

John Zurier  
*Sleeping Horses*

August 31 – October 28, 2023

Galerie Nordenhake Mexico City is pleased to present the first solo exhibition of John Zurier in the country—and his seventh in the combined spaces of the gallery. His work is deeply concerned with the mental and bodily perceptions one has in the presence of nature, and the possibility of evoking this through his canvases. Each painting, in its own way, expresses his interest in quietness and contemplation, near and far distance, weather and weathering, seasons and the passing of time.

In parallel to this suggestive nature of his practice, he is much focused on the technical and gestural aspects of painting. His attention lies in the brushwork and surface texture, modulation and atmospheric effects, the monochrome and close value color tonalities and harmonies. He combines thin layers of painting—almost transparent at times—with thicker, heavier traces. This gives the canvases an understated dynamism that becomes increasingly apparent the more time one spends looking at them. There is also a compositional exercise of removing segments of the pigments—sometimes pencil-thin lines—, or of leaving areas of the canvas unpainted.

This exhibition will present oil-on-linen paintings, of large and medium format, some of which also use glue-size tempera in their techniques. These works were completed in the last three years, and are reflections—rather than depictions—of nature and landscape. The title of this exhibition, *Sleeping Horses*, comes from an eponymous painting that Zurier finished in early May. For a few years now, he has spent his summers in Iceland, on a farm with a view of the sea beyond fields of grazing horses. Sometimes he can see horses lying on the ground asleep while at least one stands guard nearby. The relationship between this artwork and its title is representative of how Zurier's oeuvre explores the connections between thought and painting: a phrase that is seemingly direct and representational is completely changed by the elusiveness of what is happening on the canvas.

Zurier's work draws influences from diverse traditions of painting and poetry. Along with a trans-historical dialogue with the history of American painting, Zurier has studied traditional Chinese and Japanese painting, in which distant mountainous landscapes are rendered with a subtle and ethereal quality. Although there are no

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Visiting hours: Tuesday – Thursday, 11 am – 6 pm; Friday – Saturday, 11 am – 4 pm

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figurative aspects in his work, this compositional effect is similar to the atmospheres that Zurier aims to create. In 2010 he was recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship; with it, he travelled to Japan to learn traditional materials and pictorial techniques, which he later adapted to his own work. By the same token, he is an avid reader of poetry—whether Japanese, American or Icelandic—, and is interested in how the obliqueness of figurative language can give much forcefulness to the poetic image—sometimes even more so than explicit descriptions or explanations. Likewise, his paintings aim to be direct by being evasive, compelling and eloquent by giving away only the essential, and to invite us to reflect on their and our presence while alluding to visual evanescence.

### Andrés Valtierra

John Zurier was born in 1956 in Santa Monica, California and lives and works in Berkeley, California and Reykjavik, Iceland. Most recently, he participated in the artist-as-curator exhibition *The Artist's Eye: Tammy Rae Carland, David Huffman, Lava Thomas, John Zurier* at Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive in UC Berkeley, California (2022). A solo exhibition of recent paintings, *Far Again*, was presented at Moderna Museet Malmö in 2021. Selected museum exhibitions include UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (2022, 2018 and 2014); Moderna Museet, Malmö (2021); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2017); New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, NM (2016); Colby Museum of Art, Waterville, ME (2015). He has also exhibited at the 30th São Paulo Biennial, Brazil (2012); California Biennial, Orange County Museum of Art, CA (2010); 7th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (2008); Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, England (2003); and the Whitney Biennial, NY (2002). In 2010 he was awarded the prestigious John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. His work can be found in numerous public collections including the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Museum of Fine Arts Houston; and others. A catalogue surveying his work from 1981 to 2014 with an essay by Robert Storr was published in 2015.