

## PAT BOAS





*AM-FR #9*, 2019  
Archival pigment print  
49¾ x 38 in  
Edition of 5  
Photo: Mario Gallucci



*AM-FR #8*, 2019  
Archival pigment print  
49¾ x 38 in  
Edition of 5  
Photo: Mario Gallucci

*Previous page*  
*Untitled (profile)*, 2018  
Acrylic on panel  
20 x 16 in  
Photo: Mario Gallucci



*AM-FR #10*, 2019  
Archival pigment print  
49¾ x 38 in  
Edition of 5  
Photo: Mario Gallucci



*Monogram 3*, 2019  
Acrylic on linen over panel  
19½ x 14 in  
Photo: Mario Gallucci



*Monogram 2*, 2019  
Acrylic on linen over panel  
19½ x 14 in  
Photo: Mario Gallucci



## SECRET MESSAGES

by Bean Gilsdorf

Linguists know that humans learn to speak, and later to read, by recognizing patterns. In the dark bath of the womb infants process sound, distinguishing the low thrum of one voice from another. When they are brought into the world, they soon begin to group vowel sounds, then consonants, then syllables. Even learning sign language, babies “babble” with their hands, mimicking and building. By nature, humans orient themselves toward language the way a plant grows in the direction of the light.

Over the span of her lengthy career, Pat Boas' explorations of language have resulted in countless works that play freely with its forms. In *Alphabet* (NYT 01/01/01), a work from 2001–2002, she deconstructed the front page of the *New York Times* onto a succession of twenty-six silk panels. Each panel features only one letter of the alphabet, distributed across the silk as it originally appeared on the news page. The work takes a basic form of textual communication and transforms it into a meditation on information and composition. A later series, the robustly colorful gouache-on-paper *Logo* of 2015, is comprised of stacked, reversed, and fragmented letterforms taken from phrases either read or overheard by the artist. Looking at them, one feels that they sit to one side of our usual inclination to translate or interpret. In other words, though they frustrate the process of reading, they reward the act of viewing.

Boas often reaches for abstraction as a means to contend with the potency of symbolic forms. A recent body of work investigates the idiomatic schema of art magazines by ripping pages from their bindings, excising all text, and then stacking and scanning them to produce large-scale serigraphs and digital prints. Shapes in saturated designer

hues give way to voids in the paper, creating a push-pull effect between foreground and background and what is revealed or concealed. The torn page edges allude to the work's provenance and indicate the hand of the artist.

Currently Boas is working on a series of intensely colorful paintings constructed from monograms of notable women, who she describes simply as “change makers.” With these works, Boas is preoccupied with using color and pattern to signify each woman without illustrating her. Intimate in scale, these works feel more compressed than much of her prior work, revealing a laborious process of adding and reworking layers of paint; close inspection reveals slight variations in texture where previously painted lines have been painted over. These works force the eye to move about in all directions, and the artist maintains that, unlike a written page read from one direction to its opposite, this work feels complete when it can be viewed in any orientation.

These operations of isolation, compression, and inversion confound the customary goal of transmitting ideas without doubt or ambiguity. Considered across its breadth, Boas' practice can be viewed as an ongoing exercise in the productive use of unlearning—the recognition that in order to play with language and use it to new ends, one must find ways outside its structures and limits. Her work offers up a tantalizingly partial transcription, one that exchanges linguistic legibility for something more enigmatic. Viewing her work conjures the pleasure of standing on a busy foreign street, surrounded by textual and auditory expressions that are interpretable to a point, but still retain their mystery.



*Sad birds (LG)*, 2014  
Gouache on paper  
17 x 14 in  
Photo: T. Harrison



*Monogram 4, 2020*  
Acrylic on linen over panel  
20 x 16 in  
Photo: Mario Gallucci



*T and e from Alphabet (NYT 01/01/01), 2001–2002*  
Solvent transfer on silk tissue  
26 panels, 24 x 18 in (each)

## PAT BOAS

*b. 1952. Lives and works in Portland, Oregon*

*2017 Hallie Ford Fellow*

Pat Boas' practice is grounded in a love of color, form and the bodily dimension of language-based activities. She has been featured in exhibitions including the Portland Art Museum, the Art Gym and Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, in Portland, Oregon; the Hallie Ford Museum, Salem, Oregon; the Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico; the Boise Art Museum, Boise, Idaho; the Center on Contemporary Art, Seattle, Washington; and the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio. She is the recipient of the 2012 Bonnie Bronson Fellowship, as well as grants and residencies from the Oregon Arts Commission and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, among others. Reviews of Boas' work have appeared in *Art in America* and *Art Papers*. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Printmaking from the Pacific Northwest College of Art and Master of Fine Arts in Painting from Portland State University.

**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](http://www.tfff.org).



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*Monogram 2, Monogram 3, Monogram 4,*  
*Sad birds (LG), Alphabet (NYT 01/01/01),*  
*Untitled (profile):* Courtesy the artist and  
Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR