

Thoughts on early work 2015

My first husband, Stephen Ellis, was from High Point, NC. He was (still is) a terrific painter and had a huge influence on my work. I became much more connected to painting because of him. I understood painting much more by watching him work. We lived in NYC but used to spend summers in North Carolina. That was in the 1970's and early 80's. It was a very formative time for me. I had just completed graduate school in photography. I was out in the world as a photographer, on my own. Not a student anymore, but a real photographer. I photographed in the area. I was interested in Walker Evans at the time and photographed beautiful, old buildings front on, the way Evans did. I also photographed beautiful, old steel bridges in the area in a very abstract way. I still have all of these abstractions and some of the buildings, photographed with a 4 x 5 camera and have never exhibited them.

You can see elements of what I am doing now in those formative summers in North Carolina. I had become interested in abstract expressionism through my husband -- Pollock, Franz Kline, Aaron Siskind (I later got to know Aaron.), deKooning, Rothko and David Smith. I loved David Smith and Pollock especially. In composing the water glasses, for example, I like to leave only a tiny bit of space around the edge of the glass so there is practically no room for the glass to breathe. It pushes the shape of the glass almost out beyond the front of the picture surface, as if it is being squeezed out by the edge tension. Pollock did this with his drip paintings. Rothko used the edges in a related way. They were very aware of the edges and the shapes created between a shape and an edge within a rectangle or a square. I was doing the same thing with the way I photographed those buildings and learning a great deal about space with my work on the bridges. It had a lasting effect on my work. It later on took me to a great appreciation for Ellsworth Kelly and his wonderful sensitivity to edges and edge tension. Some of his shapes "kiss" the edge, as one writer used to describe it.