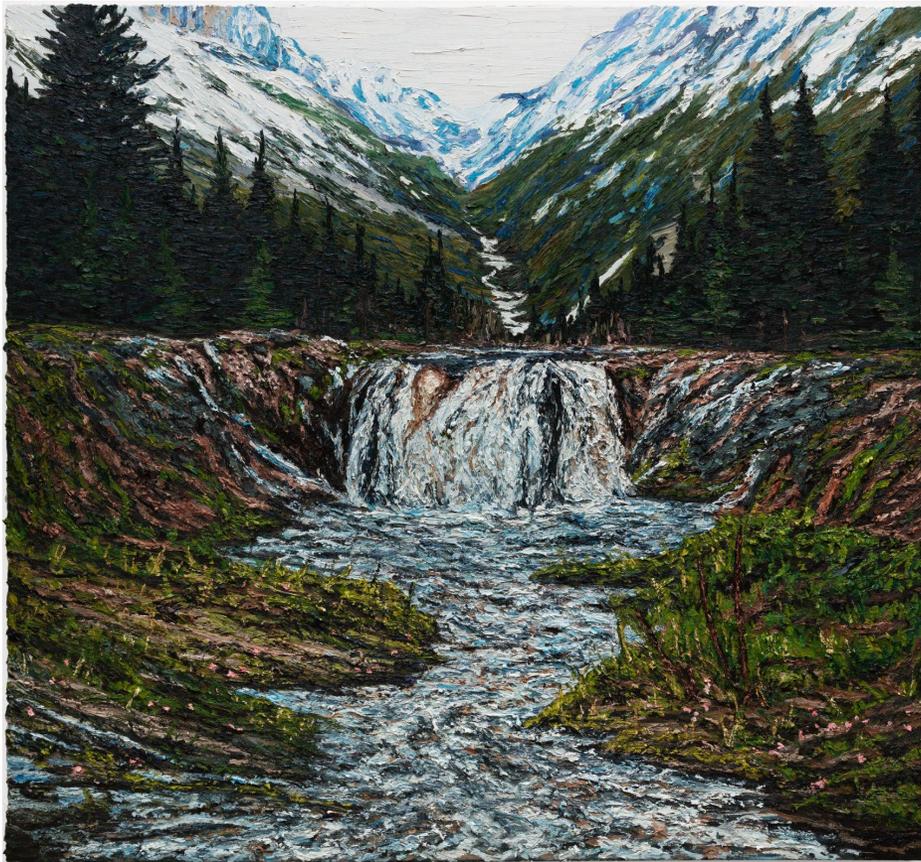


The painting 'The Crossing' by Matt Bahen depicts a landscape with a body of water, reeds, and a sunset sky. The foreground is dominated by tall, dark green reeds. The middle ground shows a body of water with several small, dark figures or structures. The background features a dark, silhouetted treeline against a bright, orange and yellow sunset sky. The overall style is expressive and textured, with visible brushstrokes.

March 7 - 28, 2026

Essay by Agnieszka Matejko

Matt Bahen
The Crossing



From a Trickle to a Flood, 2023. Oil on Canvas, 72" x 78"



To Illuminate the Mouth of the Flood, 2024. Oil on Canvas, 48" x 54"

At the Threshold: Where Myth Becomes Image

By: Agnieszka Matejko

The last rays of sunlight skim the surface of a marshy lake in Matt Bahen's painting. Only faint traces of green linger in the silhouettes of reeds piercing the water. One senses that if we were to turn away from *Save for the Light*, even briefly, the landscape would descend into impenetrable darkness.

This feeling of twilight — the sense of standing at the edge of a world about to change — permeates Bahen's new series. His paintings draw on legends, myths, epic poems, and fairy tales in which a lone hero or heroine ventures into the unknown: the depths of a forest, a storm-tossed sea, a realm from which there is no easy return.

By evocatively titling his exhibition *The Crossing*, Bahen invokes the ideas of one of his favourite authors, the mythologist Joseph Campbell. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell described "Crossing the First Threshold" as the decisive moment when the hero leaves the familiar world and overcomes perilous adventures. It is a symbolic passage — one that ultimately makes renewal and transformation possible.

Yet Bahen's works contain no human figures. Instead, they invite us to become the protagonists poised to step into his immersive paintings. In *To Illuminate the Mouth of the Flood*, we confront an almost impenetrable wall of tree trunks while a swelling stream surges into a torrent that bars our way forward.



The Little Prince, 2025. Oil on Canvas, 48" x 54"



Save for the Light, 2025. Oil on Canvas, 60" x 66"

Its silver ripples glow amid the surrounding darkness. The contrast is deliberate: Bahen does not work in photographic realism but builds his images from symbolic fragments. In this image, seasons collapse into one another: an icy winter creek swells to flood a lush, verdant forest. This quiet dissonance deepens the painting's atmosphere of unease and mystery.

When figures do appear, they emerge as animal avatars. In *The Little Prince* painting, a dog — or perhaps a fox — stands camouflaged among withered grasses as a winter storm approaches, gazing expectantly at the sky. The scene and the title echo Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's book, a spiritual allegory in which a child travels from planet to planet, encountering adults who, blinded by money and vanity, have forgotten love. In the end, the little prince realizes that the rose he left behind needs him; it is his devotion that makes her lovable, and he returns to care for her.

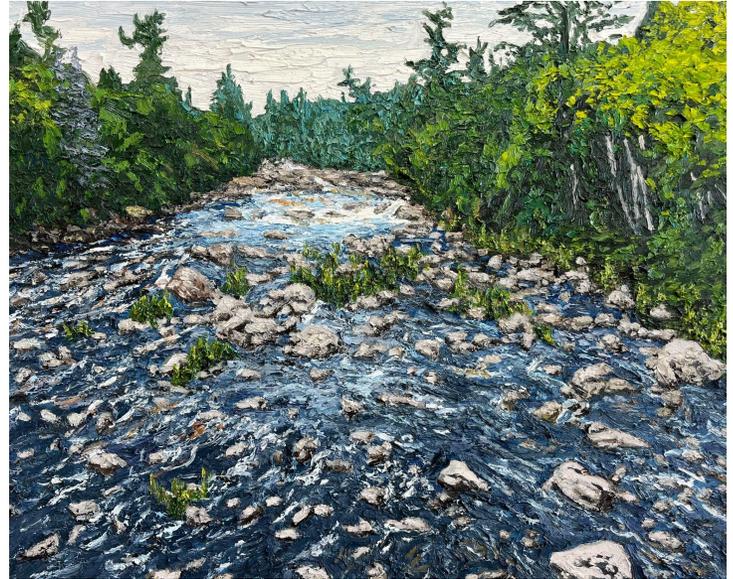
So too in Bahen's paintings: every ending contains a new beginning. Darkness gives way to light. Flood waters rise and recede. Trials unfold — and as one epoch closes, another rises to meet the challenge.

This is an allegory for the present moment. In our politically, socially, and environmentally turbulent times, these works express not catastrophe but continuity and the possibility of transformation. Instead of moralizing, the artist turns to myth to help navigate uncertainty.



The Gardener's Plot Bears the Fruit of Intention, 2023. Oil on Canvas, 48" x 54"

Ultimately, Bahen places his trust in enduring cycles and timeless legends. “That’s why I keep going back to storytelling – to literature and narrative – as a way of navigating the world,” he says. “That’s what holds us together; that’s how we make sense of our lives.” This faith infuses his work, offering viewers both quiet reassurance and strength to face turbulent times.



Unbridled, 2025. Oil on Canvas, 24" x 30"



The Pilgrimage, 2024. Oil on Canvas, 60" x 66"



The Weave of the Tapestry, 2024. Oil on Canvas, 48" x 54"



To Show the Way, 2024. Oil on Canvas, 60" x 66"

Publication in conjunction with the exhibition Matt Bahen: *The Crossing* by Peter Robertson Gallery from March 7th to 28th, 2026.
Essay written by Agnieszka Matejko.

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Front cover:
Matt Bahen
To Save for the Light, 2025
60" x 66"
Oil on Canvas

Toronto based painter Matt Bahen's primary influence is literature. He strives to interpret the power of metaphor and allegory with paint. Bahen listens to audiobooks while working and is an avid reader of fiction, particularly Cormac McCarthy, TS Eliot, and Joseph Campbell. His impastoed surfaces and stark compositions are at once unsettling and highly engaging. Using various motifs including water, fire, and animals, Bahen constructs individual narratives that remain in a state of perpetual tension.

**peter
robertson
gallery**



Matt Bahen