



# EVERY STEP WAS AN AWAKENING

By Lisa Chontos

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—Moisés Ortiz*



## THREE UTSA STUDENTS USE SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDY IN GERMANY, ENGLAND AND FRANCE

**"It** began in Florence, Italy. My first experience in Europe, and everything I saw and heard was an awakening. Within the first week of my summer trip I knew I would go back to Europe."

So begins the travel journal of Moisés Ortiz, an art history student at UTSA. And thanks to the David Bowen Memorial Endowment for Study in Europe, Ortiz was able to return to Europe this past spring to study. Four COLFA students from various disciplines used their Bowen awards to study abroad in spring 2007, journeying to Germany, England or France. In keeping with Bowen's hope of showing students a world beyond commercialism where history is ever present, each student returned with stories of art, nature and culture, as well as self-discovery.

### Berlin, Germany

Planning to finish his final semester of college by returning to Europe, Ortiz signed up for an art history class taught by Professor Ron Binks. The class was structured around a two-week trip to Berlin that would give students the chance to experience the original artworks they were studying.

Recalling the first few hours of his trip in his journal, Ortiz writes: "The inside [of the hotel] was like a time machine. The wood squeaked and the doors were large and heavy. I tried to imagine the stories these walls could have told. The building was dimmed and the halls were like a labyrinth of doors to other guests."

Ortiz remembers immediately striking out from the hotel and getting lost, which is something he welcomes while traveling. He was also pleasantly surprised that he was able to use his Italian frequently, and he was impressed by the diversity of the people and how clean the streets were.

He began each day in the hotel's 19th century revival-style dining room, where the continental breakfast was a generous spread of cold cuts, breads, fruits and cheeses. "The morning was my favorite part of the day," he writes. "I made sure I sat by the balcony to enjoy the natural light creeping into the room, and listen to everyone talk. ... Now with a full stomach, I was set for a day of long walks and deep discovery."

With Binks leading the way, Ortiz and his classmates spent two weeks exploring the art museums and streets of Berlin. Ortiz's favorite museum was the Pergamon, which is part of a group of museums that make up the city's famed Museum Island. The Pergamon contains life-size reconstructions of monumental structures such as the altar of Zeus and the Ishtar gate of Babylon.

While feeding his mind with art, Ortiz also made sure to enjoy the local food, which he believes is key in getting to know a place. His request for a traditional German meal was met with a large blood sausage, kraut and potatoes, to be washed down with a Berliner Pilsner. "The sausage was interesting," Ortiz grins, "but I enjoyed every ounce of that plate."

Ortiz plans to travel as much as he can in the future and says, "Germany has given me a new way of seeing modernism and the history behind it. It also showed me the importance of art in a society that has a passion for growth and progress. Art and culture sit side by side with politics and the economy, and the people are very well educated and informed about the world. This was a big lesson to me not only as an art student, but also as an American."

### Keele, England

Senior honors student Evelyn Brown spent a semester at Keele University in Keele, England. Like Ortiz, she had visited Europe before, but this was her first extended stay.

"I'm not sure I would have been able to travel, had I not received the Bowen," she says. "David Bowen was a personal friend of Dr. Mark Allen, a brilliant [English] professor at UTSA, whom I consider to be my mentor. The Bowen Endowment has a special place in his heart. I had heard of the award through a friend, but it was at his suggestion that I was determined to apply."

Brown chose Keele because it was the most fitting place for someone earning an English degree, granting her access to the British libraries. She enrolled in a Shakespeare class, a British culture class, and two philosophy classes, but beyond her studies, she hoped to become a more well-rounded person.

Her trip got off to a rough start with 40 hours of sleepless travel and the discovery that her luggage had been lost by the airline. Fortunately, things improved.

"I lived about a mile from the main campus," she recalls. "One Sunday night, I was walking back to my dorm with about four inches of snow on the ground. I've spent very little time in snow in my life, so I decided to go up to the church graveyard on top of the hill in Keele Village and wander about for a bit, with the bells striking midnight. It's a bit of an odd story, but that night is something that will always stay with me. It was beautiful—the starlight shining on the snow by that church. That's how I'll always think of England."

Reflecting on her journey, Brown says, "It changed the way I saw myself and my future, and I'm still in the process. I have been unbelievably blessed. While studying abroad, I was able to travel to Greece, Portugal, Wales, and Northern and Southern Ireland. I've made amazing friends, and seen beautiful things I may never see again. Make the most of God's blessings as he grants you opportunities, but be true to yourself. That's something I've always known, but have only now learned."



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**J. DAVID BOWEN**

J. David Bowen's generosity is benefiting students at The University of Texas at San Antonio.

When he died Jan. 23, 1998, he left the bulk of his estate to create an endowment to fund European study and travel opportunities for undergraduates in the College of Liberal and Fine Arts. According to his will, his desire was "to expose the students to cultures where history is ever present and commercialism does not have the last word."

The grandson of Jewish immigrants from Germany, Bowen was born in New York City in 1930 and grew up in New York and Chicago. After graduating from Harvard in 1951, he earned a master's degree in Latin American history at the City College of New York while also making a name for himself as an off-Broadway actor and Latin American travel writer.

Bowen arrived in San Antonio in 1966 as part of the planning staff for HemisFair '68, and never left the city he had grown to love. In the ensuing years, he came to be known locally as the "dean of San Antonio actors" as well as the consummate "book-man" through his rare book shop and Corona Publishing Company, which he started in 1977 to feature the works of Texas writers.

**Aix-en-Provence, France**

Jeremy Faulk, who is majoring in psychology, spent last spring studying in Aix-en-Provence, the small village where artist Cézanne was born and raised, about 20 miles north of Marseille. Faulk started planning his trip two years earlier, steadily working on his French and researching which university he'd like to attend. A year into his planning, he saw the Bowen travel award advertised on a bulletin board and immediately applied.

While in France, Faulk lived with a host family, who was also hosting two other American students and a student from Tokyo. Since French was their common language, they always spoke it when they were together and Faulk had the benefit of being fully immersed in the language.

During his second week there, Faulk writes, "Walking aimlessly through the closely knit avenues, I'm certain to find myself casually strolling into one of Aix's many squares—at the center of which is usually an ancient Roman fountain or a bustling local market that is propped up and taken down three to four mornings a week with all haste and precision. Before lunch, if the market is not already taken down, I'll buy a fruit or something fresh to eat while I look for a familiar face to have lunch with me in a small café or restaurant. I'm still a bit out of my element, but I feel that I will find my place."


Something that helped Faulk orient himself was painting. He had worked with chalk pastels and acrylics in high school, but in France he discovered oil painting. Besides two art classes, he also took a French class and a psychology class. When he wasn't in class or exploring with friends, he spent time soaking up the culture around him with journal in hand.

He writes, "I'm sipping un café Américain from the Chez Mus pub outside in the square. It is a flower market day and I am surrounded by all sorts of Provençal flowers, herbs, and wonderful smells. ... There is a man I've seen before, his shirt is off but he has on a gray vest. His hair is long, curly and graying. He is touting philosophy and poems to the square, masterpieces he is certain, and then going to each table asking for money. His great love lived in Ireland, he tells the women behind me, who he has just discovered are from Ireland. He flirts, in English, 'Look at these lovelies that make a man's heart beat so fast.' It works. 'Six euros!' he says, astonished. 'Ms. Racoom, my first English teacher, will be proud of me today!' He waltzes away. ... The square is quieter now. I can hear the Roman column fountain now, soft. The colors pop out everywhere. A new monsieur and madame sit next to me. The monsieur has on a very bright violet sweater.

The flowers fit here; there is no other vegetation in the square but this place is always alive. Someone whistles. Philosopher is back, no shoes this time. A dog makes his way through the tables, tail wagging."

For his 20th birthday, Faulk had planned to paint the sunset from the mountain that Cézanne always painted. He missed his bus to the mountain, and spending the week in Paris had left him with 3.70 euros. While waiting two hours for the next bus, he saw a homeless man playing a drum. Faulk also plays the drums, and he asked permission to sit by the man. They spent the next two hours taking turns on the drum and occasionally conversing in French. Wearing beat-up art clothes and having only 3.70 euros in his pocket, Faulk could temporarily feel a little of what the man felt. When his bus came, Faulk left 3 euros in the man's drum case and had just enough left for one-way bus fare. After climbing the mountain and painting the sunset, he met some students from Marseille. The next day, all enjoyed a huge festival held on the mountain.

The festival involved an annual pilgrimage of people dressed in Provençal clothing, and Faulk joined in the traditional dances and free rappelling. Afterward, his new friends from Marseille offered to drive him home.

Explaining how his time in Aix has changed him, Faulk captures the heart of the Bowen award. "I'm much more light-hearted now. When you start college, you want to get out and make a living. I'm not as worried about that as I am about finding something I like doing. I think going to France somehow pointed that out to me. And by starting to plan my trip to France so early, I realized that I can start planning things now that I want to do later. If I want to do grad school in Europe, there's no excuse for me to not do it. I could not buy a car right now so I could be free to do that later. I have to start making those choices now. That first step can always be taken now, and it doesn't always mean buying a plane ticket. You can just start thinking differently." 

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