

# TAHOE WEEKLY

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## Creating a space for artists

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Nestled in the Ponderosa pines up by the Ritz-Carlton lies the new Rendezvous Cabins built by Mountainside at Northstar. With incredible views of the Mount Rose Wilderness and an extensive trail system accessible from its front doors, these modern rustically furnished huts are an ideal place to get away and absorb the mountain's natural surroundings.



In addition to the luxury accommodations, the developers created the Mountainside Institute as a way for cabin owners to collaborate and create, using the outdoors as a catalyst to build experiences that connect nature and people. The Mountainside Institute includes a seasonal artist residency program to invite noted artists to come to Lake Tahoe for several weeks, work in a cabin and offer open studio hours. Brooklyn-based artist Zaria Forman was the first to take advantage of the program.

It was lightly snowing outside and she was working on a 10.5-foot panel perched on a wall with lifelike-looking ice popping out of it. The natural light peeking over the snow-covered windows on to the Antarctica portrait was breathtakingly beautiful. Despite the crazy January weather, Forman made significant progress on her work over the course of a month. This is Forman's third artist-in-residency experience and she thoroughly enjoyed it.

*"I'm really affected by my visual surroundings; I loved everything about the space. Being there felt like a retreat. It was so rejuvenating in so many ways and I got work done."* –Zaria Forman

"It was such a winter wonderland since day one," said Forman. "Besides Antarctica, this is the only other place I've been to that has this much snow. I would come here every winter if I could."

According to Forman, ice is one of the most difficult landscapes to translate to paper: "In 2006, I went to Greenland with my family. Up until then I painted tumultuous skies, hurricanes, tornadoes. But while we were in Greenland, I found out that climate change was a huge issue because the locals had to adapt to the changing environment in order to survive. I realized that I wanted to add meaning to my work instead of just painting things for someone's wall."

For a challenge, she started drawing water but was afraid of drawing ice.

"White is a really hard color to draw," she said. "I didn't think I could do it."

But she said that drawing water was the one step that eventually led to her portraying the world's icecaps. Drawing white ice was the ultimate challenge, but she was up to it because art was ingrained in Forman since she was a child.

"My mother was an artist and so I grew up with it," said Forman, adding that her mother took her to remote places, as far away from civilization as possible to practice landscape photography.

After Forman received a formal education in art, a NASA Airborne Extraterrestrial Navigator came across her TED Talk on Apple TV. He invited her by e-mail to Antarctica aboard the National Geographic Explorer. She says that she thought it was a joke, but soon found herself among the towering glacial ice with the rest of the crew. NASA has spent the last eight years revisiting and mapping certain parts of the world to learn more about climate change.

"I took thousands of photos and used those plus the memory of the experience to capture it [for her later drawings]," said Forman, adding that she will sometimes mix and match photos and change the shape or colors of the ice to represent the experience. She then grids out the photos and uses them for reference as she draws out the ice.

"One thing that's really important to my work is to focus on the beauty of these vulnerable regions instead of the destruction. I want to be encouraging, motivating and positive. I want to create a piece that has that special, magical fairy dust of that human experience that you can't really translate."

The petite artist kept a positive attitude despite going without power for a bit, her panel arriving late and the 4-inch-thick rim of ice around her cabin. She embraced the full experience.

"I felt like nothing had been challenging, except wanting to be outside all the time," she said. "I'm really affected by my visual surroundings; I loved everything about the space. Being there felt like a retreat. It was so rejuvenating in so many ways and I got work done. I mostly enjoyed being so remote on the mountain. I'm lucky and grateful that I got to be there. I woke up every morning ecstatic."

Forman completed her Mountainside residency in early February and her finished piece will be on display for the public on June 21 at an exhibition in Seattle, Wash. Mountainside at Northstar will announce its next artist in the coming months.

For more information about Mountainside, visit [mountainsidenorthstar.com](http://mountainsidenorthstar.com). For more information about Zaria Forman, visit [zariaforman.com](http://zariaforman.com).



By Kayla Anderson  
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THE ARTS