

Susan Eley
Fine Art

fission / fusion

David L. Bullis & Carole Eisner

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Susan Eley Fine Art, Hudson

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August 31—October 15, 2023

Opening Reception: Saturday, September 2, 5-7PM

Panel Discussion: Sunday, September 3, 4PM

SEFA Hudson presents a two-person exhibition featuring David L. Bullis and Carole Eisner entitled *fission / fusion*. The artists are both painters and sculptors. Their multifaceted practices are highlighted in this show. Bullis' colorful mobile sculptures are suspended from the ceiling, casting shadows as they turn. They are paired with Eisner's colorful, abstract paintings, whose geometric elements buzz and energize the color fields they inhabit.

fission / fusion is on view at SEFA Hudson from August 31 to October 15, 2023. There will be an opening reception on Saturday, September 2 from 5-7PM. This exhibition coincides with The Hudson Eye which is an annual arts and culture festival that features many Upstate New York creators. The festival is supported by the Jonah Bokaer Arts Foundation with Aaron Levi Garvey as Chief Curator. SEFA Hudson will host a panel discussion between Jeremy Bullis and Susan Eley on September 3 at 4PM. The moderator of this talk is Ellen D'Arcy Simpson, the Owner and Director of D'Arcy Simpson Art Works in Hudson, NY.

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The concepts of fission and fusion are well known in scientific communities as atomic reactions that produce energy. Fission is characterized by the splitting of atoms, while fusion is the joining. Both forces work in tandem to achieve powerful effects. They need to break in order to bind. Similarly, Bullis's sculptures and Eisner's paintings multiply their force when presented together in this exhibition, abstracting reality to rebuild better.

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The metal sculptures by Bullis hang from above. As the Gallery door opens, they move and turn. The organic nature of SEFA's visitors entering the space propels these objects into motion. Their iconic shadows also change throughout the day, giving visitors a new view with the shifting light. For Bullis, each metal piece is part of an alphabet. He fuses each shape together with a knowing care creating his own language. An example of kinetic sculpture, these delicate pieces are reminiscent of mid-century artists like Alexander Calder, Marcel Duchamp, Jean Tinguely and Victor Vasarely who all linked separate parts into expressive and harmonious moving objects.

The works on view were first produced by David L. Bullis. His son Jeremy Bullis, who is both an artist and a gallerist in Hudson, began to work with his father on the original sculptures. Now, Jeremy Bullis reproduces David's sculptures in editions, turning it into a body of work that can live on—to legitimize his father's practice. Originals and editions will be on view at SEFA. The editioned colors can vary from verdant green to bright yellow to stunning red; yet, the essence is the same. Additionally, there are two works originally conceived of by Jeremy in the style and forms of David. In this way, Jeremy is continuing the legacy of his father in their collaboration known as *Jeremy Bullis after David Bullis*. His practice gives him an opportunity to remember how creating the original sculptures together helped their relationship evolve from challenging to fulfilling—the fusion after the fission.



Eisner's practice as a sculptor and painter spans almost 60 years, and features geometric abstract painting, gestural and figurative painting and small-scale and monumental sculpture, welded from recycled scrap steel. The geometric paintings, with a total of about 30 extant works, were all produced in about five years from the late 1970s through the early 1980s. The paintings are a study in geometry upon first glance; however, they are not the mere mid-century modern version of relating shapes. Colorful backgrounds are illuminated with white lines and green

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rectangles; shapes overlay and collide, coexist and confront. As a whole, Eisner's abstractions express kinetic energy—the pent up energy that is ultimately expressed by the scientific actions of fission and fusion.

While Pop Art was in full force, Eisner always related more to the Abstract Expressionists. “I recall very vividly going to MoMA during high school to see Pollock's paintings,” she says. “It was an epiphany for me to understand that you could paint outside of the lines.” Along with Pollock, she was also influenced by the work of Josef Albers and Marc Rothko, who demonstrated the power of the rectangle and how colors could vibrate and shimmer when next to each other. By the late 70s Eisner's hieroglyphics began to appear on the edges and inside and outside of the larger geometric shapes. Squiggles, dashes, Xs, triangles, lines and semi-circles would dance across the canvas, like punctuation marks in contrasting colors, or staccato notes on a musical score. Eisner played with the thickness of borders around the rectangles and squares, sometimes using the razor edge of the tape to create a sharp line, but increasingly allowing the line to blur and the color to bleed, creating fuzzy edges. “It felt right to let the color leak out a bit, more like how the world really is,” adds Eisner.

By the end of this period, Eisner's signature shapes grew and obliterated the confines of the larger quadrangles. All grown up and independent, the shapes now took center stage, and a new series of geometric paintings was born, exemplified here by “Yond” and “Stacked”. The brief era of the Dancing Hieroglyphics had ended, making the paintings from this series all the more precious.



Commercially available in the 1950s and widely used by artists by the 1970s, acrylic paint became an important tool for both Bullis and Eisner. Jeremy Bullis states: “David used aerosol (spray) paints because they met both his practical and artistic needs - the paint was developed to stick to metal in an even layer and came in a wide range of colors from primary to fluorescent.” Regarding this medium, Eisner adds “people said acrylic was not as rich and glossy as oil paint, but it had a flatness that was ideal for the graphic, smooth quality I was after,” says Eisner.

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Additionally, Eisner is the mother of SEFA's Owner and Director Susan Eley. Thus, similarly between Bullis and Eisner and Eley—there is the connection between “artist parent” and “next generation” creative. This fascinating dynamic will be the subject of the panel discussion on Sunday, September 3rd.



The legacy might weigh heavily initially,
yet the burden is triumphed by the blessing—
the lessons of creativity, passion and perseverance.

Press Release Text by Susan Eley & Liz Lorenz

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DAVID L. BULLIS & JEREMY BULLIS

Artist Biographies:

David Bullis (1942 - 2011) lived in North Benton, Ohio. From the beginning he was an outsider with a dark sense of humor, a curiosity that rural Ohio could not satisfy, and a need to create. When graduating high school he was told by his father that he could not be an artist. That, "Making art is not a job." David's response was to join the Navy and see the world. He became a fighter jet mechanic on an aircraft carrier and toured the Asian Seas. After the Navy he spent the late 60's exploring the North and South Western United States, experimenting with painting, making sand candles and racing cars. Eventually he returned to Ohio, got married and raised a family. He had a large workshop/studio where he spent the majority of his free time creating and building things. Not satisfied with just fitting in the time to create art, he took early retirement and devoted the last 15 years of his life to doing what he wanted to do—paint, sculpt, carve, build, and write. He accepted death knowing that he had made the most out of life and that he had created as much as he was able to.

Jeremy's artistic interests were encouraged and nurtured from the earliest age by both of his artistically talented parents. He too left rural Ohio after high school, but headed East, to New York City. He worked as an artist in NYC for 25 years creating sculptures, creatures, masks, costumes and sets for his own exhibitions, as well as Broadway, dance, film and television. Now in Hudson, NY his current sculptural project is *Bullis Towers*, a study of Fantasy, Fact and Humanity's shared experience. He is also the Artistic Director of Window On Hudson and co-founder of the 2econd Saturday Hudson Gallery Crawl.

Artist Statement:

Jeremy Bullis after David Bullis is a collaboration that began almost 50 years ago between father and son. Jeremy, always curious about what his father was making, would stand by his side asking, "Can I do it?" Fortunately, David was eager to pass on his knowledge as a sculptor, painter, woodworker, and mechanic. He took the time to teach Jeremy the skills and patience needed for making what he was creating. David had always been fascinated by things that could fly or swim. In their element these vehicles or animals could float, soar, spin, dart, dive and glide as if by magic. The mobiles are a study of these movements. With delicate lines, the mobiles attempt to capture a snapshot of action and then recreate motion with balance and a breeze. In

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his own practice David meditated on each piece, seeing each shape from all sides, watching it interact with the others, watching a new image form in shadow and then slowly disappear, never to be repeated in exactly the same way again. The mobiles provide a moment of calm joy—one can appreciate them with a glance, but stopping and watching for a moment, just like we do with birds or fish, is what was hoped for.

Over decades David created his own language with the mobiles, partially derived from Alexander Calder's, but over time developing into its own dialect. More free, more intentional, a whisper, a long note. The language developed first as flat objects, rather representational in their shape, and then evolved into more abstract forms representing feelings and mirroring the curves used in David's own paintings and carvings. These wire shapes began to bend, turning out and away from themselves, eventually becoming fully three dimensional ovoids. The overall size of the hanging mobiles grew as well, starting around 24"x24" then increasing to 36"x36" followed by tabletop versions and eventually hanging pieces over 5 feet in length.

David only showed the mobiles twice in his life, both times in Salem, Ohio. After his passing in 2011, in an attempt to honor the enormous archive of work that he had created in his lifetime, his heirs began looking for exhibition opportunities. With a limited number of completed mobiles in the estate Jeremy decided to pick up the mantle and, just as his father did, replicate the works of art in limited editions. Some of the language that David developed has come easily to Jeremy, both pairs of hands seemingly programmed to create a curve here rather than there. Other aspects have required more study and practice. Now, Jeremy spends time trying to get into his Father's thought process and continue his meditations on wonder, fear, regret and simple joys aiming to imbue each replicated edition with the same light, hopeful spirit that David used. He is also adding his own vocabulary to this language of wire and shadow and hopes to continue the conversation with his father for many years to come.

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CAROLE EISNER

Artist Biography - Painting:

Carole S. Eisner was born and raised in New York City and received a BFA from Syracuse University (1958). She has had eight solo shows in New York City at David Findlay Gallery, Elizabeth Weiner Gallery, Syracuse University's Lubin House, the Jack Gallery, the Segal Gallery and the First Women's Bank; and elsewhere at the Jill Youngblood Gallery, LA, the Silvermine Center for the Arts, New Canaan, CT, and in Tokyo, at Gallery Tanishima and Gallery Sagan. She has participated in group shows at The Guggenheim Collection, NY (Recent Acquisitions show, 1986), The Atria Gallery, Hartford, CT, Neill Gallery, NY, The Institute of Contemporary Art, London, The Michael Stone Gallery, McLean, VA, and Gallery 99, Bay Harbor Islands, FL. Eisner is represented in private, public and corporate collections and has been published in The New York Times, New York Magazine, Who's Who in American Art, Vogue and New York Newsday. Eisner, her husband and three dogs live in Weston, CT.

Artist Statement:

My interest in pure color and geometric shapes has been an overarching theme in the many artistic pursuits I have undertaken in my career. From my first years as a fashion designer, I gravitated to painting and sculpture. Abstraction, geometry, shape and color have always been at the core of my work. The paintings in this exhibit, from 1977 to the early 80s, are based on the rectangle. I was influenced by Albers and Rothko, Mondrian and Bolotowsky. I loved the experimentation and simplicity of Albers work in examining the juxtaposition of two colors vibrating off each other. His work was more cerebral, more controlled than mine; Rothko's more passionate and emotional and Mondrian and Bolotowsky, more linear and graphic. I endeavored to create work in response to these Masters, by using my own color palette, adding personal symbols and hieroglyphics to animate and create a conversation on the canvas. Later in the series, I tested the addition of glitter, adding texture and playfulness to the paintings.