

# The Coast & The Sea

## Surveys Marine And Maritime Art In America



**PORTLAND, MAINE** — “The Coast & the Sea: Marine and Maritime Art in America” is on view at the Portland Museum of Art through April 26.

***“Fishing in a Catboat in Great South Bay” by Junius Brutus Stearns (United States, 1810–1885), 1871, oil on canvas, 29 by 39¼ inches. New-York Historical Society, Gift of C. Otto von Kienbusch.***



***Unidentified artist (Nineteenth Century), whale's tooth scrimshaw; ivory and black ink, 3 1/8 by 7 1/4 by 2 1/4 inches. New-York Historical Society, gift of Colonial Henry O. Havemeyer.***



***“Tropical Sunset at Sea” by Maurice Frederick Hendrick De Haas (United States, born Belgium, 1832–1895), circa 1862, oil on canvas, 24 by 34 inches. New-York Historical Society, the Robert L. Stuart Collection, the gift of his widow Mary Stuart.***

Organized by the New-York Historical Society, “Coast & the Sea” features 52 marine paintings and ten maritime artifacts from the society’s large and impressive collection.

Since the earliest voyages of European exploration, the destiny of the United States has always been linked to the ocean. The Atlantic Ocean, in particular, loomed large in the American consciousness. It served as the

***Elisha Kent Kane, MD, by Thomas Hicks (United States, 1823–1890), 1858, oil on canvas, 42 by 51 inches. New-York Historical Society, gift of several ladies of New York.***





***“US Ships of the Line Delaware and North Carolina and Frigates Brandywine and Constellation” by James Guy Evans (United States, b England, circa 1810–1860), circa 1835–60, oil on canvas, 31¾ by 44 1/8 inches. New-York Historical Society, gift of an anonymous donor.***

geographical barrier between Old and New Worlds and was a conduit for the global exchange of ideas, people and things. It spurred commerce and enterprise that was the basis for both national economic activity and personal fortune. The activities in America’s great harbors and port cities also supported the nation’s cultural development, prompting the rise of schools of maritime and landscape painting, as well as portraiture.

“The Coast & the Sea” explores the rich visual traditions of marine and maritime art through a diverse selection of paintings and objects that



***"Sunset on the Coast (Seashore)" by John Frederick Kensett (United States, 1816–1872), 1861, oil on canvas, 18 by 30 inches. New-York Historical Society, The Robert L. Stuart Collection, the gift of his widow Mary Stuart.***

range in date from 1750 to 1904. For example, early Nineteenth Century seascapes by Thomas Birch, who was considered the country's first specialist in marine paintings, trace the adaptation of Anglo Dutch painting conventions to an American context. Other highlights include spirited paintings of famous sea battles that celebrate the heroic feats of the US Navy, and romanticized portrayals of ships in storms that symbolize life's trials and the power of nature. There are portraits of esteemed merchants, mariners and naval heroes, as well as of notable crafts, including the legendary naval frigate the *USS Constitution* (known as "Old Ironsides"). Views of bustling harbors and scenic sites along the water by leading landscape artists of the day — such as Samuel Colman, Sanford Gifford, John Frederick Kensett and Francis Augustus Silva — showcase American waterways as a source of aesthetic inspiration, economic growth and leisure activities. The global reach of American maritime activities is exemplified in a rare Nineteenth Century painting by an unidentified Chinese artist, portraying the harbor of Canton.

Maritime artifacts such as an elaborately engraved whale's tooth scrimshaw from the mid-Nineteenth Century, a mariner's octant from 1840 and a handsome silver presentation tureen commemorating acts of bravery during the War of 1812 provide additional historical context for understanding the visual and material culture of seafaring life in the United States.

The exhibition is accompanied by the catalog *The Coast & the Sea: Marine and Maritime Art in America* by exhibition curator Linda S. Ferber (D Giles Limited, London, 104 pages, \$29.95).

The museum is at 7 Congress Square. For information, [www.portlandmuseum.org](http://www.portlandmuseum.org) or 207-775-6148.



***"Engagement between the US Frigate Constitution and HMS Guerriere" by Carlton Theodore Chapman (United States, 1860–1925), 1895, oil on canvas, 29¼ by 35½ inches; New-York Historical Society, The Naval History Society Collection (John Sanford Barnes Foundation).***