

JON SCHUELER



Works from the 1950s and 60s

(Cover image) Skye (57-51), 1957, oil on canvas, 42 1/4 x 79 inches

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October 4-25, 2008

Monday-Saturday 10:00am - 5:30pm

Reception: Saturday, October 4, 3:00-5:00pm

DAVID FINDLAY JR FINE ART

AMERICAN PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURE

Early 20th Century Modernism Contemporary



Ballachulish Mist (57-8), 1957, oil on canvas, 51 x 45 inches

JON SCHUELER (1916-1992)

Seldom in my career as a contemporary art dealer have I had the opportunity to exhibit the work of so singular an artist as Jon Schueler.

In 1949, Schueler had the good fortune to study art in San Francisco with Clyfford Still, as well as Richard Diebenkorn, Mark Rothko, and Ad Reinhardt. It was Still who had the greatest influence on him, and it was Still who would introduce Schueler to the work of J.M.W. Turner whose landscapes would inspire Schueler's art for the rest of his career. Impressed by Turner's devotion to the relationship of art to nature, Schueler also dedicated himself to art that captured the forces of nature and its many moods. He was particularly entranced by the aspects of sky, light and color. Schueler employed the methods of abstract painting to suggest clouds, wind, mist, light, and storms. He discovered and embraced wild and isolated rural Scotland where he managed to paint for several months of every year through the 1970s and thereafter.

Schueler wrote an essay regarding his 1954 solo exhibition at the famed Stable Gallery. He recorded that he wanted to infuse life into art's substance. Rather than paint a reflection of life, he wanted the image to be a living thing in itself. He wrote: "Beyond all this is the final mystery of a painting wherein it talks in silent music; music which reaches and affects the spirit in a manner which can never be translated into words."

In 1976 he married a remarkable young woman named Magda Salvesen, who had been with the Scottish Arts Council in Edinburgh. Their partnership was a continuing, positive influence on his output for the remainder of his career. She continues to strongly champion his works and views and we are most grateful for her support of this exhibition.

Louis Newman
Director, David Findlay Jr. Fine Art, New York, NY

JON SCHUELER Works from the 1950s and 60s

Jon Schueler entered the mainstream of America's vibrant Abstract Expressionist movement at an exciting, pivotal point in the 1950s, when the artworld was ready to give more recognition to the relationship between nature and contemporary abstraction - the intertwined sensibilities that he had been energetically pursuing after studying with Clyfford Still at the California School of Fine Arts.

There was now considerable interest in exploring, both formally and informally, the sources of emotional and intuitive content in current art and especially in attempting to clarify the differences between American avant-garde abstraction and the European roots of non-objective painting. In early 1955, the Club¹ devoted five of its weekly gatherings to panels titled "Nature and New Painting"² or "Nature and Abstract Art." In the catalogue for *Vanguard 55: A Painter's Selection of New American Painting*,³ Kyle Morris addressed the way nature's mutability and constant change produced effects that lingered in a painter's subconscious, and by 1958, John I. H. Baur was ready to mount *Nature in Abstraction: The Relation of Abstract Painting and Sculpture to Nature in Twentieth-Century American Painting* at the Whitney Museum. Both shows included major Schueler paintings.

Baur's project included the solicitation of statements from the invited artists, and Schueler's thoughts reveal particularly penetrating and effective insights. His expressive skills were verbal as well as visual, and he had taught English literature at the University of San Francisco before enrolling as a full time California School of Fine Arts student in 1949.

Mark Rothko was part of the faculty that summer. When Schueler moved to New York in 1951, the prior connections with Rothko, and

particularly with Still, provided initial introductions to Franz Kline, Ad Reinhardt, and many others. The first solo exhibition of his vigorously orchestrated, richly pigmented work was at the Stable Gallery in 1954. Three years later, the sales from his exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery allowed him to realize a long desire to set up a studio for a time in the Scottish Highlands. That ruggedly dramatic motif fueled much of Schueler's imagination and memory throughout his career.

Stored experiences of natural forces were always the primary resources for Schueler. In Scotland, experiences with unlimited expanses of sky filled with reflections of wind, sea and mist furthered his strong interest in the visual potential of skies. *Ballachulish Mist*, 1957, suggests Schueler's efforts to create a painterly parallel to the rapidly changing movements in the sky. The earlier *Burning*, 1956, along with *Landscape Study: Ultramarine Red*, 1957, underscore his efforts to give pigment forms the sensation of environmental forces, and demonstrate the character of the pulsating energy shifts that distinguish a Schueler canvas.

In many ways, Schueler's work demonstrates a conscious use of the subconscious and, in a sense, this helps to appreciate his place in Abstract Expressionism. A theorist, ponderer and prober for meaning -- as evidenced, in part, by his gathering of thoughts about the sky for the Spring 1960 issue of *It Is*⁴ -- Schueler represents the abstract painter concerned with his ability to make private passions into something tangible. Service in the Air Force during World War II stimulated an awareness of the potency of his own personal reactions to skies as a place of haunting discoveries, and he knew these and other private thoughts were constantly intertwined with his color abstraction in the form of agitation, uncertainty, and menacing configurations.



A Field in the Morning (57-19), 1957, oil on canvas, 33 x 58 inches

At times, clouds could be anthropological repositories for life, death and a range of stressful emotions.

The potential for skies as a source for powerful painterly expression had initially impressed Schueler during his art school years, when Still showed reproductions of J.M.W. Turner's strikingly ephemeral treatments of the environment. To a mid-twentieth century artist, this demonstration of non-descriptive pigment triggering optical resonances was an important prototype. A 1958 visit to London provided an opportunity for Schueler to directly examine Turner's translations of sky sensations to paint. In *The Cloud*, 1958, Schueler makes light become alive and dramatic in a way that suggests this inspiration. Using strokes that are Turner-esque in character, but larger, Schueler makes *The First Snow Cloud*, 1958, into a swirl of material and goes beyond the nineteenth century master in the way he allows the pigment gestures to hold the full luminosity and energy of nature.

As part of the avant-garde of the moment, Schueler used pigment itself, and its gestural application as a way to capture rapidly changing, unpredictable environmental conditions. Works like *A Field in the Morning*, 1957, and *Skye*, 1957 are good examples of his intensely articulated, built-up surfaces. These surfaces conveyed the sensuality of the paint and offered a credible equivalent to the sensuality of nature. Like many other artists at that point in the 50s, Schueler liked using the palette knife, and liked the way it could form edges and break them down. For him, the physicality of the process, even its violence, contributed to the meaning and message.

Like other contemporary abstract painters, too, Schueler believed in finding a visual equivalent for nature's forces through the interactions of colors and forms. He created speed and velocity through the vibrant and dynamic juxtaposition of tones. In addition, he had a consistent interest in establishing the feeling of intense mood through color, and seemed to approach this intuitively.

Areas of abstract juxtapositions of color tend to produce visual responses that involve plane and space. The inevitable optical tension between a strongly developed all-over surface and the suggestion of shifting planes in undefined and potentially vast space could add dynamic power to a work, and Schueler explored this direction extensively in his canvases from the 60s. *Red Snow Cloud and Blue Sky*, 1962, demonstrates his accomplishments in building plane through brush gesture, and the vibrant *North of Ullapool*, 1967, is a fine example of his ability to make space compellingly rich and complex.

Exploring fresh possibilities for an abstract artist's treatment of plane was part of Schueler's achievement. But he also did much to reinforce the awareness of the very valid subjective role nature could play in contemporary art.

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- 1 During this period Jon Schueler was a member of this now legendary association of artists who met regularly at 39 East Eighth Street in Greenwich Village.
 - 2 The three panels under this title were organized by Frank O'Hara.
 - 3 A 1955 exhibition at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.
 - 4 Jon Schueler, "A Letter about the Sky," *It Is*, No.5, Spring, 1960, pp.12-14. The periodical was edited by Philip Pavia, one of the founders of the Club.



Summer: Martha's Vineyard (57-33A), 1957, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

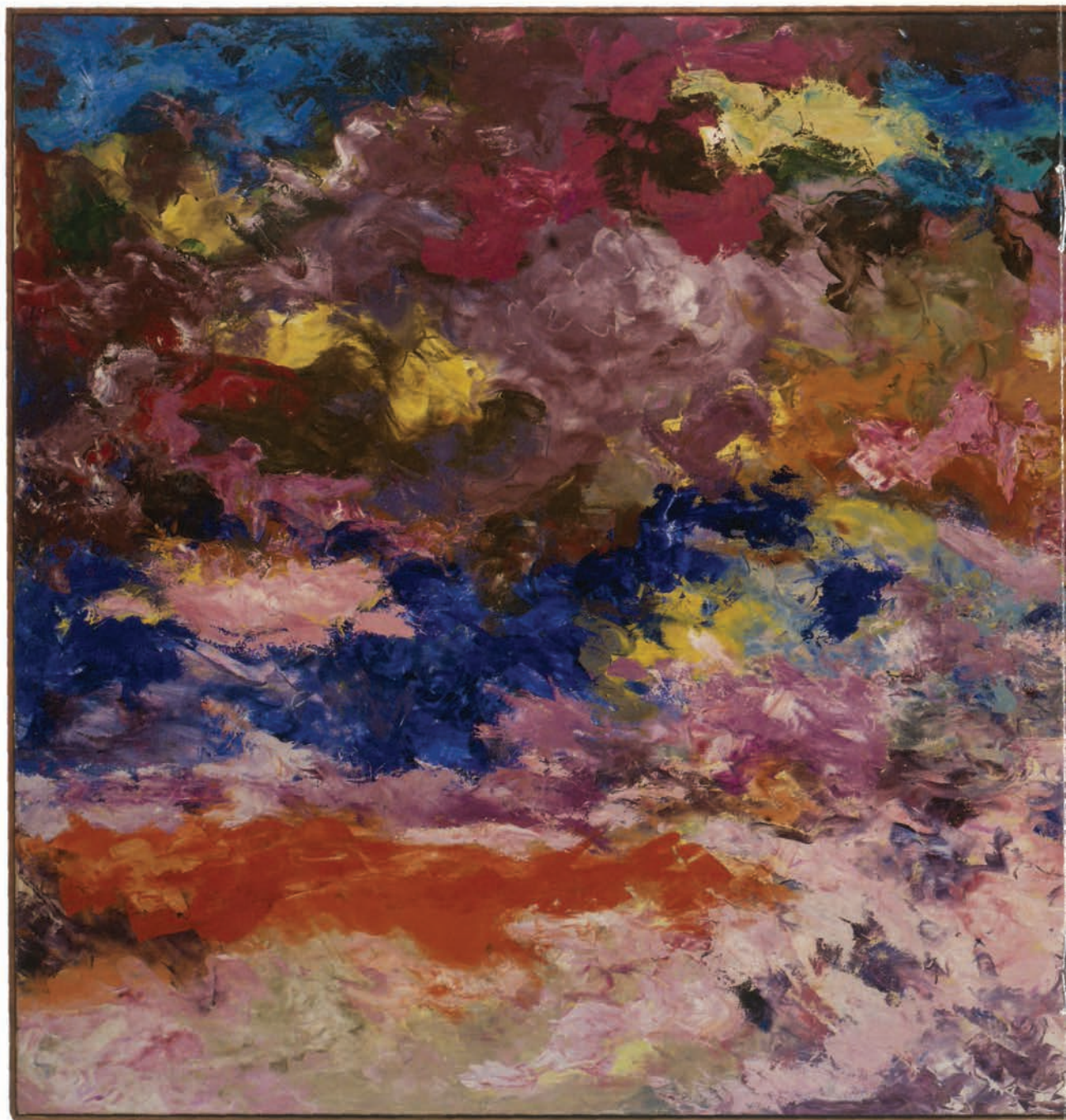
I am creating an event out of the forces of nature that I understand. And this event, if its implications, both emotional and intellectual, are understood, should throw light on nature.

Jon Schueler, 1954

excerpt taken from a 1954 artist's statement published in conjunction with a solo exhibition at the Stable Gallery, New York, NY.

The First Snow Cloud (58-3), 1958, oil on canvas, 37 x 32 inches







Landscape Study: Ultramarine Red (57-12), 1957, oil on canvas, 48 x 90 inches

North of Ullapool (67-2), 1967, oil on canvas, 79 x 73 inches





Burning (56-12), 1956, oil on canvas, 23 x 35 inches



Red and Blue I (56-19), 1956, oil on canvas, 27 1/2 x 32 1/2 inches

We see his paintings one minute as clouds and sea and islands, the next as swirling arrangements of pure color and light. And they shift back and forth in our vision from one pole to the other..

John I.H. Baur

excerpted from the Jon Schueler exhibition catalogue,

Whitney Museum of American Art, 1975.

Red Snow Cloud and Blue Sky (62-15), 1962, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 inches



CHECK LIST

A Field in the Morning (57-19), 1957
oil on canvas, 33 x 58"

Ballachulish Mist (57-8), 1957
oil on canvas, 51 x 45"

Blue Snow Cloud (62-9), 1962
oil on canvas, 79 x 73"

Bodyscape/Landscape (dr.65-98), c.1965
watercolor on paper, 27 ½ x 39 1/2"

Burning (56-12), 1956
oil on canvas, 23 x 35"

High Summer (56-25), 1956
oil on canvas, 31 x 36"

Landscape Study: Ultramarine Red (57-12),
1957, oil on canvas, 48 x 90"

Light (55-11), 1955
oil on canvas, 46 x 52"

North of Ullapool (67-2), 1967
oil on canvas, 79 x 73"

Red and Blue I (56-19), 1956
oil on canvas, 24 3/4 x 32 1/2"

Red and Blue II (56-20), 1956
oil on canvas, 19 1/2 x 31"

Red in Landscape (op.639-8), c.1963
oil on paper, 27 ½ x 40"

Red Snow Cloud and Blue Sky (62-15), 1962
oil on canvas, 60 x 50"

Sea and Black Sand (55-3), 1955
oil on canvas, 44 x 52"

Skye (57-51), 1957
oil on canvas, 42 ¼ x 79"

Summer Forms (op.63-6), c.1963
oil on paper, 15 ½ x 20 1/4"

Summer: Martha's Vineyard (57-33A), 1957
oil on canvas, 24 x 30"

Summer Sky: Loch Eishort (66-14), 1966
oil on canvas, 78 ½ x 72 ¾"

Storm (55-4), 1955
oil on canvas, 46 x 48"

The Cloud (58-61), 1958
oil on canvas, 60 x 51"

The First Snow Cloud (58-3), 1958
oil on canvas, 37 x 32"

The Island (56-6), 1956
oil on canvas, 42 x 50"

The Mountain Near the Sea (58-8), 1958
oil on canvas, 25 x 57"

Western Landscape (55-9), 1955
oil on canvas, 50 x 60"

Yellow Study (54-5), 1954
oil on canvas, 20 x 24"



The Cloud (58-61), 1958, oil on canvas, 60 x 51 inches



The Island (56-6), 1956, oil on canvas, 42 x 50 inches

JON SCHUELER (1916-1992)

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1954 Stable Gallery, New York, NY. (also 1961, '63)
1957 Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, NY. (also 1959)
1967 The Maryland Institute, Baltimore, MD.
1971 The Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland.
1973 The Edinburgh College of Art, sponsored by Richard Nathanson. Edinburgh, Scotland
1975 Dayton's Gallery 12, Minneapolis, MN.
1975 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.
1977 Landmark Gallery, New York, NY.
1980 The John C. Stoller Gallery, Minneapolis, MN.
1981 Dorothy Rosenthal Gallery, Chicago, IL. (also 1984)
1981 University of Edinburgh, The Talbot Rice Art Centre, Edinburgh, Scotland.
1982 Dorry Gates Gallery, Kansas City, MO. (also , 1986, '91)
1983 A.M. Sachs Gallery, New York, NY. (also 1984)
1986 Katharina Rich Perlow Gallery, New York, NY. (also 1987, '89, '91, '99, '02)
1991 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland. (also 1994)
1995 ACA Galleries, New York, NY. (also 1996, '99, '02, '06)
1999 "Jon Schueler: About the Sky," Sweet Briar College, Sweet Briar, VA (traveling exhibition)
2000 Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland. (also 2002, '06)
2003 "Jon Schueler: To the North," City Art Centre, Edinburgh, Scotland
2006: "Jon Schueler: The Sign of the Gale," Telfair Museum of Art, Jepson Center, Savannah, GA (traveling exhibition)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1954 "Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture at the Stable Gallery," New York, NY. (also 1955, '57)
1955 "Vanguard 1955: A Painter's Selection of New American Painting," The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN
1957 "Whitney Museum of American Art Annual," New York, NY. (also 1959, '61, '63, '65, '69)
1958 Corcoran Gallery of Art Biennial, Washington, DC. (also 1963)
1958 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, "Nature in Abstraction: The Relation of Abstract Paintings and Sculpture to Nature in Twentieth Century Art."
1960 "School of New York: Some Younger Artists," Stable Gallery, New York, NY

- 1975 "Landscapes, Interior and Exterior: Avery, Rothko and Schueler." Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
1984 "Creation: Modern Art and Nature." Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, Scotland
1988 "The Impact of Scotland on Two American Artists, Jon Schueler and Daniel Lang." William Hardie Ltd. at the Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh, Scotland
1994 "Land, Sea and Air." The Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York, NY. (also 1997)
1996 "El Expresionismo Abstracto y La Experiencia Estadounidense," Centro Cultural/Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City, Mexico
2004 "Abstract Paintings: 1930s-2004," Katharina Rich Perlow Gallery, New York, NY
2005 "Black," Thomas McCormick Gallery, Chicago, IL
2005 "Pairings II: Dialogues in Postwar Abstraction." Hackett-Freedman, San Francisco, CA
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, Scotland
2007 Dean Jensen Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
2008 "The Art of Gesture," David Findlay Jr Fine Art, New York, NY
"SummerSet," David Findlay Jr Fine Art, New York, NY
"Suitcase Paintings: Small Scale Work by Abstract Expressionists," Loyola University Museum of Art, Chicago, IL. (traveling exhibition)

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD
City Art Centre, Edinburgh, Scotland
Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI
Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, Scotland
Greenville County Museum of Arts, Greenville, SC
Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, NM
Mallaig Heritage Centre, Mallaig, Scotland
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN
National Academy of Design, New York, NY
Roy Neuberger Museum, SUNY, Purchase, NY
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, Scotland
Stirling University, Stirling, Scotland
Sweet Briar Collage, Sweet Briar, VA
Telfair Museum of Art, Savannah, GA
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT

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