

**Eric Aho's Icy Abstractions at the Hood Museum of Art
Emphasize Nature's Innate Contrasts**



The *avanto*, or the hole cut in the pond ice next to a Finnish sauna, has captivated nationally recognized Vermont artist Eric Aho for the last nine years and inspired the ongoing series of paintings titled *Ice Cuts*. The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, is delighted to gather together, for the first time, a large group of these works, along with the artist's related watercolor studies and monotypes. This exhibition provides the opportunity to share in Aho's extended

meditation upon this austere, simple, yet mesmerizing subject. *Eric Aho: Ice Cuts* is on view from January 9 through March 13, 2016, and programming highlights include an opening artist talk and reception on Friday, January 8, as well as other talks, tours, workshops and family events, and member exclusives.

"I hope to accomplish something in painting that has the weight of actual human experience," says Aho of the *Ice Cuts* series.

Trained initially as a printmaker, Eric Aho started painting when he moved to northern New England to teach that subject at the Putney School in Vermont in 1989. His major interest has been the landscape. His work has evolved toward abstraction in recent decades, as is clear from the *Ice Cuts* series, which eliminates the horizon line and focuses entirely on the shape of this void in the ice. The vantage point of these pictures is slightly above the hole, in fact, and in the large paintings it feels as though one needs to take just a few steps to immerse oneself in the cold depths.

The ice surface and cutaway edge reveal nuanced color and curious reflections, while the water in the hole is opaque in some canvases and reflective in others. Together, these aspects become rich painterly opportunities for Aho. As the series progresses, for example, Aho transforms the water, occupying the primary shape of the canvas, from a dark chasm into a glowing yellow surface, revealing the light of an imagined Arctic sky. In these luminous and complex works, ice and water, the same substance in different forms, are transubstantiated as paint through color and brushstroke. Seen as a whole, Eric Aho's *Ice Cuts* are an intense meditation on winter, and on the art of painting.

This exhibition was organized by the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, and generously supported the Philip Fowler 1927 Memorial Fund and the Ray Winfield Smith 1918 Memorial Fund.

Eric Aho: Ice Cuts

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About the Hood Museum of Art

The mission of the Hood Museum of Art, as a teaching museum, is to create an ideal learning environment that fosters transformative encounters with works of art. This dynamic educational and cultural facility houses one of the oldest and largest college collections in the country, with more than 70,000 objects acquired since 1772. Among its most important works are six Assyrian stone reliefs that date from around 900 BCE. The collection also presents art from other ancient cultures, the Americas, Europe, Africa, Papua New Guinea, and many more regions of the world. The Hood seeks to inspire and educate through direct engagement with original works of art and offers access to the rich diversity of its collections through ongoing highlights displays, special exhibitions, an online collections database, and a wide array of programs and events.

About Dartmouth

Founded in 1769, Dartmouth is a member of the Ivy League and consistently ranks among the world's greatest colleges and universities. Dartmouth has forged a singular identity for combining its deep commitment to outstanding undergraduate liberal arts and graduate and professional education with distinguished research and scholarship in the arts and sciences and its three leading professional schools—the Geisel School of Medicine, Thayer School of Engineering, and the Tuck School of Business.

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Image caption: Eric Aho, *Ice Cut (1932)*, 2010, oil on linen. Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College: Purchased through the Virginia and Preston T. Kelsey '58 Fund; 2015.24.1. Photo by Rachel Portesi.

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