

Susan Eley
— Hudson —
Fine Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 20, 2024

Ellen Hermanos: A Retrospective

Flowers Shall Grow



Susan Eley Fine Art, Hudson
433 Warren Street, Hudson, NY 12534



October 17 - December 22, 2024
Opening Reception: Saturday, October 19, 4-6 PM

This fall Susan Eley Fine Art, Hudson, presents the first retrospective of Ellen Hermanos' paintings since her passing in 2023. *Flowers Shall Grow* features a selection of paintings drawn from several series of the late artist's oeuvre. *Flowers Shall Grow* is on view from October 17th to December 22nd, 2024. The Gallery will host a reception on Saturday, October 19th from 4-6PM. All of the family's and a portion of the Gallery's proceeds from the sales will be donated to The Ellen Hermanos '83 Scholarship Fund at the artist's beloved alma mater, The Frederick Gunn School, Washington, CT.

Ellen Hermanos (1964-2023) was born in New York, NY and lived and worked near Boston, MA. SEFA has represented Hermanos since 2007, showcasing her work in 13 exhibitions and art fairs in New York, Miami and Toronto, among other cities, and will continue to work closely with the family to represent her estate. The selection of paintings in *Flowers Shall Grow* draws from several series of paintings and highlights the ingenuity, experimentation and techniques that characterized the artist's work for over 40 years, including "Color Block," "Golden Windows" and "Tulips."

"Flowers shall grow and I am in them, and that is eternity."
— Edvard Munch

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In parallel to Hermanos' career as a painter, she was also a practicing psychotherapist. She often described the process of painting—layering, scraping, adding and removing paint—to her therapy practice, exploring the workings of the innerminds of her patients. As a therapist, she helped others make tangible meaning of their experiences—developing compassion and value for themselves and their accomplishments. Connecting with others, she escaped the narrowness of personal introspection, giving an emotional perspective that reached beyond the borders of self. Hermanos often spoke about how her two careers informed one another: how she was a better painter because she was a therapist and vice versa.

The artist plumbed her own psyche to reveal layers of memory, experiences and actions, expressing them in shimmering sweeps of multi-colored forms. Hermanos employed a variety of tools to add and remove paint in layers that are often too many to count—brushes, palette knife, roller sponge, scraping tools, the back tip of the brush, and sandpaper. Her paintings strike the viewer as vividly alive. Hermanos used color as a tool to show viewers what a canvas could reveal through an artist's manipulations. Sometimes she presented flatter color blocks, like *Mid Century I* (2016); at other times, she overlapped countless layers to elicit memory, the past and contradictory thought as in *Sunset* (2020).

In many of her later paintings, Hermanos veered from the familiarity of the “Color Block” series to experiment with duality and synchronicity. The painting *Night Into Day* (2019) contrasts a black half and a white half, with an injection of bright red hues. The strokes create unexpected expressions and reveal or disguise hidden colors beneath the surface. Her abstract compositions often feature opaque sections that are contrasted with areas of softness and transparency. In *Putty Study* (2019), blues and greens peek through the thick, textured white background to reveal the worlds within. The circular forms in *Butterfield*, from the “Dots” series, allude to both the precise points and the concentric loops that people arrive at and move through in their ever-evolving minds.

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Continuing to push boundaries, Hermanos developed the boldly hued paintings of the “Golden Windows” series in 2020. They are often inspired by domestic symbols such as flowers and windows, visualized through an abstract lens. These luminescent works plunge viewers into an atmosphere that is simultaneously familiar and otherworldly. Their scintillating, metallic palette acts as a surface for the play of light and shadow as the sun changes throughout the day.

Embracing a study of botanical forms, Hermanos began her “Tulips” series in 2021. The tulip was her initial source material, and she typically painted from live flowers. Hermanos’ skillful manipulations of color and texture transformed petals, leaves and stems to generate intimate and atmospheric visual scenes. She leaned into the nuances of the tulip’s buds to produce multilayered abstract paintings and portrayed her personal interpretations of the botanical. Her works frequently echoed the shape and function of an interior or a window, providing a glimpse into another universe—conjured by golden, sapphire and cerulean tones.

As a young artist, Hermanos kept to acrylic on canvas, pushing the steadfast medium as far as it could go. More recently, in the “Tulips” and “Golden Windows” series, the artist overlaid acrylic, oil, pastel and graphite, growing through and delighting in the experimentation and mixing of media. By scratching with a palette knife, she physically erased elements—repeatedly adding to and subtracting from her canvases to achieve her desired aesthetic effect.

Press Release Text by Liz Lorenz,
Assistant Director, SEFA Hudson



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Memories from Susan Eley

I met Ellen many years ago when we were both girls. Our parents are friends, and our older brothers—Steve and Joe—are boyhood friends. I have had the privilege of representing Ellen’s artwork at my contemporary art gallery since 2007. When I first saw her paintings, I was struck by her unusually wonderful way of putting color next to color. A warm orange might be adjacent to a minty green—and somehow through a blurring, sanding and melding, Ellen not only made it work successfully, but created moments for a heart to soar. Ellen talked about her desire for viewers to appreciate the complexity of her work, while simultaneously enjoying the simplicity of form.

Over years of working together, we became friends. I came to admire not only her practice as a painter, but also the way she lived her life as a friend to many, a loving daughter, sister, aunt and stepmother. During our hours together of studio visits, we shared stories of our lives and got to know each other well. We spent time talking about the intersection of her work as a psychotherapist and a painter. It always intrigued me that she had these two careers in parallel to which she was equally dedicated and passionate about. What a gift she enjoyed throughout her life, to have not one but two passions, that benefited so many through the practice of helping patients and bringing beauty to the world through art.

Ellen had a beautiful calmness and intelligence; a quiet way of being in the world that was so admirable. Whenever I spoke with Ellen, she always introduced me to a few other artists working near her. “You’ve got to meet so and so,” she would say—“they have some wonderful work I think you will like.” She was so generous in that way.

Ellen’s beautiful life was tragically cut short. I hope that Ellen’s family and loved ones take some solace and comfort in knowing that she brought so much healing and beauty to the world.



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Ellen Hermanos

Artist Biography:

Ellen Hermanos (1964-2023) was born and raised in New York City and lived and worked in Wellesley, MA near Boston.

As a child Hermanos was surrounded by a community of artists and collectors, and discussions of art emanated from family dinners and cocktail hours. Growing up, she received presents of boxes of pastels, paper and paint sets. These introduced Hermanos to the concept of creativity before she was old enough to know its true meaning.

The artist received a BA in Art History from William Smith College in the US. She also studied abroad in Florence and Venice at the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica in Italy. In 1992, Hermanos received a certificate in graphic design from the Massachusetts College of Art. Her studies continued in the less formal, but no less colorful, New Orleans, LA. While painting there, Hermanos often retreated from formalistic visual constraints—free from the structures of her past to uncover her own expressions.

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

The artist is represented by Susan Eley Fine Art and has shown with the Gallery in both its NYC and Upstate locations in 13 exhibitions and art fairs. In 2022 at SEFA Hudson, Hermanos' works were shown in the exhibition *Floral Inhabited*. In 2024, SEFA Hudson presents her retrospective exhibition *Flowers Shall Grow*.

The Estate of Ellen Hermanos is represented by Susan Eley Fine Art with Steve Hermanos as chief executor.

Artist Statement:

My interest lies in the exploration of the uses of color and the subsequent creation of texture. A brush, a palette knife, and a sponge roller lay on or remove color. My work is primarily the product of unintentional combinations of color and texture, which create new, unexpected results. Newness presents an opportunity to change the direction of the work; decision-making of what parts remain and what is then reworked. Blocks of color, the anti-form, detract from a subject, in favor of color and texture. Most of my paintings have many layers. Some are finished works, then reworked, which show through the surface, insinuating another time, layer and life.

– Ellen Hermanos, 2022