

Katherine Bernhardt *Sidewalk Chalk*

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616 N Western Avenue, Los Angeles



Katherine Bernhardt, *It's Butter!*, 2024. © Katherine Bernhardt. Courtesy the artist, David Zwirner, and Canada

David Zwirner is pleased to announce *Sidewalk Chalk*, an exhibition of new paintings by American artist Katherine Bernhardt at the gallery's 616 N Western Avenue location in Los Angeles. Featuring Bernhardt's signature lively brushwork and vibrant palette, the works in this presentation continue to expand the artist's unique visual lexicon, which culls from an irreverent pop vernacular as well as her own life and the broader culture. Here she focuses on newer motifs such as Lucky Charms cereal marshmallows and sticks of butter, which are playfully combined with iconic imagery from her oeuvre, including the Sesame Street character Cookie Monster, the Pink Panther, and Garfield.

Bernhardt's boundless visual appetite has established her as one of the most energetic painters working today. She 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 coloration 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.

The exhibition title *Sidewalk Chalk* conjures images of the colorful cylinders that children use to draw freely on pavements and sidewalks, echoing Bernhardt's exploration of this kind of playful open expression and engagement with American youth culture. The typical palette of sidewalk chalk—comprising varying shades of blue, pink, and yellow—echo that of these new paintings, the compositions of which unfurl rhapsodically without restraint. 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. In some of her new,

larger-scale compositions, Bernhardt experiments with a mop alongside other instruments to apply paint across sweeping swaths of canvas.

In *Chew* (2024), Bernhardt fills the wide-open maw of Cookie Monster with her signature rolls of toilet paper and loose cigarettes, a prepared toothbrush, and tubs of Vaseline. Two tubes of Crest toothpaste enter the frame from the top right corners, as if ready to squeeze their contents into the creature's waiting mouth. Bernhardt's series of images pays a winking art-historical homage to the fifteenth-century Bolognini Chapel fresco by Italian Renaissance painter Giovanni da Modena, known as the *Inferno* (c. 1410), in which a similarly blue-haired beast devours and excretes a screaming human being while surrounded by a swirling host of shocking events. Here, Bernhardt reimagines the hellmouth as a joyful landscape for a kind of new pattern painting that jumbles together a plethora of items: sticks of butter, Lucky Charms marshmallows, shooting stars, the McDonald's logo, and Cookie Monster's own preferred treats.

In some works, Bernhardt adopts a softer, matte palette that brings to mind mass-market food advertising. Invoking butter yellow, KitchenAid's 2025 "color of the year," she peppers her new compositions with thick rectangular forms of the wrapped, labeled dairy product. In *It's Butter!* (2024), the cartoon cat Garfield is flanked by two tall yellow columns of the titular spread as he cheerfully stretches his arms out wide. A stick of butter runs along the diagonal of the Pink Panther's cheek in *Butter Butter Butter Butter Butter* (2024) as rainbow- and crescent-shaped Lucky Charms marshmallows dance around the frame. In these paintings, colors and lines bleed and pool together across their surfaces, revealing Bernhardt's brisk and improvisational process.

Katherine Bernhardt (b. 1975) 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.

A retrospective of the artist's work will open at the Hangaram Art Museum in the Seoul Arts Center on June 5, 2025. *A Match Made in Heaven*, a two-person presentation with fashion designer Jeremy Scott, is currently on view at the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas, through August 3, 2025. In 2018, the solo exhibition *Katherine Bernhardt: Watermelon World* was on view at the Museo Mario Testino (MATE) in Lima, Peru. In 2017, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, presented *FOCUS: Katherine Bernhardt*. In the same year, 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, Greenwich, Connecticut (2017); *NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Rubell Museum, Miami (2015; traveled to the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC, through 2017); and *Bad Touch*, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, Chicago (2002).

In 2022, *Katherine Bernhardt: Why is a mushroom growing in my shower?* was held at David Zwirner London, marking the artist's first solo presentation at the gallery. David Zwirner Hong Kong presented a solo exhibition of works by Bernhardt in 2023.

Work by the artist is found in prominent public and museum collections worldwide, including The Brant Foundation, New York; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; 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 the San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas. Bernhardt lives and works in St. Louis.

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