THE ADAA FAIR
NOVEMBER 12 - 15, 2026
PARK AVENUE ARMORY (643 Park Avenue)
BOOTH A21

Herald Nix: Never the Same

For nearly two decades, Canadian painter and musician Herald Nix (b. 1951) has been engaged in an extraordinary act of repetition: painting the same view of Shuswap Lake, over and over again. The subject, a familiar configuration of water, hills, and sky in the interior of British Columbia, has remained essentially unchanged, while the paintings themselves have taken innumerable forms. Ricco/Maresca is pleased to present forty works from this ongoing series at the 2026 edition of The ADAA Fair. Together, they reveal an obsessive undertaking in which the apparent limitations of a single subject have become the conditions for remarkable pictorial freedom.

Shuswap Lake is a vast, branching freshwater lake surrounded by wooded mountains and rolling hills in southern British Columbia. Nix was born and raised in nearby Salmon Arm, where he continues to live and work. His attachment to the landscape is rooted in a lifetime of familiarity, but his decision to paint one particular view repeatedly has transformed that relationship into something more complex. Rather than seeking new subjects, he returns to the same arrangement of landforms, testing what remains possible within its boundaries. The lake provides a constant against which almost everything else is allowed to change.

Each painting begins with the same basic vocabulary: a horizontal band of water, overlapping hills, and an expanse of sky. Yet the variations are astonishing. In some, the landscape emerges through delicate veils of gray, blue, and pale yellow, its contours barely distinguishable from the surrounding atmosphere. In others, banks of dark pigment press against the hills, while sudden passages of crimson, violet, turquoise, or ocher disrupt any expectation of naturalistic color. Skies become turbulent fields of gesture; mountains dissolve into broad, irregular masses; the lake itself is sometimes reduced to a narrow strip along the bottom edge. What remains recognizable in one painting may approach complete abstraction in the next.

Nix's handling of paint is as restless as his palette. Working in oil on nearly identical sized birch plywood panels, he builds and dismantles his images through a continual negotiation between addition and removal. Paint is brushed on thickly or dragged into thin, translucent layers; surfaces are scraped, scored, and carved, exposing the grain of the wood beneath. Lines cut through fields of color, while earlier gestures remain visible under subsequent applications. The final works preserve the physical history of their making: moments of assertion, hesitation, erasure, and reconsideration. The activity of painting becomes inseparable from the landscape it describes.

There is a compelling contradiction at the center of this practice. Nix's commitment to a single composition might suggest an exercise in discipline or control, yet the paintings themselves frequently display an unruly, improvisational energy. Some are spare and almost austere, their few carefully placed forms held in delicate balance. Others are densely worked, their surfaces animated by forceful gestures and abrupt collisions of color. They can be lyrical, somber, turbulent, or unexpectedly exuberant. The repetition does not impose uniformity; it makes difference more conspicuous. Within the narrow parameters he has established, Nix allows himself considerable freedom, treating each new panel as an opportunity to depart from what came before.

An acclaimed musician as well as a painter, Nix has spent decades performing and recording music rooted in blues, country, and experimental traditions. His parallel pursuits suggest an illuminating connection. Just as a musician can return to a familiar melody and discover new possibilities through changes in phrasing, tempo, or emphasis, Nix approaches his landscape as a recurring motif open to endless interpretation. Each painting stands as an independent improvisation, but the full scope of the project becomes apparent through accumulation. One image modifies our experience of another; subtle variations gain significance through their proximity, and repetition develops a rhythm of its own.

Nix once observed that the landscape changes less from one day to the next than our perception of it does. The distinction is essential. These paintings are not simply records of weather, season, or changing light, although all three leave their traces. They register the shifting relationship between an artist and a subject so familiar that observation becomes increasingly entangled with memory, instinct, and the possibilities of paint itself. As the compositions move between representation and abstraction, the landscape ceases to function solely as something to be depicted. It becomes a framework for experimentation, a point of departure rather than a prescribed destination.

There is also something quietly radical about Nix's willingness to pursue beauty without irony. His paintings make no grand claims for their subject, nor do they depend on spectacular scenery or monumental scale. Their ambition resides in the sustained intensity of his engagement. Across forty small format panels, the same hills rise and fall beneath skies that seem capable of assuming every imaginable mood. The scene persists, but no single painting can be said to encompass it. Many years into this undertaking, Nix has arrived at neither a definitive image nor a perfected formula. Instead, his obsession has produced an expanding body of work in which the familiar remains inexhaustible, and the act of returning continues to yield something new.

PREVIEW GALA

Benefiting the Whitney Museum of American Art

Thursday, November 12, 4:30–9:30pm

RUN OF THE SHOW

November 13 – 16

VIP Preview:

Friday, Nov 13, 10:00am–12:00pm

Public

Friday, Nov 13, 12:00–7:00pm

Saturday, Nov 14, 11:00am–7:00pm

Sunday, Nov 15, 11:00am–6:00pm

Monday, Nov 16, 11:00am–5:00pm