



Celene Aubry (left) is manager at veteran letterpress shop Hatch Show Print in Nashville, Tennessee. Old posters and memorabilia cover every bit of wall space in the store (below).



MEET THE MAKER

The Print Artist

In 139 years of uninterrupted operation, Hatch Show Print has become synonymous with Nashville's entertainment history. Meet the person who's helping to keep that tradition alive.

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THE CLANK OF A WELL-OILED letterpress rings through Hatch Show Print as printmakers work to complete a batch of posters advertising a Beatles tribute band. In spite of the shop's location in the middle of Nashville's rapidly expanding downtown, inside there's an air of Music City's past, when horses outnumbered cars and before neon lit up Broadway.

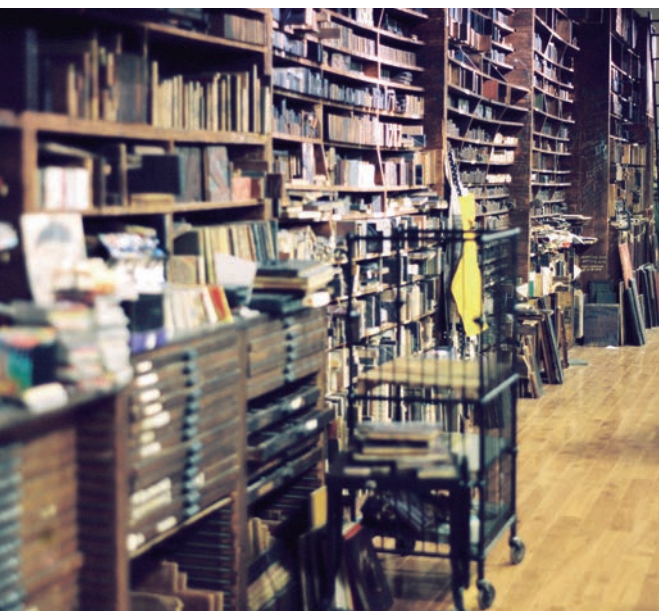
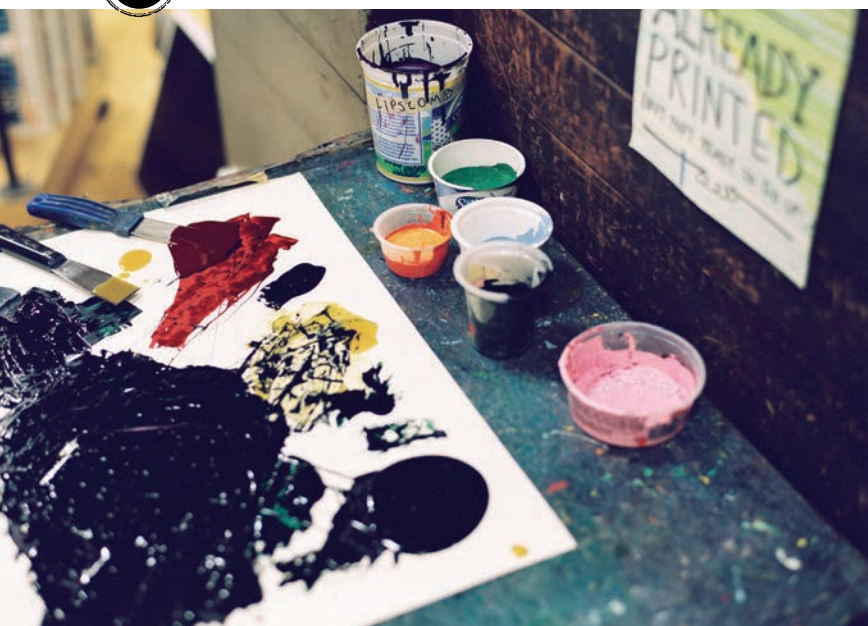
Although Hatch began in 1879, its golden age coincided with the rise of Nashville's best-known export: country music. As the sound of twanging guitars, fiddles and banjos poured through radios and dance halls across America, Hatch positioned itself as the No. 1 print shop for the industry, offering show posters for some of the biggest names in entertainment, including Hank Williams, Patsy Cline and Johnny Cash.

For more than a century, Hatch defined a "look" that became synonymous with

country music: bold colors, intricate design and balanced type. In the 1980s, facing competition from computerized printing, the shop reinvented itself, adding commemorative art pieces to its repertoire.

"One of the unique things about Hatch as a print shop is that we design everything that we print and we print only what we design," shop manager Celene Aubry says. "It's been that way since day one." Aubry runs the store, helping with everything from ordering supplies to managing staff. Then there's the fun stuff: setting antique type, developing educational programs, mixing ink and operating a letterpress to produce Hatch's iconic posters.

Aubry laughs when asked what drew her to the craft, which uses inked raised blocks of wood to press images and type onto paper. "I studied physics and architecture in college," she says. "But I grew up in a



household where creativity was encouraged and we were always making stuff.” She is fascinated with the letterpress printing process, the tactile nature of hand-carved type, the ease of production and distribution of paper materials. “It’s the antithesis of digital design,” Aubry says. “Sometimes you can still smell the ink on the poster when you pick it up.”

Since arriving in Nashville in 2012, she has guided Hatch as it moved from its old location on Broadway to a new space nearby, next to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. She helped develop an informative tour that demonstrates the process and shares Hatch’s history. She rails off dates and details like a historian, easily gliding into the story of Hatch’s beginnings.

Clockwise from top left: mixing ink; printing posters for Rain, a Beatles tribute band; old posters make an informal gallery of prints through the ages; the library of antique type

But as her hands expertly set pieces of type, it’s clear that dates and details aren’t the only things that drew her to Hatch. “I knew that if I came to the shop, I wouldn’t be able to leave,” Aubrey says amid shelves of type stacked like old paperbacks. “So I intentionally didn’t visit the shop until I knew I was coming for a job.”

Today her team continues to produce an array of posters and ads for businesses and musicians. Hatch also maintains an art program that features restrikes of original print blocks that haven’t been used in decades, such as an Airstream ad from the 1940s, alongside new work from national and international printmakers. Tours \$18; prints from \$8; hatchshowprint.com

Hatching a Plan in Nashville

Here are print shop manager Celene Aubry’s recommendations for a Hatch-inspired trip to Nashville.

Get inky on the Art Crawl.

“During the the First Saturday Art Crawl, we offer a two-hour block party where we take some of the hand-carved imagery that we’ve made in the shop and let participants ink it up and print it on paper and then on fabric.” nashvilledowntown.com

Catch a show at the “Mother Church of Country Music.”

“Visit the Ryman Auditorium. It’s incredible to have a venue that has the natural acoustics that venue has. Everybody who plays there sounds about a hundred times better when they hit those floorboards.” ryman.com

Dip into Nashville’s art scene.

“The art galleries on 5th Avenue downtown have been introducing Nashvillians to art for many years. Newer galleries, such as those of Julia Martin, Dane Carder and David Lusk are offering work that is not as conventional, but definitely part of the conversation.” juliamartingallery.com
danecarder.com
davidluskgallery.com