



Dialogs in Line | Works by Paul Briskey & ellsworth snyder

Exhibiting June 11- August 7, 2026

Opening Reception | June 18, 4-7pm

Concert | June 21, 11:30am

Peace Gallery, 701 S Century Ave, Waunakee, WI

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Some conversations need to span time and geography to happen. This one unfolds between the work of **Paul Briskey** — painter, bibliophile, and beloved contemporary presence in the Waunakee arts community — and that of **ellsworth snyder**, the Madison painter, pianist, and scholar who devoted his life to making this region an outpost of the international avant-garde, and who died in 2005.

Dialogs in Line is at its heart a conversation — one that unfolds across a chronological retrospective of Briskey's development as an artist, from his early formation through the transformative Kuwait years, his return to the States, his divorce, and into his current practice. snyder's work enters not as backdrop but as correspondent across time — one who listens closely and writes back. Yet both artists, across their very different visual traditions, return again and again to the same fundamental question: what is a line? snyder





said it plainly: "to draw a line is to have an idea." For Briskey, drawing a strong line is an act of confidence and identity — a conviction that moves through both bodies of work like a continuous thread, Briskey's searching observed line and Snyder's gestural chance-inflected mark tracing parallel paths toward the same essential inquiry.

Snyder once described his move from concert pianist to painter as a shift from being a "middleman" to a creator — a leap encouraged by his close friend **John Cage**, the legendary American composer who argued that silence itself was music and whose radical ideas about chance, restraint, and the boundaries of art changed the course of 20th-century culture. Snyder had known Cage since 1960, wrote the first doctoral dissertation ever completed on his work, and spent decades as one of his most trusted interpreters. Cage trusted the rules of chance absolutely. Snyder followed them with a pianist's ear — and what emerged was something warmer and harder to contain: an abstract lyricism that lives in every line. Madison audiences had access to that work for nearly thirty years — Snyder served as music director at the **Frank Lloyd Wright–designed First Unitarian Society** from 1971 to 2000, building it into one of the city's most vital venues for experimental and traditional music, and showing his paintings regularly at **Grace Chosy Gallery** on Monroe Street. His work is held in the collections of the **Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Walker Art Center, the Menil Collection, and the Chazen Museum of Art**; his collection of Fluxus objects and ephemera is housed at the **New York Public Library**.

Briskey holds a Fine Arts degree from the **University of Wisconsin–Madison**, but it was a decade spent living and painting in Kuwait, immersed in the landscapes and light of the Middle East, that fully forged his artistic vision and turned him decisively toward line as his primary language. That devotion to line runs deeper still — during a period of personal turmoil, going through a divorce and relocating from New Jersey to Madison, Briskey made a series of intimate, non-objective works on paper in which autobiographical lines were gradually obscured by the accumulation of more and more marks, until the original pattern dissolved into visual noise. It is a quietly radical idea: that meaning can be buried as deliberately as it is revealed, and that line is never merely description — it is Self. Since returning to the Madison area more than two decades ago, he has maintained a consistent and active exhibition presence, and is represented by **Milward Farrell Fine Art** in Madison.





At first glance the two seem to inhabit different worlds — Briskey's paintings rooted in the observed, snyder's abstract, working from silence and the open surface. But place them side by side and unexpected similarities emerge: the same blocky, committed use of color, the same willingness to let a line carry the full weight of thought.

Dialogs in Line is an invitation to look slowly and deliberately — to recognize that two artists, working from very different formal traditions and across different decades, share something essential: a deep curiosity about the world and a commitment to engaging it fully, on their own terms, through looking and making. Briskey and snyder never met. But work, once made, has a life of its own — it moves through time, finds new rooms, new eyes, new company. It is that independent life that makes this conversation not only possible but compelling. What unfolds here is ours to witness and to take active part in. The work rewards close looking.

Works & Sales Information

Works by Paul Briskey are presented directly from the artist's studio and are all available for purchase. Works by ellsworth snyder are drawn from Rosenthal Fine Art, Chicago and various private collections.

Prices are available upon request. A percentage of all sales benefit Peace Lutheran Church and Create Waunakee.

Also available: recordings and books by ellsworth snyder.





Make Music Day at Peace Lutheran

A Concert in Four Movements

Sunday, June 21, 2026, 11:30

Peace Lutheran Church, Waunakee, WI

Some silences are louder than others.

In celebration of Make Music Day and in conjunction with *Dialogs in Line*, we invite you to an unlikely afternoon of sound — four pieces, one heavy metal setup, and a lot to think about.

A Grunge Metal band takes the stage for a program that moves from the visceral to the conceptual and back again: 90's grunge, John Cage's legendary 4'33", another grunge metal song— and finally *One5*, the piece John Cage composed in 1990 as a personal gift for Madison's own Ellsworth Snyder, whose work is currently on view in the gallery.

It is a program that asks what music is, what silence is, and what happens when a Marshall stack just stands there and says nothing.

Free and open to the public.

