

Flounder Lee's (almost) astronaut life

by Dan Grossman



Flounder Lee never went to Space Camp, but got to create SpaceCamp instead. Here, he's flying in Alaska. *Michael Hoefle*

For years, Herron professor and founder of [SpaceCamp MicroGallery](#) Flounder Lee wanted to be an astronaut; he talked with NUVO correspondent Dan Grossman about those aspirations.

NUVO: Talk about your childhood ambition to be an astronaut.

Lee: It's just something I wanted to do for as long as I could remember. I grew up near Huntsville which was a NASA center... I always wanted to go to Space Camp but never got the chance. That was a big part of the naming of my gallery. The other part in the naming was my favorite music venue when I lived in LA, Spaceland.

NUVO: Tell me about your experience at the University of Alabama.

Lee: I was an Aerospace Engineering major — an undergrad for one year. I had wanted to be that for a long time though and had actually received a lot of scholarships to go. I did well in the computer drafting part of the program and I actually taught an experiment in my physics lab because I could figure the brand new computers out quicker than the professor. He kept asking me for help and finally just had me teach the experiment. Those are two things that carried over into my art and teaching career.

NUVO: How did your experience as an Aerospace Engineering student affect your [art-making and curating](#)?

Lee: I take a somewhat analytical approach to my work. I usually set up systems with very small variables and set parameters that I try and follow. Unlike an engineer or scientist, though, when the real world interferes with my parameters, I bend or break them to still end up with the artwork. For instance if there is cliff that my GPS says I should go off or a lake I should go through, I just go around and shoot as close to the original line as possible.

In my curating, it is mostly that I am just interested in science and space. I have curated one show that was [Aerospacial](#) [at Herron School of Art & Design in March, 2011] all about different work relating to aerospace as well as co-curated [RetroFuturism](#) which was about ideas related to the future but in a backwards sort of way.

NUVO: Tell me about the concept behind the *Aerospatial* show.

Lee: I knew I wanted to do a show on this theme for a while and I had a couple of artists in mind, Sam Davis and Darren Hostetter. I searched for a couple of years for other artists at art fairs that would fit with them. I briefly considered picking more artists in an open call but finally found a third artist, McLean Fahnstock, that worked so I made it a three person show. I knew all three artists, but I think it had more to do with LA culture that they fit my idea for this. In LA, you always have helicopters, planes and blimps overhead, not to mention all the military and space industries nearby.

NUVO: You make a point of keeping up with the technologies that you could conceivably apply to your work. What are some of the technologies you're excited about now?

Lee: I'm excited by the pervasiveness of GPS technology for the art-world as a whole. For my work, I am enjoying learning to use the remote control helicopter that I got with the RSFG [Research Support Funds Grant] grant. I'd like to pair it with a 3D camera at some point as well as a pocket projector. I am also interested in 3D printing/output. These are always rolling around in my head just waiting for the right project to use them on.

NUVO: Can you picture how you would employ your photographic mapping on the moon (if you could get a grant to go up there)?

Lee: Never really thought about it but I guess something to do with the Outer Space Treaty, which basically states that all celestial bodies are owned by all of humanity and countries can't exploit them without some agreement. What I'd really like to do is do a giant video show that could be seen from Earth!

For more about Lee, check out "[Flounder Lee's big adventure.](#)"

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