

MIKE BRAY



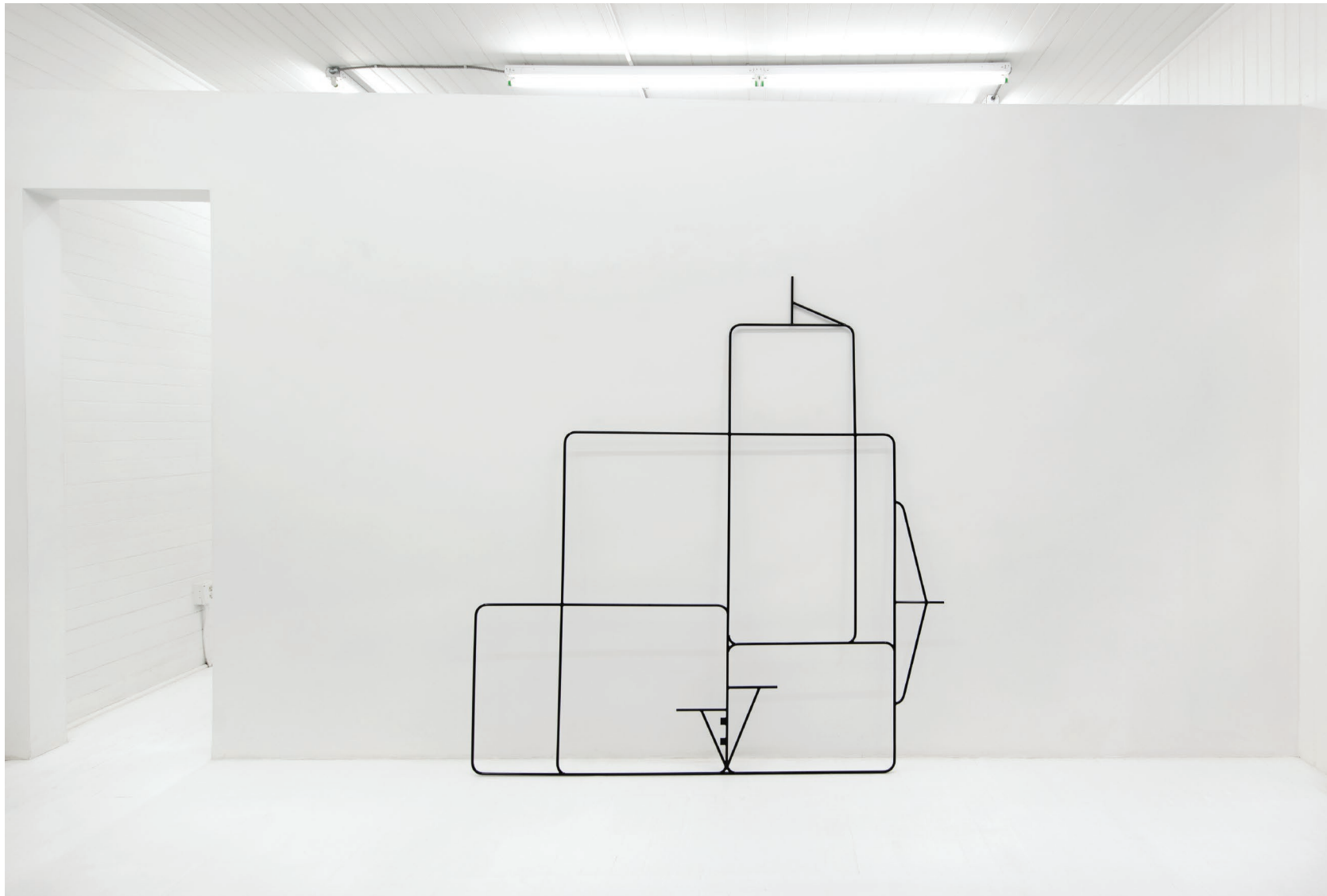


Thomas looking at pictures I, 2013
Screenprint on acrylic, light gel, splicing tape
19 x 35½ x 2 in
Photo: Evan La Londe

Previous page
Viewfinder, 2013
Two way mirror, nickel
13 x 1 x 10 in
Photo: Evan La Londe



Intersect Theory, 2016
Two-way mirror, silver
20 x 20 x 20 in
Photo: Evan La Londe



Blocking out the sun, 2016
Powder coated steel
67 x 72¼ in
Photo: Evan La Londe

FROM IN BETWEEN

By Ashley Stull Meyers

Mike Bray is an artist's artist. His work, fueled by a collaborative spirit and a curiosity for inventive strategy, is the kind of work that immediately pushes the imaginations of those who see it. Bray is deeply invested in the in-between. The many objects (material and immaterial) that become subject in his practice are not worked with, but worked through and worked around. Bray's efforts manifest in many ways—things that transcend traditional conceptions of three-dimensional space, images that are at once keenly present and deceptively incorporeal, and exhibitions that harness the collective spirit of experimentation between creatives that share a singular commitment to community alchemy.

Bray's individual work is best exemplified by the 2016 sculpture, *The Necessity to Interfere with Movement*. The acrylic and neon sculpture is a veritable "landscape" of light, shadow, and impossible-seeming points of horizon. Its fluorescent bulbs pulse in geometric line-forms, animating Barnett Newman-esque "zips" that lead in all directions. The frontal view is entirely unlike the view from any other angle, creating doubt, over and over, about what was witnessed even moments before. The acrylic, acting as both structural support and substrate, is just opaque enough, and simultaneously transparent enough, to confuse the dimensional plane within which the light is hosted. *The Necessity to Interfere with Movement* is as much a progressive take on painting as it is a sculpture freed from any conventional concept of ground. It is the feeling of studying the planets through a telescope, yet being surprised what you find when physically careening through the cosmos. The experience of the body in motion, maneuvering through all possibilities of perspective, gives this work not only its title, but its most precious contribution to questions of what contemporary sculpture can do.

Bray has also collaborated with partner Anya Kivarkis on projects like *Time and the Other*. Perfectly titled to discuss the complexities and various magics of disembodiment and navigating the temporal, the body of work comprised recreations of jewelry from mid-twentieth century film. Jeweled necklaces from *Last Year at Marienbad* (1962) and *To Catch a Thief* (1955) become iconography for a universal sentiment around things that are untouchable—conjuring the stigmas of desire, class, and access. The adornments, recreated through combinations of photography, video, and purposefully incomplete three-dimensional replication, are imbued with a sense of value independent from material worth, but ideologically akin through notions of exquisite and delicate labor. Viewership of

the objects and images feel like a perfect behind-the-scenes study of sleight-of-hand technique. Bray and Kivarkis reveal elements of process—research, archival impulse, meticulous creative mechanics, while never quite relinquishing the essence of illusion or magnetism.

In further experiment with collaboration, Bray is one of the founding members and guiding forces behind Springfield, Oregon's Ditch Projects. Ditch Projects, initiated in 2008, has been home to an ever-evolving and expanding group of artists interested in the power of self-imagined and self-manifested space for making and exhibiting. Part laboratory and part adaptable gathering site for public curiosity, Ditch is a primary example of the ingenuity of the Northwest contemporary art scene, and Bray himself. In November 2019, Ditch played host to *A Good Way to Invent the Future*, an exhibition that presented the possibility for "history" to be a living and breathing entity that defies concretization in collective memory. Featuring 13 artists (and co-curated by Bray), *A Good Way to Invent the Future* explores in part what happens when the concept of "white utopianism" is laid bare to reveal all its cracks. The many objects and paintings that litter the space are well-placed commentary on how romance can be deconstructed, and when made vulnerable in such a way, becomes something altogether more interesting—a set of principles that function poorly when not in the company of sweepingly articulated prose. Tropes of pioneerism, colonization, and segregation are formative ideals within the state of Oregon's westernized beginnings. But so too, in recent imagination, are punk, DIY and craft-focused sensibilities. The past and the present abut in a spirit that isn't entirely dissimilar, but that was leveraged toward thankfully dissimilar ends. *A Good Way to Invent the Future* asks that we negotiate the stakes of those origins with the temporal and social distance that over a century's intellectual recompense can provide. A good way to invent the future is to firstly supplant old polemics, and secondly to harvest their best parts for ideas that incorporate what's to be learned.

Mike Bray has made a practice from mining the interstice. His diversity of works, collaborative and solitary, demonstrate an eagerness to leave no thread of investigation unexamined. The finished products arrive not from a place of logistical certainty, but from aestheticizing the moments of calculation. They are born from a love of the not quite here-nor-there, just as his method of making exists somewhere between Futurism and the classics.

Ashley Stull Meyers is a writer, editor, and culture worker.



The necessity to interfere with movement, 2016
Acrylic, neon, light stands
60 x 78 x 6 in
Photo: Evan La Londe



No beginning...no end, 2013
 Acrylic, inkjet transparency
 19 x 35½ x 2 in
 Photo: Evan La Londe

MIKE BRAY

b. 1973. Lives and works in Springfield, Oregon
2013 Hallie Ford Fellow

Mike Bray creates investigations into a self-inflicted cinematic space, his work recontextualizing time, frame-by-frame, while collapsing and expanding the spectacle through the idiom of cinema. Select group exhibitions include Grammar Center, Medford, Oregon; 12128 Boatspace, Portland, Oregon; Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, Oregon; Lumber Room, Portland, Oregon; and Human Resources, Los Angeles, California. Bray has held solo exhibitions at Portland State University, Portland, Oregon; Sienna Gallery, Lenox, Massachusetts; and Fourteen30 Contemporary, Portland, Oregon. He is Co-Founder of Ditch Projects, an artist-run space in downtown Springfield, Oregon.



Angles of Refraction, 2016
 Digital video
 02:20 min
 Photo: Evan La Londe

Hallie Brown was born in 1905, outside of Tulsa, in Indian Territory that would become the state of Oklahoma. She supported herself as she earned a bachelor's degree at East Central University and taught in Oklahoma before her parents moved their family to rural Oregon. In 1935 Hallie married Kenneth W. Ford and together they established Roseburg Lumber Company in the midst of the Great Depression.

Hallie Ford was drawn to art all her life, specifically the accessibility of artmaking. She took classes with the painter Carl Hall at Willamette University in Salem, and painting became a central part of her life. Her philanthropy established and supported key Oregon visual art museums and universities.

After Hallie's death in 2007, The Ford Family Foundation's Board of Directors honored our co-founder by establishing a Visual Arts Program. The first element of this program was the Hallie Ford Fellowships in the Visual Arts, awarded since 2010. Through these unrestricted fellowships, we seek to make significant awards to visual artists who have worked to establish their voice and craft.

Another of our goals is to help support the ecology that builds connections and capacity in the visual arts community of our state. As the Fellows become the focus of exhibitions throughout the world, they bring more attention and support to their Oregon peers. We are certain that Hallie Ford would be pleased to see how both individual artists and the visual arts community in Oregon have flourished since the establishment of this program in her honor.

We could not be more excited each year to bring new Hallie Ford Fellows into this family, and to share their work with you.

Anne C. Kubisch
President, The Ford Family Foundation

The Hallie Ford Fellowships are the flagship element of The Ford Family Foundation Visual Arts Program. The Foundation commits to an ongoing relationship with our Fellows through exhibition support, convenings, and professional development opportunities. In addition, the Visual Arts Program offers grants to visual artists for unanticipated career opportunities; supports artists-in-residence programs in Oregon and nationally; brings curators and arts writers from outside the region to Oregon for studio visits and community dialogue; commissions arts writing and publication; supports exhibitions, catalogues and other forms of documentation for Oregon artists; and awards grants to enhance exhibition spaces.

The Foundation is pleased to partner with the Oregon Arts Commission, University of Oregon, Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA), Portland State University, Reed College, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), Creative Capital, Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, United States Artists, and the artists and visual arts organizations of our state.

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, visit www.tfff.org.



VISUAL ARTS PROGRAM

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