

ALEXANDRE

Independent



Emily Nelligan & John Walker

**Independent Spring Studios
6 St Johns Lane, New York, NY 10013**

May 11 – 14, 2023

Alexandre is pleased to present a selection of intimate drawings by Emily Nelligan (American, 1924-2018). Utilizing unfixed charcoal and erasure on ordinary writing paper, Nelligan's sole muse was the coastal

landscape of Great Cranberry Island in Maine from the time she completed her studies at Cooper Union in 1944 until her death in 2018. During this time, 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 created over sixty years represents a deep relationship between artist and environment, an extended meditation upon a remote, intimately-known place, shaped by the forces of time and nature. As Deborah Weisgall wrote in the *New York Times* in 2000: "If Ms. Nelligan's subject is the moment in its infinite variability, she also draws permanence: a summer place apart from chronology, where time is measured by seasons, tides and changing light."

Working most often at sunrise and sunset, Nelligan's work oscillates between a high-contrast, almost photograph-like intensity and a dreamy stillness. In his review of her 2022 exhibition at Alexandre, Jeffrey Kastner wrote in *Artforum*, "Her control over her medium was exceptional, and her pieces seem to effortlessly modulate between pitch-black densities and moments of reflection, plainspoken terrestrial figuration and atmospheric abstraction that roils with Turner-esque disquiet." At times she 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.

Accompanying the works by Nelligan is a single large (84 x 66 inch) plein-air painting by John Walker (American, b. England 1939), concurrent with the exhibition of Walker's most recent paintings at the gallery's Grand Street location (April 19-June 17). Also working directly from the landscape of coastal Maine, Walker's emotive abstract seascapes utilize a broad vocabulary of forms and rich, gritty surfaces to evoke powerful natural rhythms and qualities of light; forces which guide the land and sea to which Walker, like Nelligan, is deeply connected.

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Image: Emily Nelligan, *7 Oct 99 (2)*, 1999 charcoal on paper, 7 1/4 x 10 1/2 inches

291 Grand Street, New York, New York 10002

25 East 73rd Street, 2nd Floor, New York, New York 10021 212.755.2828 alexandregallery.com

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