

NAZARIAN / CURCIO



Summer Wheat. Fountains, 2023. Acrylic paint and gouache on aluminum mesh, framed, 69 ½ x 95 ½ in.

Summer Wheat *Fertile Ground*

February 24 – April 6

Opening Reception, Saturday, February 24, 6–8pm

Nazarian / Curcio is pleased to announce Fertile Ground, by Brooklyn-based artist Summer Wheat. This will be the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

Set in a mythical and lush gardenscape, the paintings and sculptures in this exhibition continue the artist's longstanding interest in depictions of labor and leisure, especially those that have been historically gendered. Fertile Ground imagines a utopian world where women are in control, having formed a community of independent caretakers that tend to the land and the creatures that populate it, receiving nourishment in turn. The works in Fertile Ground blend recurring motifs from the artist's past exhibitions, including expansive night gardens, fountains, and beekeepers, each of which represents a symbiotic relationship between Wheat's figures and the spaces that they occupy.

Known for their tactility and texture, Wheat's paintings reside somewhere between painting and sculpture, while also borrowing from the rich—and often gendered—history of fibers and textiles. At first look, they appear to be beaded or woven, but closer inspection reveals that the works are made by pushing paint

NAZARIAN / CURCIO

through the openings of a fine wire, aluminum mesh using fingers, palette scrapers, syringes and pastry piping bags to create a tactile and vivid surface that engages process, form, and narrative.

In several of the new paintings, the viewer encounters women spewing water from their mouth, eyes, and ears onto a saturated ground. These figures act as a vessel, containing a life-sustaining material and offering their own bodies in an act of devotion to nourish the land. For Wheat, “These figures surrender as water springs from their bodies, they embrace the downpour, they seek to cultivate new relationships and to offer an essential life-giving force. They generously give back to the land that provides for them.” Fertile Ground also features three new pebble sculptures that reference ancient mosaics, some of the earliest forms of storytelling, and maintain a narrative kinship with her paintings. These sculptures offer the viewer a grounding experience—and a place to sit within the exhibition. Constructed of stone, glass, and grout, their form is based on the smooth, round contours of stones weathered and shaped by river currents.

Seen together, the works in Fertile Ground employ absurdity with a sense of optimism. They offer a biting critique of historical representations of labor, while also proposing an alternative future, one that dismisses any implied hierarchy of power and position. Wheat’s works move to destabilize the boundaries of figure and ground, representation and abstraction, portrait and landscape, and fine art and craft, offering a hybrid approach to centuries-old traditions.

Fertile Ground will be accompanied by a new 224 page monograph *Summer Wheat: Forager* published by Rizzoli Electa with essays by Dr. Jennifer Sudul Edwards, Anne Ellegood, Jennifer Krasinski, and Diedrick Brackens.

Summer Wheat received a B.A. from the University of Central Oklahoma and an M.F.A. from Savannah College of Art and Design. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized at The Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC (2021); Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO (2020); KMAC Museum, Louisville, KY (2019); Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles, CA (2021, 2018); Smack Mellon, New York, NY (2018); Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, WA (2017); and Oklahoma Contemporary, Oklahoma City, OK (2016). Select group exhibitions featuring her work include *America Will Be! Surveying the Contemporary Landscape*, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; *Expanding the Field of Abstraction*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; *beyond the stretcher*, deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA; and *Paradox Maintenance Technicians: A comprehensive technical manual to contemporary painting from Los Angeles and Beyond*, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA..

Wheat’s work is in numerous public collections, including the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; The Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA; The Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC; The Speed Art Museum in Louisville, KY, and Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO. Wheat has received several awards and prizes including, the Northern Trust Purchase Prize at EXPO Chicago (2019) and the New York NADA Artadia Award (2016).

In March 2022, the Kansas City Museum announced that it selected Summer Wheat to transform the museum’s Carriage House Beaux-Arts Conservatory on the property into a light-filled sacred space entitled *JewelHouse*. This permanent architectural installation will debut in 2025.