This summer, I was an intern at Public Art Fund, a non-profit organization that puts together large-scale public exhibitions of art throughout New York. For approximately ten weeks, I worked at Public Art Fund’s Development Department, which essentially handles fundraising for the organization, among other things. Rachel Nawi and Courtney Stern were my amazing supervisors and I really enjoyed working with them, as well as with the 11 other staff members!

**TASKS & PROJECTS:**

**Raiser’s Edge**

One of the things I worked with during my very first day at Public Art Fund was updating information on Raiser’s Edge, the organization’s database for donors, organizations, and artists. Raiser’s Edge is extremely important to the Development Department, which works with PAF’s sponsors and donors, because it keeps their information (from addresses to past contributions) organized and in-check. To an organization like Public Art Fund, its supporters are its core, so Development needs to make sure that it has the correct information for things like thank-you letters, invitation lists to PAF events, and donor projections. Over the next few weeks I would work really closely with Raiser’s Edge by making sure that each constituent profile had the latest and most complete information possible.

At first it took some time getting used to Raiser’s Edge, but once I got the hang of it, it was easy to navigate and work with. By the end of the summer, I was familiar with the program’s quirks and was also able to use it for other tasks. Knowing how useful such a database is reminded me of how important it is to make sure all loose ends are tied and make sure that the information on there was as accurate as possible.

**Spring Benefit Aftermath**

On April 10th, Public Art Fund hosted its annual Spring Benefit. An event like the Spring Benefit requires a lot of planning ahead of time (Rachel was already starting to work on next year’s benefit during the summer!), but there are also a lot of details to take care of in the months following the benefit. So one of the tasks I worked on over the summer was helping to prepare thank you letters to the PAF supporters that bought tables, tickets or artwork at the event, as well as the artists that donated artwork towards the evening’s Silent Auction, which was a success. I learned very quickly that thank you letters are a big part of the Development team’s tasks. PAF depends on the goodwill and generosity of others, so it’s very important that the team properly and promptly express its gratitude to its loyal supporters.

Much of the success of the Benefit is due to its Benefit Committee Chairs, who are usually board members that send out invitations to people they think might be interested in joining the Benefit Committee, which in turn draws more guests to the event. One of my projects over the summer was to create an Excel spreadsheet for every BC chair, where I would consolidate the lists of whom they invited to the Benefit Committee, those who actually joined, and anyone else they might have invited that attended the Benefit. It’s good to keep track of this information in
anticipation of next year’s benefit—if any Benefit Committee chair wants a complete list of who attended in response to their invitation, its all organized in a single place.

There was also a Silent Auction at the Spring Benefit and every now and then Courntey and I would personally return unsold artwork from the auction to its artist. I loved delivering artwork because I got to visit some interesting places, like Salon 94 and Ugo Rondinone’s new studio, which is an abandoned church that he’s currently renovating. Working with Silent Auction thank you letters and artwork also helped me familiarize myself with contemporary artists, which I really enjoyed!

**Department of Cultural Affairs FY14 Final Report**

One of my main projects over the summer was helping Courtney and Rachel with the Final Report for the Department of Cultural Affairs. At the end of each fiscal year, PAF has to submit a report to the Department of Cultural Affairs detailing how it allocated the funds that the DCA gave them for that fiscal year. I helped draft the report for fiscal year 2014 (July 2013-June 2014) and compiled the packet of supplemental materials as well.

This was one of my favorite projects at PAF. I had the opportunity to write substantial portions of the report, and the process made me learn so much about PAF’s exhibitions and public programs. Also, the project gave me a more detailed idea about the relationship between non-profits in the art world and government funding, a process I was curious about but had never been exposed to. Courtney and I even went down to the City Hall area for a seminar on writing and submitting the report. This was great because we also had the chance to see Danh Vo’s We The People exhibit in City Hall Park!

**Development Files**

Another one of my main projects was reorganizing the Development files. Public Art Fund doesn’t keep electronic copies of all of their documents, so it’s important to keep the hard copies stored in an organized place so that everything is easy to find. So, I spent a good deal of time creating new labels and folders for the constituent files, starting with the Board Members and working my way up alphabetically. I had to make sure all files were in chronological order and archive the files that were older than a certain date. Even though this was sometimes tedious, I quickly realized how important it was that Rachel and Courtney have these files in place. It’s crucial to keep hard copies of contributions on file.

**EVENTS:**

**Jeff Koons “Split Rocker”**

For the past few months, the Public Art Fund projects team had been working on Jeff Koons’s giant, flowering sculpture in Rockefeller Center, Split Rocker. On June 24th, I was finally able to see it up close during the press conference that took place before the official opening. It was really exciting to be there with the entire PAF staff and cheer on our Director, Nicholas Baume, after his speech during the conference.

**Sam Falls “Light Over Time”**

During my time at Public Art Fund I was also able to help Rachel and Courtney with the reception and dinner celebrating the opening of Sam Falls’ exhibit “Light Over Time” in Metrotech Commons. I helped Courtney with the invitations by consolidating the invitation lists sent by the different galleries that supported Sam and his project and checking for doubles. The day of the opening was also very exciting—I went to MetroTech commons with the other interns and helped with
check-in at the reception, then accompanied Courtney and Megan as they set up the dinner and checked the guests in. Overall, it was a lovely event celebrating an impressive exhibition and a very talented artist, so I was very happy to have been able to help out.

OTHER:

**Staff & Project Meetings**

Every Wednesday morning, we would have staff meeting in the conference room, where each department would present updates on current and upcoming projects after Nicholas or Susan gave their general comments and updates. I also attended a few project meetings about upcoming exhibitions—I was truly amazed by how much time is put into PAF exhibitions and how far in advance they are planned! Staff and project meetings were a great way to learn about the role of other departments other than Development and to get a general sense of how the departments come together to put together so that after many months, their roles and tasks fit together to produce successful, large-scale exhibitions.

CLOSE-OUT:

Overall, my experience at Public Art Fund was extremely positive! The office environment was always very welcoming and friendly and I learned so much about the contemporary art world as well as the inner workings of non-profits. There are also a few important take-aways from this summer that I learned through my conversations and experiences as an intern. Before the summer, I was quite confused about my career aspirations, and even though I’m not completely clear as of now, I’m certain that I would love to explore the art world further. Working at Public Art Fund taught me that there are many facets to working with the arts and I’m glad that I had the opportunity to explore one of them at PAF. Over the summer, I also realized that the experiences I might have through internships or the people I meet eventually connect to provide more insight into my ultimate career goals, so I don’t necessarily have to have a full career plan immediately. In the end, I’m extremely grateful that I had the opportunity to intern at Public Art Fund with such talented and kind people, and that I had the guidance from the staff at CCE to help me along the way. I hope to continue cultivating these relationships and to continue thinking about my possible career path in the context of what I learned this summer.
After our Department of Cultural Affairs seminar, Courtney and I visited City Hall Park so I was able to see Danh Vo’s *We The People* exhibit!
Our director, Nicholas, speaking at the press conference for Split-Rocker!

Thanks to Creative Time, we were able to attend a private viewing of Kara Walker’s exhibit, *A Subtlety* in the Domino Sugar Factory in Brooklyn.