

ART & DESIGN | ART IN REVIEW

Katherine Bradford: ‘New Work’

By KEN JOHNSON MAY 3, 2012

Edward Thorp

210 11th Avenue, at 24th Street

Chelsea

Through May 26

“Transform, transport and transcend” could be a motto for the veteran New York artist Katherine Bradford. Painting loosely with infectious joie de vivre Ms. Bradford creates luminous and sumptuously tactile, sometimes goofy visions of Superman and oceangoing ships.

Comical yet earnest, the Superman paintings at Edward Thorp look as if they had been appropriated from a child’s portfolio. Our hero is a brusquely painted, doll-like figure. In “Long Flight” a thick blue-green line traces his zigzagging path on an opalescent gray sky from a red X in the lower right to the upper left corner, where he is about to fly off the edge of the 66-by-84-inch canvas. “At Home” finds him relaxing on a chair with one leg crossed over the other. In the background long-stemmed trees like giant glowing lollipops rise

on a green hill against a salmon sky. Soon, no doubt, Ms. Bradford's avatar will be off on another mission of Nietzschean daring.

If Superman represents the visionary individual, Ms. Bradford's ships suggest utopian collectivity. Paintings of ocean liners looming monumentally prow-first toward the viewer and draped by festive lights promise imminent voyages of kindred spirits to heretofore unknown shores.

A giddy sense of possibility animating all Ms. Bradford's work is best realized in her most abstract and beautiful picture, "Midsummer Night," in which a great, pink circular shape dotted by a grid of black, white and primary-colored spots hovers before a grassy field and starry sky. It is a metaphysical revelation deftly conjured out of the sensuous stuff of material reality.

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