



Katherine Bradford in Maine, 1978

## How About a Little Badass Inspiration?

In 1980 my mother moved from rural Maine to NYC with two young children and she slept on a pull-out couch in the living room while attending art-school and working nights. She wanted to make a real and lasting mark on the art world. Now, some 46 years later, this is actually happening.

Here she is in 1985, a dedicated painter, and single mother of two. After she would get us off to school, she'd commute up to the state university in

Purchase, NY to pursue her MFA in painting.



Katherine Bradford in 1985

Many of us carry dreams like my mother did back then, but we find them harder to hold onto as financial and logistical realities set in. So too do the harsh preferences of our artistic culture. New and emerging artists are supposed to be young, we are told. That's where the cutting edge lives. By most accounts, my mother got a late start on things. She was over 40 by the time she got her MFA.

Undaunted, she rented a studio in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, then a working class Polish neighborhood and worked downstairs from her friend Chris Martin, also a painter working to establish himself in the NYC art world.





My sister and me, age 7

As children, my sister and I would sometimes attend art shows with our mother, snatching chips and cheese off the tables, wondering why she cared so much about those paintings on the walls. We were proud of her when she began to have shows of her own, usually group shows at smaller galleries, often outside of the coveted landscape of New York City.

And I suppose when we went off to college she felt a sense of freedom. She could devote herself to her work in a way that wasn't possible before. I'd

come home to visit her in the 90's and she'd tell me about the new breed of young people wandering around that Williamsburg neighborhood where she now owned a loft studio. Every morning, when she wasn't teaching art, she would rise early and ride the subway out to that studio. She'd stay there until late at night, cooking her meals on a hotplate, returning home with paint-splattered hands.

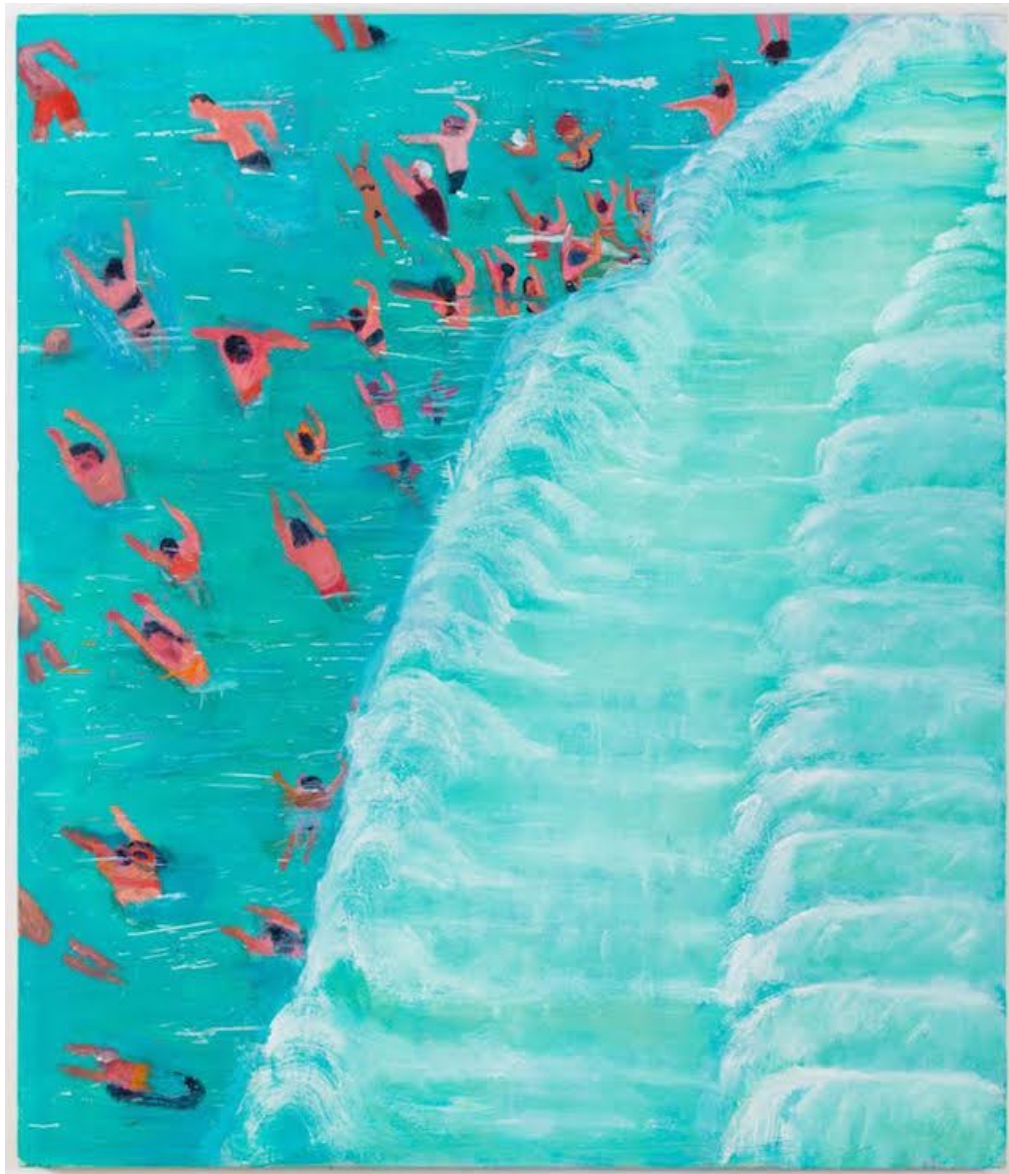


Katherine Bradford in her studio, 2014

She kept up this routine for years, unwavering. She turned 50, then 60, and while she saw certain successes, we could tell she wasn't satisfied. She'd speak of the difficulty of getting a gallery owner's attention in a world populated by young up and comers, the very students she'd spent time teaching were now out there making their own marks, passing her by, even.

About the time she turned 70, my mother eased up on her teaching, but she didn't ease up on her art. In fact, she painted with more focus and fury. She took on bigger canvases and made bolder statements.





"Fear of Waves", 2015

And lo and behold, the art world began to take notice. This winter my sister and I flew to NYC to witness her big solo show opening at the venerable Canada gallery in lower manhattan. What a feeling it was to see this huge space overflowing, packed with people, all crowding in to catch a glimpse of our hardworking mother and her paintings. Every piece in the show sold within minutes. I could've cried seeing this dream come true.



Katherine Bradford's January opening at Canada Gallery in NYC.

Yes, she is now making her mark, the one she had set out to make so long ago when she left Maine for NYC with us kids in tow. What I find especially remarkable about this turn of events is that the work we are celebrating is her most recent paintings, the art she has made in the past couple of years. Her work has always been good, but she's had some kind of breakthrough lately. She's getting better, more vital, and more vibrant at an age when many of us choose to step back and relax. But don't take my word for it, check out this review of her most recent show in *Art in America*.

Yes, she's kicking ass in her seventies. And it's here that I hope you'll take some inspiration from this story. Perhaps you are an aspiring artist yourself. Perhaps you struggle to balance the rigors of raising children with finding a creative edge. It's hard, and not always rewarding. But what a wonderful dream it would be for us all to know that if we stick to it, and work hard, we'll actually find our groove down the line, and get recognized for it to boot. What a wonderful dream it would be to imagine that those kids we are now raising and cursing and cuddling might someday gather around us and say, "Wow, so this is what it was all about." How nice it would be to know that we might one day make our children, and those we love, so proud.





After her NYC opening with mom

Katherine Bradford has a new show opening at Adams and Ollman Gallery in Portland, Oregon. If you are in town, please come say hello:

Katherine Bradford, “Divers and Dreamers” at Adams and Ollman. Opening reception, Friday, April 22, 6–8pm 209 SW 9th Ave, Portland.



“Water Nurses”, 2016