



Jesse Harrod:
Tarot I, 2022, paracord
and wood,
36 ¾ × 25 1/8 × 4 in
(93.3 × 63.8 × 10.2 cm),
HARR 86;
Come Inside, 2022, brass,
25 ½ × 20 × 1 ¼ in
(64.8 × 50.8 × 3.2 cm),
HARR 74

Jesse Harrod: Tough Nut

January 19 – March 11, 2023

Opening reception, January 19, 6–8PM

Fleisher/Ollman proudly presents *Jesse Harrod: Tough Nut*, an exhibition of new wall-based sculptures in paracord and brass. The latter medium marks a material shift for the artist—the outcome of an extended residency at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center and Kohler Co.'s Art/Industry program, where artists experiment with the materials and processes that Kohler employs in the manufacturing of bathroom fixtures. This is Harrod's first solo exhibition at Fleisher/Ollman.

Jesse Harrod works in the spaces between fiber art, craft, painting, sculpture, and hobbyism. Adopting the amateur crafts associated with 1970s feminism, Harrod supercharges hobbyist traditions materially and conceptually. Building on historical feminism, Harrod aims to synthesize herstories with a contemporary take on queerness and how this fusion can contribute to the development of queer aesthetics. Harrod is perhaps best known for embracing the material vernacular of macramé using synthetic fibers like paracord, a utility cord devised by the military in the making of parachutes now used for a range of purposes, and available in a variety of colors. Harrod is keenly aware of the irony and contradictions of using a material that has militaristic and masculinist overtones (they first procured paracord from a tactical shop catering to survivalists and gun enthusiasts) for queer art.

In Fleisher/Ollman's small gallery, Harrod presents paracord wall sculptures and felt collage studies complete with wooden frames that follow the wonky contours of the macramé and felt forms. These bring to mind shaped canvas paintings. The concentric topographies of one of the paracord works are reminiscent of Niki de Saint Phalle's large-scale sculptures and environments which voluptuously explore female and hybrid bodily forms. Others borrow from the bright color palette of Eugene Von Breunchein's (EVB) paintings and ceramics—several of them are mounted in unusually shaped triangular and arched aluminum frames. EVB has been a touchstone for Harrod ever since their two person exhibition in 2019 at Fleisher/Ollman with Lisi Raskin, where together

they researched the gallery's holdings of self-taught material and made art based on their findings. Harrod has since extended their investigation of EVB with a John Michael Kohler Arts Center commission situated in the EVB section of the Art Preserve at that institution.

In the main gallery space at Fleisher/Ollman, Harrod showcases new brass wall sculptures made in the Kohler foundry. The larger works in the group are cast from paracord macramé, rigidifying these normally supple objects as they are transformed from fiber to metal. Dispensing with the colorful abundance we expect from Harrod's art, polychromy morphs into gold monochrome. Their solidness, weight, metallic composition, and form conjures up medieval armor and chainmail, and the body protected within. Harrod underscores the alchemical aspect of working with molten brass—the lava-like fiery viscosity of near-liquid metal transforms the original object that was light and pliant into a heavy, unyielding form.

The fraktur-like brass objects hung nearby have more in common with Harrod's drawing practice than their sculptural one. Harrod first etches into the sand and resin casting material using a Dremel power tool, and then molten brass is poured directly into the drawn void. Harrod's brass "drawings" evoke the folk art sensibility of German immigrant, 18th-century iron stove plate metal working traditions. Composed of five square cast iron plates, the stoves served not only a practical purpose but an aesthetic one as each plate contained images and designs both sacred and secular from Biblical scenes to flowers, sheaves of wheat, hearts, and stars. Updated and personalized with motifs like the vagina dentata that are also reminiscent of Venus fly traps, Harrod incorporates a range of plant elements including flowers, stems, stalks, seed pods, and stamens, in short the fecundity of the well-tended garden reminiscent of Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

Jesse Harrod's solo exhibitions include *Hatch*, Bowtie Projects, Los Angeles, CA; *Mother Mascots*, Drake Hotel, Toronto, Canada; *Flaggin' 1,2,3*, Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, New York; *Rope*, Hangaram Art Museum, Seoul, South Korea; *Low Ropes Course*, NurtureArt, Brooklyn, NY; and *Toxic Shock and Hotdog*, Vox Populi, Philadelphia, PA, among others. In 2019, Fleisher/Ollman presented *Mending and Repair in Response*, a two person exhibition featuring Harrod and Lisi Raskin. Harrod has been featured in group exhibitions such as *In Practice: Material Deviance*, SculptureCenter, NY; the traveling exhibition *Queer Threads: Crafting Identity and Community*, organized by Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, New York, NY; *Even Thread Has a Speech*, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI; and *String Along* at Antenna Gallery, New Orleans, LA. In 2021, Harrod was commissioned by the John Michael Kohler Arts Center to create a work responding to the Eugene Von Bruenchenhein collection in the Center's Art Preserve. In 2020, they received a Pew Fellowship in the Arts as well as a Temple University Faculty Award for Creative Achievement. Harrod has been awarded residencies at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center's Art/Industry program; Fire Island Artist Residency; the Open Studio Residency at Haystack Mountain School of Craft; the Icelandic Textile Center; the Vermont Studio Center; Ox-Bow Artist's Residency; RAIR, Philadelphia; Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity; and Museum of Art and Design, among others. Harrod has an MFA from the Department of Fiber & Material Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University. They are currently the Head of Fibers & Material Studies at Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia.