

HOLLIS TAGGART

John Knuth Pays Homage to the Horseshoe Crab in Upcoming Exhibition at Hollis Taggart

High Noon On View May 25 – June 24, 2023

May 3, 2023 – Hollis Taggart is pleased to present *High Noon*, the Los Angeles-based artist John Knuth's third solo show with the gallery. Knuth continues to push artmaking in new directions with his latest body of work, his boldest and most painterly to date. Conceived as a follow-up exhibition to *The Dawn*, presented in the spring of 2021 at Hollis Taggart's former Southport CT location, *High Noon* extends the artist's exploration of rebirth and reawakening through a focus on the horseshoe crab, whose blood was instrumental in the development of the COVID-19 vaccine and continues to be vital in medical innovation. The twelve new paintings in *High Noon* all feature gilded horseshoe crab shells in an homage to this ancient and now threatened animal which plays a largely unacknowledged role in human health. The exhibition will be on view on the first floor of Hollis Taggart from May 25 through June 24, 2023, with an opening reception on Thursday, May 25, from 5-8PM.

John Knuth (b. 1978 Minneapolis, lives and works in Los Angeles) often uses unorthodox materials and approaches to find beauty and significance in the mundane. The artist is particularly interested in the natural world, highlighting species and processes that are lesser-known and at times even regarded as base. Challenging traditional notions of artmaking, Knuth is perhaps most recognized for collaborating with flies to create shimmering paintings using their regurgitation processes. In his latest body of work, the artist continues this formal and conceptual play by positioning horseshoe crabs on abstract compositions that appear almost like landscapes the animals are exploring. While creating this series, Knuth began to identify with the ancient arthropods as explorers of abstract landscapes. As with much of his work, abstract compositions are not only about the act of painting but are new frontiers the artist too sets out to explore as he pushes the boundaries of artmaking.

Earlier this year, the *New York Times* published an opinion essay by the science writer Deborah Cramer titled "When the Horseshoe Crabs Are Gone, We'll Be in Trouble" in which she details how the blue blood of horseshoe crabs has been essential to the development of safe vaccines and calls for the development of an artificial alternative. As the only natural substance known to be effective in identifying potentially lethal contaminants called endotoxins, horseshoe crab blood is currently necessary for safe medical innovation. In recent years, crab populations have been steadily declining due to human use, and researchers are striving to find a cloned alternative to their blood.

"Horseshoe crabs are these lifesaving and miraculous ancient animals we rely on for medicine, and yet most people are unaware of them let alone their importance to us as a species," said Knuth. "The works in *High Noon* are not only meant to draw attention to the plight of the crab, but also to elevate them to the status of an icon."

As an artist deeply engaged with art history, Knuth drew inspiration for the crab paintings from a wide range of artists, from Clyfford Still's abstract paintings to the surrealist landscapes of Max Ernst and Andy Warhol's celebrity portraits. Mounted on thickly painted canvases of varying shades of blue as well as sunset colors of yellow, orange, and red, the crabs are the main characters of *High Noon*. Covered in gold leaf, the stunning gilded shells of the crabs on Knuth's canvases recall Byzantine icons, and the viewer is invited to consider the crabs' magnificence and encouraged to conceive of them as a natural treasure.

10% of the proceeds from the exhibition will be donated to Defenders of Wildlife for their work protecting the horseshoe crab.

About John Knuth

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John Knuth was born in 1978 in Minneapolis, Minnesota and lives and works in Los Angeles, California. He received an MFA from University of Southern California and a BFA from the University of Minnesota. Knuth's recent solo exhibitions include Powerplant at Brand New Gallery, Milan, Italy; Base Alchemy at 5 Car Garage, Santa Monica, CA; Master Plan at Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Chicago, IL; Elevated Uncertainty at Marie Kirkegaard, Copenhagen, Denmark; and Fading Horizon at Human Resources, Los Angeles, CA. His work has recently been included in group shows at International Print Center, New York, NY; Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY; MassArt, Boston, MA; Self-Titled, Tilburg, NL; Loudhailer, Greene Exhibitions, China Art Objects and Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles, CA, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

About Hollis Taggart

Founded in 1979, Hollis Taggart presents significant works of American art, showcasing the trajectory of American art movements from the Hudson River School to American Modernism and the Post-War and Contemporary eras. Its program is characterized by a deep commitment to scholarship and bringing to the fore the work of under-recognized artists. The gallery has sponsored several catalogue raisonné projects, most recently for the American Surrealist artist Kay Sage, and has been instrumental in advancing knowledge of such artists as Alfred Maurer, Arthur B. Carles, and more recently, Theodoros Stamos, Marjorie Strider, and Michael (Corinne) West. In the summer of 2019, the gallery announced the formal expansion of its primary market business and focus on the presentation of contemporary work. It continues to expand its roster of contemporary artists, focusing on emerging and mid-career talents. With more than 40 years of experience, Hollis Taggart is widely recognized by collectors and curators for its leadership, expertise, and openness, on matters of art history, market trends and opportunities.

For press inquiries, please contact Aga Sablinska at aga.sablinska@gmail.com or 862-216-6485.