

## MK GUTH





*GETTING OVER IT*, 2018  
Stack of four 1000 pages books that ask viewers to write what they “want to get over” on one of the pages  
9 x 11½ x 3 in (each), total 9 x 11½ x 12½ in  
Photo: Dan Kvitka

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*Dinner for Getting Over It Or At Least Through It*, 2019  
One artist book, two small bound books, ceramic bowl and matches, poplar shelf  
Shelf 10 x 16 in  
Photo Credit: John Muggenborg



*Dinner to Tell a Joke*, 2019  
One artist book, six ceramic red cups in the shape of clown noses, poplar shelf  
Shelf 10 x 27 in  
Photo: John Muggenborg



*Dinner to Tell a Joke*, 2019  
Image of the dinner being activated during the “Menu” exhibition  
Photo: Lauren Shimel



*Menu*, 2019  
Installation view  
Photo: John Muggenborg

## POETIC OPPORTUNITIES TO EMBRACE THE UNKNOWN

*By Amelia Rina*

MK Guth makes space for the unpredictable. Over the past two decades, Guth's object- and experience-based practice has evolved in its scale, potential catharsis, and emotional risk required from participants. Each piece emerges from a collaboration, sometimes involving few people, other times hundreds. Whatever the group size, location, or type of interaction, one crucial motivation propels Guth's work: the desire to set up opportunities for surprising moments.

Earlier works involved large-scale orchestrations of both strangers and friends. In *Red Shoe Delivery Service (RSDS)*, for example, Guth and her co-conspirators offered anyone a ride in their van, as long as the person donned ruby red slippers and agreed to be video recorded while proclaiming their destination. The color red carries over into *Ties of Protection and Safekeeping*, Guth's contribution to the 2008 Whitney Biennial, which consisted of 1,500 feet of synthetic blonde hair braided with pieces of red felt on which visitors wrote answers to the question "What is worth protecting?"

The impulse to facilitate the disclosure of intimate, unencumbered thoughts flows through many of Guth's projects. More than merely a conductor, however, Guth also bears the role of archivist and secret keeper. In more recent works, such as her book stack series, Guth provides an elegant proposal for confession and voyeurism. The works exist as stacks of 1,000-page books bound in a colorful leather cover, each with a bold title that dictates what revelations it contains, as well as a subtitle that acts as an additional filter or prompt.

The *What Needs to Be Said* volumes hold thoughts on love, politics, identity, ecology, and art. *Getting Over It* offers musings on insecurity, family, love, and anxiety. *A Memory About* elicits reflections on adventure, place, sorrow, happiness, and, again, the unending complexities of love. Participants can add their experiences to the books—each page represents one person—or decide to simply read the entries of others.

Once the tome is full, Guth seals it, thus transforming it from a book into an object that acts as an assembly of memories and feelings.

Guth's works often involve a grand theatricality, as with *RSDS* or *Choreography for Reading Aloud*, which starts with instructions to locate a library, bookstore, or other sites well-stocked with consumable texts. Then, several performers assemble and each reads aloud from a text found in that site, together creating a dyssynchronous cacophony. The book stacks provide a gentler experience at an intimate, human scale. However, regardless of each project's size or level of logistical complication, Guth always works to facilitate conversations. Every conversation—whether it's between two friends, two strangers, or group of people all reading into a room simultaneously—contains a small, imperfect, generative world. Some are ordinary and lead nowhere, while others offer the potential for new, unimaginable interactions.

Guth's practice of constructing temporary worlds continues in the book stacks, which function as both micro- and macrocosms. Small, discrete objects in the cosmos like books, humans, and trees are only as meaningful as the vast networks they are a part of: literature, humanity, forest ecosystems. Unlike most texts, which are written by one or a few authors, each of Guth's books contains one thousand authors across as many pages. The condensation of collective experience allows for both a deeper and broader consideration of human life—its nuances, mundanities, and profound revelations. Guth's final intervention, however, provides a twist by sealing the books. This gesture suggests that no one person should try to or can amass a complete archive of all beings' thoughts. Instead, the significance of the object and our interaction with it lies in the act of sharing, being part of the process, and maintaining a heightened level of trust in the face of the unknown. In a time when events in everyday life increasingly defy all logic or expectations, the ability to adapt to fluctuating situations becomes immensely valuable. Artists like Guth offer poetic opportunities to practice embracing the unknown.

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



*Dinner For Remembering*, 2016  
One artist book, three selected books (*Mythology and Meatballs* by Daniel Spoerri, *I Remember* by Joe Brainard, and *I Remember* by Georges Perec), poplar shelf  
Shelf 10 x 23 in  
Photo: Etienne Frossard



*Dinner to Plan a Revolution*, 2016  
One felt flag, one artist book, three selected books (*Selected Poems of Nikki Giovanni*, *Selected Poems of Andrei Voznesensky*, and *The Anatomy of Revolution* by Crane Brinton), poplar shelf  
Shelf 10 x 22 in  
Photo: Etienne Frossard



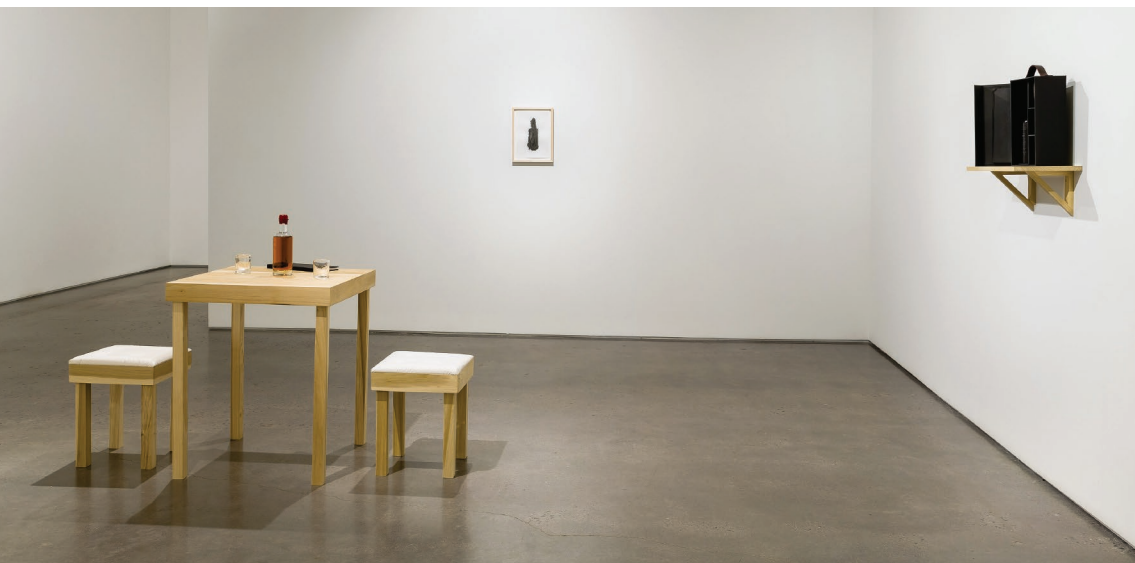
*Instructions for Drinking with a Friend*, 2016  
 Two hand-blown glasses, artist book, etched bottle  
 of whiskey, embroidered bar cloth, carrying case  
 16 x 6 x 6 in  
 Photo: Dan Kvitka



## MK GUTH

*b. 1963. Lives and works in Portland, Oregon  
 2015 Hallie Ford Fellow*

Small shifts of the familiar amplify human presence and speak to the intricacies of social relations in MK Guth's work. Guth works in sculpture, performance and interactive projects. She has exhibited and performed with numerous galleries and institutions in the United States and abroad including A Gentil Carioca, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Gallery-Pfeister, Gudhjem, Denmark; the Melbourne International Arts Festival, Melbourne, Australia; Nottdance Festival, Nottingham, England; The Whitney Museum of American Art, Swiss Institute, and White Columns, in New York, New York; Yerba Buena, San Francisco, California; Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, Washington; the Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio; and Boise Art Museum, Boise, Idaho. She is a recipient of the Bonnie Bronson Award, Betty Bowen Special Recognition Award through the Seattle Art Museum and an Award of Merit from the Bellevue Art Museum. Guth received a Master of Fine Arts from New York University, New York, New York.



*Instructions for Drinking with a Friend*, 2016  
 Installation view  
 Photo: Etienne Frossard



*Instructions for Drinking with a Friend*, 2016  
 Installation view

**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).



## VISUAL ARTS PROGRAM

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Roseburg, OR

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Essay © 2020 by Amelia Rina

Designed by Martha Lewis

Photographed as credited

Edited by Abby McGehee

Printed and finished in Portland, OR,  
by Brown Printing

*Dinner for Getting Over It or At Least Through  
It:* Courtesy Cristin Tierney Gallery, New  
York, NY and Elizabeth Leach Gallery,  
Portland, OR

*Dinner For Remembering:* Courtesy the col-  
lection of Ann & Mark Edlen, Sun Valley, ID

*Dinner to Plan a Revolution:* Courtesy the  
collection of Sara & Michelle Vance Waddell,  
Cincinnati, OH

*Dinner to Tell a Joke:* Courtesy Cristin  
Tierney Gallery, New York, NY

Installation view of exhibition *Menu:* Courtesy  
Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York, NY

*GETTING OVER IT:* Courtesy Elizabeth  
Leach Gallery, Portland, OR

All remaining works: Courtesy the artist