

ALEXANDRE

Emily Nelligan



Emily Nelligan: *Great Cranberry Island*
September 8 – October 22, 2022
Alexandre
291 Grand Street, New York

Alexandre is pleased to present *Great Cranberry Island*, an exhibition of 30 charcoal drawings by the artist Emily Nelligan (American, 1924–2018). The show will be on view from September 8 until October 22.

Nelligan's drawings reveal the shadowy world of Great Cranberry Island in Maine, a place that singularly captivated the artist from the time she completed her studies at Cooper Union in 1944 until her death in 2018. For over 70 years, she and her husband, the artist Marvin Bileck, spent their summers on the island—the only location where Nelligan would draw. The resulting body of work represents a deep relationship between artist and environment, an extended meditation upon a remote, intimately-known place. As curator Allison Ferris wrote: "The emotion we observe in Nelligan's work is authentic—she pours months of anticipation and longing for the sea into her drawings which result in profound and contemplative works of art."

Born and raised in New York City, Nelligan studied painting at Cooper Union, switching to charcoal soon after graduation due to its more economical nature. Her approach remained straightforward throughout her career, titling her drawings according to their date of completion and working solely with unfixed charcoal on ordinary writing paper. At times Nelligan obscured her subject matter to the point of abstraction—at other times, the intricate interplay of light and dark summons a resounding sense of the environment of the island. Hilton Kramer wrote of her work: "She has somehow been able to wrest from this smudgy, powdery substance a 'palette' of so many blacks, grays and off-whites, so many different densities of light and shade, so many nocturnal nuances and daylight subtleties, so much oceanic movement and celestial drama, that one is indeed made to wonder if one has ever before fully understood the power and range of charcoal as a pictorial medium." In these moody, atmospheric renderings of clouds, fog, seascapes, and unpeopled shorelines, we see an abiding record of the passing days, months, and years that tied together a lifetime of devoted observation.

Long a well-loved artist among other artists in Maine, Nelligan received her first full-scale exhibition in 2000 at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art. Her work was first exhibited at Alexandre Gallery in 2005.

Image: Emily Nelligan, *16 June 95 (2)*, 1995, charcoal on paper, 7 1/4 x 10 1/2 inches

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