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**THE ROSE ART MUSEUM
PRESENTS JENNIFER PACKER: TENDERHEADED**

(Waltham, Mass.) –The Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University will present *Jennifer Packer: Tenderheaded*, the New York-based artist’s first solo museum exhibition, March 2 – July 8, 2018. Based in observation, improvisation, and memory, this selection of recent work by Packer (b. 1984) presents paintings of funerary bouquets and intimate portraits. Pointing to possibilities both bodily and emotional, fragile and strong, her works exhibit a rigorous engagement with art history as well as a highly personal response to how black bodies navigate within the present political landscape. A public opening reception to celebrate the museum’s spring exhibition will be held on Thursday, March 1, 7-9pm.

Packer’s figurative paintings are marked by a powerful quietude. Each canvas reads as a self-contained world, its subject emerging from or dissolving into its surroundings. She presents those who sit for her—usually family members and friends— with compassion, foregrounding their individual autonomy and carefully guarding their integrity.

The funerary bouquet provides the subject for an ongoing series of paintings that suggest themes of trauma and loss. Packer’s floral arrangements recall those of classical still life painters like Henri Fantin-Latour, yet, like her other works, they primarily produce a psychological space. Perhaps innocuous, even beautiful, on initial view, each suggests a private sorrow that reverberates beyond the fleeting moment of the flowers’ public display. One of the most striking examples is “Say Her Name,” a work that takes its title from the social media movement calling on people to publicize the names of black women killed by police.

A multifaceted cultural narrative can be seen through how Packer views the idea of being tenderheaded not just as an emotional state, but also a political one, as tenderheaded is a word often used to describe black women who have a sensitive scalp. Packer has said that being tenderheaded is “an assessment of not only physical sensitivity, but also an emotional sensitivity, perhaps bordering on weakness. But the weakness isn’t necessarily a fault—it’s more of way of noting the need to take extra care of that person.”

Packer’s practice is marked by its restraint, producing works that are complicated, sometimes elusive, but always generous. Suspicious of realism’s capacity to communicate, she recently said, “The more I approach realism, the further I feel from the true emotive quality of the things I’m depicting. I think emotional information is often housed in the image’s resistance to a fixed identity... I believe that

through engaging with [this] resistance there is a pushing toward something truer, more complex, and long-lasting.”

Packer renders fragments of her paintings in detail while she obscures information in other areas through more abstract mark-making or even leaving the surface blank. The artist paints each canvas over a long duration, returning again and again to rework the surface, “undoing” the image, as she says, until a balance is struck. A narrow palette in each work—chartreuse, mauve, ochre, for example—demands close attention to shifts in hue and tone and often results in subject and environment seeming to collapse into one another. Suggesting an emotional and psychological depth, her work is enigmatic, avoiding a straightforward reading. “I think about images that resist, that attempt to retain their secrets or maintain their composure, that put you to work,” Packer explains. “I hope to make works that suggest how dynamic and complex our lives and relationships really are.”

Organized by The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago and curated by Solveig Øvstebø, *Tenderheaded*, The Rose will be the only touring venue for the show.

A forthcoming monograph—the artist’s first—features new texts by Jessica Bell Brown, April Freely, and Safiya Sinclair, as well as a conversation between the artist and Kerry James Marshall.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jennifer Packer (born Philadelphia, 1984) received her BFA from the Tyler University School of Art at Temple University in 2007, and her MFA from the Yale University School of Art in 2012. In 2012-2013 she was Artist-in-Residence at The Studio Museum in Harlem, and from 2014 to 2016 she was a Visual Arts Fellow at The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA.

ABOUT THE ROSE ART MUSEUM AT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1961, The Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University is among the nation’s premier university museums dedicated to collecting, preserving, exhibiting, and interpreting modern and contemporary art. A center of cultural and intellectual life on campus, the Museum serves as a catalyst for the exchange of ideas: a place of discovery, intersection, and dialogue at the university and within the Greater Boston community. Through its collection, exhibitions, and programs, the Rose works to affirm and advance the values of social justice, freedom of expression, global diversity, and academic excellence that are hallmarks of Brandeis University. Postwar American and international contemporary art are particularly well represented within the Rose’s renowned permanent collection of more than 9,000 objects.

Located on Brandeis University’s campus at 415 South Street, Waltham, MA, the museum is free and open to the public Wednesday through Sunday, 11 AM – 5 PM.

For more information, visit www.brandeis.edu/rose/ or call 781-736-3434.

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