JULIE GREEN

The Ford Family Foundation Visual Arts Program

Huwe Burton Said Truth Freed Me, Music Kept Me Sane While I Waited, 2019
Acrylic, glow-in-the-dark paint on Tyvek (sewn together)
40 x 47 5/16 in

Photo: Mario Gallucci

Pepsi-Cola Monticello for Horace Roberts, 2019
Acrylic, glow-in-the-dark logo on Tyvek
38 x 47 in

Photo: Mario Gallucci

Blueberries Handfed to Julie Rea, 2018
Acrylic on Tyvek
35 x 47 in

Photo: Mario Gallucci

Pizza Pennant, 2018
Acrylic on Tyvek
46 x 36 in

Photo: Mario Gallucci

Holding Orange for Jason Strong, 2018
Acrylic on Tyvek
47 x 35 in

Photo: Mario Gallucci

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Beef House Near Danville (detail), 2020
Acrylic, platinum leaf, glow-in-the-dark on Tyvek
Sewing collaboration with Clay Lohmann
36 x 48 51/64 in

Photo: Mario Gallucci

FLOWN

by Sarah Sentilles

How do you represent absence? How do you depict loss? For two decades, Julie Green has been painting the final meals of people on death row. *The Last Supper* includes 895 (and counting) paintings on ceramic plates, almost every one painted blue. Green looks directly at hard topics, and the artist keeps looking, keeps painting, for years. Yet there is delight in the work, playfulness, humor, a clear love of paint and pattern, of material and experimentation. For *Wallpaper* (2015), two hundred sheets of mulberry paper, hand-painted in sumi ink with thousands of seashells, cover the gallery walls and serve as backdrop for *My New Blue Friends,* blue airbrushed egg tempera paintings, abstractions of food. In *2-pack Trauma* (2017), 34 flattened vinegar cardboard boxes are the artist's canvas, and on each box Green has painted in acrylic and day glow a small oval scene depicting a personal traumatic event. The work plays with the idea of confession—the brand is Four Monks, vinegar can be used to clean and disinfect, and the date stamps suggest repetition, ritual. What does forgiveness look like? And who can grant it?

Though not used for most of *The Last Supper* series, flow blue (also called flown blue) is Green's favorite historical ceramic technique—blue glaze painted or transferred on white ceramic that smears during firing. "What likely began as an accident becomes a goal," Green said. Accidents, mistakes, misunderstandings. To be human is to be fallible; our beliefs are infected with our biases. "The most ethical thing we can say is 'I might be wrong,'" my mentor, the late theologian Gordon Kaufman, used to say. That doesn't mean we can't stake our lives on our beliefs. But it does mean we can't kill someone else over them." Like me, Green was Christian, and like me, the artist isn't anymore, but Green's work offers a version of transcendence that troubles certainty. To know what someone ate before being executed—shrimp, French fries, garlic bread, ice cream, and strawberries with whipped cream—humanizes. Green's work reminds viewers there is a part of every person that is uncapturable, resistant, free—even if they have been locked away for years.

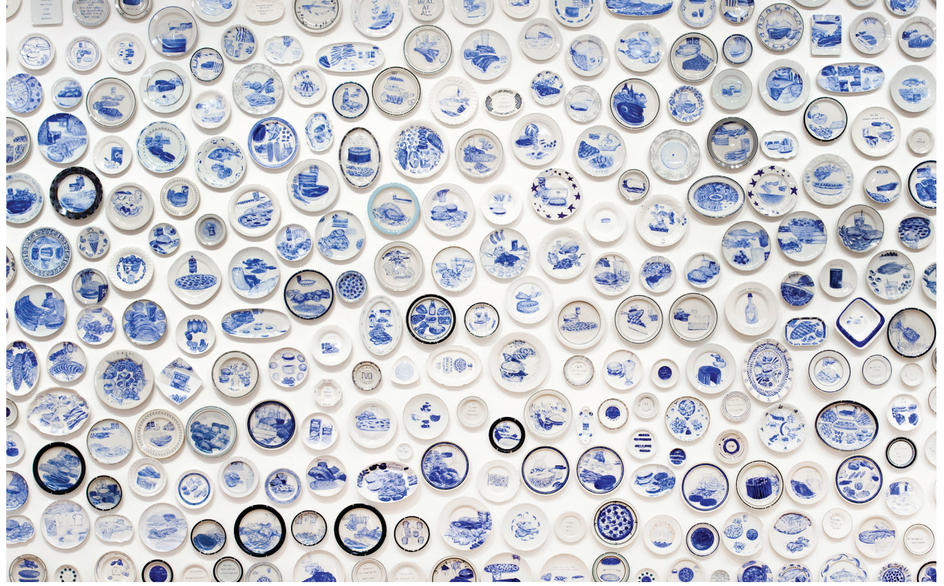
Theodor Adorno describes "this elusive force" as "a presence that acts upon us." In *Vibrant Matter,* philosopher Jane Bennett puts Adorno's idea this way: "We knowers are haunted…by a painful, nagging feeling that something's being forgotten or left out."[1] And the ethical challenge is to learn to live with this haunting, to accentuate it, remember it, protect it. Green's art helps viewers learn to do just that. The paintings suggest there is more than whatever it is we think we know—about an apple, an orange, a prisoner, a plate.

Growing up, Green never ate alone; eating was a shared activity, led by the artist's mother, who taught home economics. Most people on death row eat their last meal alone or with a guard. Green thinks about that when painting. The artist tends a garden and sent me home from a studio visit with a suitcase filled with tarragon and instructions for how to make tarragon infused vinegar, a recipe included in the artist's limited-edition book, *Picnic Brownies Make Life Easy.* At home, I rinsed Green's tarragon, packed it in a glass jar, added red wine vinegar, and topped the mixture with a clean flat rock. In some communities, family is formed not only by blood or marriage or adoption, but by eating food grown on the same land. You bury your ancestors; their bodies nurture the plants; the plants nurture the people and animals who eat those plants.[2] "Take, eat," the story tells us Jesus said. "This is my body." Then he hands his friends pieces of bread.

For *An Embarrassment of Dishes,* Green painted over the original pattern of a Noritake dinner service for 12, inherited from the artist's grandmother. On the back of each dish, Green painted words, inscribing moments of discomfort, using a mixture of blue pigment, 7-Up, and simple syrup. Confessions, injury, humiliation, and secrets exposed. "We can learn from the objects in our homes," Green said. "Especially from objects we didn't choose." Green shared that their grandmother had two sets of china—Japanese china designed to look British, and British china designed to look Japanese. Like Green's childhood pink sponge curlers meant to make straight hair curly, these household objects "reveal something about the human longing to be other than we are," Green said.

Green's art also reveals the human longing to make others *other than they are*—to mis-see and to misunderstand. The effects of misapprehension are at the heart of Green's new series, *First Meals,* paintings of what the exonerated eat when they are released after years, even decades, of being wrongly imprisoned. Green expected creating this work to feel hopeful but found it crushing. "All that lost time," Green said. The work is a three-way collaboration between the exonerees, the Center on Wrongful Convictions, and the artist. The paintings are made on Tyvek, a synthetic material used to protect buildings during construction, to protect homes. Green calls the paintings "pennants of loss," and they are flag-like, from a country most of us pretend doesn't exist.

In *Blueberries Handfed to Julie Rea* (2018), the third in an ongoing series of fifteen paintings to date, one woman feeds another blueberries, the pair in the foreground of a landscape that feels as if it is from another time. Rea spent six years in prison wrongly convicted for murder of her ten-year old son, and her first meal was a potluck at a friend's house, with lots of fresh fruit. Looking at the blueberry-blue painting, I thought of Ariella Azoulay's



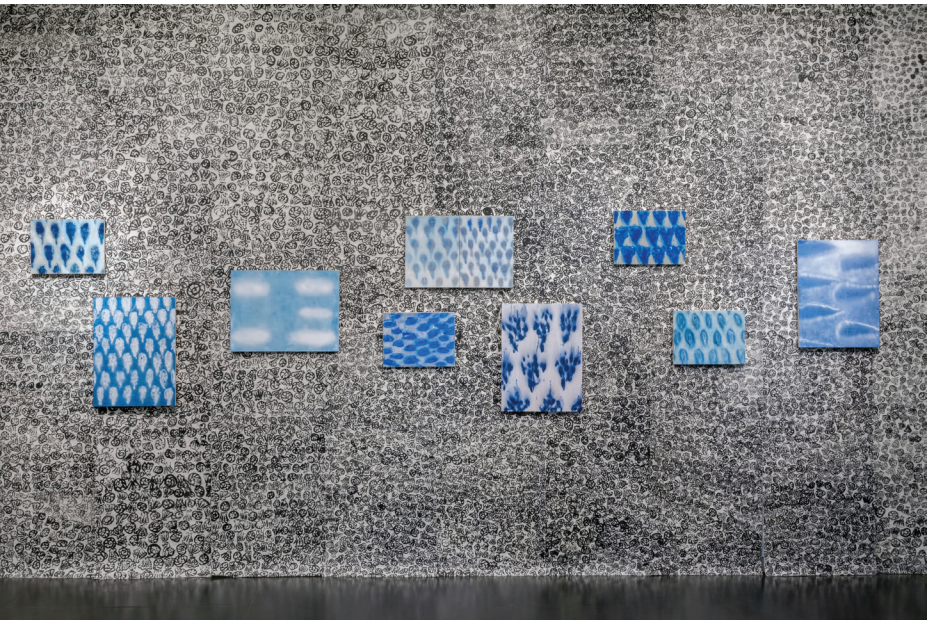
The Last Supper, 2009
Installation view
Dimensions variable
Photo: Julie Green

"Potential History" and her argument about how photographs work. Green placed figures from different eras in the same scene—Rea and her friend alongside a group with a person wearing a top hat—collapsing time, or at least bending it. Azoulay, too, asks viewers to bend time by projecting themselves into the scenes of photographs and viewing their outcomes not as inevitable but as one possibility among many. Looking this way, Azoulay asserts, can help us remember that history didn't have to proceed the way it did. Things could have been different. Viewing becomes a kind of reanimation: what was still begins to move, what was intractable becomes malleable.[3] And that, ultimately, is what exoneration is, though Green's paintings remind us that release is only the first step. What has been done cannot be undone; something new must be fashioned—a painting, a plate, a meal, a world, reparations. Green comes from a family of repairers, people who knew how to mend and heal, how to transform broken objects into something useful again. The artist continues that family work.

1 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 14.

2 Sahlins, Marshall. "What Kinship Is (Part One)," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (Vol. 17, 2011), p. 4.

3 Ariella Aisha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019). I wrote about Ariella Azoulay in "How Should We Respond to Photographs of Suffering," New Yorker, August 3, 2017.



My New Blue Friends, 2015
Installation view
Air-brushed egg tempera on panel, large-scale five-year sumi ink drawing on mulberry paper
Dimensions variable

Photo: Mario Gallucci

2-pack Trauma, 2017
Installation view
Acrylic, glow in the dark paint on repurposed cardboard
Dimensions variable

Photo: Mario Gallucci

JULIE GREEN

b. 1961. Lives and works in Corvallis, Oregon
2017 Hallie Ford Fellow

Julie Green lives in the Willamette Valley with husband and artist Clay Lohmann and their small cat, Mini. Half of each year, usually winter months, is spent painting *The Last Supper.* A recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant for Painters and Sculptors, Green is included in *A World of Art* published by Prentice Hall. Green has had forty-two solo exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad including *First Meal* at Upfor in Portland, Oregon; The Armory Show in New York, New York; The Block Museum at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois; Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, Tennessee; and University of Liverpool Art Museum, Liverpool, England. Collections include Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Kansas; Fidelity Investments, (International), Athena Art Finance, New York, New York; and hundreds of private collections world-wide. Green's work has been featured in publications including the *New York Times,* the *Los Angeles Times,* a Whole Foods mini-documentary, National Public Radio, and *Ceramics Monthly.*

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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