

# CULTURED

## Our Critic Recommends 3 Tribeca Shows That Strip Away the Excesses of Painting

John Vincler visits Katherine Bradford at Canada, Leslie Smith III at Chart, and Kate Spencer Stewart at Bureau.

*Now is a great time to look at paintings in Tribeca. While Nicole Eisenman at 52 Walker, which I reviewed soon after it opened, remains my top pick to see in the neighborhood, I've gathered here three other nearby painting shows that also shouldn't be missed. Next time you are downtown, I recommend seeing these shows in reverse order, ending with Eisenman.*



Katherine Bradford, *While Father Sleeps*, 2025. Photography by Joe DeNardo. Image courtesy of the artist and CANADA.

Katherine Bradford  
Canada | 60 Lispenard Street  
Through December 13, 2025

A warm autumnal purple dominates Katherine Bradford's exhibition at Canada gallery, followed by other colors of fall: oranges, pinks, reds, some yellows and greens, and deep twilight blues. Two paintings with sun in the title—*Tricolor Sun* and *Low Shining Sun*—(all paintings are 2025) are outliers beaming with yellow and green.

After many years spent painting, Bradford, now in her 80s, has become in the last decade or so a prominent figure in the New York scene. She is best known for her compositions featuring swimmers and bodies of water. A few of the paintings in "Communal Table" satisfy that expectation, like *City River Waders*, depicting two women standing in water before a nighttime cityscape.

Her simplified figures remind me somewhat of James Castle's anonymized, abstracting portraits. She usually paints them in groups or pairs. Many of my favorite pictures here include the moon, or several moons (or is it a series of planets?) as in the stand-out *While Father Sleeps*.

I keep returning to see these paintings. They don't make a show of technical virtuosity nor do they rifle through the archive of art history in a performative way. Bradford's canvases instead simply convey a deep devotion to the act of painting itself, one that remains distinctly personal, unresolved, and ongoing.



Leslie Smith III, *The Stillness Between Breaths*, 2025. Image courtesy the artist and Chart.

Leslie Smith III

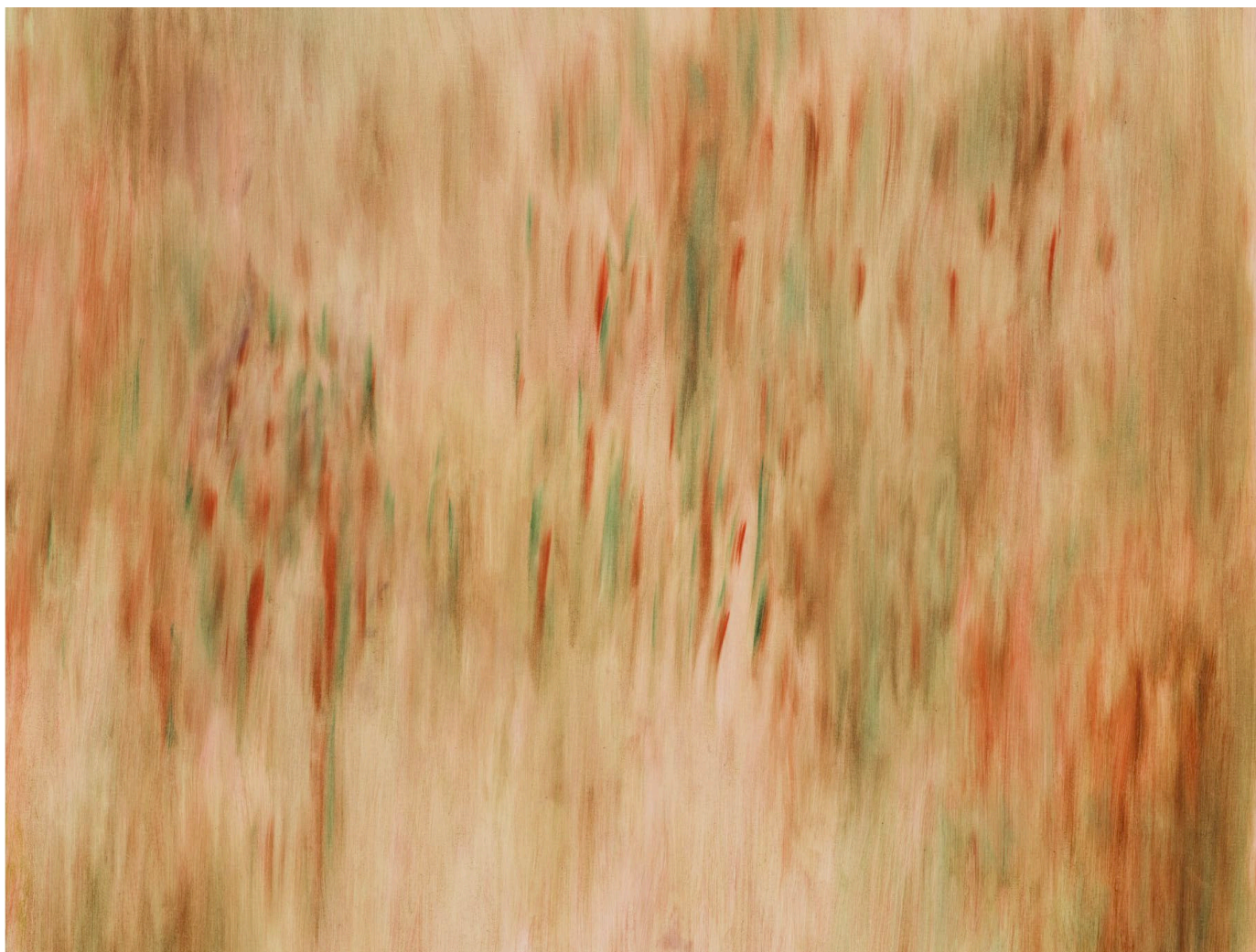
Chart | 74 Franklin Street

Through December 20, 2025

I'll take the exhibition title "Gentle Thoughts" as a prompt for checking my critic-self. I knew nothing of Leslie Smith III upon entering the gallery. After passing through and observing the resolute *thingness* of these abstract paintings that push closer to sculpture or to a sort of frieze, I almost dismissed the works for being too beautiful, too pleasurable, too much like *design* rather than *art*. I'll credit the works themselves for prompting some self-criticism. What? Was I afraid of having a good time?

The canvases, which are also mosaic-like assemblages, by the Wisconsin-based artist evoke a zoomed-in view of terrazzo. They immediately give a simple pleasure, which was initially distracting from looking closer and dwelling on what these compositions were doing. The experience reminded me of the effect of the late Texan painter Otis Jones's minimal oval canvases, which I first saw online but then, in person, surprised me with their material heft. Likewise, Smith's paintings rewarded further scrutiny.

They fuse Jack Whitten's raking and mosaic techniques with the bold shapes and colors of Matisse or Ellsworth Kelly pushed to simple organic forms. Delightful *and* substantial.



Kate Spencer Stewart, *Ritual*, 2025. Image courtesy of the artist and Bureau.

Kate Spencer Stewart  
Bureau | 112 Duane Street  
Through December 20, 2025

Kate Spencer Stewart's large paintings are most interesting in how they record rhythms of repetitive gestures in her approach to post-color field abstraction. The Los Angeles-based painter's canvases (all 2025) conjure diaphanous forms or energetic movements, as in the evocation of wind-blown stalks of wheat or cattails in *Ritual*, the thick morning fog of *Morning Star*, or the red heat radiating from *Verily Verily*, where gestural figure eights suggest licking flames. The smaller floral works downstairs are unpretentious gifts of simple beauty, made more interesting—and, like their subjects, more ephemeral—in the three examples of linen mounted on cardboard, creating a slightly pillowed effect. Painting for painting's sake, reduced to an essence alternatively floral or vaporous.