

Susan Eley

Fine Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

October 26, 2023

But We've Come So Far
Sasha Hallock and Liz Rundorff Smith



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



November 9—January 6, 2023
Opening Reception: Thursday, November 16, 6-8PM

Susan Eley Fine Art is pleased to present a two-person exhibition of paintings by Sasha Hallock and Liz Rundorff Smith. *But We've Come So Far* will be on view November 9th-January 6th at the Lower East Side Gallery, with an opening reception November 16th from 6-8pm. Both abstract painters, Hallock and Rundorff Smith grapple with deeply personal themes, often considering the abstract forms at the heart of their paintings to be repositories for memories and daily struggles or joys.

Hinted at with tender and witty names, the underlying spirit of the works is obscured from view, to be felt rather than narrated. While Rundorff Smith deals with central shapes that she develops by referencing urns, shrines, burial mounds, and other places of veneration, Hallock's forms develop through experimentation with media and color, often connecting the finished figures with totems, religious icons and architecture. Both seek to beget a familiarity but also a hazy uncertainty with their meticulous and animated presence.

This exhibition at SEFA's Lower East Side location marks a year since our relocation from the Upper West Side. SEFA NYC is now located at 190 Orchard Street in the heart of the LES arts

Susan Eley

Fine Art

district. Hours for SEFA NYC are Tuesday-Saturday, 11AM-6PM. Our location in Hudson, NY continues its regular hours and programming at 433 Warren Street.



Sasha Hallock's paintings are a diary of his daily inspirations, spirituality and challenges. He builds abstract forms through a focus on color relationships, texture and universal aesthetics. Each of his abstractions is a monument to a moment in time. His daily experiences inform each work stating, "All of my lived experience, art historical knowledge, every show and artist I admire is brought to bear as I paint, along with the weather conditions, world events and what audiobook I happen to be listening to in the studio...I am constantly observing the relationships between things: the texture of corduroy as it hits the black leather of a person's boot on the subway. The place where an old brick apartment building meets a shiny glass tower. In many ways, these paintings reflect my love for New York City, its density, intersections and diversity."

Small in scale, Hallock's paintings are reminiscent of medieval icons meant for religious devotion. They are precious, nurtured by the artist who insists on perfecting every element. The practice is almost meditative, this is demonstrated in the careful consideration of soft blends, repetition of shapes and minute details in works like *Untitled Small Works No. 134*. A sense of peace can be found in the painting's spiraling center and pale washes.

Though confined to the surface of each panel, the forms appear three dimensional, as if a sculpture in a white cube gallery. The white space, painted with as much care as the form itself, creates the illusion of blending into the wall. The care the artist devotes to his material animates the seemingly foreign shape into a figure with personality and character. He likens them to sculptures, totems, icons, machines and architecture. They have a palpable presence that seem both recognizable and otherworldly. At first glance joyful, their intricacy requires time to consider.



Grappling with themes of personal histories, societal expectations and the ways in which we

Susan Eley

Fine Art

were shaped and in turn shape our children, Liz Rundroff Smith uses her paintings as reliquaries for memories. She references memorials, urns, burial mounds, shrines and other places of contemplation. Common shapes she finds across these spiritual spaces turn into the central forms within her paintings. The artist works in layers to create a literal history on the surface and implying the personal one each vessel is meant to hold. In this newest body of work Rundroff Smith began altering the shape, finding that they easily became trophies. A grid blankets the surface of many of the paintings, this pattern was inspired by the memorable shape and numerous windows of the building her father worked in. She sees the “Trophy” paintings as small awards to herself, acknowledgement of her successes and work she does to ensure her daughters are raised differently than herself.

Rundroff Smith is interested in kitsch as an accessible form of beauty, related to the aesthetics of her childhood. The color choices and build up of encaustic is reminiscent of plastic decor. Bright, artificial colors hint to a nostalgia. In recent paintings the artist has begun adding fringe to the bottom of the canvas and this embellishment plays into kitsch and reminds one of party decorations, parade floats and even prize ribbons, elevating the vessel to something to be celebrated.

Repetition appears throughout the work. Patterning, the grid, mirrored vessels and the layers of process suggest the artist's need to nurture the painting, a way to hand off the desired memories and emotions. In works like *Four-Day-Old Smirk* and *Breathing Room* mirrored vessels stand side by side. Above and below them the suggestion of additional identical forms implies an unbroken succession, that the artist has zoomed in on a piece of a larger chain. When paired together the artist associates the vessels with her two daughters or herself and her sister. While many of the forms are repeated, they are never perfect, color is allowed to bleed, lines cut off, encaustic bubbles, grids are overtaken, previous marks shine through. This undulation between symmetry and irregularity creates a need to examine every inch.



Susan Eley

Fine Art

Sasha Hallock

Artist Biography:

Sasha Hallock (b. 1986, Syracuse, NY) is an Iranian American artist living and working in New York City. He holds a degree in painting and drawing from the State University of New York at New Paltz. Geometric forms, vibrant colors, varied textures and sculptural landscapes populate Hallock's paintings. Each painting is the result of meticulous building, one line, shape and color in relationship to the next. Hallock uses a unique abstract language to express themes of play, joy and faith.

Hallock's work has been exhibited at Susan Eley Fine Art in New York City and Hudson, New York. His work is held in private collections in New York, San Francisco, London, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Tehran. He is represented by Susan Eley Fine Art.

Artist Statement:

My paintings have been likened to statues and totems, icons and machines. Like mysterious objects uncovered from archeological dig sites, or the visualization of angels and supernatural beings. They are built structures, assembled from a thousand parts, architectural and compact. Their function is unknown or forgotten. They are a memory of times long past and a prophetic voice of a future far off. They are constructed like homes or shelters, their design and craftsmanship communicates care. They are sculptural objects of strength and protection, both familiar and foreign. They wield power and are tender, they have personality and presence.

These paintings contain my grief and mourning, my celebration and my joy. I danced while making these paintings, and I wept as well. They are my faith made manifest, my audacious belief in hope, like prayers of respite for a weary body, for a weary world.



Liz Rundorff Smith

Artist Biography

Liz Rundorff Smith (b. 1977, Greenville, PA) currently lives and works in Greenville, SC. She received a BA in Studio Art with a concentration in sculpture from the College of Wooster in Wooster, OH in 2000 and an MFA in Painting from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania in 2005.

Susan Eley

Fine Art

Rundorff Smith studied abroad at The Marchutz School of Painting in Aix en Provence, France and the British Institute of Florence in Florence, Italy and was awarded a fellowship and residency at the Virginia Center for Creative Arts. Her work can be found in private and corporate collections including the Marilyn Monroe Bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel and Sun City Showa Kien Koen, Tachikawa, Japan. Rundorff Smith is a member of the Painting Center Art File in New York. Her work has been featured in *Southern Living* and *Create Magazine* Issue 20. Recent exhibitions include the two-person show “Counterbalance” at Susan Eley Fine Art New York, NY, “The Shape of Things” at 701 Center for Contemporary Art in Columbia, SC, “Coined in the South: 2022” at the Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC, and the solo exhibition “Street Garden” at Florence County Museum Waters Gallery, Florence, SC.

Artist Statement:

I am interested in the need to assign meaning to seemingly valueless things because they are things that represent a connection to the deeper experience of loss. My work elevates the mundane, in a process of assigning meaning, that mimics the way we bring significance to loss with keepsakes and memorials. I want to create work that evokes a sense of nostalgia and exposes the sentimentality in memory. Color choice is tied to the decor and design trends of decades past that have become kitschy artifacts. Patterns reference fragments of common spaces and utilitarian objects while shifting to suggest the passage of time and the loss of stability that accompanies remembrance. Shapes intimate things that are no longer identifiable but retain familiarity. I am mimicking the past, attempting to reproduce the original while allowing imperfection and a lack of precision to create work that exploits the failure in repetition and the fragility in recollection.