

Art Review: Familiar Becomes Strange in the Works of Riverhead Artist Adam Straus

The compelling East End ecological paintings of Adam Straus are on display at Nohra Haime Gallery in Manhattan through Oct. 23.

By [Sara Evans](#)

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Riverhead artist [Adam Straus's](#) current exhibition, "Air and Water: Or Everything is Alright Until It Isn't," is on view until Oct. 23 at the [Nohra Haime Gallery](#) in Manhattan.

The paintings on display portray both the beauty of the East End — and the artist's concern for a planet in peril.

Gallery owner Nohra Haime, who has shown Straus's work for many years, noted that the paint was barely dry when she showed Straus's "Oil Slick," a work showing a distant tanker ship afloat in a blackened sea dripping its poison onto a beach beneath a beautiful blue sky filled with puffy clouds.

Many of Straus's works portray either impending ecological disasters or reflect environmental degradation. Some portray man's increasing distance from the natural world. Whether capturing unnatural inescence on a lily pond, a man talking on a cell phone on a beautiful beach, or a beachcomber with a metal detector, Straus strives to tell us that something is not right.

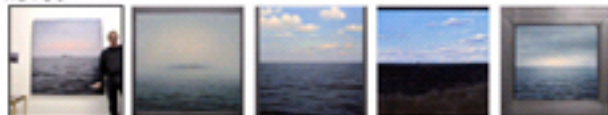
He often frames his works in lead, a material with dull heaviness lending a sense of importance in the painting. In the current exhibition, his paintings evoke the abstractions of [Mark Rothko](#), who also painted on the North Fork. With the marshes of the Gulf of Mexico still recovering from the BP spill, the title of the show points to how quickly the fragile balance of nature can spin out of control.



Adam Straus in his Riverhead studio. Credit Noah Straus

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Straus and his wife Nicole, an arts consultant, moved to Riverhead seven years ago after living in Brooklyn and Tribeca and exploring many other places and options over the years. They decided that Riverhead — with its proximity to the Twin Forks, farmlands, sandy pathways, creeks, rivers, bays and inlets, and easy access to both the ocean and the Long Island Sound — was a perfect place to live and raise their son, Noah.

Straus is an heir to generations of Long Island landscape painters, who for decades have painted the open land and maritime scenes and the shifting light of the region. But despite his mastery of traditional technique and subject matter, Straus is a modernist — painting landscapes that have a mysterious quality.

His work, "Shelter Island in Fog," for instance, shows the familiar view of the island — yet with two beckoning lights and the island barely discernable from the water — the familiar becomes strange.

His work delivers a powerful ecological message.

"The artist has a responsibility to show and tell the truth," he said.

In her introduction to the catalogue for the current Manhattan exhibition, Mattituck-based art critic and noted filmmaker Amei Wallach notes that Straus's work reflects the artist's fierce love of the natural world.

"And his romance with the paintings of the modern landscape ... They announce Straus's faith in the potency of nature, however fragile it might be," she said.

Get out of town and experience the work of Adam Straus, on display through Oct. 23 at Mohra Haime Gallery in Manhattan, 730 5th Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019. Call 212-888-3550 for more information.

<http://northfork.patch.com/articles/art-review-familiar-becomes-strange-in-the-works-of-north-fork-artist-adam-straus#c>