

IVÁN CARMONA





Borikén, 2019
Flashe paint on ceramic
22 x 11 x 7 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci



Margarita, 2020
Flashe paint on ceramic
9¾ x 11 x 9½ in
Photo: Mario Gallucci

Previous page
Palma de Coco, 2020
Flashe paint on ceramic
35 x 31 x 10 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci



Viento Trópical, 2020
Flashe paint on ceramic
59 x 26 x 10 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci



Verde Esperanza, 2020
Flashe paint on ceramic
10¼ x 7 x 3 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci



Cemi, 2019
Flashe paint on ceramic
10 x 7 x 3½ in
Photo: Mario Gallucci

RECONSTRUYENDO MEMORIAS

by Cheryl Hartup

Iván Carmona's ceramic sculptures exude the vibrant forces of nature and family, memory and touch. His intense, saturated colors, lyrical abstract forms, and subtle textures radiate the light and energy of the Caribbean. Walking into an exhibition of his ceramic sculptures is a joyful experience of rhythm, warmth, sensuality, and vitality.

Carmona grew up in Luquillo, Puerto Rico, known as "The Sunshine Capitol." It is located in the northeast part of the island on the Atlantic coast. The beauty of nature surrounded him, from expansive, picturesque beaches ideal for sunning and surfing, to the rivers and dense forestation of El Yunque, a misty tropical rainforest. The indigenous peoples living on the island, the Taínos, regarded (and continue to regard) El Yunque as a sacred mountain and the home of their chief god.

Borikén carries Puerto Rico's original indigenous name meaning "Land of the Valiant and Noble Lord." Its deep green color evokes lush vegetation and renewal. Its rounded forms suggest hills, mountains, an avocado, a tangy, sweet *quenepa*. The verticality of *Borikén* also symbolizes the strength and resiliency of Puerto Rico's indigenous and Afro-Caribbean peoples.

Cemí is another sculpture that references Taíno culture, which flourished between the tenth and fifteenth century CE. *Cemí* or *zemí* in the Taíno language refers not to an object or image, but to a spiritual and vital force pertaining to deities and ancestors. A leader, healer, and artist collaborated on expressing a *cemí's* identity. Artists carved and shaped *cemís* out of wood, fiber, beadwork, stone, bone and shell. Carmona's *Cemí* (10 x 7 x 3.5 inches) is an intimate, yet sizeable and weighty object that I can imagine at a monumental scale. Its soft baby pink color and curved forms suggest something new, and at the same time familiar.

*Viento Trópic*al (Tropical Wind) is Carmona's largest sculpture to date (59 x 26 x 10 inches). As the viewer walks around the work, they experience its harmony and balance, gravity and force. In Puerto Rico, tropical winds, rainstorms, and hurricanes demonstrate the power of destruction and rebirth, and natural disasters shape the island's social, economic, and political history. The bold red orange color of *Viento Trópic*al is symbolic of the fury of Guabancex, the Taíno goddess of the winds, tropical storms, and hurricanes. It is also a signature color of artist Alexander Calder (1898–1976), whose modern, minimalist, kinetic sculptures and mobiles activated by the wind inspire Carmona.

A rich dialogue between sculpture and nature defines the work of Calder and Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), another artist Carmona admires. An inborn

sense of place and an aura of care accompanies the sculpture of Noguchi and Carmona. Noguchi introduces negative space in his solid masses with a central hollow. Carmona often makes a rounded concave imprint in his ceramic sculptures like *Viento Trópic*al, *Borikén*, and *Cemí*. Carmona's circular and ovoid concave imprints are repositories for collective memories, cultural myths, and personal experiences and emotions. Deeply tied to place, the works of Calder, Noguchi and Carmona draw from the artists' experiences with, and interpretations of, the natural environment.

Carmona uses pinch pot and coil building to create volumetric containers of interior space. He makes external bursts of blossom, leaf and pod shapes with slab construction. The plasticity of clay attracted him to the medium. Clay encourages experimentation and when it is fired, it can imitate the appearance of another material. The texture of the artist's sculptures simulates another versatile and malleable substance, cement. As a youth, Carmona and his brother mixed concrete and brought it in buckets to their father who built their home over time, room by room. Carmona's precise but subtle handling of short parallel lines marks the surfaces of his sculptures and reference a raked concrete finish. The artist carefully adheres tiny protrusions onto his objects to imitate the nubs on cement walls. These lumps also suggest scars, scabs and aerial views of small islands in the Caribbean archipelago.

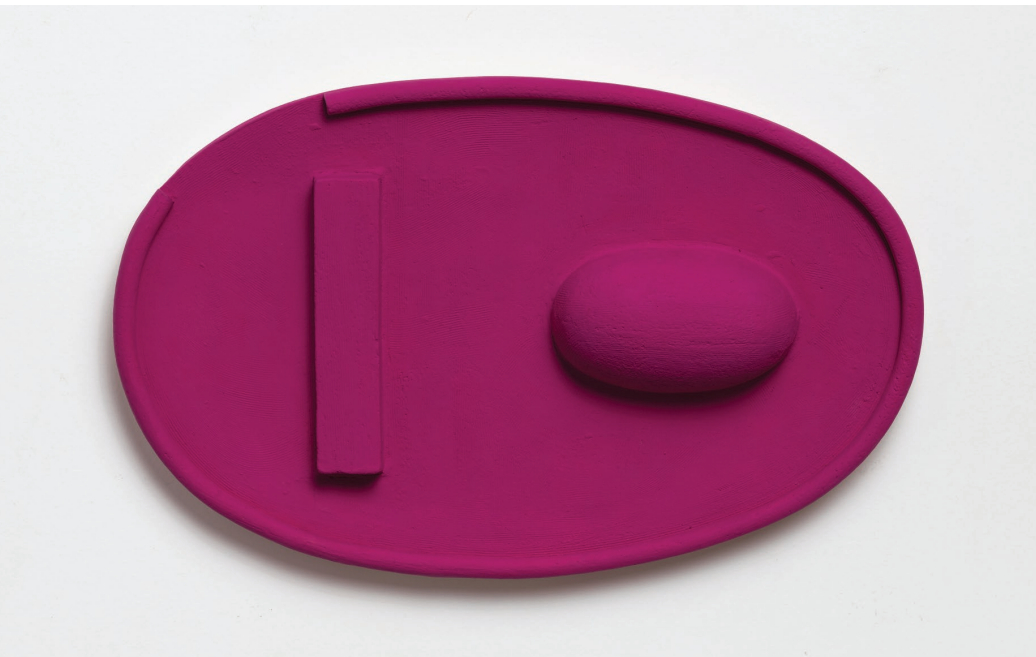
The intense colors of flora and fauna in Puerto Rico, tropical fruits, and the bright, velvety fabrics his mother worked with as a seamstress, inspire Carmona's palette. The softness and gentleness expressed in his rounded forms is a vocabulary the artist associates with his mother. His sublime, paired shapes, inclined toward one another and slightly touching one another, suggest nostalgic childhood memories like the gentle caress between a mother and child.

Carmona explores the poetic possibilities of giving shape to the concept of "home". The titles of his sculptures are singular, but they signify a plurality of open relations. Permeations of the "natural" with the "cultural," the physical with the imagined, flow through his reconstructed memories. Carmona's work is a celebration of the necessary and liberating multiplicity of life.

Cheryl Hartup is the curator of Latin American & Caribbean Art at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon.



Juey, 2020
Flashe paint on ceramic
34¾ x 30 x 9 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci



Topografía, 2020
Flashe paint on ceramic
11¼ x 18 x 3 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci



A la Media Noche, 2019
Flashe paint on ceramic
13½ x 27½ x 4 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci

IVÁN CARMONA

b. 1973. Lives and works in Portland, Oregon

2020 Hallie Ford Fellow

Iván Carmona's hands helped his father tend to a family home in Puerto Rico. The coarse finish of cement is coded to his personal history, as are the rich pastels and modernist lines that distinguish Puerto Rican architecture. Already a successful ceramicist, Carmona made the move to Portland to study more deeply, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Oregon College of Art and Craft in 2015, where he also assisted many artists in the studio and as an instructor. Carmona's work has been exhibited in Portland, Oregon, Eutectic Gallery and Ash Street Project, and is held in the collections of King County, Washington; Boise Art Museum, Boise, Idaho; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Santurce, Puerto Rico; and Gifu Prefecture Tokyo Kouryu High School, Japan.

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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