

15 DECEMBER 2014

## INTERVIEW: KATHERINE BRADFORD

BY GUEST BLOGGER



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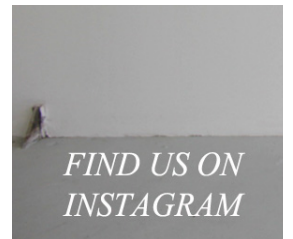
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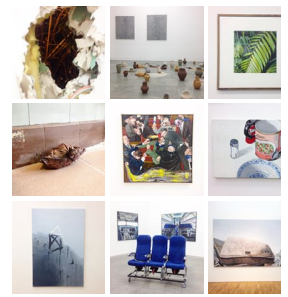
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*all works by Katherine*

*Bradford at ADAMS AND OLLMAN in Portland; courtesy Adams and Ollman, copyright Katherine Bradford*

**Katherine Bradford**, an American artist and recent Guggenheim Fellow, has been making a personal and intimate body of work that merges abstraction and figuration to emotional ends for nearly three decades. Her work, in turns humorous, epic and vulnerable is in conversation with a younger generation of artists dedicated to finding a way to tell stories and share experience through painting. During Bradford's two person exhibition with Sarah Gamble at **Adams and Ollman** in Portland, the artist is interviewed by her son, **Arthur Bradford**, a writer and Emmy-nominated filmmaker.

**Arthur Bradford: Hi Mom. Are you afraid to be interviewed by your son?**

Katherine Bradford: I am hoping this interview brings out your brilliant comedic side and not your lazy ass slacker side.

**Arthur: We'll see about that! I suppose one of the first things a person might notice about your recent work is the presence of a lot of water. People are diving into it, swimming in it, riding horses or ships through it. Why do you think water is a recurring element in your work?**

Katherine: The open ocean at night is visually intoxicating to me. It contains everything a painter might need: endless mystery and lack of boundaries, hidden stories and dramatic light. As for the horse in water I stumbled on that when I went to cover up a failed pair of horse legs and the paint came out looking like water.

**Arthur: Your current show features some of your superman images. Your supermen are often kind of frumpy or goofy. Do you do that on purpose?**

Katherine: What interests me about Superman is that he is part human and thus quite vulnerable. The two paintings at Adams and Ollman show him flying through the air in a state of relaxed bliss, perhaps on a purposeful and mystical mission. I am not interested in the hero part. Our job as artists is to redefine our heroes.

**Arthur: I think it is funny that you have hit upon supermen and ships as recurring images in your work since, to be honest, I do not recall a lot of superheroes or nautical trappings in our house growing up. This summer, when we visited you at your studio in Maine, it struck me that I had grown up in this house a short walk from the ocean, but we never owned a boat, or spent much time there. So maybe these images are about longing for a different life? Or more mystery? You live in New York now, I should point out, and return to Maine in the summers. Tell me why as children you packed us up and moved us from that idyllic seaside town to dirty old NYC?**

Katherine: You are right, we lived on the coast of Maine and did not own a boat – did you want one? When we moved to New York you both were distraught, but in time each of you in your own way thanked me for introducing you to city life. I needed New York. The language of painting is spoken so fluently and so beautifully there. You are also right that I use painting to create an alternative world, one I can infuse with a dream like longing.

**Arthur: Your paintings are often weird and off-kilter. Why don't you just paint some nice landscapes or portraits like your mother so often implored you to do?**

Katherine: My mother, your grandmother, wanted me to do portraits of pets, mainly her pets. I think as artists we need two families, our biological family to love us and then our art family to understand our work and give us support in our creative life. When I was in Portland for this show, I met some of your writer friends when they performed in the "Shit Show" and I saw that you had this great group of offbeat, risk taking, very funny people who totally understood you and probably egged you on. They actually made me feel as though I should have done a much more "off kilter" show for Portland than I did.

**Arthur: Oh, your Portland show is plenty "off-kilter". I always enjoy going to your opening and seeing that younger artist look up to you. You established yourself relatively late in life, while raising us pesky children. You were a single mother, sleeping on a pullout couch in NYC, getting an MFA while my sister and I were in school. Tell me about what a pain in the ass that must have been?**

Katherine: What you kids gave me was a fun and loving home life. I needed that in order to face the harsh New York art world. Those early years in New York were hard for me, because I was a newcomer among much more established artists. The art world was quite stratified in the 80's. It was very hard to get an older artist to come to your studio and they did not welcome us into their studios. I felt quite dismissed by a lot of people and vowed I would never act like that. Thankfully, the Brooklyn community of artists that I am part of now is very intergenerational and there is a lot of back and forth between artists at all levels of their career

**KATHERINE BRADFORD and SARAH GAMBLE**

7.11 - 20.12.2014

**Adams and Ollman**

811 East Burnside #213

Portland, OR 97214

Opening Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 11-17h

*Artist's website: [kathbradford.com](http://kathbradford.com)*













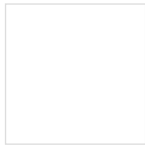


*all works by Katherine Bradford at ADAMS AND OLLMAN in Portland; courtesy Adams and Ollman, copyright Katherine Bradford*

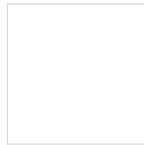
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