Emily Nelligan



Emily Nelligan: *Cranberry Island*
ALEXANDRE
25 East 73rd Street, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10021
November 21, 2026 – January 23, 2027

New York, NY . . . ALEXANDRE is pleased to present *Cranberry Island*, an exhibition of drawings by Emily Nelligan (1924–2018). Spanning more than five decades, from charcoals made around 1958 to sheets completed in 2011, the exhibition brings together over 40 works, most of them devoted to Great Cranberry Island in Maine, the place that shaped Nelligan's entire practice.

The island captivated Nelligan 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 there, and it was on the island that she made her drawings. In an interview toward the end of her life, Nelligan recalled, "I owe everything to the island. When I'm away from it I can't work. I feel claustrophobic. I grew up in New York City, and I suppose I was always dealing with that. When I got to Maine with all that openness, the expanse of the sea and the sky with nothing there, it was such a relief. It was wonderful."

Nelligan and Bileck kept a daily routine while working on Cranberry Island: "We used to go out every day in the morning, and then again in the afternoon and just set ourselves down and look. Sometimes something would present itself and sometimes it wouldn't. But the process was looking and waiting and hoping to come up with something...If the light was right, I would set myself down and try and capture it. I'm utterly dependent on what I see."

Born and raised in New York City, Nelligan trained as a painter but switched to charcoal soon after graduation, drawn to its more economical nature. Her means stayed spare throughout her career: unfixed charcoal on ordinary writing paper, with most drawings titled by their date of completion, such as *7-13-64* or *20 Aug 95 (1)*. At times Nelligan obscured her subject to the point of abstraction; at others, the intricate interplay of light and dark summons a resounding sense of the island's weather, water and sky. As Isabelle Dervaux writes, "whether turbulent or serene, Nelligan's views of nature are both surprisingly consistent and extraordinarily varied. Throughout her life, she exploited with increasing mastery the versatility of the charcoal medium to capture the metamorphoses of light over her favorite seashore while at the same time articulating the intense feelings it stirred in her through images of subtle power and exquisite refinement."

The exhibition opens with three charcoals from around 1958, *Dark Pool*, *Dark Sea* and *Pale Moon Above a Quiet Sea*, and includes a selection of early drawings from the 1960s: views of the Maine woods, *New Hampshire Landscape #2*, and a set of four ink drawings of geraniums that stand apart from her charcoal work. From the late 1970s on, the drawings settle into the intimate, roughly 7 x 10 inch format of her mature practice, recording

moonlit water, fog and the boulders of the island's back shore across successive summers and autumns through 2011.

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. In Spring 2027, the gallery will publish a catalogue to accompany the exhibition, with a new text by Isabelle Dervaux, former curator at The Morgan Library & Museum.

About ALEXANDRE

For over a quarter century, ALEXANDRE has occupied a public space in New York City, currently located on the second and third floors of 25 East 73rd Street. The gallery is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, from 11:00 am to 5:30 pm, and available by appointment. Representing a curated roster of diverse contemporary artists, the gallery also maintains a specialized focus on the Stieglitz Group and first-generation American modernists. For additional information, please visit alexandregallery.com or reach out to inquiries@alexandregallery.com. +1 212-755-2828.

Press Inquiries
Hyatt Mannix
hyatt@danamannix.com

Image: Emily Nelligan, *Pale Moon Above a Quiet Sea*, c. 1958, charcoal on paper, 7 5/8 x 15 5/8 inches, courtesy ALEXANDRE, New York.