

Susan Eley
— Hudson —
Fine Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 5, 2021

Katharine Dufault

Sarah Lutz



July 15 – August 15, 2021

433 Warren St, Hudson, NY 12534



Opening Reception: Friday, July 16, 6-8 PM*

For the summer 2021 season, Susan Eley Fine Art, Hudson presents a series of three exhibitions, each fostering an intimate and dynamic dialogue between two artists based in the greater Hudson Valley region. Selected for the aesthetic, material and/or conceptual concerns resonating within and between their practices—the artist pairings are Jim Napierala and Lisa Pressman; Katharine Dufault and Sarah Lutz; and Barbara Marks and Joe Sultan. Each artist shines independently; then, contextualized alongside one another, their works manifest both interstices and interconnections.

The second presentation in SEFA Hudson's summer series highlights recent works by Katharine Dufault and Sarah Lutz—on view from July 15 to August 15, 2021, including an opening reception on July 16th with the artists on site. The exhibition features selections from Dufault's latest series of oil paintings, plus a portfolio of watercolor studies on paper, and Lutz's multimedia paintings in varying sizing and a selection of her new monotype prints—gathering about a dozen works by each artist in SEFA's downtown Warren Street space. Dufault's and Lutz's practices reveal a deep connection to and appreciation for nature. Rooted in the landscapes around them, the artists observe, interpret and abstract naturalistic forms and colors into rich, vivid imagery. While they capture their personal interpretations of a specific place or natural detail, their masterful introduction of abstraction into their canvases also provides a myriad of access points for viewers: they build wondrous worlds that are catalysts for memory and for fantasy, both theirs and ours.

Dufault and Lutz are further linked by their emphasis on gesture and process and the primacy of color in their practices. Yet, they employ their techniques and materials to achieve highly distinct visual results. Dufault creates hazy landscapes where trees blur and mountains melt into sumptuous patches of color. Her paintings

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are quiet meditations in which she seeks to simplify the landscape into its essentials, reflecting her lasting impressions rather than recording precise details. While Dufault zooms out, Lutz zooms in. Taking a different aesthetic approach, Lutz favors a specificity, crispness and clarity in her style and content. Exuberant and dense cellular forms float throughout her paintings and prints, bumping into and merging with other amoebic constellations.

While adhering to their unique visual sensibilities and individual conceptual concerns, Dufault and Lutz have stated similar goals for their artwork: composing scenes that simultaneously evoke the familiar and transmit something ethereal or unknown. They explore the alchemic potentials of pigment by abstracting form through feeling. Presented together at SEFA Hudson—their works enrich each other by providing viewers both a macrocosmic and a microcosmic lens to poetically interpret nature, alluding to our place within and enhancing our relationships with the surrounding world.



Artist, curator and advisor **Katharine Dufault** was born in Cambridge, England in 1966 and graduated with honors from Columbia University in New York. Currently living and working in the Berkshires region of western Massachusetts, she is influenced by the nature enveloping her home. Her works are based in the tradition of observational landscape painting. Yet, she decisively moves toward an abstract style, creating atmospheric, impressionistic renderings of the neighboring trees, fields and mountains and the glowing rural moon—a prominent motif throughout the works on view at SEFA Hudson, her latest series. Dufault recently relocated to the Berkshires full-time, providing her the opportunity to experience this notably mountainous and lush environment on a daily basis. She absorbs its particularities and its energies from her kitchen windows and on her daily walks, witnessing the changes throughout the seasons. As the time she spends here increases, she finds that her connection to the land also deepens. Thus, to the artist, it has become “a living landscape.”

In addition to direct observations from her studio windows, Dufault’s newest oil paintings presented at SEFA Hudson are sourced from photographs taken during her walks and her *en plein air* sketches. She makes expressive watercolor studies (also on view) while outdoors, a tradition that began with her mother when she was young and that she continues to recall fondly. However, the most important source for Dufault’s large-scale paintings is her memory—the quiet experience of how the landscape looked and felt to her in a fleeting moment. The artist often records her reactions and perceptions in writing, and she has accumulated a number of notebooks that interweave quick sketches and daily journaling with concepts and plans for future works. Language, specifically poetry, figures into her inspirations as well. She frequently cites a phrase drawn from the title of a poetry anthology by her father-in-law Peter Kane Dufault (1923-2013) to describe her own work:

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“To Be In The Same World.” The artist believes that this simple, powerful sentiment reflects the intentionality of her approach and the essence of her landscapes, manifesting an invitation for collective experience.

Relying on her lasting impressions of a place, Dufault captures its most fundamental elements by eliminating the details. To achieve this, she manipulates pattern and space through palette, and color generally takes precedence over form. The artist stated: “I am a colorist.” Typically, she approaches a new canvas by selecting one or two hues—such as her signature earthy red or her new favorite oil paint Zinc Yellow. Then, she “takes the color *beyond* how it actually does look” in nature. She plays with paint and “the way that it moves into itself materially, or merges and bleeds” in order to “find out which colors make each other sing.” Dufault applies oil paint in thin washes to build up layers, resulting in a range of opacities within a single piece. Nearly translucent strokes of a morning sky morph into the deep, opaque tones of a shadowy mountain. Throughout her working process, the artist moves the canvas between vertical and horizontal positions to attain her desired visual effects. She drips paint directly onto the canvas to create density; she slaps paint on with a brush to create splatters; she wipes paint away to create depth—never overthinking her next move. Dufault’s way of seeing—this zooming out—embraces simplicity, self-reflection and intuition rather than reproduction or precision, and her hazy, meditative landscapes become more truthful in their obscurity.



Artist **Sarah Lutz** is based between Germantown, NY and Truro, MA. She was born in 1967 in Madison, WI and spent her formative years of nine to thirteen living in Guatemala, which had a lasting impact on her sensitivity to color. As an undergraduate at Skidmore College, Lutz grew to love the material effects of painting and “learned how to swing paint.” Her graduate studies at American University provided a more formal art education under professors such as Stanley Lewis. Here, the artist immersed herself in Early Renaissance painting styles, notably that of Piero della Francesca, who was lauded for his bold juxtapositions of aquamarine blues and deep reds; this created what Lutz describes as “buzzing of colors”—an ocular sensation that influences her own palette today.

The artist creates multimedia paintings, which are presented at SEFA Hudson alongside new monotype prints. She is interested in the multifaceted relationships between figure and ground. Lutz concurrently emphasizes negative spaces within her compositions, dense clusters of suspended, floating shapes and the moments where such forms divide, intersect and merge. On an initial visual level, it appears that the artist could have drawn her content directly from under a microscope lens—zooming in to discover the aesthetic pleasures of the biological realm. Cell-like amalgamations, honeycomb structures and interlocking circles and ovals dominate Lutz’s

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imagery. These intricate, anatomical shapes were initially inspired by her pregnancy and life as a mother, referencing groupings of cells, or morula. Indeed, she has expressed her fascination with the mysteries of cell structures—both their appearance and their behavior; their idiosyncrasies and their ubiquitousness. In addition to looking closely within organisms, the artist turns to the natural world around her, specifically at her home in Cape Cod. During her walks along the beach, Lutz gathers shells and coral that have washed up on the coastline. She has amassed a collection of sea fans, clams, barnacles and anemones, arranged in dioramas to bring the underwater energy she relishes into her studio. She is also attuned to underwater movements, such as the undulations of sea grasses from the currents—the action beneath the easily visible surface, a “bubbling up and bubbling down.” Lutz’s works are, effectively, detailed studies of such natural forms—abstracted and reimagined to uncover their essence.

While ultimately abstract and approaching the fantastical, Lutz’s paintings are formally rendered in a crisp, clear manner with vibrant colors. According to the artist, this is achieved through “a honing and specificity that I require of myself in each painting through my precise and conscious handling of my gestures and my materials.” For Lutz, subject matter and process are “seamlessly interwoven; the evolution of the work becomes the subject, even a narrative.” She uses a variety of techniques to craft intersecting layers on each canvas—building and breaking her surfaces until her ideal vision emerges. She employs a wide range of colors, with a myriad of paint tubes always accessible in her studio. At times, she paints directly from the tubes, applying pigment onto the canvas in dots and swipes. Lutz works on her paintings in two directions, flipping the canvas as needed to control the drips of pigment. She also relies on an arsenal of tools: a fan brush for creating delicate patterns; a six-headed brush for applying rippling lines; a trowel for incising; a squeegee for wiping. Lutz often incorporates stencils—both in the traditional manner where the stencil acts as a resist for her spray paint and, innovatively, like a stamp where the stencil becomes an additive to the composition. She also makes her own paper stencils, which she considers an integral part of her printmaking process, bringing her characteristic amoebic forms to her works on paper. Produced by 10 Grand Press with printer Marina Ancona, the new series of prints on view at SEFA Hudson possesses a rich ochre and navy palette. These monotypes manifest the dynamism ever-present in Lutz’s oeuvre—the cell and the sea; the gestures of fission and fusion; the rhizomatic nature of the world that connects the individual and the universal.

Text by Liz Lorenz, Assistant Director, Susan Eley Fine Art, Hudson

* SEFA Hudson is following the rules and regulations around gatherings in Columbia County, NY. Face coverings are required for any visitors that are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.