

Mrs.

GAIL SPAIEN

Observed and Imagined

Organized by Hilary Schaffner

60-19 56th Road

Maspeth, NY

January 18 - March 8, 2025

Opening reception: January 18, 4 - 7pm

Mrs. is pleased to announce *Observed and Imagined*, a solo exhibition of works by Gail Spaien, organized by Hilary Schaffner, opening January 18, 2024. Spaien is a distinguished American painter who keenly explores life in Maine through a lens of the domestic interior. Culling from a long tradition of regional painters, Maine's interior spaces and landscapes play center stage in her works.

Spaien's figureless tableaus reflect a world in which her lived experience and imagination coexist. Every element has its place. Strategically placed shoes, tableware and chairs allude to the aftermath of a domestic event that give each painting a sense of place and rootedness.

"It is rootedness, the foundations to place, to identity and to time, that Spaien seeks to convey in her observed and imagined compositions. Every element in her paintings has a place, a locked and secure location that is in harmony with every other element. It is not just the birds' relationship to the sky or a chair's relationship to its decorative cushions but the floorboards' kinship to the trees, the puzzle pieces' connection to the sea waves, and a curtain's fellowship to wispy clouds." (Michele Grabner's essay, *Gail Spaien: Puzzle Pieces and the Sea's Waves*, 2022)

For Spaien a painting is a site of connection. It is an opportunity for two worlds to intersect - the viewer's internal world and the artist's imagined world. Through the use of mesmerizing patterns akin to those of Morris Hirshfield and the flattened surfaces of early Folk Art painting, Spaien masterfully constructs her landscapes of objects creating subtle contradictions in space that keep curiosity afloat and a sense of place ever present.

-Hilary Schaffner

Gail Spaien (b. 1958) is an American artist and educator based in Maine. Spaien has been the recipient of numerous fellowships including the Ucross Foundation (2024), Varda Artist Residency Program, Djerassi Foundation Resident Artists Program, Millay Colony for the Arts and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. She has received grant funding from the Lillian Orlowsky and William Freed Foundation, the Maine Arts Commission, and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. Spaien's solo exhibitions include Taymour Grahne Projects, London, (2023); Ogunquit Museum of American Art, Ogunquit, ME; Nancy Margolis Gallery, NY; Ellen Miller Gallery, Boston, MA; Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME; Group exhibitions include Taymour Grahne Projects, London; Center for Maine

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Contemporary Art, Rockland, ME; studio e, Seattle, WA; Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown, MA; University of New Hampshire Museum, Durham, NH; Institute of Contemporary Art, Portland, ME; Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME; and the DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA. Spaien received her MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and BFA from University of Southern Maine. A recently retired professor at Maine College of Art and Design she is now full-time in her studio.

Hilary Schaffner is an independent curator and arts professional whose career in the arts spans over 20 years. In 2011 she co-founded Halsey McKay Gallery in Long Island, New York with the goal of bringing mid-career and emerging artists to the area. During her time at Halsey McKay Hilary had critical roles in artist development and representation, client advisory, collection management, exhibition curation, and art fair presentations. Prior to founding the gallery, she received her MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York City while working as director of a small gallery on the Lower East Side. Hilary has worked in public relations for arts institutions including the Dia Art Foundation, Isamu Noguchi Foundation and the Cisneros Foundation. She has been a guest critic at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, NY; School of Visual Arts, NY, Parsons School of Design, NY and MECA, ME. Since moving to Maine in 2018 Hilary has curated several exhibitions including: *Broken Open* at Museum of New Art, Portsmouth, NH; *You Look Like a World* at Able Baker Gallery, Portland, ME; *Asters & Goldenrod* at Alice Gavin Gallery, Portland, ME; *Letha Wilson: Cut, Bend, Burn* at CMCA, Rockland, ME; *Lauren Luloff: Paint the Air*, CMCA, Rockland, ME. Her curatorial work has been featured in Artforum, ArtNews, Interview, The East Hampton Star, Modern Painters, Vogue, Portland Press Herald and Boston Art Review. Hilary lives in Portland, ME.

Gail Spaien, *Observed and Imagined* will be on view at Mrs., 60-19 56th Road., Maspeth, Queens, NY 11378 through March 8, 2025. For more information please contact hello@mrsgallery.com.