

# A Meditation with Nature

## An Interview with Artist Hunter Buck

Imagine, you're standing in the middle of a lava field. You look down at your feet, marveling at the lumps, bumps, and pukas created by this incredible volcanic force. Or imagine, you're face to face with the bark of a beautiful tree in the forest. You can see the patterns and grooves, feel the texture with your fingertips. Imagine you're standing knee-deep in an ice cold stream. You watch the water flow around you, noticing the ripples and bubbles, the sparkle of sunlight across its surface. If you stop, if you look closely, all of nature is a masterpiece. Printmaker and painter Hunter Buck is into stopping and looking closely.

### Inspiration

Buck's paintings and prints center on the earth, up close – exploring the intricate textures and patterns of geology, geography, and biology. As a kid, he grew up back and forth between Montana and the Big Island of Hawai'i. These two rugged and wild landscapes serve as a continuing source of inspiration, along with his more recent travels through Iceland. With each piece he makes, he aims to create a peripheral, immersive experience for the viewer. A personal window into the beauty and mystery of the natural world.

*"It's the microcosm, rather than the macrocosm," says Buck. "It's about slowing down, taking your time, creating a date, a meditation, with nature. I feel if everyone did this more, we would have a greater connection."*

### Process

Buck's process starts by doing just this – slowing down. He'll be driving down the road and something will catch his eye and he'll pull over and stop to investigate. He's in the habit of always carrying a 5x7 Moleskin notebook with him for these exact moments. By now, he's got shoe boxes full of these notebooks, which go onto inspire larger prints. *"My best work is probably in these notebooks,"* he jokes.

If he's going to create a painting, Buck will often interact directly with the landscape by putting down a cloth over rock or other natural formation and painting over it to transfer the texture of the surface. For printmaking, he begins with the initial sketch from his notebook and then creates a matrix for the design.

For those who are unfamiliar with printmaking and how it works, it involves transferring images from a matrix (a template usually made of wood, metal, or glass) onto another surface, most often paper or fabric. Traditional printmaking techniques include woodcut, etching, engraving, and lithography. The design is created on the matrix by working its flat surface with tools or chemicals. Then, the matrix is inked and transferred onto the desired surface, using pressure via a printing press or by hand.

*“Printmaking is like doing the dishes,”* says Buck, *“but more fun.”* In the process, the artist is always cleaning and wiping away the ink. It’s as much about what you remove as what you leave behind. In this case, you want your dishes to be a little dirty. One of the things he loves most about working in the medium is the element of surprise. You never know what you’re going to get until you pull the print off. There’s the anticipation and a moment of reveal.

## Experience

Buck earned his BFA from the California College of Arts and his MFA from the Pacific Northwest College of Art. He gained additional experience working at [Paulson Fontaine Press](#), the [Kala Art institute](#), and as an apprentice to Hiroki Morinoue, master printmaker and co-founder of the Donkey Mill Art Center.

Perhaps his biggest mentors were, and still are, his parents, artists Deborah Butterfield and John Buck. As one might imagine, being raised by two artists was a pretty good time. *“There was always plenty of art supplies lying around for me to experiment with,”* says Buck. *“Art was like a second language at home.”* Someone was always creating something. Traveling artist friends would often come to stay and work with the family.

## Exhibits

Buck’s work has appeared in numerous group and solo exhibitions. Some of his recent shows include: *New Work*, Foundry Vineyards, Walla Walla, WA (2020), *Cast Shadow*, Tjaden Gallery Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, (2020), *FACE to FACE*, Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago, IL (2020), and *New Petrographics*, The Ink Shop, Ithaca, NY (2019).

This summer, his work will appear in two group shows in Berlin, Germany and Þingeyri, Iceland, where he will also participate in an artist residency.

## Giving Back

Today, Buck enjoys giving back and teaching others after receiving so much support and encouragement from his mentors. He taught an eight-week etching class earlier this year at the Donkey Mill and is on the roster to teach again in 2023.

His advice for aspiring artists is simple:

*“Surround yourself with as much art and artists as possible. See what resonates with you, then chase it. It will speak to you; it’s not going to lie.”*

*Hunter Buck splits his time between the Big Island of Hawai’i and Montana with his partner and fellow artist, [Emma Ulen-klees](#).*

*Find him online at <http://www.hunterbuck.com> and @hunterbuckart.*