

## Working Overseas

David Thompson describes the rewards of perseverance when trying to find work in New York.

### Leaping across the pond

In late February 2008 I visited New York for ten days, with the goal of securing a job in either a gallery or museum. In hindsight, I would not recommend this method to anyone – unless of course money is no object to you. I returned to England unsuccessful but resilient, and I continued my search using the Internet. Simply put, this is not an easy task for anyone and you will receive overwhelming rejection. For this reason I stress the importance of ensuring that you are pursuing something you're passionate about, as it is easy to give up under this pressure. Make sure the risk and commitment required match your enthusiasm and perseverance. In addition to this, the US visa processes are not an easy task, but with the information available online you should be able to gain a solid understanding of their requirements.

Be prepared to take risks. In my experience the Internet proved to be the best tool, but be ready to make plenty of long-distance phone calls, too. Depending on where you intend to travel, search for online jobs postings first but also note that in large cities such as New York there are likely to be hundreds of others applying for the same positions. For this reason I recommend calling or emailing potential employers directly. Be bold, honest and direct. As I later found out, after joining Serrano Contemporary in New York, it was my confident approach that convinced the director to commit to sponsoring my visa. If it is possible, contact businesses in the UK which have overseas locations, as internal transfers or recommendations are possible if you meet the right people. You must be prepared to make sacrifices, many of which are likely to be unforeseen. Looking back, I would gladly take the same risks and make the same sacrifices again for this kind of opportunity.

My first professional visit to New York came almost immediately after graduating, when I undertook a three- month artist residency programme in Brooklyn. I found this opportunity through an artist residency guide book and made all contact via email. This includes an initial contact letter, artist submission, negotiations and acceptance; even my deposit was paid online. The mission brief was to provide international artists a space to create in, and connect with, whilst experiencing New York. This experience taught me well. I was fortunate enough to surround myself with the artistic heritage of New York every day for three months, and discover the dedication that artists from all over the world have and how ideas vary from country to country. The potential experience you can gain is limitless, and the opportunities are everywhere if you chose to look for them. I believe the UK fits very well into the international art scene. It has a very strong reputation in the US and there appears to be no shortage of travelling artists developing their careers outside the UK. Much to the frustration of well-meaning Americans, there are additional benefits to being British: in such a culturally diverse city as New York, individuality and distinctiveness are celebrated and positive attention develops. Plus, New Yorkers do love a good British accent.

David Thompson is curator of fine arts at Serrano Contemporary in New York City. Established in 2000, Serrano Contemporary seeks to unite distinctive visions from varied cultures, and to spark dialogues among the expressions and energies of its featured artists.

t: 001 212 239 1271

e: [Thompson-art@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Thompson-art@hotmail.co.uk)

w: <http://www.thompson-art.co.uk>



The Serrano Gallery. Photo: Ramses Serrano



#### Comments

[Have your say! - click here to comment on this article >>](#)

This article has not yet been commented on