

William T. Carson
Santa Fe, New Mexico



ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Coal has a reputation that precedes itself. Whether mining coal from the earth, debating its future in the political arena, using the electricity it generates, or simply breathing the air around us, coal affects all of us. While coal has an impact on everyone, many have never seen the material in person. My paintings and sculptures are meant to present the viewer with coal in its raw form.

The coal I work with is roughly 60 million years old. What began as leafy plant material has been transformed into a flammable black rock through pressure, heat, and time. This coal was mined at the Wolf Mountain Mine in Decker, Montana, which is near my childhood home on my family's cattle ranch.

I began experimenting with coal as an artistic medium during the winter of 2015 in response to time I spent studying coal development in Montana's Powder River Basin. Since childhood I had seen coal from a distance: gazing at the seams of black rock in the mines near our home, looking on as thousands of black-capped railroad cars hauled it away, and watching news reports on the mining industry and climate change. However, I had never taken the time to simply observe coal. I had never broken the stone apart to discover the way it cleaves, felt the soft powder of its dust between my fingers, or twisted it in my hands to watch the way it plays with light. I had never considered coal to be beautiful.

Through my artwork I am searching for new ways to value coal. We often appreciate the earth's natural resources for their economic value, but what if we look beyond that? I had not considered coal to be a beautiful material because I saw it through a strictly political lens: one that emphasized its economic value and minimized its other qualities. If not a fuel, what is coal?

What if we were to appreciate coal for the way it reflects light? Or the way it sounds when water flows through it? What if we were to admire coal for the way it reminds us of deep time and the millions of years that led to our existence?

If we deem that coal is no longer a viable fuel source, perhaps we can begin a new relationship with this rock. Through painting and sculpture, I aim to promote a relationship with coal that is based in gratitude. Coal is the bedrock of modern civilization; we owe a great deal of our abundance as a species to the technological advances made possible by coal. In my work I intend to express respect for the magnitude of coal's significance in human history and gratitude for all those who have given their time and health to provide for society by working with this rock.

I invite those who view my work to approach coal with curiosity in an attempt to reframe their relationship to the material, if only for a little while. In my time creating art with coal I have developed a fondness for the qualities of the material that I had previously overlooked, which I hope to share with others through my work.

William T. Carson

EDUCATION

- 2015 BA – Colorado College – Colorado Springs, CO – *magna cum laude* with distinction in Art: Art Studio
- 2014 Danish Institute for Study Abroad – Copenhagen, Denmark - semester abroad in Architecture

SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS, & GRANTS

- 2020 12 Artist to Know Now In New Mexico (Southwest Contemporary)
- 2015 Anderson Ranch Scholarship
Ritt Kellogg Memorial Fund Expedition Grant
- 2014 Venture Grant
Colorado College President's Fund
Colorado College Dean of Student Life Fund
- 2013 Danish Institute for Study Abroad Architecture Scholarship
Student Blogger of the Semester Award, Danish Institute for Study Abroad
- 2011 David and Lucille Packard Scholarship for the Arts
Lopez Artist Guild Art Achievement Award
Chimera Cooperative Gallery Scholarship
Island Artisans Visual Arts Scholarship

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *12 Artists to Know Now in New Mexico* – Southwest Contemporary – Santa Fe, NM
- 2018 *Source Material* – CAMIBAart Gallery – Austin, TX – two-person exhibit with Rebecca Rothfus Harrell
Echoes of the Mind – Sixth Street Gallery by CAMIBAart – Austin, TX – group exhibition
- 2017 *Year End Review* – CAMIBAart Gallery – Austin, TX – group exhibition
Unearth – CAMIBAart Gallery – Austin, TX – solo exhibit
Art City Austin Art Fair – exhibited by CAMIBAart Gallery – Austin, TX
- 2016 *East Austin Studio Tour* – Austin, TX – temporary exhibition
Due East – Big Medium – Austin, TX – group exhibition
Bituminous – Gallery of Contemporary Art, University of Colorado – Colorado Springs, CO – group exhibition
- 2015 *Bituminous: Thesis Exhibition* – Studio 802 – Colorado Springs, CO – solo exhibition
Senior Show – Coburn Gallery – Colorado Springs, CO – group exhibition
Student Art Show – Studio 802 – Colorado Springs, CO – group exhibition

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

- 2017 Beyond the Bio: William T. Carson – Interview by Art Alliance Austin
- 2015 Wasko, Sarah. "89 Miles Along the Tongue River." *Monster Children*. June