

## David Harris Flaherty Undergraduate Student Library Scholarship 2019 Recipient

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### Award-winning Essay

The University of Victoria Library expanded my learning in both Visual Arts as well as Art History and Visual Studies by prompting me to dig further into related artists and artworks after being educated on the basics of both. The library offered many quiet hours which were key to making progress on papers or readings, with all the background information right there when needed. As always, it was beneficial to have access to printing off papers or assignments before running to class, or printing drafts to rework and making copies of notes that could be shared with other students.

For Art History, I found it extremely helpful to utilize the considerable number of books on Modern European Art during the second semester which rounded my understanding of the context at hand, especially when it came to completing reading responses. During the fall term it was great to use books that backed up my Cinema and Modern Arts course as a written component to the visual learning aspect of Cinema. Within my Visual Arts classes it was inspiring and advantageous to visit the Special Collections and be able to look through archival materials such as Tin-Type photographs, as well as rare materials such as Nan Goldin's *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*. Access to Visual Arts books that have colour print and important writings on art theory, how to understand and unpack works, and the meanings behind historical pieces creates an important place to learn further and dive into areas which advance one's artistic practice.

This year it was particularly useful to visit Special Collections as it further pushed my personal practice and, consequently, my photography assignments into a space which stepped away from commodified beauty into abstraction and the materiality of photography. My work

has always been influenced by analog mechanics, using film photography over digital which follows the flow of the antithesis of the modern world. This includes capturing images on film, but also printing on light-sensitive paper in the darkroom and learning how to connect with photography in a completely different way from modern technology. These concepts felt validated after spending time with the many different analog prints from the Special Collections and inspired my final assignment for Art 242 – Photography. These analog prints were meticulously created by hand and connect the viewer to the material of photography. The assignment within my course involved scanning 35mm film at a high resolution on the ends of the film strips which show almost nothing to the naked eye. After being scanned, many various and beautiful colours, patterns and “mishaps” on the film – such as scratches, chemical burns, or dust – are visible and create a connection with the viewer and the materiality of the negatives, instead of the viewer flowing through a photograph to the referent within the image. I believe this space in the library stimulates inspiration and creation as it pushed my own artistic practice beyond the limits I had previously set for myself, opening the door to new artistic endeavours.