

ART AS HEALING

Susan Swartz illuminates the restorative world of natural wonders.

BY CLAIRE BREUKEL

“I paint flowers so they will not die.” -Frida Kahlo.

For ages, artists have been preoccupied with depicting the abundance of nature, from painters Claude Monet (1840-1926) and Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) to today’s land artists Andy Goldsworthy and Mary Mattingly. This same creative impulse—to capture moments for wonder and contemplation—is central to Susan Swartz’s (susanswartz.com) artistic practice. From her work with documentary film organization Impact Partners to her philanthropy or her paintings and sculptures, Swartz fronts human equilibrium with the environment.

In 2002, Swartz was selected as the Olympic Environmental Artist for the Winter Olympic Games. Her longstanding relationship with the Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington, DC—which embraced women artists when many museums refused— is most heartfelt.

Following a 2011 solo exhibition, Swartz’s work was acquired by the museum and re-shown at its October 2023 reopening. Last year also saw Swartz honored with the Harvard Divinity School and Peter J. Gomes Honors Award in recognition of her career’s hope-driven perspective; a painting sale for a record price at Sotheby’s Impact Gala to raise funds for a reforestation project, and her work debut at Art Miami with New York-based Jason McCoy gallery.

Yet Swartz’s storied career hasn’t always been roses. Growing up with late-diagnosed dyslexia, Swartz found solace in art to

From top: Susan Swartz, “Vase” (extra small, gray 11), 8 x 8 inches; Susan Swartz, “Evolution of Nature” # 27, (2023), 36 x 36 inches, acrylic on linen.



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express herself. In adulthood, Swartz was diagnosed with simultaneous Lyme disease and Mercury poisoning, leaving her deathly ill. Using her Utah-based art studio as a space to regain strength, her passion for painting and sculpting as a means of healing was reignited, inspiring a stylistic shift from realism to abstraction. In Swartz’s “Evolution of Nature” series, flowers and fruit fill the painted canvases with kaleidoscopic texture and pigment. Her Rhapsody paintings and Vase sculptures are composed of bold monochromatic paint strokes that transform surfaces with awe-inspiring color.

“My art practice invites connections with nature and expresses the urgency for preserving our natural world for generations to come,” shares Swartz.



Clockwise from top: “Evolution of Nature #18”, (2021), 72 x 72 inches, acrylic on linen; artist Susan Swartz; “Vase” (extra small, gray 6), 8 x 8 inches.

Susan Swartz’s career trajectory is defined by supporting others to realize their potential, inviting cognizance of the urgent movement toward environmental care, and creating moments for heartfelt healing. Her art ensures that flowers will not die. o

