

John Alexander's Lush Lilies and Angry Birds Go Up at McClain Gallery

By Meredith Deliso

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Lilies, and more lilies, at McClain Gallery.

Photo by Meredith Deliso

John Alexander has come full circle.

The Beaumont native started his career in landscapes, making painterly paintings inspired by his Texas environs - - the flora and fauna of the marshlands of the bayou and the Gulf Coast. After following that up with a series of paintings of grotesque animals, and people that look like animals, the artist makes a full-spirited

return to nature in his newest exhibition, "In My Garden," which opened on Saturday at [McClain Gallery](#). Though instead of any familiar, local scenes, the artist trades the Gulf for his adopted Amagansett home and studio in Long Island, NY.

A McClain Gallery regular, Alexander has draped the white walls with his latest works -- big, impressive, meditative landscapes of lilies and flowers. Mention the word "lilies," and it draws obvious comparisons to Monet. Alexander is not as impressionistic as the French master, but he is equally interested in color, and the moods it can create. The works may seem a bit repetitive -- oh, here's another painting of lily pads -- until you notice the differences in light, shadow, and reflections on the water. Then, they look nothing alike at all. There's the cool paleness to *Late Afternoon*

Amagansett, the peaceful blues of *Amagansett Morning*, the deeper, dark blues in *Lilies at Midnight*. *Amagansett Fog* approaches an impressionistic look the most, the scattered strokes and white emptiness amid the muted purples and greens illustrative of the effects of the fog. There's even a black and white piece in *Lilies* that looks like the negative of a photograph, a rare work of charcoal on paper for a man so well-versed in oil on canvas.



"The Stare II" by John Alexander -- just a bunch of angry birds.

Photo by Meredith Deliso

Still, despite the obvious skill, all those lilies can be a bit tiresome. So when you need a break, just head farther into the gallery for Alexander's study on coastal birds. These pieces are brimming with personality, beauty and humor as the artist depicts birds in mid-flight, wading, or landing using oil, watercolor and pastel.

Of particular note is *The Stare II*, an engaging

depiction of a flock of birds, their heads turned in rapt attention to the viewer's left, all with these fierce, penetrating, angry eyes pointed at some unseen, unknown object. They're -- yes -- angry birds, especially one loner in the bottom left of the piece, which curiously faces the opposite direction and seems the angriest of them all in his defiance. The raw, human-like emotion evident in all their eyes has an unsettling effect, aided by the slight furrow of that bird brow. So when you need a little break from their intense stare, simply slip back into the comfort of those lush, harmless lilies, and sigh.

"In My Garden," works by John Alexander, is on view at McClain Gallery, 2242 Richmond Avenue, now through December 3. For more information, call 713-520-9988 or visit www.mcclaingallery.com.



Photo by Meredith Deliso

The angriest bird of them all.

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