



Press release

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Curator

Lisa Felicitas Mattheis
Scientific Director of the
Kunsthalle Emden

KATHERINE BRADFORD Sky Swimmers

August 30, 2024 to January 19, 2025

Emden. Large-format works by artist Katherine Bradford (*1942 in New York City) are now on display in the airy atrium of the Kunsthalle Emden. Bradford's works are a mixture of figuration and abstraction. Recurring motifs are swimmers and superheroes in mystical, surreal scenarios.

After initially working in rural Maine and exchanging ideas in a small circle of artists, Katherine Bradford decided at the age of 37 to leave her marriage behind and move to New York City with her children. There she connected with the painterly avant-garde of the 1980s and 1990s and the up-and-coming art scene in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Influenced on the one hand by the color field painting of the New York School as well as by older figurative positions of American classical modernism, the artist developed dreamlike and symbolic scenes.

The exhibition in Emden is one of the artist's first institutional solo exhibitions in Germany.

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Introduction

KATHERINE BRADFORD

Sky Swimmers

30. August 2024 bis 19. Januar 2025

Curator:

Lisa Felicitas Mattheis
wissenschaftliche Direktorin
der Kunsthalle Emden

With *Katherine Bradford. Sky Swimmers*, Kunsthalle Emden is proud to be one of the first European institutions to present a solo exhibition of the American artist. Katherine Bradford (b.1942) creates works that are characterized by a blend of figuration and abstraction along with a vibrant, contemporary color palette; her recurring motifs of swimmers, supermen, and acrobats populate the canvases in mystical, surreal scenes, and are the focus of the exhibition in Emden. These anonymous figures—some truncated, some whole—appear ghostly and other-worldly. Strong painterly reduction breaks them down to the essentials: devoid of faces, characteristic body features, or gender classification, the figures seem mysterious and masked. They are depicted in suspended states, in which both the before and the after are ambiguous: thus, they are made a commonplace of human existence. Whether the bodies are standing, swimming, or floating, their interrelations can be read as a visual metaphor for social relationships such as community and isolation, vulnerability and strength, and activity and passivity.

For the artist, it makes no difference whether the figures are arranged in water or against the sky: “I think I’m attracted to the sky, the ocean, and outer space, because you can tip it in all of those directions pretty easily. You can slide from the ocean right into outer space.” A brushstroke can change the dynamics of the painting; a shade of color can alter the reference space. In her highly intuitive painting style, in which memory, idea and imagination intermingle, the artist models the figures out of the background. To Bradford, paint is not so much material as matter. This is particularly evident when one is looking for the source of light: The figures seem to glow from within.

Katherine Bradford (b. 1942) belongs to an older generation of female artists whose lives have been strongly affected by heteronormative ideas of family: “The effort I had to make to turn

my life around so that I could be an artist, a real artist, was a hundred times harder than becoming a gay person. Being a lesbian was a lateral transfer. I think when I was young, I didn't have the imagination to be a lesbian." She was born in New York and grew up in Connecticut. After earning a bachelor's degree in art history at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, she settled in Maine with her husband and had twins. There she joined a group of free spirits, artists, and poets and began actively exploring painting for the first time. After her divorce, at the age of 37, Katherine Bradford moved to New York City with her twins to devote herself entirely to art. There, she soon made contact with other artists, completed an MFA at New York State University, and met her long-term partner. It was not until the 2000s that she began to gain recognition as an artist, with her breakthrough coming in 2016—at the age of 74. Her works are included in the collections of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum; Dallas Museum of Art; the Menil Collection, Houston, and the Portland Museum of Art, among others.

Special thanks to Haverkamp Leistenschneider Gallery (Berlin) and Katherine Bradford.

Biography

KATHERINE BRADFORD

1942 born in New York, NY, US
lives and works in Brooklyn, NY, US

Education

MFA, State University of New York, Purchase, NY
BA, Bryn Mawr College, PA

Awards / Scholarships

2012 Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant
2011 Guggenheim Fellowship
American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, New York, NY
2005 American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, NY
2000 Pollock Krasner Foundation Grant, New York, NY

Solo exhibitions (selection)

Halle für Kunst Steiermark, Graz (2024), Haverkamp Leistenschneider, Berlin (2024, 2018, 2017, kaufmann repetto, Mailand (2024, 2021), Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo (2024, 2022), Galerie Frye Art Museum, Seattle (2023), Canada, New York (2023, 2021, 2018, 2016), Campoli Presti, Paris/London (2023, 2021, 2019), Kunstmuseum Schloss Derneburg (2023), Portland Museum of Art (2022), Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2022, with Sedrick Chisom), Hall Art Foundation, Reading, VT (2021), Carpenter Center for Visual Art, Harvard University, Cambridge (2021), Adams and Ollman, Portland (2020, 2018, 2016, 2014), Galleria Monica De Cardenas, Mailand (2017), Sperone Westwater, New York (2017), The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (2017)
Gruppenausstellungen (Auswahl): Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2023), Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland (2023, 2021), Kunsthaus Nürnberg (2023), Anton Kern Gallery, New York (2023, 2022), Le Consortium, Dijon (2022), Bowdoin College Museum, Brunswick (2022, 2019, 2004), Grimm Gallery, Amsterdam/New York (2021, 2019), RISD Museum, Brown University, Providence (2021), Transcend, Alabama Contemporary Art Center, Mobile (2021), Pace Gallery, New York (2019), Prospect 4, U.S. Biennial, New Orleans (2017)

Works in public collections (selection)

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Brooklyn Museum, NY; Smith College Museum, MA; Bowdoin College Museum, ME; Farnsworth Museum, ME; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, PA; Bates College Museum, ME; Addison Gallery of American Art, MA; Worcester Museum of Art, MA; Portland Museum, ME

Guided tours and general information

GUIDED TOURS (German language)

Information and booking of individual or group tours:

Tel: +49 (0) 49 21 - 97 50 70

Public guided tour (German language) every Sunday at 11.30 a.m., registration in advance at the museum box office and in the Kunsthalle's online ticket store (website) WWW.KUNSTHALLE-EMDEN.DE

Opening hours / public holidays

Sat, Sun, public holidays 11-17 hrs, Tue to Fri 10-17 hrs, Mon and closed on 23, 24, 25 and 31.12.2024

Open every first Tuesday/month 10 am to 9 pm (art evening see above).

Admission prices

Adults €10, reduced €7, groups of 10 or more €8 per person,

Children/young people under 18 free

Online tickets for admission and for regular guided tours (e.g. art evening) in the ticket store on the website

KUNSTABEND (LONG ART EVENING)

Thanks to the support of the Aloys Wobben Foundation, admission to the Kunstabend from 5 to 9 pm is free (including events).

The art evening takes place on the 1st Tuesday of every month. The program includes a guided tour at 6 pm (registration recommended) and a talk in the atrium at 7 pm entitled "For a beer with...". Director Lisa Felicitas Mattheis invites guests from the region (registration not required).

Dates: 03.09., 01.10., 05.11., 03.12. and 07.01.