

The Ford Family Foundation
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The Ford Family Foundation Names
Three Oregon Artists Hallie Ford Fellows in the Visual Arts for 2012

*Three \$25,000 Fellowships are awarded
to help individual Oregon visual artists actively pursue their life work*

Roseburg, OR: The Ford Family Foundation (Foundation) today named its 2012 Hallie Ford Fellows in the Visual Arts, thus recognizing three Oregon visual artists for the demonstrated excellence of their work and their significant future potential.

Selected were Ellen Lesperance, Akihiko Miyoshi and Michelle Ross. In addition to dedicating significant time to their studio practices, each serves as a faculty member and student mentor at the Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA), Reed College and the Oregon College of Art & Craft (OCAC), respectively.

"We are delighted with the diversity of practices from this group of Fellows. It is complementary to the focus of our previous six Fellows, all of whom will participate in the upcoming exhibition of works opening in January of next year. The exhibition will travel outside of Oregon, as well," stated Norm Smith, President of the Foundation.

In selecting Lesperance, Miyoshi and Ross the panel of five arts professionals noted they each had "a very distinctive voice and personal vision to their work, demonstrated conceptual and technical rigor, and exhibited an awareness of their work in the broader context of contemporary art within and beyond the region". In this "hot house" environment of Oregon's best visual artists, these three stood out as deserving of the honor and who would make excellent use of the financial resources.

Lesperance is noted for her drawing and painting, having branched out in recent years to develop a series of gouache paintings on paper in which sweaters worn by women activists she admires are memorialized and augmented with the actual pattern development and knitting of sweaters as part of an

exhibition installation. Critics have noted a "fierce conviction" to her work honoring women who have "fought for causes that are greater than themselves", often taking on political subjects that others might shy away from. Her work is conceptually driven, thoughtful and well crafted, bridging between mediums and even performative at times. "Her work always follows the idea - she intensively researches and develops her idea in writing before and after. The mother of two, Lesperance is "making these paintings on her kitchen table while feeding her children with her other hand, at the same time juggling an enormous teaching role. Hers is super authentic work, original and uncontrived. It really springs from who she is. Now she's finally hitting a great stride and momentum and getting recognition for her work." The panel noted her work as "masterful" with a strong awareness to her practice, almost a "compulsive-making quality to it".

Miyoshi's work stems from an intersection of science and engineering with photography. As with Lesperance, his work is driven by ideas and thinking about and testing assumptions about what photography is or the subject of photography. Critics have noted that although he uses himself in the photograph, "they are not about him" - but rather "an explosive invention of the process of photography". They further stated that his work is grounded in both conceptual art and in extremely well thought out aesthetics, "setting up a conundrum and a meditation of the way we see things, bridging the divide between representational and the abstract." The selection panel added that his work "doesn't read "Oregon" - it feels as if he could be from anywhere and participating in a bigger dialogue about what photography tells us to be true. There is originality to each individual image, unique and unexpected.

Ross' career in painting spans nearly two decades. Her work attempts to communicate a sense of possibility and contingency beyond the literal and observable. In her words "I trust the power of abstraction to orient us to experiences of uncertainty and interpretation. The selection panel was struck by her "elegant and sophisticated but fresh look at abstractionism noting hers was a contemporary, gutsy look at formalist image making and what really is a painting." She has an incredible command of color, form and materials. Critics have noted "she is a painter's painter" and stressed her unswerving commitment to abstract painting, but challenging it. Her recent incorporation of fabrics into her paintings is simultaneously obscuring and revealing. They are drawn to her work both for aesthetic reasons and because she addresses the historical aspects of painting as reflected in both her practice and her teaching. "She is looking forward and backward and being very aware of her place in that historical context." Ross was named a 2011 Contemporary Northwest Art Award and over the past 15 years has received numerous other awards from local and state arts agencies.

The jury of five arts professionals selected Lesperance, Miyoshi and Ross out of a field of 182 applications based on the following criteria:

- Quality of their work: artistic excellence/exemplary talent and depth of sophisticated exploration evidenced in past work,

- Evolution of their work: whether the individual was poised at a pivotal point in his or her practice and the use to which the fellowship funds would aid in that pursuit, and
- Effect of the Fellowship on their work: how the Fellowship goals are consistent with the artist's goals, potential for future accomplishment and capacity both to improve individual work and contribute significantly to Oregon's visual arts ecology.

Panelists included: Kate Bonansinga, newly appointed Director, School of Art in the College of Design, Art, Architecture and Planning at University of Cincinnati after having served as the Founding Director of the University of El Paso's Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts for the past eight years; Chris Bruce, Director of the Museum of Art / Washington State University since June 2003; Michael Darling, formerly of the Seattle Art Museum and current James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Chicago; Bonnie Laing-Malcolmson, former President of the Oregon College of Art & Craft and currently the Arlene and Harold Schnitzer Curator of Northwest Art at the Portland Art Museum, and Linda Tesner, long-time director and curator of the Ronna and Eric Hoffman Gallery of Contemporary Art at Lewis & Clark College in Portland.

The panelists individually evaluated each application, later deliberating together in person on the merits of a narrowed field of 57 artists before finalizing their recommendation. In making its selection, the panel believed these three awardees represented the spirit of the person whom the program honors and the Foundation's vision for supporting important contemporary visual artists of our time.

The fellowships are one of seven program facets of the Foundation's \$3.5 million, five-year Visual Arts Program established in memory of Hallie Ford, a co-founder of the Foundation. The purpose of the program is two-fold: to accelerate an enhanced quality of artistic endeavor and bodies of work by Oregon's established visual artists who are at pivotal points in their careers and to improve Oregon's visual arts ecology. Additional resources are dedicated to artists-in-residence programs; support for exhibitions and associated materials; small capital projects to improve exhibition space; grants for unanticipated opportunities that arise for which additional resources are needed; bringing curators and critics from outside the region to Oregon for studio visitations and community dialogue; and special funding to acquire seminal works by Oregon visual artists to preserve access to them in the public realm. The Foundation is the sole funder of this Visual Arts Program. It partners with Oregon's leading visual arts educators, gallerists, museum and arts professionals to help implement program elements and leverages funding with other state and national resources.

ABOUT THE 2012 HALLIE FORD FELLOWS

ELLEN LESPERANCE: Painting and Mixed Media - practicing artist with Bachelor of Arts from the University of Washington and a Masters of Fine Arts from the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. Lesperance is an Assistant Professor of both BFA and MFA programs at PNCA, teaching drawing, hybrid and intermediate painting as well as both BFA and MFA research and theses writing courses. Before coming to Oregon she taught at the Maine College of Art for seven years, and

chaired its Painting Department for several years. She served as an associate editor at Butterick and SOHO Publishing in New York for two years. She has soloed and been included in group exhibitions for the past 10-15 years in Portland, New York, Boston, Seattle, London, Miami, Los Angeles, Sante Fe and Kansas City to name a few. Her works are held in a number of public collections including the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Museum of Art and Design and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Lesperance was selected as a recipient of the Betty Bowen Award, as an interdisciplinary artist-in-residence at the MacDowell Colony, and as an invited participant by the Creative Capital Foundation in its artists mentor program. Numerous critics have written of her work over the past decade. *Phaidon* is including her in its upcoming biennial survey on contemporary drawing, acknowledging her work on an international scale. She is currently represented by Los Angeles-based Ambach & Rice Gallery.

AKIHIKO MIYOSHI: Photography- practicing artist and Associate Professor of Art at Reed College. Miyoshi received his Bachelor of Arts from Tokyo-based Keio University and two masters degrees, a Master of Science in Electrical and Computer Engineering from Carnegie Mellon University in 2000 and an MFA in Photography from Rochester Institute of Technology. Miyoshi has exhibited in solo and group shows in Los Angeles, New York, Toronto, Pittsburgh and Japan; most recently as part of the Portland 2012 Biennial. He has served as a guest lecturer and has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the Fellowship 12 International Award Winner from the Silver Eye Center for Photography, the Mellon Research and Stillman Drake Research grants, both from Reed College, as well as numerous scholarships while at the Rochester Institute of Technology. His science and technology background lend an unusual perspective to his work, grounding him in the process as well as the subject of photography.

MICHELLE ROSS: Painting- practicing artist and Professor of Art, Oregon College of Art & Craft. Ross received her BFA from PNCA in 1987 and her MFA from Washington State University in 1994. She has been exhibiting for over 15 years in solo and group exhibitions in both the Northwest as well as as far away as Rome. In addition to teaching and the practice of art she has been actively engaged in the Oregon arts community serving as a mentor to younger artists, giving gallery talks and serving as a visiting guest lecturer. Her work is held by a number of collections including the Rhode Island School of Design Special Collections, the Portland Art Museum, the City of Portland, Willamette University, Saks Fifth Avenue and the Portland Art Museum in both its main collection and the Gilkey Print Center.

ABOUT THE FORD FAMILY FOUNDATION

The Ford Family Foundation was established in 1957 by Kenneth W. and Hallie E. Ford. Its Mission is “successful citizens and vital rural communities” in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. The Foundation is located in Roseburg, Oregon, with a Scholarship office in Eugene. For more information about the Foundation and its Visual Arts Program please visit www.tfff.org.

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