

Katherine Bernhardt
*Neonfarbblendluminanzwucht
gemaeldenetzhautkollisionsgefahr*
24. 9. 2026 – 10. 1. 2027

Press talk: 23. 9. 2026, 11 a.m.

Opening: 23. 9. 2026, 6 p.m.

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark
Burgring 2, 8010 Graz (AT)

Catalog in preparation

Curator:
Sandro Droschl

The first institutional exhibition in Europe dedicated to the US-American painter Katherine Bernhardt presents a comprehensive overview of her recent work. With her large-scale, vibrantly colored paintings, Bernhardt has established herself as one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary painting.

The title of Katherine Bernhardt's exhibition, *Neonfarbblendluminanzwuchtgemaeldenetzhautkollisionsgefahr*, consists of fifty-eight letters combining the individual elements essential to the exhibition concept and artistic approach, in German, into a single unit: Neon – Color – Blinding – Luminance – Force – Painting – Retina – Collision – Hazard. At the same time, the title functions as a gesture of linguistic overload and as a condensation of a logic of sensory experience: It describes less than it affects, and points to a production of images that directly targets perception, stimulus intensity, and visual superimposition. The juxtaposition of these terms generates a kind of continuous semantic current that translates the logic of her painting—characterized by the superimposition and proximity of signs, as well as by impulsive intensity and simultaneity—into a radically open language.

Bernhardt's work operates at the intersection of Pop Art, Neo-Expressionism, and post-digital painting. She draws on the strategies of 1960s Pop Art, as developed by artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Claes Oldenburg, translating their visual vocabularies into a subjective and expressive contemporary language. Unlike the calculated detachment of classical Pop Art, Bernhardt's paintings are characterized by gestural immediacy, spontaneity, and a deliberately imperfect openness. Her work also reveals affinities with the Neo-Expressionism of the 1980s. At the same time, the paintings' emphatic use of color and their physical, sensual presence reveal connections that reach even further back—to the space-defining colors of Henri Matisse or the still lifes from Giorgio Morandi's concentrated visual world. Bernhardt, too, uses everyday objects not primarily for their symbolic meaning, but as a starting point for painterly explorations, her compositions first and foremost follow the dynamics of the act of painting. In her paintings, Bernhardt also pays homage to the work of contemporary artists she admires, such as Alex Katz, Mary Heilmann, Laura Owens, and Josh Smith.

halle-fuer-kunst.at/press

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Burgring 2, 8010 Graz, Austria, +43 316 740084, info@halle-fuer-kunst.at, halle-fuer-kunst.at

Press contact: Mag. Helga Droschl, +43 316 740084-14, +43 664 3935718, hd@halle-fuer-kunst.at

Operated by Kunstverein Medienturm in der „HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark“, Burgring 2, 8010 Graz, Austria, ZVR: 542738445 1/2

Bernhardt's pictorial worlds are shaped by globally circulating visual systems: comics, cartoons, advertising, fashion, and digital media intersect with motifs drawn from everyday life and consumer culture. Characters such as Pink Panther, Garfield, Pac-Man, or those from the Pokémon universe encounter sneakers, Crocs, cigarettes, mushrooms, or toilet paper rolls. In seemingly spontaneous constellations, the artist combines motifs that appear unrelated at first glance, creating visual spaces that are at once humorous and unsettling.

Executed directly with spray paint and acrylic on canvas, Bernhardt's works reject perspective, illusion, and atmospheric depth. Instead, they unfold as open pictorial fields in which pop aesthetics, consumer culture, and personal associations overlap. The repeated use of certain figures and objects simultaneously evokes serial image production and strategies of Appropriation Art. Yet Bernhardt continually subverts any rigid system through her intuitive and almost improvisational compositions. Her paintings emerge from a remarkably fast and immediate creative process. Given the speed with which she develops her paintings, connections often arise spontaneously and organically from the material itself. Not every decision is the result of theoretical deliberation—many are, above all, painterly decisions.

Balancing irony, sensory overload, and playful lightness, her works generate a distinctive ambivalence: familiar consumer images shift into the surreal, while humorous motifs acquire an underlying darker tone. Each painting appears as a self-contained visual thought that sets off a chain of free associations.

The exhibition presents a selection of key works from recent years and offers insight into Bernhardt's unmistakable visual language through a carefully conceived exhibition parcours. It provides a comprehensive perspective on an artist whose work combines the expressive freedom of painting with the visual codes of global popular culture.

Katherine Bernhardt

*1975 St. Louis, Missouri, lives in St. Louis

Solo exhibitions (selection): Canada, New York (2026), David Zwirner, Los Angeles (2025), Gangneung Art Museum Sorol, Gangwon-do, South Korea (2025), Hangaram Art Museum, Seoul Arts Center, Seoul (2025), Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas (2025, with Jeremy Scott), David Zwirner, Hong Kong (2023), Canada, New York (2023), David Zwirner, London (2022), Diablo Rosso, Panama (2021), Canada, New York (2020), NANZUKA, Tokyo (2019), Xavier Hufkens, Brussels (2019), Museo Mario Testino (MATE), Lima (2018), Canada, New York (2018), Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas (2017), St. Louis Contemporary Art Museum, Missouri (2017), Karma, Amagansett, New York (2017), Xavier Hufkens, Brussels (2016), Venus Over Los Angeles, Los Angeles, New York (2015), Carl Freedman Gallery, London (2015), Canada, New York (2008), Galerie Suzanne Tarasieve, Paris (2006), Gallery Lisa Ruyter, Vienna (2004), Team Gallery, New York (2000).

Group exhibitions (selection): High Line Art, New York (2026), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Park, Washington DC (2022), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2021), The Drawing Center, New York (2020), Jewish Museum, New York (2020), The Brant Foundation, Greenwich, Connecticut (2017), Pratt Institute, New York (2017), National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington (2017), Manifesta 11, Zurich (2016), Rubell Museum, Miami (2015).

halle-fuer-kunst.at/press

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Burgring 2, 8010 Graz, Austria, +43 316 740084, info@halle-fuer-kunst.at, halle-fuer-kunst.at

Press contact: Mag. Helga Droschl, +43 316 740084-14, +43 664 3935718, hd@halle-fuer-kunst.at

Operated by Kunstverein Medienturm in der „HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark“, Burgring 2, 8010 Graz, Austria, ZVR: 542738445 2/2