



LYRICAL

JOHN CLARKE

December 2 - February 3

Reception Saturday, December 8, 3:00 – 6:00
(During Making Spirits Bright Festival in Lenox, MA)

Photography Workshop: Intro to iPhone Photography
Monday, January 28
9:00 - 5:00
\$195

Sohn Fine Art is pleased to present *Lyrical*, an exhibition of mixed media work by Berkshire-based artist John Clarke. Clarke's creative endeavors include painting, photography and music. But rather than those practices being separate, Clarke has successfully merged them in recent years. Hanging one visual language on the balance of another, Clarke's latest work combines mediums, using the photographic print as a backdrop for emotional layers of line, color and symbol with pastel, pencil and paint to create one-of-a-kind pieces. This exhibition highlights his new frontier into integrating the photograph with negative space on the paper and allowing the play of handwork to integrate between the image and the blank canvas. Most work in the exhibition will be in this style, but the show will also include some of Clarke's original paintings and bridge pieces, showing the arc of his career and explorations as an artist.

Melodious and articulate, Clarke's fine art work draws on his background as a classical composer. His lines and symbols are directed by an unheard music as they float and interact in the spaces of his images. Clarke's process is directly tied to his musical connectedness, methodically listening to classical music while at work. This music allows him to create freely and openly. He explains: "When I'm painting, my best work is done without reflection—the things I love about painting come through most purely when my conscious mind rests. In that place, I can work without judgement or preconceived direction." Similar to Edvard Grieg's *Lyric Pieces*, a collection of 66 short pieces for a solo piano, Clarke's artwork is varied in character ranging from soft and meditative to bold and vigorous, providing a symbiotic movement and rhythm.

In music, lyrical playing is a style which emphasizes the melodic line, legato touch, and sensitive phrasing. It is a smooth and connected, rather than percussive, sound, which is performed at the lower degrees of the dynamic spectrum, quiet as opposed to loud. Clarke employs this rhythm as he pushes the camera to its limits using a range of photographic mediums, producing images that often feel like they were created with pastel, charcoal or paint, rather than photography. There is often a tension in Clarke's 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 over and over again.

Clarke has lived in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts since 2007. He was born in central Massachusetts and went to college in Maine, earning his degree in classical music composition. 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 Orrin, writes poems for children. In a featured article in *Rural Intelligence*, associate editor Nichole Dupont called him a "multimedia abstract master."

SOHN FINE ART

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