

SOHN FINE ART



JOHN CLARKE BIO

Born Uxbridge, MA, 1971

John Clarke has lived in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts since 2007. He was born in central Massachusetts around a landscape of mills, rivers, trains and bridges. Clarke received his degree in classical music composition from Bates College in Maine.

Clarke's fine art work is created using a range of mediums. Oil paints, pastels, and pencil were his main tools for many years. A series of fifteen large pieces were displayed in the *Latchis Theatre* in Brattleboro, Vermont in 2007, and since then in several other galleries. They were inspired by a neoclassical piece of music called *Alina* by the Estonian composer Arvo Part. The *Alina* series exemplifies his style and use of color, line, and shape. In an article in the on-line journal *Rural Intelligence*, associate editor Nichole Dupont called him a "multimedia abstract master." Earlier, in 2002, Clarke started scanning pressed flowers through a now-outdated color printer. The results, what he called *Flower, Stain, and Fingerprint*, were a novel type of botanical illustration, which cannot be recreated, as newer printers do not produce the same effects. Also, around 2002 Clarke stopped riding freight trains and realized he hadn't documented the incredible journeys and places he had discovered. So he bought a camera and started exploring railroad tracks and train yards to capture some of those memories. At that time Clarke was interested in sharply focused images, describing his desire for sharpness as wanting to feel the rust in his photos. In 2012, his tripod broke. During an autumn hike Clarke headed out without his tripod and produced images with accidental blur. The trails of light and color appealed to the abstract line painter in him and changed the way he thought about photography. The experience established a new course for him as a visual artist. A year later, Clarke discovered the iPhone and has become an accomplished iPhone photographer and teacher, helping his students capture and process images with a unique, painterly feel.

Clarke continues to push the camera to its limits, translating photographic images into other mediums. Painting with light, his works are often mistakenly viewed as pastel or charcoal drawings. Long exposures and gestural movements blur the distinction between art forms. There is often a tension in his work between what is revealed and what is obscured. This has been with him since the beginning when he started painting and is revisited in alternative ways again and again. He is driven to create images that are purely personal, diffusing and abstracting the world around him in the hopes that they will spark an unknown journey into aesthetic, emotional and spiritual territories. He calls it "looking through the curtain." The creation of an image holds the excitement of unlimited potential.

Hanging one visual language on the balance of another, Clarke's latest work combines mediums, using photographic prints or past-written stories as backdrops for emotional layers of line, color and symbol with acrylic, pastel, pencil and gesso to create one-of-a-kind pieces. Clarke's most recent body of work, "Drawing on Memory" is a tactile and visual exploration of past written stories. Based on notes, journal entries, letters, sketches, and short stories, the new works are a reinterpretation of John Clarke's past jumping freight trains throughout the northeast. The mixed-mediums in these works interact with the stories, re-creating the narratives, playing a game of hide and seek with words and gestural drawings.

Often described as a "renaissance man," Clarke was front man and a primary songwriter for the band *Bell Engine*. He also has a solo album, *All Beneath Our Train*. An avid writer, he has written more than 60 short stories about his years jumping freight trains and more recently, after the birth of his son and daughter, writes poems for children. Clarke's work has been shown at *The Berkshire Museum*, *The Katonah Museum of Art*, *Geoff Young Gallery*, *Art on Main at Barnbrook*, *Joyce Goldstein Gallery*, *Isha Nelson Gallery*, *Deb Koffman's Little Gallery*, and *Sohn Fine Art Gallery*, where he is currently represented. Clarke has been featured in the April 2011, August 2016, and September 2019 issues of *The Artful Mind Magazine* and the 2018 Autumn issue of *ArtAscent Magazine* (silver medal honor).

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Curriculum Vitae

Education

1994 BA Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa from Bates College, Lewiston, ME

Selected Exhibitions

- 2020 *The Art of the Hills, Narrative*, Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA
On the Surface, Attleboro Arts Museum, Attleboro, MA
Neoteric Abstract, Limner Gallery, Hudson, NY
Dreamscapes and Visions, PhotoPlace Gallery, Middlebury, VT
Moments of Focus, Alfa Art Gallery, New Brunswick, NJ
Interiors, Cape Cod Museum of Art, Dennis, MA
- 2019 *Drawing on Memory*, Stockbridge Station Gallery (solo exhibition), Stockbridge, MA
Red Lion Inn exhibition (summer residency), Stockbridge, MA
Juried Exhibition, Becket Arts Center, Becket, MA
Beneath the Surface, 6 Bridges Gallery, Maynard, MA
BerkshireNow, Berkshire Museum (solo exhibition), Pittsfield, MA
- 2018 *Lyrical*, Sohn Fine Art (solo exhibition), Lenox, MA
Meshes, Geoff Young Gallery, Great Barrington, MA
Surfaces, LoosenArt Gallery, Rome, Italy
Autumn Juried Show, Rowayton Arts Center, Norwalk, CT
Art Through the Lens, Yeiser Art Center, Paducah, KY
The Art of the Hills, Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA
True North, Labspace, Hillsdale, NY
Photography as Impressionism, The Dot, Pittsfield, MA
White as Snow, Sohn Fine Art, Lenox, MA
- 2017 *Into the Woods*, Sohn Fine Art, Lenox, MA
Seeds, Sohn Fine Art, Lenox, MA
Wild Berkshires, The Stationery Factory, Dalton, MA
10 x 10, The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA
- 2016 *The Bridge*, Geoff Young Gallery, Great Barrington, MA (Solo)
iMotif, Sohn Fine Art, Lenox, MA
Midwinter Night's Dream, Good Purpose Gallery, Lee, MA
- 2015 *Orrin's Ladder*, Six Depot Gallery, West Stockbridge, MA (Solo)
- 2014 *Rurbansim*, Sohn Fine Art, Lenox, MA
A View of the Village, Little Gallery, Housatonic, MA (Solo)
- 2013 *Nude*, Sohn Fine Art, Lenox, MA
- 2011 *Untitled Drawings*, Joyce Goldstein Gallery, Chatham, NY (Solo)
- 2009 *15 Years*, Geoff Young Gallery, Great Barrington, MA (Solo)
- 2008 *Alina*, Latchis Theater, Brattleboro, VT (Solo)

Teaching

- 2015–2021 *iPhone Photography*, Sohn Fine Art, Lenox, MA
- 2018 *iPhone Photography*, Camp Flying Cloud, New Marlborough, MA
- 2017 *iPhone Photography*, deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA
- 2010–2013 IS183 Art School of the Berkshires, Stockbridge, MA