

Susan Eley

Fine Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 1, 2023

Rachel Burgess
Deli Flowers My Husband Bought Me
&
Deborah Freedman
My Apple Tree on Tilly Road

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Susan Eley Fine Art, NYC
190 Orchard Street, New York, NY, 10002

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September 7—November 4, 2023
Opening Reception: Thursday, September 7, 6-8PM

Susan Eley Fine Art is pleased to present recent monotypes by Rachel Burgess in *Deli Flowers My Husband Bought Me* and by Deborah Freedman in *My Apple Tree on Tilly Road*. These two solo shows will be on view September 7th- November 4th at the Lower East Side Gallery, with an opening reception September 7th. Debuting a new series of still life monotypes, Rachel Burgess shares a glimpse into a simple gesture that punctuates the artist's life. Deborah Freedman presents two series of landscape prints and a painting that continue the artist's impetus to address the challenges facing our world through her language of distorted, otherworldly interpretations of familiar scenery.

Deli Flowers My Husband Bought Me and *My Apple Tree on Tilly Road* will open to the public on Thursday September 7th. There will be an opening reception at the LES Gallery that evening from 6-8pm. This is the seventh exhibition at SEFA's new gallery in the Lower East Side since our relocation from the Upper West Side, founded in 2006 by Susan Eley. SEFA NYC is now located at 190 Orchard Street in the heart of the LES arts district. Hours for SEFA NYC are Tuesday-Saturday, 11AM-6PM. Our location in Hudson, NY will continue its regular hours and programming at 433 Warren Street.

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Rachel Burgess presents large-scale monotypes that serve as windows into her life. In this newest series the artist reinterprets bouquets given to her by her husband. An NYPD detective, he often comes home late at night, bearing flowers from their local deli, the only store open at the late hour. The series began when Burgess decided to sketch the flowers. Attracted to their color and shape, the artist carved out simplified chromatic compositions in the small-scale drawings. These small sketches, included in the exhibition, give an even more intimate experience of the ephemeral gift. Burgess immortalized the short-lived flowers by printing them on a monumental scale. Each composition consists of large, smooth areas of bright bold color that depict the subjects in silhouette. Burgess creates snapshots of a moment as shadow figures of pure color fill the frame.

The artist's depictions are abstracted and blurred at the edges, as if the scene itself has been filtered through the artist's lens. The viewer can only experience the private moment secondhand. Or perhaps the soft edges are to emphasize the brief lives of these gifts from nature, allowed to live on as fleeting visages. Much like Pop artists Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, Burgess uses a familiar object or scene and reimagines it, taking with the imagery its context and inherent connections. Not only do Burgess' monotypes give her audience a look into an intimate moment in her own life, but they remind us of a universal feeling, of the small gestures made by and for the ones we love. In printing these simple gifts Burgess wishes to not only express gratitude to her husband, but also to memorialize the city's essential workers and services.



Like the artists of the Hudson River School before her, **Deborah Freedman** depicts the sublime landscapes of her Catskills home. Inspired by painters like Frederic Edwin Church and Thomas Cole, Freedman creates emotive scenes that emphasize humanity's connection to and impact on nature. Abstracting the landscapes for conceptual impact, the artist adds striking color and

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warped lines. In the *Spring Fever* series, the changing silhouette of the apple tree straddles the line between concrete and imagined. The color, almost electric in its presence, demands attention and consideration. The artificially arranged hues belie the natural subject matter. Freedman's linear elements undulate between organic, swaying strokes and bold, disruptive flares wrought with emotion. These contrasting moments further reflect the artist's focus on the chaos of our modern world. Each print has its own pace and urgency. *Cold Spring I* serves as a spare, calming scene only to be followed by *Cold Spring II*, which pulsates with commotion. Through these reimagined spaces, Freedman addresses the environmental and political state of the region and beyond.

Serializing many of her subjects, the artist's career can be used to map the changes to the landscapes she repeatedly depicts, further emphasizing the elements of change and time. In *Imagined Places*, Freedman displays the vastness of the space in its stretched depiction. This pond, which she has painted for 25 years, is a prime example of the artist's concentration on environmental impacts over time. Each location becoming a surreal, dreamlike vision, threatened by human action.



Rachel Burgess

Biography:

Rachel Burgess is a visual artist based in New York. Originally from Boston, she received a B.A. in literature from Yale University and an M.F.A. in Illustration from the School of Visual Arts. Her interest in narrative and sequential forms continues to inform her work. She has been an artist in residence at Zea Mays Printmaking and the Schoodic Institute in Acadia National Park.

The coastal landscapes of Maine have been the main source of inspiration for Burgess for many years. Her ongoing fascination with how land meets water—along rivers, lakes and the seaside—fuels the creation of her stunning, expressive painterly monotypes. Gradations of subtle colors—pinks to blues to warm yellows—underscore the impressionistic views the artist captures, first in sketches and sometimes years later when she revisits particular images from her many sketchbooks.

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Burgess has exhibited nationally and internationally, including at the International Print Center of New York, the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, the American University Museum, the Monmouth Museum, the University of Connecticut, the Katzen Art Center, the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art at Snug Harbor and the Seoul Museum of Art.

Artist Statement:

I make autobiographical works on paper of landscapes and domestic scenes. Window-like in scale, my pieces combine elements of oil painting, folk art and commercial illustration, exploring our attempts to impose narratives on our lives. I grew up in New England, and my traditional pieces are inspired by memories of its landscape that have stayed with me since childhood. I'm interested in the discrepancy between what we experience and how we remember it by the way we take a specific moment and turn it into an abstract memory. Attracted by the accessible, democratic nature of printmaking, I work primarily in monotype, straddling the divide between popular and elite forms of storytelling.

"Deli Flowers My Husband Bought Me" is based on flowers that my husband, an NYPD detective, has brought home over the years from our local corner deli. Through iconic renderings of these simple gifts, I pay tribute to the things we take for granted, to the city, to its essential workers and services and to the fundamental relationships that underpin our lives.

Originally attracted to the flowers' bold shapes and colors, I began sketching them for fun before eventually turning them into large-scale monotypes. To make each piece, I paint in oils on a large sheet of plexiglass, then lay a piece of paper on top of the painting and run it through a printing press, creating a single, unique impression. The fact that traditional deli flowers like daisies, daffodils, lilies and mums are simultaneously quotidian and beloved makes them a perfect metaphor, both for the unassuming beauty of works on paper and for the humble joy of day-to-day life.



Deborah Freedman

Biography:

Deborah Freedman lives and works in New York City and Ulster County, NY. She received her B.A. in studio art from New York University where she studied with Robert Blackburn.

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Freedman is a painter and printmaker whose work is deeply informed by nature. She makes suites of varying images of the Ashokan Reservoir and the Catskill Mountains. Her inner eye and skill in etching, monotype, and oil painting captures both the physical and emotional transformation of her subject.

After 9/11, what had once been an idyllic scene suddenly became threatened and "disturbed." Deborah's work, even though historically abstract, became less homage to the natural world and more a protest about the potential dangers of environmental and political disaster. The titles of her work—such as *Good Night Irene*, *With or Without You* and *Disturbed Landscapes*—refer to these concerns.

A partial list of collections that feature her work includes The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The New York Public Library, Rutgers University, The Department of State, the Library of Congress, IPCNY, The Hess Collection, CITI, Morgan Guarantee Trust, Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital., and The Smithsonian Institution. She is also co-owner of VanDeb Editions in Long Island City.

Artist Statement:

I create landscapes inspired by the painters Church and Cole who honored the Hudson Valley and the early 20th Century American artists like Dove and Hartley who included symbolism in their abstractions as well. The work is informed by the environmental changes in the region and beyond. There is a Pond near my property in the Catskill Mountains that I have been observing and painting for 25 years. While the pond appears unchanged over time, what had been an idyllic landscape has become disturbed in my mind, a metaphor for the impact of climate change. The paintings and prints of the pond are an investigation of a dreamlike landscape that is threatened. The pictorial space can be warped or disturbed echoing my disquiet - as if there is a hole in the world that needs to be healed. The Pond appears and reappears in series informed by events such as 9/11, Hurricane Irene and the Covid lockdown. *Imagined Places #7* is a triptych of the Pond tipped toward the viewer...taking up most of the space while nestled in the mountain and surrounded by trees. *The Spring Fever* and *Cold Spring* series are solar plate etchings and monoprints based on watercolors of an Apple Tree and Ashes near my home on Tilly Road on a snowy overcast day.

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