

AN ENDANGERED LANDSCAPE: Recent Paintings of Hypoluxo Scrub

In his second Florida solo museum exhibition, **Paul Gervais** is showing landscape paintings of Hypoluxo Scrub Natural Area. *An Endangered Landscape: Recent Paintings of Hypoluxo Scrub* will be on view at *The Norton House*, Ann Norton Sculpture Garden in West Palm Beach. Art enthusiasts may recall his solo show, *Faces and Forms*, at the Boca Raton Museum in early 2019.

Not a landscape painter nor even a representational painter, Gervais has spent his lifetime in visual arts as a nonrepresentational artist, employing a range of mediums, many not normally associated with fine art, to produce geometric studies involving the “line,” painted freehand in various widths of brushes. Originally from Massachusetts, Gervais now divides his time between West Palm Beach and London, where he keeps his primary studio.

Oddly, landscape painting doesn’t feel like an enormous departure to the artist. “You bring all you have to bear artistically, all you’ve ever considered, studied, loved about art, to every painting endeavor, no matter the subject matter,” Gervais says. “I’m still the artist I’ve always been. Only the surface of the product is different.”

In Italy, where he lived for 35 years, Gervais put aside his painting for a long period of time in favor of the written word, and so in today’s art language you could truly call him a multi-disciplinary artist. His first novel, *Extraordinary People*, was a finalist for the *PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction*, one of the nation’s most prestigious literary prizes. This publication was later followed by *A Garden in Lucca*, the story of making a garden, together with his husband, **Gil Cohen**, at their 16th Century hunting lodge near the Tuscan city of Lucca.

Gervais happened upon *Hypoluxo Scrub* by chance. Passing by on the Brightline returning from Miami he noticed a swathe of land that seemed to be untouched by development. Googling it he came upon the *Natural Area* and visited it the very next day. “It’s the way all of this looked before Europeans arrived,” Gervais explains. “This is the real South Florida, so intently maintained by those visionaries who chose to preserve it as an invaluable reference, a fragment of Florida ecology all but lost by now.” The artist made countless photographic studies of the “beautiful, if brutal” landscape on that first visit and brought them to his studio where over a period of two years he produced more than 40 paintings, in oil on linen or board. “People often ask me if I painted on site,” the artist says. “I do not. I’m a contemporary artist and I freely make use of all the available tools progress provides.” Distinctly different from mid-19th Century landscape painting, such as that of the Barbizon artists, these works make no descriptive reference to any moment in time. There are no figures present and no signs of human activity; we’re shown only the white sands of the scrub and its starkly characteristic vegetation of palmetto and oak.

An Endangered Landscape: Recent Paintings of Hypoluxo Scrub will be on view at *The Norton House*, Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens in West Palm Beach from October 11th through January 7, 2024. For more information visit ansg.org or call 561.832.5328.



Paul Gervais