

## John Alexander

Arthur Roger Gallery  
New Orleans

In this new series of pastels, charcoals, and watercolors on paper, John Alexander represented nature's innocence at the violent hands of human folly. Harking back to Alexander's childhood memories of the wetlands in Texas and Louisiana, the works in the show depicted bucolic marshlands that were injected with foreboding hints at the inevitability of destruction. For inspiration, and to maintain a sort of metaphysical connection with the past, the artist built a lily pond and a "Louisiana Swamp" outside his current Amagansett, New York, studio; the scenes presented in the exhibition, titled "Recent Observations," were composites of his real-world impressions and nostalgic memories.



John Alexander, *Seven Spanish Angels*, 2012, oil on canvas, 98" x 76". Arthur Roger Gallery.

Throughout the show, Alexander's representations of nature seemed idyllic at first, but that judgment faded with closer inspection. Often embedded in his romantic images of wildlife at peace with the landscape was subtle evidence of, and implied warnings against, environmental degradation. In *The Danger Zone* (2012), for instance, three large herons stand in a thicket, staring out warily from the canvas, as if distrustful of those looking back at them. It seems like a tranquil scene until you notice, discarded in the brambles, a section of rusted chain that embodies mankind's careless intrusion into fragile habitats.

Alexander continually creates visual tension between the beauty of untouched nature and the corrupting power of human encroachment. The sharp points of a flowering thistle bush in *Thistles with Finch* (2012), surrounded by a flock of canary-yellow birds, lend the painting an unsettling air. In *Seven Spanish Angels* (2012), bright red and vibrant blue macaws take flight across an ominously dark and melancholy forest, which, Alexander seems to suggest, might not exist for much longer. —John R. Kemp