

Anderson Ranch Arts Center: Study in Relief

Shannon Spence | Class of 2019, Miller Arts Scholar

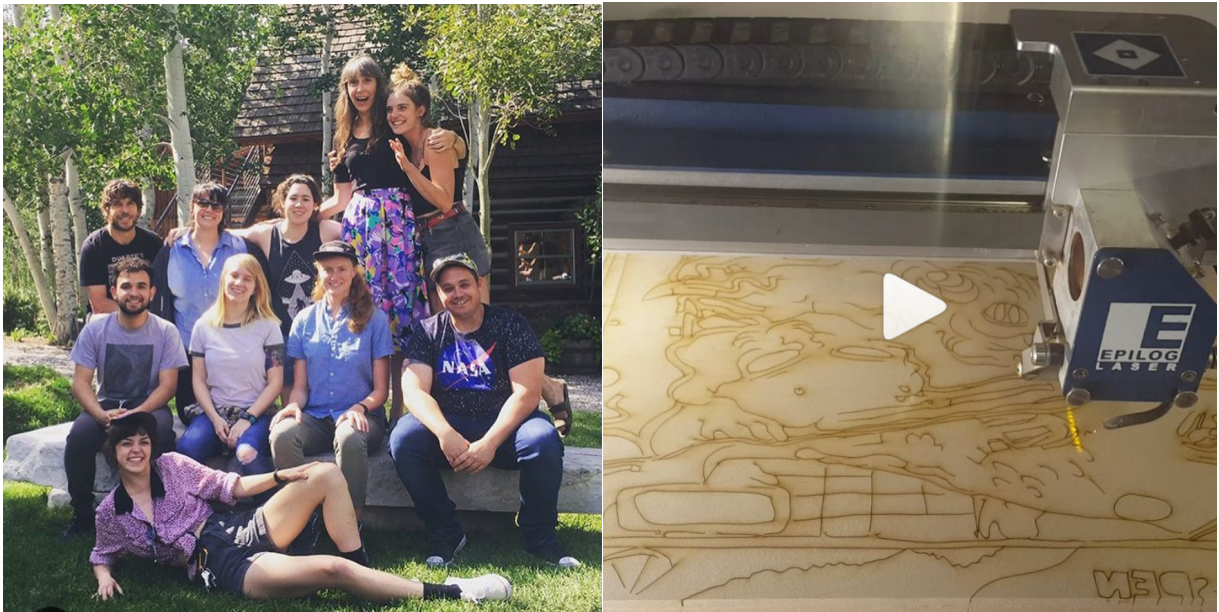
Dean Dass, McIntire Department of Art

March 2019

OUTCOME SUMMARY

With the support of the Miller Arts Scholar 4th year award, I was able to attend “*Bridging the Gap: white-line woodcut & CNC*” at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Colorado from July 23-27th. It was an invaluable experience that has influenced my art in wonderful ways since that week up in the mountains. From where my work stood at the time I embarked on this journey, I didn’t anticipate the effect this experience had on myself as an artist and my work.

I am primarily a woodcut artist, and this class seemed like a logical step in learning a new and exciting technique. We learned how to translate our line drawings into paths for a computer to cut *for* us. This took out the entire experience of carving that I was used to. We had access to a CNC router and a laser cutter, and everyone in the course had their own preference or experiments they wanted to attempt. We learned about the traditional white-line woodcuts created primarily by women in the early 20th century, and how our incredibly talented instructor was bringing back this technique in her own work. With these tools and newly acquired skills, we were given free rein to try and fail during a week-long intensive workload.



1 My classmates up at Anderson Ranch. The instructor, Breanne Trammel, is in the top right.

2 The laser cutter burning one of my drawings into wood. The video can be viewed [here](#).

I was stunned by the talented artists I was able to work with and meet on this trip. Everyone had something to bring to the table and a unique way of utilizing the new technique. It was an incredibly healthy and invigorating experience to work side-by-side with passionate and creative people. I worked harder than I ever have generating ideas, converting them to digital files, and printing. The printing process was very labor intensive: watercolor by hand and section by section. This completely flipped how I normally went about woodcut (printing usually being quick and effortless) and allowed me to explore a light and bright color palette.



3 "Tracer Bullet", 9" x 12", white-line woodcut. Inspired by the wildfires raging when I arrived in Colorado.

4 Recent white-line woodcut from Fall 2018, done by hand and printed with techniques learned at Anderson Ranch.

Throughout this weeklong course, I was fortunate enough to have bountiful inspiration at my fingertips in the beautiful mountains of Colorado. I had never been to anywhere like it before, and the wildlife, landscapes, and people were a constant source of inspiration for my work. My favorite pieces I made during that week were "Tracer Bullet" and "Monster of Aspen", both inspired directly by Colorado, and they currently are on display at 1515 on the Corner. The week was intense (I even got my first migraine at the end of the week after too many late nights printing) but an incredible step for my future as an artist. I still have blocks from that week I have yet to print, and I've folded what I've learned into my current work as well.



5 "Monsters of Aspen", 9"x 12", white-line woodcut. Doodles on a local map, cut by the laser-cutter.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Miller Arts Scholars for this incredible opportunity. Without them I wouldn't have been able to cover the cost of travel or for the supplies I needed to complete that week in Colorado, and that I still use on a regular basis for my work. The support of this program has funded many of my ventures over the years, and I am incredibly grateful to have these opportunities to try new and exciting art experiments with full support. I would also like to thank the Printmaking department in the McIntire Department of Art for awarding me a tuition scholarship to attend this course in Anderson Ranch. I hope I can repay these amazing opportunities by my future work as an alumni and artist.