

## DISTINCTLY UNIQUE LIVES

### WALKER & MILLER STILL KICKING THE EDGES AT OGUNQUIT

What does it take to become a celebrated artist? One who kicks the edges, who does it their way. One who accumulates all the credentials and accolades. One who keeps growing, even in their 80s. Well, if that definition fits anyone, it undoubtedly fits the two artists who are exhibiting concurrently at the Ogunquit Museum of American Art (Ogunquit, Maine).

Both are 83. Both are highly accomplished. Both are distinctly unique artists. Both are worth the trip to this beautiful backroad coastal area of Maine. But the similarities end there.

We are all products of our life experiences. But I think artists tend to express those experiences more readily than other professions. Certainly, writers who write fiction (and often portray characters who reflect those they know or themselves) also do this. But visual artists often can do it blatantly, and it's not always immediately discernible by the viewer, yet they admire the work, nevertheless. Both of these artists live this expression, even if you, as the viewer, don't understand it until you dig deeper.

"John Walker: From Low Tide to High Tide" is an exhibition portraying the artist's exploration of Maine coastal landscapes and the movement of the tides. "Sue Miller: Personal Voyage" is an exhibition of paintings spanning nearly 40 years of the artist's career and her works that are both representational and abstract, indicative of her life's voyage.

Walker is a product of his environment. Traumatized by his father's telling of the Battle of Somme during World War I, where on the first day of the battle, his father's immediate family lost 11 members. Walker lived under that shroud. His father's nurse, who later became his wife, cared for him after he nearly died from shrapnel wounds. Walker's father

eventually physically recovered but was psychologically damaged by this wartime experience.

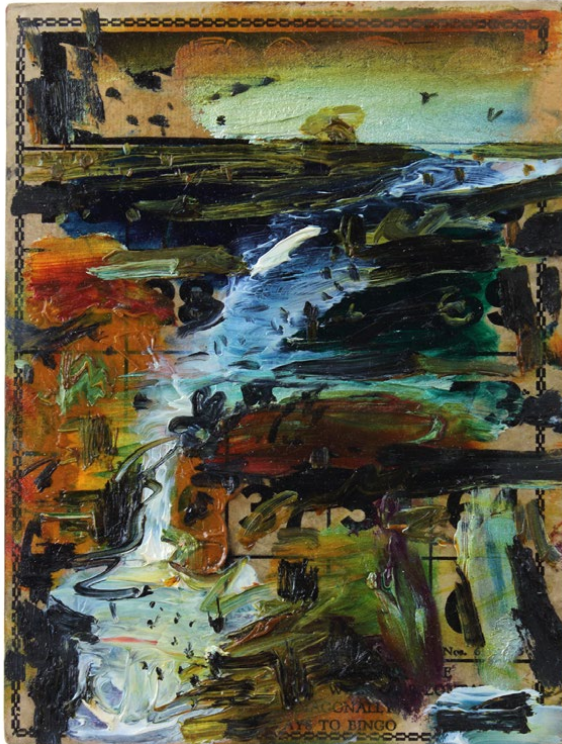
The younger Walker still bears the scars – not of the war wounds inflicted upon his father, but the decades-long emotional damage his father suffered and the resultant repercussions to his family.

Walker was also influenced by his training, his exposure to different expressions of art and his environment. He grew up in Birmingham, England, and his work is in permanent collections at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Guggenheim, Metropolitan Museum of Art, MoMA, the Whitney Museums in New York City and the MFA in Boston. He's taught in England, Australia, China, and most recently, at Boston University, where he retired from in 2015. He now lives in South Bristol, Maine.

Among the many influences in Walker's painting career were Van Gogh. He was so enamored that at age 18 he hopped on his motorbike and went to Amsterdam to see Van Gogh's work. Rembrandt fascinated him too. He was particularly overtaken with the beauty of Rembrandt's "The Jewish Bride," an

image of a couple touching hands. He felt a fusion of the sensual and spiritual.

Then there was Malevich. After viewing the Rembrandt, Walker left the Rijksmuseum and made his way across the street to the Stedelijk Museum and was astounded by the white square on a white ground that Malevich created. It was uncharted waters for Walker, as he'd been trained in figurative art, and didn't have any idea on how to process this execution of "art" that was a geometric rendition of art.



#### FEATURED EXHIBITION

**JOHN WALKER: FROM LOW TIDE TO HIGH TIDE**

**SUE MILLER: PERSONAL VOYAGE**

**OGUNQUIT MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART**

**543 SHORE ROAD  
OGUNQUIT, MAINE**

**THROUGH OCTOBER 31**

John Walker (b. 1939), *Seal Point Series #V VIII, 2007*, oil on bingo card, 7 1/4" x 5 1/2". © John Walker. Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York.

# ALEXANDRE



Sue Miller, *Rider II*, 1983-88, acrylic and wood on canvas, 50" x 66". Copyright Sue Miller. Image courtesy of the Artist.



Later, an encounter with Malevich in London, known for his Suprematism work, eased Walker's mind when Malevich explained that his purpose for his work was to "imbue the square with feeling." Walker's explanation of this was that: "Somehow that square had to act figuratively and not abstractly even though it was in an abstract form." He was satisfied with that extraction.

And then there was Picasso's influence, and Goya's, and Constable's. Then he moved to New York City where he bumped up against the likes of Elizabeth Murray, Harvey Quaytman, Robert Motherwell, Richard Diebenkorn and the list goes on. Oh, and then there was the Aboriginal art when he lived in Australia. And African art. They all made impressions on him.

This all became his art. His life. When he first chose to live in Maine, he admittedly could not paint landscapes. He felt the coastal vistas too pretty, too scenic. But with time passing, he became enraptured with the ebb and flow of the mudflats and the ripples, textures, the reflections of light they left in their path. So much so that he was invigorated with the thought of taking his work to places people have never been.

At times, he literally paints with mud. He found stacks of discarded bingo cards left in his studio in Maine. They quickly became fodder for his paintings. He loved the grid work of the background. The vertical with a high band across matched his inclination toward a high horizon line, and so he created – some might say abstracts. Some might say landscapes. I see both. They are abstracts. But if you look further, you'll see the clouds, the swirl of the pooling mud tides, the late afternoon light glaring off the rivulets left behind. The titles often suggest seascapes, "Seal Point Series," "Sea Cake," etc., as the text floats over a green sky. Below is a grid in primary colors rampant with globs of color, explosions of texture.

Larger pieces with zigzag textures ("Fire and Tide") will draw you in. One of my favorites, "Pemaquid #21," a work you could simply revel in as an abstract painting with well-balanced proportions, enticing contrast of light and dark, and arresting geometric shapes – or as I prefer to see it, as a seascape with the moon shining off the water and reflecting the stars and snaps of bright colors. Intriguing.

Sue Miller, *In the Intervening Years*, 2009-12, acrylic on paper, 1/2" x 7 1/2". Copyright Sue Miller. Image courtesy of the Artist.

**Daniel Jocz: Permission Granted**  
September 17, 2022 - May 14, 2023

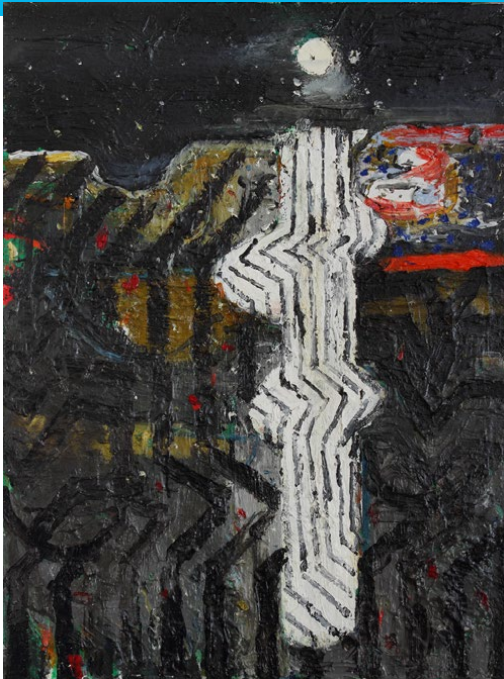
Tuesday - Sunday, 10am-5pm  
455 Oak Street Brockton, MA 02301  
fullercraft.org

Featured Image: *The Bee Stings (ring)* from "Sculpture" series

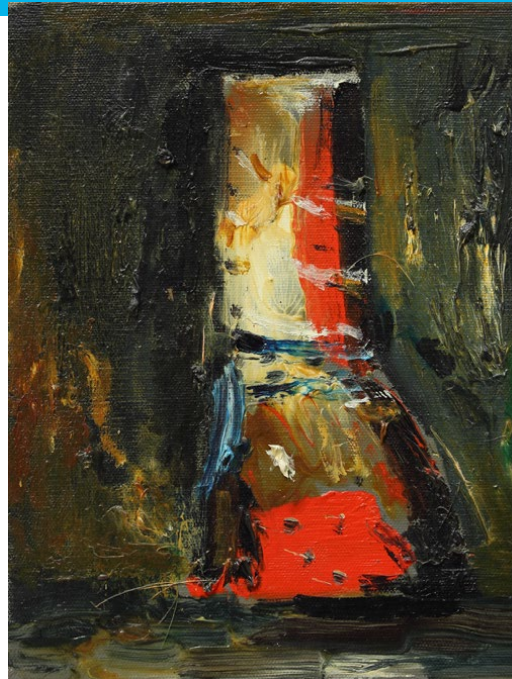
Fuller Craft Museum



# ALEXANDRE



ABOVE LEFT: John Walker, *Pemaquid #21*, 2016, oil on canvas, 24" x 18". Copyright John Walker. Image courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York.



ABOVE RIGHT: John Walker, *Untitled*, 1980, oil on canvas, 10" x 8". Copyright John Walker. Image courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York.

Sue Miller, whose work is also on display, has, like all of us, been molded by life's experiences. Her education and training are noteworthy. (Undergrad degree from Connecticut College for Women, grad degree from Harvard.) She has exhibited extensively: Bronx Museum, Guggenheim Museum, the Jewish Museum and the Farnsworth Museum in Maine.

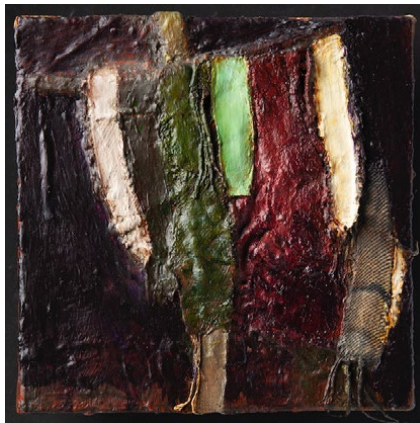
Over the course of her long career, Miller has created a deeply personal visual language that is inspired by many things, resulting in work that is simultaneously abstract and representational. "Miller's paintings of boats are far from traditional," remarked Katherine French, guest curator for both exhibitions at the museum. "In actuality, her paintings are a metaphorical exploration on the vicissitudes of wind, weather and circumstance."

Miller spent most of her life by the ocean, and that influenced her use of water, light and nautical shapes that really speak to the viewer. But what struck me as the viewer were the rich textures, three-dimensionality of her pieces and the insinuating of objects. Or not.

For example, "SPAR V" could simply be perceived as an abstract piece with juxtaposition of light and dark colors, and forms resembling geometric triangular shapes, interspersed with vertical and mostly horizontal relaxed lines. But it could also be read as if, according to the curator, French, that the blood-red that appears on what resembles the sail cloth that has been used to bandage a wound. French said that Miller always stresses that a recognizable subject is not what matters.

BELOW LEFT: Sue Miller, *SPAR I*, 2017-2018, acrylic, wood and fabric on canvas, 6" x 6". © Sue Miller. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph by William Palmer.

BELOW RIGHT: Sue Miller, *Salvage (Diptych)*, 1991-1993, acrylic and wood on canvas, 12" x 18". © Sue Miller. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Susan Byrne.





# ALEXANDRE

"There have always been identifiable features," Miller said. But while cows, barns and boats might provide useful metaphors, they're not a central concern. Miller does not so much impose images, as nurture ones that appear organically. "Life is present within art, yielding itself through creative process," she said.

Her metaphorical pieces representing life – if one knows the story behind it – are equally captivating standing on their own. One such piece, "Boat/Moon/Mast," is dripping with meaning. During a time in Miller's life when she felt like a vessel on open water, vulnerable to the elements, and at the mercy of the unknown, she chose a luminescent yellow-green shade that fairly glowed behind the mast to depict this chapter of her life. The texture of the pigment is dense and crusty. Symbolism at its best. Her hope was that she and her fragile dinghy could eventually locate safe harbor.

But of all the titillating works she has on display, "Rider II" took my breath away. A massive piece – 4' x 5.5' – is mostly monochromatic in tones of dulled green-brown color accented by a shining horizon. As you get closer to the piece you begin to understand that the dimensionality isn't paint buildup, but wood that has been adhered to the canvas. Captivating.

But Miller would be the first to tell you that her references to boats or sails in her works are touch stones to broader issues. "Eventually the subject isn't a boat or sail," she explained. "Instead, it becomes part of my own personal voyage into the act of painting itself."

Linda Chestney


## NESTO GALLERY

**Nora Valdez**  
*Passage*

**September 15, 2022 -  
June 17, 2023**

**Outdoor Installation**  
*in front of the Art & Media Center*

**Opening Reception**  
**Thursday, September 15, 2022**  
Art & Media Center (*lower level*)  
5:30-7:00pm



Nora Valdez, *Voiceless*,  
Indiana limestone, 54"x12"x12", 2020

### MILTON ACADEMY

All exhibitions free and open to the public 9am-4pm M-F (*closed on school holidays*)  
Milton, MA [www.milton.edu/arts/nesto-gallery](http://www.milton.edu/arts/nesto-gallery)

## Rosamond Purcell

### Nature Stands Aside

September 1 – December 31



**ADDISON** Addison Gallery of American Art | [www.addisongallery.org](http://www.addisongallery.org)  
Phillips Academy, Andover, MA | Free & open to the public

Rosamond Purcell, *Wall*, 1990s, mixed media installation,  
121 x 264 x 5 inches. Courtesy of the artist, © Rosamond Purcell