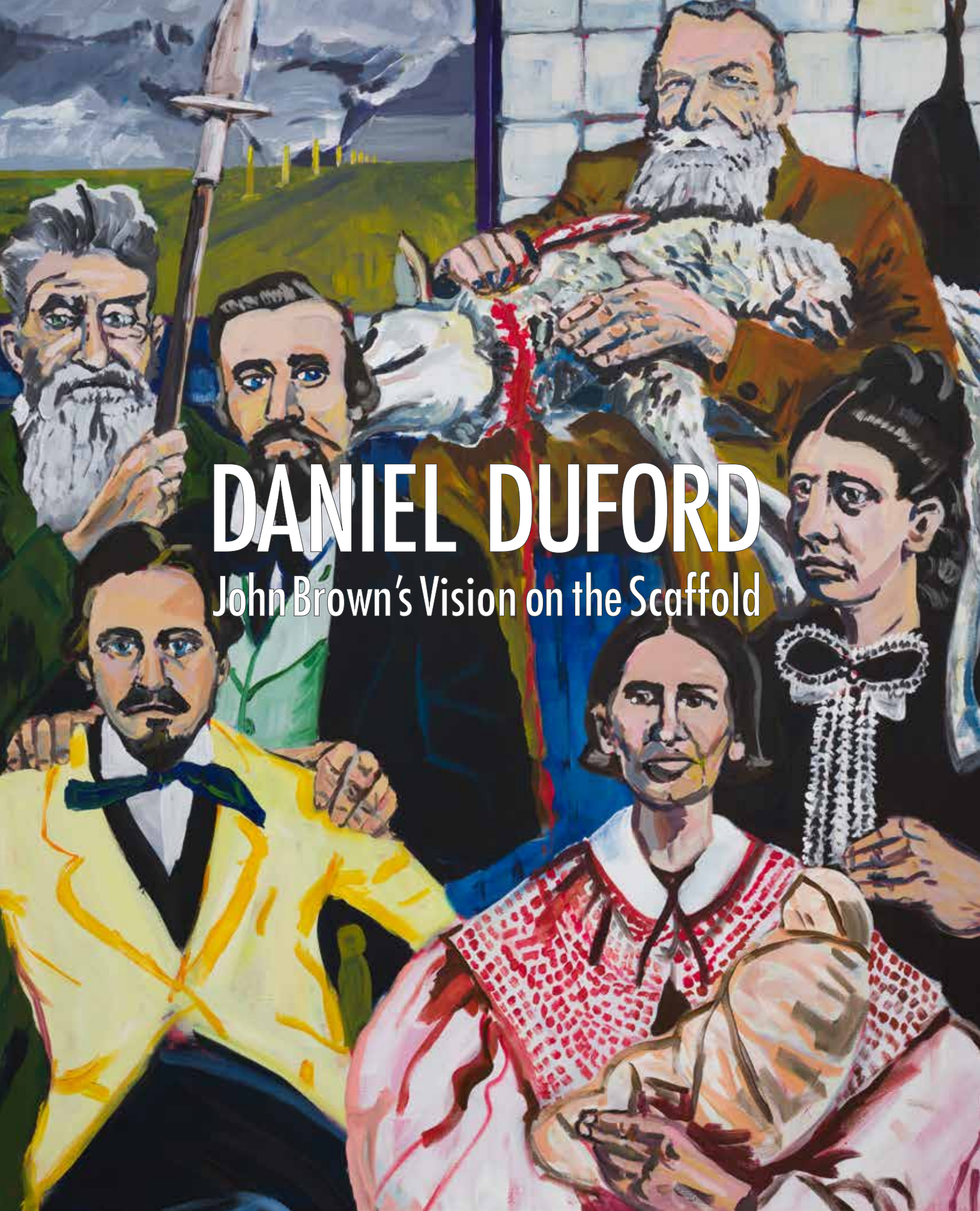
DANIEL DUFORD
John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold

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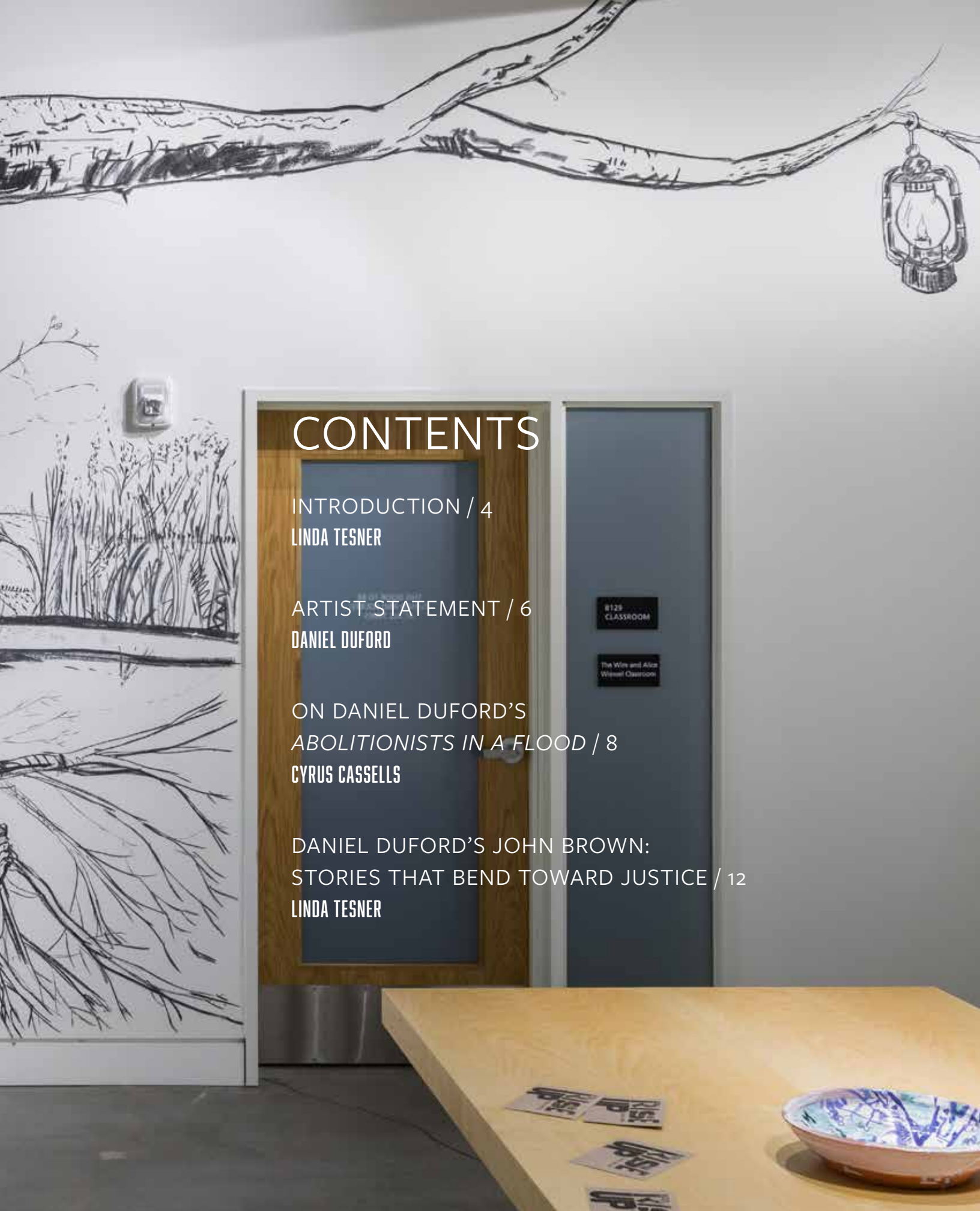
John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold

Essays by Linda Tesner
& Cyrus Cassells

JORDAN SCHNITZER MUSEUM OF ART AT PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE FORD FAMILY FOUNDATION



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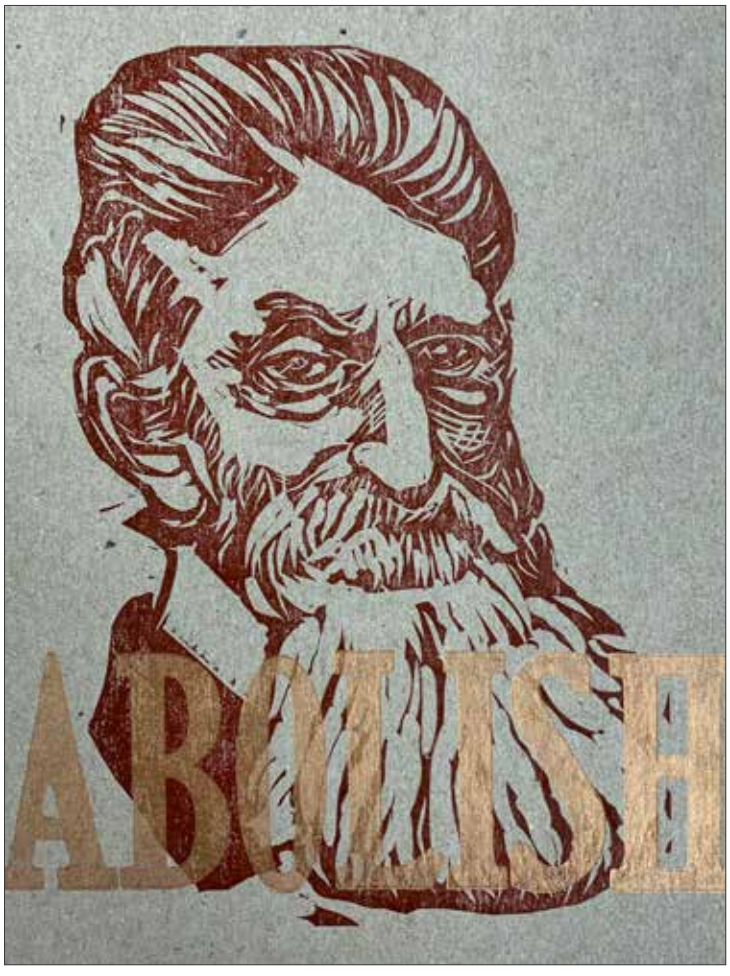


ABOLISH, 2019
Letterpress on chipboard postcard, 5 by 7 inches
Printed by Cumbersome Multiples

INTRODUCTION

It is fair to say that John Brown found Daniel Duford.

During the summer of 2017, Duford was invited by Armand Balboni to develop a new residency and fellowship program called Ground Beneath Us in Waterford, Virginia. (Duford was the program's first fellow as well.) One of the great benefits of any artist residency is that the participant is afforded an extended opportunity to respond to the essence of a place—the land, the setting, the weather, and even the very air impart unique qualities to a residency. So too do the culture and history of the place. These elements—geographic, cultural, historic—almost always influence the artist's creative output, though sometimes imperceptibly. Waterford's offerings are ample in this regard: the town has both deep historic roots and a history of defiance.

Now a National Historic Landmark, Waterford was founded in 1733 as a Quaker village. Eventually it would become the home of the Loudoun Rangers, an independent cavalry unit that fought against the Confederates during the Civil War. Local lore is full of stories of resistance: Quaker women who published antislavery newspapers and smuggled them across the Shenandoah River under their petticoats; citizens who protected free Blacks from slave patrols. (That said, slave auctions thrived in Waterford nonetheless.) Today, Loudoun County is one of the wealthiest in the nation, yet it sits just across the Shenandoah from West Virginia, where poverty is rampant and the opioid epidemic rages on.

On October 16, 1859, abolitionist John Brown led a raid on the federal armory in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia—an act of rebellion that is widely considered to have helped spark the Civil War. While staying in Waterford, Daniel Duford visited Harpers Ferry. He went to the John Brown Wax Museum, where folksy animatronic tableaus recount Brown's story. The song "John Brown's Body" began to play on repeat in his head. (The song had been popular in the Union during the Civil War, and poet Julia Ward Howe later rewrote its lyrics and repurposed its tune for "The Battle Hymn of the Republic.") Duford wondered: What lessons does this nineteenth-century abolitionist have for present-day America? At the end of his residency, he published a chapbook titled *John Brown's Body: Stories from Waterford, Virginia*, in which he chronicled his experiences and impressions, as well as the parallels he'd discovered between a historical figure who has been somewhat obscured by the passage of time and the very current issue of entrenched racism in America. Only two days after Duford returned to Portland from Virginia, white supremacists and neo-Nazis rallied in Charlottesville to

save a Confederate monument, while President Trump tweeted, "Sad to see the history and culture of our great country being ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful statues and monuments" (@realDonaldTrump, August 17, 2017). During the summer of 2020, as we prepare this catalogue to go to press, concerns surrounding public art—specifically how historical figures and events are memorialized—have erupted into a critical and often contentious national debate.

The timing of Duford's residency was important: it took place not long after the 2016 presidential election. Duford says, "After the election of 2016, my wife, artist Tracy Schlapp, and I tried to find a response to our despair. We began a collaboration of watercolors and letterpress called *Resistance Is Necessary*, to chronicle the first hundred days of the Trump administration. The work we created is some of our best work, but the effort sickened us both. Almost simultaneously we recoiled at the immersion in that hyper-immediate image world. It was then that I realized that by accepting these images and hitting them head on, I would break my back like a belly flopper hitting a plane of water from a great height. But if I stepped back and viewed the images from the vantage of history and old stories, I could pierce the paper-thin membrane like a diver. I could knife through the surface and reach the true depths."

This discovery yielded a new way for Duford to tap into history and transmogrify narrative into works that speak to profound issues in contemporary life. Out of his chapbook an entire body of work emerged: *John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold*, an ambitious thought experiment that examines Brown's story from the perspective of the present day, 161 years after the raid on Harpers Ferry. Aside from the mythology surrounding the colorful character that was John Brown, what marrow can be found in his narrative to sustain us now? Duford looks through the lens of history and succeeds in plumbing the depths of subjects that have real significance in our own time.

The exhibition *Daniel Duford: John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold* opened at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at Portland State University in early March 2020. Just eight days after the opening, the museum had to shutter its doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was murdered, and the nation was forced to face the heartbreaking and persistent fact of police brutality against Black Americans. In July 2020, in a maneuver that can only be described as totalitarian, Trump ordered federal officers into downtown Portland to enforce "law and order." Citizens of our city were literally snatched off the streets and interrogated without due course of law. This is a moment in history when all Americans are being asked to examine their fundamental values as citizens—as human beings—and take action for the benefit of *everyone*. We face a time that is as fraught and uncertain as the era when John Brown lived.

Daniel Duford's project, started in 2017, has been remarkably prescient at addressing issues that are critical now. Current events lend additional weight to the importance of his exhibition and its documentation. This publication was funded by The Ford Family Foundation, whose generous funding of exhibition documentation is singular and exceedingly valuable in the preservation of Oregon's art history. Thank you to Meagan Atiyeh, Carol Dalu, and Kandis Nunn for their support of this project. At this unprecedented moment, when the ecology of the visual arts is under threat, The Ford Family Foundation remains committed to the conservation of Oregon's visual art narrative. I am deeply grateful.

Linda Tesner
Former Interim Director and Curator
Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
Portland State University

ARTIST STATEMENT

I, JOHN BROWN, AM NOW QUITE CERTAIN THAT THE CRIMES OF THIS GUILTY LAND WILL NEVER BE PURGED AWAY BUT WITH BLOOD.

JOHN BROWN, DECEMBER 2, 1859

On December 2, 1859, radical abolitionist John Brown stood on a scaffold in Virginia, awaiting the drop of the gallows floor. A month and a half earlier, with the aim of instigating an insurrection that would forever eradicate the Slave Power, he had taken over the federal armory in Harpers Ferry along with a mixed-race group of radical abolitionists. For this he had been sentenced to hang. Brown stood for a full ten minutes with the hood over his head and the noose around his neck. He waited patiently as the military gathered in formation to witness his execution. He had already issued this final statement: "I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood." The work in this show grows out of those ten minutes, their possibility and potential. It reaches from the deep past into the present.

Folklore and myth seep into this telling. Stories are alive; they are promiscuous. They slip the borders. *John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold* is steeped in American history and storytelling. I created a series of portraits of the people around John Brown as if those people were my sitters. I made the choice to focus not on the heroic individual but on Brown's community and family. He didn't just use his own body as collateral for the cause—he gambled his family's lives as well. This coalition of activists, friends, and family felt the repercussions of political action. Each person depicted in the portraits lived a life of small joys, trivial mercies, and great consequence. Behind them—outside, beyond the window—something else transpires: a reference to something older and bigger that casts light on their stories. The landscape is a necessary character in the work, and the long arc of tree time is essential to the narrative. Trees are the most patient of witnesses. Their slow perception connects stories and communities across centuries.

Daniel Duford

THE BROWN FAMILY: ALL PRESENT
(detail: Owen Brown), 2020
Acrylic on canvas
60 by 48 inches

ON DANIEL DUFORD'S *ABOLITIONISTS IN A FLOOD*

CYRUS CASSELLS

ABOLITIONISTS IN A FLOOD, 2019
Oil on canvas
48 by 69 inches

THE HARRIET TUBMAN WHOM DUFORD DEPICTS IS UN-BOSSED AND FLESH-AND-BLOOD DIRECT–MORE THAN JUST A COMMODIFIED ICON OR A TRUSTWORTHY FACE MEANT TO POTENTIALLY GRACE AMERICAN CURRENCY.

CYRUS CASSELLS

Watching Kasi Lemmons's stirring award-nominated film *Harriet*, with Cynthia Erivo as the gallant slave woman transformed into a rescuing "General Moses" for her beleaguered people, I wasn't prepared for the riveting beauty and pull of the movie's striking natural landscapes, reminding me of the salient relationship of nineteenth-century slaves to both the bedeviling land they were forced to work and the unbridled wilderness—bark, roots, branches, and Big Dipper—that formed the green mazes and perilous meshes of their runagate escape routes. Some cogent lines from Toni Morrison's masterpiece *Beloved* came to mind: " . . . and suddenly there was Sweet Home, rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes, and although there was not a leaf on that farm that did not make her want to scream, it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty." This primal sense of American landscape as a potent and inspirational part of the antislavery story is a sublime aspect of Daniel Duford's surprising and engaging *Abolitionists in a Flood*. In this evocative painting, we're rooted in a visionary landscape, an entrancing mix of the pastoral and the political, one that embodies risk, ruin, and imminent danger, the memory of rapacious bloodhounds and "paterollers," not to mention a well-conveyed sense of hard-won celebration, impassioned community, and camaraderie. There's a startling air of confidence and conviviality to this extraordinary outdoor pumpkin-colored-couch soiree, this piquant gathering of dauntless and indelible nineteenth-century thinkers, writers, reformers, and able Underground Railroad leaders—the insurgent martyr John Brown, attic poet Emily Dickinson (clasping a sword), Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Gerrit Smith (who has a congenial arm around Douglass, the great orator, the eloquent runaway slave), Henry David Thoreau, Sojourner Truth, and lamplighter Harriet Tubman—all distinctive, keen-eyed (they seem to be peering directly at us), startlingly present, and profoundly accounted for.

In these roiling days of infuriating police brutality and the urgent Black Lives Matter movement, it's both an immense joy to imagine these daring American crusaders together, and also, by the very nature of their fabled will to envision a just America, a subtle but rousing call to arms that challenges viewers to rethink our limited definitions of nature and activism. Poet and literary critic Donna Seaman has said that "nature is too often defined as wilderness when, in fact, nature is everywhere we are." Perhaps these swamp or floodwaters are a medium that Duford's staunch, never-say-die heroes and heroines have mastered through love and will, through fortitude—enough that they can wade in this intermediary realm with something akin to assurance, soulful poise, or authentic aplomb. Their radical hope and unfailing action have already been distilled into inspiriting lore and gospel, but part of Duford's necessary task seems to be to make our progressive saints less Olympian

and more accessible, human, and intimate in the face of relentless mythmaking and concerted attempts to render them unapproachable, larger than life, or merely marble busts. The Harriet Tubman whom Duford depicts is un-bossed and flesh-and-blood direct—more than just a commodified icon or a trustworthy face meant to potentially grace American currency.

As a sort of delicate and complex fillip, Duford has added, in a distance glimpsed through a claw of grasping branches, the isolate and melancholy figure of the Fisher King (taken from Arthurian legend) rowing in the midst of what must be for him a worrisome flood. Versions of the original tale vary widely, but the wistful monarch is always wounded in the legs or groin and incapable of standing. All he can do is fish in a small, solitary boat on the river adjacent to his castle and wait for some noble or knight-errant capable of healing him by asking a certain question. For my part, the stalled Fisher King has always suggested a patriarchal need for humility, renewal, healing, and accountability. Perhaps the Fisher King's disabling wound, in the context of this gently haunting and allusive painting, is the sin of slavery and bigotry that, in our contested and divided America, poisons generation after generation.

The flood in this arresting painting has now become a sweeping deluge of protestors worldwide, marching in a time of ferocious pandemic against the loathsome murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many other African Americans at the hands of a rogue and militarized police force. In his dedication to the dynamic visual depiction of the life of John Brown and other key abolitionist leaders and firebrands (who limned the dream of freedom and battled to attain it), Duford aligns their adamant struggles with our twenty-first-century causes, our deep-seated search for equality and racial harmony; he accomplishes this with strong colors and a documentary clarity and freshness that suggests the phrase "this happened here today." An artist who remains alive to the racial labyrinths and justice cries of the nineteenth century as well as the volatile present, Daniel Duford reminds us, in artful fashion, that our questing and truth-telling champions, our devoted ancestors, continue to speak to us and through us.

ABOLITIONISTS IN A FLOOD (detail: Harriet Tubman), 2019
Oil on canvas
48 by 69 inches

CYRUS CASSELLS

A 2019 Guggenheim Fellow, Cyrus Cassells has won the National Poetry Series competition, a Lambda Literary Award, a Lannan Literary Award, and a William Carlos Williams Award. His 2018 volume *The Gospel according to Wild Indigo* was a finalist for the NAACP Image Award. *Still Life with Children: Selected Poems of Francesc Parcerisas*, translated from the Catalan, was awarded the Texas Institute of Letters' Soeurette Diehl Fraser Award for Best Translation of a Book in 2018–19. His seventh book, *More Than Watchmen at Daybreak*, a lyric cycle about his stay in a Benedictine desert monastery, was published by Nine Mile Books in April 2020. His eighth and ninth books, *The World That the Shooter Left Us* and *Is There Room for Another Horse on Your Horse Ranch?* (a finalist for the 2019 National Poetry Series) are forthcoming from Four Way Books in early 2022 and 2024.

DANIEL DUFORD'S
JOHN BROWN:

STORIES THAT BEND TOWARD JUSTICE

LINDA TESNER

It is surprising how few visual artists have tackled the narrative of John Brown's life. Given that Brown makes for a compelling protagonist, one might think more artists would have been moved to interpret his story. There are notable exceptions. Thomas Hovenden's *The Last Moments of John Brown* (1882–84) is a greatly romanticized painting of a white-haired and unfettered Brown ambling down the steps of the jailhouse, stopping to kiss a Black baby. More familiar is John Steuart Curry's monumental mural *Tragic Prelude* (ca. 1938–40), installed at the Kansas State Capitol. Curry's interpretation of John Brown's story is highly symbolic, framed by a tornado and prairie fires that portend the storms of civil war that ensued so swiftly after Brown was hanged for treason. Central to this vision is the commanding and grizzled figure of Brown himself, caught at a moment of messianic fervor. There is a slave at Brown's side, and prairie schooners head west behind him. Curry's mural is a visual battle cry for the abolition of human bondage. Many years later, the African American artist Jacob Lawrence created *The Legend of John Brown* (1977), a suite of twenty-two spare and elegant prints that retell significant moments from Brown's life[1]—not only the heroic violence wrought by Brown and his men in their attempts to free slaves, or Brown's dramatic hanging in Charles Town, Virginia, in 1859, but also more ignominious moments, such as his disastrous business affairs and his passionate, but not always successful, campaigns to garner financial support from abolitionists in the north.[2]

John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold, Daniel Duford's series of paintings, offers a representation of Brown that is very different from any of these forebears. When Duford began to work with Brown's story and its imagery, he asked himself about his intentions toward the subject: Was this going to be a history project, a simple biographical retelling of the facts? Duford was already inspired by works of speculative fiction such as Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred*, or, even more specific to John Brown, James McBride's *The Good Lord Bird* and Terry Bisson's *Fire on the Mountain*. Duford began

Thomas Hovenden (1840–95)
THE LAST MOMENTS OF JOHN BROWN, 1882–84
Oil on canvas
77 3/8 by 66 1/4 inches
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000)
NO. 20 from THE LEGEND OF JOHN BROWN, 1977
Color screenprint
20 by 25 3/4 inches
Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

to think of Brown's story not as an isolated historical event, but as one element along a continuum linking history to the present day. He started to consider what it meant to be an abolitionist in the pre–Civil War era, and what abolition means now, two decades into the twenty-first century. Duford chose to focus on the moment when John Brown was standing on the scaffold on December 2, 1859, those fleeting minutes when he stood with a hood over his head and a noose around his neck, waiting for the terrible deed to take place. What was going through his mind? Was he thinking about the deep past, the centuries of colonialism that came before him and the innumerable injustices that led to the institution of slavery and the desperate need for abolition? Or did Brown dare hope toward the future, to the end of slavery and beyond? Duford started to think about those freighted minutes as a portal between the distant past and the present. He simultaneously broadened his own vision of the John Brown story, including the natural world and the passage of time as witness-bearers in this particular human drama.

John Steuart Curry (1897–1946)
JOHN BROWN, 1939
Oil on canvas, 69 by 45 inches
Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1950 (50.94.1)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

THE WATERCOLORS

The first works Duford made in this series were three watercolors. During the spring of 2018, he participated in a residency at MacDowell, the artist colony founded in 1907 in Peterborough, New Hampshire, part of the New England landscape that was embraced by the Transcendentalists in the nineteenth century. In *John Brown and Thoreau at the Stump of the World Tree*, a painting that feels like a preamble to the entire series, Brown stands with Henry David Thoreau at the foot of a massive stump. The world tree, or Yggdrasil in Norse mythology—the mythic center of the universe—has been felled. Thoreau authored an essay called "A Plea for Captain John Brown" based on a speech he gave in Concord, Massachusetts, just two weeks after Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. Thoreau espoused Brown's ideals and, in opposition to popular media claims of Brown's foolishness and recklessness, proclaimed his admiration for Brown's peerless commitment to abolition. The poignancy of the image of Brown and Thoreau standing together in a living forest, joined by a blue jay and a mountain lion, reminds the viewer that abolitionism and ecological thought are inextricably intertwined; the culture that devastates human life will surely devalue nonhuman lives as well.

In a second watercolor, *The General and Supermax*, Duford conflates elements of past and present. Here, John Brown is joined by Harriet Tubman (also known as "the General"). The two had met in Canada in 1858 while Brown was campaigning for support, and Tubman supported Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. Behind them is a steam engine, referencing their moment in the American past. But there's a third figure in the composition as well: a contemporary Black man who's being escorted by Brown and Tubman away from a supermax prison pictured in the background. The supermax prison complex inarguably represents the persistence of systemic racism in America to this day, and present-day abolitionists argue convincingly that the exploitative convict-lease system is yet another form of slavery.[3]

The third watercolor, *John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold*, lends its title to the entire body of work. Brown stands with his back to the viewer, a noose around his neck. He is taking in a final view, moments before his demise. In the distance is the world tree, its roots snaking throughout the land, its massive canopy so encompassing that it spreads out of view, miraculously restored after having been cut down to a stump. At the foot of the scaffold are two of Brown's heroes: Joseph Cinqué, who led many captured Africans in a revolt on the Spanish slave ship *La Amistad* in 1839; and Nat Turner, the enslaved African American preacher who led a four-day rebellion of both enslaved and free Black people in Virginia in 1831. Just beyond Cinqué and Turner is Robert E. Lee, who arrested Brown and shortly thereafter became a leader and an embodiment of the Confederacy.

JOHN BROWN AND THOREAU AT THE STUMP OF THE WORLD TREE, 2018
Watercolor on paper, 44 by 36 inches

THE GENERAL AND SUPERMAX, 2018
Watercolor on paper, 44 by 36 inches

JOHN BROWN'S VISION ON THE SCAFFOLD, 2018
Watercolor on paper, 44 by 36 inches

POETS, PROPHETS, AND REFORMERS ARE ALL PICTURE-MAKERS–AND THIS ABILITY IS THE SECRET OF THEIR POWER AND OF THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS. THEY SEE WHAT OUGHT TO BE BY THE REFLECTION OF WHAT IS, AND ENDEAVOR TO REMOVE THE CONTRADICTION.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS, "PICTURES AND PROGRESS," 1864–65

THE CO-CONSPIRATORS

While John Brown is the central figure in Duford's vision, many other individuals played supporting roles in Brown's story. These conspirators are included in Duford's narrative in the form of portraits, and this rather traditional approach sets Duford's work in stark contrast to the interpretations of Hovenden, Curry, and Lawrence. In Duford's hand, the sitters are placed in decorous settings, their eyes gazing at the viewer so directly that one almost expects a conversation to ensue. By using the simple formal element of the gaze, Duford holds his audience accountable, expecting us to know the sobering facts of history and to commit to taking a stand on where that history has brought us. Duford draws the viewer's eye to the background of each grouping, where a parallel, subsidiary vignette takes place. These add a sophisticated layer of metaphor that underscores the primary story being told by the portrait sitters.

The portrait *Co-Conspirators: The Amistad* depicts the five Black men who joined John Brown on his raid. The educated freeman Osborne Perry Anderson, the figure who holds back the curtain, is one of the few men who escaped the raid alive. Dangerfield Newby, in the red suit, had fled slavery and joined Brown in order to rescue his wife and daughter, who were going to be sold down South. He carried a letter from his wife that was found on his corpse. The other men are Lewis Leary, wearing a hat in the foreground; John Copeland, behind him; and Shields Green, in the back left with his arms crossed.

In the background of *Co-Conspirators* is a rendering of the nineteenth-century two-masted schooner *La Amistad*, the slave ship on which African captives who had been sold by slave hunters in Sierra Leone rose up in revolt. Along the beachfront are the blackened silhouettes of contemporary riot cops, a particularly sobering juxtaposition given the protests around police brutality that have taken place during the summer following this exhibition.

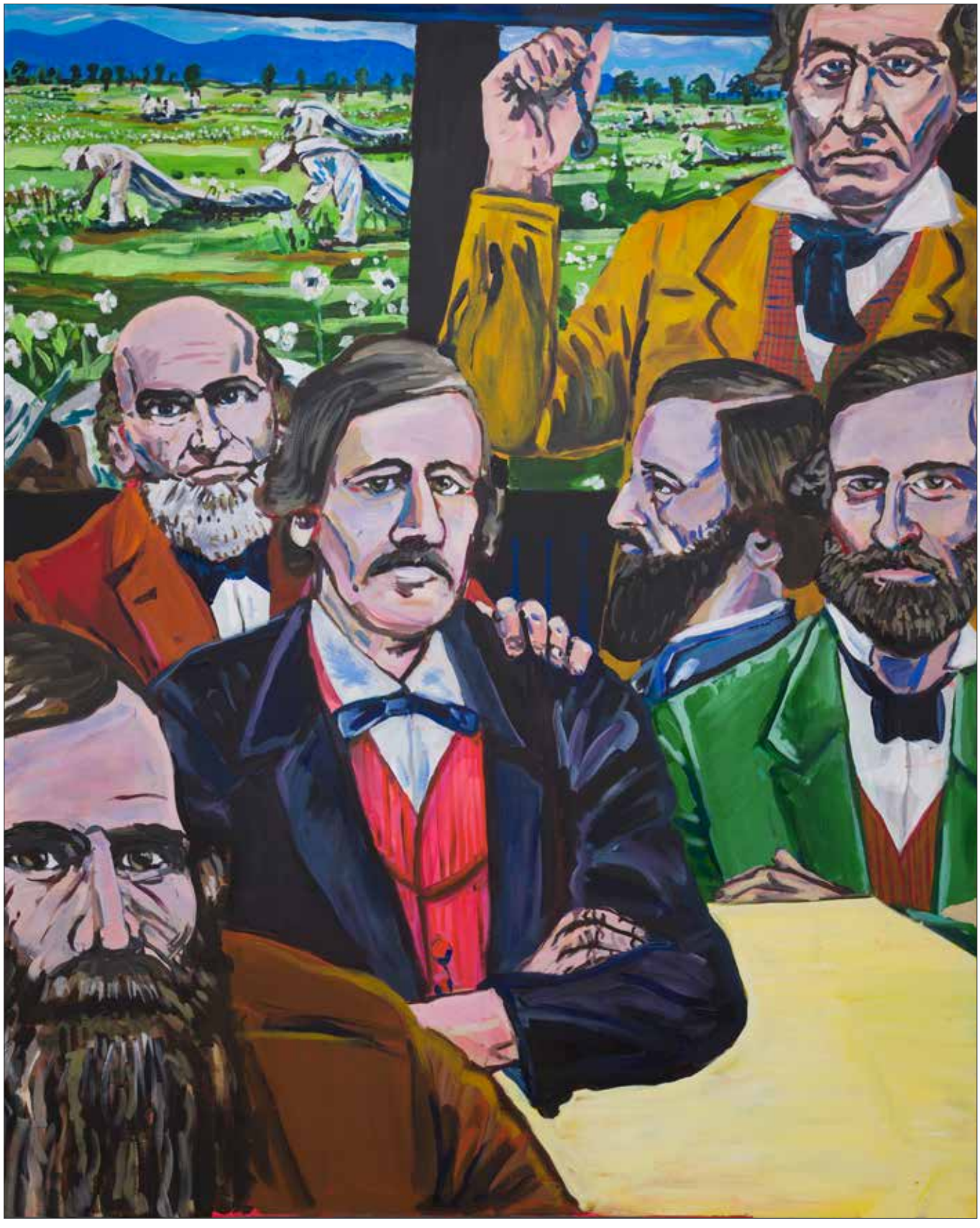
CO-CONSPIRATORS: THE AMISTAD, 2019
Acrylic on canvas, 60 by 48 inches

I CANNOT CALCULATE THE CURVE AND COMPLETE THE FIGURE BY THE EXPERIENCE OF SIGHT; I CAN DIVINE IT BY CONSCIENCE. AND FROM WHAT I SEE I AM SURE IT BENDS TOWARD JUSTICE.

THEODORE PARKER, 1853

The Secret Six: Chain Gang Cotton is a portrait of the wealthy Northern backers of Brown's operation. Included in the portrait are the industrialist George Luther Stearns, in the foreground; journalist and author Franklin Sanborn, at the table; physician and educator Samuel Gridley Howe, in profile; clergyman Thomas Wentworth Higginson, in the green suit; and in the far back, philanthropist Gerrit Smith. Theodore Parker, the bald man on the left, is the theologian and pastor who famously said, in an 1853 sermon, "I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends toward justice." A century later, Martin Luther King Jr. paraphrased these words in a statement he read in 1956, after the Montgomery bus boycott had come to an end.

Duford says he does not know what the background scene will be when he begins a painting; it occurs to him in the process of painting the main figures. In this case, he started to think about what these six men wanted—what element of social change—and what they hoped to accomplish by supporting John Brown. They sought an end to the slave state. The Civil War brought slavery to an end, but the incarcerate state took its place. Behind the Secret Six, Duford has painted a re-creation of Danny Lyon's iconic photograph *Cotton Pickers, Ferguson Unit, Texas*, taken in the late 1960s. In the scene, prisoners on a Texas chain gang perform conscripted labor, in this case picking cotton—a thinly veiled variation on slavery. Gerrit Smith has his hand on the window shade, but this gesture is ambiguous. It is impossible to know whether he is pulling the shade up to expose the sad reality of how slavery has evolved, or pulling it down to prevent the viewer from having to face that reality.



THE SECRET SIX: CHAIN GANG COTTON, 2019
Acrylic on canvas, 60 by 48 inches

The Warriors: The Three Sisters is something of a companion portrait to *The Secret Six: Chain Gang Cotton*. In this portrait, five women who fought for abolition and women's suffrage stand in front of a window. In the foreground are Mary Ann Shadd Cary, editor, author, activist, and the first Black woman publisher in the United States; and the Grimké sisters, Sarah Moore Grimké and Angelina Emily Grimké, prominent activists for abolition and women's rights. The Grimké sisters were raised on a Southern plantation, but later renounced their upbringing and wealth to fight for abolition. In the background are Sojourner Truth, who was born enslaved and later, as a freedwoman, became one of the leading activists for abolition; Harriet Forten Purvis, who holds the overflowing cup from the tarot or the legend of the Holy Grail, a symbol of abundant life and the renewal of the soul; and Charlotte Forten Grimké in the far back, an antislavery activist, poet, and educator. In the distance there is a traditional Iroquois longhouse, with a garden where the three sisters—corn, beans, and squash—grow. The inseparable crop sisters, which thrive best when grown together, remind us that all individuals blossom when supported by community.

THE WARRIORS: THE THREE SISTERS, 2020
Acrylic on canvas, 60 by 48 inches

The Brown Family: All Present is a portrait of all of the Brown family members who were present at the raid on Harpers Ferry. John Brown holds a pike, the weapon he chose over guns. In preparation for his raid, Brown contracted a blacksmith to craft hundreds of pikes, which he intended to hand out to those slaves who joined him in rebellion. The pike, a forged cast-steel blade attached to a six-foot ash handle, is another element in Duford's work that refers to the far-reaching span of time, as the wood handles were once the clear timber of a living tree. Also included in the portrait is Oliver Brown (in the yellow jacket), beside his wife, Martha; behind Martha is Annie Brown, one of John's daughters. Watson Brown stands to the right of his father. Owen, the only one of Brown's sons to escape the raid alive, is depicted here as an old man, when he was living out his final days in California. He holds a slaughtered lamb, a potent symbol of sacrifice and the loss of innocence. A ferocious tornado surges outside the window; as in John Steuart Curry's mural, the maelstrom references the extreme weather of the Kansas prairie[4] and the violence of the cultural storm that swelled during the Civil War.

THE BROWN FAMILY: ALL PRESENT, 2020
Acrylic on canvas, 60 by 48 inches

In *Abolitionists in a Flood*, eight prominent abolitionists are arranged as if sitting for a formal portrait, while the rising waters of a flooding forest pool around their calves. They are all at different points in their lives, which results in an anachronistic scene. John Brown holds one of the pikes he had made to arm the slaves he broke from bondage. Gerrit Smith, older than he was in *The Secret Six: Chain Gang Cotton*, holds the overflowing cup; Emily Dickinson holds a sword; and Harriet Tubman holds a lantern. These objects punctuate the painting with symbolism inspired by the suits of the tarot, and perhaps they refer to the shadow of fate, as cast by destiny. Also in the group are Sojourner Truth; Henry David Thoreau; William Lloyd Garrison, founder of the widely read antislavery newspaper the *Liberator*; and Frederick Douglass. Douglass was a longtime confidant and friend of John Brown's, although he admitted his own ambivalence about Brown's Harpers Ferry plans. Nonetheless, Douglass declared that the hour of Brown's "defeat was the hour of his triumph," and that his capture was the "victory of his life." Despite the rising waters, which lend a sense of urgency and impending doom, the sitters remain eerily calm and poised, as if resigned to their roles in history.

In the distant background of *Abolitionists in a Flood*, almost unnoticeable in the upper-right corner, is a dark figure rowing a boat (see detail on page 11.) This is the Fisher King from Arthurian legend. In the many variations on this tale, the king has been wounded and can no longer stand. He can only sit in a small boat on a river near his castle, fishing, while waiting for a knight to approach him with the right question, which, when asked, will heal him. The king's wound is a metaphor for the dying environment; if the sovereign is ill, so too is the land. An important detail, the figure of the Fisher King reveals the way in which Duford thinks about how messages are ingrained within history, as well as the powerful role of storytelling. He intertwines multiple cultural, literary, and visual references to create a nuanced and complex narrative.

ABOLITIONISTS IN A FLOOD
(detail: John Brown, Frederick Douglass, and Sojourner Truth), 2019
Oil on canvas
48 by 69 inches

DUFORD, AS BARD

AND ARTIST. . .REMINDS US

THAT MYTH HAS

SOMETHING VITAL

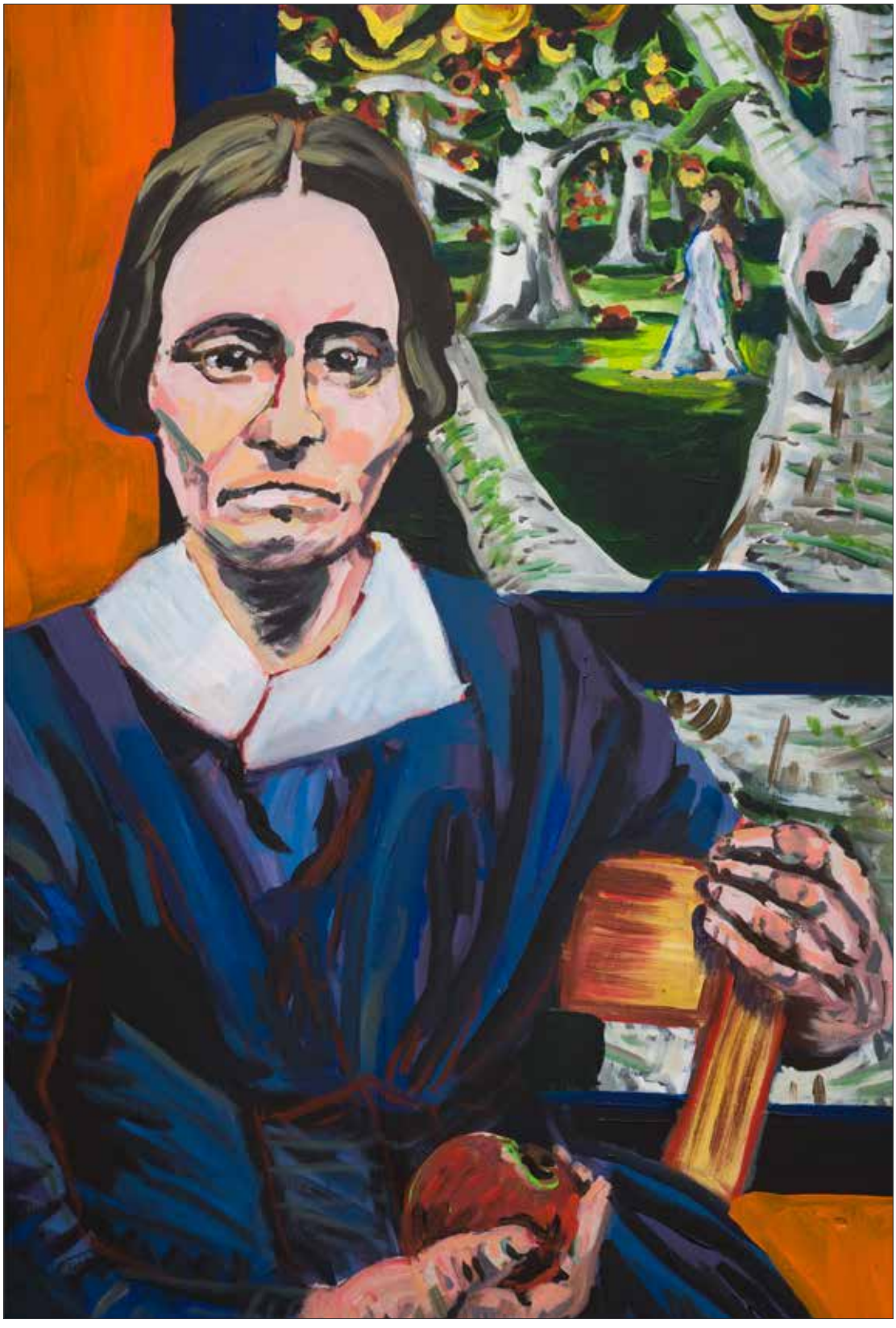
TO SAY ABOUT

THE CONDITION OF

OUR LIVES AND

THE STATUS OF OUR EARTH.

LINDA TESNER



MARY BROWN: THE HANDLESS MAIDEN, 2019
Acrylic on panel, 36 by 24 inches

THE THREE WOMEN

Three women—Mary Brown, Anna Murray-Douglass, and Helen Eliza Garrison—are singularly important background characters in the John Brown narrative, and Duford honors them with individual portraits. Each sitter was the wife of a prominent abolitionist; each made her husband's work possible by taking care of the house and home. The first of the paintings is *Mary Brown: The Handless Maiden*, a portrait of the long-suffering wife of John Brown. She bore thirteen children (only six lived to adulthood) and had to oversee the Brown household with almost no money, a task that must have been especially difficult during the family's move from Springfield, Massachusetts, to North Elba, New York, in 1849. Nevertheless, with extremely limited resources, she managed to keep the family together, all the while supporting her husband's work with the strength of her own moral compass.

In each of these three portraits, Duford has included a window in the background that looks out on an image from a folktale or myth in which a woman is transformed and gains agency through her travails in the forest. In her portrait, Mary Brown holds an apple in her hand, while behind her we see a scene from "The Handless Maiden," a tale in which a poor miller cuts off his daughter's hands in exchange for endless wealth granted by the devil. The daughter wanders through the woods, meets a prince, and marries him; through further trials, she learns to grow her own hands back.

Anna Murray-Douglass: The Bear Mother is a portrait of Frederick Douglass's wife. She was not an intellectual like her famous orator husband, but, like Frederick, she escaped slavery. And, like Mary Brown, she was the rock who kept her family intact. Here Anna Murray-Douglass holds berries, the fruits of the forest, while the background window looks upon a young woman nursing a bear cub, with another at her feet. "The Bear Mother" is a foundational Indigenous myth told throughout North America, in which a woman is seduced by a powerful man who turns out to be a bear. She gives birth to twins. Her brothers come to kill her husband, but not before the bear teaches his sons the correct relationship between bears and humans.

Helen Eliza Garrison: The Three Spindles portrays the wife of William Lloyd Garrison, publisher of the *Liberator*. She was the daughter of an abolitionist merchant and a powerful intellectual force in her own right. (William Lloyd Garrison also championed women's suffrage, and one might imagine that Helen Eliza had a voice in that public discussion.) In her portrait, she holds three spindles, a reference to "The Three Spindles," a European folktale in which a young woman, pregnant out of wedlock, is nurtured by fairies in the forest. In exchange for her son, born in the woods, she is given three magic spindles that confer wealth to her as long as she always remembers the forest's reciprocity.

These three portraits—shown next to one another, almost as a triptych—are meant to honor the life partners of Brown, Douglass, and Garrison, and to acknowledge the importance of their usually subordinated roles in history. The background scenes, drawn from mythology, provide a potent subtext to the central sitter's narrative. In each tale, the main figure is a young woman, vulnerable and marginalized, who is able to step into her own strength through the wisdom of nature. Each of these stories can be viewed as a commentary on the sitter, but Duford, as bard and artist, asks more of the viewer. By including these stories, he reminds us that myth has something vital to say about the condition of our lives and the status of our earth.[5]

ANNA MURRAY-DOUGLASS: THE BEAR MOTHER, 2019
Acrylic on panel, 36 by 24 inches

HELEN ELIZA GARRISON: THE THREE SPINDLES, 2019
Acrylic on panel, 36 by 24 inches

STILL-LIFE PAINTINGS

The three still-life paintings in *John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold* make up yet another layer of narrative content. In these paintings Duford has created contemplative tableaus that underscore the story of John Brown. Each still life presents an array of significant souvenirs, suggesting that talismans of meaning are inherent in Brown's tale for each viewer to carry forward.

It is interesting that Duford invokes a tradition that, historically and intrinsically, speaks to the evanescent riches of human existence paired with memento mori symbolizing the passage of time and eventual death. In traditional still-life painting, oysters, fruits and flowers, and musical instruments represent life's fleeting pleasures. Skulls, hourglasses, and burning candles urge us to remember that time flies—tempus fugit. The lush arrangements, replete with sumptuous objects and glistening surfaces, appeal even today to corporeal appetites and a sense of beauty. In a broader context, the Golden Age of Dutch still-life painting coincided with the extraordinary economic, political, and cultural growth of the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century. These historical *vanitas* paintings were created during a time of rampant colonialism, when the Dutch empire controlled, at various times, Indonesia, Brazil, Sri Lanka, and vast parts of Africa and India (and, eventually, the North American colony of New Amsterdam). The Dutch East India Company, the first joint stock company in history, was established in 1602. Contemporary American culture has clear parallels to the nouveau riche class of that era, for whom these opulent paintings were made.

Duford's still lifes are not trompe l'oeil representations of aggrandized arrangements, but the paintings do adhere to still-life tradition. There is abundant symbolism in these works. Duford arranged the compositions in his studio; they are the only pieces in *John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold* that are painted from life. In each painting, the still life is pushed up to the edge of the picture plane. The three compositions are similar, consisting of fruits, vegetables, flowers, skulls, drapery, and earthenware platters and vessels. (Duford is a ceramic artist as well as a painter, and the clay objects illustrated in these paintings are by his own hand.) Railroad lanterns, tangled ropes, a bell, feathers, rocks, and twigs also appear. One still life includes a bottle of wine and two partly filled glasses; another features a loaf of bread. The centerpiece of *Still Life with Bread and Flood* is the severed head of John Brown presented on a cake stand, reminiscent of Renaissance paintings of the beheaded St. John the Baptist.[6]

STILL LIFE WITH BREAD AND FLOOD, 2020
Acrylic on canvas, 36 by 48 inches

How might one read these compelling symbols? Bread, of course, is the staff of life, the sustenance of quotidian existence, but it is also metaphysical in the implied question it poses to the viewer: What nourishes you? The bounty of produce—the onions, butternut squash, pumpkins, and pears—seem autumnal. Brown launched his raid on Harpers Ferry on October 16 and was executed on December 2, during the seasonal cycle so closely associated with encroaching darkness. The railroad lantern, found in two of the still-life paintings, is a beacon to lead the way. The rope, of course, is the material of a hangman's noose, but it also moors, ties, or tethers us, perhaps to dishonorable but commonplace cultural mores. The bell, seen in *Still Life with Scaffold and Forest Fire*, suggests a ritual cleansing, the dispelling of evil. Feathers, in traditional iconography, "are sensitive to the slightest wind, and thus are emblems of the psyche's capacity to pick up invaluable and imperceptible currents."[7] One might say that, at Brown's death, his abolitionist views were just starting to waft through the hearts and minds of American citizens—they were not yet mainstream, but soon would ignite sufficient unrest to begin a civil war. The skulls, found in each still-life painting, are weighty symbols of demise—without a doubt, death surrounded the history of abolition and the Civil War in tragic abundance. But, too, the stuff of skulls—bone—is indurate and unyielding, like an entrenched ideology in need of redemption.

Equal and opposite to the still lifes themselves are the background narratives mentioned in the paintings' titles. These subsidiary scenes supply urgent context for the contemplative arrangements in the foreground of each painting, disrupting the serenity of the laid table. As the viewer gazes at the meditative arrangement, disaster awaits just beyond the curtains.

STILL LIFE WITH SCAFFOLD AND FOREST FIRE, 2020
Acrylic on canvas, 36 by 48 inches

In *Still Life with Conductor and Devil Dogs*, red-eyed and ominous black canines threaten both the table arrangement and a figure of John Brown standing in the background. Duford wrote about devil dogs in his 2017 chapbook *John Brown's Body*, an anthology of sketches and short essays about his Ground Beneath Us residency in Waterford, Virginia. (Duford is a co-founder of the organization.) In preparation for his stay in Waterford, he read about Virginia folktales in which devil dogs (also called death dogs, spirit dogs, or hellhounds) feature prominently as bad omens. Duford began to think of devil dogs as equivalent to the nineteenth-century slave patrols that prowled pre–Civil War America, violent and unpredictable gangs of white men who terrorized Black Americans by threatening lynching, rape, or the sale of free Blacks into slavery.[8] These brutal and menacing "spirits" still lurk in contemporary American life, taking innumerable forms.

In *Still Life with Bread and Flood* and *Still Life with Scaffold and Forest Fire*, the background scenes depict natural calamities. If ever there were ominous images that feel strikingly contemporary, they would be visions of floods and forest fires, now continual threats as the effects of climate change become more and more evident. During the same summer that Duford had his residency in Waterford, the Eagle Creek fire raged at the eastern edge of Portland for three months, burning fifty thousand acres. This is just one example of the devastating forest fires that imperil the western United States today. Hurricanes Katrina, Sandy, Maria, and Harvey, with their concurrent floods, have also forced Americans to confront the havoc wrought by extreme weather. Imminent danger is not an isolated concept restricted to history; it is as present now as ever. In *Still Life with Scaffold and Forest Fire*, we find John Brown in the midground, lying on a bed, his head bandaged from the wounds he sustained during his raid. He is holding a pike, the fearsome weapon he imagined would be used in an ensuing slave rebellion. In the distance are the gallows, framed as if on a proscenium stage, with a forest fire raging behind them, while red-headed woodpeckers swoop through the interior.[9] All the world's a stage, and men and women are the players who individually and collectively advance the narrative.

STILL LIFE WITH CONDUCTOR AND DEVIL DOGS, 2020
Acrylic on canvas, 36 by 48 inches

THE GALLOWS

A final large painting—*Toward the Gallows the Course of Empire Makes Its Way*—illustrates the end of John Brown's story. Here, the ominous stage of the hangman's scaffold frames a glorious landscape. A noose is flung over the structure, Brown's broadsword caught in its loop. The gallows telescope the eye to a wagon in the distance; there is John Brown, made to sit on his own coffin en route to his hanging. Supposedly Brown calmly remarked on the beauty of the landscape as he was taken to the gallows, saying that he had never really noticed it before that moment. In the distance, a storm is gathering and fires are ablaze. The materiality of Duford's painting is also significant. *Toward the Gallows the Course of Empire Makes Its Way* is painted on a huge swath of unstretched canvas; it is mounted to the wall through the grommets along the edge. The structure and immediacy of the painting evoke a banner or a flag, more a signifier emblematic of the John Brown story than a studio painting.

Duford notes that this painting was inspired by the work of the American Hudson River School, specifically a Thomas Cole painting titled *Catskill Mountain House: The Four Elements* (1843–44). The majestic landscape is a powerful image intrinsic to American history, documented in monumental paintings by artists such as Cole, Albert Bierstadt, Frederic Edwin Church, Thomas Moran, and others. In American art history, the landscape is virtually synonymous with Manifest Destiny, the doctrine that insinuates that the expansion of the United States was both justifiable and inevitable—a doctrine inextricably enmeshed with cruel injustices wrought upon Blacks, Indigenous peoples, Chinese immigrants, and other marginalized groups. The title of Duford's painting reinforces this association, as it is a riff on the title of the Emanuel Leutze painting *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* (1861). A mural located alongside a staircase in the chamber of the House of Representatives in the United States Capitol Building, the Leutze painting is densely packed with symbolism justifying Manifest Destiny. Leutze's mural, and much of nineteenth-century American landscape painting, visualizes the final dream of the American empire. Duford's landscape painting depicts the gallows at the end of John Brown's journey, hardly the redemptive West.

TOWARD THE GALLOWS THE COURSE OF EMPIRE MAKES ITS WAY
2020
Acrylic on canvas, 48 by 60 inches








TREE TIME DIVINATIONS FOR THE SCAFFOLD

If Duford's *Toward the Gallows the Course of Empire Makes Its Way* is a visual summation of the John Brown story, his *Tree Time Divinations for the Scaffold*, a series of small paintings, are the footnotes and marginalia. Duford has long had an interest in tarot cards and their archetypal images, which spark something in one's subconscious and can be used as divinatory or prophetic tools. Coequal is his belief that human events can—indeed, must—be viewed within the context of the long arc of history, and within the abiding endurance of nature. Recent literature, such as Richard Powers's *The Overstory: A Novel* and Peter Wohlleben's *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*, presents us with the scientific evidence that trees (among other living things) form communities, harbor deep memories, and act upon altruistic impulses. Like the imaginary Ents in *The Lord of the Rings*, ancient shepherds of the forest and allies of people, Earth's actual forests are full of *genii locorum* who share their wisdom freely, while human beings fumble to make sense of the arcaneness of human existence.

Duford's *Tree Time Divinations for the Scaffold* tells an alternate American history, as expressed by the very wood used for the construction of the gallows where John Brown was hanged. The tree, narrowly and coldly defined as a commodity, is an unrecognized player in the narrative of slavery, as American forests were gutted for commerce. Think of *La Amistad*, with her two great masts built from trunks harvested from the old-growth pine forests of the American Northeast, and the enormous quantities of timber felled to satisfy the shipbuilding industry. This is just one example of the tree's perspective and, sadly, its conscription into colonialism and the slave trade.

Duford's small paintings are visual reminders of how nature has both participated in and witnessed the American story. Here are *Mast Pine*, a blue-skied gaze into the canopy of a stand of trees, along with *Longhouse*, a depiction of a traditional bark-and-wood building used by the Algonquin people. There is *Tall Mast: Empire Builder*, a view into the sails of a ship,[10] and *Railroad Ties*, representing the railroad systems that cut through the American landscape, destroying entire forests to supply the ties needed for the tracks. Like many other aspects of American commerce, the railroad caused the massive displacement of Indigenous peoples and ecological communities. *Clear Cut* evokes a commercial system closer in time and place to present-day Oregon, where the clear-cutting of old-growth trees and other forestry practices remain contentious and ecologically questionable.

Raid Headquarters shows us the Maryland farmhouse where John Brown and his raiders lived as they planned the insurrection at Harpers Ferry, gathering intelligence and weapons; and *Log Cabin and Pike* portrays Brown's weapon of choice—the pike—which he loved because it was cheap, easy to distribute, and

above: HIVE THE BEES
below: RAILROAD TIES
2019
Oil on panel
12 by 12 inches

above: RATATOSKR
below: CLEAR CUT
2019
Oil on panel
12 by 12 inches

above: TALL MAST: EMPIRE BUILDER
below: MAST PINE
2019
Oil on panel
12 by 12 inches

above: LONGHOUSE
below: TREES ON OLD RAILROAD BRIDGE: HARPERS FERRY
2019
Oil on panel
12 by 12 inches

above: WELL-BUILT GALLOWS
below: RAID HEADQUARTERS
2019
Oil on panel
12 by 12 inches

above: CICADA
below: LOG CABIN AND PIKE
2019
Oil on panel
12 by 12 inches

needed no reloading. Brown planned to distribute pikes to all of the people he intended to free. Here, one leans against the rough-hewn corner of a log building typical of nineteenth-century Virginia and Maryland; both the wood of the pike handle and the logs that make up the walls retain their arboreal memory. *Well-Built Gallows* reimagines the scaffolding where Brown died, while *Trees on Old Railroad Bridge: Harpers Ferry* brings the John Brown story into the present day—it is a view of trees growing out of the old and now obsolete railroad bridge supports in modern-day Harpers Ferry on the Potomac River, a reminder that nature answers calamity with rebirth.

There are other divinations from nature here, too: *Hive the Bees* depicts a wild beehive in a tree, but also references John Brown's proclamation to Frederick Douglass to "hive the bees," that is, to gather the newly freed people and plan an insurrection. *Cicada* recalls the cicada's song, the principal background soundtrack of summer in the eastern and southern United States. This insect can stay dormant for thirteen to seventeen years, awaiting the right conditions to emerge, mate, and die. And with *Ratatoskr*, Duford includes a voice from Norse mythology: Ratatoskr is the squirrel who lives on the world tree. He is a gossip who spreads lies between the eagle at the crown and the serpent at the roots, a symbol of the slippery nature of truth and the elusiveness of accurate information.

Duford, who is also a graphic novelist, has used these small paintings much like an aspect-to-aspect transition, a device usually used in comics to establish alternate moods or evoke different emotions. Duford's divinations slow time down for the viewer and provide multiple viewpoints on the John Brown story. Each painting is like a call-and-response, a little prompt or portal that urges the viewer to think more deeply about the interconnectedness between human history and natural history. As Herman Hesse famously wrote, "[T]rees have always been the most penetrating preachers . . . Trees are sanctuaries. Whoever knows how to speak to them, whoever knows how to listen to them, can learn the truth. They do not preach learning and precepts, they preach, undeterred by particulars, the ancient law of life." Or, as Duford himself admonishes the reader in his chapbook *John Brown's Body*: "Think like a tree before it's too late."

EACH PAINTING IS LIKE A CALL-AND-RESPONSE, A LITTLE PROMPT OR PORTAL THAT URGES THE VIEWER TO THINK MORE DEEPLY ABOUT THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS BETWEEN HUMAN HISTORY AND NATURAL HISTORY.

LINDA TESNER

Duford's *John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold* is an elegy to a man, a myth, and a history that resonates deeply with current events. But the series is not a historical research project. Instead, Duford presents thoughtful contemplations on John Brown and—perhaps more importantly—he poses the most pertinent question all Americans must ask themselves today: What in American culture urgently needs to be abolished? And what does it mean to be an abolitionist in 2020? Duford's subseries—the watercolors, the large portraits, the portraits of women paired with folktales, the still-life paintings, the tree time divinations—are visual meditations in various forms. In literature, we might speak of these works as essays, works of fiction, and poems.

In a lecture delivered in Boston in 1861 and later published as the essay "Pictures and Progress" (1864–65), Frederick Douglass wrote, "Poets, prophets, and reformers are all picture-makers—and this ability is the secret of their power and of their achievements." Duford has commented on the meaning of Douglass's words as they apply to *John Brown's Vision on the Scaffold*. He proposes that if one tells Brown's story with images that are complicated and not easy to digest, the viewer might be moved to deepen the time spent with each painting and explore its metaphors and symbols more completely. Each painting presents an opportunity to go inside of oneself, to absorb a history that those in power proclaim is meaningless or pertinent only to the remote past, but that is, in reality, urgent and current. The embers of John Brown's story still burn, and by blowing on them, pondering them, that story can be transformative. Duford serves us by enlivening our image worlds—those assortments of imagery and meaning we all carry with us, both as individuals and as a collective—and by keeping the flame of John Brown's spirit alive.

NOTES

1. Lawrence's prints were based on a series of gouache paintings he made in 1941, just a few years after Curry's *Tragic Prelude*.
2. See R. Blakeslee Gilpin, *John Brown Still Lives! America's Long Reckoning with Violence, Equality, and Change* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), for his thoughts on other writers and artists who have represented John Brown in their work, including W. E. B. Du Bois and Kara Walker.
3. See Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003).
4. Between 1855 and 1858, Brown lived on and off in Kansas Territory, where he was involved in fighting pro-slavery forces by leading raids and freeing slaves.
5. In 2018, Duford participated in Martin Shaw's Westcountry School of Myth, an immersive program held in Dartmoor, England. This experience reinforced and further shaped Duford's commitment to storytelling as a critical element in his art making.
6. John Brown is compared to St. John the Baptist in the fourth verse of one of the versions of the song "John Brown's Body" (1861): *John Brown was John the Baptist of the Christ we are to see,/Christ who of the bondsman shall the Liberator be,/And soon throughout the sunny South the slaves shall all be free,/For his soul is marching on.*
7. Ami Ronnberg and Kathleen Martin, eds., *The Book of Symbols* (Cologne: Taschen, 2010), 242.
8. Daniel Duford, *John Brown's Body: Stories from Waterford, Virginia* (self-pub., 2017), 27–28.
9. Duford says that the woodpeckers in this painting, while not ivory-billed woodpeckers, refer to the Good Lord Bird of James McBride's acclaimed 2013 novel, *The Good Lord Bird*.
10. In the course of supplying timber for the empire building of England, the massive straight pines were felled and skidded down to the waterfront, giving rise to the term "skid row," which also refers to the part of a city where the desperate and impoverished are forced to live.

LINDA TESNER

Linda Tesner is an independent curator and writer living in Portland, Oregon. She has served as the interim director of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at Portland State University and, from 1998 to 2019, as the director and curator of the Ronna and Eric Hoffman Gallery of Contemporary Art at Lewis & Clark College. She was formerly the assistant director of the Portland Art Museum and the director of the Maryhill Museum of Art in Goldendale, Washington. She received her BA in art history from the University of Oregon and her MA in the history of art from Ohio State University.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many hands go into making an exhibition and a catalogue. I cannot adequately express my gratitude for those who've helped me. The work in this exhibition is three years in the making. I did not expect to be caught by John Brown and his story. He lay in wait for me in Harpers Ferry, which I visited in the summer of 2017. At the time I was in Waterford, Virginia, creating the bedrock for what would become the artist fellowship and residency Ground Beneath Us. I want to thank Armand Balboni for insisting on starting that residency and for bringing over pastries and coffee from the farmers' market in the spring of 2016 to help make his case. Armand followed through with financial support and encouragement. I also want to thank Tracy and Maya Balboni for letting me stay at their home in Waterford and making me feel like part of the family. I would like to thank the Oregon Arts Commission for giving me a 2017 opportunity grant to produce the first Ground Beneath Us publication, *John Brown's Body*. A special thank-you and a bow of awe go to Kandis Nunn and Carol Dalu of The Ford Family Foundation. Since I became a Hallie Ford Fellow in 2010, they have inspired and encouraged me. That fellowship is one of the most impactful awards I've ever received. An extra thank-you to The Ford Family Foundation for the support of this catalogue, and a welcome to Meagan Atiyeh. Kandis pushed me to apply for a residency at MacDowell (formerly the MacDowell Colony), where I developed much of the structure of this work in the Firth Studio in May 2018. To my fellow MacDowell Fellows who were there with me, and to the tireless staff who fed, encouraged, and supported me, I say thank you for bringing me onto a larger stage and believing in me.

This show certainly wouldn't have been possible without my decades-long friendship and collaboration with Linda Tesner, the former interim director of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at Portland State University. It would take me many pages to list all the reasons why I am grateful to Linda. When the original venue for the show suddenly closed due to budget cuts, she advocated to have the exhibition continue at the JSMA. Her insightful essay in this catalogue helped me to see deeper into my own work. She also insisted I apply for the Guggenheim just one more time, and in 2019 I was awarded a fellowship for this work. I want to thank the Guggenheim Foundation and the selection committee for their belief in my work. I have big shoes to fill. Through that fellowship I became friends with Cyrus Cassells, also a Guggenheim recipient. I am deeply honored by his contribution to this catalogue and grateful for his friendship. I want to thank my partner and wife, Tracy Schlapp, for everything. Tracy not only designed this catalogue and *John Brown's Body*, but she has always been my lodestar. Her incisive intellect and keen insight helped guide this work to be the best it can be. Thank you to Allison Dubinsky for the razor-sharp editing that makes all the words shine. Thank you to Mario Gallucci for coming out masked in the early days of quarantine to so beautifully document the work. To the staff at the JSMA, including Emily Stennes and David Maddox: thank you for stewarding the museum through such a difficult and unprecedented time. It is truly an honor to be one of the first solo artists chosen to show at the new Jordan Schnitzer museum at PSU. Jordan's remarkable collection and PSU's dedicated academic community provide valuable context for this body of work. The project is steeped in the labor of many historians and scholars who are working to make sure history doesn't get perverted by the new Slave Power. I owe a great debt to that body of scholarship. Finally, I want to thank all those ancestors and siblings—whether by bloodline or soul connection—who whispered secret passwords in my ear throughout the years to keep me going. I am humbled to be the recipient of all this support.

Daniel Duford

A 2019 Guggenheim Fellow, Daniel Duford is an artist, curator, writer, and teacher. He tells stories drawn from North American history and mythology. He is a 2010 Hallie Ford Fellow and the recipient of a 2012 Art Matters grant. His work has been shown nationally at such venues as the Orange County Museum of Art, MASS MoCA, the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, the Bellevue Arts Museum, and the Boise Art Museum. He has held residencies at MacDowell, Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts, and Ash Street Project, among others. He is the co-founder of Ground Beneath Us, an artist fellowship and place-based educational residency program in Waterford, Virginia. Duford has taught at Reed College and the Pacific Northwest College of Art. He currently teaches at Portland Community College, Rock Creek.

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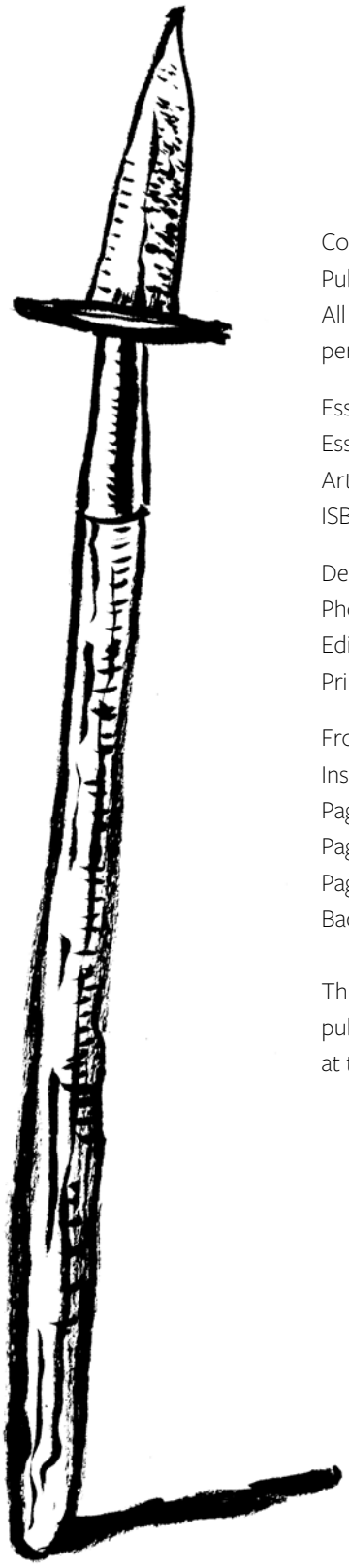

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Front cover:	Daniel Duford, *The Brown Family: All Present*
Inside cover:	Daniel Duford, *Scaffold*, watercolor illustration
Pages 2–3:	Wall drawing, gallery installation, graphite
Page 57:	Daniel Duford, *The General and Supermax* (detail: John Brown)
Page 59:	Daniel Duford, photograph by Mario Gallucci
Back cover:	Daniel Duford, *Still Life with Conductor and Devil Dogs* (detail)

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