

CAWDELL DOUGLAS

P R E S S R E L E A S E

BINGO!
HOW AN ABANDONED HOARD OF GAME CARDS INSPIRED
ONE OF BRITAIN'S FINEST ARTISTS
16 OCTOBER - 7 NOVEMBER 2009



Seal Point Series 1 by John Walker, 7x5ins, oil on card

When the influential British artist John Walker moved into a new studio in the picturesque American state of Maine he discovered hundreds of abandoned bingo cards dating from the building's history as a community centre in the 1950s. He bundled them into plastic bags and was about to take them to the local rubbish tip when he had a flash of inspiration – why not use them as the basis for a new series of paintings?

Fifty of the resulting tiny paintings – measuring 7 x 5ins – are to be offered for sale in Britain for the first time in an exhibition entitled ***Incoming Tide, Small Paintings from Seal Point, Maine*** at **Offer Waterman & Co.** in London from **16 October - 7 November 2009**. It is Birmingham-born Walker's first solo show in Britain for 25 years.

The Seal Point series, as the works are collectively known after the place where they were painted, brilliantly reflect the constantly changing weather, light and tidal patterns along the coast of Maine where Walker has spent summers for the past 25 years. Their size marks a radical change for an artist who is renowned for painting on large-scale canvases.

The series dates from 2005 when Walker found the cards in his new studio in Walpole, Maine. Used for bingo – or beano as it is called in that region of the United States – the cards have a random selection of numbers on one side and are plain black on the other. “I think they date from the 1950s when the building was used as a community centre,” said Walker. “I was going to throw them all out and had put them into plastic bags to take them to the dump and then I thought ‘I may be able to do something with them’. I paint outside most of the time and so they are a handy size to take with me.”



Seal Point Series 32 by John Walker, 7x5ins, oil on card

Walker originally planned to paint on the black sides of the cards but then realised that the shapes of the numbers were similar to some forms found in nature and could be incorporated into the paintings. The result is a stunningly beautiful record of the changing winds and shifting tides in just one place on America’s northeast coastline.

Walker was born in Birmingham and studied at Birmingham School of Art and in Paris. His distinguished career includes representing Britain at the 1972 Venice Biennale, First Prize at the John Moores Liverpool Exhibition, the Harkness Fellowship, the Arts Council Drawing Prize and the Academy Award in Art at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York. He was shortlisted for the Turner Prize. He has held senior academic posts at the Victoria College of Art, Melbourne, Australia, the Royal Academy in London and Yale University in the United States and is currently Professor of Graduate Painting at Boston University.

His works are in many of the world's major institutions including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University and the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. The British Museum, the Tate Gallery and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London have examples of his work as do the City Art Galleries in his birthplace Birmingham. But, despite this and the fact that he still has a home and relatives in Birmingham, his many years working overseas have meant that he is better known internationally than he is in Britain. The exhibition at **Offer Waterman & Co**, his first solo show in Britain since 1984, will restore him to his rightful place in his home country.

July 2009

Offer Waterman & Co.

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The gallery is open Monday to Friday 10am to 6.30pm, Saturdays 11am to 4pm.

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