

MIT List Center

Elizabeth Murray

Elizabeth Murray once said she needed to make paintings that would blow up in space. The jumble of domestic objects in this still life, *Castaway*, from 1992, indeed resemble happy homemaking moments gone awry. Set against a garish green canvas with sharp teeth-like edges and ropey appendages, the coffee cup and table appear to be anything but domestic comforts. With her multipart eccentricly-formed canvases, Murray literally reshaped abstraction, working against the reductivism of minimalism.

Early in her career, she created cartoon-like paintings, and that influence is felt in works like this one. She also incorporated lessons from Cubism, fragmenting and compressing her subject matter. The fractured planes distorted forms, and expressive brushstrokes endow this domestically-themed work with an underlying psychological tension.

Murray contended that she painted the stuff of her own life. She said, "My paintings are often strange, and sometimes show me a side of myself-- a violence and physicality that scares me. It's not always pleasant or easy. I don't always like it. And really, when I do them, it's a journey."