



# THE ART NEWSPAPER

---

[Russia-Ukraine war](#) [Art market](#) [Museums & heritage](#) [Exhibitions](#) [Books](#) [Podcasts](#) [Columns](#) [Adve](#)

---

**Exhibitions**  
[Archive](#)

## Elizabeth Murray curates MoMA exhibition of women Modernist artists

This feminist show is the fifth of the museum's artist-curated exhibitions drawn from the permanent collection

**Jason Edward Kaufman**

31 May 1995

---

### New York

In the fifth of the museum's artist-curated shows drawn from the permanent collection, Elizabeth Murray—known for her whimsical, perspective-distorting, oddly-shaped relief paintings—has provided a ladies-only alternative to the male bastion known as the Modernist canon. Her array of more than one hundred drawings, paintings, prints, and sculptures, all by women, constitutes a purposeful, if gentle, incursion into the sanctum of twentieth-century art history. Almost half of the works are by Agnes Martin, Lee Bontecou, Joan Mitchell, Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan and others who forged their reputations during Ms Murray's formative period, and whose examples helped shape her artistic identity. They are joined by progenitors such as Lyubov Popova, Frida Kahlo and Georgia O'Keeffe, as well as contemporaries

like Eva Hesse and Dorothea Rockburne, none later than the early 1970s.

Rather than being arranged chronologically, the works of art are in groups according to Ms Murray's visual and aesthetic predilections. The approach is less aggressive, and perhaps less persuasive, than to have offered an all-ladies twentieth-century timeline, or to have injected a contingent of women's works into the male-dominated moma chronology.

Still, this is clearly a feminist show. Ms Murray was unavailable for comment, but Kirk Varnedoe, the chief curator of the painting and sculpture department who chose her to curate the show, acknowledges, "Obviously the issue of feminism and feminist perspective on the arts is written into the concept of doing this show". For one thing, "She wants to excavate the history of the museum and see how it has dealt with women artists", he says. Has moma neglected women? "There's no doubt about it", he states, adding, "I think that has changed enormously since 1970. But, it's undeniable that women were not given the same opportunities in the past as men, and to some degree the museum inevitably reflects that". Mr Varnedoe is quick to add that "The proportion of women artists that [moma has] been collecting in the last two decades is much larger than it was in the years before".

A second issue that Ms Murray raises is whether there is any common sensibility among women evident from the show. Is there a common thread linking Meret Oppenheim's "Fur-lined teacup", Frida Kahlo's "Self-portrait with cropped hair", Georgia O'Keeffe's "Lake George's window" and a sculpture by Louise Nevelson and Marisol? That is left for the viewer to discern.

"Artist's Choice: Elizabeth Murray - Modern Women" will be on view from 19 June to 22 August.

Originally appeared in The Art Newspaper as *'Adding the Y chromosome to MoMA'*

---

[Exhibitions](#)

[Museum of Modern Art New York](#)

[Modernism](#)

[New York City](#)

[Elizabeth Murray](#)

---

[COOKIE SETTINGS](#)