I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

Henry David Thoreau, Walden; or, Life in the Woods, 1854

For over 40 years, Thaddeus Holownia has explored the interplay between nature and humanity, examining how nature has determined man’s existence and how, in turn, man has altered the environment. Walden Revisited pays direct homage to the artist’s muse, Henry David Thoreau, who lived at Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts for two years, two months, and two days, from July 1845 until September 1847, studying the natural world and seasonal change. Inspired by Thoreau’s meditations on nature in Walden; or, Life in the Woods, which he read as a young man, Holownia has devoted his oeuvre to exploring the connections between a place and its history, revealing the past through the present. In Walden Revisited, the artist originally intended to document Walden Pond as it appears today, with the trappings of a National Historic Landmark that receives hundreds of thousands of visitors a year. Over time, however, the artist realized that the site was remarkably true to its appearance in Thoreau’s day.

Over the course of two years, two months, and two days, mirroring the length of Thoreau’s stay, Holownia visited the site almost monthly, hiking and photographing a large body of work based on and photography, focusing on broad panoramas and the progression of seasons. Later, he turned to the monumental, vertical images that comprise 24 Tree Studies for Henry David Thoreau, which focus closely on
individual trees. Their format recalls the tradition of conventional portraiture and imbues the trees with an anthropomorphic quality. Marred by burls and scars, and ravaged by weather and lightning strikes, Holownia’s trees convey a palpable sense of the passage of time, revealing both their personal history and the natural history of their surroundings. Presented as a full-gallery installation, *24 Tree Studies for Henry David Thoreau* is an intimate portrait of Walden Pond that captures the spirit of Thoreau and Holownia’s experience there. It evokes intimate solitude and a sense of nature’s majestic grandeur. In distilling the essence of the site, *Walden Revisited* encourages thoughtful contemplation of the particular, which Emerson, Thoreau, and Holownia believe reveals universal truths that transcend place and time.