

MICHAEL BENNALLACK HART

LYRICAL LANDSCAPES



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13th – 31st May

JOHN MITCHELL
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

MICHAEL BENNALLACK HART

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I'm delighted to present this exhibition of recent landscape paintings by **Michael Bennallack Hart (b.1948)**. May seems an appropriate month to host this exhibition. After a reluctant spring and with the promise of summer, these evocative, light-filled landscapes, seem to fulfil our yearning for the season to come. Since our last show with him, *A Quieter World* in November 2020, Michael has been busy in his Richmond studio, creating landscapes inspired by travels in Italy, France, Greece and the UK, as well as views painted directly from his imagination.

As some readers may know, Michael worked as a commercial designer and illustrator before devoting himself to painting as a full-time artist over thirty years ago. Indeed, it was his intriguing cover illustration for Jane Smiley's 1991 book *A Thousand Acres* that led William Mitchell to first contact him and subsequently hold an exhibition of his work in 1998. Illustration as a profession necessitates the sure handling of artist's materials, and a strong sense of compositional design and balance that is often overlooked in today's 'Fine Art' teaching. This

practical training is evidenced in all of Michael's paintings, where each is immediately striking in the clarity and of its forms, and the variety of colour and contrast achieved with the oil paint. From wide open skies and distant vistas, with their subtle transitions in hue and value, to the velvety darks of trees silhouetted against an evening sky, Michael has a masterful ability to present his vision of the landscape on canvas.

It is a personal vision too, one that is suffused with memory and nostalgia, of places visited and now returned to through the artist's eyes. As a studio-based painter Michael deliberately distances himself from the motif, which is a key process in creating the dream-like quality we see. This has been the working method of important artists such as Edward Hopper (1882-1967), whose paintings were composed by a process of imaginative reconstruction in which both observation and memory played parts. Like Hopper, Michael paints 'imaginative composites' whether a Mediterranean coastline, or a golden afternoon in one of London's parks (*White Beach, Corfu, The White House,*

Hampstead Heath) the magic lies in how he allows the sentiments and emotions held in the memory of a place to embellish the painting. For some paintings such as *City Lights* the landscape is assembled directly from the imagination, an amalgamation of past experiences, in this instance Michael's memories of New York and Chicago.

Often in my conversations with him, Michael has stated that poetry and music are as integral an influence on the mood of his landscapes as any visual reference. The poems of John Keats, Thomas Hardy, Robert Frost, Anthony Hecht and Carl Sandburg to name a few, have all informed his work. The swallows in the melancholic *Last of Summer, Kew Gardens* are a direct reference to Keat's *Ode to Autumn*, "and gathering swallows twitter in the sky", while more ambiguous references are suggested in the atmosphere and settings of the landscapes for those willing to search for them.

Like good poetry these paintings leave much suggested for the audience to imagine. The motif of the path that disappears out of view as seen in *Roadway into Dusk, The Sea Beyond* and others, hold a suggestive power, an implication of a place beyond, somewhere out of reach, ephemeral - like a dream.

In the spirit of letting the paintings reveal their own mysteries, I leave you now to enjoy this catalogue and invite you to the gallery to see these lyrical landscapes for yourself. Some of the paintings are larger than may be assumed from reading this catalogue, and reward first-hand viewing. The exhibition is on view until 31st May. Full details for each painting are listed at the back of this catalogue, as well as some notes about them by the artist. Detailed images, including photographs of the paintings framed are available at www.johnmitchell.net.

James Astley Birtwistle

May 2024

MICHAEL BENNALLACK HART

LYRICAL LANDSCAPES

13th – 31st May 2024

Monday – Friday, 10am – 5pm

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS

17 Avery Row, Brook Street, London W1K 4BF

Please visit **www.johnmitchell.net**

where all the paintings in the exhibition are displayed with their frames and prices. All paintings are for sale.

Please contact James Astley Birtwistle (jamesb@johnmitchell.net / +44 (0)20 7493 7567) for all exhibition enquiries.

LINES FROM *THE ROAD AND THE END* BY CARL SANDBURG

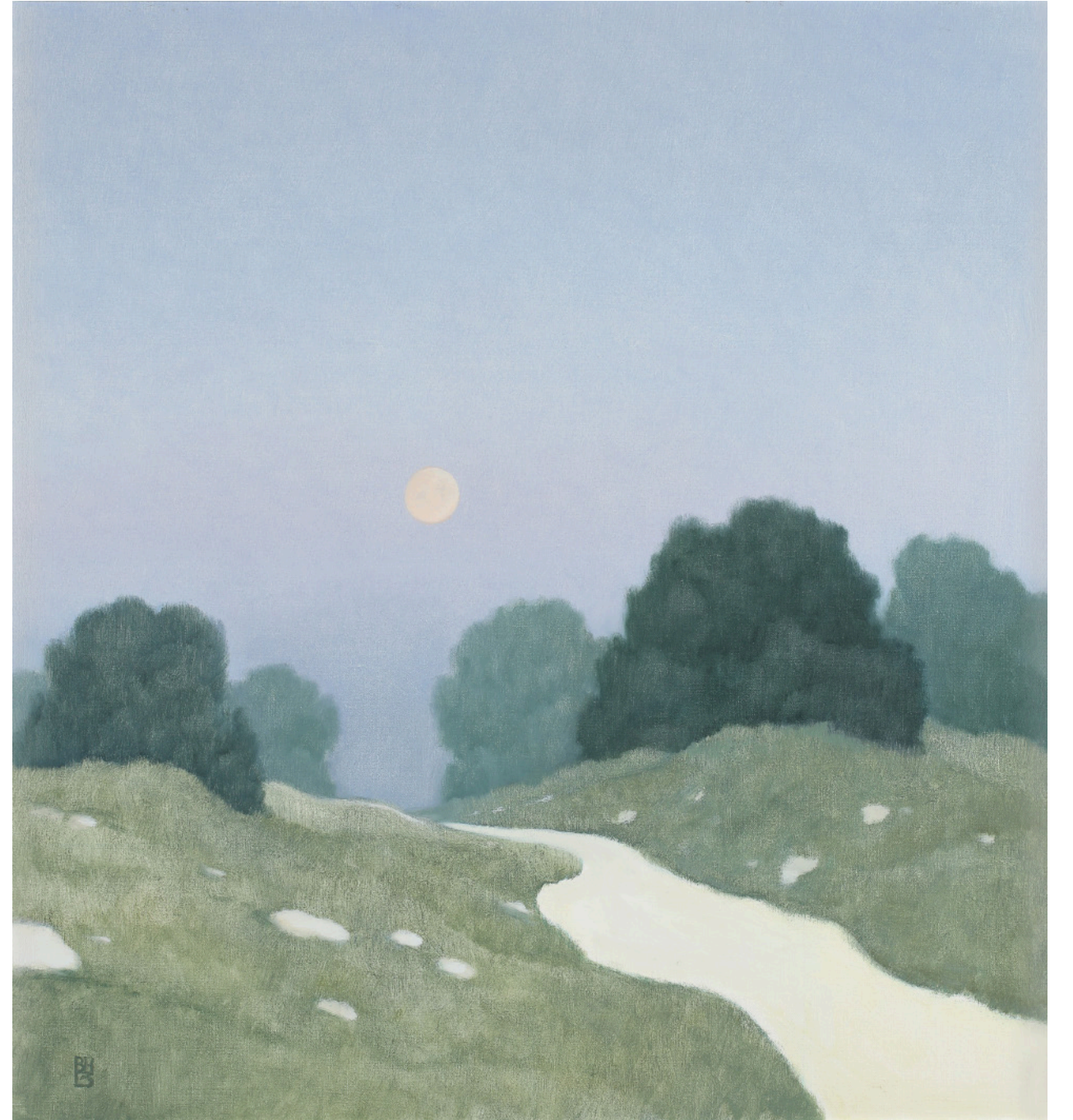
*In the silence of the morning,
See the night slur into dawn,
Hear the slow great winds arise
Where tall trees flank the way
And shoulder toward the sky.*





White Beach, Corfu
61 x 81 cm

Roadway into Dusk
76 x 71 cm

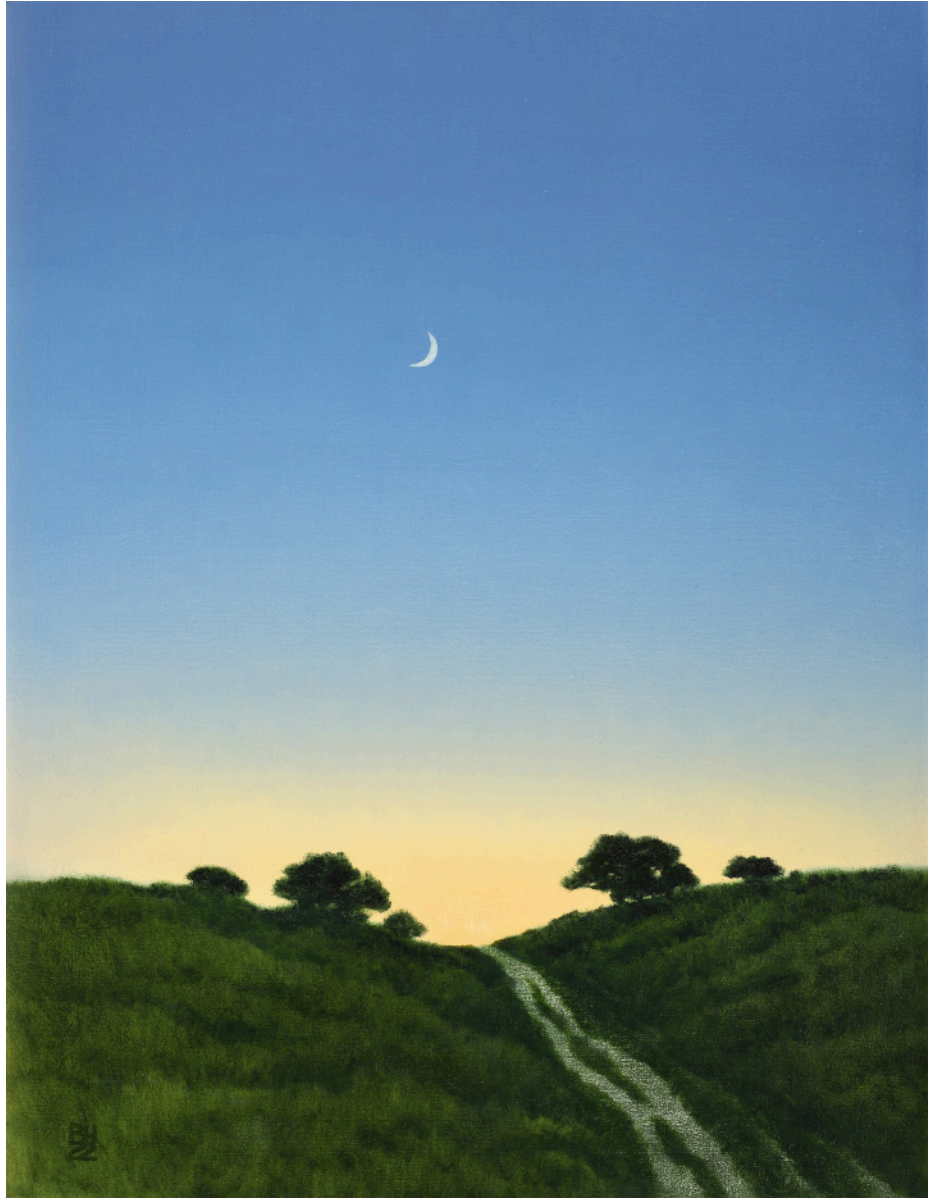




Old Perithia, Corfu
41 x 46 cm



The Sea Beyond
76 x 101,5 cm



Crescent Moon
51 x 66 cm

The White House, Hampstead Heath
66 x 91,5 cm





Chalk Valley, Botany Bay, Kent
102 x 102 cm



Moon over Siusi, Italy
76.5 x 86.5 cm



'La Superba', Summer Night, Genoa
71 x 81 cm



Castellabate, Italy
46 x 76 cm



Italian Nocturne
71 x 86 cm



August Moon
82 x 91.5 cm



Pines with Mount Etna Beyond, Sicily
45 x 76 cm



Sea path and moon
71 x 87 cm



Landscape at Lourmarin, Provence
66 x 86.5 cm



The Night Watch, Old Sarum
76.5 x 107 cm



City Lights
76 x 76 cm

Away and Westward Bound
61 x 46 cm





Daybreak
61 x 76 cm

The Last of Summer, Kew Gardens
86 x 71 cm



White Beach, Corfu

oil on canvas
61 x 81 cm. [24 x 32 in.]
framed size 75 x 95.5 cm. [29 ½ x 37 ½ in.]
signed and dated 2022

The north-east coast of Corfu seen from the sea. I was attracted by the dark verticals of the cypresses contrasting with the white sloping beach.

Roadway into Dusk

oil on canvas
76 x 71 cm. [30 x 28 in.]
framed size 90.5 x 85.5 cm. [35 ½ x 33 ½ in.]
signed and dated 2013

The title of this painting is from a poem *The Road and the End* by Carl Sandburg.

Old Perithia, Corfu

oil on canvas
41 x 46 cm. [16 x 18 in.]
framed size 58 x 46 cm. [22 ¾ x 18 in.]
signed and dated 2019

An abandoned 15th century village of Venetian origin on the side of Mount Pantokrator in Corfu. Clouds of butterflies by day, and fireflies by night.

The Sea Beyond

oil on canvas
76 x 101.5 cm. [30 x 40 in.]
framed size 92 x 117.5 cm. [36 ¼ x 46 ¼ in.]
signed and dated 2022

From a dream: a path leading towards the sea at the close of day, moody clouds with the moon low in the sky.

Crescent Moon

oil on canvas
51 x 66 cm. [20 x 26 in.]
framed size 65.5 x 80.5 cm. [25 ¾ x 31 ¾ in.]
signed and dated 2022

The beauty of the pale moon over open country at sundown, showing the gradation of sky colour from blue to apricot.

The White House, Hampstead Heath

oil on canvas
66 x 91.5 cm. [26 x 36 in.]
framed size 80 x 105 cm. [31 ½ x 41 ¼ in.]
signed and dated 2023

A view of the Dairy at Kenwood House, seen while walking across Hampstead Heath. The dairy was built by George Saunders, the 2nd Earl Mansfield's architect from 1794–6, for the Earl's wife, Louisa.

Chalk Valley, Botany Bay, Kent

oil on canvas
102 x 102 cm. [40 x 40 in.]
framed size 110.5 x 110.5 cm. [43 ½ x 43 ¼ in.]
signed and dated 2023

Cliffs at Botany Bay in Kent. The shadow brings drama and contrast to the white of the chalk.

Moon over Siusi, Italy

oil on canvas
76.5 x 86.5 cm. [30 x 34 in.]
framed size 90 x 100.5 cm. [35 ½ x 39 ½ in.]
signed and dated 2020

An evening walk in the moonlight at Siusi, in the Italian part of the South Tyrol.

‘La Superba’, Summer Night, Genoa

oil on canvas
71 x 81 cm. [28 x 32 in.]
framed size 88 x 98 cm. [34 ½ x 38 ¼ in.]
signed and dated 2013

Looking up at the balustrade of one of the grand aristocratic palaces on Via Giuseppe Garibaldi, built during the Renaissance.

Castellabate, Italy

oil on canvas
46 x 76 cm. [18 x 30 in.]
framed size 60 x 90 cm. [23 ½ x 35 ¼ in.]
signed and dated 2021

On the coast of the Cilento National Park south of Naples. A hot summer's day, with the umbrella pines casting welcome shade over the sand.

Italian Nocturne

oil on canvas
71 x 86 cm. [28 x 34 in.]
framed size 84 x 98.5 cm. [33 x 38 ¾ in.]
signed and dated 2022

An evening scene by the sea in Italy, on the Italian Riviera (Liguria). There's an intensity to the blue that comes before night falls absolutely.

August Moon

oil on canvas
82 x 91.5 cm. [32 ¼ x 36 in.]
framed size 95.5 x 105.5 cm. [37 ½ x 41 ½ in.]
signed and dated 2022

The height of summer and beauty. An imagined landscape.

Pines with Mount Etna Beyond, Sicily

oil on canvas
45 x 76 cm. [17 ¾ x 30 in.]
framed size 62 x 92 cm. [24 ½ x 36 ¼ in.]
signed and dated 2011

A break in a line of pines on a steep hill revealing the slumbering giant Mount Etna, with a plume of smoke escaping from the summit.

Sea path and moon

oil on canvas
71 x 87 cm. [28 x 34 ¼ in.]
framed size 88.5 x 104 cm. [35 x 41 in.]
signed and dated 2014

A nocturne based on memories of night walks by the sea in Dorset.

Landscape at Lourmarin, Provence

oil on canvas
66 x 86.5 cm. [26 x 34 in.]
framed size 79.5 x 100.5 cm. [31 ¼ x 39 ½ in.]
signed and dated 2018

A village in the Luberon, Provence, on a hazy day. I was attracted to the slope of the fields mirroring the distant sloping hills and the geometric shape of the house in the middle ground.

The Night Watch, Old Sarum

oil on canvas
76.5 x 107 cm. [30 x 42 in.]
framed size 91 x 121 cm. [35 ¾ x 47 ½ in.]
signed and dated 2023

On the site of the original ancient city of Salisbury, to the side of the ruined castle moat, it seemed as if two trees were in conversation with each other.

City Lights

oil on canvas
76 x 76 cm. [30 x 30 in.]
framed size 90.5 x 90.5 cm. [35 ½ x 35 ½ in.]
signed and dated 2023

From my imagination and memories of time spent in New York and Chicago.

Away and Westward Bound

oil on canvas
61 x 46 cm. [24 x 18 in.]
framed size 72 x 56.5 cm. [28 ¼ x 22 ¼ in.]
signed and dated 2021

A line from the song Early Morning Rain by Gordon Lightfoot, sung by Peter, Paul and Mary.

Daybreak

oil on canvas
61 x 76 cm. [24 x 30 in.]
framed size 75 x 90 cm. [29 ½ x 35 ½ in.]
signed and dated 2016

When the sky sings. I wanted to capture the purity of the early morning light, with Venus still visible.

The Last of Summer, Kew Gardens

oil on canvas
86 x 71 cm. [34 x 28 in.]
framed size 103 x 88 cm. [40 ½ x 34 ¾ in.]
signed and dated 2020

Late summer in Kew Gardens and a reminder of the last line in Keats' Ode to Autumn ('and gathering swallows twitter in the sky').

MIXED AND SOLO[*] EXHIBITIONS

2023 Roland Goslett Gallery, Richmond*
Canvas Gallery, Winchester

2022 Minster Gallery, Winchester

2021 Roland Goslett Gallery, Richmond*
Wykeham Gallery, Stockbridge, Hampshire
Iona House Gallery, Woodstock, Oxfordshire

2020 John Mitchell Fine Paintings, London*
Roland Goslett Gallery, Richmond
Wykeham Gallery, Stockbridge, Hampshire

2019 Wykeham Gallery, Stockbridge / Chelsea Arts Club

2018 Roland Goslett Gallery, Richmond* / Wykeham Gallery, Stockbridge

2017 Roland Goslett Gallery, Richmond / Wykeham Gallery, Stockbridge / Slader's Yard Gallery, West Bay, Dorset

2016 Belgravia Gallery, London / Slader's Yard Gallery, West Bay, Dorset / Blackheath Gallery, London

2015 Medici Gallery, London* / Blackheath Gallery, London / Roland Goslett Gallery, Richmond

2014 Medici Gallery, London / Blackheath Gallery, London

2013 Medici Gallery, London* / Blackheath Gallery, London

2012 Medici Gallery, London* / Pepper Gallery, London / Red Rag Gallery, Bath / Blackheath Gallery, London / Russell Gallery, London

2011 Langham Gallery, London / Russell Gallery, London / Medici Gallery, London*

2010 Medici Gallery, London* / Roland Goslett Gallery, Richmond / Galerie Carla Magna, Paris / Gloss Gallery, Exeter

2009 Medici Gallery, London*

2008 Medici Gallery, London* / Roland Goslett Gallery, Richmond

2007 Medici Gallery, London*

2006 Medici Gallery, London*

2005 Brian Sinfield Gallery, Burford* / Royal Academy of Arts, London / Medici Gallery, London*

2004 Medici Gallery, London* / Collins & Hastie, London*

2003 Medici Gallery, London* / Rye Art Gallery / Walton Gallery, London*

2002 Chelsea Arts Club* / Mall Galleries, London / Walton Gallery, London* / Pierrepont Fine Art Gallery, Oxford*

2001 Montgomery Gallery, San Francisco* / Henry Boxer Gallery, London / Pierrepont Fine Art Gallery, Oxford / John Mitchell & Son, London*

2000 Stacy-Marks Gallery, Perth / Island Gallery, Oxford / John Mitchell & Son, London*

1999 John Mitchell & Son, London*

1998 John Mitchell & Son, London* / Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh

1995 Mall Galleries, London

1994 Edith Grove Gallery, London*

1993 Roland Goslett Gallery, Richmond

1978-1982 Spectrum Gallery, New York

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