



Hudson, New York

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Art and about: Shaker minimalism personified

by John Isaacs



Now that I'm "out and about" again (just) after a nasty car accident and subsequent surgery three months ago, it's maybe time to resume "Art and about", and what better occasion to start with, at least briefly, than the opening of Jeff Bailey's jewel of a show "Line and Curve".

Juxtaposing five exemplary Ellsworth Kelly lithographs with eight representative items from Kelly's and Jack Shear's collection of Shaker masterworks (including Kelly's own work table) reveals an extraordinary symbiosis of art-making from two different eras (and, on Bailey's part, curatorial savoir-faire).

To view a mere thirteen pieces of simplified art, côte-a-côte in a diminutive, though impeccably configured gallery might sound underwhelming. But it manages to be a sublime, appropriately Zen experience. The minimalist aesthetic shared by the Shakers and their most eminent enthusiast is a treat in these days of visual clutter: the balance of restraint and harmony here is implicit, not strived for.

Kelly's art has at times appeared to me too precious for its own good. This show finally dissolves what I now consider to be a rude misconception on my part. Here he is revealed as the quintessential and most elegant exponent of purely formal, but visually exhilarating economy.

The exhibition will travel to the New Britain Museum of American Art in New Britain, Connecticut in July, but I urge you to take the opportunity to view it now, here in Columbia County, which after all was the crucible of both Shaker creativity and Ellsworth Kelly's own genius.

Through May 13, at Jeff Bailey Gallery, 127 Warren Street, Hudson.