

Katherine Bernhardt  
*Dummy doll jealous eyes ditto pikachu beefy mimikyu rough play Galarian rapid dash libra horn HP 270 Vmax full art*

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5–6/F, H Queen's,  
80 Queen's Road Central  
Hong Kong



Katherine Bernhardt, *Ditto VMax Ju Ju*, 2021. © Katherine Bernhardt  
Courtesy the artist, David Zwirner, and Canada

David Zwirner is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by American artist Katherine Bernhardt (b. 1975) that will take place at the gallery's location in Hong Kong. The works in this presentation focus on characters from the Japanese media franchise and global game sensation Pokémon, continuing to expand Bernhardt's unique visual lexicon, which culls from an irreverent pop vernacular as well as her own life and the broader culture. *Dummy doll jealous eyes ditto pikachu beefy mimikyu rough play Galarian rapid dash libra horn HP 270 Vmax full art* will be Bernhardt's first solo exhibition in Hong Kong and her second with David Zwirner.

Bernhardt first attracted notice in the early 2000s for her paintings of supermodels taken from the pages of fashion magazines such as *Elle* and *Vogue*. In the decade following, she began making pattern paintings that feature quotidian motifs—such as tacos, coffee makers, toilet paper, cigarettes, E.T., Garfield, Darth Vader, and the Pink Panther—in unlikely visual combinations within expansive fields of exuberant color. The compositional elements of Bernhardt's paintings include palettes that allude to the tropical climes of Puerto Rico, references to the design and colouration of Moroccan rugs and West African Dutch wax fabrics, and influences ranging from Henri Matisse and the Pattern and Decoration movement to Peter Doig and Chris Ofili.

In this exhibition, Bernhardt continues her exploration of contemporary pop phenomena by focusing on the characters of Pokémon's expansive universe. Conceived by creator Satoshi Tajiri and art director Ken Sugimori and first launched by Nintendo in Japan in 1996, Pokémon was introduced to much fanfare in the United States in 1998 and has become one of the world's largest cross-media franchises. Bernhardt previously debuted the Pokémon character Ditto, a pink-purple blob-like form with shape-shifting powers, in her 2022 exhibition *Why is a mushroom growing in my shower?* at David Zwirner London.

In *Dummy doll jealous eyes ditto pikachu beefy mimikyu rough play Galarian rapid dash libra horn HP 270 Vmax full art*, the new works feature compositions culled from the Pokémon Trading Card Game; these "cards," each featuring a different Pokémon, are rendered using the signature elements of Bernhardt's ebullient style. For each painting, she delineates a loose border that frames the character represented and overlays the statistics and special abilities that distinguish their role within the game. Colors and lines bleed and pool together across their surfaces, revealing Bernhardt's brisk and improvisational process. To create her works, the artist first draws on upright canvases with spray paint, after which she lays them on the floor to apply acrylic paint thinned out with water. Moving back and forth between several paintings at once, Bernhardt invites accident and chance into each of her dynamic compositions through her fast-paced actions.

By engaging the Pokémon ecosystem—premised on rarity—Bernhardt taps into a structure that corresponds to the high-low dichotomies of contemporary painting. In her attempt to "catch them all," Bernhardt samples many of the eighteen Pokémon "types" that allow players to categorize characters according to their powers and capabilities. In *Surfing Pikachu* (2023), the titular canary-yellow critter originally created by artist Atsuko Nishida bursts across the painting in action. The cyan-colored Wobbuffet squeezes its eyes shut and opens its mouth wide against a bright pink backdrop. Mimikyu is the subject of *Dummy Doll Jealous Eyes* (2023), facing the viewer with floppy lopsided ears and a crooked smile. Bernhardt situates these characters in movement: the multiple arms of the rosy Chansey are activated mid-air as if running forth; a leporine Cinderace is poised for battle. The framework of these paintings seems to contain the characters' constantly morphing bodies, which are ready to move and leap into our own spheres at any moment. In the monumentally scaled *Yeti Gaming* (2021), several Pikachus and amoebic Dittos share space with Teddiursa and household items such as a bottle of Elmer's glue, a jug of Clorox bleach, and rolls of toilet paper—familiar motifs in Bernhardt's oeuvre.

A monograph on Bernhardt is forthcoming from David Zwirner Books in October 2023.

Katherine Bernhardt was born in St. Louis, Missouri, and received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1998 and an MFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York, in 2000.

In 2018, the solo exhibition *Katherine Bernhardt: Watermelon World* was on view at the Mario Testino Museum (MATE) in Lima, Peru. The previous year, in 2017, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, presented *FOCUS: Katherine Bernhardt*. Also in 2017, the artist painted a sixty-foot-long mural entitled *XXL Superflat Pancake* for the St. Louis Contemporary Art Museum. Bernhardt has created a permanent installation for Club Caribe, Cidra, Puerto Rico, and a pool painting at the Nautilus South Beach, Miami Beach (both 2015).

Her work has also been included in significant group exhibitions, such as *We Fight to Build a Free World: An Exhibition by Jonathan Horowitz*, Jewish Museum, New York (2020); *Animal Farm*, an exhibition curated by Sadie Laska at the Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, Connecticut (2017); *NO*

*MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Rubell Museum, Miami, which traveled to the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC (2015–2017); and *Bad Touch*, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, Chicago (2002).

In 2022, David Zwirner, London presented an exhibition of new work by the artist, *Katherine Bernhardt: why is a mushroom growing in my shower?*

Work by the artist is found in prominent public and museum collections, including the Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, Connecticut; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Knoxville Museum of Art, Tennessee; Portland Museum of Art, Maine; Rubell Museum, Miami; and San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas. Bernhardt lives and works in St. Louis.

For all press inquiries, contact:  
Victoria Kung [ykung@davidzwirner.com](mailto:ykung@davidzwirner.com)