

Susan Eley

Fine Art

Awakenings:

Works by Luis Maldonado, Ellen Hermanos, and Carolyn Monastra

May 12 – June 15, 2007 at the Prince George Gallery Ballroom

May 2007

New York, NY – Susan Eley Fine Art is proud to present its spring exhibition, “Awakenings,” showcasing the work of artists Luis Maldonado, Ellen Hermanos and Carolyn Monastra. Presented at the Prince George Gallery, located in the historic Prince George Hotel, this extraordinary exhibit focuses on the theme of awakening, both spiritually and seasonally, via painting and photography.

Each of these talented artists takes the viewer on a journey through the exploration and enrichment of the soul. Maldonado, in his fantastical seasonal paintings, explores the physical and emotional changes one undergoes as the seasons move from winter to spring to summer. The abstract paintings of Ellen Hermanos, a practicing psychotherapist, explore the internal landscape of the mind through the use of layering of washes of tone and color blocks. Carolyn Monastra’s photographs are fairytale and mystical landscapes that explore our relationship with nature.

As spring awakens the beauty of the natural world, the work of Maldonado, Hermanos and Monastra awaken the artistic spirit within each of us in this wondrous exhibit.

Opening Reception

Monday, May 21, 6-8 PM

The Prince George Ballroom is located at
15 East 27th Street

Gallery hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 12 - 6 PM
or call for an appointment: 917.952.7641.

Who is Susan Eley?

Susan Eley opened her Upper West Side gallery in a landmarked townhouse in the spring of 2006. Since that time she has represented and sold the work of fifteen artists and has had four on-site and five off-site exhibitions. Her unique vision of collecting and selling art has insured great success within a short period of time. "I am open-minded about how to showcase art. There are so many talented, underrepresented artists in Manhattan that it is important to remain open to exposing art in a variety of venues – from offices to cafes to traditional art spaces." Eley, a one time art journalist believes that a collector should collect what they love and not solely for investment purposes. "It's important to know the artist's work, look at the work more than once and get to know the artist."

With over 25 years experience in the arts--as a performer, collector, curator, writer and educator-- Susan Eley can tell what will work for her gallery and her growing clientele. "My reaction to a work is informed by years of experience. I know right away if I like something, but then I will stand back and determine if the piece is well crafted and offers something new." The artists featured in Eley's newest off-site show fit her strict criteria. For further information visit www.susaneleyfineart.com.

ARTIST BIO:

LUIS MALDONADO



Born in Brookfield, Wisconsin, Luis Maldonado spent the better part of his childhood in Miami. A child of a Puerto Rican father and an American mother, Maldonado always felt the tug of two cultures, growing up with a strong feeling of displacement. "This feeling of not belonging is freeing at the same time as being open-ended and confusing," he says.

While always interested in art, Maldonado turned to painting and sculpture in earnest his senior year in high school. He received a BFA in sculpture and paintings from Northern Illinois University and an MFA in paintings from SUNY Purchase College.

The artist's rich cultural heritage has forged his desire to map a narrative of his world at various stages. For this current series, he has chosen to set this narrative against a backdrop of seasonal changes.

Using a layering system of symbols, geometric color forms and linear design, Maldonado maps the seasons in paint, drawing on general, preconceived notions as well as his own personal ideas and symbols for the seasons. While his mapping technique evokes paintings by Julie Mehretu and BLANK, he has created his own language and mythology about the passage of time in these vibrant, oftentimes whimsical paintings.



Maldonado's work has been featured at Walker's Point Art Center, Milwaukee, Third Rail, Larchmont, NY, Threewalls, Chicago, Momenta Art, Brooklyn, the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, Peekskill, DeKalb Gallery, Illinois and more. He has participated in three residencies and garnered many grants and fellowships.

Artist Statement

Seasons play a major role in all aspects of society, from religion to entertainment to agriculture and economics. People of all cultures have represented the seasons in various art forms since the beginning of civilization.

Early man celebrated the Sun God in cave paintings, the Japanese painted murals on

screens and panels that showed the moment when the seasons changed, Hudson River School painters depicted the orange autumn leaves along luminous rivers in Upstate New York, the German Romantics painted cold winters, reflecting the economic and physical hardship of the time, and of course there are the iconic Monet haystacks, painted during different seasons.

Recently I have developed a series of seasonal paintings, inspired, in part, by a need to record the movement of time-its cyclical nature and its inevitable march forward. I imbue each seasonal work with universal symbols and signs, leaves, ghosts and candy for fall, for example, combined with personal myths and memories.

The seasonal paintings are a marriage of Modern and Contemporary painting. I appropriate the brush strokes and expressiveness of Abstract Expressionism, while featuring small scenes within the larger paintings, as do some artists today. I also draw on Clement Greenberg's concept of formal push and pull, maintaining a flatness, while finding inspiration in the bold, sometimes commercial issues and symbols of Pop Art.

My seasonal paintings come in different sizes - mini, small, medium, large and gigantic - to appeal to a broad audience and create an active marketplace for them. Some are created with a portable hand carry crate to give the collector the power of portability. The crates make it practical to collect all four seasons and display them on a rotating basis. After all, each painting relies on its season for it to live.

With commissions, I request clients to complete a Seasonal Client Sheet, with responses to what she/he believes a season to be. I can then place these particular and highly personal symbols in the painting. The process creates a special bond between client and painting and encourages a collector to participate in the creative process.

ARTIST BIO:

ELLEN HERMANOS



Ellen Hermanos was born and raised in New York City, surrounded by a family of artists and collectors. Discussions of art emanated from family dinners and cocktail hours. Growing up, she received presents of boxes of pastels, paper and paint sets and was introduced to the concept of creativity before she was old enough to know its meaning. Hermanos received a BA in Art History from William Smith College. She studied abroad in Florence and Venice at the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica. She received a certificate in graphic design from the Massachusetts College of Art, 1992. Her influences continue in the less formal, but no less colorful New Orleans, where Ellen often retreats, free from the structures of her past to uncover her own expressions.

Hermanos' interest in the emotional world threads not only through her art, but also her alternate career as a psychotherapist. As a therapist, she helps others to make tangible meaning of their experiences, developing compassion and value for themselves and their accomplishments. Connecting with others, she escapes the narrowness of personal introspection, giving an emotional perspective that reaches beyond the borders of self.

Hermanos' work has been featured in Massachusetts at The Stove Factory Gallery, Charlestown, Artana Gallery, Coolidge Corner, Charlesmark Hotel, Claremont Café, South End, Boston, at Crystal Duell Arts, South Boston Open Studio, as well as in New Orleans at Gallery Diva.

The artist lives in Boston, away from the distractions and pace of Manhattan. She is a member of a group therapy practice and spends time in her studio.

Artist Statement

My passion is exploring color as it evolves through my texture creations. I use brush, palette knife and sponge roller to lay on or take away the colors. The strokes create unexpected expressions. Deep layers remain hidden, and can resurrect themselves to be reworked as an entirely new emotion arises and is expressed. The deep layers represent a past, which shows through the upper layers, revealing hints of the profound, unconscious influences of another time, another life.

My objective while painting is to create strong, structured images that are balanced and possess depth that viewers can enjoy beyond the flat surface. Areas of opaque color are contrasted with softer edged areas. My hope is that the viewer can appreciate the complexity of my work, while simultaneously enjoying the simplicity of form.



ARTIST BIO:
CAROLYN MONASTRA



Carolyn Monastra received her first camera on her 15th birthday and started printing her own work in the basement darkroom her father built in their Cleveland home. The high schooler's early passion for photography deepened with photography classes at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

Monastra received a BA in English Literature from Fordham University in the Bronx. Following a stint as a social worker (for the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and a psychiatric

hospital in Philadelphia), she left for Yale University, where she received an MFA in photography.

The current exhibition features work from two recent series. Each photograph in the series "The Dominion of Trees," created between 2001-04 at artist residencies in the northeast, is a landscape narrative, usually featuring a single character in a story--the viewer's alone to unravel.

"I was reading a lot of fairytales at the time and was inspired by these, my dreams, myths, my connection to nature, as well as the exquisite natural beauty at these residencies," explains the artist.

In "lovely, dark and deep," an ongoing series named from a line in the Robert Frost poem, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," the artist continues her quest for recording quiet, devotional moments in nature, all photographed at dusk.

Monastra has exhibited her work in many galleries including Julie Saul, Capsule, and Exit Art in NY, as well as at Miami Art Basel with Ambrosino Gallery, the Tokyo Art Fair, the Palm Beach Contemporary Art Fair and more. This is her first exhibition at SEFA.

Artist Statement

"Nature is never spent" - G. M. Hopkins

My work is influenced, in large part, by my deeply felt connections to the land. I draw from fairy tales, myths, the fragmentary space of dreams and contemporary notions of figuration to discover and create mystery in the realm of the natural world. The people and places may seem familiar, yet there is something uncanny or restless in what is being presented. As fairy tales use characters and symbols to appeal to our conscious and unconscious mind, these pictures work in a similar manner to engage the viewer on several levels— aesthetically, emotionally and psychologically. But, whereas fairy tales find their resolution by the last page, my photographs are intended to be fictive fragments, which invite viewers to create their own unabridged reveries.

For this exhibit with Susan Eley Fine Art, I have chosen to show selections from two related bodies of work. A primary focus for me in the series *The Dominion of Trees* was to carefully modulate distinctions between the natural and the perceived. Some of these images came as gifts, surprises: the reflection of the early morning sun on the surface of the lake reminded me of a 19th-century Romantic landscape. Even in my staged scenarios, this element of surprise reveals itself in perhaps grander, but equally intimate ways: the red ice house challenged me to play with the warmth of its color and the coolness of its history; the condensation on my windows pulled me from my slumber in the morning to revel in its beauty in *Wonderglass*.

With my current series, lovely, dark and deep, I am still interested in telling stories, but now there is no central character on which the tale turns. I have ventured deeper into the forests of Hansel and Gretel to investigate the mystique of the woods themselves. These long exposures taken at dusk depict both the seduction and the apprehension that surface during that blue hour. Objects become hazy, sounds amplified. The mind plays tricks. The world is a less certain, more mystifying, but still alluring place.



