

MONYA ROWE GALLERY

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For Immediate Release

CINDY BERNHARD

Holy Smokes

May 4 - June 9, 2023

Opening reception: Thursday, May 4, 6-8 PM

Monya Rowe Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by **Cindy Bernhard**, the artist's first exhibition with the gallery and in New York. The opening reception for the artist will be held on Thursday, May 4, 6-8 PM. **This is the inaugural exhibition in the gallery's new location. The gallery is located in the same building on a different floor, new suite #304.**

In this exhibition, featuring small to large scale works, Bernhard continues to incorporate her signature imagery of candles, mirrors, cats and smoke. In *Stairway* (2023), a cat ascends a staircase in a trance-like state toward a burning taper candle. The candle is situated on the landing of the staircase in front of a gilded mirror adorned with smoke patterns and the appearance of a portal leading to a night-time sky replete with stars. The ornate mirror is in stark contrast to the austere minimalist surroundings suggestive of a modern city apartment. The cat appears to be spiritually led to this mysterious make-shift alter. Bernhard uses animals as humorous stand-ins for people. The cats depicted may appear startled or surprised when looking outside the picture plane, which forces the viewer to confront the protagonist and alludes to an otherworldly presence.

For Bernhard, growing up Catholic imbued an inherent affinity for religious imagery associated with the Church, such as gold relics, a plethora of candles, large statues, and Gothic sensibilities. The work hints at rituals, spirits and mystical experiences.

Bernhard's stylized paintings use shadows to suggest the passage of time and light while imbuing each painting with atmosphere and feeling. Through illusion and tension, the work explores scenes with a heightened awareness packed with psychological energy. The artist uses humor and an eye-catching candy-like palette to further draw the viewer into each quiet scene. Beneath the surface humor, the work subversively addresses philosophical subjects such as ones' own mortality and human existence as a whole.

Cindy Bernhard (b. 1989, Chicago, IL) received a MFA from *Laguna College of Art and Design*, Laguna Beach, CA and a BFA from *American Academy of Art*, Chicago, IL. Recent exhibitions include *Andrew Rafacz Gallery*, Chicago, IL and *Monya Rowe Gallery*, NY. The artist lives and works in Chicago, IL, and is represented by *Richard Heller Gallery*, LA.

Gallery hours

Tuesday – Saturday, 12 – 6 PM

Summer hours start June 1

Tuesday - Thursday 12 – 5 PM

Friday 12 - 4 PM

And by appointment