

ARTFORUM

NEW YORK

Beverly Buchanan

ANDREW EDLIN GALLERY

212 Bowery

March 25–May 13, 2023



View of “Beverly Buchanan: Northern Walls and Southern Yards,” 2023.

The latest posthumous exhibition of Beverly Buchanan’s sculptures, paintings, and drawings calls attention not only to surfaces themselves—their distinct materialities coalescing into larger forms—but to immanent meanings contained within. Best known for her maquette-like structures made of found wood emulating vernacular shacks in the rural American South, Buchanan’s greater range here is a startling reminder of the artist’s fluid and thoughtful capacities. Working across an expansive matrix of media and genres, the ensemble of Buchanan’s output presents multiple facets of what “making things” might point toward in the greater world.

Among several distinct bodies of work is a set of small slabs—made from cast concrete, enamel, and oyster-shell tabby—laid out on a low dais in the center of the floor. Buchanan deployed these types of sculpture to quietly but insistently mark a series of sites containing unheralded racial histories—a sort of deliberately anti-monumental memorializing. These markers’ facades hint at the elaborate means of their creation, while also indicating specific localities of sourcing. The artist’s production in coastal Georgia of tabby concrete, for instance, relied on burned oyster shells, recollecting what the eighteenth-century enslaved workers of colonial settlers used to build area structures there.

Surrounding the slabs are several large paintings, whose numinous imagery hovers between abstraction and figuration. Impressively grand, they gently immerse viewers at an especially human scale, embodying yet again characteristics of a relatable anti-monumentality. Among these is *Honey*, ca. 1971–76; its central, stucco-like textures give way to a warm gradient flare of bright yellows and rich oranges that spill beyond the painting’s edges. A selection of Buchanan’s later work—bright abstractions of flowers and foliage juxtaposed with small idiosyncratic figures and vessels—resonate with qualities similar to those of her small shacks. They tantalize with a glimpse of the sort of place-making environmental sculpture that Buchanan generated and positioned with exceptional care in the later part of her life and career.

— *Brian Karl*