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Kim Hill

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Self-Designed Major Leads to Prestigious Internship

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Designing her own interdisciplinary major at Illinois Wesleyan University helped Annie Tillmann secure a competitive internship at the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art in Amherst, Mass. A 2012 graduate, Tillmann was selected from among hundreds of applicants for the prestigious Trinkett Clark internship.

“My determination to create my own path really helped me stand out,” Tillmann said. “The curators said my passion came across very clearly in my interview.”

She created her own path at IWU by designing her interdisciplinary major in Educational Studies with a concentration in Visual Literacy. “Annie’s proposal for her major, which included a detailed rationale for her cutting-edge concentration in visual literacy and each course in the major, was commended as the best student proposal the University Curriculum Council had ever reviewed,” said Robin Leavitt, chair of the department of educational studies. “Hers is now used as a model proposal.”



Annie Tillmann '12

Tillmann also had a second major in Art with a concentration in Graphic Design. “I always wanted to work with younger children in some capacity,” explained Tillmann.

“After extensive research I came across the concept of visual literacy, and felt it was the perfect combination of the elements I loved most about education and graphic design. Creating the major exemplified everything I loved about IWU, including the interdisciplinary quality that I admired and a flexible environment created by supportive faculty that encouraged self-discovery.”

Tillmann could have taken her desired courses independently, but her goal was to create a cohesive program to explore visual literacy – making the connections in a unified way – rather than a skill set that she would have to explain in every job or graduate school interview.

The Eric Carle Museum was founded to inspire a love of art and reading through picture books. Carle is the author and illustrator of more than 70 books including the 1969 classic, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and founded the museum along with his wife, Barbara. The Trinkett Clark internship allows students at the baccalaureate level and above who are interested in pursuing careers associated with the arts or museums to gain practical experience within a nationally renowned museum dedicated to the art of the picture book.

A native of Skokie, Ill., Tillmann plans to attend graduate school on the East Coast where she can continue her association with the Eric Carle Museum. “I hope to continue to volunteer or work at the museum because I had such a tremendous experience,” she explained. Her internship responsibilities included curating an exhibit of her creation and writing biographies of the 60-plus illustrators collected by the museum over its 10-year history.

“Watching people make connections, and seeing how transformative and joyful learning through literature and pictures can be in a museum setting really helped me solidify my decision to pursue work in this field,” Tillmann added.

Contact: **Kim Hill**, (309) 556-3960