

### Sarah Dziamba, Second-Generation Rutgers Student, Dreams of Becoming a Professor

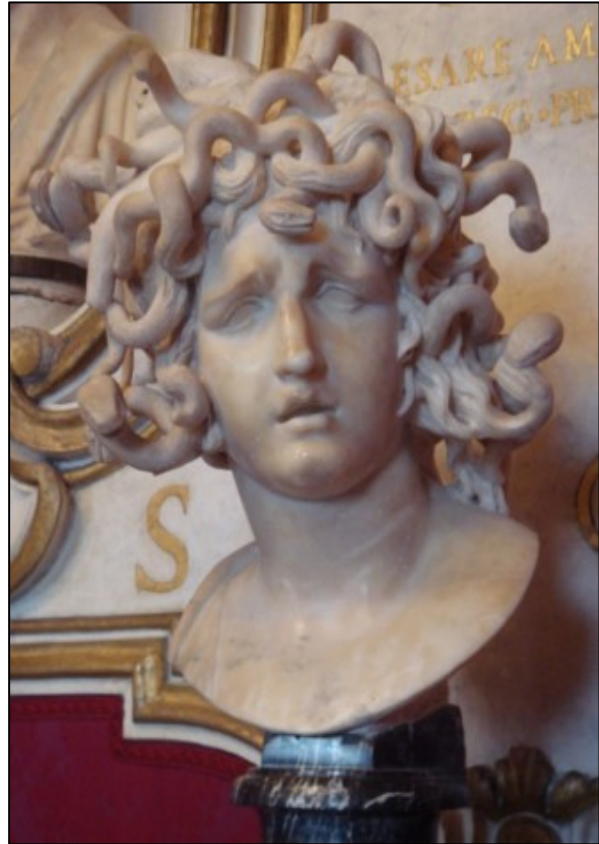
Sarah Dziamba grew up loving art, writing, and Rutgers. Her parents, Michael and Patricia (née Adamczyk), graduated from Rutgers in 1976 and 1975, respectively, and are active members of the alumni association. Two of Dziamba's cousins went to Rutgers, and her younger brother Patrick started this year.

Despite the fact that both her parents are scientists, the senior from Flemington, New Jersey, has always been drawn to the humanities. "I've been painting and drawing since I was little, and I kind of have the whole writing thing in my blood," said Dziamba. She took an art history class in her first year with professors John F. Kenfield III and Seth Gopin, formerly the director of Study Abroad, and said she "fell in love with it." The rest, as they say, is art history.

This year Dziamba received an Aresty grant to travel to Rome for a research project at the Capitoline Museum. She wanted to confirm something that art historians have assumed for many years: that the museum's *Medusa*, an unsigned marble bust, is the work of the Baroque-era Italian sculptor and architect Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680). She was guided by Professor Tod A. Marder. "Sarah's research is very interesting – one of the best undergrad papers I've seen in some time," Marder said in an email. "And I've seen a lot."

Applying her dual interests, Dziamba analyzed the Capitoline's *Medusa* from a literary as well as artistic perspective. The sculpture, Dziamba says, is the earliest known three-dimensional, in-the-round marble bust of the beautiful Medusa, whose hair, according to myth, is turned to snakes by Athena, and who has the power to turn anyone who looks her way to stone. Eventually beheaded by Perseus, Medusa is usually depicted as a horrifying, disembodied head, sometimes hanging by her hair from Perseus's hand.

The bust attributed to Bernini, however, shows Medusa not as horrifying but "sad rather than scary or frightening," Dziamba said. "I wanted to find out why the artist showed her that way." By tracing the evolution of the literary myth and artistic depictions of Medusa, as well as the evolution of Bernini as an



artist, Dziamba concludes in her paper that Bernini likely crafted the bust early in his career, around 1620. "It was meant to instruct the viewer against sin and other moral weaknesses," Dziamba writes.

The experience proved defining for Dziamba, who has been accepted into the graduate program in art history at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. Dziamba's "goal and dream" in life is to be a professor. The best part about the undergraduate research experience, she said, "especially for someone who wants to go to grad school, was applying for and getting a grant and traveling to see the sculpture."

**The following is an abstract of Dziamba's paper:**

**"Myth and Mystery: Bernini's Bust of the Medusa,"** by Sarah Dziamba, explores the issues surrounding a seventeenth-century marble bust that lacks not only an artist's signature, but a trail of documentation as well. Since the nineteenth century, it has traditionally been attributed to the Baroque artist Gianlorenzo Bernini, but a majority of the scholarship related to the bust has not adequately addressed the uniqueness of the piece. My project provides a satisfactory conclusion to several aspects of this mysterious object: its literary influences, artistic influences and finally the plausibility of attributing the bust to Bernini. Through an analysis of the Medusa myth from Ovid to the seventeenth century, and a study of representations of Medusa prior to the bust, both the meaning behind the piece as well as its artistic influences can be understood. After completing these analyses, it is clear that a satisfactory explanation of the Medusa bust involves the utilization of a multitude of sources, literary and artistic, spanning the sixth century to the seventeenth century A.D. I also propose a new conclusion, based on a combination of my visual analysis done in Rome and a balanced investigation of scholarly sources on the bust, regarding the placement of the piece within Bernini's body of work.

*Photography by Sarah Dziamba*