

# JOSEPH HARTMAN

## *Parry Sound 33*

**Opening Reception:** Saturday, March 4, 2-5pm

**Guided Tour of the Exhibition with Joseph Hartman:** Saturday, March 4, 3pm

**Exhibition Dates:** March 4 – April 22, 2023

The gallery is pleased to present “Parry Sound 33”, our fifth solo exhibition of work by Canadian photographer Joseph Hartman.

“Parry Sound 33” is a series of landscape photographs and watercolour paintings documenting the aftermath of the Parry Sound 33 forest fire which began on July 18, 2018, on the Henvey Inlet First Nation in Northern Ontario. Construction crews working on a wind farm sparked a fire that eventually burned a total of 11,362 hectares along the shores of Georgian Bay. It took three months to officially extinguish the fire that was so intense that embers carried by the wind crossed open water spanning the Key River, reaching many islands, and burning several cottages and homes. An investigation by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry concluded that the fire was started by a disabled vehicle that had been operated by construction crews working on the Henvey Inlet Wind Project. The construction company hired to complete the installation of the windmills was pressured to continue work through extreme fire bans despite the many small fires that had already been started by crews due to the strict completion deadline imposed by the government contract. Circumstances surrounding the forest fire are complex and ultimately, its investigation did not assign blame, and no charges were laid.

The Northeastern shoreline of Georgian Bay is a landscape that Hartman knows intimately. He has spent his summers on the Bay since he was a child, and while at university he worked with the Canadian Coast Guard patrolling a 150-kilometre section of the coastline that extends from Parry Sound to Killarney. Hartman watched from afar as the fire burned in the summer of 2018 because access to the area was blocked. He returned the following summer and photographed the aftermath using a drone to make composite aerial views which led to the production of large-scale immersive prints. Hartman quickly began to see the potential for a project while documenting the barren but sculpturally beautiful landscape. His photographs of this exposed and vulnerable landscape are an investigation into how the landscape, ecosystem and community have been affected by the fire. Through his exploration of the area, Hartman asks, “how do we move forward with renewable energy projects in a responsible way that doesn’t jeopardize the environment we are trying to protect?” In “Parry Sound 33”, Hartman exposes how humans can rapidly change a landscape, especially one that is so fragile.

Climate change is increasing the number and severity of forest fires worldwide. The Parry Sound 33 forest fire is of global interest as it occurred in an area with an abundance of peat. Peat is now in the scientific spotlight in the fight against global warming because of how much carbon is stored in its bulk. Although they occupy only 3% of the global land area, peatlands contain about 25% of global soil carbon—twice as much as the world’s forests. About a quarter of the world’s peatlands exist within Canada’s borders, storing more carbon than the Amazon Rainforest.

Joseph Hartman’s work has been exhibited in private and public galleries across Canada and his photographs are in private and corporate collections across North America.