

ALEXANDRE

John Walker



John Walker
New Work

April 29 – June 17, 2023
Opening Reception Saturday, May 6

Alexandre
291 Grand Street, New York 10002

New York . . . Alexandre is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by John Walker, a singular painter of gritty, abstract New England landscapes that Hilton Kramer once called “some of the most extraordinary landscape paintings of the modern era.” Including fifteen paintings and works on paper made between 2021 and 2023, eight of which are Walker’s signature

large canvases, “John Walker: New Work” will showcase the artist’s intuitive and expressive reflections upon his observations of the natural cycles and rhythms of coastal Maine, which has remained his primary muse for the past twenty years.

Over his six-decade career, Walker has created a body of work that draws inspiration from a range of sources including the art of Oceania, European masters such as Goya, Cézanne, and Rembrandt, and American Abstract Expressionists. Such influence is seen in his varied approaches to form, using paint (which he calls “colored mud”) to summon from the canvas a careful balance between spontaneity and structure, rich with a sense of its own surface and materiality. Gravitating towards a range of different shape and pattern motifs throughout his career, he has explored the qualities of light and recurrences of forms that define our shared visual and emotional experience. As John Yau wrote of Walker in 2015: “Everything in these paintings has been lived intensely... Such passion has nothing to do with the prevailing narratives of art, and its preference for bluster and irony, but it does have a lot to do with painting, and why I, for one, go to Walker’s paintings to get the news of what it means to be alive in an indifferent universe.”

In his recent work, zigzag lines and various shape motifs denote the repetitive character of tides, weather patterns, and the natural rhythms exposed by extended meditation upon the sea. A palette of jewel-like cobalt blue and green often contrasts against muddy brown, black, and a crisp white that seems to speak to the spaces in-between, the things unseen. Several of these paintings hold reference to Cézanne’s *The Black Marble Clock* (1869-70), in which a handless clock and large seashell are presented on a linen-draped table. Both the shell and clock appear in Walker’s new work, represented



in amorphous shapes and circular outlines which evoke the artist’s ongoing reflection

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upon the passing of time. Still other works reference the powerful swooping forms of the fishing nets used to capture eels in the Pemaquid river, which runs past his studio on its way to the nearby bay and Atlantic Ocean. In this vocabulary of color and form, Walker illuminates the passive ephemerality of the natural world and a resounding, intimate connection between artist and place.

John Walker (b. 1939, Birmingham, England) attended the Mosely School of Art and later the Birmingham School of Art and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris. The artist's many teaching appointments throughout his lengthy career have included Cooper Union, Yale University, the Victoria College of the Arts in Melbourne, and the Royal College in London. He retired in 2015 from his position as the head of the graduate department in painting at Boston University. His work has been the subject of more than fifty one-person exhibitions in the States and internationally and is in the permanent collections of major museums including the Guggenheim, Metropolitan Museum of Art, MoMA, the Phillips Collection, which presented exhibitions of his work in 1982 and 2002, and the Tate in London.

Images: John Walker, *For Harvey*, 2022, oil on canvas, 84 x 66 inches

Paul Cézanne (French, 1839-1906), *The Black Marble Clock*, 1869-70, oil on canvas, 21 1/4 x 28 3/4 inches. Private collection.

John Walker, *Study for Clock + Shell III*, 2023, oil on canvas, 30 x 24 inches

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