

THE WORK OF ADAM STRAUS OFTEN COMMUNICATES AN ENVIRONMENTAL MESSAGE; ON OCCASION THAT MESSAGE IS POINTEDLY EXPRESSED AS IN *FIRE AND EARTH* AND OTHER TIMES IT TAKES ON MORE SUBTLE FORMS SUCH AS *AIR AND WATER*.



TOP: *MONTAUK MORNING*; *DUNE IN FOG*, 2002. BOTTOM LEFT: *FIRE AND EARTH*, 2008. *AIR AND WATER*, 2008.

ADAM STRAUS

Adam Straus works in the long and broad tradition of Long Island landscape painters. But as an artist of his time, he is a man on a mission—a mission to heal the earth. **BY SARA EVANS**

IN HIS RIVERHEAD STUDIO, ARTIST ADAM STRAUS PAINTS PICTURES of luminous beauty. As an East End artist, he really gets it—the way the moon rises over the ocean in Montauk, how the mist settles over North Fork fields, the way sandy pathways lead into the woods and black branches etch the winter sky. But for Straus, painting is about much more than creating beautiful landscapes.

Straus grew up in Florida, a Florida that was still wild. It was a place where a boy could set out in a 12-foot aluminum boat, alone on the ocean, and explore the tangled mangrove swamps to his heart's content. It is a Florida that barely exists anymore.

For Straus, the East End is still paradise. After living in Tribeca and Brooklyn, he and his wife Nicole explored many different places to live before choosing Riverhead. For them, the area held the promise of living close to nature in an area still relatively affordable, pristine and not over-

developed. What clinched the deal for Adam Straus, who is a passionate fisherman, was the heady experience of swimming in the breakers off Southampton. “All of a sudden, I was surrounded by large striped bass, actually swimming with them! That did it!”

Straus subscribes to the ancient Hebrew notion of Tikkun Olam, the responsibility of each individual to repair the world. He does his part through his work. Many of his paintings have a strong ecological message. Some are subtle, others not so subtle. One pictures a man by the shore speaking on a cell phone, another depicts tire tracks that have dug up a pristine beach, and a third is of a lily pond with an iridescent oil slick floating on its surface.

Others are more insistent: an angry, toxic wave spilling over the edge of a lead frame and a landscape so parched it is burning. “The artist,” Straus insists, “has a responsibility to be realistic, to show and tell the truth.”

His current show, “Drill Here! Drill Now!” explores the cardinal elements, Earth, Fire, Water and Air, as well as the Void, or nature, and the myriad ways in which they are being damaged and exploited.

“I seek out places, atmospheres, and landscapes that inspire awe in me and then attempt to translate all that into paintings,” Straus explains. “I feel that a disconnect from nature, and a lack of appreciation of it, allows us to forget about what’s happening to it.”

“Drill Here! Drill Now!” is at the **Nohra Haime Gallery**, 41 East 57th Street, New York City until November 15. For more information, call (212) 888-3550.