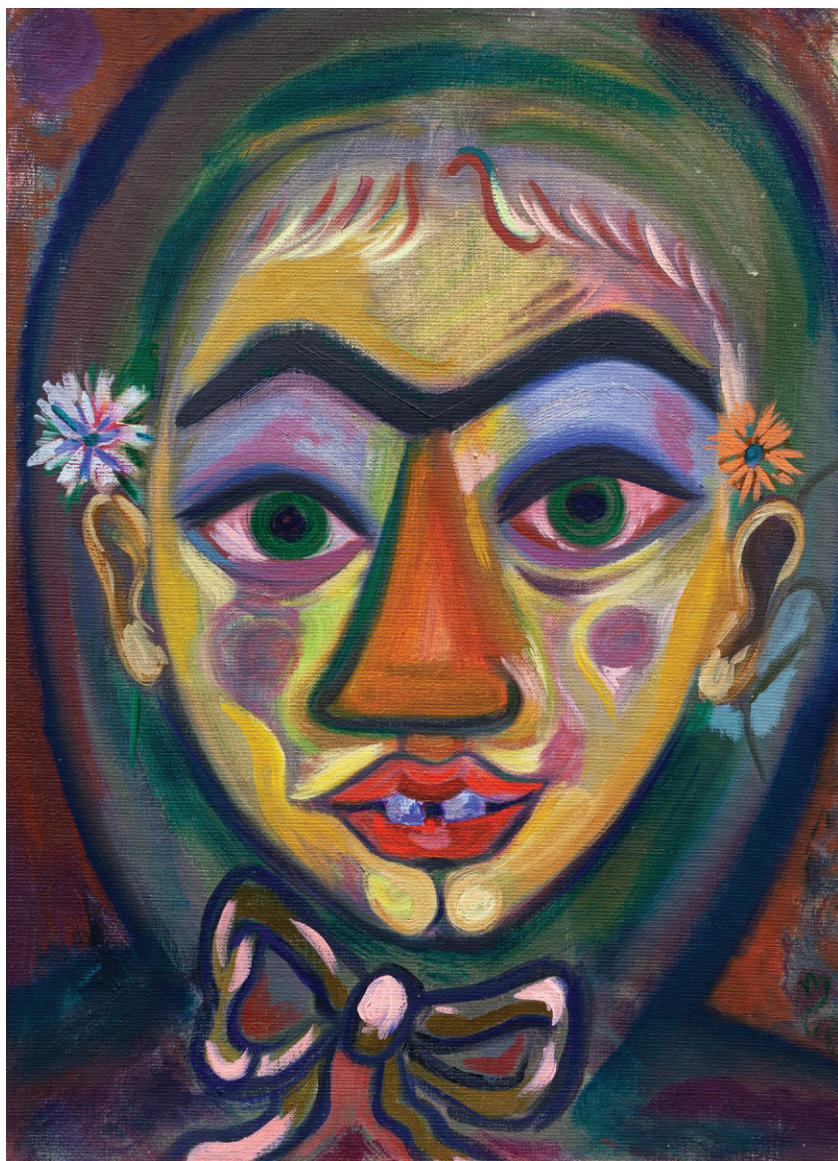


RAINEN KNECHT





Previous page
Fair Brow, 2020
Oil on linen
16 x 12 in



Cow Girl, 2018
Oil on canvas
16 x 20 x ¾ in

Harpy Landing in a Magnolia Tree, 2020
Oil on canvas with artist frame
15 x 13 x 1 in



Minataurs Embrace, 2020
Oil on canvas with artist frame
15 x 13 x 1 in



Garbage Brain, 2020
Oil on linen with artist frame
18 x 15 x 1 in

Upon first viewing Rainen Knecht's paintings, Edward Munch's *The Scream* (1893) immediately came to mind. With Munch as one of her artistic ancestors, Knecht doesn't mimic the iconic artist's style, but it's in her DNA as revealed by her loose and washy, yet controlled brush-strokes and evocative and dreamlike subject matter through which she has established a distinct vision and style. Of course, Munch is far from the only long-lost cousin contributing to Knecht's artistic makeup. Her memory bank overflows with personal experiences and memories, dreams and nightmares, alongside endless pictures and stories from art, popular culture, and everyday life. Besides art historical precedents like Munch, Knecht's style and/or subject matter calls to mind artists as varied as Gauguin, Matisse, and the German Expressionists (including and especially the Blue Rider group), as well as Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, and Oskar Kokoschka, amongst many others. A painting such as *Fair Brow* (2020) recalls Margaret Keane's paintings of wide-eyed children, which are nearly impossible to unsee (while less revered by art history, Keane's influence has not suffered). Additionally, the thick arching brows elicit memories of Frida Kahlo and even Picasso with the wide nose and oddly proportioned facial features. Looking at *Garbage Brain* (2020), prompted a vivid memory of seeing Dana Schutz's early painting *Sneeze* (2001), which is so visceral it nearly triggered a physiological response—it sets your nerves on fire. Like Schutz's figure on the verge of a huge release, the character depicted in *Garbage Brain* appears plagued by something—physically and emotionally. Look closer and you'll discover a girl yanking her nostrils open. Ouch.

Knecht has created a universe populated with fantastical characters who would be right at home in the universe of *Where the Wild Things Are*. There's a witchy tone and several paintings tell ghostly or supernatural tales. *Gorgones on a Sandspit* (2020), for instance, could at first seem like a classical picture of female sirens, but there's something deeply ominous in their facial expressions and the flickering flames surrounding them only heighten the anxiety. Eyes and teeth dominate many of Knecht's paintings, and bodies are frequently contorted and entangled with one another in a manner at once awe-inducing and intimidating. *The Jersey Devil's Daughter* (2020) simultaneously depicts a sweet and loving embrace between mother and daughter, and a disturbing

picture of menacing animal-human hybrids. And again, the eyes and teeth produce a magnetic attraction and repulsion. Set in a lush green forest, the picture suggests the experience of looking at gorillas trapped behind glass at the zoo. And like those gorillas, Knecht's mother and daughter can never break out and be freed from their containment. The animal kingdom clearly plays a prominent role in Knecht's interpretations of classic mythological and biblical narratives. The painting *Harpy Landing in Magnolia Tree* (2020), zooms in on the face of a lioness-like character with two pronounced bright white buck teeth, elongated, lithe fingers, and penetrating eyes. The titular figure in *Cow Girl* (2018), reclines haughtily lording over her cow disciples and *Minotaur's Embrace* (2020) evokes classic mythology and surrealists like Man Ray. This then leads to the Black Dahlia murder and the theory that Man Ray's *Minotaur* (1934) was a direct influence for the killer... but let's not fall into that rabbit hole. Knecht can take it up in one of her forthcoming paintings if so desired.

Knecht recently began placing her paintings inside hand-painted frames, reinforcing the Renaissance notion that we're looking through a window onto another world, yet some of them seamlessly extend the paintings allowing some of her magical world to seep into ours. A distinctive formal device, the painted frames simultaneously serve as a barrier and a gateway. Contemporary artist Zach Harris similarly hand carves and hand paints frames for his surreal and dizzying abstractions and like Harris, Knecht's style aligns with occult artists such as Cameron and Paul Laffoley who often endowed their practice with a spirituality and sense of ritual. And while Knecht's paintings are haunting and soul-piercing, there is an underlying thread of humor running throughout her work. Take *Delivering Gladiolas* (2017)—a delightfully absurd painting of a green-faced woman who seems to have twisted her head around Exorcist-style, without moving her body, standing behind the open doors to a van in a psychedelic swirl that feels like a portal to another plane. It's weird and funny, disturbing and confounding, demonstrating Knecht's signature mix of humor and surrealism that leaves a lasting impression.

Ali Subotnick is an independent curator based in Los Angeles.



The Jersey Devil's Daughter, 2020
Oil on linen with artist frame
16 x 18 x 1 in



Delivering Gladiolas, 2017
Oil on linen
36 x 24 x ¾ in

RAINEN KNECHT

b. 1982. Lives and works in Portland, Oregon

2021 Hallie Ford Fellow

Employing a form of dream logic, Rainen Knecht examines beauty, humor, and horror. Her femme figures are, as she describes, “situated between a warrior princess and sturdy milkmaid.” Clawed and distorted, they enact art historical motifs imbued with mischievous agency. In recent work, Knecht, a new mother, has studied the mother and child figure intertwined. The massive upheaval of becoming a mother, paired with the experience of witnessing her own mother’s death of cancer, is a centering gravity in Knecht’s paintings.

Knecht studied at the San Francisco Art Institute, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2006. Her exhibition history includes solo and two-person exhibitions at Fourteen30 Contemporary, Portland, Oregon; SITUATIONS, New York, New York; and CAPITAL, San Francisco, California, as well as recent group exhibitions at Shulamit. Nazarian and Various Small Fires in Los Angeles, California; Fisher Parrish, Brooklyn, New York; Stems Gallery, Brussels, Belgium; Ditch Projects, Springfield, Oregon; and PMOMA, Portland, Oregon.

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

© 2021

Published by The Ford Family Foundation,
Roseburg, OR

All rights reserved. This book may not
be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any
form without written permission from
the publisher.

Essay © 2021 by Ali Subotnick

Designed by Martha Lewis

Photographed as credited

Edited by Abby McGehee

Printed and finished in Portland, OR,
by Brown Printing

Cow Girl: Courtesy the collection of Philip
and Shelley Fox Aarons, New York, NY

All remaining works: Courtesy the artist