

# MaJo Keleshian

Jun 7, 2023



MaJo Keleshian

## Ellsworth

July 6, 1945 – May 28, 2023

To the great sadness of her many friends, artist and activist MaJo Keleshian died of a sudden illness on May 28, 2023. She was born Margaret Ann Keleshian in 1945 to Armenian parents in Washington Heights, NYC. Her art education began early: her mom pushing her to the Cloisters in her baby carriage. She graduated from Sarah Lawrence in 1967 and devoted her life to creating a better world. She joined a busload of volunteers headed to Indiana for Gene McCarthy, stood with the Chicago Seven in the antiwar protests of 1968 and returned to New York to link her path forever with her beloved husband, the poet and editor Sylvester Pollet.

Sylvester and MaJo left the city to live deliberately in Downeast Maine. They stayed on Swan's Island and then house sat a farmhouse in Amherst. Their neighbors were Tony and Charlotte Herbold and the eight Herbold children, who became MaJo's second family in the course of time.

In 1975, MaJo and Sylvester bought several woodland acres from their friends Annie and Sandy Koufax and built a house facing Flying Moose Mountain. They lived off the grid beneath a teetering wind turbine till they upgraded to Bangor Hydro in 1980.

After Sylvester's death in 2007, MaJo singlehandedly maintained their house and grounds, stacking cordwood, keeping a beautiful and productive garden, integrating her own life with the changing seasons and refining the disciplines of art, mind and spirit. She was a voracious and discerning reader. She watched classical music on

YouTube as if listening to it with her eyes. Her home near the Winkumpaugh crossroads was the heart of a close-knit, loving and mutually supportive community that sustained her until the end. For many years an active member of the Ellsworth Meditation Center, she focused and unified her life through her Buddhist practice and deeply attentive view of nature. Her artwork revealed the depth of her experience through the texture of its surfaces. She blended natural forms and color with the grace and abstraction of the human spirit. Her work has been widely exhibited in museums and galleries from Maine to Connecticut and New York.

MaJo loved water in all its forms. She walked the Bucksport shorefront winter and summer. She contemplated Castine Harbor from Fort Madison and Dice Head. She was a fearless and untiring helmsperson on the many boats she sailed: the Orion, the Northern Light and their own beloved Echo. She knew the open ocean at its fiercest as well as the morning calm of a Maine harbor with ospreys and eagles overhead.

Her political activism just never stopped. Quoting John Lewis, she saw herself as making “good trouble.” The last picture of MaJo, taken the day before her death, shows her vigorously campaigning for social justice with the Bucksport Bridge Vigil as she did every Saturday: rain, snow or shine.

As a teacher, MaJo influenced a generation of students at Haystack and UMaine, encouraging them to follow her own example, release preconceived ideas and open themselves to the unexpected and unintentional. She was so generous with her enlightenment that we were all her students. Now we will have to continue on our own.

Examples of MaJo’s work are currently on display at the John Edwards gallery in Ellsworth. A celebration of her life will be held in Castine in August. Donations in her name may be made to the Himalayan Children’s Fund: <https://www.himalayanchildrensfund.org/>. Condolences may be expressed to [BrookingsSmith.com](http://BrookingsSmith.com).