

Community Project Showcases Maine's History of Ice Harvesting and Landscape Painting



Marsden Hartley, *The Ice Hole, Maine*, 1908-09, Oil on canvas, 34 x 34 in
New Orleans Museum of Art .

[Stoneham, ME]— On February 5, artist Eric Aho will host a community-wide ice cutting project on Keewaydin Lake to recreate the winter scene of Marsden Hartley's 1908-09 painting *The Ice-Hole, Maine* (New Orleans Art Museum, LA). This public-led effort will commemorate a pivotal work by an important American artist and invite local residents to engage in and celebrate two of Maine's many historical winter pastimes: ice cutting and landscape painting. Both emphasize the simple pleasure of the outdoors.

The brutal Maine winter has provided the natural resources and setting to create industries and pastimes, from ice harvesting to landscaping painting. In 1908, American painter Marsden Hartley moved into a small house in North Stoneham, Maine. Inspired by the winter terrain of his home state, Hartley produced his first mature works that

subsequently launched his career as an artist, including one of his first landscapes, *The Ice-Hole, Maine*.

In *The Ice Hole, Maine*, Hartley paints a scene depicting a local ice harvest, a common enterprise in 19th-century New England that consisted of collecting surface ice from lakes to be exported for use in household iceboxes. Yet, instead of a showing a traditional carved grid pattern, Hartley paints an elongated “H” into the pond. While mountains in the background form a lower-case *m*, affixing Hartley’s monogram to the scene. These details show Hartley’s affection for the environment that inspired the artist to align himself with the rugged and restless character of the state, eventually referring to himself as “The Painter from Maine.”

To celebrate rural Maine’s unique cultural history, an enthusiastic team of winter-loving community volunteers will cut a fifteen (15) foot wide by thirty (30) foot long “H” in the ice near the north shore of Keewaydin Lake at roughly the same location as the ice harvest pictured in the 1908 painting by Marsden Hartley. The volunteer crew will utilize hand tools typical of a late 19th / early 20th century ice harvest including: picks, saws, chisels, and tongs. The resulting shape will resemble a giant elongated letter “H” much like the form Marsden Hartley observed and included in his painting. Drone and land-based video and photography will be used to document the project from start to completion.

The project hopes to highlight the meaningful commercial and leisure opportunities that Maine’s winter has created, highlight changing winter conditions and its effect on New England’s natural resources, and recognize the important role of rural Maine communities in the development of American Art.

About Eric Aho

Eric Aho is an American painter known for his immersive paintings of the natural world. With color and form that bridges the way we experience nature in totality, Aho’s canvases at every scale, occupy a zone of perception between sober realism and ecstatic abstraction. He’s been called “One of the leading painters of landscape and the environment of his generation.”

His works have been exhibited and collected widely in the United States and abroad. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Eric Aho: An Unfinished Point in a Vast Surrounding* at the New Britain Museum of American Art, Connecticut (2016); *Eric Aho: Ice Cuts* at the Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, New Hampshire (2016); *Eric Aho: In the Landscape* at the Federal Reserve Board, Washington, D.C. (2013); and *Transcending Nature: Paintings by Eric Aho* at the Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire (2012). Other exhibitions have taken place at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut; Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, New Hampshire; Portland Art Museum, Maine; Ogunquit Museum of American Art, Maine; National Academy, New York; and American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York. Aho's paintings have been shown internationally in Ireland, South Africa, Cuba, Norway, Finland, and Japan.

Eric Aho was elected National Academician of the National Academy Museum in 2009. DC Moore Gallery in New York represents his work. The artist lives and works in Saxtons River, Vermont, and since childhood has spent several weeks each year in Maine.