

• FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE •

**Susan Wick**  
*Through an Open Frame*

Co-curated with Adam Gildar

February 24 — March 30, 2024

**Opening Reception: Saturday, February 24, 5–8 pm**  
Free and open to the public | Artist in attendance

**Open Studio Tour at ZWick Place: Friday, March 9th, 5-8 pm**  
3601 Wazee Street, Denver, CO 80216  
Free and open to the public

David B. Smith Gallery is honored to present *Through an Open Frame*, the first solo exhibition at the gallery by the esteemed Denver and San Francisco-based artist Susan Wick. The exhibition, co-curated with Adam Gildar, celebrates Wick's highly imaginative 50-year journey in art, showcasing her unique vision through recent paintings in the Main Gallery and a salon-style historic installation in the Project Room.

The Main Gallery features a selection of Wick's recent highly-inventive and vibrantly-hued acrylic paintings that connect the quotidian experiences of the day-to-day with lyrical meditations on existential themes. The gallery's Project Room will be dedicated to a salon-style installation with works spanning the artist's career reflecting a small-scale example of the intimate, yet expansive creative environment that has been instrumental in her inventive art-making process. This thoughtful presentation aims to provide a window into the artist's extensive and diverse multi-disciplinary practice across drawing, painting, soft sculpture, and environmental installation.



Susan Wick, *Strolling Back Home If You Need Me*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in. (91.4 x 121.9 cm)

In a special event that further bridges the connection between the artist's life and work, the gallery will host an open tour of ZWick Place, Wick's home studio and living art installation in Denver, on March 9th from 5-8 pm. For the past 25 years, this warehouse, transformed by Wick's hand and vision, has been a crucible of creativity for her, and the tour promises to offer a rare and personal insight into her artistic domain.

The exhibition's title, *Through an Open Frame*, resonates with the ethos of Emily Dickinson's short poem "Not knowing when the Dawn will Come."

Not knowing when the Dawn will come,  
I open every Door,  
Or has it Feathers, like a Bird,  
Or Billows, like a Shore —

The poet, like Wick, created much of her highly personal and unconventional language experiments willfully insulated in an environment of her own making well away from outside influence and judgment. Capturing the essence of exploration and the unknown, Wick's lived artistic philosophy seen in her expansive and highly distinct output, has for half a century, joyfully refused to adhere to accepted orthodoxies. Akin to Dickinson's embrace of uncertainty, where every door is opened in anticipation of discovery, Wick's paintings appear as doorways into unreal dreamscapes. Like Dickinson, who goes on to ask the oddly punctuated non sequitur "Or has it Feathers, like a Bird, Or Billows, like a Shore," Wick allows herself the liberty to fly freely between idiosyncratic associations, retaining surprising juxtapositions rather than resolving into definite narrative meaning.

The symbols Wick employs in her oeuvre are a rich blend of the mundane and the extraordinary, with recurring motifs such as travel, domesticity, and nature, as well as mortality and loss. Among objects such as diving boards, philosophers stones, floral still lifes, potted trees, mountains, and various means of transport, figures populate unrealities as either humans or birds. Wick's fluid vocabulary of forms, allow for a dynamic interplay of allegory and abstraction, with the ability to slide along the spectrum of becoming between the immaterial and recognizable forms. This fluidity can be seen exemplified in Wick's differing treatment of birds across three paintings: the half human/half anatine figure in *Bird in a Glass*, the three beaked birds neighbors in *Strolling Back Home If You Need Me*, and a far more abstracted duck shape puzzled into the lyrical landscape of *Dreaming*. Much like the profound nonsense of Zen Koans, viewers and readers who are able to embrace indeterminacy in both the artist and poet's works, are offered a mechanism for short-circuiting the tyranny of linear logic by relinquishing to the profoundly absurd.



Susan Wick, *Bird in a Glass*, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 36 in.  
(152.4 x 91.4 x cm)

Wick's approach to space in her paintings is characterized by an exuberant disregard of aesthetic conventions and trends. Her self-determined parameters foster a timeless sense of the present in which space, form, and color intermingle openly. This boundary crossing is evident in the painting *Strolling Back Home If You Need Me*, where she compresses all content into a single visual plane. Along with the noticeable absence of volume via external light sources, Wick eschews any attempt at illusory realism for the truths found in emotional and psychological space. Within this subjective realm, objects, figures, and landscapes glow from within rather than reflecting an outside reality, interacting with each other as equivalents that defy fixed narrative meaning.

In lieu of perspective, Wick does provide layered depth using framing techniques, such as windows, curtains, and actual frames, along with color blocking that results in a layered dynamism without vanishing points. This layered depth reflects the graphic influence of Wick's time spent living in Japan and France in the 1970's, where she was drawn to 18th and 19th century woodblock prints and the French Impressionists who were influenced by them. However, unlike her historic predecessors, in Wick's hands, these orienting portals often dissolve into ambivalence, crossing planes and confounding prepositional relationships such as "in", "on", "between" "behind" and "through", thus emphasizing the act of looking itself over pictorial legibility.

Beginning her artistic journey in the 1960s after leaving a career in New York as an occupational therapist, Wick pursued a Master of Fine Arts in Environmental Design and Textiles at the University of California Berkeley. Her relationship to space has been a central element in her approach to artmaking that has evolved through early feminist storefront performance installations in the 1970's as part of the trio Baker/Rapoport/Wick, to the creation of the City Spirit concept restaurant, bookshop, and performance space in Denver between 1984-1994.

Echoing Virginia Woolf's seminal essay about the conditions for women to make art on their own terms, *A Room of One's Own*, Wick's expansive home and studio, ZWick Place, is not just a room, but a two-story warehouse transformed over 25 years into a living artwork. The building not only provided Wick with the physical and psychological space to create on her own terms, but became itself a material, subsumed in the artist's practice and covered floor to ceiling by her distinctly imaginative vision. It stands as a Gesamtkunstwerk—a complete art environment where life and art coalesce.

*Through an Open Frame* is a celebration of Susan Wick's enduring legacy. Her profound output and life as a pioneering artist exemplifies that art is not the purview of only an innately gifted class of genius, but as a process available to anyone able to and commit to the practice of tuning to their own idiosyncratic inclinations. We invite you to experience the depth and breadth of her work at David B. Smith Gallery, where every frame is an invitation to explore boundless possibilities.



Susan Wick, *Dreaming*, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in. (91.4 x 121.9 cm)

### **About Susan Wick**

Susan Wick (b. 1938, Madison, Wisconsin) is an artist living and working in Denver, CO and San Francisco, CA. As part of the 1970's San Francisco based performance collective Baker/Rapoport/Wick, she exhibited at the California State University, Los Angeles, University Art Museum, Berkeley, San Francisco Art Institute, Musée Des Beaux Arts Laussane, Switzerland and the Bologna Biennial among others. As a solo artist she had a one-person exhibition at the DeSaisset Art Museum, Santa Clara, California (1981) thereafter moving to Denver, Colorado where she continued to work in relative isolation from the broader art world. In 2006, the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver named Wick "Colorado Artist of the Year" and presented a solo exhibition of her work. In 2015, the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art presented a 50 year-survey of the artist's work. In 2018, Gildar Gallery, Denver and Lulu, Mexico City co-presented a solo exhibition at Vacation NYC. Wick's work has been exhibited at Untitled, Miami and Art Los Angeles Contemporary.

### **About David B. Smith Gallery**

David B. Smith Gallery is committed to presenting intelligent and culturally relevant exhibitions in its Denver location, featuring the region's most important emerging talent alongside internationally recognized artists. Through its curatorial program, participation in art fairs, and extensive media coverage in publications such as *Artforum*, *Art in America*, and *ARTnews*, David B. Smith Gallery has cultivated a strong regional, national and international collector audience. *The New York Times* hailed the gallery as offering "an exciting contrast of cutting edge works." The gallery also maintains an active publishing division, which produces exhibition catalogues and editions.

David B. Smith Gallery is a member of the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA).

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