

JESS PERLITZ



Previous page
Barely There, 2017
Fiberglass, FGR
9 x 8 x 3 ft



Crotch Pipe, 2019
Welded steel
90 x 15 x 24 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci



Endless Night (disco lumps), 2017
Mirror, Styrofoam, cable, disco ball motor, beanbag chair
Dimensions variable
Photo: Dru Donovan



Mud Breathes Better, 2017
Clay, body, water, rag
Dimensions variable



Boulder, 2019
Cement, concrete sealer
24 x 16 x 19 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci

ROCK COMMISSION

by Eileen Myles

I blow up balloon Jess Perlitz “made” and discover faded rock face on it. It’s a grey balloon. I think if I can’t blow this I up I probably have the virus. Blowing is easy. Tying the knot is not.

I recollect rock Jess Perlitz sent me in New York. I stood there holding it in my kitchen one night. Yet I doubt my own recollection so I text poet assistant Will to pick up rock & describe it for me. (The rock is in New York and I am in Texas.) He does so and sends photograph(s). I think about how more poets should have secondary (in terms of any one task being a primary responsibility) poet to relay sensations to them remotely for fabrication purposes in this case to fulfill an essay commission on the work of Jess Perlitz who uses rocks in their practice.

Why rocks I wonder.

Reading an essay by JP on their own work two things occur to me. One is that the pleasure & the quality of their writing makes me wonder my purpose here. I think I generally supply the text to accompany the body of art. I am a companion to the work. Here JP has already demonstrated their capacity to companion themselves (in writing) similar to the project of theirs in which they wandered Portland & outlying districts costumed as a rock carrying *another* rock (on wheels) alongside them—and so it occurs to me for all their talk about work they admire (including their own) being conceptually “unfinished” JP’s work is *completed* by this fact of a companion. Perhaps (I stroke my chin) I am being *invited* to re-open the procedure & by stating another, placing *my* text next to theirs a rock next to their rock similarly to how Will my poet assistant holds the gifted rock remotely in their hand, a network of rocks is getting reinstated, or established. A continuum exists in which I reprise the phenomenon of *non infinito*. And so they need me after all.

The second thought is pure rock in the sense in which the moon (in their work) gets invoked, and meteors are invoked (10–15 arrive unbeknownst to us every day I learned in JP’s essay) and the rock we stand on is by implication invoked too. JP herself is *already* being a satellite of all rocks landed & fallen, native and migratory. She establishes a grammar of stones and sculptures as an articulation of mineral bodies made & found. They are almost like the baby dolls of humans and of the planet earth.

I’ve not been asked to only talk about JP’s rocks here & her writing on them but all her work. I met JP about a year ago at the Academy of American Arts & Letters where both of us had received an award.

Unexpectedly since then many people on the planet earth are sick. My life is changed and so is hers like an invisible enemy is driving much of the world away from each other and into their homes where we are quietly waiting for it to pass like a war or a storm. And even a civil war since a portion of the world—even as people are dying—persists in insisting the virus that is doing it is a hoax.

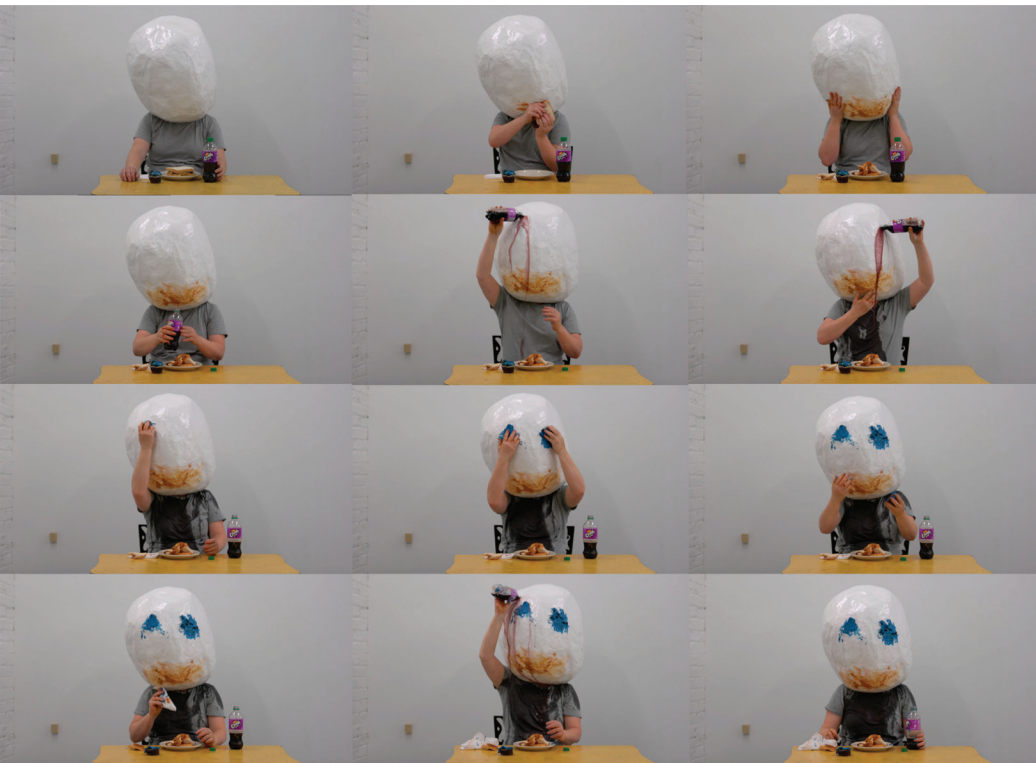
People think for instance that it’s still okay to gather in churches. Inviting a miracle, the greatest kind of work.

The piece of Jess’s work I like the most is burned beast. The world had not seemed destined to turn this way. There’s a stain on the wall near the creature like a cloud or an exit or the creature’s dream. A gateway to the abyss from which he came. His head is turned slightly listening to a distant song.

I stood in my kitchen earlier this year & turned the key on the grey stone I was holding that JP had sent me. I was listening carefully as the stone played Amazing Grace. Now I look into the jeering complacency on the face of the creature. I think it resembles me.



Bones, 2019
Plaster
2½ x 2 x 6 ft
Photo: Mario Gallucci



Face, 2017
Video stills
5 min



Body without body masks, 2019
Abaca pulp
8 x 8 in (each)
Photo: Mario Gallucci

JESS PERLITZ

b. 1978. Lives and works in Portland, Oregon

2019 Hallie Ford Fellow

Jess Perlitz makes work considering body and landscape and the ways in which we define and seek to recognize ourselves within it. Grappling with how space gets articulated, her projects take many forms—traversing performance, sculpture, and drawing. The work has appeared in a variety of venues such as playgrounds, fields, galleries, and museums, including the Institute for Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Socrates Sculpture Park, New York, New York; Cambridge Galleries, Cambridge, Ontario; and De Fabriek, The Netherlands. Born in 1978 in Toronto, Canada, Jess is a graduate of Bard College, received her Master of Fine Arts from Tyler School of Art and clown training from the Manitoulin Center for Creation and Performance. Jess was named the 2018 Joan Shipley Fellow by the Oregon Arts Commission.

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.



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