

JUXTAPOZ

Art & Culture



If there was ever a year for an island to be both a physical and spiritual aspiration, 2020 is definitely the one. A return to nature has been at the top of many people's lists, and we travel vicariously through the works of Bianca Nemelc and Zaria Forman as well as in our recent conversation with Drew Bennett. For NY-based painter [Sam Friedman](#), who is set to open *Island* at [Dio Horia](#) in Athens, Greece from October 7–November 15, 2020, this concept is abstracted in hazy, luxurious colors that expand on the history of landscape painting and, in the words of the artist, natural phenomena.

Like so many shows that are finally seeing the light of day this fall, Friedman created this work during the heart of the pandemic, in his case, upstate New York. The sort of energy that emanates outside of the city, that hums with a peaceful buzz, is essential to these works. Friedman has always had an appreciation of the history of Abstract Expressionism and a unique ability to form the figurative in elements of nature, plants, sunsets and clouds. The gallery notes that "When looking at the works as a whole, one cannot avoid thinking of the ways we are all a little more isolated at this time, and also a bit more familiar to a romanticized island way of life." What we dream about in a vacation or getaway is the fuzzy memory of what is apparent throughout *Island*. It's the idealized version of an *Island* life, it's stunning and yes, romantic.

Back in 2015, when we interviewed Friedman in the magazine, he made this observation about himself: "I still find a comfort at the beach. My father described the beach as a place where people go with a common goal, to get to the edge of the world, to get away from things that people have created. I'm sure I'm paraphrasing, and maybe even getting it wrong, but I think there's something to that. There is an appeal in going to the edge of the world, and just looking out at the distance, and trying to relax and play. I imagine that I will try to make time to do that forever, so if I keep getting pleasure out of being there, I imagine it will keep giving me plans for paintings." This idea of at the brink, or at the edge of some kind of end, and relaxing, has been realized in his paintings in one of the most contentious of years. Friedman has maybe indeed, found his island. —*Evan Pricco*

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