

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

NEW YORK | ASPEN

JENNIFER BARTLETT

ON THE WATER

On View: March 20 – April 26, 2025
507 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011

New York, NY – Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present *On the Water*, an exhibition of aquatic-themed works by Jennifer Bartlett (1941–2022). Drawing from various bodies of work made throughout the artist’s prodigious career, *On the Water* is the first in a series of three exhibitions exploring the significant motifs of Bartlett’s practice. *Jennifer Bartlett: In the House* will open at Pippy Houldsworth Gallery in London on June 6; *Jennifer Bartlett: In the Woods* will follow at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York.

An unwavering force in American art for more than 50 years, Bartlett’s expansive oeuvre is an intellectually rigorous, visually bold investigation into the very possibilities of painting. At various turns, Bartlett drew inspiration from Minimalism, from Conceptualism, from Neo-Expressionism, from a litany of modernist movements—yet, her work was never confined to any one movement or moment or idea. “Sometimes the entire history of modern art seemed to be making a guest appearance in her work,” critic Calvin Tomkins wrote of Bartlett, “without quite upstaging the host.”

Bartlett was born and raised in Southern California, and the landscape of her childhood home had a lasting influence on the artist and her work—even long after she relocated to New York. “Bartlett,” critic Roberta Smith wrote in 1985, “spent the first seventeen years of her life in Long Beach, California, with the Pacific literally at her back door, and she swam in it daily; the impression it made, judging from her art, cannot be overestimated.” Water first appeared in Bartlett’s imagery in the mid-1970s, when she identified the ocean as one of the four figurative themes of her monumental masterpiece, *Rhapsody*, alongside the house, the tree, and the mountain. The final movement of the piece is a grand, 126-plate oceanscape incorporating 54 different shades of blue.

For Bartlett, *Rhapsody* catalyzed a series of in-depth explorations of the themes revealed in the installation, first of houses with the *Addresses* paintings, and then, beginning in the late 1970s, of water. This motif would recur throughout her work for the next 40 years, appearing across Bartlett’s rather tenacious material and formal experiments. The earliest work featured in *On the Water*, a 1979 painting from the *Swimmers* series, incorporates both the artist’s distinct painted enameled-steel plates alongside more traditional oil-on-canvas, juxtaposing the modularity of her plates with the painterly freedom of canvas. With *To the Island* (1982)—a diptych made with Testors enamel paint on glass—Bartlett’s experiments with both materials and perspective come to the fore. *Boats* (1987) embodies the artist’s investigations into sculpture in the 1980s. A group of seascape pastels made during Bartlett’s various travels—from Long Island to Bermuda to the Caribbean island of Nevis—revel in soft painterliness, conjuring the experience of standing on the beach at sunset. A diptych—also depicting Nevis—reimagines sunrise over the beach in the unique crosshatch painting technique she developed in 2007. The most abstract work, *Leaking Systems* (2001), hearkens back to the playful systemization of Bartlett’s early plate works.

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Bartlett's legacy is defined, in large part, by her relentless and thorough commitment to experimentation. Identifying an image or idea in the studio—or on her travels—the artist would examine it from every possible angle, employing every possible material configuration, invoking every imaginable artistic genre and movement. Frequently engaging seemingly universal motifs—like water, houses, and trees—Bartlett's imagery belies its rich, autobiographical underpinnings. Drawing from different moments in this ongoing practice of investigation, *On the Water* offers an intimate view of the artist's evolving vision of herself through the motif of water.

ABOUT JENNIFER BARTLETT

Jennifer Bartlett's work is featured in the collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, TX; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; the Tate Modern, London; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, among many others. The first major museum survey exhibition of Bartlett's work was organized in 1985—it traveled from the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN to the Brooklyn Museum, NY and then the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA. In 2006, her early enameled steel plate paintings were surveyed at the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover MA. In 2013 and 2014, a second survey of Bartlett's work—*Jennifer Bartlett: History of the Universe*, curated by Klaus Ottman—traveled to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, PA and the Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY.

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