

CANDICE MADEY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JOHN HOUCK

Perfect Temperature Lava
January 12–March 2, 2024



New York, NY — CANDICE MADEY is excited to announce a solo exhibition of new paintings by John Houck, *Perfect Temperature Lava*, in the gallery's 1 Freeman Alley location. The exhibition marks Houck's first show in the gallery's newly appointed Freeman Alley space and celebrates ten years since a solo exhibition of Houck's work took place at CANDICE MADEY's 1 Rivington Street location.

Perfect Temperature Lava is the first full-scale presentation of Houck's foray into painting and the culmination of several years of work in the studio. Houck is well known as a photographer, albeit one who persistently moves beyond the pictorial and material parameters of a lens-based studio practice. In 2017, Houck presented new work that hinted at new directions in the studio—a series of photographs titled *Playing and Reality*—which investigated the subjective nature of memory through the artist's signature use of recursive processes. These compositions also introduced unexpected painted elements that probed the presumed veracity of a photographic image. Initially, painted gestures disrupted or traversed the foreground or background of an image, but increasingly Houck offered glimpses of full canvases in the studio. Since then, Houck has pursued a regimen of formal training and dedicated studio time to master a new painting language.

Throughout all his work, Houck's ongoing interest in psychoanalytic theories of memory and the mind permeate both subject matter and process. Houck never paints from photographic images, focusing instead on intentional acts of imagination. Various exercises in the studio—such as meditating on objects with an emotional resonance, or, invoking hypothetical landscapes from memory—are

1 RIVINGTON STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10002

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integrated into the composition of a single painting. Houck's perceptual processes share an affinity with movements from early 20th century that similarly investigated the subconscious, among them symbolism and surrealism; however, he has also pursued painting techniques that originate with atelier painters of the preceding century—beginning with color studies, sketches from observation, and eventually layering canvases with oil paint.

Large-scale canvases depict loosely painted volcanoes, avalanches, waterfalls, and seascapes, overlaid with hyper-realistic depictions of sentimental objects from the artist's family. The disassociated picture planes are further confounded by erratic shadow patterns that only sometimes correspond to objects in the painting's frame. Houck deftly uses the shadow to act as a bridge between the worlds of representation and imagination. The slippage between painting styles and approaches within a single canvas creates an ambiguous space that viewers will recognize from his photographs, with landscapes doubling as potential dream or mindscapes.

Perfect Temperature Lava cites a conversation between the artist and his young daughter, referencing the ways that children can challenge assumptions about the world. Here, the malleability of reality is central, furthering ideas that Houck originally posited in *Playing and Reality*, while playfully affecting a range of *realism's* assumed prefixes: sur-, hyper-, magic, or other undefined possibilities for observing and recounting. In this exhibition's accomplished body of work, Houck fully embraces painting's potential for illusion and imagination.

John Houck (b. 1977) has shown extensively in the United States and abroad. Recent solo exhibitions include Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco (2018); Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York (2018); fused space, San Francisco (2017); Dallas Contemporary (2017); On Stellar Rays, New York (2016, 2013). In 2018 he was included in *Made in L.A.* at the Hammer Museum, and in 2015 he presented work in *New Photography* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. His work is held in the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, amongst other institutions.

Houck received his MFA from UCLA, Los Angeles (2007) and a BA in Architecture from Colorado University, Boulder (2000). He participated in the Whitney Independent Study Program (2010) and The Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2008).

CANDICE MADEY's 1 Freeman Alley location is open to the public Tuesday to Saturday, 11am to 6pm.

Image details: *John Houck, Moveable Alphabet, 2023, Oil on linen, 50 x 42 inches.*