

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Natasha Sweeten, "Elizabeth Murray's wildly imaginative, electrified mind," *Two Coats of Paint*, May 24, 2024

TWO COATS OF PAINT

Award-winning blogazine, primarily about painting

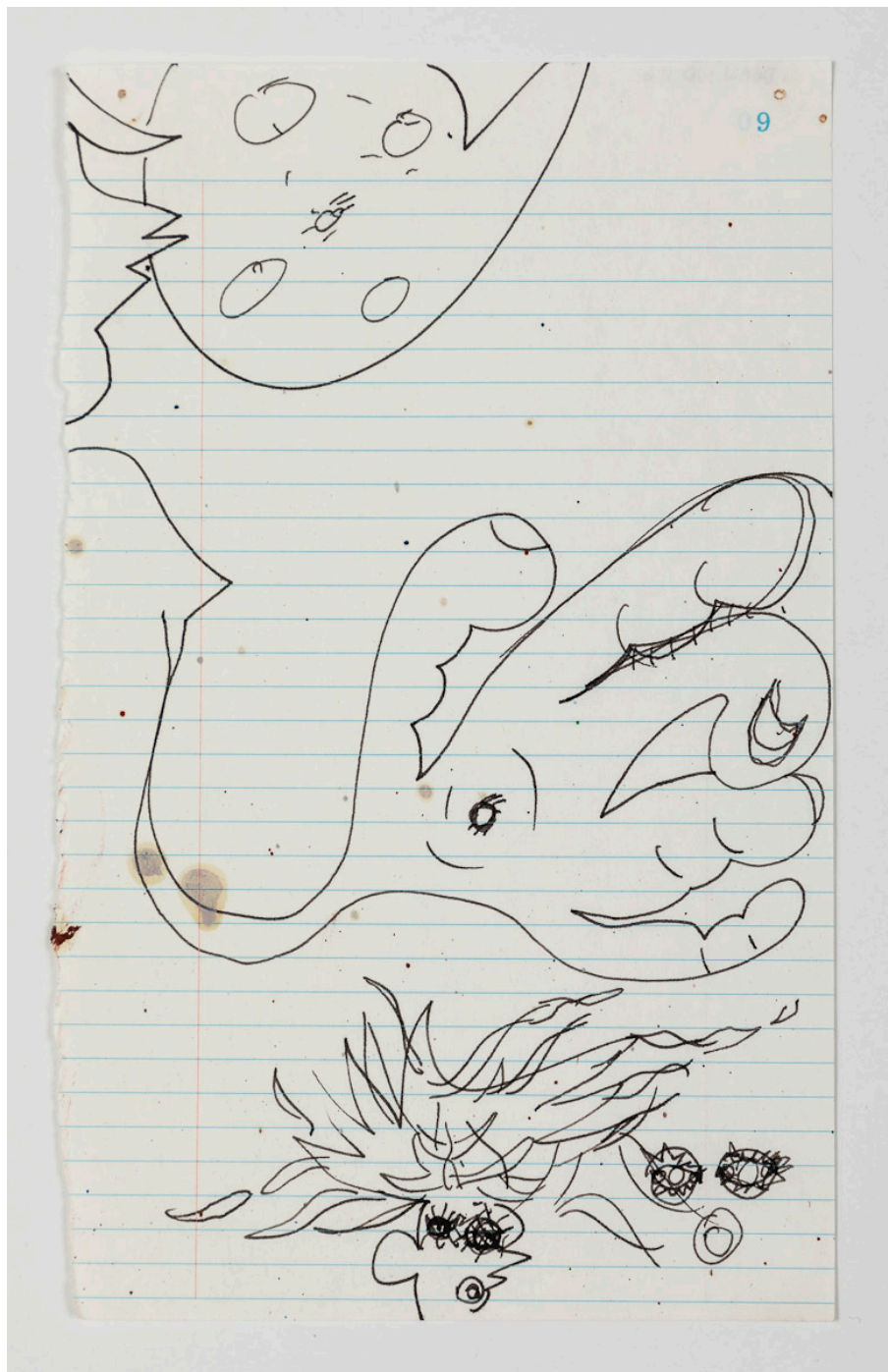
DRAWING

Elizabeth Murray's wildly imaginative, electrified mind

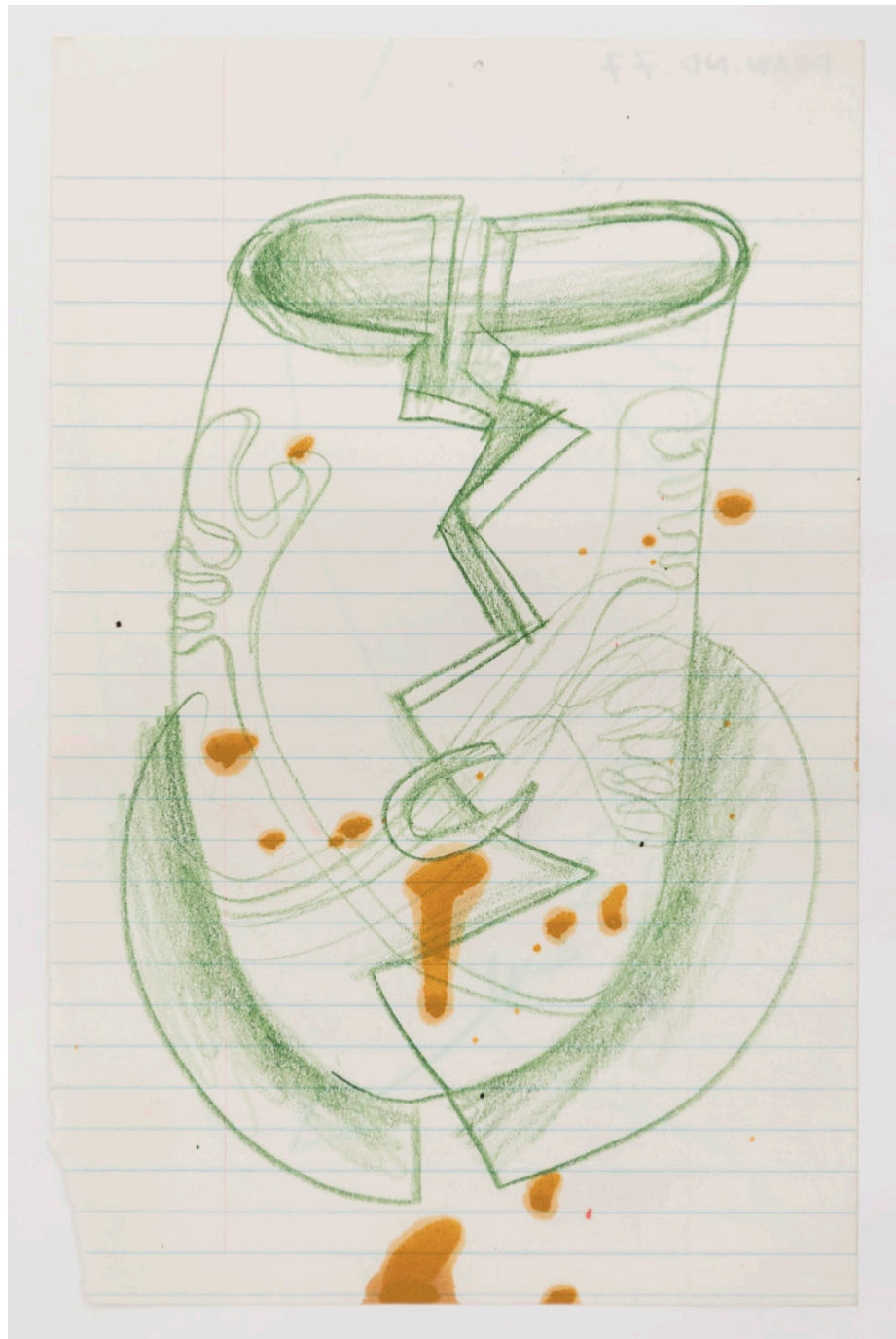


Installation view, Elizabeth Murray: Drawings (1974 – 2006), Gladstone Gallery, New York, 2024.

Contributed by Natasha Sweeten / Like a car with its engine left running, Elizabeth Murray (1940–2007) seemed poised to dart in any direction on short notice. On view at Gladstone 64, *Drawings (1974–2006)*, curated by Kathy Halbreich, boasts over 60 works of mostly pen, marker, and/or colored pencil on notebook-size paper (and actual notebook paper). Several are studies for larger works, others are on pages ripped from a binding, most all are imbued with a casualness but also intention. This show offers an enchanting glimpse into Murray's wildly imaginative, electrified mind. I dare you to see it and not smile.

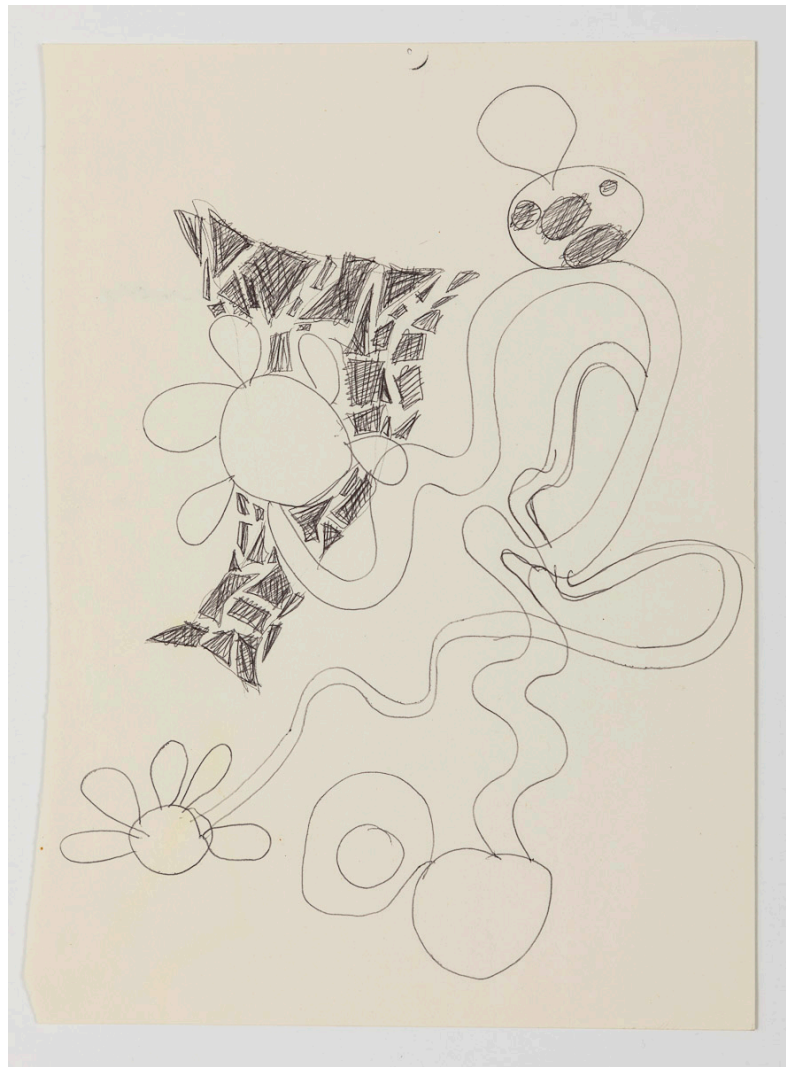


Elizabeth Murray, Study for "Calling", c.1994, Felt tipped pen on lined notebook paper, 9 1/4 x 5 7/8 inches (23.5 x 14.92 cm)



Elizabeth Murray, Study for "The Weaver Painting", c.1988, Colored pencil with oil paint on paper, 7 5/8 x 4 5/8 inches (19.37 x 11.75 cm), 10 1/2 x 7 3/4 x 1 3/8 inches (26.7 x 19.7 x 3.5 cm) framed

Murray brought household objects to life, and some of her best-known work embraces moments of domestic frenzy: tables, chairs, and utensils push the boundaries of painting on multiple, interconnected shaped canvases. In the gallery's front room, you can appreciate how deep this fascination ran. Drawings spanning two decades explore coffee cups breaking, leaping, or sloshing their contents. One seems to provide a legend for four main components: yellow room, red cup, green splash, and multi-colored table. Another with green pencil on torn notebook paper likely salvaged from the studio depicts a jagged crack down the middle of a cup. The thin blue lines of the paper hold the image in place while droplets of ocher oil paint serendipitously hint of coffee. In another drawing, a fury of black lines forms a cup and saucer resting on a tiny chair, a companion spoon stitched in ink vertically along the paper's left side. These scenes resonate with warmth and humor, finding delight in the quotidian.



Elizabeth Murray, *Study for "Making It Up"*, c.1986, Ballpoint pen on paper, 10 3/4 x 7 3/4 inches (27.3 x 19.7 cm), 13 5/8 x 10 1/8 x 1 3/8 inches (34.6 x 25.7 x 3.5 cm) framed

Two cartoonish daisies sprout from loopy stems in *Study for "Making It Up"* from 1986. One flower wearily droops towards the bottom of the page while the other cheerily faces the viewer, backlit by a warped grid of colored-in rectangles and triangles. Balancing on an arc of the uppermost stem, a marble – no, wait, maybe a globe – seeks to announce something but the speech bubble is empty, as if the marble-globe has changed its mind, or perhaps just sighed.

In *Study for "The New World"* (2006), a cat-like head with pursed, pink lips and a curled, rudimentary body hovers near the top of the page while a creature with an arrow tail perches precariously atop a triangle that could be a Christmas tree or a hill. The creature leans away, seemingly to avoid a kiss. Three geometric shapes, one resembling a star, float below the cat in the center of the page. This quirky scenario puzzles and amuses, but wait – there's more: Murray adds one line – a simple U shape – that holds the cat's head in place like a paperclip, cleverly anchoring the drawing.



Elizabeth Murray, Untitled, 2006, Ballpoint and felt tipped pen on paper (Hilton Hotel Stationery), 4 1/8 x 4 5/8 inches (10.47 x 11.75 cm)

In the back room are Murray's larger multimedia drawings and a vitrine of very small ones, a couple on hotel stationery. She was not bashful in her work, and this combination underscores the ease and confidence she felt in claiming any material at hand. As much as any artist, Murray's charm balanced on the play between observed life and inner rumination, between *what* she saw and *how* she saw. These worlds collide and intertwine like a double-helix of barely contained energy, bouncing towards and away from recognizability. In this exhibition you can see her mind traveling a mile a minute. You can feel a spirited wind in her wake.

"Elizabeth Murray: Drawings (1974–2006)," Gladstone 64, 130 East 64th Street, New York, NY. Through June 12, 2024.