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## Katherine Bernhardt

Katherine Bernhardt's wildly dynamic paintings reflect her ever-changing obsessions. She started out making Expressionist portraits of the fashion models she was transfixed by as a teen, dashed off with slashing strokes in lurid colors. A trip to Morocco in 2008 sparked her love of that country's rugs and inspired canvases full of riotous abstract patterns and forms. (With her Moroccan-born second husband, Youssef Jdia, she cofounded Magic Flying Carpets in 2009, a website and pop-up that sells rugs to support the traditions of Morocco's Berber women.) Next came commonplace consumer items like bananas, hamburgers, and basketballs set against saturated backdrops. And, lately, the tropical lushness of Caribbean life has her spellbound. "I've made about 10 trips to Puerto Rico; I want to move to San Juan," says Bernhardt, 40, who was born in St. Louis and works out of a studio in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Not surprisingly, her fall show at Venus Over Manhattan gallery in New York "was all about Puerto Rico. So there are sharks, sea turtles, plantains, and papayas."

The graffitied wall in this photograph of Drake, taken at her behest in front of a West Indian variety store in Toronto, references *Fruit Salad*, her eye-popping mural on the facade of Venus Over Manhattan's recently opened Los Angeles outpost. (Her first public work, it's become something of a hit on Instagram, with its hodgepodge of color-block watermelons, toucans, and cigarettes.) When Bernhardt learned that Drake wanted to be photographed in his hometown of Toronto, she immediately thought of her Guyanese-born first husband, who also lived in that city. As a couple, she recalls, they spent a lot of time in Toronto's West Indian neighborhood: The patterns and colors of its markets had just the kind of wallpapered backdrop she wanted for her depiction of Drake. Other works of this kind are surely in Bernhardt's future—she says that as a result of *Fruit Salad*, she's now entertaining more offers than she can accommodate to paint murals all over the country. "I get to pick what I want to do," she says in disbelief. "My dream is to paint Cafetería Mallorca in Old San Juan. Now *that* would be the ultimate." »





A portrait of Drake by Katherine Bernhardt.