

= Blanche Lazzell =

Blanche Lazzell ( October 10 , 1878 ? June 1 , 1956 ) was an American painter , printmaker and designer . Known especially for her white @-@ line woodcuts , she was an early modernist American artist , bringing elements of Cubism and abstraction into her art .

Born in a small farming community in West Virginia , Lazzell traveled to Europe twice , studying in Paris with French artists Albert Gleizes , Fernand Léger , and André Lhote . In 1915 , she began spending her summers in the Cape Cod art community of Provincetown , Massachusetts and eventually settled there permanently . She was one of the founding members of the Provincetown Printers , a group of artists who experimented with a white @-@ line woodcut technique based on the Japanese ukiyo @-@ e woodblock prints .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life and education = = =

Nettie Blanche Lazzell was born October 10 , 1878 on a farm near Maidsville , West Virginia to Mary Prudence Pope and Cornelius Carhart Lazzell . Her father was a direct descendant of Reverend Thomas and Hannah Lazzell , pioneers who settled in Monongalia County after the American Revolutionary War . The Lazzells were devout Methodists , attending the Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church . The ninth of ten children , she was nicknamed " Pet " by her older brother Rufus , a name that her family would continue to use throughout her life . She grew up on the 200 acre ( 0 @.@ 81 km2 ) family farm , attending a one @-@ room schoolhouse on the property where students from the first through eighth grades were taught from October through February . Her mother died when she was twelve .

When Lazzell was fifteen , she enrolled in the West Virginia Conference Seminary ( now West Virginia Wesleyan College ) in Buckhannon . Probably sometime prior to her entering the Seminary she became partially deaf , although the exact origin of her condition is unclear . In 1894 she sought treatment from a Baltimore doctor who blamed her deafness on catarrh .

In 1899 , Lazzell enrolled in the South Carolina Co @-@ educational Institute . Upon graduation later that year , she became a teacher at the Red Oaks School in Ramsey , South Carolina . In spring of 1900 , she returned to Maidsville , where she tutored her younger sister , Bessie .

Lazzell was matriculated into the West Virginia University ( WVU ) in 1901 and decided to study fine art . While her education was paid for by her father , she kept a strict account of her expenditures and took a job coloring photographs at Frieds , a studio in Morgantown . She took drawing and art history classes from William J. Leonard and studied with Eva E. Hubbard . In June 1905 Lazzell was graduated , earning her degree in fine arts . She continued to study at WVU off and on until 1909 , furthering her art studies and twice substituting as a painting teacher for Hubbard . During this time she learned ceramics , gold etching , and china decoration .

She enrolled in the Art Students League of New York in 1908 where she studied under painters Kenyon Cox and William Merritt Chase . Georgia O 'Keeffe attended the league during the same period , but it is not clear whether the two attended classes together . In 1908 , Lazzell 's father died and she left the Art Students League .

= = = Travels to Europe = = =

Lazzell boarded the SS Ivernia on July 3 , 1912 bound for Europe on a summer tour arranged by the American Travel Club . The tour began in England and continued through the Netherlands , Belgium , and Italy , where Lazzell studied the architecture of churches . In August she left the tour and traveled to Paris , where she stayed at a pension in Montparnasse on the Left Bank . She attended lectures by Florence Heywood and Rossiter Howard , avoided the cafe life , and joined the Students Hostel on Boulevard Saint @-@ Michel . While in Paris , Lazzell took classes at the

Académie de la Grande Chaumière , Académie Julian , and Académie Delécluse , eventually settling in at the Académie Moderne where she studied with post @-@ impressionist painter Charles Guérin and David Rosen . Lazzell felt most comfortable at the Moderne , which was associated with the Parisian avant @-@ garde . She embarked upon a six @-@ week sketching tour of Italy with four other young women in February 1913 . The quintet returned to Paris via Germany where Lazzell partook in her first glass of beer in Munich . In April she visited an ear specialist who removed a growth from the back of her throat , resulting in what she characterized as " a slight improvement " in her hearing . She continued to study with Guérin , who recognized Lazzell 's inclination for landscape art . Lazzell extended her stay in France and attended lectures at the Louvre concerning Flemish paintings , Dutch art and the Italian Renaissance . She returned to the United States at the end of September , sailing from London on the SS Arabic of the White Star Line .

Upon returning to Morgantown , Lazzell focused on painting and lived with her sister Bessie . She held a solo exhibition in December 1914 that included her sketches and paintings . Lazzell rented a studio where she taught art while supporting herself through the sales of hand @-@ painted china .

= = = Provincetown = = =

Lacking artistic stimulation in Morgantown , Lazzell journeyed to Provincetown , Massachusetts in 1915 . Already an artists ' colony , Provincetown was a mecca for European artists escaping World War I. Stella Johnson and Jessie Fremont Herring , two of Lazzell 's companions from her tour in Italy , were already in Provincetown and Lazzell stayed with Johnson 's mother . Lazzell took a morning outdoor painting class that summer from Charles Webster Hawthorne at his Cape Cod School of Art where she was exposed to Fauvist color and technique . She returned to Morgantown in the autumn and held an exhibition in her studio that October .

Lazzell returned to Provincetown the following summer and requested that painting instructor , Oliver Chaffee , teach her the white @-@ line woodcut technique innovated by Arthur Wesley Dow and adopted by a group of artists who had spent the previous winter in Provincetown . The white @-@ line woodcuts were inspired by Japanese ukiyo @-@ e woodblock prints , but only used a single block of wood . Designs were etched into the surface of woodblocks , with the incised lines separating sections of the blocks . The sections were individually painted and printed onto paper with the carved portions forming white lines . Lazzell and other artists specializing in the white @-@ line technique formed the Provincetown Printers , an artist collective that later would earn national recognition . Toward the close of 1916 she traveled to Manhattan where she studied with Homer Boss and did an analysis of color with William E. Schumacher . Two of her pieces in the white @-@ line style were exhibited in the Provincetown Art Association 's annual show in 1917 .

Originality , Simplicity , Freedom of Expression , and above all Sincerity , with a clean cut block , are characteristics of a good wood block print .

In the summer of 1917 , she spent time at Byrdcliffe Colony , an artists ' colony in Woodstock , New York . There she studied with William Schumacher , under whom she made her first color woodcut . She also studied with William Zorach and Andrew Dasburg . In the summer of 1918 Lazzell moved to Provincetown permanently , converting an old fish house overlooking the Provincetown Harbor into a studio . She spent the winters in Morgantown and Manhattan until 1922 , always returning to Provincetown for the summer . In addition to her involvement with the Provincetown Printers , Lazzell was a member of the Provincetown Art Association and the Sail Loft Club , Provincetown 's women 's art club .

Although the bohemian atmosphere of Provincetown contrasted with Lazzell 's church @-@ going conservative demeanor , she wove herself into a tight circle of friends , including Ada Gilmore , Agnes Weinrich , and Otto Karl Knaths . She became close to Simeon C. Smith , a former WVU English professor who had retired to Provincetown . She spent Thanksgiving with his family in 1918 and while the couple became romantically entangled , they never married .

In 1919 Lazzell was featured in an exhibition in Manhattan at the Touchstone Gallery alongside Weinrich , Mary Kirkup , and Flora Schoenfeld . Later that year , the Provincetown Printers were

featured at the Detroit Institute of Arts exhibition " Wood Block Prints in Color by American Artists " . That show included Lazzell 's depiction of the Monongahela River in Morgantown The Monongahela , which was cut at Byrdcliffe in William E. Schumacher 's studio . Critics and galleries associated the Provincetown Printers with modernist schools of painting and the artist collective continued to receive national exposure over the next few years with exhibitions in Chicago , Los Angeles , Philadelphia , Baltimore , and New Orleans .

Lazzell turned her old fish shack into a personal space and built large flower boxes around her studio , allowing morning glory and Madeira vines to grow up to the roof . Her studio 's garden became a local attraction and she hosted teas for which she made homemade candy . During this time Lazzell produced white @-@ line prints and flower monoprints and she taught painting and block printing classes .

= = = Return to Europe = = =

Lazzell returned to Europe in 1923 with Tannahill and Kaesche , touring Italy and spending two months in Cassis before settling in Paris late that summer . Her friend Flora Schoenfeld convinced her to dye her hair red in the fashion of many women in their circle . While in Paris Lazzell studied Cubism and geometric abstraction alongside Fernand Léger , André Lhote , and Albert Gleizes . Lazzell 's work was exhibited at the Salon d 'Automne and the American Women 's Club in 1923 . She returned to Morgantown in August 1924 after her sister Bessie had given birth to a son .

= = = Later years = = =

Lazzell grew close to her niece , Frances Reed , for whom she was a mentor and role model . For six years she served on the committee of selection for the Annual Modern Exhibition . After her return to Provincetown in 1926 , Lazzell tore down her studio and had a new building constructed , as the fish house was too cold during the winter . She participated in a show called " Fifty Prints of the Year " where she debuted her compositions The Violet Jug and Trees . She was particularly influenced by Gleizes and produced a series of abstract Synthetic cubist paintings based on the golden ratio , including Painting VIII .

Lazzell was a member of the international arts group Société Anonyme and was asked by artist and patron Katherine Dreier to be on its board of directors in 1928 . Lazzell later joined the New York Society of Women Artists and the Society of Independent Artists . Lazzell began incorporating abstract designs into her woodblocks and created designs for hooked rugs toward the end of the decade . She returned to Morgantown in the winter of 1929 and offered art lessons . Among her students was Ella Sophonisba Hergesheimer .

In 1934 , Lazzell was one of two West Virginians who received Federal Art Project grants through the Works Progress Administration . That same year she created a mural for a court room in the Monongalia County Courthouse entitled , Justice . The mural took fourteen weeks to complete . The mural is currently displayed at the Art Museum of West Virginia University in Morgantown , WV . She continued experimenting with woodprints and , in 1935 , studied with the renowned German abstract expressionist Hans Hofmann in Provincetown . Hofmann 's push / pull spatial theory is evident in the asymmetry of her later works . Lazzell 's studies of flowers were inspired by her lavish potted gardens , such as Star Phlox ( 1931 ) . Her 1948 floral print , Red and White Petunia , won first prize at the American Color Print Society exhibition . A collection of her prints are housed at the Art Museum of West Virginia University .

In 1956 , Lazzell 's health began to fail and she was hospitalized in Bourne , Massachusetts toward the end of May for a suspected stroke . After suffering a documented stroke , Lazzell died on June 1 . She is interred next to her father in Bethel Cemetery in Maidsville .

= = Artistic style = =

While Lazzell is most well known for her white @-@ line woodcuts , she also created ceramics ,

hooked rugs , paintings , and gouache studies . The subjects of her paintings and prints included landscape scenery and harbor scenes in Provincetown as well as flowers and still lifes . These and her abstract works incorporated elements of both Synthetic and Analytic cubism and frequently comprised arrangements of vibrantly colored geometric shapes . She was among the earliest women artists in the United States to work in a modernist style .

Lazzell 's paintings demonstrated a rich and nuanced use of color . She preferred French watercolor pigments that , alongside the grain of the woodblocks , created embossed lines and striated patterns . Typically the woodblocks she created were made from cherry or basswood and she only pulled three or four prints from each woodblock . From 1916 to 1955 , Lazzell created 138 woodblocks . Modern exhibitions of Lazzell 's artworks have included the woodblocks themselves .

Although she was a pioneer in the white @-@ line woodcut technique and played a role in the development of abstract art in the United States , Lazzell 's work faded into obscurity for a time . With a resurgence of interest in the modern print , and especially the white @-@ line woodcut , Lazzell 's popularity has surged lately . On August 3 , 2012 Lazzell 's print ' Sail Boat ' reached a staggering \$ 106 @,@ 200 at auction .