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“MAKE PAINTING GREAT AGAIN”

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Is the ironic title meant to set up these seventeen painters as degenerate artists of a new century, or merely as opponents of a candidate whose taste for gold and marble makes Saddam Hussein seem minimalist? Hard to say what else unites the low-contrast, rough-edged fields of Joe Bradley, Sarah Braman, and Katherine Bradford with Lily Ludlow’s dark rehash of Cubist portraiture, Tyson Reeder’s calm and etiolated representation of a bike rack, and Katherine Bernhardt’s hell-for-leather composition (done with hot-pink spray paint) of plantains, cigarette butts, and Lisa Simpson. “Greatness,” in contemporary art, is a suspect word, and can smack of exclusion; much painting today, and many paintings here, lampoon the very idea of seriousness. But ideals need defending, in the face of both cynics and Trumpists.

Canada
333 Broome St.
New York, NY 10002
<http://www.canadanewyork.com>
212-925-4631

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