

John Alexander

Life on a Merry-Go-Round



Artist Cocktail Soiree: Friday, May 7, 2010
6:30 - 8:30 pm

"John Alexander, skilled draftsman and sharp-eyed satirist, has spent a career rendering the dark side of man, the glorious side of nature, and the destruction of both."

-Ann Landi, *ArtNews*

McClain Gallery is pleased to present a new major painting, *Life on a Merry-Go-Round*, and supporting works on paper by John Alexander. This important work marks a return to large scale, socially engaged imagery comparable to *Ship of Fools*, 2006-7, as seen in Alexander's 2008 Retrospective at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. *Life on a Merry-Go-Round* depicts a carnival-like, nightmarish scene densely packed with some of Alexander's most iconic themes: the cast of characters in *Life on a Merry-Go-Round* include masked figures, wide-eyed

monkeys, and demons, some of whom stare intently back at the viewer as if to warn them not to climb on this endless and frightening ride.

This painting, like many of Alexander's major works, is imbued with "Goya's moral urgency, Durer's precision, Breugel's visions of hell." Lisa Gray of the Houston Chronicle once observed: "These references aren't winking or ironic. Alexander isn't "quoting" the Old Masters. He is declaring himself their heir." The attention given to the details and the rich textures in *Life on a Merry-Go-Round* are a testament to both the artist's skill and devotion to his craft.

John Alexander (b. 1945) grew up in Beaumont, Texas. He attended college and graduate school in his home-state and was an important participant in the 1970s Houston art scene. While living in Houston, Alexander taught at the University of Houston. Although he moved to New York in 1979, John Alexander's Texas roots run deep. Since moving to New York, Alexander has established himself as an internationally recognized artist and his artwork is found in museums and galleries in the United States, Latin America, and Europe. Alexander's work is in such notable public collections as the Dallas Museum of Art; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; Smithsonian Institution; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art; as well as many others.

The Opening Reception is sponsored in part by

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Image: *Life on a Merry-Go-Round*, 2010, oil on canvas, 76 x 96 inches