

Adams and Ollman

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KATHERINE BRADFORD:

MOTHER JOINS THE CIRCUS

ADAMS AND OLLMAN

ON VIEW APRIL 3

BY APPOINTMENT AND ONLINE



March 23, 2020, Portland, Oregon: Adams and Ollman is pleased to announce *Mother Joins the Circus*, a solo exhibition of works by Katherine Bradford. This exhibition, which marks the artist's fourth show with the gallery, will be accompanied by a publication that focuses on Bradford's inventive, unwieldy, and deeply personal subjects.

The figures in Katherine Bradford's paintings are informed by their surroundings—bodies of water, the night sky, or fields of color populated with abstract shapes and forms. Against the undefined spaces that Bradford so skillfully creates, the artist's subjects assert themselves as places of imagination or introspection as well as sites to consider politics, sexuality, and, sometimes very simply, the nature of paint. Deftly employing color and form, Bradford offers the viewer bits of information—pieces of narrative, subjects, and feelings—to reorganize and rework in order to create new meanings.

In a shift that can be understood in light of the current political chaos worldwide, Bradford's most recent works are increasingly defined by their eccentricities, tackling difficult and awkward subjects. The new paintings contain spatial enigmas and unexpected changes in scale that complicate a simple narrative or linear reading. Moving away from the airiness of her previous works, Bradford

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employs a line that is faster and more urgent as she defines her figures, bringing them to the front of the picture plane. In *Team Players*, for example, an aggressive red line delineates shapes from a neutral background. Genderless bodies huddle together in solidarity, one with no pants, one in profile with a bird-like mask, another assigned only a torso. Bradford's figurative red stroke suggests a point of no return, one at which the artist continues to create and destroy images and expectations.

Conflict and contradiction unfold from Bradford's subjects, which have become more object-like, with their trajectories suspended between animate and inanimate states. In *Mother Joins the Circus*, two figures appear to carry a third out of the picture plane, but their arms form a ring so perhaps we are seeing "mother" metaphorically jump through hoops, potentially a comment on society's expectations of women. In a related work, *Circus Ring*, three strong men half-heartedly perform in front of their audience, here defined by no more than a flurry of rudimentary pieces of paint, the ringmaster notably absent. The speed of Bradford's mark making reinforces the urgency of her investigation and message.

In *Full Moon Swimmers*, bands of color create multiple horizon lines across the picture plane as a line matter-of-factly conjures a couple embracing under a glowing green moon. Even in this intimate moment, the couple becomes performers on display against swaths of color, simultaneously buoyant and vulnerable. Here, the swimmers—iconic subjects in Bradford's work—adopt the struggles of the circus performers elsewhere in the show, uncertain of their ability to entertain and conscious of expectant gazes.

Mother Joins the Circus will be available to view online at adamsandollman.com beginning April 3. The gallery is temporarily closed to the public

(private viewings by appointment only) to support the effort to contain the spread of COVID-19 until further notice.

Katherine Bradford lives and works in New York. Her works have been exhibited at MoMA PS1 and the Brooklyn Museum, both New York; the Portland Museum of Art, Maine; the Addison Gallery of American Art, Massachusetts; the Weatherspoon Gallery, North Carolina; and most recently at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, and Prospect 4, New Orleans, Louisiana. She has been honored with two awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Pollock Krasner Foundation Grant, a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum, both New York; the Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts; the Portland Museum of Art, Maine; Smith College Museum, Massachusetts; Dallas Art Museum and the Menil Collection, both Texas; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Pennsylvania; and the Portland Art Museum, Oregon.

Above: Katherine Bradford, *Mother Joins the Circus*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches.