

Alain Le Chatelier : The Essence Of Saint Barth



The French painter is back: Alain Le Chatelier, who has shown his work at Les Artisans in Gustavia since 1996, has returned with a collection of paintings that focus on Saint Barth. "Last year while I was here I did a lot of drawings and took a lot of photographs of the landscapes," says Le Chatelier, whose former collections shown here were based on his studio, home, and garden in Paris and the French countryside, featuring ripe fruit, frying eggs, unmade beds, half-eaten cakes, forks dancing in the air, and the combined sense of humor and trompe l'oeil that charac-

terize the work of this perfectionist whose paintings never fail to please.

This year the work has a different feel as Le Chatelier explores the island's landscapes as well as its light: "The light is very different here," he notes, "and there are some very beautiful moments where the light changes very quickly. It's not like in France, or Sweden where I also exhibit my work and the sunsets last all evening." When he left the island last winter, the painter had enough "food" in his drawings and photographs to create this collection of 30 new paintings. "The big ones were



all done at my house in the country," he says.

One of the largest paintings is a view of the port of Gustavia at sunset, with lights twinkling around the harbor, but as is typical with Le Chatelier, he played with the position of the houses and some of the colors, playing with that elusive light at the end of the day. In another scene, the narrow road in Lurin, a fictitious mango tree appears in the painting. Nature yes, true to nature, not entirely.

"The sea here can be black, dark blue, even white, it depends on how the sun hits it, although we always dream of blue seas," says this painter whose eye captures the soul of what it sees and translates it into a captivating image on canvas, from dark green cactus with an iguana peeking out at you, or a grove of latanier trees

in Flamands set against a fiery red sky. A series of small paintings evoke elements of the island as well as cactus and bread fruit typical of the Caribbean.

"What I like best about Saint Barth is its natural beauty," affirms Le Chatelier. "But because it's Saint Barth there is always one boat, one car, one helicopter, one airplane," he adds. "I walk around the island a lot. I have a lot of images of the landscape in my head."

At times, Le Chatelier seems almost like a botanist let loose with a paintbrush: he has always had a fondness for lush vegetation, oversized leaves, and the variegated greens of gardens—a perfect predilection to apply to the essence of Saint Barth.

*By Ellen Lampert-Gréaux
Photo: Rosemond Gréaux*

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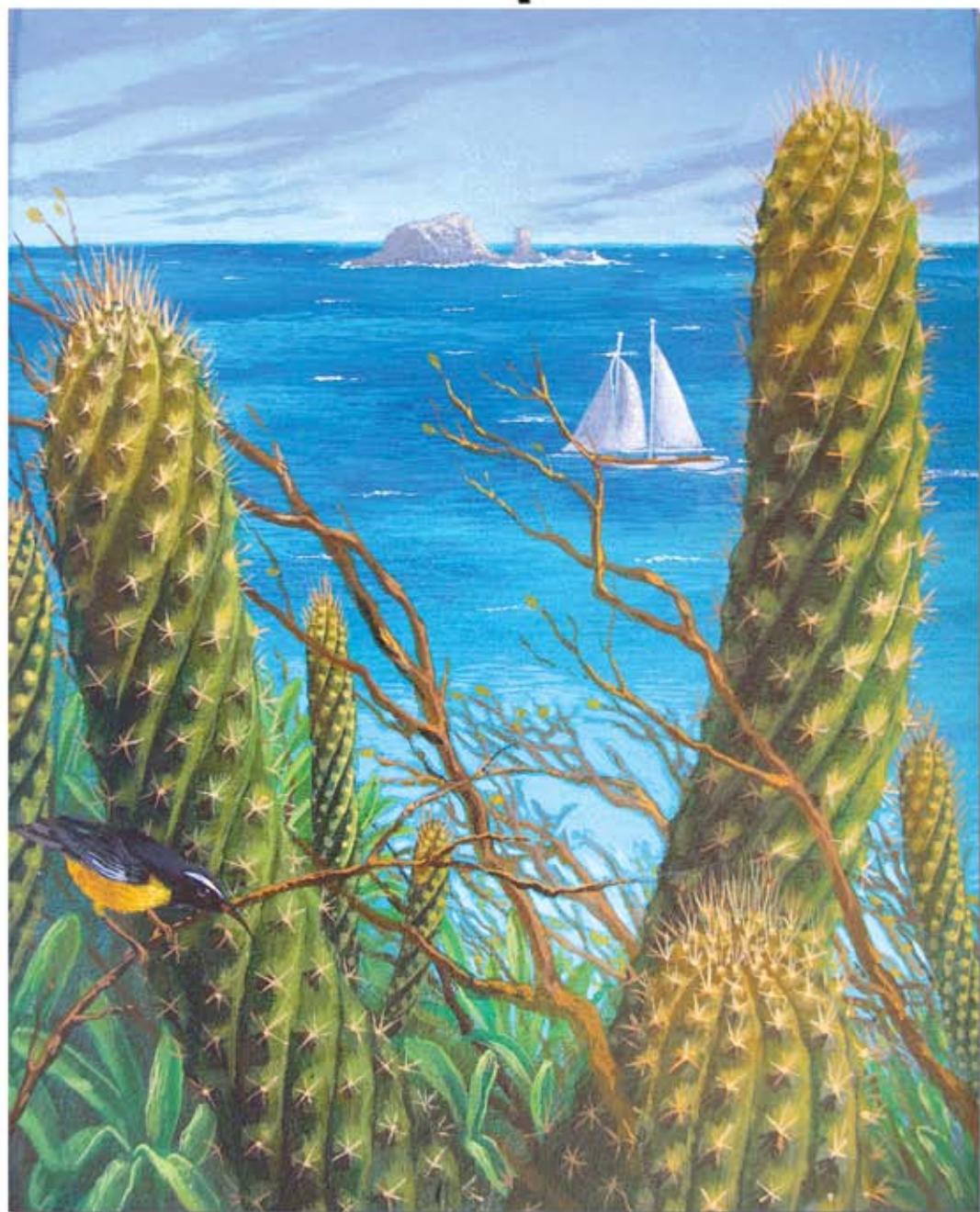
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