



Summer Wheat, Downpour, 2020, acrylic on aluminum mesh, triptych 175.3 x 358.1 cm (69 x 141 inches)

SUMMER WHEAT

Shallow Water

12 May – 18 July 2020

Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery is proud to welcome the American artist Summer Wheat for her first solo exhibition in Europe.

Using an inventive process of pushing paint through aluminum mesh, Summer Wheat's large-scale paintings resemble medieval tapestries showing female figures as hunters, fishers, and beekeepers. These women rewrite historical imagery through themes such as labor, discovery, and expressions of joy where traditionally only men were present. Beginning with drawings referencing inspiration from a broad spectrum of art historical references, ranging from Egyptian pictography to Native American imagery, from French Post-Impressionism to American Pop Art, Wheat questions the history of these narratives by proposing a contemporary perspective. Her dense and pictorial figural compositions and contrasting color palette are often compared to such painters as Henri Matisse or Pablo Picasso, both known for often objectifying their female subjects.

Born in Oklahoma City, the artist's understanding of institutional art centered on Native American traditions of art production, focusing special attention on the connection between human and animal behavior respective to their environment. Rather than making quaint the lives of those who struggle, Wheat dignifies her subjects and decidedly refutes the gender specific representations found in various cultures through history by swapping women into the traditional roles of men. Her figurative scenes aggrandize the invisible work of women by focusing on both their experience and their craft.

Long associated with cleansing and renewal, as well as the origin of life, water flows throughout Summer Wheat's new paintings. **Shallow Water** presents a new body of work referencing historical imagery associated with the substance and metaphors elucidated by the theme of water—washing (women's work and domestic life), diving (discovery and innovation), wading (leisure), walking on water (biblical), and reflection (the ability to contemplate one's own self and inevitable mortality)—that liberate these scenes from their gendered roles.

"Water is reflective. It is a mirror, a cleanser, a healer, and a representation of transformation. So often in art, water is used as a way to enhance a woman's sensuality or convey a sense of purity. The women in these paintings are not there to be muses. They do not pose languidly in water, subjects to the voyeuristic eye. These women play in the water, they rejoice in it. They use it as a tool and spill it freely. They collect and release water with their own bodies, acting as vessels. As water pours from their mouths, eyes, and ears they share the physical weight each carry. Resting on stacks of animals pulled up to the surface, the figures balance precariously, managing instability with ease and joy. Working together as a machine, women pull apart the hard shells of crabs, squeeze out the remains of fish, and become inventors in their kitchens. The women in my paintings are not passive figures. They occupy their own space and claim their own agency. In embracing the downpour, they seek new relationships with this essential life-giving force."

Summer Wheat (b. 1977, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma) received a BA from the University of Central Oklahoma and an MFA from Savannah College of Art and Design. Recent solo exhibitions include the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City (2020); KMAC Museum, Louisville (2019); Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles (2018); Smack Mellon, New York (2018); Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle (2017); and Oklahoma Contemporary, Oklahoma City (2016). Additional museum exhibitions include Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2013–14); deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park (2013); and Torrance Art Museum (2013). Wheat received the 2016 New York NADA Artadia Award and the 2019 Northern Trust Purchase Prize at EXPO Chicago. The artist's work is in the permanent collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, Texas; de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; Pérez Art Museum Miami; The Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington, Seattle; The Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC and the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky. Blood, Sweat, and Tears, the artist's largest solo museum exhibition to date, is currently on view at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City through May 2020.