

STEPHEN HAYES





*La Loche, Saskatchewan (1-22-16), 2016*  
Oil on canvas  
23 x 35 in



*St. Paul, MN (7-6-16), 2016*  
Oil on canvas  
30 x 30 in



*Ferguson, MO (8-9-14), 2017*  
Oil on canvas  
30 x 30 in



*El Despoblado, 2012*  
Oil on canvas  
23 x 35 in

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*To Think of Time, 2012*  
Oil on canvas  
60 x 60 in

## IN COMMUNION WITH THE WORLD

by Linda Tesner

There is a lodestar that has shined on the career of Stephen Hayes for the past forty years and its name is “Curiosity.” Over the past four decades, Hayes has spread his focus on the figure, abstraction, the landscape, portraiture, and multiples. His guiding principle remains his commitment to following the threads of whatever he is curious about. This is an artist with an assiduously inquisitive mind that leads him to investigate innumerable facets of the world and the human presence in it.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Hayes’s exploration of the landscape. His career throughline is his love of plein air painting, the most direct expression of his view of the land. A summer’s day will find Hayes on Sauvie Island, translating the face of nature into paint upon paint.

But Hayes’s oeuvre equally and increasingly includes studio paintings that are more intellectually rigorous and complex. The nascence of these works begins with Hayes’s straightforward experience of the landscape, but from there he loves to construct a painting in his studio, making formal decisions about the composition conceptually and intuitively. Hayes is known as a “painter’s painter” for his love of the medium and the bravura of his brushstrokes. A good example of this is *El Despoblado* (2012), a work Hayes made during his years teaching at Oregon State University when he routinely commuted between Portland and Corvallis. He started recording his drive by simply shooting photographs from his car window while in transit, using those blurred images as the starting point of a large painting. Back in his studio, the photograph became a factual artifact documenting his experience, but coequally the springboard for making a much more complicated work detached from observed reality. Hayes is known for his active interaction with the picture plane, repeatedly painting, wiping, dripping, scraping, sanding and repainting before he considers the painting to be finished. Through gestures such as the emphatic magenta brushstroke in the center of *El Despoblado*, the viewer’s gaze is arrested at the painting’s activated surface, a reminder that this is a painting, an object, as much as it is an emotive view of place.

Hayes’s studio practice shifted abruptly in late 2015 when a series of terrorist attacks took place in Paris. Hayes had already been using Google Earth as a tool, a way to transport himself to another landscape via technology. The targets of the mass shootings in Paris included a

café, a nightclub, a stadium—places that anyone might find oneself during the quotidian course of an ordinary day. Hayes began to “Google visit” other locations around the world where incomprehensible acts of violence occurred all too frequently. He began to paint these unremarkable landscapes in a series he calls *In the Hour Before* as a way to memorialize the inconceivable tragedies that have transformed these places into consecrated tributes to loss. Since 2015, Hayes has painted Newtown, Connecticut; Ferguson, Missouri; Orlando, Florida; Kalamazoo, Michigan; San Bernardino, California; Jerusalem, Israel; Saskatchewan, Canada and, sadly, many more scenes. It was this project that led to Hayes’s award of the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship in 2018.

Roseburg, Oregon, is the home of The Ford Family Foundation, the singular and exemplary organization that awarded Hayes the Hallie Ford Fellowship in 2011. Sadly, Roseburg is also where the Umpqua Community College shootings occurred in 2015 in which ten people lost their lives (including the suicide of the perpetrator). In Hayes’s painting, *Roseburg (10-1-15)*, one sees an unexceptional landscape. The horizon line is low, defined by modest shrubbery and the roofline of a nondescript building. The broad sky is light blue-grey with diffused clouds in that hazy way that Oregon skies appear on an average day in autumn. In viewing the painting, there is nary a hint of the violence that distinguishes this place, except for the date in the subtitle. There is an unnerving disjunction between the pleasant commonplaceness of the image and the jarring realization that the painting serves as a memorial to the victims and their bereaved survivors. In Hayes’s subtle and inimitable way, he is an activist who deeply mourns the brutality engrained in human society.

If curiosity leads Hayes to his imagery, the act of painting is his communion with the world. In the series *In the Hour Before*, human compassion and empathy are in the forefront, but those are qualities and components that define all of Hayes’s work. His work is successful because he taps into the deep river of human dignity and authenticity, whether in a monoprint of the human nude, a portrait of a contemporary, or his vision of the landscape. Hayes reminds the viewer of what it means to be human, in its sadness, poignancy, and terrible beauty.

*Linda Tesner is an independent curator and arts writer.*



*Roseburg (10-1-15)*, 2016  
Oil on canvas  
23 x 35 in



*Parkland, FL (2-14-18), 2018*  
Oil on canvas  
90 x 120 in (diptych)

## STEPHEN HAYES

*b. 1955. Lives and works in Portland, Oregon*  
*2011 Hallie Ford Fellow*

Stephen Hayes' works exhibit a depth of understanding that belies the familiarity of imagery and seeming nonchalance of execution. Hayes has held over thirty-five solo exhibitions of his paintings, prints and drawings in the U.S. and abroad, which have been reviewed in *Art Forum*, *Art in America*, and *Artweek*. His works can be found in the collections of Frans Masereel Centrum voor Grafiek in Kasterlee, Belgium; New York Public Library, New York, New York, The Gates Foundation, Seattle, Washington; Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon; the Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon; University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. In 2013 Hayes was the subject of a 30-year career retrospective at the Hoffman Gallery at Lewis & Clark College, Portland, Oregon, which included a fully illustrated catalogue. In recognition of his accomplished career and dedicated studio art practice, Hayes was awarded a 2018 Guggenheim Fellowship. Hayes received a Master of Fine Arts in Painting from University of Wisconsin, Madison.

**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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Published by The Ford Family Foundation,  
Roseburg, OR

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Essay © 2020 by Linda Tesner

Designed by Martha Lewis

Photographed as credited

Edited by Abby McGehee

Printed and finished in Portland, OR,  
by Brown Printing

*Parkland, FL (2-14-18); Roseburg (10-1-15);  
St. Paul, MN (7-6-16):* Courtesy the artist  
and Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR

*To Think of Time:* Courtesy Private Collection,  
Litchfield, CT

*La Loche, Saskatchewan (1-22-16):*  
Courtesy the collection of the Portland Art  
Museum, Portland, OR. Museum Purchase:  
Funds provided by The Arlene and Harold  
Schnitzer Endowment for Northwest Art

*Ferguson, MO (8-9-14):* Courtesy the collec-  
tion of Gregg Stewart, Seattle, WA

*El Desplado:* Courtesy Private Collection,  
Portland, OR