

THE BOSTON GLOBE

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2004

By Cate McQuaid
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Wendy Edwards: Paintings

At: O'H+T Gallery, 450 Harrison Ave., through
Oct. 2. 617-423-1677. www.ohgallery.com

A net gain

Painter Wendy Edwards has a system to fluidly explore surface and depth. In her paintings at O'H+T Gallery, she covers her canvases, large and small, in great, looping gestures of wet paint, making sensual tangles of strokes that draw you in and compel you to get lost in them. Then she applies nets of paint, squeezed out in tendrils, knotting briefly at intersections, expanding and contracting over the surface of each work. They look like fishnets rolling atop waves. The viewer might be the netted fish, caught between the flow of the tides and the pull of the rope.

It's seductive work, both in the way Edwards puts down her paint and in the colors she uses. The large "Pepto" sways with green-gold streaks, like Rapunzel's voluminous curly locks. Edwards writes over that with a loose grid, blushing from pale to bubblegum pink. Here, it's delicate and calligraphic, there, heavy and blotting. The net dances over the gold background. Both foreground and background show pure delight in gesture; the artist's elegant, assured hand is everywhere.

Despite all the fun, Edwards builds tension into her works, setting the delicate netting against the swell and brawn of the background strokes. In "Caramel," a smaller piece, she paints a red ground over with powder blue, like a fog settling over a sunset. The net, tugging and gathering, is also blue, but a second net of warm caramel contains the whole, reining in the torrent beneath.