

VAN DOREN
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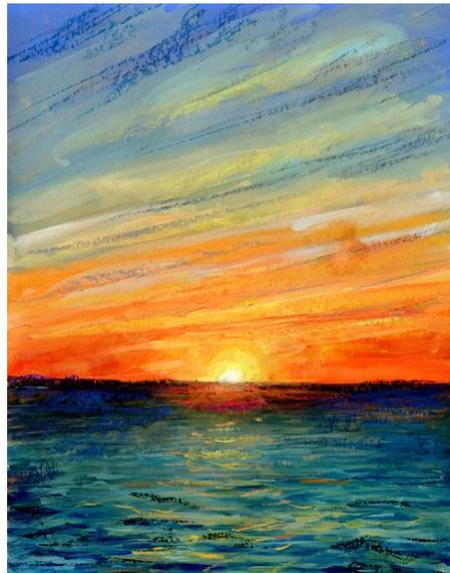
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Painting the 'Quiet Freedoms' of New York's Queer Island

In 'This Marram', TM Davy ushers you into a very personal – and almost enchanted – sliver of Fire Island

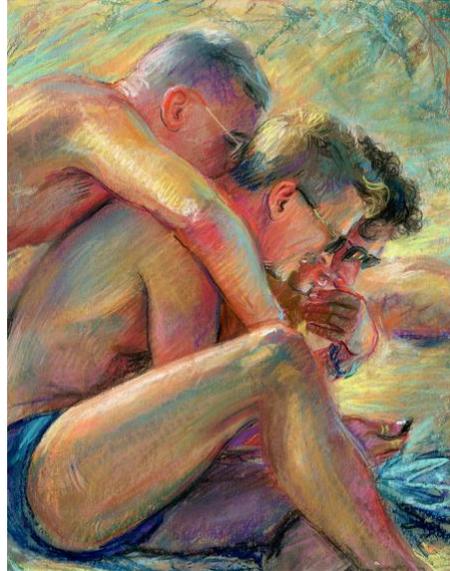


When I visit Pines, Fire Island – the community where many queer New Yorkers who can afford it holiday during the summer – I go with the hope that by sundown I'll find a couch where I might crash. The mid-century bungalows, secluded among pitch pine, stretch out to the sea or Great South Bay but are typically booked, in shares, far in advance. *Why not reserve my room a year out?* I'm not one to plan ahead, apparently.



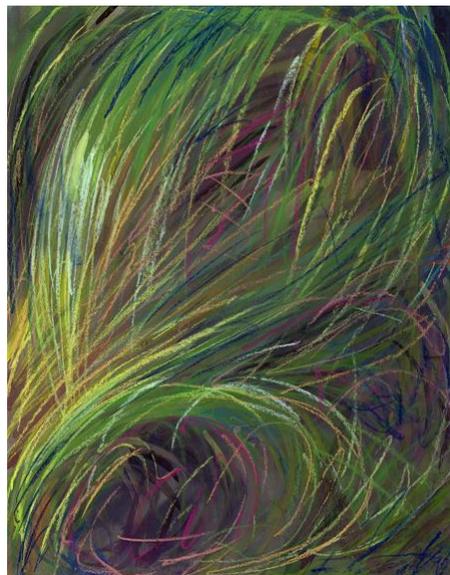
TM Davy, *Great South Bay Sunset 6/16/19*, 2019, pastel and gouache on paper, 36 × 28 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Van Doren Waxter For his latest solo exhibition, 'This Marram', the painter TM Davy ushers you into a very personal – and almost enchanted – sliver of his Fire Island. In over 100 unframed studies in pastel and gouache (all works are 36 × 28 cm and from 2019) that wrap across Van Doren Waxter's gallery walls at eye-level, Davy's observational drawings depict the wide vistas visible from the island: wispy clouds, the Atlantic sunset, startled deer. Included among these are tender scenes from the artist's own life: portraits of close friends, artists, writers and critics, and several of his husband, Liam. The show is named for a type of coarse grass that spurts among Pines's endangered dunes; marram binds the sand and, in the process, creates sites for gay cruising. Davy's studies

revel in these historically queer places of frolic and communion, celebrating the people who spend their summers here with friends, occasional lovers, companions.



TM Davy, *635*, 2019, pastel and gouache on paper, 36 × 28 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Van Doren Waxter

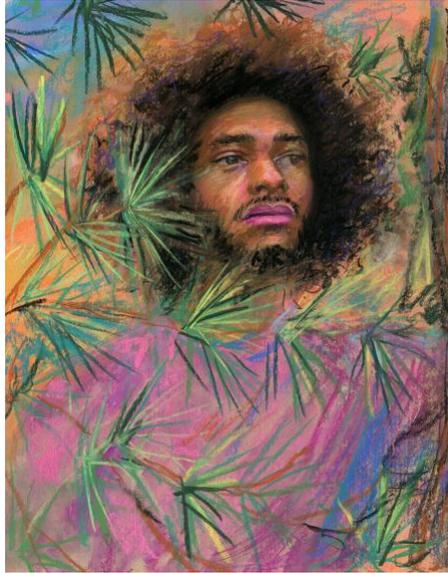
For years, Davy's practice has focused on realist portraiture of subjects both human and non-human. His 2017 show at Van Doren Waxter – then a downtown gallery known as Eleven Rivington or 11R – presented eight regal horses the artist painted from observation and photographs. At 'Candela', in 2013–14, Davy painted other friends and lovers in angular shadows, illuminated by candlelight. The Fire Island series is also concerned with light: the way it pings off the reflective surfaces of pools or appears in pinkish skies. Many of the works, such as *Great South Bay Sunset 9/1/19* and *Atlantic Moonrise 8/16/19* are comprised of three or four images that document the sun and moon as they shift position. Several portraits of marram appear in abstracted form, like fireworks or a tuft of hair.



TM Davy, *Marram*, 2019, pastel and gouache on paper, 36 × 28 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Van Doren Waxter

'This Marram' uncannily reproduces the feelings I have when I visit the island. I, too, want to nuzzle a man's hair. Saddened by summer's actual end – New York City's beaches closed days before the show's opening – I looked to see if any of Davy's friends' eyes might meet mine, as if I were in the island's famed cruising grounds, the Meat Rack, and not on the tony Upper East Side. Despite my desires, I cannot shake the feeling that the cruise-y fantasies of isolation – from New York City, from the straight world – that enable a sense of queer 'freedom' rely on quiet and unshakable forms of racial exclusion. Is the 'anonymity' of cruising in the dunes or

woods or on the island's elevated gangways just another kind of ethnic erasure? I can never be anonymous in Pines; its predominate whiteness forbids it.



TM Davy, *Brandon in the Pines 2800*, 2019, pastel and gouache on paper, 36 × 28 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Van Doren Waxter

Davy doesn't ignore this fact; he includes it. While most of his subjects are white men, several people of colour, including the playwright Jeremy O. Harris, cohabit Davy's land- and seascapes. In the drawing *In Water Sports or Insignificant White Boys*, the head of a handsome black man reclines on a yellow floatation device in a pool. Davy's tender rendering of this subject's gaze is enough to make anyone – even, I imagine, most white people – feel the way I do when I've finally made it to Fire Island and found a place to rest my own head. I feel like light itself, and like light, I'm often invisible.

TM Davy, 'This Marram' continues at Van Doren Waxter, New York, USA, through 2 November 2019.

Main image: TM Davy, You Oceans Both, 2019, pastel and gouache on paper, 36 × 28 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Van Doren Waxter