

The Creators Project

CANADA Is Making Painting Great Again

Andrew Nunes — Jun 22 2016

After being passed down from Ronald Reagan to Donald Trump, the groan-inducing “Make America Great Again” slogan has found its way into the art world. But in this case, sarcasm, instead of xenophobic ignorance, oozes delightfully out of its use. Lower East Side gallery CANADA wants to Make Painting Great Again, as the title of its current exhibition suggests.

Two Simpsons, Plantains, Basketballs, Cigarettes, Katherine Bernhardt, 2016. All images courtesy of the artists and CANADA



Sarcasm aside, it is somewhat humorous that the exhibition will be up through Independence Day and that, amongst the grand total of 17 painters included in the show, 15 of them were born in the US. All but one is represented by CANADA.

Make Painting Great Again Installation View

Perhaps these are also playful nods to the jingoistic and non-inclusive rhetoric of Trump— or, maybe it’s just pure coincidence. But in any case, the works on display here joyfully diverge from the overly academic, zombie formalism-style painting that has plagued the medium’s upper echelons in the past few years. Maybe painting is on its way to becoming great again, no joke.





Make Painting Great Again Installation View

There is a fair amount of playfulness on display here, a refreshing departure from the medium's tendency to be serious and calculated. Katherine Bernhardt's enormous spray-painted canvas is a tropical 90's throwback, mixing graffiti-esque renderings of Lisa Simpson with neon pink-outlined cigarettes, palm tree leaves, and basketballs.



Make Painting Great Again Installation View

Tomorrow's Party, by Sadie Laska, is a painterly take on a full tuxedo, with spray paint applied onto PVA and aluminum cut to the rough shape of a tuxedo outfit, at approximately twice the normal size. Michael Williams' *Bet it All on Number Twelve* is a surreal and geometric

potpourri of figures that sometimes resemble real objects, like a toothpaste tube labeled "STUFF WE CAN USE," but more often than not only come halfway between recognizable and unknown forms.



Dugan Nash, the only artist in the show not represented by CANADA, has painted a world map onto a mounted bowling ball that has land masses resembling Earth's own, but seemingly inverted and slightly distorted. Xylor Jane has continued her longstanding practice of painting number sequences; in this case, what appears to be dates of the past and of the future, ranging from 1992 to 2357. As with all of her number works, the assortment of numbers is seemingly random, but in fact bear calculated significance to Jane that is never deliberately disclosed.



These works, alongside the 14 others in the show, bring a stimulating energy to the historically turbulent artistic medium. They are not heralding changes as radical (or as retrogressive) as Trump, but unlike the Republican presidential candidate, they seek to explore new territory, rather than return to an archaic climate.



Make Painting Great Again
Installation View

Make Painting Great Again can be seen at CANADA until July 15th, with the aforementioned paintings on display alongside works by Katherine Bradford, Joe Bradley, Sarah Braman, Matt Connors, Gerald Ferguson, Jason Fox, Daniel Hesidence, Lily Ludlow, Elena Pankova, Tyson Reeder, Anke Weyer, and Wallace Whitney.

ABOUT THE CREATORS PROJECT

The Creators Project is a global network dedicated to the celebration of creativity, arts and technology.

© 2016 Vice Media Inc.

<http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/canada-is-making-painting-great-again>