

ARTFORUM

Christina Forrer Parker Gallery

Christina Forrer often cites “The Turnip Princess,” a German fairy tale, as the inspiration for her figurative tapestries, drawings, watercolors, and wallpaper (a new foray). The story stars a bachelor prince who finds a wife by following the instructions of a talking bear, who is later revealed to be his lost father. The prince places a sharp nail “under a turnip,” magically turning a local old woman young again—and thus into a suitable bride. The enchanted world of “The Turnip Princess,” like those of many folktales, is bait, coaxing young listeners into topsy-turvy landscapes that can reinforce restrictive social norms. Along the way, though, these stories often invoke stranger, more expansive life-forms and events that haunt the conventions they ultimately aim to impose.

Forrer’s self-titled solo exhibition at Parker Gallery included just five tapestries and two works on paper, but this neat array managed to probe the instabilities of such storytelling traditions, with the artist employing her signature childlike styling to reveal the eerie, gothic underbellies of supposedly serene domestic scenes. Whether through human/animal hybrids or distorted interiors, Forrer’s artworks yield mind-bending pictorial spaces equally shaped by both intimacy and estrangement.

In the tapestries, the artist depicted homes that are made permeable to the outside world—and this porousness produces surreal results. The large, rectangular *Training Tables*, 2025, revealed a cozy interior scene, akin to that of a dollhouse with its walls removed. Upon closer inspection, the proportions of its elements warp: A plume of rainbow smoke extends from one exterior window while, just below, an indoor staircase sits adjacent to an oversize nightstand—watched over by an enormous blushing face peering through a window. In *Cutaway*, 2024, the infrastructure of an underground multistory home was curiously linked to the home’s residents. Figures seated at a dining table exhale rainbow fumes that enter—or exit—a stove’s overhead fan, filtering through gas lines and vents. Pipes, wire, and breath merge architecture and inhabitants into a conjoined respiratory system.

Forrer’s artworks challenge the boundaries between private and public life, embodying an ambiguity that thrusts their inhabitants into

liminal spaces—between grotesque and ordinary, animal and human. In these worlds, homes breathe, bodies mutate, and kinship falters. In *Guy on a Swing*, 2025, a hunched-over man, naked from the waist down, perched on what might be a swing or a toilet. Across from him crouches a small, blonde human/animal hybrid, her backside exposed and bare. *Mother/Daughter*, 2025, a gouache that mirrors the blunt styling of Forrer’s textile work, depicts two bright-pink horselike creatures with wide-eyed human faces. Their staggered sizes—and the work’s title—suggest their shared lineage, but the smaller figure’s fearful posture and open-mouth expression mark the bond as fraught. In Forrer’s work, familial and romantic connections appear less comforting than threatening, a reversal redolent of the volatile (and sometimes violent) relationships in fairy tales.

Despite their tightly woven rows and fringes reminiscent of floor rugs, the artist’s tapestries were hung on the walls. Similarly, a new addition to the artist’s repertoire is wallpaper she made featuring her drawings, its floor-to-ceiling sheets coating one side of the gallery. The display strategy replicates how such work might be displayed in a collector’s home, a tactic that can feel cloying in its overt appeal to clients’ decorative inclinations. Here, though, the wallpaper seemed to wink at cutesy standards of interior design, reconfiguring imagery from other artworks on view into disorienting combinations. The centaur-like figures from *Mother/Daughter* appeared alongside the oversize face from *Training Tables*, now rotated upside down. A few feet above, an older, hunched female figure—perhaps the woman from “The Turnip Princess”—trudged along a perilous road, stalked by three massive, hungry-looking wolves.

“Living room art” can be a pejorative term in the art world, implying paintings and sculptures that are more ornamental than ambitious—even though a large part of any commercial gallery’s income is gained from private collectors sprucing up their walls. One can imagine, though, how viewing Forrer’s work in such a context would be akin to hearing a folktale just before bedtime, its mystical visions affecting to children and parents alike. What emerges from the artist’s altered landscapes is less sanctuary, more subterfuge—her imagery’s deceptively whimsical tone is merely a guise for more disruptive ways of living. In her house, public and private, human and animal, comfort and menace, collapse—night after night.

—Claudia Ross



Christina Forrer,
Training Tables, 2025,
cotton and wool,
42 1/4 x 98".