

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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High-resolution images available upon request

CONTACT: Michael Goodson

Director, Weston Art Gallery

(646) 808-9656

John Brooks: Islands Are Not Forever

Saturday, January 31 – Sunday, March 15, 2026

Opening Reception: Friday, Jan. 30, 6-8 pm, Weston Art Gallery, Aronoff Center

Program:

John Brooks in conversation with celebrated writer Ocean Vuong

Thursday, Jan. 29, 6 pm

The Mercantile Library, Cincinnati, OH



JOHN BROOKS *Islands Are Not Forever XXI, XXII and XXIII, 2025*
Courtesy the artist and Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles / © John Brooks

CINCINNATI, OH—The Cincinnati Arts Association’s Alice F. and Harris K. Weston Art Gallery in the Aronoff Center for the Arts is elated to announce the exhibition John Brooks: *Islands Are Not Forever*, a series of large-scale drawings that are installed as an immersive environment.

Islands Are Not Forever holds a mirror to the bewildering complexity of an anachronistic depiction of time and history – both personal and collective. Brooks’ on-going, large scale drawing project yields a panoramic landscape inhabited by film stars, artists, and friends, adorned with both personal and cultural motifs, locales, and artistic innuendos. His subjects are selected from ruminations on history and current events, past personal and shared experiences or drawn from the flux of life. They are arranged in an ongoing stream of recollection in a range from forceful to dreamlike with some figures and ideas in confronting postures that demand attention and others that drift softly upon the paper, the way an image is summoned from behind closed eyelids.

Collectively the installation of these 28 drawings (there are now 33 to date... and counting) address the notion of “Queer Time” - the concept among certain aestheticians and philosophers that suggests that any deviation from historical or individual linearity inherently alludes to a queer perspective and sensibility.

John Brooks intends to continue making these drawings for the rest of his life. In that sense, *Islands Are Not Forever* is an incomplete cycle, a list of ingredients without instructions. Its force is born not only from visual richness, but from its function as a collective mnemonic device, an invitation to the beholder to sit in reverence, to make a connection, to follow the path forward, or back.

John Brooks was born in central Kentucky in 1978. He studied Political Science and English Literature at the College of Charleston, South Carolina, with continuing education in art at Central St. Martins and the Hampstead School of Art in London, England. His work has been exhibited across the United States and Europe and is included in the collections of the 21C Museum Hotels, Grinnell College Museum of Art, among others.

Brooks has been featured in The New York Review of Books and The Yale Review. In 2021, Garth Greenwell penned a feature article about Brooks for the The New Yorker titled *A Kentucky Painter’s Travels in Queer Time*.