

Alexis Rockman: *Conflagration*

6 March - 13 April 2024



RIO PASTAZA (2023)
ALEXIS ROCKMAN

Huxley-Parlour are pleased to present *Conflagration*, a solo exhibition by American painter Alexis Rockman. The exhibition's title refers to fires of monumental scale that are ravaging ecosystems and human habitations across the globe. The exhibition consists of nine new works developed over 2023, a year which has seen wildfires engulf much of the planet, including the artist's own country. Presented during this critical moment of no return for the global climate crisis, Rockman's new suite of works presents a pressing vision of the critical environmental state of the planet.

Over the last forty years, Rockman has developed a distinct visual language that has been described as "natural history psychedelia". The artist's iconography draws upon diverse references – theatrical dioramas in the American Museum of Natural History, natural history illustrations, nature and scientific photography and cinematic landscapes from film history. His methodology is further anchored within rigorous scientific research, often conducted in collaboration with scientific experts and historians, and extensive first-hand field study.

Conflagration presents a departure point in the artist's work, as Rockman brings his attention to the present moment, foregoing the post-apocalyptic dystopias of previous work. This series, too, returns to a gestural, impasto style used in earlier works. Using a combination of oil paint and cold wax on wood to create visceral marks enlivened with a sense of urgency, his gestural brushstrokes reference canonical landscape paintings by Turner, Courbet, Peder Balke, while calling to mind the heavily applied, textural surfaces of Clyfford Still. Rockman contrasts this painterly language, associated with an art-historical veneration of the sublime beauty of nature, with his hallucinatory

depiction of a world in ecological collapse – rendering it at once spectacular and horrifying. Their monumentality is underscored by the inclusion of small-scale foreground elements such as traditional fishing vessels, recreational kayaks, wildlife and livestock. This fundamental tension between beauty and catastrophe defines the world of *Conflagration*, making Rockman's demands for environmental action more compelling than ever.

Alexis Rockman (b. 1962) is an artist and environmental activist who began making paintings and works on paper to build environmental awareness in the mid-1980s. Notable solo museum exhibitions include *Alexis Rockman: Manifest Destiny* at the Brooklyn Museum (2004), which travelled to the Wexner Center for the Arts (2004) and the Rhode Island School of Design and Addison Museum (2005). In 2010 the Smithsonian American Art Museum held a mid-career survey *Alexis Rockman: A Fable for Tomorrow*, which toured to The Wexner Center for the Arts. His series of 76 New Mexico Field Drawings was included in *Future Shock* at SITE Santa Fe (2017-18). *Alexis Rockman: The Great Lakes Cycle*, a major exhibition of 5 large-scale paintings, eight large scale watercolours and field drawings, toured the Midwest in 2018-20, opening at the Grand Rapids Art Museum and travelling to five other institutions in the Great Lakes region. *Alexis Rockman: Shipwrecks*, opened at the Peabody Essex Museum (2021) and travelled to Guild Hall (2021), Ackland Art Museum (2022), and Princeton University Art Museum (2022). In May, 2023, The Mystic Seaport Museum presented *Alexis Rockman: Oceanus*, featuring ten large-scale watercolours and an 8-by-24-foot panoramic painting commissioned by the museum for their permanent collection. *Mark Dion and Alexis Rockman: A Journey to Nature's Underworld* was presented at the Bruce Museum, Greenwich, CT in Summer 2023 and will travel to the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, The Tang Teaching Museum and other institutions in 2025. Rockman's work is held in the collections of The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Brooklyn Museum; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; Grand Rapids Art Museum; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; New Orleans Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Smithsonian American Art Museum; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; and Whitney Museum of American Art. He lives and works in Connecticut.

Alexis Rockman
Conflagration

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Private view 5 March, 6–8 pm

HUXLEY-PARLOUR
3-5 Swallow Street, London W1B 4DE

Opening Hours Monday to Friday, 10:00am - 5:30pm
Saturdays, 1:00pm - 5:30pm

Entry is free

More information can be found online at www.huxleyparlour.com

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