

# KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

## The New York Times

**Art in Review**  
**September 18, 2009**  
**Karen Rosenberg**

**MICHAEL BERRYHILL**  
**Basement States**  
**Horton & Liu**  
**504 West 22nd Street**  
**Chelsea**  
**Through Oct. 10**

One of the hardest things about making a painting is knowing when to stop. Some artists tend to leave things raw; others habitually overcook. In his New York solo debut at the recently opened gallery Horton& Liu, Michael Berryhill does both.

Mr. Berryhill is a recent graduate of Columbia's Master of Fine Arts program (class of 2009), though at 38 he's older than most. His paintings, semi-abstract still lifes with a cartoonish touch, are confident and colorful. The problem is that some are worked to within an inch of their lives, while others look as if they were plucked half-formed from the studio.

The standout is "Stair Guitar" (2009), in which Mr. Berryhill plays a noodling, psychedelic riff on Picasso's cubist instrument. The music theme extends to the spectral amplifier of "Mi Amigo Sound Machine" (2009), and the warped fingerboards of "Two Easy Pieces" (2009), which exude a friendly, jam-band Surrealism.

Meanwhile, "Gay Pride Moustache" (2008) doesn't deliver on the campy promises of its title. The folds of drapery are too distracting, the artfully cluttered tabletop too reminiscent of an undergraduate exercise. And the smaller, sketchlike paintings clustered nearby aren't quite ready for prime time. Mr. Berryhill should keep thinking about music, which seems to give him some parameters.