

NICHOLAS METIVIER GALLERY

John Hartman | *Islands*

May 31 – June 27, 2025

Nicholas Metivier Gallery is thrilled to present *Islands*, a major exhibition of new paintings and watercolours by acclaimed Canadian artist John Hartman. This latest body of work is inspired by his recent travels to Sikinos (Greece), Bermuda, and Newfoundland and marks an exciting continuation of his exploration into the connection between people, place, and memory.

In the summer of 2024, John Hartman visited Sikinos, a small island in the Cyclades between mainland Greece and Crete. He brought along his watercolour supplies and sketched en plein air, taking advantage of the elevated vantage points from the hilly terrain. Upon returning to his studio in Lafontaine, Ontario, he discovered a compelling link between the visual and atmospheric qualities of Sikinos, Bermuda, and Newfoundland — particularly the luminous light and unique characteristics that have been shaped by their insular geographies.

"I have always been fascinated by islands. They have beautiful light, as sunlight bounces off the surrounding water into the moist air, then bounces back down to land. They often have a unique culture, being isolated from their most immediate neighbours. Getting to most islands means getting in a boat, which I love to do." - John Hartman

A few months prior to his trip to Sikinos, Hartman had traveled to Bermuda for an exhibition featuring his work at the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art. There, he made studies of the densely populated landscape, with its iconic pastel architecture and distinctive rain-harvesting roofs. Much of the activity and arresting visual detail in these works comes from the lively harbours filled with the comings and goings of boats.

Hartman's long-standing connection with Newfoundland was also reignited through this series. He referenced recent studies made there during his 2022 exhibition *Many Lives Mark This Place* at the Grenfell Art Gallery as well as archival sketchbooks from the early 2000s. In contrast to his previous paintings of the province, Hartman infused these new works with a radiant palette of gold and magenta inspired by his Sikinos paintings. The vertical compositions of both Sikinos and Newfoundland further emphasize the sculptural drama of these landforms.

Islands marks a much anticipated return to Hartman's use of narrative in the way of the figures, animals and boats. In the 90s, his vignettes of specific stories and histories of the places he encountered could often be found floating across the skies of his paintings; now these elements play out on the land, in the sea and in the perceived space between the viewer and the landscape. The captivating details along with Hartman's ability to convey colour and light transcends the specificity of place and presents us with one of his most exuberant bodies of work to date.