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INTERNSHIP REPORT on Aroma Lab intern position in Mediamatic

An internship report is presented to Rijksuniversiteit Groningen,
University College Groningen for the Liberal Arts and Science
Bachelor degree, Health and Life Science major

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Internship took place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands,
In Mediamatic organization

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Introduction

In Groningen University I learned so much theoretical background of so many subjects, but I was always keen to apply my knowledge in real life. Therefore, I decided to do an internship. It is true that as a university student I learn from published papers, books or professors and other students, rather than doing all the experiments and researches myself. In this way I gain so much heavy in theory knowledge about specific field of choice, which in my case was natural sciences. Majoring in Health and Life Science I found myself constantly learning, but applying my knowledge very little, just in few laboratory courses that I had. Especially when being student in University College Groningen, I mastered to question everything, discuss and find solutions because of the problem based learning method that we apply. Nevertheless, I definitely learned how to work in groups, projects and just felt a stronger need to test myself in a different setting. After having such intense course for two years, I decided that I really need to focus on the upcoming next few years; which would be my final, very personally composed year, and professional life, career that follows next.

Reason behind choosing this internship

Analyzing myself and understanding what is the professional path that I want to follow was not so easy. University College Groningen provided me a perfect opportunity to pick two fields of interest, rather than one like in any other faculties. Therefore, I could choose a major and a minor. By having such opportunity I got to explore my interests more. Just then I came to a conclusion that I see myself in the future not being in one very specific discipline, but being interdisciplinary, working and combining way broader knowledge with many different perspectives. On the other hand, thinking of combining arts and science in one place gave me so much stress, because I would not see so many other people doing that. Knowing how difficult it might be for me, I felt a strong internal pressure to think about my future career even more and to experience what would art and science combination could be. Creating something by myself or is it already well explored scene? Thinking that I want to do a Masters program in biochemistry or toxicology, I needed to take an advantage from my free time and be sure with my decision before applying for such hard, purely scientific program. Therefore, my goal was to find a perfect internship that would allow me explore my career options while applying my already gained knowledge.



Preparation for the internship and prior expectations

I started looking for an internship in the beginning of my second academic year, right after fun and exciting, but not very good for my resume, summer. Trying to combine arts and science disciplines was challenging, but I never gave up, I just talked with everyone about it even more. Talking particularly helped me the most. Since I am a foreign student, I do not know all the best or most suitable organizations in the country. Discussing my situation with countless friends and professors, I came across this place called Mediamatic. My Dutch friend that knows me for a very long time told me that this place would be perfect for me, since already when you enter their website they describe themselves as " Mediamatic is an art centre dedicated to new developments in the arts since 1983. We organize lectures, workshops and art projects, focusing on nature, biotechnology and art+science in a strong international network " (1). This got me really excited, because it is quite a challenge to find an internship, but finding internship during Corona pandemic and being international with zero Dutch language skills is close to impossible. Researching more about the place and realizing that the environment would be perfect for me, I found myself getting very excited about an internship position called "Aroma Lab". It is because I was always very interested in olfactory system, science and artistic perception. For this reason I got really intrigued, so I applied specifically to this position.

After being highly disappointed, because I did not hear from the foundation for few months, I applied to the same position once again and then called the next day. Fighting so much for this place, mentioning my name on and on, motivated me to challenge myself fully. That I could do by actually moving to a very busy, slightly intimidating, big and expensive Amsterdam. I knew that living situation will be another problem, but first I really needed to get this internship. And I did. That I made by calling Mediamatic's office few times, till I got the interview that I knew I was ready for. What followed next, was all the paperwork and understanding what I got myself into. Application procedure was rather smooth and easy, the substantive preparation relating to the content of this internship description was making me very excited and so it motivated me to do a bigger research before arriving. Nonetheless, financially and accommodation wise I knew that it will be more challenging, for this reason I looked for the cheapest room in the city like a crazy person: through friends, social media, parents, friend's parents, etc. When I got a rather good option, I took it and just patiently waited to experience this new stage in life.

I adjusted to the city and Mediamatic pretty fast. My living place was 45min away by bike one way, so I was thinking positively that I do not need to spend money on physical exercises in a gym. And at work I looked up to my colleagues and instantly liked them, because they made the environment very friendly, yet intense, creative, efficient, collaborative. I could not have that many expectations before arriving, because I have never worked in such professional environment, nevertheless, I never lived in such a big city, which is one of the World's centres. Therefore, I adjusted and elucidated to the nature, structure and objectives of the workplace and took everything as it comes.



Description of Mediamatic

It was interesting that I had a lot of freedom and space to learn in this organization. They believe that a student, working 8,5 hours per day, five times a week, 100 working days in total, is a lot, but very much needed. For this reason, my internship took five months in total. For this much time I needed a lot of energy to continue to learn and create, but because everyone in the team had the same contract, we realized the nature of this institution together. The main idea was that by surrounding ourselves with this common mindset that everyone is equal the environment would continue to motivate you, because everyone is in the same position. I felt like I am a young professional that has lunch together with my colleagues and talks only about business related things. Sometimes we would be so tired of a long day or rambling for hours. Because we were in such position, we started coming up with ideas, brainstorming and collaborating even more. Conversations would be way past lunch break and ideas for new projects, discussions and debates would not stop. Later, I understood that such environment is very iconic and unique to Mediamatic. Motivation to learn and create came internally, because I felt like I was my own boss. My schedule was from 9:30am to 6pm five days per week and even though I could leave earlier or come later secretly, I did not want to. It might be because I was always watched by my coordinators, but big part of that was me deliberately feeling responsible of keeping that environment equally creative, friendly, tolerant, freeing and accepting.

Overview of the activities and tasks

My work in Mediamatic in Aroma Lab would be challenging already, but because of Covid-19 it was also unexpected. Because of such circumstances the whole organization was not working as it was before the crisis. In such times, when everything needs to adjust, this place needed to adjust drastically, since the easiest way of describing it to a friend is calling it "museum", "art gallery" or "something in between". Therefore, I needed to come up with a lot of concept myself, because there were no interns in my position before during Corona virus crisis. I was given an idea from my colleague that I should create a document, where I would write down my daily tasks, while I am figuring them out. I thought it is genius idea, because sometimes I am in the lab alone and nobody knows what I am doing there. By having a document, where I write down all the very important tasks for myself not to forget, I am also writing an archive for the next Aroma Lab Intern, who's might be lost or would not know how to deal with this lab and where what is. What I did not know that I was learning about the strategies, designs and aesthetics of Mediamatic. This organization (as I expect every) has very specific and iconic to itself style and way of working. I thought it is very smart that I was giving this big task, where I define my own rules, because all the pressure and first big responsibility is on me. Because of such archive, Mediamatic can accept a lot of interns and still survive the change of people after five months. In it I had to define the tasks



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so that I would constantly have work to do, but it would still be physically doable. It would also be for the future Aroma Lab generations and in the system forever. Throughout my internship I realized that the best way would be categorizing what I do in an Aroma Lab position by distinguishing into general tasks and then projects tasks (Figure 1). I also included a lot of pictures in this document, because it would help other people after me to adjust in a lab faster, without having to ask where what is. I am not showing the entire document here in this report, but Figure 1 is an accurate representation of the final form. Here I display all my important mandatory duties to keep the lab tidy and events well prepared.

Learning process

I was just an intern in the face of working staff and owners, but they never downgraded me, it felt like we were equal. From the begging I was looking up a lot to a collaborative Aroma Lab scientist, which were professional perfumers. These two people taught me daily about theory of perfumery, history and nowadays in olfactory world. One of them ended up being my main coordinators, since he was working in this field for a long time and we got along very well, teaching me was very pleasant for him. With the main owners I found my relationship to be quite cold, since I was told that one of them will be my internship coordinator, but of course, they were way to busy with handling the company during pandemic. Therefore, my coordinators changed. The only interaction that I would have with them was a weekly two hours meeting, where we

Hi, new Aroma Lab Intern!

Collaborative artist: Frank Bloem
 Phone number: 0644718080
 Email address: frank.bloem@mediamatic.nl

Collaborative artist: Niklaus Mettler
 Email address: niklaus.mettler@mediamatic.nl

Current Aroma Lab Interns: Agne Buciunaite

General tasks include:

1. Dilutions in the perfume library with limonene need to be thrown away and diluted fresh every year.
(last time it changed 2020.07.09)
2. All the perfumes in the library that has solid/hard particles needs to be shaken, warmed, boiled, removed (research or consult with Frank)
3. Ordering new materials if needed: there is a list of raw materials we maintain, and we adjust the inventory according to the previous one.
4. Before placing a new order, check which one needs to be replaced.
5. Make sure there is enough pipets, and ethanol, you can do the dilutions only with that
6. If there is a DPG dilution required, make sure that it is in stock, otherwise it needs to be ordered

Places where you can order:

<https://www.herbacos.be/> <https://www.hekserij.nl/scholen/>
<https://www.labshop.nl/>

Open Aroma Lab tasks include:

During restricted corona times in Open Aroma-Lab there are 4 people at one time. For this you have to prepare:

- 4 printed sheets of blending paper
- Glass or metal beker
- Pen
- Some water for the room

If you want to, you can lead Open Aroma Lab after introduction from Frank on what to say. But Frank or Niklas are usually taking care of the people during the workshop.

Workshops tasks include:

1. If you are interested or you are needed to participate in one or both of the workshops (Distilling a Scent Bouquet with Frank Bloem & Composing Fragrance with Frank Bloem) you need to prepare everything for Frank:
(info in details will be found here)
 - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_qXcVipQrh7FdEPF3uuG7BgO1P1TDZ4LkPOPGrZHR6s/edit
 - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dcCkFp9RqD0ShvaZ79c6sTOTBf4YTOmwXEM>

Storage tasks:

1. Keep it tidy and organized, so check once in a while if there's no trash, unnecessary boxes, other things. *needs to have a lock*

Kids workshop:

When the intern is present in Aroma Lab, he/she is able to do a workshop for kids. With the management team and Willem decide which day and time suits us the best and you will find all the concept of the workshop in this document.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/2/search?q=kids>

Odorama:

Every (approximately) month we have an event called Odorama for that we hold a physical event and send scent packages to the people at home, so they could watch an online live event and participate as well. As an Aroma Lab intern you need to make those packages.

With this machine (figure 1) you will be able to seal plastic bags (figure 2). The end result should look like this (figure 3) just with different materials inside.

To start this process you first need blotters (double sided white papers with names of the materials and artists). Graphic designer can help you with making them, printing and cutting. After receiving them, you have to dip.pour (liquid or solid material), do everything what that specific Odorama requires, so that each pouch would be filled with smelly/tasty things. With a sample sheet (with blue marker) (figure 4) copy the size of pouches with a marker yourself, so you would know the lines of where to seal.

Trim the edges very neatly, so that the plastic bag would fit into an envelope (figure 5).

Put printed addresses onto an envelope, stamp it with "Mediamatic" stamp and take yourself or ask someone else to take it to a post office.

Figure 1



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would discuss what I did in the previous week, what are my new ideas, what can we do in upcoming weeks and how do we deal with constantly changing Corona rules. I was glad that I would not come across both of the bosses too often, because they were slightly intimidating. Therefore, I was very happy and almost stress-free to be under coordination of one of the scientist that was working in a field of perfumery.

I told him that I really wanted to be able to work independently in a chemical lab, synthesize and distillate simple compounds. For this reason, they taught me how to use distillation laboratory with equipment that I have not used in Groningen University yet. For example rotary evaporator, oil refinery distillation or steam distillation machines. Another very fun one was vacuum sealer machine (Figure 2). Therefore, I learned how to make decisions in such laboratory on my own. Understanding how to distil and separate the components or substances from a liquid mixture by using selective boiling and condensation, learning how to extract essential oils from raw materials with OilExTech was one of my main goals for this internship. And I got to do it daily on my own or do a workshop and even teach others how to do it. Nevertheless, I got an opportunity to collaborate with other interns working in aquaponics, which allowed me to grow my own raw material (many different plants) in the most sustainable way, while learning about the system. Nonetheless, I also had another Aroma Lab intern colleague that has graduated from the best perfumery school in the world called ISIPCA. Not having such education about this subject made me super interested in what she was telling me. She was the one that helped me reached few more learning goals, because she taught me all about how important my degree would be in such field and how sustainable is the world of perfumery. All of this constant joint effort from the team let me tick the personal learning box of "learning how to work on a project in collaborative team-work environment".



Figure 2

My colleagues and my coordinator were always inspiring me and giving me both scientific and artistic knowledge. A lot of times it would be something outside of my field or very interdisciplinary. One of the examples was our own kombucha tea drink (Figure 3). This required fermentation knowledge from mycelium, mushroom and fermentation lab, growing plants in aquaponics that would give the taste and Aroma Lab for the appealing smell that is yet edible. After learning how to work independently in chemical lab, I was able to not just do all the tasks, but also create my own, something that would satisfy my creativity. Such small project as creating



out own tasty drink was just the begging of the future way bigger projects and I knew that I feel comfortable with the knowledge about lab and time management that I gained.

It is not often the case that an intern has so much space and freedom to work on a personal learning goal and a project. In this cultural ANBI (Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling/ General Benefit Organization) one of the most important ideas was that by the time I finished my internship, I had to come up and create my own project. In this way I would leave a mark of myself in this foundation and apply my gained knowledge in real life, while using Mediamatic as a platform. I started thinking of what could it be and started gathering all the possibilities and connecting ideas. I realized that it is a perfect space, where young and collaborative scientists and artists are able to search for possibilities to challenge and combine biology, art, design and society. Hence, the goal is to educate ourselves and others in the most entertaining way possible. I thought to myself that it would be very comfortable to design any activities in a form of a lectures or workshops to further discover and learn how art and science merge. Therefore I decided to do both.



Figure 3

During Corona pandemic it is close to impossible to make an event, that people could attend physically, but this is why with few other team members we decided to make an educational event called "Odorama" that would take place almost completely online and would be live on a social media platform "Instagram". In the meeting we discussed that every different lecture would be about completely different topic so we decided to invite five different scientists and/or artists that would have something to say and show about that topic. All of this was possible because of our weekly set meetings, where we would just brainstorm. By the time I was in the middle of my internship I was already feeling very comfortable in my own lab, making perfumes and all kinds of smells, for example: young elephant smell, dirty socks smell, smell of human compost, woman genital smell and many more others. Therefore, as being the only Aroma Lab intern, I had a voice in those meeting. Being in a lab daily I got to explore unlimited world of smells, not even just pleasant perfumes. Throughout the making process of such event sometimes I struggled with creating and receiving too many tasks for myself. For this reason I would have to stay at work even longer and would get used to the position of event manager. It was good that my colleagues reminded me not to accept all the work, while teaching me about work ethics, amounts of responsibilities and letting me improve my leadership and entrepreneurship skills. I never knew that I could see this project as my own child, nevertheless, did not think at all that I will be so passionate about it. I guess once I found a niche that I am really interested, I wanted to work on it no matter rules. I challenge myself to express my ideas and fight for them or adjust. In this way I gain a lot of self-confidence, while learning that leadership's position is hard to get and learn, but once I did, I felt like what I did was important. Sometimes in UCG we make projects that



never have an outcome, because they are hypothetical. It is very demotivating in contrast me making an event, where my boss comes and after it taps me on a shoulder while giving a compliment for a smart idea or good organization. Therefore, such first creative event that I was participating in was a first step towards being confident in the surroundings of working people and their ethics.

Throughout a creative process of this monthly event, I understood how to communicate with my coworkers about difficulties while still completing all my tasks, for example the ones that only a person that has been in a biochemical lab could do. Overcome the hesitation to ask for help really broadened my understanding about professional life. I am not afraid to admit that I do not understand something or that I physically have too many responsibilities. It might be because of a reason that I never felt alone in such situation and everyone was very pleased if only I ask for help. I was told that I am still in a process of learning how to work with scientists and artists that have more experience in professional environment, by my boss. I thought that it is very true, because nobody were born with understanding of how different social or professional groups work. I took it as experience and opportunity to learn from people that I look up to. The guidance that I receive from them is very valuable, so now I am able to communicate my needs, ideas and rights. I want to believe that this knowledge will help me extremely in my future professional career.

Another big project that I managed to do during intense Corona crisis times was creating a workshop for 7-13 years old kids (Figure 4). I would not be lying by saying that I was not the biggest fan of kids. I never had any interaction with such small creations, because till this day I am the youngest one in my family. Improving capabilities of interacting with children was not one of my learning goals, but in the process of achieving that, I achieved way more. After being approached by my boss and being told that kid's workshop would be something very interesting, I started considering it more. Every Thursday in Mediamatic an event called "Open Aroma Lab" would be happening. The concept is that with the minimum amount of knowledge about perfumes, participants would be able to blend their own perfume formula with the guidance of me or collaborating Aroma Lab scientists. Therefore, with the help of Aroma Lab



Figure 4

intern colleague, that was by the time still working, we put her knowledge of perfumery and my about chemistry into one project. It was not as easy as I thought it would be, because a lot of steps need to be done before we can actually make an event. In the beginning, we needed to do a research about safety of the materials; this would need to be seen from the scientific and legal sides. Another perspective would be related to psychology and big question how kids are interested in what are



we suggesting and to what extent. On top of that, we needed to come up with the actual activities and learning outcomes for them. Managing people, events creators, people that are responsible for promotion would be involved as well. Big group was involved so this could come to real life, because we needed the right strategy, budget, profit, reason of making it. If that would not be enough, there was also a language barrier. Having all of this in mind, going to a lot of meetings, creating and consulting, we came up with three games. The kid would come with his/her parent and after all the activities, she/he would leave with a bottle of glittery perfume. Through this project, I gained so much knowledge about how to make an idea come to real life. Intellectual skills of understanding rules and procedure, cognitive ones, when I had to apply personal strategies and organize, motor skills of actually interacting smoothly with kids, achieving goal were improved. Important learning outcome was attitude and learning how complex creating a workshop is. This definitely inspired me to create after this and be brave, confident during the process. By simply working on something what was a small idea in our heads, we, as a team with my colleagues, came up with an actual profit bringing educational workshop and I will very proudly put it in my CV and think that this summer time is already way more helpful for my future than any other.

Tips for students that want to do an internship

My biggest tip would be to start in advance. I started to look for it almost a year in advance and could not recommend doing the same. It is because to research the field that you want to work in takes a lot of time, since real and internet world is full of opportunities. Of course knowing what is the field and knowing the location is in the first place, because it narrows down options drastically. Another recommendation, as I mentioned before, would just be to talk a lot and with everyone about your need and expectations of the internship. And lastly I would suggest being more open. When I started looking for an internship, I was looking to get a place in biochemical lab. Understanding that without a diploma of Masters in biochemistry I will not get any position, I started looking for any kind of lab. Never thought that it could be chemical lab of perfumery, but everything turned out even better, because I could combine both arts and science and approach even more learning goals. Therefore, me being open really broadened my spectrum of interests.

Expectations fulfillment and difficulties

As I mentioned before I did not have any big expectations. My only expectations were to fulfill my learning goals. I am very happy with the opportunity that I got, all the skills that I learned and all the knowledge that I gained. I would never expect that professional world can be so friendly,



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creative and collaborative, yet very sufficient and accepting. It was because this foundation is pretty well known in the Netherlands and it surprised me that they allowed me to be a relatively big part in it. To conclude, this experience was beyond any expectations I could have had. Nevertheless, the city topped my expectations and fears as well, therefore, I am staying even now in it and finishing my final third year away from Groningen.

Feedback and reflection

Thinking back on my experience as an intern in Mediamatic, I would want to understand what are my shortcomings and strengths and be nourished rather than intimidated. I was intimidated by the big city, new friends, full-time work, but all of this ended up forcing me to grow as an international young adult and as a lost person between choosing professions. I now can say that I am living in one of the world's entre, build my social life away from my student city and got to apply my gained knowledge from UCG. All of this made me one step closer to figuring out what is the sphere that I want to work and what is the ratio of science and arts that I want to have in my future career. In contrast before and after my internship, I can clearly see a difference also in my character. My self-esteem is higher than ever. Understanding that not everyone are lucky enough to do an internship in the three year program in University College Groningen, I feel very confident to bring all the knowledge that I got here back to my studies.

The only unsuccessfully met learning goal is that I did not get to practice my scientific report writing skills. I wish there was way more lab techniques for me to learn, so I could significantly improve the way I write sections as abstract, result, discussion. In this internship there was no requirement for me to keep track of my notes; therefore, without any external motivation I did not do that. Nevertheless, this lab is very specific to perfume making and I wish it was a bit bigger and broader material and machines wise.

Future career

As I mentioned before, I really struggle to find myself in one specific discipline. Before this internship I wanted to do Masters in Biochemistry or Toxicology, even though I had a strong need of arts. After this internship, I realized that in between section exists. Before I thought that I will be very unhappy with working all day just in labs with the materials and hands, instead of people. Now, I understand that I lean towards whatever direction I will prospect myself. That direction in this case is both arts and science and both working in labs and with people.



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I am not saying that I will want to continue working in making senses, but now I know that I am super passionate about it. I allowed myself to research different Master programs such as Business and Innovation Science or Drug Discovery and Safety. I also allowed myself to think that in the case, when I want to combine arts, natural and social sciences, I might want to create something of my own, since it will be highly interdisciplinary field. I was always afraid of this idea, because I see myself more as a “follower” rather than “creator”. Therefore, having this internship made me really excited of my future career and way less scared. I believe I have the right motivation to now study even more and later follow my passions in my working career.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I could have not gained this much knowledge, skills, personal achievements without this internship. I knew few years ago that I will not be able to choose one specific field: arts, social or natural sciences. Therefore, UCG offered me a perfect opportunity to push myself to find my interests and talents, but also explore whatever field I crave to get to know. Studying there cleared the cloud, but I could not apply all my knowledge in practice. By having an internship in Mediamatic, I got to know so much more about the city of Amsterdam, Dutch people mentality in professional world, principals of perfumery and my personal career preferences. By familiarizing myself with the ethics with such progressive organization, I was inspired to study, learn more, but also start creating. My teamwork, leadership, competence working in chemical lab, research skills, time and tasks management, multi task coordination, adaptation, project completion skills improved drastically. But I am very happy that I got build skills such as confidence and that for the future this experience will be perfect for my resume and I was able to expand my network in such industry contacts and earn a job reference to vouch for my performance. Therefore, this internship was the second best decision (following after applying to UCG) that I made, to build the career that I want.



References:

1. Lee, R., & Xhomaqi, A. (n.d.). About Mediamatic. Retrieved November 14, 2020, from <https://www.mediamatic.net/en/page/10341/about-mediamatic>



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