

Art: 'Line and Curve'
By Emily Gates



Ellsworth Kelly, "Red Curve" 1988 ©Jeff Bailey Gallery

'Line and Curve,' a show of Shaker objects and Ellsworth Kelly prints has a spare quality that feels appropriate to the work rather than stark. Instead, the small size of the show and its austere presentation at the Jeff Bailey gallery, stylishly allows for the purity of Shaker construction and the bold, graphic nature of the Kelly prints to star. Particularly striking is Kelly's "Red Curve," (1988) hung above a c. 1835 table of pine, beech and maple, the table's soft honeyed color and simple, straight lines a terrific contrast with the bold, almost fan shape in the image. Here, in both Kelly's single image and the juxtaposition of the two objects, the viewer is able to see "Line and Curve" beautifully brought to life.

That combination of table and image is made all the more compelling with the information that Kelly purchased the piece in 1970 to use as a worktable. It was one of the first purchases he made after moving to Columbia County. Kelly was a longtime resident of Spencertown, New York — he died in December 2015 — and together with his husband, Jack Shear, assembled a collection of Shaker artifacts. This collection was donated to the Shaker Museum in Mount Lebanon in 2016. Once covering more than 6,000 acres with 100 buildings, Mount Lebanon was central to all Shaker communities and the place from which many of the ideals and values of Shaker society emanated. In addition to being a National Historical Landmark, the Shaker Museum there houses a large and important collection. Though the museum is currently closed for the season, the exhibit offers a wonderful opportunity to see Kelly's work while getting a small taste of what that museum holds in its collection. There is a certain thrill in watching the way that patterns and silhouettes echo and repeat between the Shaker-constructed pieces and the Kelly prints. Looking at what is gathered here, it is easy to see the incredible attention the artist brought to both positive and negative shapes and his constant attention to form, which surely the Shakers would have admired.

"Line and Curve" is on view through May 13 at Jeff Bailey Gallery, 127 Warren Street, Hudson, NY. For further information, visit the gallery's website, <http://www.baileygallery.com>, or contact (518) 828-6680.

The Shaker Museum will reopen for the season in mid-May. The Mount Lebanon Shaker Village is open year round, 202 Shaker Road, New Lebanon, NY. For further information, www.shakerml.org, or (518) 794-9100.