

PRESS RELEASE

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John Walker: Working on Paper

Messums London

4 September – 5 October 2024

Preview: 3 September, 6 – 8pm



JWa077, 2024, ink on Japanese paper, 150.5 x 114 cm

This exhibition presents a series of works on paper by the renowned British-born artist John Walker, recognised for his pioneering developments in abstraction. Walker's unique painterly language, and his teaching across continents, has influenced generations of artists over the past 50 years. This show juxtaposes the inaugural presentation of a series of new works, all produced over the past year, with works from his early career in the 1960s, thus presenting a dialogue over time. The early works presented date to 1967, just before Walker was awarded the Harkness Fellowship to visit New York (1969). He subsequently represented England at the 1972 Venice Biennale, won the 1976 John Moores Painting Prize, was awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1981, was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1985 and had extensive survey shows at both the Tate and Hayward galleries.

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The cross-section of drawings presented from the different periods of Walker's career, convey a shift in perspectives. After a lifetime of looking up, the more recent works show the artist looking down, to the ground beneath his feet. However, through this contrasting viewpoint, necessitated in part by age, Walker has discovered new motifs, further enriching his painting vocabulary. The new works share the vitality and dynamism of those from his early career. They are testament to an artist who has pursued a lifetime of exploratory endeavour, consistently pushing the potential of abstraction and never static in his quest. Walker is an artist who is ceaselessly innovating and progressing, constantly discovering and evolving his ideas. His work is represented in collections across the world.



John Walker's studio, Maine, 2022

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.

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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, 2022

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For further information and press images, please contact: stephanie@messums.org

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Notes to editors

ABOUT MESSUMS – MESSUMS WEST, MESSUMS LONDON AND MESSUMS ORG

MESSUMS WEST: Established as Messums Wiltshire in 2016 by Johnny Messum, Messums West is a leading multi-purpose gallery and arts centre set inside a restored thirteenth-century tithe barn with surrounding buildings, 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.

Under the umbrella MESSUMS ORG, the business continues to evolve the role of the gallery from presentational space to one that offers multiple ways to access, experience, understand and engage with the creative process and its outcomes. This has included establishing a network of venues and arts communities in the West and East of England – as well as connecting with our historic London gallery space, MESSUMS LONDON.

Our core specialisms are represented in the breadth of the arts we engage in as part of the programme of exhibitions and events at our venues. This encompasses painting, sculpture, ceramic, photography, and performance as well as film, architecture, textiles and more. Together with our exhibitions and events, we offer international artist residencies, contemporary dance premiers, symposia, and workshops. Underpinning all of this is an appreciation and respect for nature to which most artists and individuals would readily identify, and a belief that innovation like creativity itself runs at the vanguard of our thoughts.

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