

Exhibition #1-#3: Letters against the Nor'Easter Oyster Co Experimental Lease. A selection of letters from artists, art students who have painted on the site of the proposed lease.

Dear John,

Painting on your land in Maine has been one of the most meaningful and memorable experiences of my life. Being young and impressionable, it was the perfect place to be absorbed by the land—where it felt as though I was visiting an inside of a living and breathing painting. I have never witnessed another place that felt like it had a pulse like your place. It was the purest form of painting. I still, twenty years later, think about the tides going in and out and observing the changing light on the rocks and seaweed. This kind of painting can only be achieved through experience. The touch on the canvas and the touch on the earth. I used to think that it would be easy to maintain this, that this feeling I have towards art would always be accessible and convenient. But as I got older and let life's obstacles get in the way, I realize how unique and special this time was. Unique in a sense that it cannot be replicated. My goal is to get back to this feeling. To live in a world that nurtures art the way your property fed my painting. I recently received your new monograph. As I was flipping through it the first time a flood of feelings came over me. For the past 13 years I have been working a job within the “art world” and lost a certain level of clarity within my own work. The feelings I felt looking through your book triggered the memory of why I fell in love with art and felt like I was returning to a sense of home.

Sincerely,
Ryan Smith, 2002-2004

Dear John,

I want to tell you that I am very upset to hear that your view of John's Bay might be obstructed by a proposed oyster farm development! As someone who has returned to this specific site year after year for almost two decades, I found this very upsetting. Your view is far more than a stretch of coastline. I believe that it is a place of profound artistic and educational significance—a literal living landscape that has shaped the vision and practice of generations of painters. During the ten years I taught at Boston University, we would frequently bring students to your land specifically to paint in the landscape. Your view was central to our work and teaching. It is where I, and many others, first learned to truly see—where we studied light, color, atmosphere, and spatial depth in a way no classroom could ever replicate. We would do this alongside you, and therefore this view has become embedded with the history of young and old artists learning to paint. I think it's fair to say that your view has become a site of visual discovery and transformation by not only inspiring your paintings but nurturing a whole community of emerging artists—those who, like me, found their way by returning to this view, season after season.

I fully understand and support the importance of sustainable aquaculture, but this bay is already home to several oyster farms. This particular view—one of the last unobstructed stretches of this shoreline—is irreplaceable. In my opinion, the cultural, educational, and artistic value of the view at John's Bay merits the same level of protection we would afford any historical landmark.

Thank you for your stewardship of this very special place.

Sincerely, Dana Frankfort

Hello, Although I'm in Dallas, Texas, John's Bay greets me each morning. Gazing at it over my coffee is the most peaceful way to start my day. My view of John's Bay comes through the eyes and hands of John Walker, in a painting I'm fortunate to call my own. I spend countless hours staring at it, drawn into a profound connection with this place—a love transmitted through paint. I often reflect on how many others around the world have experienced this place through John's vision, and how many have made pilgrimages to this beautiful, raw, rugged remnant of Maine, captivated just as I am. It reminds me of Monet and Giverny, how people flock to a place after falling in love with it through an artist's eyes.

It's a place that deserves safeguarding—for everyone who has come to know its beauty through John Walker's art, and for all those yet to discover its magic through his eyes.

Thank you,

Joshua Goode

Gabriel Phipps

44 Grove Avenue

Leeds, MA 01053

Email: gabrielhipps@gmail.com

Phone: (718) 852-0255

August 1, 2025

To the Department of Marine Resources, Aquaculture Division:

I am writing in regard to Nor'Easter Oyster Company's plans to build a farm in proximity to Peabow Island, in Lincoln County, Maine. Please, please do not allow this company or any other farm to proceed with such plans, as they would adversely impact the physical beauty of that vista and the wildlife that inhabits it. Moreover, the great painter and teacher, John Walker, owns property in nearby Walpole and has spent decades painting that vista, and teaching his students to do the same. Years ago, I was one of those students and the experience was pivotal to my artistic and professional development. I know for a fact that countless other art students have reaped similar benefits from painting that view. To deny any future artists the opportunity to do the same would be a terrible loss. And, of course, it would be hugely detrimental to Mr. Walker's creative and professional output.

Surely, there are other places to build an oyster farm. Having grown up Downeast, I know full well how vital the Maine coastline is and just how important it is to maintain its' natural beauty. Please reconsider.

Thank you for your consideration, Gabriel Phibbs

Department of Marine Resources, Aquaculture Division

Enough oysters! We need more art! and John Walker's work in and with the Maine landscape on John's Bay represents a unique series of focused studies and accomplished paintings that should be celebrated by old and young alike as they document moments in time with due diligence and 100 percent commitment to truth. In this fast changing turbulent world these images slow life down to reveal elements from close observation this special very particular view from the artist's studio without adornment, or embellishment just the natural elements as they are seen by this internationally renowned artist, He is the area's closest most respectful observer recording the changes in time, temperature and season for those of us who don't have the privilege to be there ourselves, please do not deprive us/ the world of the opportunity to see where this painter

who has dedicated his practice to recording this particular landscape will lead... Please to not deny us the opportunity follow his single-minded journey that benefits so many including me, who now follows Walker's work in a wheelchair (otherwise this view is inaccessible to me and others in similar circumstances).

Thank you,

Wendy Davis Beard currently based in the British countryside
formerly of NY and Cape Cod, but a past and future visitor with many friends now based in
Maine.

To Department of Maine Resources - Aquaculture Division,

The coast along the Eastern Branch Johns River in Walpole, Maine has profoundly shaped who I am as an artist. Its natural beauty, solitude, and sense of place have been a constant source of influence, inspiration, and creative renewal throughout my life and work.

Thanks to the generosity of artist John Walker, this remarkable property—a true gem—has welcomed artists from around the world. For over 18 years, I've returned to the same exact spot, gazing out at Peabow Island and the endless sea, creating paintings and drawings directly from observations that are deeply rooted in this landscape.

I recognize the importance of sustainable practices like oyster farming to Maine's economy and environment. But during my most recent visit in July, the constant hum from an existing oyster farm disrupted the peaceful silence that has always defined this place while I worked en plein air, painting directly from the natural environment. It altered not just the atmosphere, but the deeply personal and creative experience it offers.

Expanding oyster farming in this area would threaten more than just the view. It risks diminishing a rare place of reflection, artistic renewal, and quiet beauty that supports the well-being of many—John Walker, residents, and artists who come here seeking inspiration.

Please don't let another natural gem be lost. Protect the integrity and tranquility of this irreplaceable place—for the community, for artists, and for generations to come.

Thank you,

Arista Alanis, Johnson, Vermont