

ARTFORUM

Summer Wheat at Andrew Edlin Gallery



Summer Wheat, *Wrestling an Alligator*, 2018, aluminum on acrylic mesh, 68 x 96".

The experience of viewing Summer Wheat's paintings and sculptures for the first time produces an inordinate number of pleasurable surprises. From afar, her large-scale wall pieces playfully fluctuate between being tapestries and paintings; yet upon closer inspection, they are indeed both. Wheat works by pushing thick, claylike paint through sheets of mesh. The resulting textures resemble rich, woven textiles, or rows of tassels.

Wheat's subject matter also rewards prolonged contemplation. In *Gamekeepers* (all works 2018), different kinds of animals, including a horse, snake, bear, and fish, blend into one another and several female figures based on ancient Greek goddesses. Wheat's skillful use of color and line delineates the women just enough to make them distinct within the visual pandemonium. Two other impressive works depict simpler scenes that emphasize the artist's interest in flipping historical gender roles, by portraying women as trappers. In *Swamp Hunters*, a couple of women walk before a wall of abstracted vines with a large net full of animals draped over their shoulders. In *Wrestling an Alligator*, a champion in high heels calmly strangles the titular creature.

Also in the show are Wheat's series of "*Tulipière*" sculptures. They are based on the ornate seventeenth-century European vessels made for growing tulips. Instead of faithfully reproducing the fussy facture of these haute luxury objects, Wheat's pieces, though no less impressive, go in for the rough and handmade. Each tower is decorated with tableaux of her extraordinary muses. The artist's carefully made objects here celebrate female power and complexity.