

KATHERINE KADISH: RECENT WORKS

K Kadish 1983

The Couple, 1980
oil on paper, 30 x 40



Mt. San Angelo, 1980
charcoal, 24 x 30

Katherine Kadish: Recent Works

February 14 - March 22, 1981
University Art Gallery
SUNY-Binghamton

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Yaddo and to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts for their generous gifts of time, which made so much of the work in this exhibition possible.

I am grateful also to the Foundation of the State University of New York at Binghamton for its support of this catalog and exhibition.

For her efforts in every phase of this project, I am much in debt to Barbara Perkins, and to the others who have given help of various kinds at various times, particularly Chris Focht, Walter Luckert, and Denise Durkot.

For their contributions to this catalog, I especially wish to thank Janet Heit, Molly Peacock, Sue Standing, and Susan Wood.

Finally, my gratitude to those friends who, in their particular ways, have been important to this work.

KK
Binghamton, NY
October, 1980

FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that the University Art Gallery presents *Katherine Kadish: Recent Works*. This exhibition represents the development of the artist's work over the past few years from primarily charcoal and conte drawings to paintings which employ strong color and light. We are also delighted to be able to include in the catalog two poems and a prologue written in response to these paintings by friends, fellow artists whose poetry has affinities with Kadish's work. These intimate interpretations reflect on the imagery and mood of the paintings. Common observations about subject matter and point of view connect these statements, though the poets express their reactions in their own distinct personal terms. These poets share similar experiences and perceptions with Kadish, enabling them to capture and make tangible the feelings inherent in her work.

Susan Wood, writer for the *Washington Post Magazine*, has contributed *Those Women, For Instance*, to the catalog. This romantic vision links the earliest works in the exhibition with the more recent garden paintings, some of which were inspired by the formal gardens at Yaddo. Kadish and Wood met while both were on fellowships at Yaddo, a haven for writers and artists in Saratoga Springs, New York. Both artists were dealing with themes of people and places from their own past, and both were influenced by the environment in which they were working.

Kadish met Sue Standing at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, where Kadish was working on the poolsides and bathers of her Phoenix series. Sue Standing also happened to be working with water imagery in her own poetry at the time. *Angle of Inclination*, a poem which explores the intrinsic experience of Kadish's Gardens and Phoenix series, was written especially for this catalog by Sue Standing.

Molly Peacock, alumna of SUNY-Binghamton and currently Poet-in-Residence for the State of Delaware, has written *A Prologue* to Kadish's recent works. For several years both artists have recognized that their work often draws from the same sources. Peacock's poetic analysis of Kadish's work reveals their mutual appreciation of landscape and desire to achieve a sense of the place. The essay evokes the paintings in terms that link the two forms of expression in a highly personal manner.

Finally, Janet Heit, art critic and curator at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, has enriched our catalog by offering an introduction to the artist.

Barbara Perkins
Administrative and Curatorial Assistant
University Art Gallery

INTRODUCTION

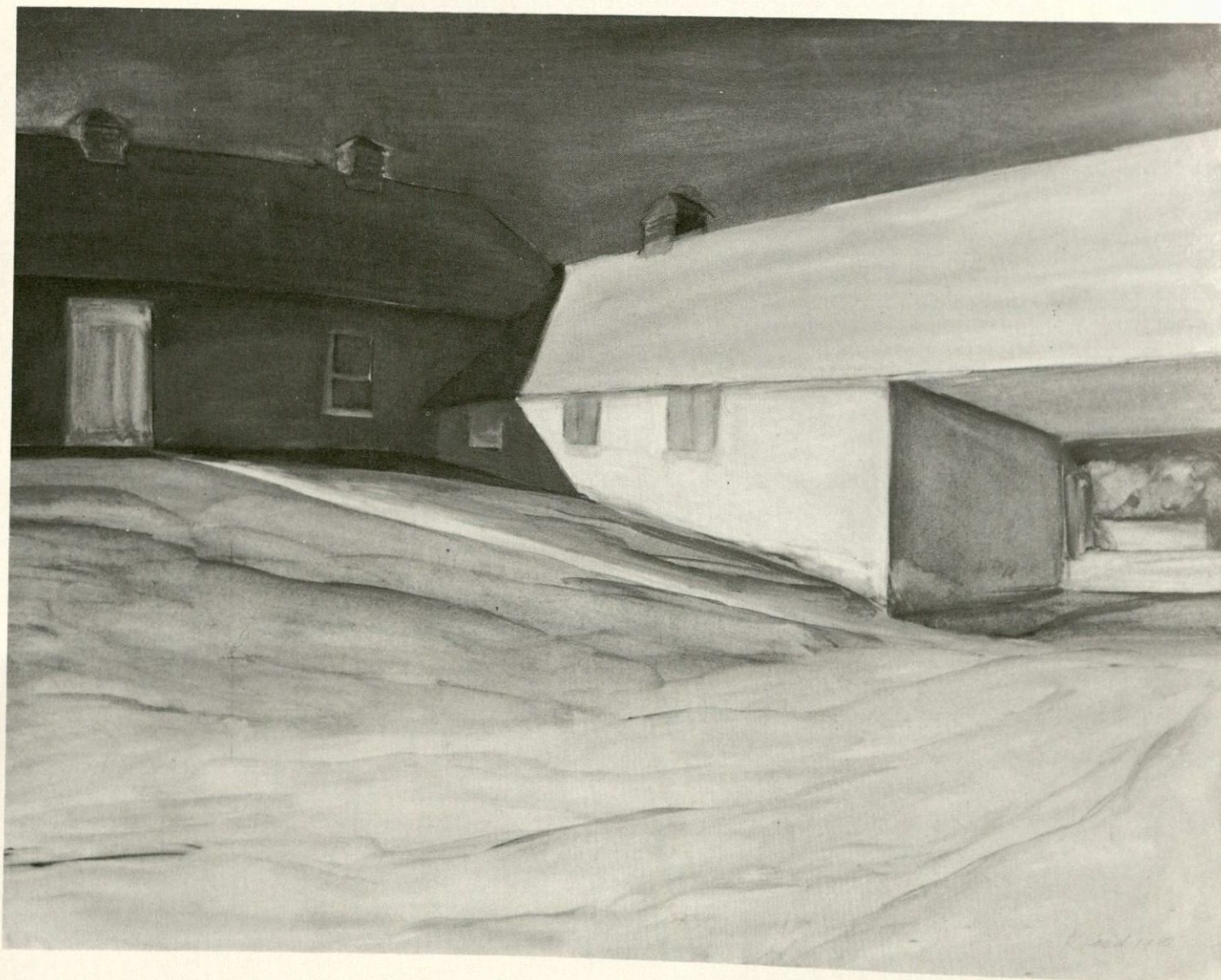
Katherine Kadish understands the moods inherent in sunlight, the emotions evoked by color, the energy expressed through movement in space. Light, color, space: essential yet intangible underpinnings that help us discover the beauty in living things. This is what Katherine Kadish is so adept at depicting; therein lies the power of her art.

Kadish reveals the "thingness" of the thing: yellow-pink Arizona heat; cool, aqueous pools; vast, rolling hillsides; quiet, formal gardens. Human figures are fleshed out of darkness and light, or molded in planes of color. A tree is suggested with a swift stroke of paint, carving its imprint into the sky. Long afternoon shadows cross the landscape, marking the passage of time.

The paintings and drawings in this exhibition are the loving result of years spent drawing, etching, and painting, both from the subject and from slides and photographs taken while traveling. Many of the works gathered here were inspired by stays at Yaddo, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Phoenix, Arizona—three major places of influence in recent years. Still an essentially figurative artist, Kadish has tended increasingly toward incorporating abstract elements into her work, striking a wonderful balance between the two. The result is both a personal expression based on the living world and a geometric ordering of environmental space.

All of Katherine Kadish's works are overwhelmingly sensual, a feeling transmitted from her own joy in mixing paint and rubbing charcoal into paper. As tranquil or even solemn as many of these works may appear, Kadish's essential optimism transcends all, bringing the work to the root of her creative energy, affirming life.

Janet Heit
New York City



The Barns, 1979 - 80
oil on paper, 30 x 40



The Porch, 1978
oil on canvas, 66 x 48

THE PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS OF KATHERINE KADISH, 1976 - 1980

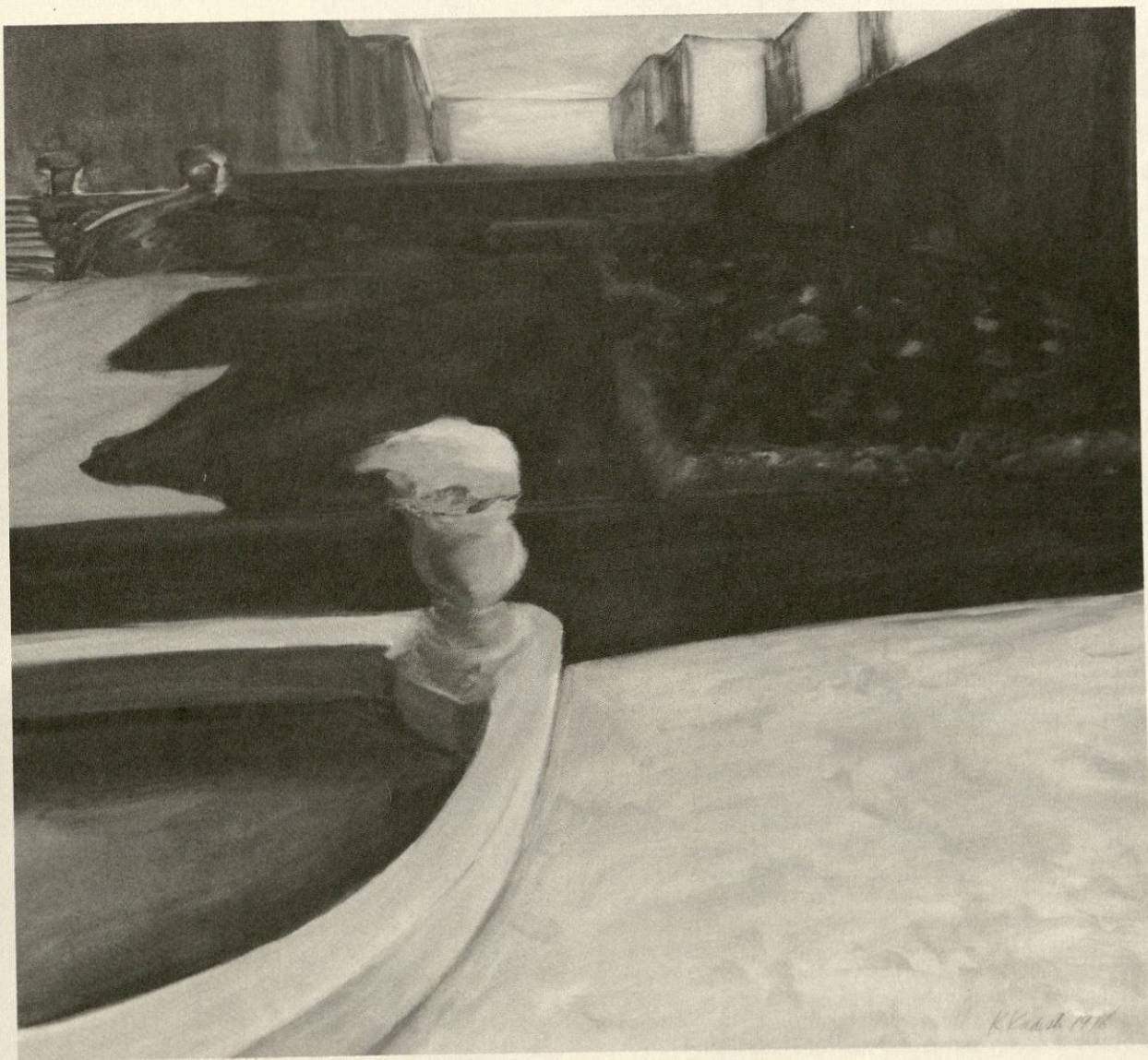
A PROLOGUE

I

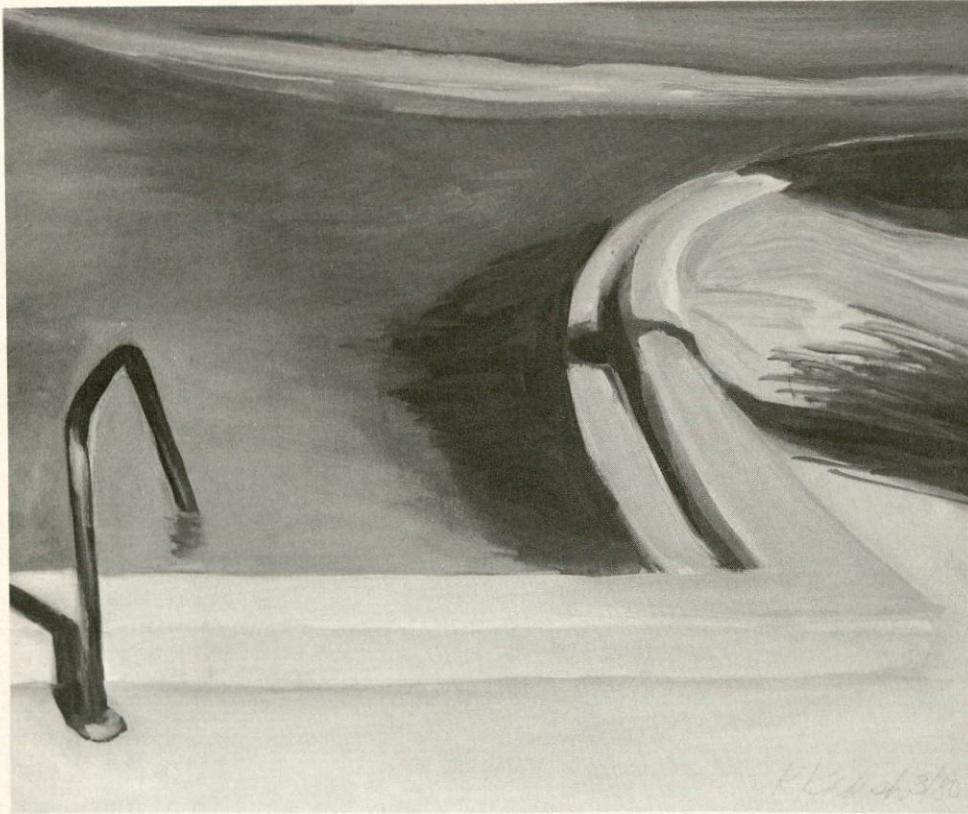
The pools, gardens, and landscapes tell this story:

It is always summer. You the viewer are always approaching, on foot, in the sun, the place you would like to be, a garden, a pool, a hill. What you see in front of you is what you want, although even when you stop, you may have a sense that you are still walking past it. The figures you see are figures you are going to meet, because you are walking rapidly and purposefully to the places they occupy with a desire to be precisely in the spots in which they sit. And it is warm. It is in the middle of the day in the middle of the season in the middle of the year. With a fullness that comes with a sense of being completely in the midst of a day on earth, you feel that you are in the middle of your life and that what is in front of you is your life's momentary center. The certainty you feel at this juncture is a matter of an instinct, unerring because it is bodily attuned, which will lead you by way of steps, low walls, guide-rails, paths, and the edges of shadows toward a place that—descended, ascended, or entered into—will flower in your eyes. Perhaps it is also a place in which you will flower.

If one of the functions of art is to arrest time, then one way to view the work of an artist is to find out when she chooses to arrest it. In these paintings and drawings of pools and bathers and paintings of formal gardens and country landscapes, time is stopped in the midst of its fullest moments. The work is not fecund or cornucopic, probably because it is not detailed. The paintings are simply full: full of light, full of water, full of green, full of blue, full of air. They are not full of sky at all. They are full of summer air. They are sensuous and loose. When the artist is working, the paintings and drawings are produced very quickly. Very little is lingered over. What is valued are the approaches to places, and approaches to desired goals are never lingering, since to linger (or to work over slowly) always anticipates loss. That midpoint or full point at which we see the bathers or gardens or landscapes or pools has in it a sense of having. The sense of stillness or calm about the paintings is a sense of holding, in the way a summer afternoon holds or embraces its inhabitants. There is no reason to be cautious. It is not about to rain. A sudden wind will not come up. The excellent weather enables the paintings to take their stance toward time: one can only be in the middle of a middle when the weather is calm and clear enough for one to be able to locate this sort of heart or core.



The Curved Pool, 1978 - 79
oil on paper, 26½ x 29



Pool at Bay Pines, 1980
oil on paper, 8 x 10

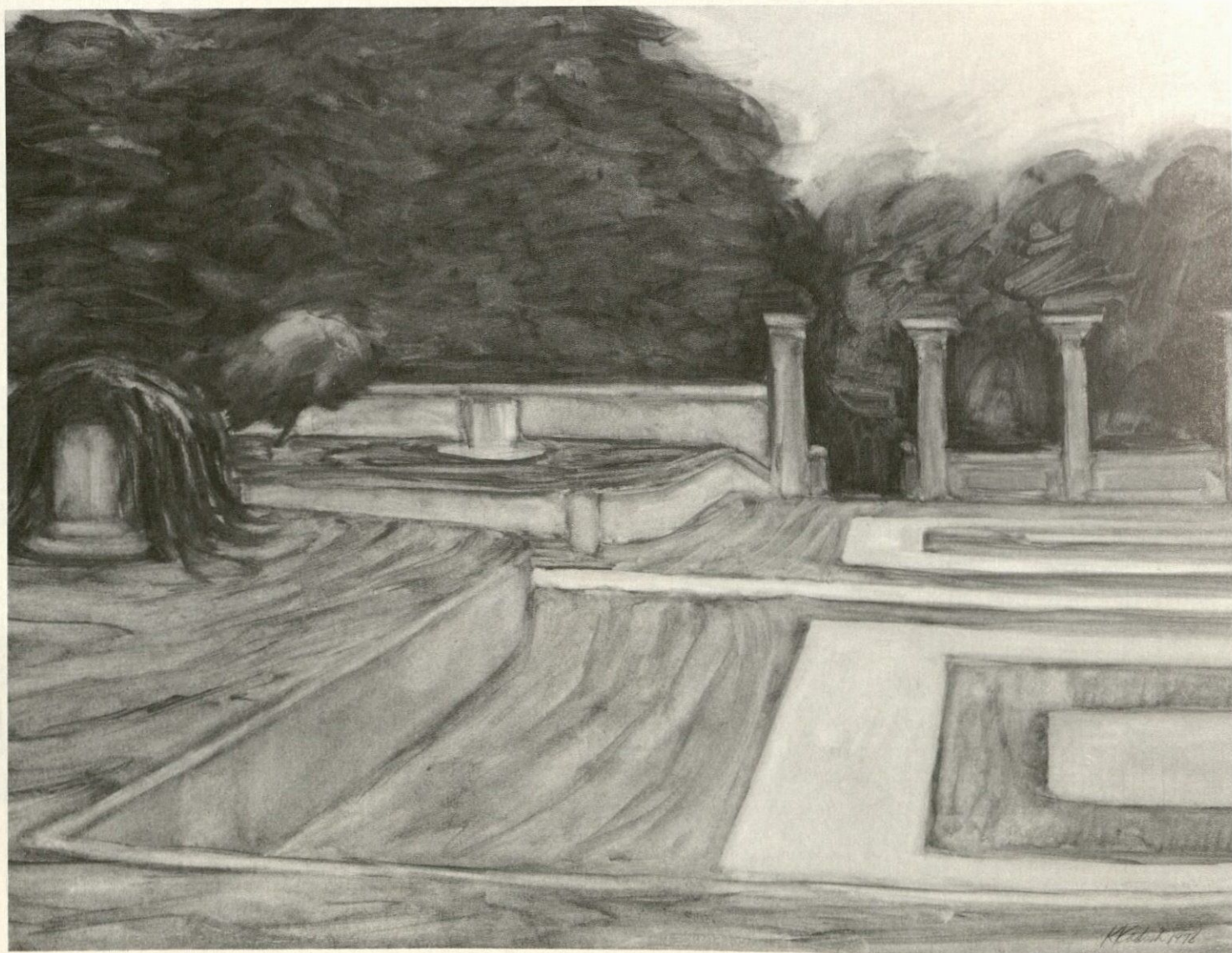
But one never has the sense of being caught in a moment. Time here is in its leisure. Where the artist stops time is at a point where hours exist. There is a sense that at the heart of time there is time to spend. The viewer has hours to spend there, walking along the roads or through the grasses or down the paths by the fountains or clambering in and out of the pools. The stillness of the paintings without figures is the stillness of landscape waiting to be inhabited. In this sense the paintings are inviting, literally. The bathers partake of the sense of mid-time without being caught in a moment as well. The swimmers and other summer figures on porches, steps, diving boards, and lounge chairs appear to be granted the hours for their contemplations and anxieties and conversations and relaxations simply by virtue of their physical stances. Usually they are positioned at the middle point between two elements: standing half in water, half in summer air; lounging on a diving board suspended over water; sitting on porches or stairways half-way between interiors and exteriors, at midpoints between deep shade and strong sunlight.



At the Edge of the Pool, 1979
acrylic on paper, 26 x 20



The Patio, 1979
charcoal, 40 x 30



The Terraces, 1978 - 79
oil on paper, 30 x 40

The fluidity of the work—its ability both to stop in the middle of the middle of time and to grant time—comes from its spirit of movement. Motion in this work reinforces the calmness and fullness and allows the idea of the “centered hours” to exist not in a vast fantastic benignity, but within their genuine earthly scope. In the swimming pools the water is moving, and in the gardens and landscapes the air is moving. In all of the paintings outdoors there is the sense of a breeze. This is leisure in its fullest meaning: that one is the master of one’s time. Part of the feeling of being “in the midst” is due to the speed at which the works are envisioned and completed and the sureness with which separate areas are both linked and defined; one’s eye “circulates” like a breeze.

Motion plays a literal role in Katherine Kadish’s vision. That extraordinary sense (due to the perspective and the light far more than to any close detail—there is no detail to speak of in the paintings, unless it is the detail of light) of being in the middle of time yet with time to spend derives partly from the fact that the four elements are in a quiet and constant motion. Land, water, air, and light interact in such a way as to give the viewer the impression that he is moving through or past the subject. “Swimming Pool, The Water” or “The Large Stair” are good examples. Of course, that makes perfect sense when one knows that the artist walks through or past her subject many times before she photographs or draws it, in order later to make her painting. For Katherine Kadish it seems that the object of all the moving around is not finding the eventual “best spot,” but all the moving around itself. The subject of the paintings is “the place moved through.” This is especially true in the landscapes and gardens and in the paintings of pools without figures or with still figures. In the paintings of active bathers it is the bathers themselves who move through the places. The artist does not seem to be seduced by the photographs she takes and paints from, and perhaps it is because the photographs provide the point of stillness she is always moving past.

The role that going away plays in this artist’s work cannot be underestimated. Many of the paintings and drawings were done at Yaddo or at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. It is no accident that one of the favorite books of Katherine’s childhood was *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. In the book a girl is sent from India to England to live in a huge damp mansion from which she is sent out daily to explore and play. (In this respect the mansion is not unlike Yaddo.) The story presents view after view of gardens, lawns, and English countryside, the sort of countryside that still is divided by hedgerows—the sort of divided or parceled landscape Kadish now finds to paint. (The only thing the book is missing is a swimming pool.) In *The Secret Garden* the girl goes away to learn to see, to learn to become aware of the world and the place she has in it. She goes from India to England, from the mansion through the kitchen gardens through the formal gardens to the walled garden which eventually becomes her own. Kadish, too, often goes away to see, to another place, another summer, another time. It is terribly important for someone so fascinated with the ideas of approach, of going toward and of coming upon, physically to come or go some distance to her subject. There is not a single painting having to do with “home,” unless it is the series of female figures in winter coats, and even these take place out of doors, one with a curious ramp of steps providing an exit route.

The notion of “going toward” is the way I have of understanding the points of view of the paintings and drawings, and of understanding the sequential nature of the groups of pools, pools and figures, gardens and landscapes. Each painting or drawing in the sequence seems “on the way” to the next. It is a mistake, though, to think that each work is “on the way” to something else. The sequences do not point toward a goal outside themselves. The goal is the method of seeing as passing. That is why, even though each work stops each event at a certain time, the hours still seem to pass. That is why each work seems to be in the midst of, in the middle of a middle. That is why the ideas of “going toward” and “in the midst of” are mutually cooperative in this part of her oeuvre.

There is a quality of reverie in the drawings and paintings of the female figures and in the drawings of the saddle men, and in some ways it prefigures the feelings of leisure in the later work. The earliest work we have here is of seated sensuous, but preoccupied, female figures. These drawings, because they are done inside, suggest no season. With the advent of the saddle men drawings comes the suggestion of outdoors, or at least open air. The saddle figures, in my mind, are the precursors of all the bathers and swimmers. The 1976 charcoal figures of women are either dressed or nude, either covered (indeed, draped) or exposed. The 1977 drawings of men (though sometimes the male figures become wonderfully androgenous) are unclothed except that they are partially armored by their saddles. The armoring is sometimes so much like large leathery primordial leaves that the covering itself suggests uncovering: the figures seem to emerge from the leaves of leather rather than to be protected by them. There are also primordial feelings here. The figures are primitive and ceremonial, recalling some sort of rite of passage. The early female figures, drawn in backless dresses, positioned in upholstered chairs, have about them the languor of civilization. But the bathers in the later paintings and drawings will reap the best of both of these qualities. They will appear in a primitive languor. The scream of "Saddle Drawing #12" is like a war whoop. I have a feeling that he might run naked into battle. The other figures seem to parade their saddles. They all stand. The figures of the year before generally sat or crouched. The saddles are somewhere between battle dress and leaf clothes. They mediate between the defended and the exposed. In these single figures Kadish created what it took her at least two separate views to accomplish previously, a way to show both camouflage and exposure.

Having seen the draped and naked female figures and the saddled men, it is easier to understand why the large majority of figures painted or drawn after these is swimmers. The poolside gives the artist the perfect balance between defense and exposure she has aimed for, since a bathing-suited figure is both covered and exposed. There is a perfect balance of necessary covering and freedom of the skin. There is all of the order of civilization with none of its endless wardrobe; instead there is the nakedness of nature. Again, we are at a midpoint, a moment of dressed undressing, a sanctioned nudity, covering without concealing.

The ideas of balance in all of Katherine Kadish's paintings and drawings are paradoxically formal in view of the broad and loose manner of their execution and in view of the casual nature of the subjects of the work—or the casual views which are taken in spite of the formality of some of the subjects. The formalized casualness (or perhaps the casual formality) seems to me to come from the tension produced by the original decisions of what to draw or paint, and the paintings and drawings in themselves. There is something vastly intuitive about her executions of her visions, and perhaps the intuitions can be maintained because of the depth of her deftness at craft. In the best of her work there is both passion and mastery. These are the moments at which she paints the inside of an insight in the broadest terms of the physical world, outside, and full of light.

Molly Peacock
Wilmington, Delaware



Saddle Drawing #12, 1977
charcoal, 30 x 40

THOSE WOMEN, FOR INSTANCE

For Katherine Kadish

Those women, for instance, about to sail
the Atlantic again, in their blue
and brown woolen suits, foxes knotted
firmly around their necks, staring
so solemnly into the camera.
That stairway in the background
leads somewhere. As a child you thought
it led to one of those mysterious gardens
you'd seen in your grandmother's album.
Those patterned walks and perfectly
trimmed hedges, that English light
glinting off the still pond held there
like a china cup. Or the aunts gathered
on the lawn in their summer dresses, white
moths clustered at the edge
of the picture as though they would
fly away. Think of them boarding a train,
holding on to their cloches, sitting down
in the dining car, white linen
and roses on the table, crystal and silver.
Now they are about to re-enter
a past that closes before you
like the blurred and sodden pages
of a letter dropped in the garden
when a storm came, and you
are the tiny figure waving
from the doorway calling yes,
yes, you were here.

Susan Wood
Washington, D.C.

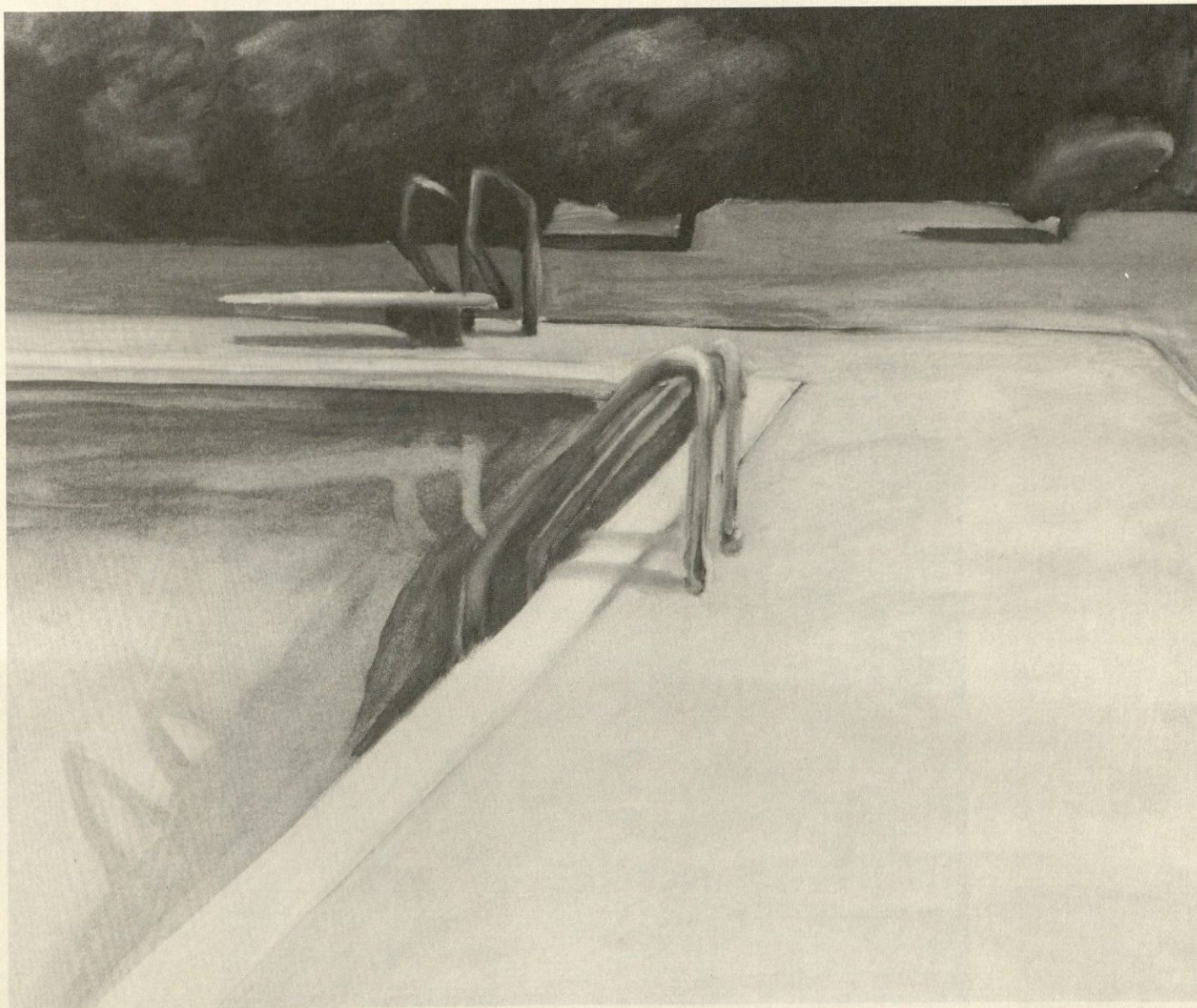
from *Bazaar* (poetry). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981.



The Large Stair, 1978
oil on paper, 38 x 60



The Italian Garden, 1978 - 79
oil on paper, 22½ x 32½



Swimming Pool: Morning, 1978
oil on paper, 24 x 30

ANGLE OF INCLINATION

For Katherine Kadish

As if on waking you entered
the landscape of your own design,
as in a storm your body dissolves,
or when swimming, equilibrium,
you have turned a corner and escaped
from the bleak house of the body—
no more vision against the grain,
instead, more light than heart can hold.

I move through these paintings
collecting vials of earth and rocks
to weigh down my sleep in a new place.
The trees line up for an instant—
next glance, nature escapes the grid again.
Those pyramidal bushes: haven't they always
been there marking each step I make,
as if travelling on the best day of summer

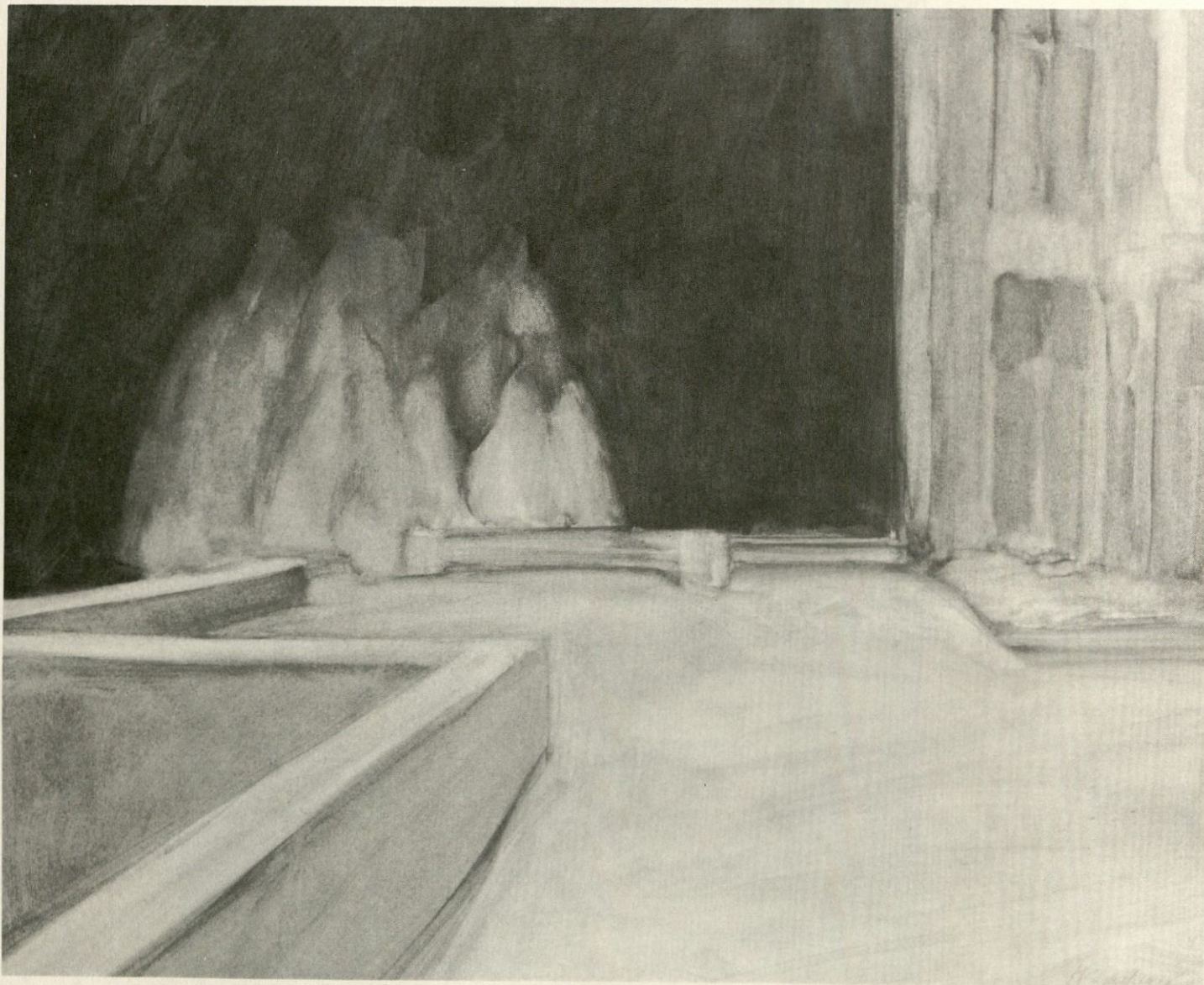
In the corner of a swimming pool,
the ladder connects water and air
and the swimmers float
on their own shadows.
They wrap the darkness
around themselves like towels
as they emerge from the water
and slowly become solid again.

These landscapes call us
out of the rafters of sleep,
away from a supper of equal parts
indifference and desire,
away from the blueprint of bodies,
the grey maze of minds,
into the green and angled labyrinth
suspending the middle distance.

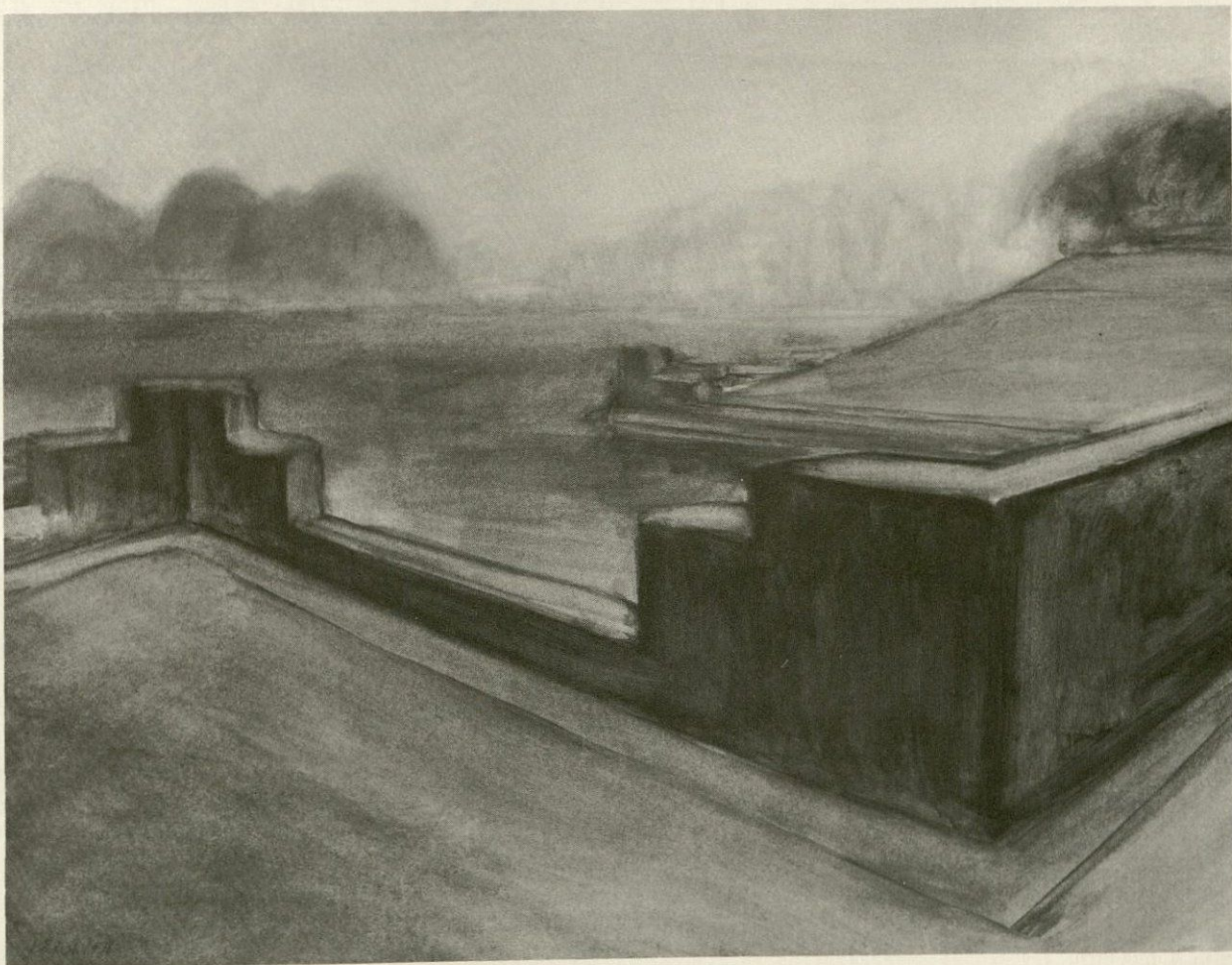
—Sue Standing
Cambridge, Massachusetts



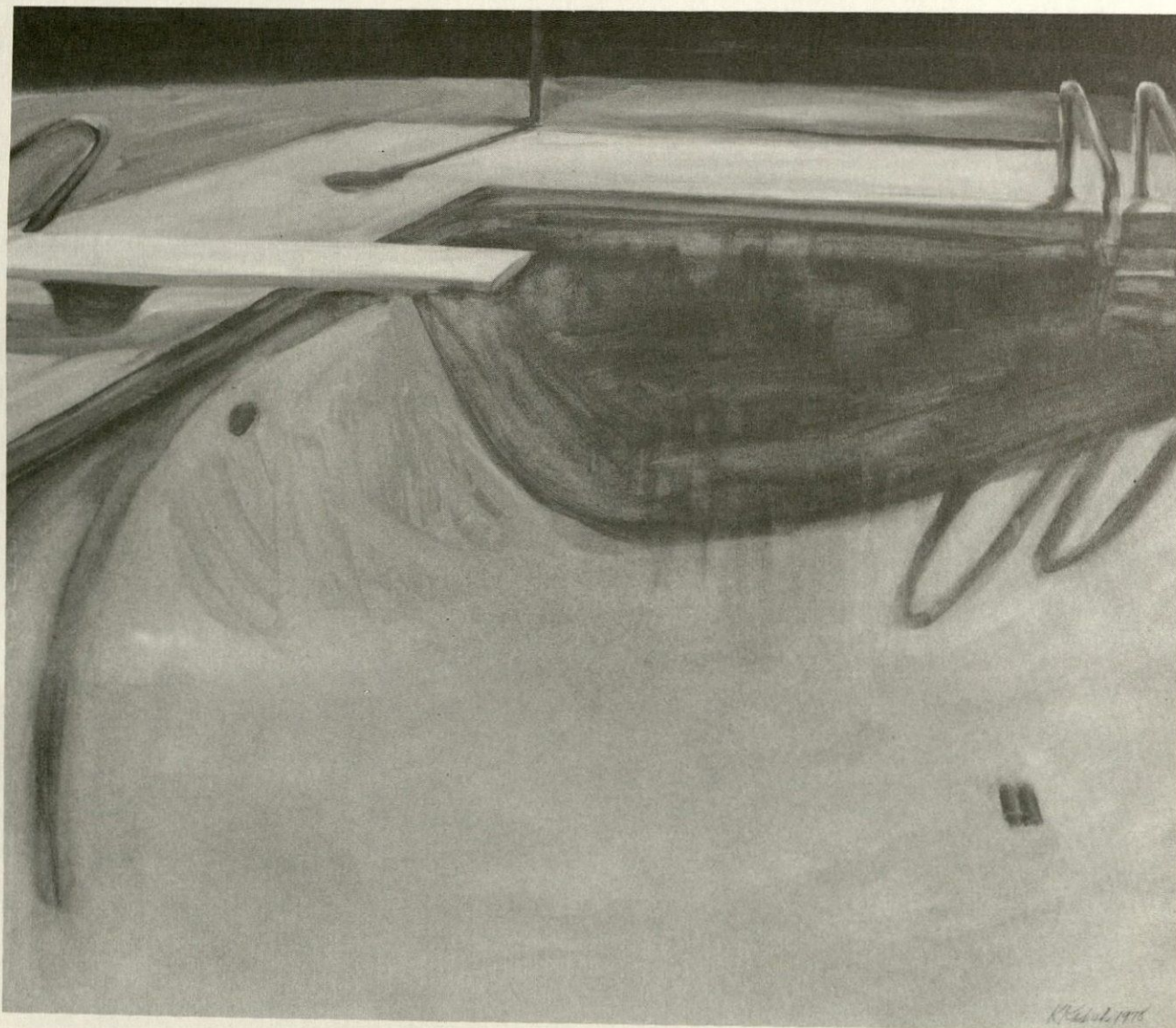
Leaving the Pool, 1979
oil on paper, 31 x 22



The Terrace with Yellow Trees, 1978
oil on paper, 24 x 30
Collection: Andrew and Freda Bromberg



The Hedge, 1978
oil on paper, 30 x 40



Swimming Pool: The Water, 1978 - 79
oil on paper, 26 x 28



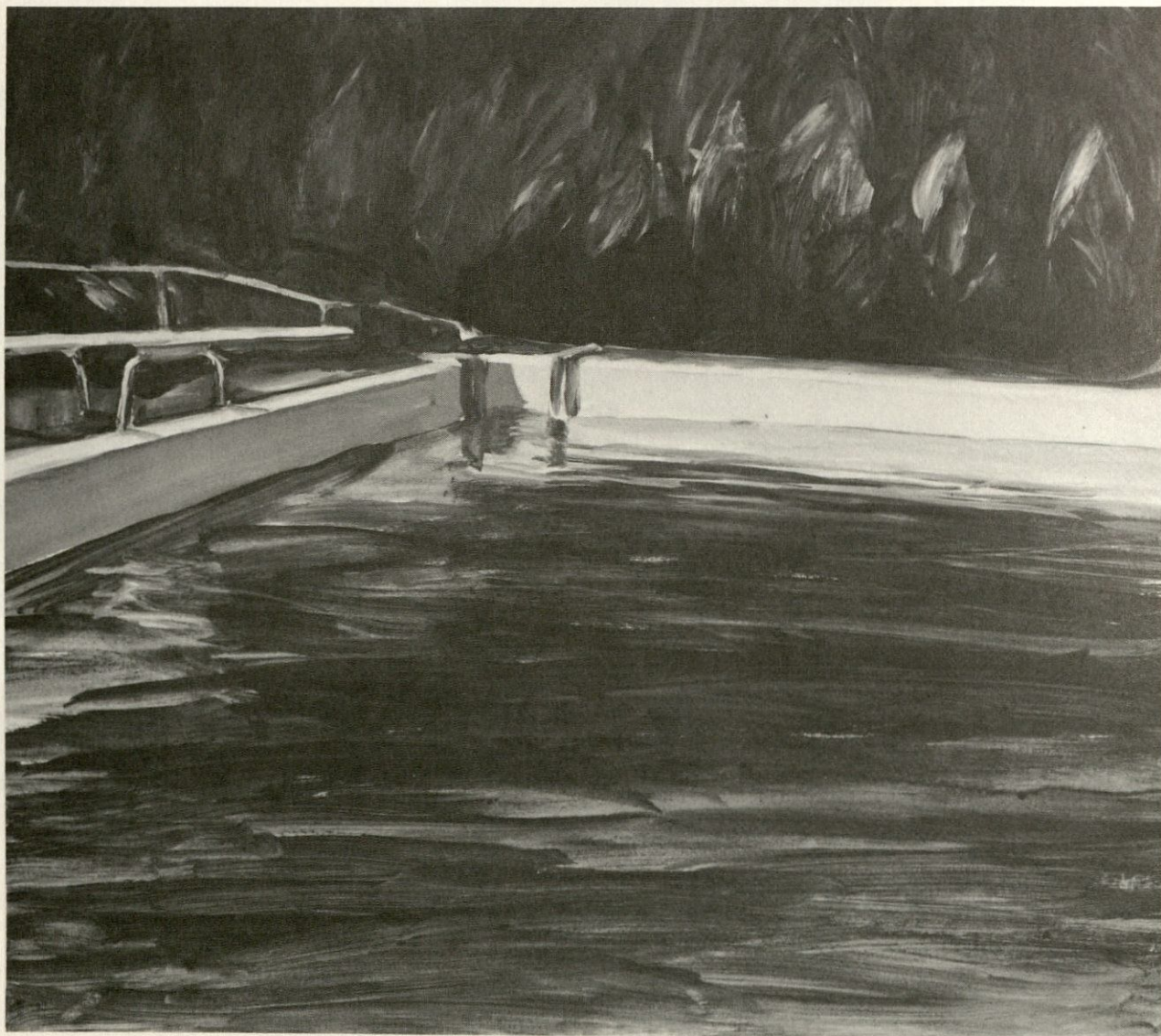
The Couple, 1979
oil on canvas, 36 x 48
Collection: Sarita Southgate and Robert Williams



Bather and Shadow, 1979
charcoal, 40 x 30



Woman Looking into a Pool, 1979
oil on canvas, 30 x 40



Swimming Pool: Morning, 1980
acrylic on paper, 24 x 30



Swimmer Resting, 1979
acrylic on paper, 20 x 26



The Boxwood Hedge, 1980
pencil, 20 x 26



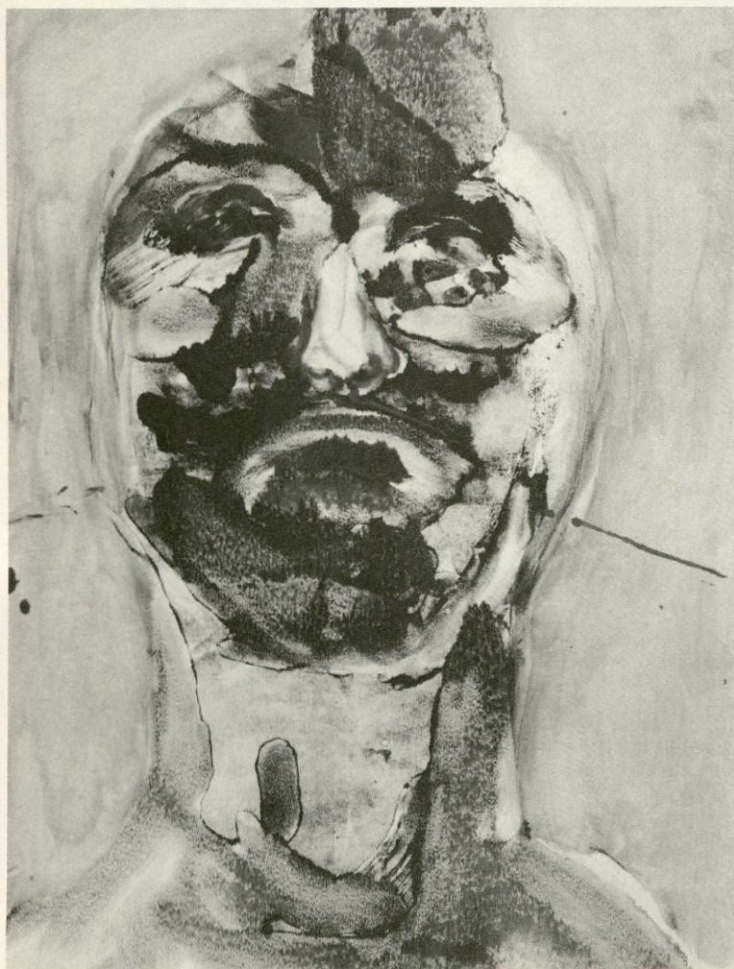
Upper Lake, Sweet Briar, 1980
charcoal, 20 x 26



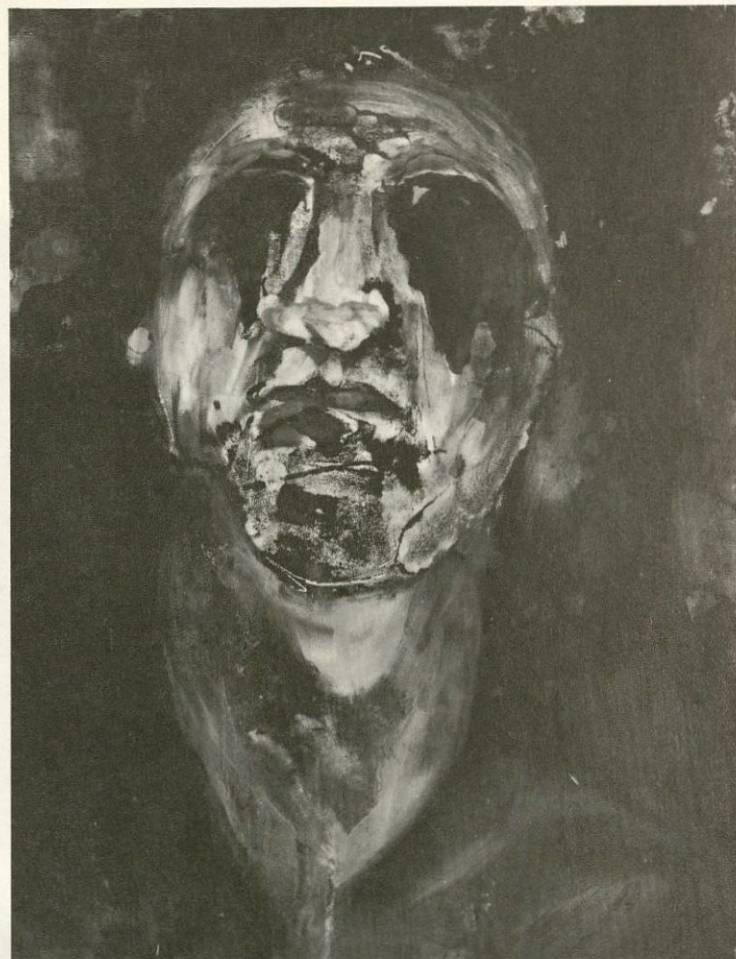
Evening, 1980
oil on paper, 18 x 22



The Red Road, 1980
oil on paper, 16 x 20
Collection: Louise Rose



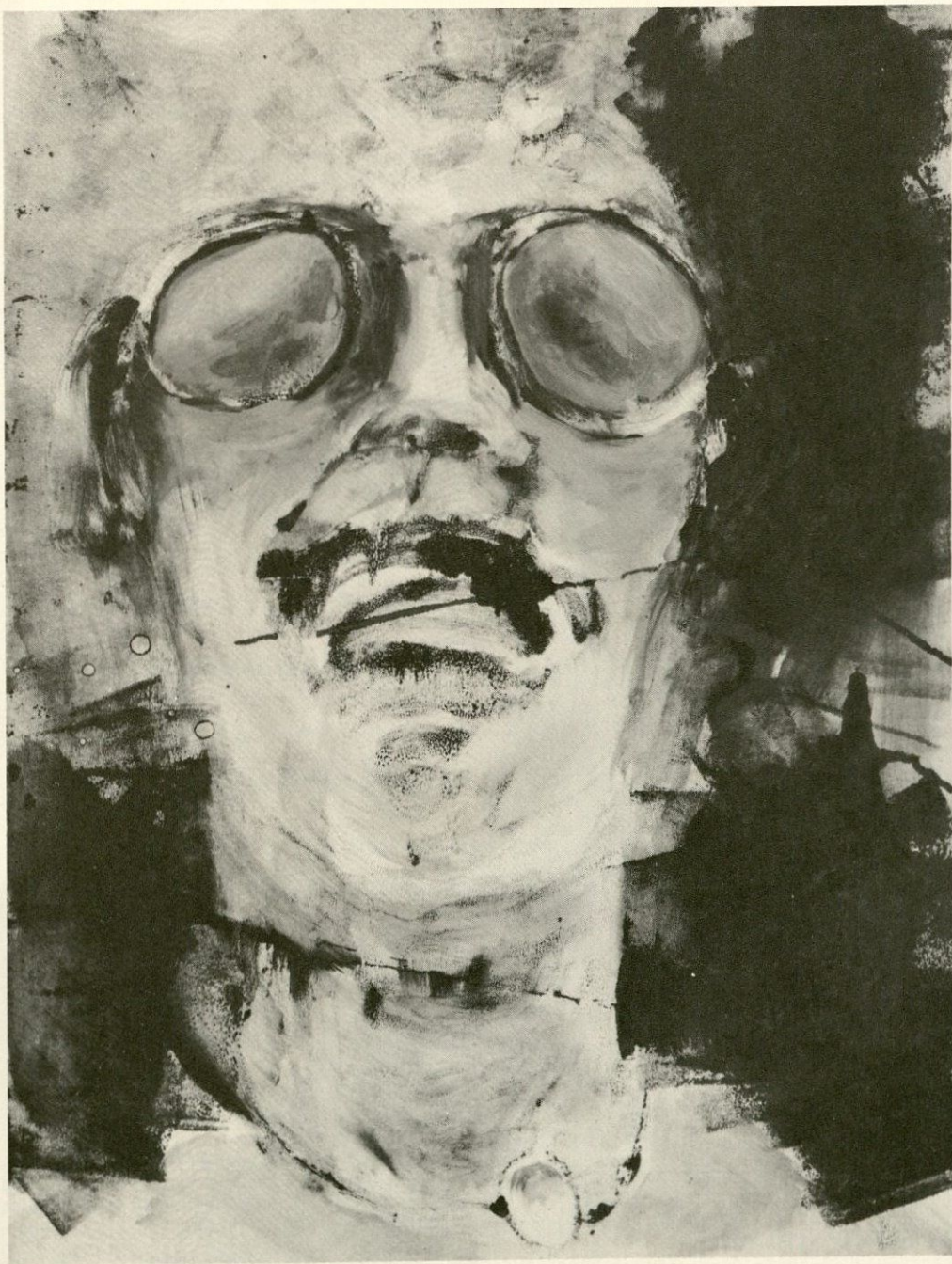
Mask #1, 1980
monotype/oil on paper, 24 x 18



Mask #4, 1980
monotype/oil on paper, 24 x 18

"Every victim was a culprit, every culprit a victim . . ."

Joseph Heller, *Catch 22*



Mask #3, 1980
monotype/oil on paper, 24 x 18
Collection: Joan Stein

BIOGRAPHY

- 1939 Born June 24 in Pittsburgh, Pa.
 1961 BFA, Department of Painting and Design, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, Pa.
 1966 MA, Department of Art History, University of Chicago
 Thesis: Alfred Stieglitz' *Camera Work*

Selected exhibitions, awards, and fellowships:

- 1971 The Forsythe Gallery, Ann Arbor, Mich. (group)
 1972 "Artists of Central New York," Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N.Y.: Purchase Prize
 1973 Davidson National Print and Drawing Exhibition, Davidson, N.C.: Purchase Prize
 Oklahoma Art Center National Print and Drawing Exhibition, Oklahoma City, Okla.
 Library of Congress Biennial Print Exhibition, Washington, D.C.
 CAPS Grant in Graphics from the New York State Council on the Arts
 1974 "The Eye of Woman," Hobart College, Geneva, N.Y. (group)
 1975 Two Rivers Gallery, Roberson Center, Binghamton, N.Y. (solo)
 Denison University, Granville, Ohio (solo)
 Evans Gallery, Toronto, Ontario (group)
 Galerie de l'Esprit, Montreal, Quebec (group)
 "Arena '75" National Exhibition, Binghamton, N.Y.: Purchase Prize
 1976 Eisenhower College, Seneca Falls, N.Y. (solo)
 Pleiades Gallery, New York, N.Y. (group)
 Publication of etching in CAPS portfolio of original prints
 Everhart Museum Regional Exhibition, Scranton, Pa.: Prize in Drawing
 1977 Hobart College, Geneva, N.Y. (solo)
 "Women in the Arts: Working Papers," Empire State Plaza, Albany, N.Y., and Hartwick College, Oneonta, N.Y.
 Potsdam National Print and Drawing Exhibition, Potsdam, N.Y.: Prize in Drawing
 Fellowship at Yaddo
 1978 Arnot Art Museum, Elmira, N.Y. (solo)
 Fellowship at Yaddo
 Fellowship at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts
 1979 Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, Mo. (solo)
 Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Sweet Briar, Va. (group)
 Chautauqua Art Gallery, Chautauqua, N.Y. (group)
 State University of New York College at Fredonia (group)
 Fellowship at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts
 1980 Gallery 219, State University of New York at Buffalo (solo)
 VCCA Traveling Exhibition: Charlottesville, Richmond, Norfolk, and Alexandria, Va. (group)
 Fellowship at Yaddo
 Fellowship at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts

In the summers of 1979 and 1980, Katherine Kadish was appointed a Master Teacher in the School of Visual Arts of the New York State Summer School of the Arts, teaching painting, drawing, and printmaking. Since 1975 she has taught drawing and printmaking at the State University of New York at Binghamton and, most recently, at Broome Community College in Binghamton.



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