

Peter Hoffmeister

Hunter College

Department of Art and Art History

I graduated from Hunter's MFA program in 2017, and was hired shortly thereafter to run the MFA Sculpture Area as a College Assistant. I maintain equipment including electric kilns, a laser cutter, and a 3D printer, and train students on their safe operation. In addition, I help the students solve sculptural problems that arise as they create new work. One day it might be making a rubber mold, another day it might be making a huge clay object that barely fits in the kiln. But we always get it done. I love doing this, and I feel horrible for the students right now...their projects have been on hold since March when Hunter shut down, and now I might not be hired back to help them. If this happens my shops will be shut down by the college, and will not be accessible to the students.

A lot of the Art Department's College Assistants are artists and curators. Just like the faculty, we engage with students on a pertinent level about issues being explored in contemporary art. Indeed, most of us are also Hunter alumni, and returned because we love the community that Hunter offers. The lack of concern by CUNY administration regarding our livelihoods shows how little they understand our continued devotion to Hunter, because it is certainly not being reciprocated. We went into debt to attend Hunter, and now have provided our labor to help run the program, only to be discarded to balance an anticipated budget shortfall.

And, very importantly, we all stand to lose our healthcare during a global pandemic. The healthcare I receive from this job covers not only myself, but also my partner. Other college assistants have families, and their children will lose healthcare. This is how devoted employees are being thanked.