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Review Katherine Bernhardt takes a large look at consumerism

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Katherine Bernhardt, "Doritos, Socks and Basketballs," 2014, acrylic and spray paint on canvas (China Art Objects)

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Is art a high-minded version of junk food, a pile of empty calories that merely tastes great on the way down?

Is it flashy equipment for the sporting life, like overpriced Nikes that look good on the street but don't really do all that much on the court?

For her solo debut at China Art Objects, New York-based painter Katherine Bernhardt shows 10 very appealing, mostly large canvases – as much as 8 feet by 10 feet – with casually familiar subject matter. It includes Doritos, Diet Coke, hamburgers and fries, fruit-punch pouches for kids, basketballs, sneakers and athletic socks.

There are cigarettes, too -- monumental smokes to calm the nerves and aid in focused concentration, all while harboring rather more negative health consequences.

Drawing with acrylic and spray paint, Bernhardt employs a graffiti-like technique to render crude but jaunty depictions quickly and almost schematically. Mustard on a hot dog is a yellow squiggle, cigarettes are a lineup of three fast strokes – one for the filter, one for the wrapped tobacco and one zigzag gesture for the ash. Monochrome backgrounds are painted last, brushed color wrapping around the objects and paradoxically pushing into the visual foreground.

Having first gained notice with slash-and-burn paintings of fashion models and magazines, Bernhardt is here productively enlarging her emphasis in a world awash with the heaven-and-hell of consumer products. Seemingly aimless, these slacker still-life paintings are in fact acutely focused. The intensity of their concentration pulls a viewer in.

China Art Objects, 6086 Comey Ave., Culver City, (323) 965-2264, through Oct. 18. Closed Sun. and Mon. www.chinaartobjects.com