

REX LAU

The Drawing Room in East Hampton is pleased to present an exhibition of recent paintings by Rex Lau, on view from January 13th through March 12th. In this new series of small oil paintings on panel Lau returns to the subject of landscape. A selection of related pastel drawings will also be available.

Lau has lived at the eastern tip of Long Island since his move to Montauk in 1979. The impact of place on his work has been associated with American Modernist landscape painters such as Arthur Dove and Marsden Hartley. Like these Modernist icons, Lau's ability to distill the essence of a physical experience into a formal composition that stands on its own as abstraction is striking. In the case of this series, which began in 2003, Lau started with a group of black and white paintings on panel characterized by a high horizon line broken by two or three black rock-like forms, which crop out of serpentine linear fields. As the series evolved, Lau introduced color, which lends powerful vibrancy to some paintings and subtle tonal shifts to others that are heightened by mottled brushwork. In the oil pastels, which came after the paintings, Lau began a black under-drawing, covered the entire surface with white and then scratched away the top surface to reveal the black lines.

For many, these images may conjure the raked lines of sand surrounding the boulders in Japanese rock gardens. Lau was well into the series before he recognized that the compositions originated in his experience sailing in and out of Fisher's Island Sound where three islands -- North Dumpling, South Dumpling and Flat Hammock -- require careful navigation. Perhaps the topography rendered on the nautical charts he consults in guiding his boat in and out of this harbor provided an unconscious source for the rings of lines that surround each form. In any case, the fresh approach to seascape is a discovery. The paintings' limited palette and compressed space contribute to a force that belies their small size.

Lau was born in Trenton, New Jersey in February 1947. He attended The School of Visual Arts in New York City from 1966 to 1969. Since the late 1970s, he has had 22 solo exhibitions. His paintings and works on paper have been widely exhibited in the United States and in Europe. His work is included in numerous museum collections, among them The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Yale University Art Gallery and The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.

For further information or reproductions, please contact Susan Papa at 631.324.5016 or info@drawingroom-gallery.com.