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## Jon Schueler: *Sky as Landscape*

**Exhibition Dates:** August 31 – September 30, 2018

**Opening Reception:** Fri, August 31, 5-7 pm

**Gallery Hours:** Mon – Fri, 10-6  
Sat, 10-5

### LewAllen Galleries

1613 Paseo de Peralta | Santa Fe, NM 87501

505.988.3250

[www.lewallengalleries.com](http://www.lewallengalleries.com)

**Press Contact:** Alex Gill

[agill@lewallengalleries.com](mailto:agill@lewallengalleries.com)



*Grey and Yesterday's Blues*, 1985,  
Oil on canvas, 36 x 32 in



*Loch Eishort*, 1969,  
Oil on canvas, 51 x 60 in

Santa Fe, NM – Finding inspiration in the visual and metaphorical properties of the sky, Jon Schueler (1916-1992) painted dramatic images that communicated its profound energy and transcendent power through rolling colors and burning light. Schueler was among the second-generation New York School of abstract expressionists who were known for reshaping the first generation's uncompromising abstraction into a more emotive, descriptive visual language. For Schueler, the sky was a theater, both ageless and ever-changing, and his paintings are talismans for its sublime drama. LewAllen Galleries has the pleasure of announcing the upcoming exhibition, *Sky as Landscape*, opening with a reception on Friday, August 31, 2018 from 5 – 7 pm and remaining on view through September 30.

*Sky as Landscape* features a selection of work from throughout his career, during which Schueler continuously

sought to paint nature's inexpressible, primal essence in "swirling arrangements of pure color and light," as described in the show catalog for Schueler's 1975 solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art by then-Director John I.H. Baur. Schueler was enthralled by the elemental power of nature—in particular, the dynamic weather off the northern coast of Scotland—and his painterly canvasses treat the sky as its mystical, metaphysical conduit.

Though communicating with the language of abstraction, Schueler's astonishing imagery evokes everything from heart-stopping sunsets (as in *South of Sleat*) to light rain or snow (*Blues*, *Evening Storm*) to a liminal fog that sweetly diffuses light through softly glowing tones of pink and blue (*Red Sky Shadow*). Treading the line between representation and non-representation, Schueler's evocations of weather, sky and the horizon focus our gaze upward, away from the materiality of the earth toward the immateriality of air, light and color. His art encourages us to contemplate the indefinable, powerful, and perhaps even spiritual aspects of the sky above us, and of nature and the infinite universe around us—all sources of endless inspiration for him.

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Schueler flew missions as a B-17 bomber navigator during World War II, and the intense experiences he endured over Europe throughout the war prompted him to view the sky anew, as a firmament with material and metaphoric implications. Under the G.I. Bill, Schueler attended the California School of Fine Arts and studied with artists such as Clyfford Still, Richard Diebenkorn, and David Park. With Clyfford Still's help and encouragement, Schueler moved to New York in 1951. One can see vestiges of Stills' influence on Schueler, in his patches of robust, unapologetic color, such as in *The First Snow Cloud* (1958) and *Cloud over Knoydart* (1957).

Upon his arrival in New York City, he was introduced to Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, and Ad Reinhardt. His first two solo exhibitions were at the Stable Gallery and at the legendary Leo Castelli Gallery, which was the Castelli's first solo exhibition and drew positive reviews in both the *New York Times* and *Life Magazine*. Though New York remained his home from 1959 until his death in 1992, Schueler found himself repeatedly drawn away from the city to the northern coast of Scotland. He had heard of the wild, isolated Scottish highlands during his time in Europe during the war and knew instinctively that it would act as a salve for him, particularly as he continued to process his wartime experiences.



*The First Snow Cloud*, 1958,  
Oil on canvas, 37 x 32 in

He first visited the remote Scottish fishing village of Mallaig in the winter of 1957 following his artistic success in New York City, and stayed for six months. Mallaig was special for being a place where humans have made very little impact on the land, and when he arrived, Schueler was struck by a sense of being so far in the middle of the rollicking, primordial heart of nature. He was spellbound by the way the sea met the craggy rocks of the Scottish coast, which produced all manners of spray, fog, and weather, and had a tremendous effect on his art. Mallaig's sunrises and sunsets lit the sky and sea in dramatic colors, cinematic fog and dreamlike atmosphere. "I wanted to live in the middle of one of my paintings for a year," he wrote in July 1959 about visiting the Scottish coast. "I saw clouds menacing my mind's eye, and the rain shafts or the mist obliterating horizons and forming new forms with the clouds and landmasses blending with the sea. I chose northern Scotland as my cathedral, because for my needs at that moment, it seemed the only church that would do."

For Schueler, Mallaig was a refuge, and his luminous sky paintings were shelter from the ominous clouds of everyday life. Even after his return to New York, memories of Mallaig took on mystical significance for him. He would return for months at a time each year, and eventually acquired a studio overlooking the Sound of Sleat in 1970, living there full time until 1975. Many of the paintings included in *Sky as Landscape* reflect his experiences in Mallaig, in addition to his view of painted image as visual representation of the sublime itself, whether depicted in misty, nearly hidden forms or tumultuous, animated color.



*Darkening Day*, 1981,  
Oil on canvas, 32 x 48 in

His subtle, yet vibrant works on canvas have been compared to the art of J.M.W. Turner, and Schueler himself has mentioned the British master as one of his chief influences. As he wrote in 1972, "Turner went further into nature and further into the sensation of nature in paint than any other

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painter. He ... did the most to break down style, to destroy it, to find the possibility of paint talking as paint, as an extension of the most immediate perception and sensibility, so that it became most like nature. This is what I would like my paintings to be.”

Schueler’s work is included in several notable museums and art institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), Cleveland Museum of Art, Baltimore Museum of Art, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. International collections include the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (Edinburgh) and the National Gallery of Australia (Canberra), among others.



*Light on the Sea, 1976,*  
Oil on canvas, 62.25 x 69 in