

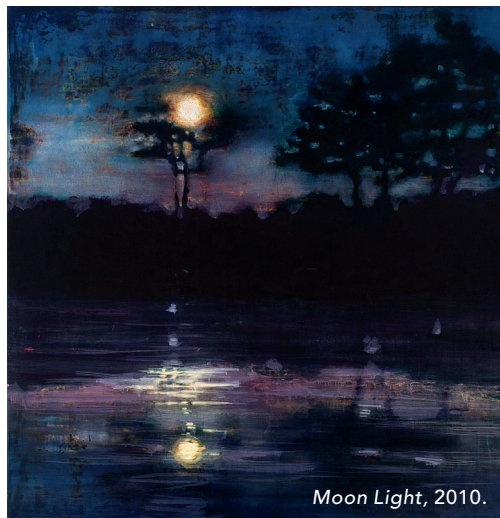
ART SHOW



Bird (Self Portrait), 2009.



Blossom, 2004.



Moon Light, 2010.



Slope, 2008.



Central Park, 2009.

Katherine Bowling

Focusing on ordinary, overlooked details, this New York painter builds lush visions of nature at its most poetic

By Peter Terzian

For the past two decades, artist Katherine Bowling has spent part of each year atop a mountain in the Catskills, in a 19th-century farmhouse surrounded by fields and forests. She calls what she paints “ordinary stuff, the things in front of me—the road I travel every day to get the paper.” Her paintings, lushly colored and suffused with light, make these everyday things extraordinary.

Like Monet, Bowling revisits and repaints her subjects: glittering branches of apple blossoms, a pond on a friend’s farm, a lone miniature spruce in a stand of birches. “I’ve painted the same tree many times,” she says. “Sometimes I look up at the tree, sometimes at the shadows of the tree, at reflections of the tree in water . . . but it’s the same tree.” Her inspirations aren’t traditional landscape paintings, but the dreamy, twilight early photographs of Edward Steichen, the skewed camera angles of Aleksandr Rodchenko, and the serene color fields of Agnes Martin. “Katherine’s work is about a way of seeing rather than about landscape,” says curator Sue Scott, who organized a show of Bowling’s work at the Orlando Museum of Art.

Bowling paints on wood panels she covers with layers of vinyl spackle, which mimics the absorbent surface of fresco plaster. A base coat of bright color makes the work appear lit from within. Scott describes how Bowling “turns the painting around, letting the paint drip—the drips might evolve into grasses or the sides of birches. The paint becomes the thing, and the thing becomes the paint.” In *Central Park*, a rare depiction of the city where Bowling spends winters, the artist’s focus is concentrated on a patch of land that might easily be overlooked. “That opening scene of *Blue Velvet*, where the camera pans down into the ground, to the ants?” she says. “That’s me.” ■

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