

*A Boat Made Out of Ocean*

May 19 – June 25, 2023  
56 Bogart Street #114, Brooklyn NY 11206

Opening Reception:  
May 19, 2023, 6-9pm



John Walker, *Transpacifica Study No. 3*, 1984, oil on canvas, 20 x 15

M.David & Co. is pleased to announce *A Boat Made Out of Ocean*

*A Boat Made Out of Ocean: Expressions of Openness*

Exhibition essay by Paul D'Agostino

Featuring works by nine artists whose practices comprise painting, collage, assemblage, and sculpture, *A Boat Made Out of Ocean* explores the notion that sincere acts of artistic creation are pathways for, and conduits of, self-expression. This has long been a crucial concern for curator Michael David. The conceit is that creative acts, if sufficiently rigorous and genuine, are means for communicative openness and manifestations of mirrored selves.

To that end, the artworks gathered in *A Boat Made Out of Ocean* are intended to demonstrate that what you make is, on some level, who you are – that some sense of an artist's identity lingers on in the works that resonate with greatest truth. This is an ambiguous enough proposition, to be sure, yet it is one that might be readily evidenced, throughout a range of media, by such things as consistency in or trademark uses of materials, subject matter, palette, compositional arrangements, spatial considerations, certain manners of mark-making, linework, brushwork, and surface treatments, among other formal or process-related concerns. As the creative act ensues, as the work's presence accrues, so too does its inherent communicative potential, its remnant utterances and latent expressions waiting to be sensed, seen, heard, read, or otherwise discovered by viewers.

Mark-making and, perhaps in an even more specific sense, mark-processing are of paramount importance for several of the painters in the show. Deborah Dancy's recent works, for instance, subdued in palette yet abuzz with compositional dynamism and gesturally compelling linework, are showcases of the artist's multivalently layered and elegantly labored, though not

laborious, marks, such that even the size and type of paintbrush might well be identified in a way that registers, too, the remnant presence of the artist. Dancy's works rustle quietly with intimations of nature and hum subtly the bustle of the world. The artist, too, is in the midst there, somewhere. Astrid Dick explores similar registers of gestural compulsion and formal dynamics through nuanced layerings, potent chromatics, cultivated textures, and brushy continuities. The artist creates surfaces that are active, excited, oscillating with swaths of vibrant hues and variant marks that are now freely fluid, now starkly linear, now short and abrupt, intermittent, interruptive. Dick's works question compositional structures and art historical strictures while beckoning viewers to navigate colorfully seductive, formally alluring, mark-forward painterly trajectories. The artist's seas of abstraction aren't always calm, but sailing them is a rewarding pursuit.

Alongside mark-making, facture itself, by way of both pronounced materiality and transmissive aspect, occupies a place of particular procedural primacy for a couple other painters in *A Boat Made Out of Ocean*. Fox Hysen's new works, for instance, grant crucial agency to marks and textures alike. Briskly brushy, hatched strokes create vicissitudes of depth and density, mood and complexity, abstracted apparitions, and ranges of compositional energies. Forms might appear almost recognizably as marks mount and strokes dart about, yet an overall vision of facture, of enduring textural stamp, is readily apparent in Hysen's paintings, picture planes of fluctuating visions. In Ben Pritchard's works, facture becomes even more pronounced, visually and conceptually, as both a matter of surface quality and a chronological imperative. For Pritchard, time, patience, prolonged looking, and assiduous reworking are of such essential importance that even these presumably impalpable characteristics become visible in the artist's viscously restive surfaces, where considerable toil, deep reflection, and formal curiosity resolve as unforeseeably novel formal unities. The works are less about energy and dynamics, rather more attuned to chronological strata and palimpsestic depths.

Other painters in the show might disclose hints of personal identity through certain subject matter, forms of figuration or abstraction, or generous material admixtures. Variable vessels, tidal formations, wavy textures, curvy linework, bodies of water, and vast, profoundly rich expanses of blue – deep ceruleans and bright ultramarines aplenty – are at play in John Walker's recent, rather formally suggestive works, a number of which register as singular episodes of an expansive story told collectively, as verses and stanzas extracted from epic poetry. Mike Olin's mixed-media paintings, meanwhile, also imbued with prodigious narrative aspects, offer deep skies, distant horizons, mysterious organic elements, atmospheric nuances, and figurative figments, all embedded in or carried along by intriguing surfaces enriched with chromatic saturations and drips, and select bits of graphically crisp collage. Olin's settings brim with strangeness and estrangement, yet they fall just shy of unsettling, channeling instead transmissions of mysterious merriment. While Mason Saltarrelli shares Walker's and Olin's interest in variably robust, somewhat saturated chromatic treatments, this artist creates surfaces that are far lighter, airier, and more open, with large areas of raw or sparsely treated canvas left exposed, its visible textures exploited for compositional purposes or as formal presences. Saltarrelli deploys cleverly these light touches and airy flourishes as thematic analogues as well, as the artist's operative subject matter is often musically inspired, with chromatically punchy, loosely gestural forms seeming to dance in step with beats, hooks, bass licks, and snare snaps, all grooving about and reveling in spheres of colorful acoustics.

Carolyn Wenning and Jim Condron furnish *A Boat Made Out of Ocean* with materially exploratory, delightfully bricolage sculptural objects. Condron quotes literature in works mounting unlikely combinations of wood scraps, plastics, and other everyday materials in ways that resound with unseemliness, humor, and quirky tragicomedy. Generally quite colorful, Condron's sculptures present as bizarre toys, teetering structures, weird relics, and improvised vehicles, among other curiously fun things, all the while seeming to somehow reflect back on themselves as three-dimensional puns. Of a much quieter mood, Wenning's recent works are perhaps not proper sculptures, rather sculptural paintings and assemblage composites incorporating reclaimed chunks of wood, bingo cards, embossed ceiling panels, and other types of bric-a-brac that are then pieced together in simple ways, maybe in just a handful of pieces or procedural steps. These pieces, often quite textured and partially shaped, sometimes also slightly colored, prior to modification, are then painted with limited palettes of white, red, black, and pink, and incorporate various abstract forms suggestive, at times, of figuration. Through their differently emotive works, Condron and Wenning alike convey something about humor and humility, inventiveness and curiosity, pragmatism and creative resourcefulness, endurance and resilience.

Curator Michael David believes that through their featured works, the artists in *A Boat Made Out of Ocean* divulge palpable equivalences between the materials and processes they choose, and their individual senses of artistic identity – identities that are now modestly, now unreservedly conveyed to attentive viewers. This idea suggests a continuum of self-renewing, self-

affirming significance between artist and audience. Meaning and expressivity are indeed bound up in the material stuff of the artworks, yet they're contained in states of active conveyance, leaving the works alluringly open-ended, interpretable, indexical, porous. In the context of this exhibition, each instance of expressive openness beckons viewers to swim out to the metaphorical boat that is one with the ocean, climb aboard, take a seat, look off to the horizon, and settle in for a multisensory ride – attuned to the sounds of the sea, adrift with the breeze and the tides.

— *Paul D'Agostino, PhD is an artist, writer, curator, and translator.*

#### Artist Bios:

**Jim Condrón** (b. 1970, Long Island, NY) lives and works in Baltimore, MD and Brooklyn, NY. Condrón earned his MFA at the Leroy E. Hoffberger School of Painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art and a BA in Art and English from Colby College, Waterville, ME. He also studied at the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture. His work appears nationally and internationally in galleries and museums as well as in corporate, university, public and private collections including: The Basil and Elise Goulandris Foundation, Andros, Greece; The Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA; Lewis Glucksman Gallery, University College Cork, Ireland; Gakushuin University, Tokyo, Japan; and Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Condrón is a recipient of a Pollock Krasner Foundation grant, an Adolf and Esther Gottlieb Foundation grant and a Maryland State Arts Council grant. He has been awarded artist residencies at Art Cake Studio Program, The Edward F. Albee Foundation, the Heliker Lahotan Foundation, and The Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

**Deborah Dancy** (B. 1949, Bessemer, Alabama) is a multi-media artist, whose paintings, drawings, digital photography, and small sculptures play with the shifting intersection between abstraction and representation. Her numerous awards include a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, Yaddo Fellowship, The American Antiquarian Society William Randolph Hearst Artist and Writers Creative Arts Fellowship, and the National Endowment of the Arts NEFA award. Her work is included in various collections including: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The High Museum, The Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO, 21C Museum, The Baltimore Museum, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Birmingham Museum of Art, The Hunter Museum, The Detroit Institute of Art, The Boston Museum of Fine, The Montgomery Museum of Art, The Spencer Museum of Art, The Hunter Museum of Art, Vanderbilt University, Grinnell College, Oberlin College Museum of Art, Davidson Art Center, Wesleyan University, and The United States Embassy in Harar, Ethiopia. She is represented by Kathryn Markel Fine Arts NYC, Robischon Gallery, Denver and Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta.

**Astrid Dick** (b. 1972 Buenos Aires, Argentina) currently lives and works in Paris. She began to paint intensively on her own at 13, and later, excited by mathematics and social frictions, begins her studies in economics in Buenos Aires, while continuing to draw in her free time. In 2002, she is awarded a Ph.D. in economics from MIT. Having led a double-life between art and economic research for many years, at age 36 she abandons her post as university professor to devote herself entirely to art. She was artist-in-residence at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, the Vermont Studio Center and the Leipzig Spinnerei and has shown her work through solo and group shows in Europe, the US and Argentina, such as the Grand Palais in Paris and the Manoir de la Ville de Martigny, Switzerland. Most recently, she had a duo exhibition with Erika Ranee at MDavid & Co. gallery in New York, intervened as guest artist at Johnson Lowe Gallery in Atlanta, published the zine “A True History of Stripes,” and her work was reviewed by John Yau in *Hyperallergic*. She is represented by MDavid & Co. gallery in New York.

**Fox Hysen** (b. 1982, San Rafael, California) received her BFA from New York University in 2006 and her MFA from Yale University in 2015. She currently lives in Norfolk, CT where she also runs an artist residency called Greenwoods, 2058. Solo exhibitions include Soloway Gallery in Brooklyn, Gallery 16 in San Francisco, The Suburban in Milwaukee Wisconsin and Marcello Marvelli Gallery in New York. Hysen has been part of numerous group shows nationally and abroad including Capital and et al. in San Francisco, Basilica Hudson, New York, Kunsthau, Bregenz, Austria, Kunstraum Kreuzber/Bethanien, Silberkuppe, Basso, all in Berlin, Germany among many others. She was the recipient of the 2022 Pollock Krasner Fellowship, the 2016 Tournesol award for painting by the Headlands Center for the Arts in Sausalito, CA, and is the 2022 Frederick Hammersley Visiting Artist for 2022.

**Mike Olin** (b.1971, Pasadena, California) received his BFA from Point Loma Nazarene University in 1993 and his MFA from Ohio University in 1998. His most recent exhibitions have been held at Baker Center for the Arts, Allentown PA; Peninsula Gallery, Brooklyn NY; Sardine Gallery, Brooklyn NY; Klaus von Nichtssagend, NYC; Yui Gallery, NYC; Edward Thorp Gallery, NYC; Park Place Gallery, Brooklyn; Lazy Susan Gallery, NYC. He has lived and worked in Bushwick, Brooklyn since 1999. He has exhibited his work throughout NYC and beyond for two decades.

**Ben Pritchard** (b. 1970, Detroit, Michigan) graduated in 2009 from the Royal Academy of Arts in London, attended the New York Studio School from 1995-1997, and has exhibited widely in New York. He has also received a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant to attend a residency at the Atlantic Center for the Arts. He was born in Detroit, Michigan. His raw, thickly-impastoed abstractions make use of interlocking geometric shapes as well as more gestural line work and organic forms, and sometimes viscous drips across the canvas. His palette uses saturated primary colors as well as more tonal compositions. While his paintings are often named after people or places, Pritchard considers his work to be mainly the result of accumulations of memory.

**Mason Saltarrelli** (b.1979, New Orleans, Louisiana) navigates connections between existing and mortality by utilizing a collection of found narrative symbols. Painting and drawing intuitively—his expression articulates an experience of continuously woven motifs, inviting open-ended exploration from the viewer. Saltarrelli's work transforms object, human, and animal beings into buoyant remembrances in an ever-evolving celebration of shape and color. He has held exhibitions at TURN Gallery, NYC; Meessen De Clercq, Brussels; Ace Hotel, New Orleans; Shrine Gallery, NYC; Marvin Gardens, Queens; Galleri Jacob Bjorn, Denmark, among many others. Mason currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

**John Walker** (born 1939, Birmingham, England) was a Gregory Fellow at Leeds University (1967-1969). He was awarded a Harkness Fellowship to the United States (1969–70) and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1981. He has been artist-in-residence at Oxford University (1977–78), and at Monash University, Melbourne (1980). He represented England at the 1972 Venice Biennale. He 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. He has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in NY; The Phillips Collection in DC; The Tate Gallery, London; The Hayward Gallery in London; The Kunstverein, Hamburg; The Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia; and others. His work can be found in museum collections, including The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; The Guggenheim Museum, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Tate Gallery, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut, among others. John Walker resides and works in Boston, Massachusetts and in South Bristol, Maine.

**Carolyn Wenning** (b. 1967, Pittsburgh, PA) is a painter who exhibits nationally and internationally; most recently at The Irma Freeman Center for Imagination, and The Spinning Plate Gallery in Pittsburgh PA. Her work has been included in exhibitions at The Andy Warhol Museum, The Mattress Factory and The Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, and is held in private and corporate collections. Her academic training includes an MFA in painting and print media from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University. She lives and works in Pittsburgh.