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Interview with Kate Sawyer

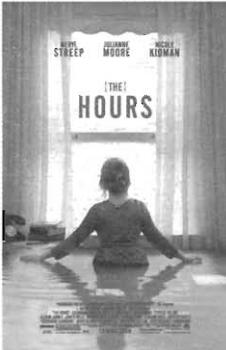
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Kate Sawyer's winning poster

INTERVIEW WITH KATE SAWYER

Art and Design Student

Kate Sawyer is a senior in the Art and Design Department with an emphasis in Graphic Design. Kate was part of a Cal Poly design team that entered the 3rd Annual Student Competition of the prestigious Hollywood Reporter Key Art Awards. Kate's team won first place for a poster design of *The Hours* based on the award winning film. Kate's major interests are editorial design and print, and after graduation she hopes to work for or start a design firm dedicated to honesty to the consumer.

Moebius: What were the Hollywood Reporter Key Art Awards all about?

KS: This is an annual competition, the 34th I think, for designers and movie marketing firms to celebrate the work they have done on major motion pictures. It is kind of like an Oscar awards night for behind the scenes people that have a lot to do with the success of major movies. The Student Competition just started a few years ago and is only open to California and New York students who are able to submit either a poster or movie trailer for one of two films that has done well in the last year.

Moebius: Who was on the team that designed the poster?

KS: I was the art director for an assignment in Advertising class. I also was the model for the photographs. Vanessa Vellozzi, who graduated last year, was my designer. Just like a real world experience, Vanessa and I looked at many photography students' portfolios and we hired Karly Forgette to be our photographer. Karly will graduate this year.

Moebius: The three of you worked together?

KS: Right. It was my design concept, initially, and then Vanessa and I worked out the details of how that concept could actually work. The idea started with just a windowpane in a river to follow the major themes in the movie. We then added a person standing in the water. We ended up compiling two images for the final. One was taken out at Poly Canyon at this little moat. The second image is a window from the Garden Street Inn in downtown San Luis Obispo. The stack of books and the old telephone were already there.

Moebius: Your group had two choices. Why did you choose The Hours over Chicago?

KS: *Chicago* was very visual and flashy. *The Hours* was a bigger challenge. It was not as obvious; it was more personal and emotional. I felt it was more of a challenge to emulate the themes.

Moebius: What was the most difficult part of creating the poster?

KS: Taking the concept to reality. I mean, starting with a great idea and realizing that I could do this. It was a big step, and it took dedicating the time to make what I wanted to happen, actually happen.

Moebius: Did you think you might win?

KS: No. We actually didn't even make it into the student show here. When we found out we were in the finals, it was a surprise.

Moebius: What was the Awards Night like?

KS: It was like going to the Oscars. Vanessa and I, and some friends, went to the Kodak Theater, and it was a red carpet event. After the ceremony, there was a huge party, with stars, food, music, and a full bar. We got to schmooze with the LA designers. It was great. We got a trophy and \$7,500.00 total: half went to the Art and Design Department and the other half Vanessa, Karly and I split three ways.

Moebius: Are you a big movie fan?

KS: Yes, I like movies like *Punch Drunk Love*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and *I ♥ Huckabees*. I like movies that are offbeat and less obvious—movies that leave you thinking...movies that still keep you thinking two days later. I am attracted to visuals that tell a story.

Moebius: Do you think being a graphic designer changes the way you view movies?

KS: Not necessarily. I think it is because of who I am that I am attracted to graphic design and the movies. I am attracted to visual beauty. I'm not just a graphic designer; I also like photography, film, and thinking.

Moebius: What else did you get from this experience?

KS: I enjoyed seeing the other students' interpretations. I was also interested in seeing the faces behind movie marketing and design. It's amazing to think that there are groups of people out there that are up at all hours, trying to do their best to make a movie different than the rest. I am also intrigued by product placement in movies. This was a big section of the awards night: placing consumable goods in movies without it being too obvious. But to me it seems like a long commercial. Maybe they should be paying me to watch some movies rather than me having to pay... It is interesting to consider how the corporation and the movies fit together. How does the corporation fit into an art form like film? I don't quite know. But I can say that I now see movie posters and movie trailers differently than I did before. ☺

Interview on behalf of Moebius conducted by Jan Zahn on April 4, 2005.