"Open Book"


Viewpoints is a rotating series that highlights works from the Henry Art Gallery's collection, paired with commentary and insights from University of Washington faculty. By offering diverse perspectives across academic fields, the series encourages open inquiry and presents diverse ways of seeing and interpreting the art on view.

Elizabeth Murray and Anne Waldman: Her Story

Upper Level Gallery
May 05, 2018 — November 04, 2018

This iteration of Viewpoints features Her Story, 1988–1990, a collaborative work by Elizabeth Murray (U.S., 1940–2007) and Anne Waldman (U.S., born 1945) that involved a back and forth exchange of drawings, prints, and drafts of poems over several years. Housed in a green folio box, the series consists of thirteen folded sheets with a poem by Waldman on the left and a print by Murray on the right, the artists’ signatures watermarked on each page. Together, the prints and poems of Her Story reciprocally inform each other, probing questions of interiority and exteriority, public and private being, freedom and entrapment, and the complexity and (im)possibility of embodying the feminine.

Murray’s highly detailed color prints mark her transition into blending the techniques of lithography and etching—the resulting images layering offset color reproductions of her drawings with gestural strokes created through intaglio. The prints pulse with an energy simultaneously playful and unnerving, elegant and cartoonish, as seemingly abstract forms morph into figures, furnishings, and trappings of a space becoming and coming undone.

For Waldman, language is energetic, open, and political, and the letterpress poems of Her Story exemplify her skill in suggesting rather than determining narratives. Over the course of the series the text subtly shifts between first, second, and third person point of view to explore a female subjectivity that is contentious and ambiguous, inescapably rooted in reality but not content with or defined by it.

As part of Viewpoints, accompanying commentary is provided by University of Washington faculty, including micha cárdenas, Assistant Professor, Interactive Media Design and Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, UW Bothell; Eva Cherniavsky, Andrew R. Hilen Professor of American Literature and Culture, Department of English; and Sasha Su-Ling Welland, Associate Professor, Department of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies.

Status of Research or Work: Completed/published

Research Type: Publications
  - Essays

People Involved: Sasha Su-Ling Welland

Related Fields: 20th Century
  - Art
    - Feminism
    - Museum Studies/Museology
    - Poetry and Poetics
    - Women

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