

Biography[edit]

Leo Dillon, of [Trinidadian](#) immigrant parentage, was born and raised in [East New York](#). He enlisted in the Navy for three years' service so that he could attend art school. He credited his interest in art and his inspiration to become an artist to his friend and mentor, Ralph Volman.^[6] Diane Sorber hails from the [Greater Los Angeles Area](#) where her interest in art was encouraged early by her mother, who was a pianist.^[6] The couple met at the [Parsons School of Design](#) in New York City in 1953 — where they "became instant archrivals and remained together from then on".^[3] They graduated in 1956 and married the next year. This union resulted in an artistic collaboration, which the couple described as a third artist. Diane Dillon explained this in an interview through these words: "We could look at ourselves as one artist rather than two individuals, and that third artist was doing something neither one of us would do. We let it flow the way it flows when an artist is working by themselves and a color goes down that they didn't quite expect and that affects the next colors they use, and it seems to have a life of its own."^[7]

An association with writer [Harlan Ellison](#) led to jobs doing book covers for his short story collections and both cover and interior [woodcut](#) illustration for his anthology *[Dangerous Visions](#)*. They illustrated a large number of [mass market paperback](#) book covers for the original [Ace Science Fiction Specials](#), for which they won their first major award, science fiction's 1971 [Hugo Award](#) for Best Professional Artist. A detailed biography and introduction to their work and styles were written by [Byron Preiss](#) in a book he edited in 1981, entitled *[The Art of Leo & Diane Dillon](#)*. They once described their work as incorporating motifs derived from their respective heritages.^[clarification needed] This can be demonstrated in their work for Margaret Musgrove's *[Ashanti to Zulu](#)*, which used tribal motifs and combined historical with contemporary styles.^[8]

On May 28, 2012, Ellison reported on his website his reception of a phone call from Diane announcing Leo's death at the age of 79 from [lung cancer](#) two days prior.^[9] Spectrum Fantastic Art, an annual art competition and art book project of which the couple were general managers, confirmed Leo's death on its website.^[10] The obituary of Leo in *[The New York Times](#)* praised the Dillons jointly as "one of the world's pre-eminent illustrators for young people, producing artwork — praised for its vibrancy, ecumenicalism and sheer sumptuous beauty — that was a seamless amalgam of both their hands", also noting the ethnoracial diversity of characters in the Dillons' work in the 1970s, "until then, the smiling faces portrayed in picture books had been overwhelmingly white."^[3]

Since Leo's death, Diane Dillon has illustrated one book, *[I Can Be Anything! Don't Tell Me I Can't](#)* (published 2018), which she also wrote.

The Dillons had one surviving son. Lee (Lionel John Dillon III), born 1965, became an artist and collaborated with his parents several times, including the illustrations for *[Pish, Posh, Said Hieronymus Bosch](#)* by [Nancy Willard](#) (1991).^[11] Both Leo and Diane lived in the [Cobble Hill](#) neighborhood at the time of Leo's death.

Picture books illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon[edit]

- 1970 *[The Ring in the Prairie](#)*, written by John Bierhorst / [Dial Press](#)
- 1972 *[Honey, I Love, Eloise Greenfield](#)* / Viking
- 1973 *[Blast Off](#)*, [Linda C. Cain](#) and [Susan Rosenbaum](#) / Xerox
- 1974 *[Whirlwind Is a Ghost Dancing](#)*, compiled by Natalia Maree Belting / Dutton
- 1974 *[Songs and Stories from Uganda](#)*, W. Moses Serwadda, [Hewitt Pantaleoni](#) / World Music Press

- 1974 *The Third Gift*, [Jan R. Carew](#) / Little Brown
- 1975 *The Hundred Penny Box*, Sharon Bell Mathis / Viking
- 1975 *Song of the Boat*, Lorenz B. Graham / Crowell
- 1976 *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*, [Verna Aardema](#) / Dial Press
- 1977 *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions*, Margaret Musgrove / Dial Press
- 1977 *Who's in Rabbit's House: A Masai Tale*, Verna Aardema / Dial Press
- 1980 *Two Pair of Shoes*, [P. L. Travers](#) / Viking Press
- 1980 *Children of the Sun*, Jan R. Carew / Little Brown
- 1985 *Brother to the Wind*, Mildred Pitts Walter / Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books
- 1986 *All in a Day*, [Mitsumasa Anno](#) and [Raymond Briggs](#) / Hamish Hamilton (London) (Translation of: *Marui chikyū no maru ichinichi.*) —illustrations by 10 artists, including the Dillons
- 1987 *The Porcelain Cat*, [Michael Patrick Hearn](#) / Little Brown
- 1989 *The Color Wizard*, Barbara Brenner / Bantam Little Rooster
- 1990 *The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks*, [Katherine Paterson](#) / LoDESTAR
- 1990 *Aïda*, [Leontyne Price](#) / Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
- 1991 *The Race of the Golden Apples*, Claire Martin / Dial Books for Young Readers
- 1991 *Pish, Posh, Said Hieronymus Bosch*, [Nancy Willard](#) / Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
- 1992 *Northern Lullaby*, Nancy White Carlstrom / Putnam
- 1992 *Switch on the Night*, [Ray Bradbury](#) / Knopf
- 1993 *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, Nancy Willard / Scholastic/Blue Sky Press
- 1994 *What Am I?*, N. N. Charles / Scholastic/Blue Sky Press
- 1997 *To Everything There is a Season*, the Dillons / Scholastic/Blue Sky Press^[clarification needed]
- 1999 *Wind Child*, Shirley Rousseau Murphy / HarperCollins
- 2000 *Switch on the Night*, [Ray Bradbury](#) / Knopf (reissue)
- 2000 *The Girl Who Spun Gold*, [Virginia Hamilton](#) / Scholastic/Blue Sky Press
- 2001 *Two Little Trains*, [Margaret Wise Brown](#) / HarperCollins
- 2002 *Rap a Tap Tap: Here's Bojangles—Think of That*, written and illustrated by the Dillons / Scholastic/Blue Sky Press
- 2003 *One Winter's Night*, John Herman / Philomel
- 2004 *Where Have You Been?*, Margaret Wise Brown / HarperCollins
- 2005 *The People Could Fly - The Picture Book*^[clarification needed]
- 2005 *Earth Mother*, Ellen B. Jackson / Walker & Company
- 2006 *Whirlwind is a Spirit Dancing*, Natalia Maree Belting and [Joseph Bruchac](#) / Milk & Cookies Press —illustrations reprinted from 1974 title, *Whirlwind is a Ghost Dancing*
- 2007 *Mother Goose numbers on the loose* / Harcourt
- 2007 *Jazz on a Saturday Night* / Blue Sky Press
- 2009 *The Goblin and the Empty Chair* / Viking Australia
- 2009 *Mama Says: A Book of Love for Mothers and Sons*
- 2011 *The Secret River*, [Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings](#) / Atheneum Books for Young Readers (reissue)^[a]

Picture books illustrated only by Diane Dillon^[edit]

- 2018 *I Can Be Anything! Don't Tell Me I Can't*^[12]

Chapter books illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon^[edit]

- 1962 *Mother Night*, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr / Fawcett Publications/Gold Medal Books
- 1964 *The Sea and the Jungle*, H. M. Tomlinson / Time / Time Reading Program Special Edition
- 1964 *Hakon of Rogen's Saga*, Erik Christian Haugaard / Houghton Mifflin
- 1965 *A Slave's Tale Haugaard*, Erik Christian Haugaard / Houghton Mifflin
- 1966 *The Witches of Karres*, James H. Schmitz / Ace Science Fiction Special
- 1967 *Claymore and Kilt*, Sorche Nic Leodhas / Holt, Rinehart, Winston
- 1968 *Shamrock and Spear Pilkington* / Holt, Rinehart, Winston
- 1968 *The Rider and His Horse*, Erik Christian Haugaard / Houghton Mifflin
- 1969 *The Preserving Machine*, Philip K. Dick / Ace Books
- 1971 *The Untold Tale*, Erik Christian Haugaard / Houghton Mifflin
- 1971 *The Search* Murray / Thomas / Scholastic^[clarification needed]
- 1974 *Burning Star*, Eth Clifford / Houghton Mifflin
- 1977 *The Planets* / Time Life Books
- 1979 *A Wrinkle In Time*, Madeleine L'Engle / (reissue)^[a]
- 1984 *The Enchanted World: Legends of Valor* / Time Life Books
- 1985 *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*, Virginia Hamilton / Knopf
- 1985 *The Enchanted World: Magical Beasts* / Time Life Books
- 1987 *Wise Child*, Monica Furlong / Knopf
- 1988 *Sing A Song of Popcorn: Every Child's Book of Poems* Beatrice Schenk de Regniers / Scholastic — illustrated by many artists
- 1989 *Moses' Ark*, Alice Bach and J. Cheryl Exum / Delacorte Press
- 1991 *Juniper*, Monica Furlong / Random House
- 1991 *Miriam's Well*, Bach and Exum / Delacorte Press
- 1992 *Many Thousand Gone*, Virginia Hamilton / Knopf
- 1993 *It's Kwaanza Time* Goss Putnam^[clarification needed]
- 1995 *Her Stories*, Virginia Hamilton / Scholastic / Blue Sky Press
- 1995 *Sabriel*, Garth Nix / HarperCollins
- 1997 *The Girl Who Dreamed Only Geese*, Howard A. Norman / Harcourt Brace & Co
- 2000 *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, Jules Verne / HarperCollins (reissue)^[a]
- 2001 *Mansa Musa*, Khephra Burns / Harcourt Brace & Co
- 2001 *Lirael*, Garth Nix / HarperCollins
- 2003 *Abhorsen*, Garth Nix / HarperCollins
- 2004 *Between Heaven and Earth: Bird Tales From Around The World*, Howard A. Norman / Harcourt Brace & Co
- 2004 *Colman*, Monica Furlong / Random House

Awards^[edit]

- 1971 Hugo Award for Best Professional Artist
- 1976 Caldecott Medal – American Library Association – *Why Mosquitoes Buzz In People's Ears* by Verna Aardema^[4]
- 1977 Caldecott Medal - American Library Association – *Ashanti To Zulu: African Traditions* by Margaret Musgrove^[4]
- 1977 Hamilton King Award – Society Of Illustrators
- 1978 Highly Commended runner-up as a duo, Hans Christian Andersen Award (body of work, children's book illustration)^[5]
- 1982 Balrog Award For Lifetime Contribution To Science Fiction/Fantasy

- 1982 Art Ninth Annual Lensman Award
- 1986 [Coretta Scott King Award](#) illustrator honor^[13]
- 1988 Third Annual [Keene State College](#) Children's Literature Festival Award
- 1991 Doctorate Of Fine Art Degree – [Parsons School Of Design](#)
- 1992 Empire State Award For Children's And Adult Literature For Body Of Work
- 1992 [Society Of Illustrators](#) Gold Medal For Northern Lullaby From The Original Art Show Of Children's Picture Books
- 1996 U.S. nominee as a duo, Hans Christian Andersen Award (body of work, children's book illustration)^[5]
- 1997 [Chesley Award](#) For Best Science Fiction Hardcover Jacket Titled Sabriel
- 1997 [The Grand Masters Award](#) - For Body Of Work - From [Spectrum - The Best In Contemporary Fantastic Art](#)
- 1997 [Society of Illustrators](#) Hall Of Fame - Inducted By A Jury of Peers
- 2002 [Virginia Hamilton](#) Literary Award - For Body Of Work
- 2003 [Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor](#) - For *Rap A Tap Tap Here's Bojangles-Think Of That*
- 2005 [Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Award](#) - For *The People Could Fly-The Picture Book*
- 2006 [Knickerbocker Award](#) - For Body Of Work - [New York Library Association](#)
- 2006 Doctorate Of Fine Arts - [Montserrat School Of Art](#)
- 2008 [World Fantasy Convention](#) Life Achievement Award^[14]
- 2012 [BolognaRagazzi Award](#) - Fiction Honorable Mention - *The Secret River*^[15]