

Art in Review

Katherine Bernhardt

'Stupid, Crazy, Ridiculous,
Funny Patterns'

Canada

333 Broome Street, between the
Bowery and Chrystie Street,
Lower East Side

Through March 2

Katherine Bernhardt's exuberant new paintings, which embed repeating images of common objects in fields of intense color, gain in coherence while sacrificing a bit of wildness, but perhaps it has to be that way, at least for now. Where Ms. Bernhardt's previous motifs — taken from fashion spreads or Moroccan rugs — tended to disintegrate, these hold together. As a result, the half-systematic way they are painted, enhanced by the jubilant scale and palette, grabs the eye. Ms. Bernhardt emerges as a latter-day Pop Art process painter who looks to Color Field painting for her strong, soaked color and fast, no-margin-for-error technique.

The titles identify the bluntly blocked-in, outlined subjects, which connote different kinds of work and play. "Hamburgers and French Fries and Basket Balls" conjures sports fans via fat burgers, planklike orange fries and red balls on a violet ground.

"Steaming Hot Coffee and Cigarettes and Pizza" acknowledges desk workers (and artists) with white cups of java, filtered cigarettes and gold pizza on purple.

"Vans, Cassette Tapes and Pizza" speaks to the city's delivery drivers in purple, orange and white. In "Salsa Music, Plantain Chips and TWA (Going to Puerto Rico)" — yellow (chips), black (speakers) and white (airliners) on green — everyone gets away. The patterns evoke real life being lived without pretense, along with wallpaper, rug designs and pajama prints.

The repeating outlines and brush strokes of a given motif — always the same but different — form a kind of calligraphy or graffiti tag. As a result, the hand-



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"Hamburgers and French Fries and Basket Balls," by Katherine Bernhardt, is part of a show of the artist's work at Canada.

made flirts with mechanical printing, evoking the Pattern and Decoration paintings of Kim MacConnel. Like him, Ms. Bernhardt paints with great economy and panache, as Andy Warhol might have without silk-screens. The results are terrific and should lay the groundwork for even better ones.

ROBERTA SMITH