

KA'ILA FARRELL-SMITH





Ascend, 2021
 Acrylics, aerosols, graphite,
 oil bars on wood panel
 24 x 18 in
 Photo: Mike Bray



SKODEN, 2019
 Acrylic, oil paints, graphite on
 cedar canoe paddle flats
 Dimensions variable
 23 x 5 in and 22½ x 5 in
 Photo: Mike Bray



Extraction, 2021
 Acrylics, Painted Hills wild red,
 Klamath charcoal, aerosols,
 graphite, oil bars on wood panel
 30 x 20 in
 Photo: Mike Bray



In Utero, 2021
 Acrylics, Painted Hills wild red,
 Klamath charcoal, aerosols,
 graphite, oil bars on wood panel
 30 x 20 in
 Photo: Mike Bray

Previous page
Descend, 2021
 Acrylics, aerosols, graphite, oil bars on wood panel
 24 x 18 in
 Photo: Mike Bray

Resistance is defined as refusing to comply or impeding one material's effect by another. The practice of resistance is also a core tenant of Indigenous culture. This historically rooted approach to resilience informs the day-to-day lives of Native people. It motivates their political and artistic identities whether they are resisting the exploitation of natural resources, opposing the hostile takeover of ancestral lands, or upending dominant narratives in American history through the arts.

Resistance is an act—and to live a life of resistance, one must accumulate many “acts” thereof. Klamath-Modoc artist Ka'ila Farrell-Smith is no stranger to this concept. Much of her work revolves around cultural survivance as she actively endeavors to bring traditional knowledge and practices into the present. Her work frequently touches upon land stewardship issues, the impact of pipelines on Native communities, and the lingering symptoms of colonization.

Farrell-Smith's work blurs the lines between traditional Indigenous aesthetics and contemporary abstraction to create a visual field punctuated by sgraffito textures that emphasize that feeling of resistance. The artist mixes various media, including earthen debris and stencils made from detritus she finds on her ancestral lands in Modoc Point, Oregon. The result of this tactile approach gives the impression of layered movement and emphasizes the presence of the artist's hands in the work.

Through these shifting layers, the viewer's eye flows between ambiguous forms and pointed representation, like the painting *Torture State* (2021). In this piece, abstracted shapes are intertwined with a human form recognizable to most Americans. This depiction of an anonymous hooded prisoner in an orange jumpsuit is visceral and kicks up memories of a time when the U.S. was under sharp global scrutiny.

A strong research practice informs Ka'ila's work. This piece reflects her investigations of historical links between the erasure of Indigenous genocide to justify European colonization and the U.S. military's torture program at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Examining the myth of “American Exceptionalism,” the artist points out the contradictions in these narratives by making those connections visible.

Throughout colonization and into contemporary times, Indigenous people have been made invisible through the distortion of national remembrance and the erasure of experiences endured by tribal communities throughout European settlement. Farrell-Smith's work interrogates these “blind spots” in American history and asks the viewer to read between the lines of the official narrative, to engage—to look again critically

What do we find when we look again? Inevitably there are more connections to be made. From the mythos of Manifest Destiny to the impending climate crisis, Farrell-Smith's work bridges the gap between theory and practice to show how a nation that rejects self-reflection will inevitably invite new conflict.

In the work *Extraction* (2021), the artist weaves together a multitude of colors and textures. Some forms are organic, and others are distinctly industrial in origin. To the right side of the canvas, the words “Land Back” are scratched into paint, hinting again at the act of resistance. The multi-generational Landback movement is centered around the idea of restoring Indigenous people to their rightful place as stewards of their homelands. *Extraction* is also a direct reference to Farrell-Smith's life as a land defender, who has been at the forefront of opposing a natural gas project at the International Port of Coos Bay, Oregon.

After many years of resisting through public protest, Ka'ila and other organizers recently celebrated as those plans were officially scrapped in late 2021. This triumph is remarkable in many ways and proves that resistance works and that lives depend on it.

Resistance is a state of mind that leads to many acts. Each of Ka'ila Farrell-Smith's works is an act of resistance, and she remains centered in these values that inform her material and conceptual choices. Her work rejects the idea of compliance and demonstrates the many ways resisting can take shape.

Steph Littlebird is an Indigenous artist-curator, writer, and illustrator.



Torture State, 2021
Acrylics, Painted Hills wild red, Klamath charcoal, aerosols, graphite, oil bars on wood panel
60 x 48 in
Photo: Mike Bray



Ghost Dancer, 2021
Acrylics, Painted Hills wild red, Klamath charcoal,
aerosols, graphite, oil bars on wood panel
36 x 12 in
Photo: Mike Bray



MMIP, 2021
Acrylics, Painted Hills wild red, Klamath charcoal,
aerosols, graphite, oil bars on wood panel
36 x 12 in
Photo: Mike Bray

KA'ILA FARRELL-SMITH (Klamath Modoc)

b. 1982. Lives and works in Modoc Point, Oregon

2021 Hallie Ford Fellow

Ka'ila Farrell-Smith relocated to her Southern Oregon ancestral homelands near Modoc Point to recenter place and decolonial freedom into her art and life. The daily practices of working and harvesting from the land allow her to gather found objects, such as bullets, discarded metal, and machine parts to use as stencils in her paintings.

Farrell-Smith's work has been recently been included in exhibitions at Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon; the Portland Art Museum and the Portland 2019 Biennial at Oregon Contemporary (formerly Disjecta Contemporary Art Center) in Portland, Oregon; Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon; the High Desert Museum of Art, Bend, Oregon; and Linfield Gallery, McMinnville, Oregon; as well as the Museum of Northwest Art, La Conner, Washington and Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, Washington. She holds a Master of Fine Arts from Portland State University and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Pacific Northwest College of Art. Farrell-Smith is a 2019–2020 Fields Fellow with the Oregon Community Foundation.

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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