

NATALIE BALL





Previous page
W.A.P. (detail), 2020
 Porcupine, deer and human hair, linen,
 trade beads, chenille, wood, steel
 W: 56½ x 12 x 7½ in
 A: 60 x 14 x 10 in

W.A.P., 2020
 Porcupine, deer and human hair, linen,
 trade beads, chenille, wood, steel
 W: 56½ x 12 x 7½ in
 A: 60 x 14 x 10 in



I Heart Rez Boys, 2019
 Textiles, elk hide, acrylic, graphite, pastels, wood, bone
 82 x 108 in



Clickety-Clack, 2020
 Leather, horsehair, beads, cotton,
 cowry shells, acrylic, canvas, wood
 16 x 12½ x 8 in



I Bind You Nancy, 2018
 Coyote skull, Skookum dolls,
 beaded moccasins
 Dimensions variable

When your culture has been violently disassembled for centuries, rebuilding becomes an act of resistance, healing, and self-exploration. With Black and Indigenous (Klamath/Modoc) heritage, Natalie Ball comes from two lineages with as much unjust suffering as collaborative resilience. Through her mixed media artworks that harmonize assemblage, folk art, and pop culture, Ball asserts her strength, honors her past, and imagines a better future.

The future and what it promises—positive or negative—act as a major motivation in Ball's work both as an artist and single mother of three children. She calls herself a future Ancestor, underlining the responsibility of all individuals to think beyond their lives. Ball's conception of time exists outside linear thinking. Instead, she employs a kind of quilted, woven, broken, and mended time, which provides a conceptual framework for the intense physicality of her assemblage sculptures.

Ball overloads some pieces with narrative innuendo, such as *When I Go Missing, North Star* (2019). The piece consists of double-sided fabric—one side has gold stars on a navy background and the reverse has navy stars on a gold background—stretched out on two long pine branches. Three points of a star in brightly colored quilted fabric extend out of a fold in the starry textile. Fabric strips wrap the branches, and braiding hair hangs from the uppermost branch. The title alone carries an immense weight of past horrors that have led to present ones. In 2016, 5,712 Indigenous women and girls were reported missing in the United States, which is only a fraction of the violence inflicted on Indigenous women and girls nationally. Anonymity, isolation, and lack of agency are some of the biggest threats for anyone seeking security or justice. Through *When I Go Missing*, Ball confidently and preemptively calls out her would-be abusers and gives herself—and other women—a star to guide their way home.

While *When I Go Missing* shines a light on systemic violence toward Indigenous women, Ball's recent "W.A.P." series acts as a decidedly contemporary answer to a historic problem. Inspired by rapper Cardi B's 2020 song *WAP*, which stands for Wet Ass Pussy, Ball harnesses the song's unapologetic celebration of female bodies, sexuality, and joy

in her suite of three sculptures. Each object, inspired by traditional dance staffs, features a main structural staff adorned with various other materials. Each has a varsity-style letter of either W, or A. The W sits on top of a long, blond human hair wig that drapes down a wooden stick. Red linen crosses tangle in the hair, and porcupine hair creates a woven crown. More porcupine hair creates a backdrop for the A letter, which sits over a black wig that fades to white strands. A rusty steel shovel acts as the staff. Ball says she will never sell the P sculpture, and may never display it, keeping it only for herself. By combining the pop cultural reference of WAP with traditional Power Objects and dance staffs, Ball refuses to be limited by the historical restrictions on Black and Indigenous people; her ancestors were not allowed to dance, express sexuality, speak their traditional languages, or even gather. Ball responds with defiant strength and self-awareness as she dances in the face of her oppressors.

Though her work addresses many serious subjects, Ball maintains an irreverent sense of humor that makes each piece feel all the more powerful. She joins a long history of Black and Indigenous artists working to correct histories and generate new images of their world. Ball takes Brian Jungen's appropriation of athletic apparel, for example, and makes it more nuanced and intimate. She takes Betye Saar's sharp critique of systemic racism through found vintage objects and makes it distinctly contemporary.

Both of these references also share Ball's antagonizing of spectatorship—whether in professional sports or the abhorrent practices such as gibbetting. Ball talks about how the public lynching of her Ancestors has left a residue on her family, as do the countless constraints of their bodies and lives. With *W.A.P.*, *When I Go Missing*, and every work Ball has made over the past decade, she refuses every oppressive history with a savvy, unflappable, and undeniably contemporary aesthetic.

Amelia Rina is a critic, writer, editor, and founder of Variable West.



When I Go Missing, North Star, 2019
Wool, satin, cotton, pine, rope, crystals, canvas,
converse shoe, braiding hair, deer rawhide
81 x 96 in



Bone Head, 2019
Wig, cowboy boot, deer spine, linen
36 x 12 x 7 in



Bar fight me then, 2019
Abalone, deer spine, horsehair, synthetic
hair, converse shoe, leather, metal
36 x 13 x 4 in

NATALIE BALL (Black, Modoc and Klamath)

b. 1980. Lives and works in Chiloquin, Oregon

2020 Hallie Ford Fellow

Natalie Ball was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. She has a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in Ethnic Studies and Art from the University of Oregon. She furthered her education in New Zealand at Massey University where she received a Master of Arts, focusing on Indigenous contemporary art. Ball then relocated to her ancestral homelands in Chiloquin to raise her three children. Natalie attained her Master of Fine Arts in Painting and Printmaking at Yale School of Art in 2018. Ball's work has been shown internationally, including Almine Rech Gallery, Paris, France; Wentrup Gallery, Berlin, Germany; SculptureCenter, Gagoasian Gallery and Half Gallery, in New York, New York; Art Basel, Miami; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada; Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, California; Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington. She is the recipient of the 2020 Bonnie Bronson Award, 2020 Joan Mitchell Painters & Sculptors Grant, 2019 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, and the 2018 Betty Bowen Award from the Seattle Art Museum.

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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*I Bind You Nancy, Bar fight me then, When
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