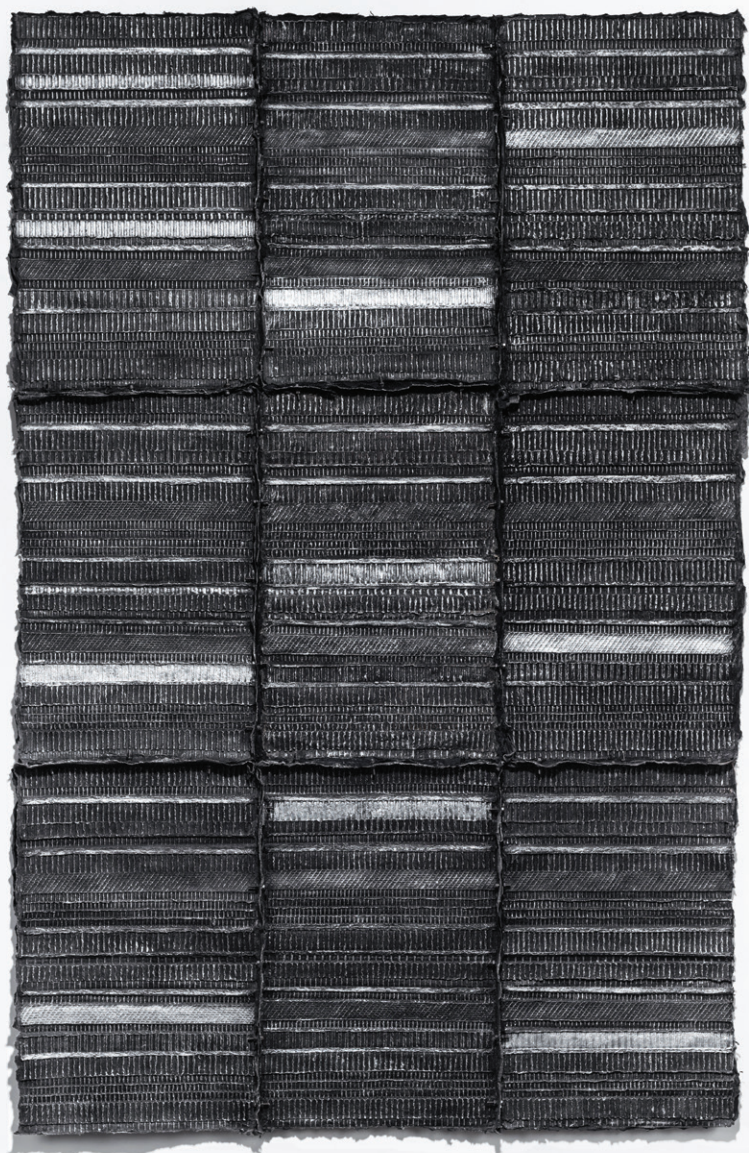


BRENDA MALLORY

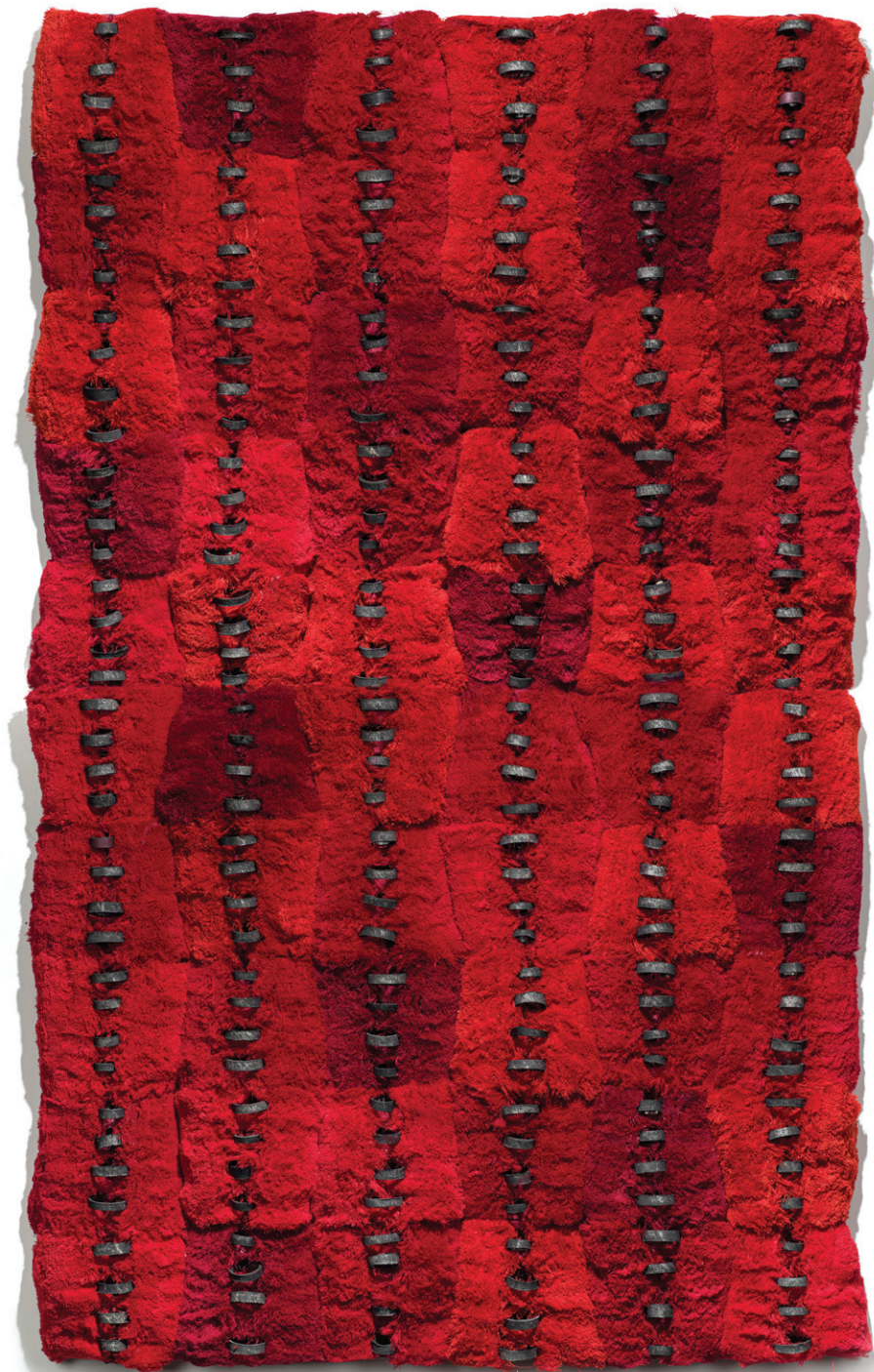




Soft Focus #4, 2018
Waxed cloth, hog rings, welded steel armature
66 x 100 x 2 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci



Undulations, 2009
Waxed cloth, nuts, bolts, welded steel
48 x 70 x 6 in
Photo: Courtney Frisse



Proximate Parcels, 2019
Deconstructed thread spools and cores
70 x 34 x 4 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci

Previous page
Further Function, 2017
Handmade cast paper, paint, nuts, bolts
62½ x 41 x 1½ in
Photo: Mario Gallucci

UNMADE & REMADE: Brenda Mallory's Sculptural Inquiries of Cherokee Identity

by Chelsea Herr (Chocktaw Nation of Oklahoma)

In the composite works of multidisciplinary artist Brenda Mallory (Cherokee Nation), the artist illuminates the complex and layered nature of her heritage and her community's history. Organic, biomorphic forms with undulating edges, constructed of industrial, otherwise harsh components—rubber belts, washers and bolts, and welded steel—contrast with softer, yet still utilitarian materials—waxed cloth, honeycomb paper, or spools of thread. As a whole, her oeuvre constitutes industrialized embodiments of Cherokee bodies and histories, intersecting and diverging at different points throughout each installation.

While she was born and spent her childhood in northeastern Oklahoma, Mallory has lived a significant amount of her adult life on the West Coast. Thus, Mallory is part of a large Cherokee diaspora that does not call their traditional homelands on the eastern seaboard, nor their removed homelands in present-day Oklahoma, "home." Like many contemporary members of removed tribes, Mallory has had to contend with further displacement within an already displaced community. This interrogation of what it means to belong to both a community and to a specific place can be found throughout her body of work, but *Recurring Chapters in the Book of Inevitable Outcomes* (2015) is a particularly poignant example. The visitor can imagine themselves in the place of the artist, carefully navigating a manufactured forest of seemingly ostensibly charred trees in the hopes of finding a place to belong. Mallory's sculptural forms exist simultaneously as autonomous entities and as parts of a much larger whole. *Recurring Chapters* exemplifies her affinity for honoring the individuality of each piece while still acknowledging their integral roles in the larger work.

Similarly, Mallory's wall-mounted sculptures are clear indicators of how discrete elements create an interdependent whole. *Thirteen Moons* (2021) refers to the historic Cherokee calendar, which was divided into 13 lunar cycles of 28 days each. Each moon was characterized by an accompanying ceremony, which maintained balance and well-being for the Cherokee people throughout the year.¹ Mallory's visualization of this calendar includes 13 rows of 28 waxed cloth rectangles, stitched together using hog rings on a welded steel frame. The ephemeral nature of a linear calendar, through which time reliably marches according to

lunar phases, is made physical and durable by Mallory's artistic hand. The rows vary in height, bringing to mind the unique ceremonial character of each Cherokee month, and they vary in shades of white, recalling the shifting tones of the moon's surface.

In *Proximate Parcels* (2019), spools of red thread, a material that was originally intended to fasten something together, are deconstructed and recombined in dense crimson tufts. With this piece, Mallory directly interrogates the destructive history of allotment, during which time the federal government parceled 160-acre plots of land for registered members of Native American tribes. This piece resembles an aerial view of reservation allotments, constructed with vivid red rectangular and trapezoidal shapes, illustrating the often arbitrary and inequitable division of land for tribal citizens. Although the goal of allotment policies was to dismantle the communal identities of Native nations and create self-sufficient individuals who saw themselves as *American* rather than *tribal* citizens, this effort eventually failed. Mallory visualizes the determination of Indigenous peoples to hold their communities together, in spite of the attempted dismantling of their community identities, by stitching the red parcels together with columns of black semicircular forms—the dissected cores of the spools of thread. In this sense, the artist inextricably binds the individual tracts together using the heart, the very center, of their being. Similarly, her piece *Undulations* (2009), relies on the juxtaposition of organic elements, like beeswax and cotton, in seemingly natural, undulating shapes that are bound to one another with industrial metal nuts and bolts. Much like the federal government's interference with the land on which the Cherokee Nation reservation is based, Mallory employs manmade materials to interfere in what the viewer initially perceives as biomorphic forms.

While Mallory's individual artworks are typically solid, static installations that demand autonomous space and attention, they clearly invoke ideas of movement, dynamism, and fluidity. She expertly sutures together otherwise disconnected elements to create something new, unexpected, and entirely unique—traits that ultimately characterize her expansive oeuvre.

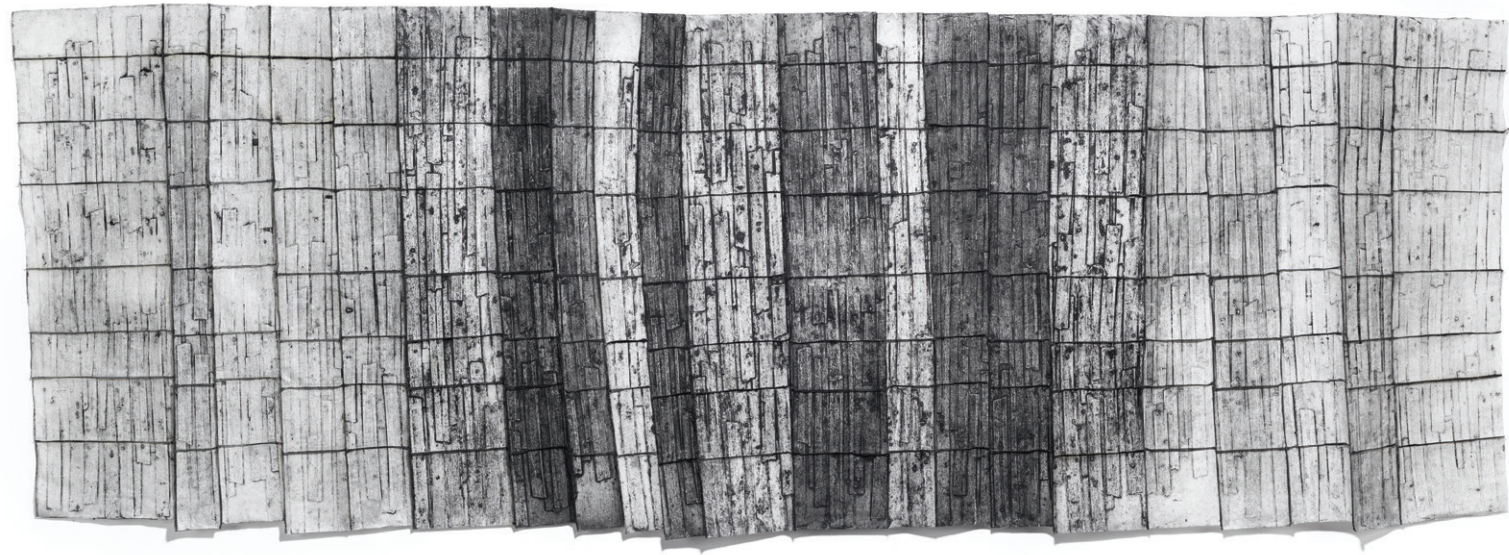
Chelsea Herr, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and Curator for Indigenous Art & Culture at Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Thirteen Moons, 2021
Waxed cloth, hog rings, welded steel
70 x 44 x 2 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci

¹ Will Chavez, "Cherokees kept time using 13 moon cycles," *Cherokee Phoenix* | GWY JdJdH0-0 (January 2009), Tahlequah, OK, p. 5.

Partitioning, 2015
Collagraph prints on kozo paper, thread, wax
30 x 95½ x 1½
Photo: Mario Gallucci



Recurring Chapters in the Book of Inevitable Outcomes, 2015
Waxed cloth, nuts, bolts, welded steel
Dimensions variable

BRENDA MALLORY (Cherokee Nation)

b. 1955. Lives and works in Portland, Oregon

2022 Hallie Ford Fellow

Brenda Mallory is a multi-disciplinary artist primarily working in sculpture. A citizen of the Cherokee Nation who grew up in Oklahoma, lived experience deeply informs her practice, as do the histories of survival inherent to Indigenous peoples. Mallory uses reclaimed raw materials, dismantled and repaired into compelling and formally beautiful objects. Mallory has been recognized as a Mentor Artist Fellow with the Native Arts and Culture Foundation, a Ucross Foundation Fellow for Native American Visual Artists, and a Contemporary Native Artist Fellow by the Eiteljorg Museum. She has been offered numerous residencies including Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts, Bullseye Glass, Anderson Ranch, and Township10. Mallory holds a Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and English from UCLA, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in General Fine Arts from Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, OR.

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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Proximate Parcels: Collection of Portland Art
Museum

*Recurring Chapters in the Book of Inevitable
Outcomes*: Image courtesy the Eiteljorg
Museum of American Indians and Western
Art, Indianapolis, IN

All other works courtesy the artist and Russo
Lee Gallery