

# Rackstraw Downes

## *Drawings*

January 27 – March 12, 2022



*In the Artist's Studio VII*, 2020, Graphite on blue paper with blue threads, 9.5 x 12.63 inches

*“Fairfield Porter said that the artist who searches for subject matter is like someone who cannot get out of bed in the morning without understanding the meaning of life.”*

~so quoted by Rackstraw Downes,  
Middlebury College, 1991

Betty Cunningham Gallery is pleased to present *Rackstraw Downes: Drawings*, an exhibition of 31 works on paper on view from January 27- March 12. This will be Downes’ seventh show with the Gallery.

Featured are nine earlier works— sprawling landscapes, architectural exteriors, and cavernous interiors in New York City, Maine, and West Texas— and twenty-two recently completed drawings of Downes’ home studio. As the pandemic tore through the New York cityscape outside his SoHo loft, Rackstraw Downes began to draw the landscapes of his home, the artist’s loft he has lived in since the early ‘90’s. Maintaining his decades-long dedication to observational drawing, Downes continued to pay attention to the things he has throughout his career— the ordinary, often-overlooked, sometimes banal aspects of his environment. He depicts his apartment as he observes it, leaving his surroundings unstaged before he begins to draw and unmanipulated afterwards. Downes’ portrayals of his everyday objects— chairs, easels, a sofa— give an intimate glimpse into the reality of his daily life and ask what is means to truly see a place that is so familiar.



*Looking Down from the Window of a Friend's on the Upper West Side*, c.1975, Graphite on manilla paper, 24 x 30 7/8 inches

Rackstraw Downes, born in England in 1939, received his BA from University of Cambridge in 1961 and his BFA and MFA from Yale University in 1963 and 1964 respectively. He remained in the United States, becoming a citizen in 1980. He is the recipient of the Guggenheim (1998) and MacArthur (2009) Fellowships, and was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1999). His work is in the collections of several museums including The Art Institute of Chicago, The Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Philadelphia Museum of Art and the National Gallery of Art.

**The current exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue and will remain on view through March 12, 2022.**

**The Gallery is monitoring the current Covid-19 crisis and hopes to schedule a celebration with the artist for a later date.**

**Listing Information:** Betty Cunningham Gallery is located at 15 Rivington Street, b/t Bowery and Chrystie, New York, NY 10002

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**Public Transportation:** F train to Second Ave, 6 Train to Spring Street, JZ Trains to Bowery

**Gallery Hours:** Tues – Saturday, 10am – 6pm