

Teacher Guide

Wild Life: Elizabeth Murray & Jessi Reaves



Jessi Reaves. *Idol of the Hares*, 2014. Oak, polyurethane foam, silk, cotton, aluminum, and ink. 38 × 28 × 48 inches. Collection Sam and Erin Falls, Los Angeles, California.

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Exhibition Overview

- *Wild Life* is both a survey and a two-person exhibition featuring artwork by Elizabeth Murray and Jessi Reaves.
- Elizabeth Murray's work spans the 1960s to the 2000s and features mostly paintings and drawings.
- Murray is best known for her monumental, fractured canvases depicting cartoonish, domestic scenes and still lifes.
- Jessi Reaves work in the exhibition includes sculptural assemblages from the last few years, her signature ottomans, and a site-specific carpeted platform.
- Reaves's eccentric, garish, and surreal sculptures are made of ripped, recombined, and reupholstered pieces of furniture--often by noted modernist designers.
- Although Murray and Reaves are generations apart, this exhibition highlights each artist's simultaneously lyrical, playful, and rigorous engagement with the decorative, domestic, and bodily.
- Murray and Reaves irreverently play with color and form, high and low cultural references, and notions of masculinity and femininity. In each artist's work, we find a refusal of rigid categorizations and, instead, an embrace of the nuanced and often ambiguous conceptions of the body and the home, wherein both body and home are continuously coming together and falling apart.



Elizabeth Murray. *C Painting*, 1980-81. Oil on canvas. 109 x 114 inches. Collection Paula Cooper, New York, New York. ©2020 The Murray-Holman Family Trust / Artists. Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Key Questions

- What current artists and artists from previous generations influence you and your work?
- Murray and Reaves often take their work apart and put it back together (i.e. creating a painting on multiple canvases or reassembling a piece of furniture). Can you do this with a work of art? How does this change the work from the original? What new meaning or materials do you use to hold the new work together?
- How do we define artwork that falls outside of traditional definitions? Art vs. Craft? Sculpture vs. Furniture? Are these definitions important?
- How do Murray and Reaves challenge ideas that are typically associated with women? Domestic spaces, home, body, decoration, craft?
- What artists would you pair up from different generations who approach similar ideas in different ways?



Elizabeth Murray. *Night Empire*, 1967–68. Oil on canvas. 51 1/2 x 48 inches. Collection Arthur and Susan Murray Resnick. ©2020 The Murray-Holman Family Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Curriculum Connections

Visual Art | Create a new work of art. Take it apart and then reassemble it in a new and interesting way. Turn it over, turn it inside out, mix-up the pieces. How does reassembling the work, give it new meaning?

Language Arts | Imagine a story revolving around one of the works in the exhibition. Where is the work found? Who owns it? It is found in a home? Who lives there? Think about every detail.