



Beverly Buchanan: Northern Walls and Southern Yards

Andrew Edlin Gallery , 212 Bowery, info@edlingallery.com.

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By Roslyn Bernstein

The Beverly Buchanan I knew was obsessed with shacks with odd angles, with southern architecture made by home dwellers, with porches and overhanging eaves, some left natural and some painted in bright colors. They were artistic versions of the homes she saw in her childhood and of homes she saw when she moved back south from Harlem in 1977.

My husband, a SoHo architect and I visited her in Athens, Georgia after seeing her work in Bernice Steinbaum Gallery in SoHo in the 1990s and we drove around the countryside in her pickup truck meeting friends and fellow folk artists and marveling at the local architecture, no two shacks the same. Narrow, Wide, Tall, Short. Open front doors. Cats and dogs roaming through the front yards and ragged rockers swaying gently in the breeze.



We stopped at her friend's Reuben Miller, whose front yard was filled with his tin art, rough cut metal piece of animals and people and the devil (which we bought), real and imaginary, strung on clothes lines or twirling on poles in the earth. They were painted bright colors and definitely for sale — Not gallery prices but more like \$15 or \$30.

Beverly and her then partner Patti were living in a house not far from the University of Georgia campus in Athens where Patti worked. Certainly not a shack but rather a big Victorian wooden house with rooms upstairs and downstairs. It fit with Beverly's passion for wooden buildings and rustic architecture. Beverly suffered from Asthma and in the entrance hall there was an oxygen tank.

So seeing the *Beverly Buchanan: Northern Walls and Southern Yards*, exhibit which just opened at the Andrew Edlin Gallery, curated by Aurélie Bernard Wortsman, was a trip back in history, to the art Beverly made before she headed south and created her shacks. In 1971, Beverly took evening classes from the African-American painter Norman Lewis at the Art Students League where she began making abstract still-lives. One painting was included in a group show in Lewis and Romare Bearden's Cinque Gallery, a space that focused on emerging minority artists.

Beverly lived with Mary Woods in the Riverdale section of the Bronx while she worked as a med tech in a Harlem Hospital. There, she photographed decaying walls and structures, old buildings collapsing, and concrete blocks lying on the ground which undoubtedly influenced her art, especially in its early abstract period. Her focus was on the facades of buildings, their massive size and their texture, too.

In Gallery 1: *Early Abstraction, 1971–1972*, Wortsman has hung three large wall paintings, black, yellow and orange, lent to the show by Mari Lorraine Molenaar, a friend of Beverly's from the time when both of them lived in East Orange, New Jersey in the mid-1970s. The two lost touch when Beverly moved to Georgia and later to Ann Arbor, MI but after Beverly passed in 2015, Molenaar connected with her friend and executor Jane Bridges. She sent Jane two of Beverly's works on paper which she also had from the 70s. When Jane told Molenaar of

Beverly's upcoming show at the Edlin gallery, Molenaar sent them photos of the three Buchanan paintings that she had. Andrew Edlin and Aurélie Wortsman came out to see them in Princeton and decided to include them in their show. "It has been very exciting," Molenaar said.

The orange and black wall paintings, acrylic on canvas, are 80 by 60 inches both done in the 1970s. The third wall painting, "Honey," was painted c. 1971–1976 and is 75 by 75 inches. The piece has an intricate pattern in the yellow, creating a feeling of movement and texture.

Also included in the gallery are Beverly's architectural pieces from the 1980s, made of cast concrete, enamel, terracotta and oyster shell tabby mixture. They are small, dense, and a very dark contrast to the bright, light wall paintings surrounding them.

By the mid-1980s, settled down South, Beverly began her exploration of the local environment and local architecture — work, she referred to as "environmental sculpture." I own one of these works from 1990, *Hastings' House*, a shack with a feminist legend that Beverly wrote, a legend that inspired me in my four decades of college teaching.

"Brunson Earthly Hastings lived by the rules of hard work, no liquor, and one woman. His 10 sons were smart, hardworking farm boys

but Anna, his only girl was his heart. He was blind when she graduated but smiled proudly when he heard them call out DR. HASTINGS, TO HER.”