DAVID
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GALLERY

Elizabeth Murray and Betty Woodman
March 19 – April 25, 2026
Los Angeles

Press Release

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present *Elizabeth Murray and Betty Woodman*, an exhibition representing over three decades of work by the two artists. The exhibition is on view in Los Angeles at 5130 W. Edgewood Pl. from March 19 through April 25, 2026. An opening reception will take place on Thursday, March 19 from 6–8 PM. The exhibition is accompanied by a commissioned text written by Steve Locke.

Bringing together two formidable artists whose work pushed their respective mediums to new heights, *Elizabeth Murray and Betty Woodman* highlights the duo's keen ability to reimagine traditional art forms by foregrounding painterly techniques on untraditional surfaces and deconstructing hierarchies between surface and form. Though working in ostensibly different mediums—Woodman in ceramics, Murray in painting—these artists shared a radical vision that collapsed the binary between two- and three-dimensional space. In the case of their wall-mounted paintings and sculptures, each artist thoughtfully incorporates the wall as a foundational element that their works can interact with and extend upon. Drawing from a period spanning 1982–2015, this presentation juxtaposes Woodman's ceramic sculptures with Murray's shaped canvases, revealing parallel investigations into positive and negative space, figure-ground relationships, the domestic sphere, and the architectural possibilities of art.

The pairing represents a dichotomy. Where Woodman began as a traditional potter and, over time, shaped her three-dimensional ceramic forms into surfaces for two-dimensional painting with glaze, Murray's career is defined by the ways in which she was able to draw her two-dimensional canvases increasingly further off the wall's surface and into three-dimensional space. In the case of Murray's multi-paneled paintings, each component is constructed so that it fits snuggly alongside its counterpart, meaning that—as with Woodman's sculptures—the way the work is installed is integral to the idea of the work itself. As Locke notes in his essay, "Both artists are using supports to make new forms that become containers for the embodiment of ideas, expanding our notions of what painting can contain. These supports are not subordinate to the images they carry but assert themselves as forms and objects in their own right. Both artists complicate the work by using these supports as painterly arenas that can, and often do, contain images of other things."

In Murray's *Flying Bye* (1982), four quadrilateral canvases slightly overlap at the center of the composition, which depicts a spilling wine glass. Red and green lines suggesting abstracted table legs intersect and bisect the circles, teardrop shapes, and fields of color that span across the overlapping canvases, lending themselves to a sense of precarity underlying both the form itself and the painting that lives on its surface.

For Woodman, even the thin curved forms that float around a central vessel, as seen in *Balustrade Relief Vase: 97-9* (1997), function as painted flourishes on the wall's surface, emphasizing her painterly sensibility. The shelf-mounted vessel and flat, rounded elements of the sculpture appear to float around the vase-shaped negative space that lives between them, exemplifying Woodman's ability to express movement, lightness, and gesture, even in a material as rigid and difficult to work as clay or in the absence of any material at all. The work, like many others seen in the group on display, defies categorization and dissolves the boundaries between abstraction, painting, sculpture, and function.

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Woodman and Murray each deployed exuberant palettes, patterns, and gestural marks drawn from sources as diverse as Matisse, Picasso, Italian Baroque, architecture, Tang Dynasty ceramics, Cubism, and Pop Art—opting to embrace visual pleasure and humor while maintaining a deep engagement with the artistic lineages that informed them. Their maximalist approach to painting treated pattern and color as structural elements equal in importance to line and volume so that color functioned not as a complement to form, but as form itself. For both artists, even in the cases where their compositions completely reinterpret their chosen medium and are literally pieced together, layered, painted, or otherwise distorted, the works maintain a material integrity, so that when viewing the works one can easily recognize their material make-up and therefore contextualize the works within an art historical context. What's left is a pure encounter with color and form.

This exhibition offers a timely reassessment of two artists whose genre-defying practices presaged contemporary art's current embrace of hybrid forms and unapologetically diversified approaches. Locke's essay concludes, "The expansiveness of Murray and Woodman cannot be overstated. Through support and shape they created their own paths of invention through form and they did so without abandoning imagery and connection to history and lived experience. Their respective practices remind us that meaning is made—assembled out of the known and the unknown." It is through each artist's deft grasp of their chosen medium and firm understanding of the possibilities that emerge when a material is shaped, warped, and otherwise reimagined, that new associations to disparate influences are continuously made. Their work remains significant and bracingly relevant for discussions about medium specificity, feminist art practice, and the false hierarchies that have long structured art historical discourse.

Woodman (b. 1930, d. 2018) was born in Norwalk, Connecticut, raised in Newton, Massachusetts, and studied ceramics at the School for American Craftsmen in Alfred, New York from 1948–1950. She was the subject of numerous solo exhibitions worldwide during her lifetime, including a 2006 retrospective at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York—the first time the museum dedicated a survey to a living female artist. Other solo exhibitions have been presented at K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong (2018); Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, England (2016); Museo Marino Marini, Florence, Italy (2015); Gardiner Museum, Toronto, Canada (2011); American Academy in Rome, Italy (2010); Palazzo Pitti, Giardino di Boboli, Florence, Italy (2009); Denver Art Museum, CO (2006); and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (1996). Recent group exhibitions include *Sevres Extraordinaire! Sculpture from 1740–Today*, Bard Graduate Center, New York (2024); *Tender Loving Care: Contemporary Art from the Collection*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston (2023); *The Flames: The Art of Ceramics*, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (2021); *Less Is a Bore: Maximalist Art & Design*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2019); and Liverpool Biennial, England (2016). Woodman's work is in numerous permanent collections worldwide, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Albertina, Vienna, Austria; Museu Nacional do Azulejo, Lisbon, Portugal; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; and World Ceramic Center, Incheon, Korea. Woodman lived and worked in Boulder, Colorado; Antella, Italy; and New York. To learn more about Betty Woodman, please visit the Woodman Family Foundation.

Murray's (b. 1940, d. 2007) work has been the subject of numerous institutional exhibitions, including the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA (2021); Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX (2021); University at Buffalo Art Galleries, New York, NY (2021); The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2005); the Dallas Museum of Art, TX (1987); the Albert and Vera List Visual Arts Center, MIT, Cambridge, MA (1987); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA (1987); The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (1987); Des Moines Art Center, SD (1987–1988); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (1988); and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (1988). Her work is included in public collections worldwide, including Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT. To learn more about Elizabeth Murray please visit the Elizabeth Murray Estate.