



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Three to see // Review

Three exhibitions to see in New York this weekend

Benjamin Sutton and Gabriella Angeletti

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Kathy Rutenberg, *A Little Birdie Told Me*, 2014

Courtesy of the artist and Lyles & King, New York. Photo credit: Charles Benton.

Kathy Rutenberg: Sunshine at Midnight

Until 30 April at Lyles & King, 21 Catherine Street, Manhattan

Kathy Rutenberg's wondrous ceramic sculptures fuse elements of Surrealism, paganism and environmentalism into richly detailed and technically stupendous tableaux featuring fairy tale figures and creatures. An eco-feminist streak also runs through the show, seen most clearly in the towering sculpture *Climate Crisis*, which grimly renders our current ecological trajectory as a figure with a thriving landscape for a dress and cut tree trunks for hair and topped by the bodies of dead birds. Elsewhere the imagery is less overt and often takes on the quality of myth and legend. In *The Awakening* (2022), for instance, two foxes drink from the breasts of a female figure who is on all fours with flowers sprouting from her back and supporting another figure who is balancing the sun on her head. There is real violence in this fanciful stoneware wilderness, too, though it is often framed as a stage in the natural cycle of decay and rebirth, as in *Fertile Ground* (2016) and *The Moment After* (2008), in which the bodies of dead women sprout new plant life. Throughout the nearly 40 works on view in the gallery and its courtyard, Rutenberg has rendered a fantastical world with an incredibly rich level of detail, from the tiny, lively creatures lurking in every treetop and crevice, to the unexpected openings in her nearly life-size figures that reveal actual inner worlds with yet more landscapes populated by fanciful characters.