

TOM PROCHASKA





*The Barber's Wife*, 2013  
Acrylic on panel  
16 x 20 in



*Trump in a Box*, 2018  
Lift ground etching  
16 x 15 in paper, 9 x 8 in image  
Edition of 5



*Oregon*, 2013  
Oil on canvas  
54 x 72 in



*First Sister*, 2016  
Lift-ground etching  
16 x 14½ in paper, 9 x 8 in image  
Edition of 6

*Previous page*  
*Busted*, 2013  
Papier mâché  
36 x 30 x 36 in

One of the most intriguing things about Tom Prochaska's work is that it has an element of unknowability to it: edges that dissolve into thick layers of paint, figures or buildings that emerge as if from a fog or a faded memory before returning again to the ether from which they came. His landscapes and city scenes push to the edge of the frame, roads and staircases wandering past our line of vision into the unknown.

With a foundation in traditional printmaking honed by a formal education at the Pratt Institute and time spent working in an old-world print shop in Switzerland, Prochaska's practice incorporates prints, painting, papier mâché and glass work. Throughout his work, his hand is searching. His paintings, in particular, hold a feeling of time, a space that has been worked in such a way as to show the duration of the artist's hand, its exploration in mapping out the structures of the composition, the moving, rearranging and mining of the layers as they are added and subtracted until they find their correct equilibrium. There are aspects of these works that Prochaska doesn't fully know when he begins, and even after they are complete, they retain a certain ephemeral quality. Seemingly monochromatic scenes, upon closer examination, reveal hidden hues, ghostly traces of past layers of color dancing between the layers.

Prochaska has long held a fascination with the mystery within faded saturation. After moving to Oregon in the 1970s he enjoyed fishing trips on the Deschutes river, and recognized the transition from day to night as particularly poignant:

"Dusk is a time when the world switches from color to silver and black with illusions of color. It's the time when elves come out and ghosts and dead relatives move in obscure light, the time of fantasy and magic, when strange birds and insects populate the sky. It is the time when I fish for trout and when all of nature is involved in pursuit, hunting life and death."<sup>1</sup>

It is this moment of dimming, of shadow and mystery, that Prochaska returns to again and again within his work. In these indistinct forms a vibrant energy is lurking a place where nature is animated and the supernatural is possible. The painting *Two in a Boat* could be such a place, a condition of loaded tension as the passengers watch the beginnings of night unfold in the surrounding wilderness in which they are subsumed.

The figure is a constant throughout Prochaska's practice, finding life in his varied mediums. Through his prints, sketches and sculptures his subjects become more articulated, protagonists seeking agency and gratification within their world. In his recent series of papier mâché figures, the sculptures are always in motion, gathering fish into a basket or frozen in a moment of high intensity performance. One figure is executing a rope trick while another spins plates in an echo of the variety acts on *The Ed Sullivan Show* that Prochaska watched as a child. These sculptures with their distinctive newsprint skins have a well-defined physicality that contrasts with the lyrical lines of the artist's print work, imbuing the sculptures with a psychological weight.

In recent years Prochaska's work has been inspired by classes he has taken in both dance and boxing. The classes, which serve as therapy for Parkinson's, have resulted in figure studies such as *Boxer 1 & Boxer 2*, 2017. The work underscores a sense of choreography that has long been part of Prochaska's creative output. His paintings in particular are imbued with movement, not frantic but patient, shifting between colors and muted monochromes, like strange birds hunting in the dusk.

*Josephine Zarkovich is a New York-based curator and writer and the editorial director of 60 Inch Center.*

<sup>1</sup> Tom Prochaska, "First Thursday Live with Tom Prochaska and Yoshihiro Kitai," *Froelick Gallery*, Apr. 20, 2020. <https://froelickgallery.com/events/25/overview/>



*Two in a Boat*, 2011  
Acrylic on canvas  
16 x 18 in



*Window I*, 2017  
Oil on panel  
23 x 23 in  
Photo: Dan Kvitka

## TOM PROCHASKA

*b. 1945. Lives and works in Portland, Oregon  
2015 Hallie Ford Fellow*

Tom Prochaska works in a range of media including painting, etchings, glass, and papier mâché. He depicts people engaged in labors, street scenes and buildings, and pastoral landscapes. Prochaska received a Master of Fine Arts from Pratt Institute in 1970. He taught at Pacific Northwest College of Art from 1988 until his retirement in 2012. He has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and the world, including exhibitions at the Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, Washington; Palos Verdes Art Center, Rancho Palos Verdes, California; and the Art Gym at Marylhurst University, Portland, Oregon. His work can be found in museum collections worldwide.



*Window II*, 2017  
Oil on panel  
23 x 23 in  
Photo: Dan Kvitka

**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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