and they welcomed me with enthusiasm. They supported me in the beginning when I needed some time to adjust to a totally different system. My classes were very small, they had 7 students maximum, much smaller than Polimi's so I had to get used to engage in conversations with everyone and to express my opinions. My classmates were really nice and we got along well. Every week we had a new assignment based on the topic of that week's lecture. It was a lot of work also because the assignments are graded so I had to put effort on them to get good grades.

-Building Brand Identity: this course had the objective of coming up with the idea of our personal brand and then to develop it in each of its aspects. I found this course very stimulating, the professor is great and he really made us think about the reasons and characteristics behind the brand.

-Textile Design and Approval Processes: This has been my favorite course out of all the courses I attended at Jefferson. It goes over all the steps that are in between the design of a collection and its production. It was very interesting as it's not something we were thought at Polimi. The assignments are many but very





stimulating and they help you learn the course material. We also went on a New York trip (there were more trips planned but a global pandemic happened...) we visited the HQ of Carlisle and then we went to Coterie.

-Strategic Design and Merchandising: This was a really nice course in collaboration with the Italian brand Marni. We visited their NY office and then we individually worked on a section (I worked on menswear), we had to make a lot of research on the brand and its architecture to then design our own collection, complete with SKUs, allocation plans, and marketing plan. It was hard to work on a mostly management-oriented project since Polimi is usually more focused on the design, but it was a great experience and I feel like I've learned a lot.

-Design Studio I-B: this was my elective course, it is part of the textile program at Jefferson. It's a knit course. I chose it because I studied knitwear in my undergrad. It was very different from doing knit at Polimi as we usually work with designing clothes with knits. Instead, the Jefferson course was focused only on the production of a lot (more than 100) samples inspired by a concept of our choice. We had to keep a sketchbook and fill a certain amount of pages each week. I had to learn how to use the type of machines they had there so it was more challenging for me but it was a good learning experience.

Two months after my arrival at Jefferson, the University had to close due to Covid-19. At first, it was a very tough time for me because I had nowhere to go and I was alone on the other side of the world. Italy was already on lockdown and there were no flights home. For an entire weekend, I was calling Italy's consulate and the airline to understand if going home could even be an option for me. All the other students were leaving the dorms so I spent three days alone in an empty apartment without even pots and pans to cook with, so I ended up having snacks all the time because the cafeteria was closed.

When everybody's was telling me that going back to Italy couldn't really be possible, one of my classmates that was becoming a friend of mine kindly offered me to go live with her and her family at her home in Long Beach Island, NJ. I didn't want to be a burden for them but I didn't have many options and it was a very scary time so I accepted her invite and after a weekend of packing all the things I had accumulated in two months, I moved in with them. It was actually the best thing that could have ever happened to me. I found a loving family that welcomed me as if I was one of them, and they made me feel at home away from home. Me and my friend continued our courses online with the support of one another and we finished the semester on May 11th with great results.

Online classes were challenging. The amount of work we had to do didn't change so we used to spend most of our days on our laptops to work on assignments and projects. The only course that changed for me was my Knit studio because I didn't have the possibility to knit, so I worked on a collection that used the samples I previously made at school.

My initial flight home was planned for May 14th but it was canceled, the first flight I could book was for May 28th so we got two extra weeks without classes to do whatever we wanted after the two months we spent in quarantine at home. We ended up driving around New Jersey and Pennsylvania so I could see some of the things I had planned on seeing while I was living in the U.S. We drove to see the Amish in Lancaster County, we explored Long Beach Island, I went to see my friend's hometown and then we went back to Philly to say goodbye to my friends before I left the country. (all these activities were done social distancing and with all the precautions).

I left the States with a bigger cultural and professional baggage. The experience I had was not even slightly close to the one I had imagined when I left Italy in January, but I wouldn't change it for anything. I am very thankful for the many friends I made in Philly and for what I consider to be my American family. I will for sure be back to visit everyone and to see all the places I didn't end up experiencing.

Firma:

Beatrice Lapatto

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