

ALEXANDRE

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Reviews: New York

Neil Welliver

Alexandre

Neil Welliver is best known for his monumental—often more than six-foot-square—depictions of the intimate beauty of Maine woods, fields, and streams. Small oil sketches, the basis for the larger works, were showcased in this compelling exhibition. Painting on site in all



Neil Welliver, *Study for Head of Passagassawaukeg*, 1992, oil on canvas, 24" x 24". Alexandre.

conditions and seasons, Welliver brings a special energy and apparent spontaneity to these masterful easel-size works, most measuring 24 by 24 inches.

The 35 sketches here, turned out over three decades, looked like fully realized paintings, but they were all labeled

“study.” They were clear-eyed and unsentimental yet filled with feeling for such subjects as dense grottoes of trees in the grip of winter (*Study for Erratic and Snow*, 1993); icy brooks rushing through forests (*Study for Head of Passagassawaukeg*, 1992); and ponds with impressive pyramids of twigs and branches (*Study for Beaver House*, 1982). There were also views of rock-strewn hillsides, verdant in warm weather (*Study for Blueberry Burn-Morey's Hill*, 1997) or covered with snow (*Study for Winter Barren*, 1974).

One highlight was *Study for Ledge on Black Brook* (1987), which rendered the cool, dark, sylvan feel of a rocky forest setting. *Study for Peat Bog* (1982), a kind of summary of Welliver's allover work, offered a panoramic view of autumnal trees across a violet-accented bog, leading to a hill topped by fleecy clouds in a blue sky backed by distant mountains.

Welliver combines broad, thick brushstrokes, swatches of pure color, and delicate detail to create his enduring, Edenic vignettes. —Stephen May

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