

Decor Maine

ISSUE NO. 4

LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

The Art Issue

OUR ANNUAL
**GALLERY GUIDE
RETURNS!**

**Bones, art,
and history at
A PAINTER'S
FREEPORT ABODE**



**AN ARTIST
WITH AN EDGE,
at home
in industrial
Rockland**

**The Alna Store
takes the
CULINARY WORLD
BY STORM**



A concrete sphere by Terrence Dinnan adds focus to the field surrounding the house. **OPPOSITE:** Ellen surrounded by furniture made by Duane, art made by friends, and artifacts collected on travels and from antique shops.

Visiting Ellen Golden's sun-flooded studio at the Fort Andross Mill in Brunswick feels like peeking behind the screen at the inner workings of a complex circuitry, say, the motherboard of a personal computer. Finely rendered abstract drawings line the walls. Small in size, their intricacy seems to accumulate meaning, an alphabet of numbers, a ganglion of glyphs.

While the works appear meticulously planned, Ellen assures me they are not. She often uses stencils and other devices to create a nucleus which she expands upon, drawing in pencil and adding ink later. There is little room for error. For static objects, they bristle with motion, an undulating iconography.

"We're all looking to create something rational out of it," Ellen concedes. "I had a couple of drawings framed, and the guy who framed them saw sacred symbols in them. I don't care what people see in them as long as they see something for themselves. I love it when people have some kind of response that means something to them."

Ellen moved to the studio after the death of her husband, Duane Paluska, in 2020, and the shuttering of ICON Contemporary Art, the gallery he founded in 1989. For those familiar, ICON was also a com-

munication hub, a nerve system for the artists whose careers were supported by Duane's curatorial acumen, an artist and sculptor in his own right. The two-story gallery enabled artists to show individually, but Ellen notes, "Duane liked to hang the work together, to figure out what the connections were. Put in proximity instead of segregating, it was a much richer experience." Similarly, the couple maintained studios in the building

where their practices seldom overlapped, but connections invariably sparked. This was evident in their joint ICON exhibition in 2019, and again in 2021, in the Maine Jewish Museum show aptly titled *Dialogue*. Although Duane had died the year before, and the drawings Ellen presented were mostly new, she realized there was an undeniable communication between them.

Ellen often leaves her pieces untitled, resisting an imposed narrative, while some sport ambiguous titles: *Are You Listening?*; *Which Way?*; *I Wish I Knew*. Like her mesmerizing drawings, she is a magnetic conversationalist; her vivid blue eyes flash as she discusses her creative process and her far-reaching travels (most recently, Bhutan, before that, India). Before returning to her artistic practice, she was the Senior Vice President at Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), and Managing Director, CEI Investment Notes. The nonprofit pursues social, environmental, and economic justice by securing financing for unserved people and communities, a job she credits with preparing her for her current mission: helping to provide funding and support for the arts. Ellen is president of the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation and the Anonimo Foundation, and serves on the board of Surf Point

Foundation, which, respectively, offer artist residencies and art education grants.

She resides in Woolwich, in the shingle-sided home that Duane, a skilled furniture maker, built beam-by-beam, a collaborative effort that resulted in what she calls a "handmade house." They lived in a small cabin on the property during the year-plus construction. She laughs, remembering her stepsons' arrival that summer,



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIN LITTLE

PROFILE

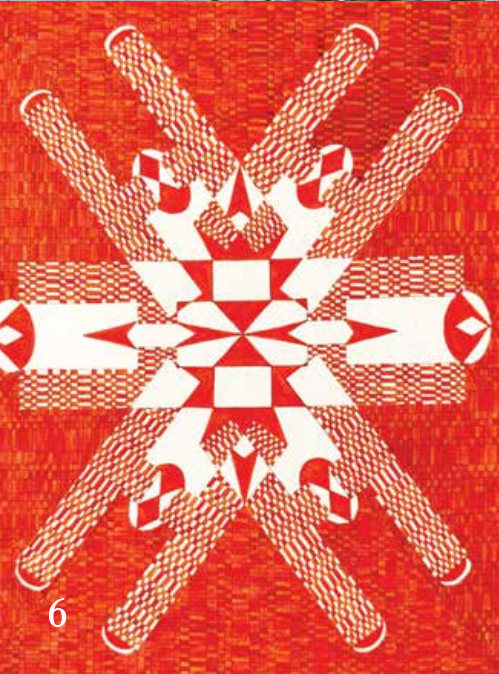
The Art of Conversation

In her art, as in her life, Ellen Golden speaks volumes

BY ALLISON PAIGE



1. Ellen Golden, *Untitled*, 2023, ink on paper, 12" x 9". **2.** At work in the studio: A slow process of discovery results in detailed abstract works whose meaning is only revealed through careful observation. **3.** Photos of family and friends are juxtaposed with a portrait of Billy the Kid (*Billy Favored the Colt Thunderer*, Dean Richardson, ca. 1986). **4.** A screened porch provides outdoor summer living space, blurring the distinction between indoors and out. **5.** Ellen Golden, *There is No Reason*, 2023, ink on paper, 8" x 8". **6.** Ellen Golden, *You Never Know*, 2023, ink on paper, 12" x 9". **7.** Untitled sculpture by Duane Paluska, undated. **8.** Untitled work by Ellen Golden, 2019, ink on paper, 24" x 18".



A wood sculpture by Duane Paluska on the staircase landing mirrors the elegant simplicity of the mahogany bannister.

Opposite page: Photos 1, 5, 6, & 8 courtesy of Ellen Golden.



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how the parents surrendered the cabin and pitched a tent instead. This degree of roughing it seems an impressive litmus for any marriage (theirs lasted nearly 40 years), but Ellen informs me that they equally enjoyed month-long camping trips out West on Duane's motorcycle.

Their artwork was paired again this January in an exhibition by Lights Out Gallery, curated by Ian Trask,

at Fort Hall, showcasing work by couples. Occupying a corner, the geometric shapes and angles of Duane's sculptures seemed to complement, even communicate, with the gyrating forms and colors of Ellen's drawings. An open-ended conversation, still in progress. ■

ABOVE: *Pulse* by Katharine Bradford, 1989, hangs above a sculpture by Duane Paluska and is flanked by an antique cupboard.