

Smack Mellon

92 Plymouth Street @ Washington Street, Dumbo, Brooklyn, NY 11201
Tel: 718.834.8761 | smackmellon.org | Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, 12-6pm
Contact: Eva Davis edavis@smackmellon.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Summer Wheat Inside the Garden

March 10 - April 22, 2018

Opening Reception: March 10, 6–8pm

Earth Day Reflections and Artist Talk: April 22, 11:30am–1pm



Sketch for *Inside the Garden*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

Summer Wheat's work investigates the materiality of paint, treating it sculpturally and pushing it into three dimensions. In her recent projects, she has been creating installations with her paintings, engaging the space and architecture. The stylized imagery of Wheat's figures and landscapes is influenced by a wide range of sources, from Egyptian pictography to Native American motifs to medieval biblical illustration.

Wheat's exhibition, *Inside the Garden*, transforms Smack Mellon's main gallery into an interior garden space that serves as a respite from the harsh realities of the outside world. This project was inspired by the gardens of antiquity, including private ones that focused on beauty and public ones, called pleasure gardens in ancient Rome, which served civic purposes. Walled gardens of ancient Egypt and classical Greece often depicted deities, creating a sacred space for reflection. In a similar way, Wheat's art environment at Smack Mellon elicits contemplation and a feeling of solace. Light filters through the botanic imagery of her window installation, creating an ethereal stained glass effect. Visitors can rest on reflective benches that represent female gardeners who support the earth, as well as the sitter. A long tapestry painting on the wall depicts floral and stellar imagery created by "weaving" paint through a mesh screen. Concerned with the need to reconnect with the natural world, Wheat is moved by the creation stories of many cultures, including Egyptian, Christian, and Native American, in which gardens figure prominently. During these troubling times, Wheat's exhibition becomes a hopeful rumination on the garden as a symbol of our link to nature and its role in generating and nourishing life.

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Born in Oklahoma City, OK, Wheat lives and works in Ridgewood, Queens. She received an MFA from Savannah College of Art and Design. In 2017, the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle presented a major solo exhibition of her work. She has also had recent solo shows at Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv and Fridman Gallery, New York. Her work has been exhibited in museum exhibitions, including shows at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park; Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA; and the Oklahoma Contemporary in Oklahoma City. Upcoming one-person shows at Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles; Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York; and Frieze New York will be presented in 2018.

Smack Mellon's exhibitions are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council, New York City Council Member Stephen Levin, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and with generous support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Robert Lehman Foundation, Iorio Charitable Foundation, Select Equity Group Foundation, many individuals and Smack Mellon's Members.

Smack Mellon's programs are also made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and with generous support from The New York Community Trust, The Roy and Niuta Titus Foundation, Jerome Foundation, The Greenwich Collection Ltd, Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation Inc., and Exploring The Arts.

Space for Smack Mellon's programs is generously provided by the Walentas family and Two Trees Management.

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Lina Puerta
Tapestries

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Untitled (Pink + Gold/Tapestries Series) (detail), 2016, 54" x 36", cotton, linen and abaca pulp, lace, sequins, appliqués, velvet ribbon, faux fur, feathers, and found insect wings. Courtesy of the artist.

Lina Puerta's work explores the shifting relationship between the organic and the artificial, natural life and human culture. She makes landscapes out of a wide range of materials, including clay, resin, concrete, fabric, wood, paper, recycled items and found objects, that combine abstraction and representation, drawing connections between human and botanical forms. The materials she uses often relate to clothing and adornment, referring to the body and human mortality. Despite the constructions that humans build to separate ourselves from the elements, Puerta's art reminds us that we are part of the natural world, and we must learn to embrace this inextricable link.

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In her *Tapestries Series*, Puerta's paper and mixed-media works are inspired by Renaissance tapestries, investigating the trappings of the ruling elite of 15th and 16th century Europe but reworking this decorative tradition to speak to the excesses of contemporary culture. During a residency at Dieu Donn  in 2016, the artist worked with studio collaborator Amy Jacobs, utilizing an experimental process of controlled manipulation of paper pulp. In this series, Puerta embraces the organic and spontaneous qualities of paper, while layering and embedding it with recycled materials, including plastic, fabric, artificial plants, beads, sequins, faux fur, lace, velvet ribbon, leather scraps, costume jewelry, butterfly wings, and dried snakes. However, this seemingly endless abundance is merely a facade that hides the detrimental effects of human activity on our environment. Portrayed in a state of decay and disintegration, this work explores the capacity of nature to reclaim the land and resources that are being consumed by our society.

Also on view is Puerta's *Tile Fragments Series*, a group of sculptural pieces that resemble rubble or broken flooring. This work is created using a laminating technique in which each polystyrene piece is covered in handmade paper that had been pressed in its wet stage. The artist also applied fur, trim, sequined fabric, and lace to the surface. As the paper fibers dry in the process, they shrink and bind to each other, making a tight and seamless shell around the form. Depicting fragility and durability with fragmented forms, Puerta's work represents the tenuous balance between the natural and the built environments and ultimately the temporality of our own existence.

Born in New Jersey and raised in Colombia, Puerta lives and works in New York City. She earned an MS in Art Education from Queens College and is the recipient of several grants and residencies including the 2017 NYFA Fellowship, 2016 Dieu Donn  Workspace Residency, Artprize-8 Sustainability Award, 2015 Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant, 2015 Kohler Arts Industry Residency, 2014-15 Keyholder Residency at the Lower East Side Printshop, 2013-14 Smack Mellon Art Studio Program, 2014 Materials for the Arts, 2013 Wave Hill Winter Workspace and the 2010 Emerging Artist Fellowship at Socrates Sculpture Park in New York. Exhibition venues include: The Museum of Biblical Art, El Museo del Barrio, Socrates Sculpture Park, Wave Hill, and Geary Contemporary, all in New York, as well as Pi-Artworks in London. Puerta's work has been featured in Hyperallergic, The New York Times, Wilder Quarterly, Sculpture Magazine and Artnet News among others.

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