a fifty-page, single-spaced printout—quotes, transcriptions, captions, and, best of all, Bloom's exacting prose. It's a thrilling document that one hopes she'll publish, allowing this lyrical show to live on.

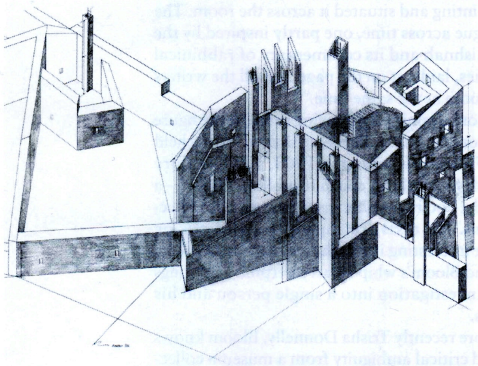
—Lauren O'Neill-Butler

NEW YORK/WATER MILL, NY

Alice Aycock

GREY ART GALLERY/PARRISH ART MUSEUM

Alice Aycock's eleven drawings for *Project Entitled "The Beginnings of a Complex . . ." (For Documenta)*, 1977, marked a subtle yet profound shift in her art. A series of architectural plans for her contribution to that year's Documenta 6, in Kassel, the drawings portray five plywood structures composed of rudimentary walls, enclosures, apertures, and ladders—a more or less straightforward scheme. Yet when it came to translating these renderings into real space, there were differences: Two structures were built as planned, two were reimagined, a fifth was not built at all, and the complex lacked the eleven underground connecting tunnels in the original design. Only one structure was built when the project was realized a second time later that year, for Artpark in Lewiston, New York, reinforcing the drawings' status as not a definitive plan but a jumping-off point. The title's emphasis on "beginning," then, pointed to a new focus for Aycock. She had begun to move away from the exacting production of fixed quasi-architectural spaces that could be expressed as actual buildings and finished works—*Maze-Aerial View*, 1972, or *Simple Network of Underground Wells and Tunnels*, 1975, for example—and inaugurated a phase of speculative, open, and soon wildly impossible designs.



Alice Aycock, *Project Entitled "The City of the Walls: A Narrow City, a Thin City . . .",* **1978,** pencil on vellum, 42 x 72½".

This generative transition marked "Alice Aycock Drawings: Some Stories Are Worth Repeating," a two-venue show curated by Jonathan Fineberg that featured the artist's work from 1971 to 1984 at the Grey Art Gallery and continued at the Parrish Art Museum with a showing of work from 1984 to the present. Both exhibitions rightly emphasized the centrality of drawing throughout Aycock's practice, as an ideational engine that has driven her to move from plans and their concrete realizations to sheer fantasy to actual architectural commissions.

At the Grey Art Gallery, *Beginnings of a Complex* was followed by a series of drawings depicting towns and cities. These plans were supplemented by explanatory, if equivocal and, over time, increasingly narrative, texts. The titles became longer and denser. In *Project Entitled "A Shanty Town Whose Lunatic Charms . . ." (Project Entitled "A Shanty Town Inhabited by Two Lunatics . . .)*, 1978, we do not see the lunatics who presumably inhabit the many structures Aycock has drawn, some of which feature oblique notes, e.g., THERE IS NO DOOR, THIS FENCE MUST BE CLIMBED. The equally meticulous *Project Entitled "The City of the Walls: A Narrow City, a Thin City . . .",* 1978, comprises pencil renderings of a walled site. The accompanying text outlines a cast of "characters" and also notes that "the city has been generated by five people who loved one another." Soon, Aycock began drawing and constructing machines of inexplicable or supernatural purpose, as in *Hoodo (Laura) from the Series "How to Catch and Manufacture Ghosts"—Vertical & Horizontal Cross-Section of the Ether Wind, (1981)*, 1990/2012. Inspired by the machinery used in early electricity experiments as well as Marcel Duchamp's apparatuses in his *Notes for The Large Glass*, 1969, she surrounded a colossal, functioning rotary-turbine ventilator with panes of glass and looping steel rods, presumably to harness the "ether wind," which nineteenth-century scientists believed was the medium that conducted light. Aycock's machines' literal existence forces industrial-age innovation, Dada obscurantism, and outright mysticism into heady combinations.

In Water Mill, the presentation of Aycock's more recent drawings and maquettes continued along this general trajectory, as her layering of citations and impossible spaces became ever more intricate and complex. *The New China Drawing Part II: The World Above, the World Below*, 1984, features hundreds of precisely drawn doors side by side. No longer representing axonometric space, the work is intended as a diagram for the imagination of a 103-year-old woman, who has assigned a memory to each door only to gradually forget them all. Below these images, Aycock has drawn a map of the world in bright blue and yellow crayon, almost expressionist in its visible hatching. In the 1980s and '90s, the artist began using games and constellations to organize her deluges of characters, forms, and signs, as in *The Celestial City Game*, 1988, and the series "Starry Night," 1993, although the pointed rules and logics governing these drawings remain abstruse. Given her oeuvre's stunning complexity, the biggest surprise may be the outdoor commissions of recent years, such as *The Uncertainty of Ground State Fluctuations*, 2007, in Clayton, Missouri. Here Aycock's panoply of references serve the ameliorative aims of public art.

—Daniel Quiles

BRUNSWICK, ME

Katherine Bradford

BOWDOIN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

New York– and Maine-based painter Katherine Bradford has been active since the 1970s, yet her ambiguously narrative, color-saturated paintings have recently assumed newfound relevance in the context of work by younger artists such as Katherine Bernhardt, Dan McCarthy, and Michael Williams. Considering both career arc and choice of painterly themes, however, Bradford's closest peer may be Joyce Pensato, who also began eliciting attention relatively late and whose works resonate with Bradford's cheekily dramatic cartoon-character portraits, which shuffle interestingly close to bathos.

Bradford's best-known paintings picture a costumed Superman cruising the sky, but "August," her exhibition at Bowdoin College Museum of Art, curated by Joachim Homann, spotlighted another favored theme: maritime scenes, something critic John Yau called a "minor, masculine genre" in a review of Bradford's 2012 show at Edward Thorp Gallery in New York. While her work can easily be interpreted as ironizing patriarchy—the Man of Steel, the steady ship, even the (minor, masculine) act of seaside painting—the disquieting scenes in Bradford's recent canvases don't initially read as takedowns of modernism's gendered exclusivity or inflated heroics. In these eight paintings from the past three years—renderings of divers, Franz Kline–like shapes-as-ships, and scenes of nocturnal loneliness—the artist appears earnestly invested in the use of abstract color fields as a means of injecting mood into her landscapes.

The imaginative wit that spawns laugh-out-loud paintings like *At Home*, 2012, in which Superman sits primly with crossed legs in a

Katherine Bradford, *Titanic Orange Sea*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 10 x 10".

bucolic backyard, is still there in Bradford's marine paintings, only deployed to more existential effect. A sun-scorched body in *Sunbathers*, 2012, jauntily props itself up on an elbow to gaze down the beach at a brownish, barely there shadow-figure lounging nearby with demonic coolness, its guts a horrible mess of Twombly cream and crimson. In *Diver, Blue/Red*, 2012, a riff on several earlier paintings of bodies suspended in air (including her 2011 *Super Flight*), a woman wearing a suspiciously Superman-like blue-and-red one-piece leaps high off a ledge into rose-white Guston gloaming that Bradford bangs out with thick, intersecting strokes. *Titanic Orange Sea*, 2012, seems like another reflection on late Guston, filtered through Gottlieb's toxic palette. Three gloopy Creamsicle-colored balls linger on a stripe of white that dumbly excretes a drip of sky blue, all backdropped by an ink-black night with the sea a fiery mess of orange and white, a pale glacier the only witness. Whether through the frosting-white Twombly haze of *Open Ocean,* 2012, or the Rothkoesque effect of pink, purple, and orange shimmering from within a colossal vessel's black hull in *Ship in Blue Harbor,* 2011–12, Bradford earmarks vast swaths of space, free-styling with pure abstraction alongside figurative imagery.

Still, her seascapes have none of the outward drama of AbEx, or the romanticism of Albert Pinkham Ryder or Winslow Homer, for that matter; the theater is an interior one. Bradford has made many paintings of ships and swimmers before, but the grouping in "August" seems designed to capture something like the essence of late summer in a cold-weather, rural state . . . and all its attendant glory and dread. This suggests a fearlessness on Bradford's part to go where "serious" painters of the current moment don't—dallying with the contested marks of high modernism and doing so with a regional sensibility that risks being seen as provincial. Such a gambit relates this work to feminism's scraps with midcentury formalism and to its engagement of traditionally marginalized genres: Lynda Benglis's Play-Doh-colored "fallen paintings" and Judy Chicago's diaristic, suggestively vaginal "Childhood Rejection Drawings" of flowers are just a few examples of women artists sticking it to Greenbergian precepts shortly after they had hardened into dogma. Given Bradford's reputation for wry humor, some dose of the laughable would seem to be automatically encoded into her brawny brushstrokes. But her ocean scenes never feel like parodies—more like confident, quietly affecting images that bravely strike art history's major and minor keys.

—Nick Stillman