

JOHN BERGGRUEN GALLERY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

John Alexander: Recent Paintings and Drawings

March 16 – April 23, 2016

I try to look back at my life and see where I came from as an artist, see where my roots are, what emotional situations I've gone through, and put all that into my work. . . . I want the art to be highly personal and very much about my interpretation, my reflection, of what my experiences in the world have been, not in an illustrative way, but in a real emotional way that is universal.¹

John Berggruen Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings and drawings by Texas-born, New York-based artist John Alexander, on view March 16 – April 23, 2016. *John Alexander: Recent Paintings and Drawings* is the first solo exhibition for Alexander in the gallery and will feature works inspired by the natural landscape—canvases abound in highly detailed, realistically rendered botanicals and animals—a subject the artist has returned to in recent years. An opening reception for the artist will be held on Wednesday, March 16th from 5:30pm–7:30pm.

For Alexander, whose childhood consisted of camping and fishing trips in the bayous and woods of East Texas, nature is a frequent subject. His lush paintings populated with diverse flora and fauna signal a reverence for the tradition of landscape painting as practiced by such art historical masters as Claude Monet or the more recent Hudson River School painters of the American northeast. As an undergraduate majoring in applied-arts at Lamar University in Beaumont, Alexander was influenced by professor and friend, Jerry Newman, whose courses emphasized academic training in drawing, painting, and art history. Himself a skilled draftsman, Newman encouraged his students to develop of a firm foundation in still-life drawing and to copy sketches by such masters as Leonardo da Vinci. Evidence of Alexander's rigorous formal training is not lost on a viewer of his works, which profess the skill and knowledge of an artist eagerly passionate about nature from the standpoint of enthusiastic student and devoted environmentalist. Alexander's vision of nature, for example, was influenced by his father's avid environmentalism and acute awareness of the devastating effects that industry and pollution had on the forests and habitats of his native Texas.

The bucolic subject matter of Alexander's paintings belies their subtle energy. His keen observations of the natural world and vivid imagery are the idiosyncratic expressions of an artist for whom everything is symbolic. The exoticism and beauty of his creations, as romantic as they seem, possess an introspective quality and speak to the psychology and experiences of the artist. Alexander has described his manner of painting as being akin to the same quality of emotional expressiveness that characterizes the work of the Abstract Expressionists.

There's very much similarity in the way I paint, even though my subjects are realistic, and the way Abstract Expressionists paint. It's very gestural, very direct, a lot of paint. Pushing the paint around. Letting it splash and drip and so forth.²

His landscape paintings, though charged with rich expressive content, are relatively more moderate in subject than is another category of Alexander's oeuvre—his heavily satirical, oftentimes scathing

¹ John Alexander, quoted by Patricia C. Johnson, "Ex-Houston Painter Feels Comfortable with His Emotional and Professional Maturity," *Houston Chronicle*, October 14, 1984, 16.

² John Alexander, quoted by Bridget leRoy, "Texas Twang in Amagansett," *The Independent*, August 31, 1994.

