



Desert Mission

TECHNICAL Artist **Gini Wade** travels to Albuquerque to experience the legendary Tamarind Institute Summer Course

The Tamarind Institute has legendary status amongst printmakers as a centre of excellence for lithography, so I was very pleased to be accepted onto the Summer Course in 2014. The syllabus is designed for printmakers who will share their knowledge, either by teaching or by collaborating with artists. I was eligible because I teach lithography at the Sidney Nolan Trust, Herefordshire.

Beginnings

During the 1950s there was a shortage of facilities for artists seeking to make prints in the USA, and Tamarind founder June Wayne had to go to Paris to create lithographs. In order to solve this problem, she made a successful application for funding from the Ford Foundation, and in 1960, she and Clinton Adams established Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles.

Wayne's objective was to rescue lithography from decline, and re-establish it as a serious fine art technique. She intended to train a pool of masterprinters who would then set up their own printshops, where they could collaborate with artists to make lithographs. There was no market at that time for prints, so Wayne set about developing one by working with well-known artists such as Ed Ruscha. After ten years, these objectives were being achieved, and Wayne decided to move on. Clinton Adams, by then Dean of Fine Arts at the University of New Mexico, took on the directorship, and Tamarind moved to Albuquerque, as Tamarind Institute. Adams retired in 1985, and Marjorie Devon has been the director ever since.

Artist projects

For the first five years at Albuquerque, Tamarind ran a guest artist programme, supported by a dwindling grant from the Ford Foundation. (Now the univer-

sity contributes a third of the budget, while the other two-thirds is generated mostly by contract printing and print sales.) Well-known artists, such as Jim Dine, are invited to work with masterprinter Bill Lagattuta. Tamarind often works on projects with international and local artists, such as *Landmarks*, a print collaboration between indigenous Australian artists and Native American artists. While I was there, local artists were working on a project funded by the town council, called *Foodie*, about food and eateries in Albuquerque. Upstairs, the Tamarind Gallery has a rolling exhibition programme of prints made in the print shop below.

Education programme

The ground floor of Tamarind is divided into two sections, each with four or five Takach presses. One half is the 'Pro' side, where Bill Lagattuta works with visiting artists, and researches materials and techniques. In the other half, educational director Rodney Hamon trains students to become collaborative printmakers. Students come from all over the world, and one or two are selected to stay for a second year, working as apprentices in the Pro shop. When students leave they are encouraged to establish their own printshops; many do, for instance Sarah Dudley and Ulrich Kühle of Keystone Editions, Berlin, and Lee Turner of Hole Editions, Newcastle upon Tyne.

The Summer Course

The Summer Course runs for four weeks, and is devoted to working on aluminium ball-grained plates. There were nine students on the course with me: six American and three from the UK, Australia and Japan. Two were printmaking students, the others were either teaching in universities, or running printshops.

Hamon took us through the basics of plate lithography, with which most of us were already familiar. However, by the end of the first week, we realized how superficial our knowledge was compared to Hamon's depth of experience. The course placed an emphasis on problem solving. Ironically, the dry desert climate is far from ideal for lithography, as materials dry so fast, and the water is very acidic. A further issue for us non-Americans was that most of the chemicals used were different (lithotint instead of turps, different etches and print bases, and so on). Inevitably we all ran into plenty of problems, which Hamon solved with never-failing good humour. Indeed he would have been disappointed if our printing had been problem-free. As well as exploring all aspects of plate lithography, Hamon demonstrated many other lithographic techniques. We also worked on our own prints, which entailed long hours in the studio outside the tuition hours.

All change

It is the end of an era at Tamarind, as Devon steps down as director in 2015. Bill Lagattuta and Rodney Hamon are also retiring this year, and theirs will be a hard act to follow. However over the years Tamarind has trained so many students that there are plenty of excellent candidates with the energy to carry the Institute into the future.

Contact

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Images, left to right

Tamarind Institute, Albuquerque
 Rodney Hamon demonstrates transfer litho watched by Virgil Taylor (USA), Jaime Powell (Aus.), Elspeth Lamb (Scotland), James Meara (USA), and Takayoshi Sakai (Japan)
 Virgil Taylor and Elspeth Lamb print, while Takayoshi Sakai watches
 Photographs by Gini Wade