

PRESS RELEASE

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John Walker: The Blue Series

Messums London

22 March – 21 April 2023

Preview: Tuesday 21 March, 6 – 8pm

Online Talk: Wednesday 22 March, 12pm, free event



Eel Running Pemaquid, 2022



Pemaquid V, 2022

The impact of the work of British-born artist John Walker has resonated for over 50 years. His unique and imaginative painterly language has influenced generations of artists. Walker represented England at the 1972 Venice Biennale, won the 1976 John Moores Painting Prize, had extensive survey shows at both the Tate and Hayward galleries and was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1985. His work is represented in collections across the world.

Since the 1980s John Walker has led a significant narrative on Abstract Art with work that focuses on nature, emotion, and, in particular, place. He states, "I want to be the painter who knows more about that one place than anybody in the world." Having bought a

house at Seal Point, Maine in 1989, he has spent many years looking out onto the view of the Atlantic, and it is this specific coastal landscape that has provided essential subject matter with the elemental drama of land, sea and sky. He has been inspired at different times by the art of Oceania, European masters Goya, Manet and Matisse, and the work of the American Abstract Expressionists. Pictorial and pattern motifs are recurrently strong features of his work ranging from the 'Alba' shape in his painting from the 1980s, polka dots and egg-like orbs in the 1990s, and, in the last 20 years, a combination of amorphous shapes and zig-zag lines.

This exhibition presents a significant body of recent paintings by Walker, including a dynamic series of seven large-scale, predominantly blue and white, canvases all completed in the last year. Walker had long held the ambition to create a body of blue paintings and, finally, the eight or nine buckets of blue paint which had been sitting in his studio for a decade, have found their way to the surface of the canvas. Typical of the artist, these works are therefore the result of considerable rumination. Pared down, bold and expressive, these paintings are full of vigour, vitality and freedom. They are testament to an artist who, now in his ninth decade, is working with as much fervour as ever.

Online Discussion Event:

John Walker: Abstraction – A Language Shared

Wednesday 22 March, 12pm

A rare opportunity to join an online discussion event with the internationally renowned artist John Walker, in conversation with a panel of artists and academics exploring the trajectory of Walker's practice, his inspirations and influences. This event marks the inaugural day of the artist's exhibition at Messums London.

Biography

John Walker (b.1939) studied at Birmingham College of Art (1956-1960), at The British School in Rome (1960-1961), and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris (1961-1963). He was a Gregory Fellow at Leeds University (1967-1969), awarded a Harkness Fellowship to the United States (1969-70) and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1981. Walker has been artist-in-residence at Oxford University (1977-78), and at Monash University, Melbourne (1980). He represented England at the 1972 Venice Biennale and has taught at the Royal College in London and at Yale University. In the 1980's he was Dean of Victoria College of Art in Melbourne, Australia. From 1993 to 2015, he taught at Boston University and is currently Professor Emeritus of Art and former head of the graduate program in Painting and Sculpture at Boston University School of Visual Arts.

Walker has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in NY; The Phillips Collection in DC; Tate Gallery, London; The Hayward Gallery, London; The Kunstverein, Hamburg; The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; and others. His work can be found in museum collections, including The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; The Guggenheim Museum, New York; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Gallery, Edinburgh; Tate Gallery, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.

John Walker resides and works in Boston, Massachusetts and in South Bristol, Maine.



John Walker in his studio, Maine, 2022

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MESSUMS WILTSHIRE is a leading multi-purpose gallery and arts centre set inside a restored thirteenth-century tithe barn and surrounding buildings with exhibition space, sculpture garden and restaurant.

MESSUMS LONDON is a 2,000 sq ft exhibition space on Cork Street behind the Royal Academy. It hosts a rolling programme of exhibitions for our contemporary artists.