

Ava Reynolds
Miller Arts Scholars; Visual Art
Arts Award Outcome Report
March, 2020

Visual Exploration of Conservation

I would like to start by graciously thanking the J. Sanford Miller family for their incredible commitment to the fine arts at UVa. The Miller Arts Scholars program has not only shaped me as an individual artist, but as someone who understands the value of fostering community for artists of all disciplines. Many of the artistic experiences I've had in my time at UVa would not have been possible without funding provided through the Miller Arts Scholars program, and I am incredibly grateful for these opportunities.

For this Fourth Year Arts Award, I was able to use Miller Arts Scholars funding to attend a week-long intensive screenprinting workshop at Anderson Ranch Arts Center located in Aspen, Colorado. Through this workshop, I learned a style of printmaking not offered in regular classes taught in the UVa Studio Art Department; a skill I would have otherwise been unable to learn on such an intensive level. While at the workshop, I was exposed to a wide variety of faculty teaching the various workshops, bringing their knowledge of all different mediums of art from many different disciplines and universities. I attended several artist talks by various featured artists, and was able to have personal conversations with the faculty as well. It was also inspiring to see the range of attendees for the various workshops; everyone from extremely serious artists with art being their primary career, to retired individuals who were beginning to get back into creating, to young people like myself who were just beginning their somewhat unknown path as an artist.

In addition to the incredible networking and community building element of this workshop, my experience at Anderson Ranch inspired me to pursue screen printing as an incredibly accessible form of printmaking. This led me to apply for an Artist Minigrant to continue to pursue screen printing, hopefully even after my time at UVa.



Left: "Golden Hour," screen print completed while at Anderson Ranch Arts Center. Right: Printmaking and painting studio at Anderson Ranch Arts Center.

Another component of this Arts Award was creating a body of work based on my experience studying abroad in Tanzania during Spring 2019. I planned to create a visual comparison of conserved environments in both Tanzania and the United States, and explore how conservation is impacted by environmental degradation, climate change, and human presence. I wanted to explore the line between beauty and controversy that exists in conservation, in how conserved spaces can impact human communities, and how human communities can impact the beauty of conservation spaces.

Although I created a series of smaller art pieces related to this theme and filled a sketchbook thinking about these topics during my time in Tanzania, I also had to be true to the artistic process as it shifts and changes, and I ultimately moved away from this theme slightly. Instead of limiting my inspiration to just conservation, I focused more generally on “Examining Environments through Visual Abstraction.” This revised title and thesis came to be the strongest influence for how I shaped this project and the work that has come out of it.

I have been incredibly drawn to expressing abstract beauty in environments, but acknowledging and expressing how environmental beauty and access to environmental beauty is a unique and privileged experience. My focus has shifted beyond environmental degradation in conserved spaces to environmental degradation in some of the most important environments: our own lived in environments, and abstractly imagining what this looks like for people inhabiting spaces with environmental injustices and environmental burdens present. Although my time as a Miller Arts Scholar is coming to an end, this is a topic I am incredibly passionate about, and my experiences with Miller Arts have encouraged me to continue to create art from passions in this topic.

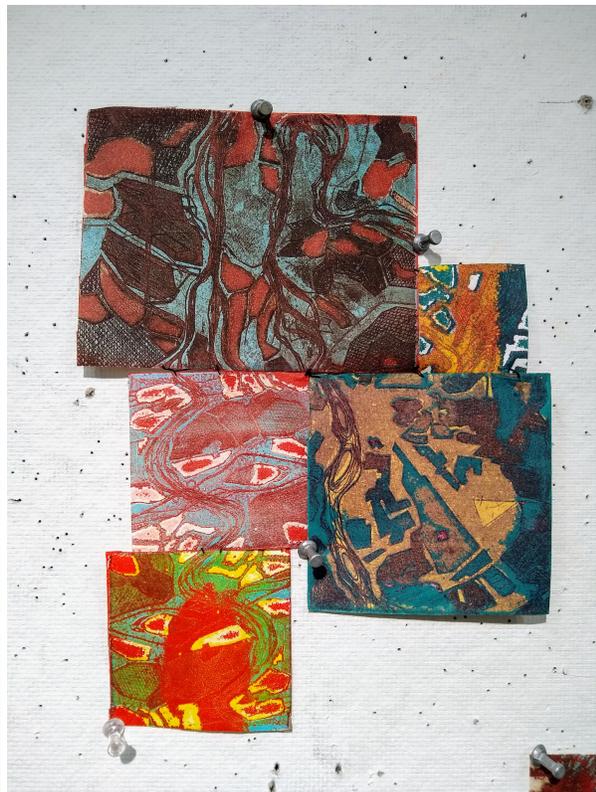
Several of the pieces I’ve been working on related to this theme would have been shown in art shows I had coming up this Spring, however with the recent cancellations I am now shifting my focus into creating an online portfolio which will highlight the concepts behind the work.



Left: “Birch”, Right: “Buttress.” Screen prints completed and inspired by abstracting characteristics of tree species seen in Tanzania.



Left: "Zone D", intaglio print inspired by environmental zoning maps. Right: "Effluence", intaglio print reflecting beauty and complexity created by organic forms of polluted and toxic water.



Left: "Below the Surface: Blue", linoleum print examining toxic flood patterns after natural disasters. Right: "Zoned", quilted intaglio prints inspired by discriminatory environmental zoning maps.

Overall, I am incredibly grateful to the J. Sanford Miller family for their commitment to the arts at UVa. My experience at Anderson Ranch Arts Center, the seminar series with other Arts Scholars, as well as general access to an amazing network of artists across many disciplines has inspired me to believe in myself as an artist, and carry that identity forward beyond my time at UVa. It has shown me the incredible importance of finding and sharing community with other artists, and has even lead me to unexpected collaboration projects and deep friendships. I was planning a shared art show with a fellow Miller Arts Scholar, and collaborated with an Arts Scholar alum earlier this spring to host Close to Home, an environmental art show that was funded and supported by Miller Arts last year. Looking beyond UVa, I am excited to seek out communities of artists from all disciplines, and find ways to always be creating art in some capacity.



“Below the Surface” – Triptych of linoleum prints.