



KATHERINE BRADFORD~~~AUGUST~~~

Bowdoin College Museum of Art • Brunswick, ME • bowdoin.edu/art-museum • Through September 1, 2013

By: Carl Little

Born in New York City in 1942, Katherine Bradford graduated from Bryn Mawr College and later attended the Concept Center for Visual Studies in Portland, Maine, where she developed an abstract idiom based on mark-making (Joan Snyder and Brice Marden were among the artists she admired). At her first solo show at the Victoria Munroe Gallery in New York City in 1989, Bradford introduced objects into her work. Since then, her intuitive and expressive approach to painting has resulted in canvases that have gained her critical acclaim and a number of honors, including a Guggenheim in 2011.

Bradford spends winters in Brooklyn, New York, and summers in Brunswick, Maine, just down the road from the venue for this exhibition. *Katherine Bradford~~~August~~~* features eight paintings from 2011–12, including examples from her ongoing swimmer/diver/bather and ocean liner series.



Katherine Bradford, *Diver Blue/Red*, 2012, oil on canvas, 14 x 11". (35.56 x 27.94cm). Courtesy of the artist, Aucocisco Galleries, Maine, and Edward Thorp Gallery, NY.

In *Diver Blue/Red*, 2012, a dark-haired woman is shown mid-air, her arms stretched out before her. The only context for this orange-fleshed figure is the flat sea, a slight strip of black coastline to the right and the air that surrounds her—and her colorful swimsuit. The suspension of motion delights even as one wonders at the way the woman seems to be dissolving in her fall toward the gray-green water.

In recent years, Bradford had explored the subject of ships, creating wonderfully humorous, loosely painted images of big boats, including the *Titanic*, making their way across the ocean, dodging icebergs or visiting unknown harbors. The vessels are clunky and lit up; they range upon brushy seas. *Mile High Liners*, 2012, stands among Bradford's most appealing renditions to date: an absurd parade of ocean liners surfs the crest of a striped tsunami.

In Bowdoin Museum curator Joachim Homann's essay for the show, he cites the artist's thoughts on this body of work: "I think the sea came to my paintings because the way I put on paint looks like water, and then I added boats and swimmers." That "watery world" she has created continues to provoke and beguile in equal measure.



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