



# SARAH FOX

## THE GREAT CRY & THEN I MET YOU

January 2 – April 14, 2019



ALBRIGHT  
*Freedman Gallery*

Mythological fables, composite-animal creatures and personal narrative are staples in Sarah Fox's oeuvre. Her consistency with these elements has honed a style that is uniquely her own and it is recognizable whether she is working in textiles, sculpture, collage, drawing, painting or animation. Any medium she chooses to work in, she masters with an ease of translation within each new material explored.

Fox earned a bachelor's degree in art from the Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas and a master's in fine art from the University of Texas at San Antonio. A prolific mixed-media artist, Fox is constantly exploring new methods of expression in her practice. In 2016, Fox enrolled in an animation class at the Southwest School of Art. Under the tutelage of Jarid Theis, Fox produced her first stop-motion animation, *The Great Cry*.

*The Great Cry* was conceived as Fox was enduring the pain of a second miscarriage. This time the loss came after eight weeks of carrying her unborn child, and she was required to use pharmaceuticals to assist in removing the fetus from her body after her child passed. Fox recalls the emotional experience as one filled with overbearing anguish and the physical process exceedingly bloody and vile. She has long suffered medical difficulties and lived through a number of surgeries throughout her life that have left her scared and feeling damaged. However, taking inspiration from her mother who is also an artist, Fox employed art making as a cathartic healing process from an early age.

*The Great Cry* expresses Fox's experience of losing her child. The fuzzy clay rabbit sits by a pond lonely and alone, kicking her feet and curling her big toes in a yearning idle. After some solemn contemplation, the rabbit scoops clay from her malleable belly and builds a little companion. Rabbit's pleased and content state is proven impermanent, as her sadness returns after putting the little one back where she came from in the flesh of the stomach.

In the history of art, a mother with her children and pregnant bodies are frequently portrayed in a cheery-settings and many times from the idealized perspective of the male gaze. Contemporary artists are now successfully injecting

the female perspective of motherhood into art which is more akin to reality, such as in the work of Rineke Dijkstra's *Mother* series and Jenny Saville's updated mother-and-child scenes. Dijkstra and Saville, like Fox, remind viewers of the bodily experience that is being a woman.

Perhaps some of the most famous examples of portraying the grief of a mother due to the loss of her offspring are in the war-torn examples created by Käthe Kollwitz in "Woman with Dead Child" and the devastated mother so famously depicted in Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*. There is also a genre of Spanish Colonial portraiture that recorded dead children peacefully resting in their caskets. In the case of these paintings, the viewer is not privy to seeing the grieving parents. Whereas, the loss of an unborn child is not as frequent in art as it statistically occurs in life. Fox brings to light a topic that is largely still taboo and shunned from discussing, even though it is such a common occurrence for woman to lose their unborn child. In Fox's work she realizes the female experience and specifically sympathizes with a mother's untimely loss as a way to process her own.

Fox's biographical account of early surgeries and subsequent issues carrying a child, recall the work and life of the famous Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. Due to an injury endured in a traffic accident when Kahlo was a teenager, she struggled to successfully bring a child to term. The artist had repeated miscarriages and she also recorded her trauma and loss in her art. Kahlo was extremely autobiographical in her paintings and this included self-portraits of herself in the hospital with graphic iconography telling the story of losing her child prematurely, such as in *Henry Ford Hospital*, 1932. Fox like Kahlo, does not shy away from the blood, flesh and gore of the embodied female experience in the cycle of love, life, and untimely loss.

In 2018 during a residency at Casa Lu just outside Mexico City, Fox created the second animation in this exhibit. culminating in a happy ending, *Then I Met You* is the artist's gift of a creation story to her adopted son William. In a figurative folk style, Fox narrated the events leading up to his birth in a cyanotype process on fabric in which she created an embroidered quilt and this animation.



*And Then I Met You*, 2018, animated cyanotypes, 14:00 minutes

Fox and her husband (illustrated as ponies), the birth mom and her first-born son (shown as wide-eyed stylized human figures), and the father (as wild oats) make up the cast of the animation in *Then I Met You*. Baby William has both human and pony parts to elucidate an inclusive birth story full of magic and love for her cherished son.

At Casa Lu, Fox partnered with Kristian Bønløkke to accompany both animations with music, making the unified exhibition on display at the Freedman Gallery dealing with the full cycle of life.

The Freedman Gallery at Albright College, named after former Albright trustee and alumna Doris Chanin Freedman, is located on the ground floor of the Center for the Arts. Since its inception, the gallery focuses primarily on contemporary, living American artists and hosts approximately twelve exhibitions each year rotating in the Main Gallery, Project Space and Foyer Gallery. Freedman Gallery is located at 13th & Bern Streets, Reading, Pa. 19612. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday 1-4 p.m. The gallery is closed on Mondays, holidays, breaks and summer. (**visit [albright.edu/events-calendar](http://albright.edu/events-calendar)**).

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Cover Image: *The Great Cry*, 2016, stop-motion animation, 2:29 minutes