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SHIPWRECKS

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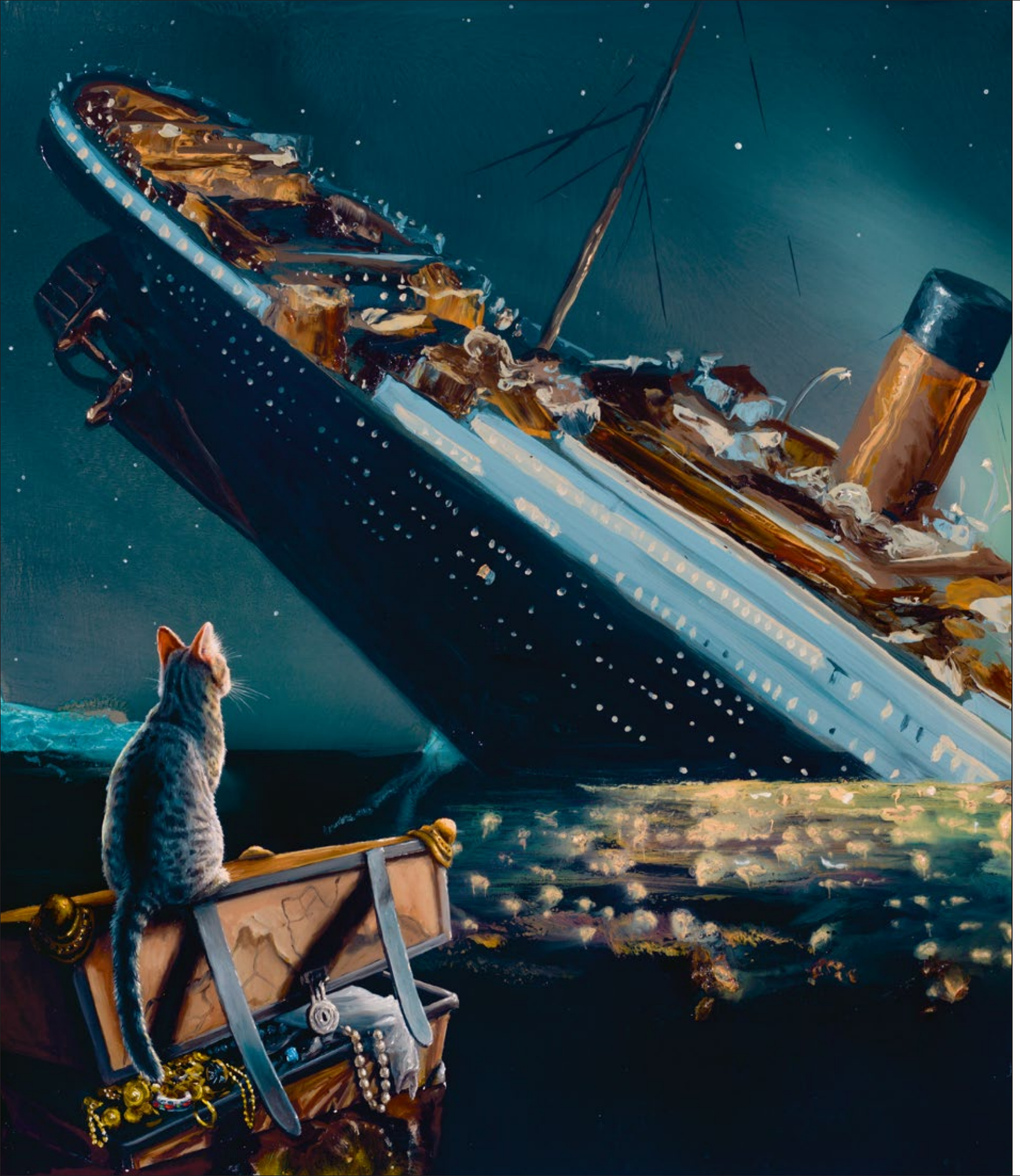

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ANDREA GROVER

GUILD HALL
DELMONICO BOOKS · D.A.P., NEW YORK

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Acknowledgments

It has been my honor to work on this exhibition. Alexis Rockman brings to painting the same athleticism and energy of his game on the basketball court. Rockman has been called an "eco-warrior,"* and while he shrugs off the commando comparison, he has spent more than three decades sounding the alarm about what humans are doing to life on Earth. The metaphor of the shipwreck was tailor-made for an exhibition about the insatiable appetite of our species for expansion and globalization, versus the finite resources of the planet. When asked if his work is literal, Rockman has responded that he has no time for elusiveness.

Our exceptional colleagues at Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) have contributed expertise and scholarship to the development of this project; Daniel Finamore, Associate Director–Exhibitions and Russell W. Knight Curator of Maritime Art and History, and Trevor Smith, Associate Director–Multisensory Experience and Curator of the Present Tense Initiative, were integral from the inception. They guided Rockman in his choices of subject matter and provided historical references from PEM's substantial maritime art collection. PEM's Director of Exhibition Planning and Display, Priscilla Danforth, oversaw the planning process for the installation in PEM's historic East India Marine Hall.

I thank the close-knit, capable Guild Hall team who organized *Alexis Rockman: Shipwrecks*. Our Chief Curator and Museum Director, Christina Strassfield, provided invaluable insight from her thirty years of curating exhibitions at our institution. My assistant, Elise Trucks, an art historian by training, contributed academic research and oversaw the production of the exhibition catalogue. Curatorial assistant and registrar Casey Dalene managed registration, transportation, and installation with characteristic pluck. The capable minds of Deputy Director Jeannine Dyner and Director of Philanthropy Kristin Eberstadt provided strong institutional leadership for this effort. And our Board Chair, Marty Cohen, and the entire Board of Trustees have contributed unparalleled spiritual and financial support for Guild Hall's 2021 exhibitions and this year's ninetieth-anniversary celebration.

Our writers for the exhibition catalogue—Daniel Finamore and Trevor Smith of PEM; Chanda Laine Carey, assistant professor of creative studies at the University of British Columbia; Brett Littman, Director of the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum; and Sasha Archibald, former editor at *Cabinet* and faculty member at Pacific Northwest College of Art—created a generous body of knowledge around Rockman and the shipwreck motif in art. Mary DelMonico, founder, DelMonico Books, and Karen Farquhar, production director, were intrepid in helping to produce the publication, designed by the talented Miko McGinty, who was aided by Julia Ma. Anna Jardine provided supreme attention to detail as our copy editor. Additional research for the catalogue was provided by Shay Kothari, a recent graduate of Bard College's art history program.

This show would not be possible without the trust and generosity of our lenders: Christine Sciulli and Carter Burwell, Dr. Joselito Cariño Cabaccan and Thomas Fandel, Dathel and Thomas Coleman, Jonathan O'Hara, Heifara Rutgers and David Roth, Dorothy Spears, Angela Westwater and David Meitus, Baldwin Gallery, Tripoli Gallery, Sperone Westwater Gallery, the artist, and anonymous lenders.

Contributions to the exhibition by true believers in the artist's vision made this breadth of work possible. We are grateful for the generosity of our lead sponsor, Angela Westwater, Sperone Westwater, and our co–lead sponsor Fiona and Eric Rudin, as well as the additional support of Philip Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons, James E. Cottrell and Joseph F. Lovett, and Hall Art Foundation. All Guild Hall Museum Programming is funded by Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, an anonymous donor, Crozier Fine Arts, The Michael Lynne Museum Endowment, and The Melville Straus Family Endowment. The catalogue *Alexis Rockman: Shipwrecks* is made possible in part by the Theo and Catherine Hios Publication Fund.

The artist would like to extend his gratitude to Guild Hall, Peabody Essex Museum, Princeton University Art Museum, Karl E. Kussero, Maxwell Anderson, Kevin Avery, Alan C. Braddock, Elizabeth Braun, Christina Connett Brophy, Alex Brown, Ferran Brown, Richard Edwards and Baldwin Gallery, Kathy Foster, Patrick Jaojoco, Elizabeth Kornhauser, Tom Levy, Celia Magee, Jonathan O'Hara, Jeff Richmond-Moll, Nancy Um, Diana Wall, Angela Westwater and Sperone Westwater, David Lieber and David Zwirner Gallery, and Tripoli Patterson and Tripoli Gallery. Alexis Rockman's assistant, Alexander Winch, provided exceptional help with research. The artist especially thanks his wife, Dorothy Spears, for being an intellectual sounding board for his entire creative practice.

It is our wish that the artist's sense of urgency for halting the exploitation of life on the planet is shared with those who view this exhibition, and that we are all inspired to action.

Andrea Grover
Guild Hall Executive Director
and Exhibition Curator

*Andrea K. Scott, "Goings on About Town," *The New Yorker*, July 9 and 18, 2018, 10.

Introduction: Alexis Rockman's Tipping Points

DANIEL FINAMORE AND TREVOR SMITH

Si bene calculum ponas, ubique naufragium est.
Make a fair reckoning, and you find shipwreck everywhere.
—Petronius, *Satyricon*[1]

Alexis Rockman's hallucinatory oil paintings of shipwrecks do not depict contemporary disasters well known from press video and photography. Neither the oil tanker *Exxon Valdez*'s fouling of Prince William Sound in 1989 nor the cruise ship *Costa Concordia*'s grounding off the coast of Tuscany in 2012 make appearances in his dramatic series. Instead, the shipwrecks Rockman depicts are events that reach back across wide swaths of time conjured through historical documents, literature, and eyewitness testimony. These events include the 1915 torpedoing of the ocean liner *Lusitania* (pp. 32, 86), which eventually brought the United States into World War I; the sinking of the *Nuestra Señora de Atocha* (p. 44), a Spanish galleon laden with treasure, off the Florida Keys in 1622; the 1727 conflagration on the *Luxborough Galley* (p. 45), which carried enslaved people, rum, and cotton goods between Africa, Jamaica, and Great Britain; and Sir John Franklin's ill-fated attempt in 1845–46, on the HMS *Erebus*, to discover the Northwest Passage (pp. 31, 84). The theme is clear: Globalization is not a recent phenomenon; the aspirations that drove these historical voyages also generated disasters that perhaps we can now understand as harbingers of our current state of world affairs.

Rockman's historical gaze is not an exercise in nostalgia but rather a meditation on the mortal consequences of global trade and on our own fraught involvement with and vulnerability in the face of climate change. Human life and emotions are not depicted; instead, animals stand in as witnesses to the precariousness of human endeavor before the unremitting power of nature. It is not a person but a monkey, for example, perched precariously on cultural flotsam, that witnesses the aftermath of disaster in *The Sinking of the Brig Helen* (2017; p. 37).

These silent witnesses continue a trope that emerged in neoclassical paintings, where small figures are often located in the foreground to give a dramatic sense of scale to a sweeping landscape. An example of this is Thomas Cole's depiction of Native Americans in his nineteenth-century Luminist paintings. In Rockman's paintings it is not people but animals that stand in for the viewer and as a sign of a culture (or in this case nature) that is under threat.

Even though Rockman's contemporary paintings are flush with passages of bravura abstract mark-making, they are created in the service of a now unfashionable representational drive grounded in realist traditions of European and American art, whose apotheosis was the academic genre of history painting. From the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, academies, most famously the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris, taught that painting was organized into a strict hierarchy

Fig. 1 P.D.P. Monogrammist, a follower of Hendrik Cornelisz Vroom (circa 1566–1640). *Ships and Whales in a Tempest*, c. 1595. Oil on panel. Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

of categories, starting with still life, proceeding to genre painting, and then portraiture. History painting, large-scale works depicting mythical narratives, was considered the most important of all. These attention-grabbing visual spectacles were often allegories of imperial reach and the power of the state but did not initially depict actual events.

In seventeenth-century Europe, paintings of shipwrecks were often allegories of humankind, religion, or the ship of state. Given that much naval activity was undertaken as part of the European colonial enterprise, perhaps this is not so surprising. Such broad topics were embraced far more readily than was the fate of an individual sailor and his ship on any given voyage. When humans were depicted, they were usually anonymous bodies in the midst of drowning or clinging to flotsam, hovering between life and death, their fate yet to be determined. Humanity was portrayed as tossed upon a sea of unpredictable events (fig. 1).

In later years, shipwrecks became a form of reportage, and paintings attempted to create dramatic images of historical events that only the most unfortunate had witnessed firsthand. Shipwreck paintings came to symbolize human frailty confronted by the vagaries of nature and, more often than not, triumph over adversity. A series of paintings in the Peabody Essex Museum's collection by John Cleveley the Elder recounting the loss of the *Luxborough Galley* (1759) begins by portraying the desperate efforts to escape the burning ship (fig. 2). Subsequent works document the fortitude of survivors in a longboat during a North Atlantic winter. But they do not directly address the slave trade that motivated the voyage, or the cannibalism that took place, or the recriminations among surviving crew afterward.

By the nineteenth-century even history painting had come to commonly include depictions of actual historical events. One of the most important historical portrayals of a shipwreck, Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818–19) drew on contemporary reportage to chronicle a highly politicized contemporary event (fig. 16). Scores of people had lost their lives when the French frigate *Medusa*, helmed by an incompetent political appointee, ran aground off the coast of Mauritania. Fifteen survivors of the horrific shipwreck are shown floating on an improvised raft as they try to signal a ship on the horizon, with the outcome of the encounter far from certain. These souls had been adrift on the raft for thirteen days unprotected from raw nature and had turned to conflict and cannibalism before their eventual rescue. The painting was interpreted as a comment on the corruption at the heart of the Bourbon restoration, and the controversy stripped the veneer off European notions of social hierarchy and civilized society.

Géricault constructed his images by researching eyewitness testimonies and a variety of other sources. Rockman is widely read and has a deep interest in history, art history, ecology, archaeology, and anthropology. Many of his paintings are built up from published sources alongside historical visual representations. Even as research remains a key step in the production of Rockman's paintings, as it was for Géricault, the act of making representational images of the world in the present tense has long been superseded by photography, film, video, and now various forms of digital media. If the *Medusa* shipwreck were to happen today, we would first see images of it on social media, almost instantaneously, via video clips shot on cell phones and transmitted by satellite. Painting, on the other hand, has remained an obdurately slow medium that continues to invite close looking and deep thinking.

Fig. 2 John Cleveley the Elder (British, 1712–1777). *The Burning of the Luxborough Galley*, 1759. Oil on canvas, 20 × 25⅛ in. (50.8 × 63.8 cm). Museum purchase made possible by Ulf B. and Elizabeth C. Heide, 2008 M27499.1. Image courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. Photograph by Walter Silver.

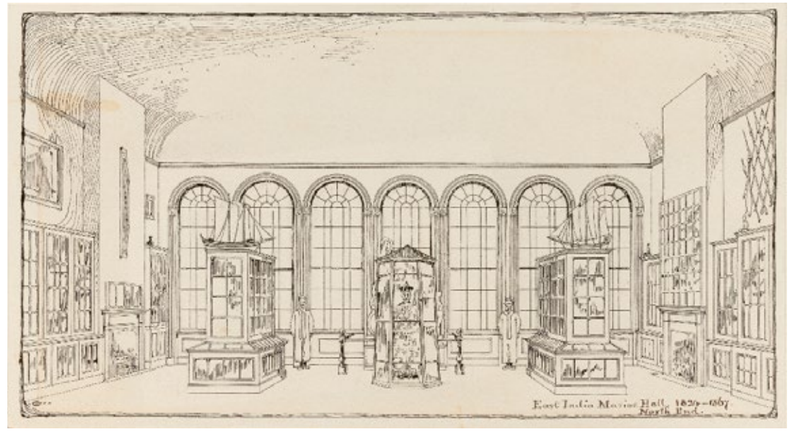


Fig. 3 James Henry Emerton, illustrator (American, 1847–1931). *East India Marine Hall, 1824–1867, North End*, 1879. Ink on paper, 6½ × 11⅞ in. (16.5 × 30.1 cm). Museum Purchase, 1889 M303.4. Image courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. Photograph by Kathy Tarantola.

The iconography of shipwrecks through history is by now rich and varied and accessible not only in museums but on the internet. It does not take long to discover how the tableau of the *Titanic*'s sinking reenacted in the Hollywood movie of the same name was based partly on historical paintings and illustrations in which the ship sinks at a dramatic plunging angle. Such images originated with firsthand descriptions from stunned survivors in nearby lifeboats. By our time, however, that compositionally potent angle of the ship on its way to the ocean floor has long been transformed from collective horror at a specific event into a metaphor of humanity's hubris. We have come full circle from the allegorical mode to reportage and back.

Rockman's paintings refer to specific historical moments in which real ships were wrecked, with consequent loss of life and property, as well as damage to a worldview in which the ship is a fundamental instrument of an integrated globe. But in the image-saturated twenty-first century, his paintings of shipwrecks have little choice but to return to the allegorical mode. Shipwrecks occupy a space of intense imaginative interest today, yet when they do become news there is often an environmental connection, as with the capsized vessels in the Mediterranean overloaded with migrants fleeing drought and desertification in North Africa. Shipwrecks also become newsworthy when the environmental damage they cause threatens a landscape that is central to the idea of the beauty of nature, as happened with the *Costa Concordia* and the *Exxon Valdez*. The disasters involving these ships came to symbolize the impact of human globalization on nature. As such, the unseen passengers in Rockman's works of art are the entirety of humanity.

Museums and artists share the challenge of keeping alive the expressive possibility of the physical manipulation of a medium in an era when images have become interchangeable bits of digital data. If you do an image search online for "shipwrecks," you have to scroll a long way before you get to a non-photo-based image. If you look for "shipwreck paintings," the chronologies and histories are made fluidly interchangeable. Rockman's paintings work with the fact that the history of shipwrecks and their images are accessible as never before. From this vast archive, Rockman can generate and reimagine a series of compositions that are not so much tethered to history but borrow from it. Rockman's paintings invite us to consider the broad sweep of global trade that gives rise to these images.

At the Peabody Essex Museum, Rockman's paintings have been installed in East India Marine Hall, situated within the milieu of a globe integrated through mercantile trade and imperial ambition circa 1825, when members of Salem's East India Marine Society opened their dazzling exhibition space to display the intellectual and material fruits of their world-encompassing ventures.

Originally, paintings in the hall were interspersed among full-sized figures of Parsi and Chinese merchants made from unfired clay and wood, and formal New England case furniture created by American craftspeople in the British design tradition (fig. 3). These cabinets were stuffed with tools, weapons, articles of dress, a cross-cultural agglomeration of "cooking utensils, shoes, hats, warlike instruments, etc., etc.," the "useful arts" from around the globe.[2] With remarkable specimens of the natural world like Neptune's cup sponges and a giant Sumatran clamshell, the experience of the room, in the society members' view, constituted a visual microcosm of the earth's variety of riches. As mariners sailed to places near and far, they transported raw materials, manufactured items, and foodstuffs, as well as political ideals, social prejudices, and diseases, in all directions.

The paintings displayed by the East India Marine Society featured geographical waypoints at Cape Town, South Africa, and Tierra del Fuego, along with nautical destinations like Guangzhou, China, and the foundational American origin story of the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. A painting of that event has sailors coming ashore from a small boat, while in the foreground Native Americans peer from behind a stone, presented as witnesses to events that will devastate their world (fig. 4). Rockman expands upon this artistic tradition with a broader lens from nature, foregrounding rats and birds that have escaped a sinking ship—passive and unwilling actors in a story of human ambition, hubris, and environmental degradation.

Fig. 4 Samuel Bartoll (American, 1765–1835). *Pilgrims First Landing at Plymouth*, 1825. Oil on panel, 33¾ × 53 in. (85.7 × 134.6 cm). Commissioned by the East India Marine Society, 1825 M293. Image courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. Photograph by Mark Sexton.

Fig. 5 Michele Felice Cornè (Italian and American, 1752–1845). *Capt. Cook Cast Away on Cape Cod*, 1802. Gouache on paper, 13½ × 15⅜ in. (34.2 × 39.1 cm). Gift of Augustus Peabody Loring, Jr., 1946 M5923. Image courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. Photograph by Mark Sexton.

Shipwrecks were not a part of the grand historical narrative promoted by the East India Marine Society for public contemplation. Such records were reserved for personal commemoration and reflection. Among the society's most egregious losses were those in February 1802, when the ships *Ulysses*, *Brutus*, and *Volusia* made sail for Batavia, which is today known as Jakarta, Indonesia. What was supposed to be a long voyage was quickly cut short when a vicious and unexpected nor'easter arose and the ships were driven onto a Cape Cod beach (fig. 5). Eleven sailors died, families were devastated, and the lost cargoes diminished ambitions for the local economy. At least six paintings documented the tragedy, but none to decorate the great hall. Rockman's paintings help to right that omission almost two hundred years later, reaching beyond the experiences of individual sailors, ships, and towns, to ponder the shipwreck as a symbol of the fragility of our globalized cultural vision.

Installing Rockman's paintings in East India Marine Hall is an opportunity to be reminded of the shadow of potential disaster that hangs over every voyage at sea, the threat that made each gathering of the East India Marine Society a celebration of the life members could not take for granted. Even where the specific events alluded to by his paintings have receded into the past, the ecological and climate changes generated by the overwhelming preponderance of human activity on our planet, otherwise known as the Anthropocene, has not. While the animals Rockman depicts in his paintings are witnesses to the aftermath of a disaster, we still must actively struggle with our fates, as ever, in the hope that we are not yet beyond redemption, that each time another human-made disaster is reported it will not be the final tipping point. Rockman's *Shipwreck* series forms a summative exhibition hall for our times, with references that cut across history countering the expected triumphal mode. And as evidenced by the epigraph to this brief introduction, that subtext of disaster has always been recognizable, if one has been willing to look for it.

1 Translation by Michael Heseltine (London: William Heinemann, 1913).

2 Quoted in George H. Schwartz, *Collecting the Globe: The Salem East India Marine Society Museum* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020), 123.

The Shipwreck Anthropocene[1]

ANDREA GROVER

This exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by American artist Alexis Rockman looks at the world's waterways as a network by which all of history has traveled. The transport of language, culture, art, architecture, cuisine, religion, disease, and warfare can be traced along the routes of seafaring vessels dating back to and in some cases predating the earliest recorded civilizations.[2] Through depictions of historic and imagined shipwrecks and their lost cargoes, Alexis Rockman addresses the impact—both factual and extrapolated—that the migration of material culture, people, plants, and animals has on the planet. The artist's virtuosity with paint and his appreciation for the marine landscape genre connect this body of work to maritime art history and its abundant sociological themes. This timely exhibition is propelled by impending climate disaster and the current largest human migration in history, which is taking place in part by water.[3]

Beginnings

Alexis Rockman was born in New York City in September 1962, the same month and year that Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*. The first chapter of this now famous cautionary tale of a prosperous farming town poisoned by pesticides provided Rockman's 2010 survey at the Smithsonian American Art Museum with its subtitle: *A Fable for Tomorrow*. Carson's fictional small town was nothing like the metropolis of Rockman's childhood. Smog from coal-fired plants and garbage incinerators made New York notorious for poor air quality. A national recession in 1969 led to economic collapse, an increase in urban crime, and the deferred maintenance of buildings and public parks. New York's waterways were polluted with PCBs and other industrial compounds. During this formative period, Rockman's experience of nature was limited to Central Park, the Bronx Zoo (2012–13; fig. 6), and dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History, where his mother worked in Margaret Mead's office. He recalls "killing time" wandering the museum and looking at the exhibits, in particular one titled "The Forest Floor," which depicted life, twenty-four times its actual size, above and below the soil.[4] A later hallmark of Rockman's panoramic paintings would be impossible views above and below land and oceans simultaneously, and across time. In this manner, human activity and natural history can be seen on a single trajectory like an evolutionary chart.

Seventies TV shows including *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* and *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau* were Rockman's introduction to diverse species and habitats, from macaques in northern Japan to marine life beneath the ice fields of Antarctica. American children of his generation learned about the planet

Fig. 6 Alexis Rockman. *Bronx Zoo*, 2012–13. Oil on wood. 84 × 168 in. Collection of Gian Enzo Sperone.

through nature documentaries and pictorial magazines such as *National Geographic*; the publication's ethnographic photography, and pull-out maps of everything from the Pacific Ocean floor to historic trade routes, raised awareness about the earth as dramatically diverse but finite. A popular science fiction film of the era, Douglas Trumbull's *Silent Running* (1972), told of a botanist turned homicidal eco-activist who kills his fellow *Valley Forge* space freighter crew members in order to preserve the last remnants of the Earth's flora and fauna. Back in reality, growing apprehension over declining biodiversity and the health impacts of pollution was timed with the birth of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 and the dawn of the modern environmental movement.

Field Research

That Alexis Rockman would become an artist who melded environmental activism, science fiction, and natural history into fantastical artworks is a result of the zeitgeist and his educational pursuits. He studied animation at Rhode Island School of Design in the early 1980s, and the acquired skills would prove useful when he contributed inspirational drawings for Ang Li's 2012 film *Life of Pi* (2009; figs. 7, 13, 14) and Darron Aronofsky's *Noah* (2014)—both movies about humans and animals at sea. Scientific illustration and field research also captivated him; following the example of Frederic Edwin Church, Martin Johnson Heade, and other nineteenth-century landscape painters, Rockman took trips in the 1990s and 2000s to Guyana, Tasmania, Costa Rica, Madagascar, and Antarctica to draw from life. On one of these trips he witnessed his first and only shipwreck.

Antarctica

In 2007, Rockman was traveling as a guest on the National Geographic Society's ecotourism vessel *Endeavour* near the South Shetland Islands. In the early hours of November 23, the ship received a distress message from a nearby cruise ship: the MV *Explorer*, carrying 154 passengers and crew, had hit ice and was taking on water. The *Endeavour* was one of two boats that arrived to assist the sinking ship. Rockman's companion (now spouse), journalist Dorothy Spears, provided details to *The New York Times*: "About 1:30 a.m.," the paper reported, "the passengers climbed down ladders on the ship's side into open lifeboats and inflatable craft. They bobbed for some four hours in the rough seas and biting winds as the sun rose and the day broadened, sandwiched between the 20-degree air and the nearly freezing waters, huddled under thin foil blankets, marking time."[5] The distressed *Explorer* was a profitable and well-worn vessel that specialized in ecological tourism, which entails an effort to see the effects of global warming in remote parts of the world; this zero-sum game educates travelers while having an impact on the environment. In this case, the ship became a permanent fixture of the ocean ecosystem, and now rests 1,130 meters down. Rockman's 2008 watercolors *The MV Explorer I* and *II*, showing the cruise ship poised to capsize, are the earliest works in this series (p. 55).

Lost Cargo

In 2017, Rockman returned to the disasters-at-sea motif with *The Sinking of the Brig Helen* (p. 37), portraying the event that nearly bankrupted—and killed—the young British scientist Alfred Russel Wallace. Wallace, who is credited with discovering evidence of natural selection about the same time as Charles Darwin, had spent four years, from 1848 to 1852, on a self-funded trip to the South American Amazon rain forest. He traveled two thousand miles upriver from the Atlantic Ocean, farther than any European explorer had gone, and collected hundreds of rare living and preserved specimens, some never before recorded. He intended to keep some of the collection for himself and sell the remainder to museums and zoos to fund his work. In May 1852, weak from tropical diseases and physical exertion, Wallace hired the brig *Helen* for his triumphant return home. Twenty-five days into the journey, the ship caught fire, and it ultimately sank with four years of Wallace's research: volumes of journals, drawings, and flora and fauna. The scientist survived ten days adrift in a lifeboat with a few salvaged notebooks and little else.

Rockman's painting imagines the enormousness of Wallace's loss. The artist frames the scene from the vantage point of a squirrel monkey crouched on a wooden cask. In the background three species of macaw (blue and gold, scarlet, and hyacinth) flee the blazing square-rigger and fly off into oblivion. Wallace presumably is outside the frame, measuring his losses. A follow-up to this work, *Wallace's Notebook* (2019; p. 47), revisits the subject from the perspective of deep-sea creatures inspecting the scientist's notebook on the ocean floor; an alien-looking anglerfish from Rockman's *Life of Pi* drawings makes a special appearance.

For Rockman, the shipwreck theme is a vehicle for the expression of material culture and living things displaced by humans, coupled with the heights of achievement and the depths

of failure. Research and artworks lost at sea constitute a thread that carries throughout this body of work.

Rockman's 2020 watercolor and acrylic *Giovanni Battista Lusieri, "Il Tempio di Nettuno a Paestum"* is a story of priceless pictures lost at sea (p. 80). Giovanni Battista Lusieri was an Italian watercolorist and court painter, in his day considered one of the most meticulous draftsmen of classical architecture and landscapes. Despite his deftness as an artist, Lusieri is remembered primarily for aiding and abetting Lord Elgin in the removal of the Parthenon marbles to Britain. After his position ended, Lusieri remained in Athens until his death in 1821. Seven years later, the ship that was transporting more than half of the artist's work from Greece to Britain sank. Rockman's watercolor envisions Lusieri's *Il Tempio di Nettuno a Paestum* slowly dissolving at the bottom of the Mediterranean.

Propped up on a sea sponge, Lusieri's architectural rendering is displayed in its gilded frame for an indifferent seahorse. In watercolor, Rockman exposes the representation of a massive Doric temple—the very monument of immortality—as transient, contingent, ruined, disappeared. He chooses this painting—depicting the Temple of Neptune at Paestum—among the many works lost in the 1828 wreck, no doubt for its irony. God of the sea, Neptune in his wrath brought shipwrecks. In Lusieri's time, the temple he painted was commonly misattributed to Neptune, while it properly belonged to Hera. Rockman renders a watercolor vision of Lusieri's misconceived testament to permanence, which stands in for the majority of Lusieri's life's work—dissipated by the sea in the same wreck off the coast of Crete, effectively erasing the artist's legacy.

Another payload of irreplaceable masterpieces destroyed in a shipwreck is the subject of Rockman's 2020 watercolor and acrylic *Abraham Storck "Study for a Man of War"* (p. 90). The Finnish ship *Vrouw Maria* was wrecked in a storm while en route from Amsterdam to St. Petersburg with a cargo of twenty-seven Dutch Master paintings acquired by Catherine the Great for the Hermitage. In Rockman's picture, Dutch marine painter Abraham Storck's picture of a naval ship reaches the seabed of the Baltic but never the walls of the museum. Also aboard that ship was a painting by Paulus Potter, an artist from a family of artists and one of the first to depict animals in elevated positions as the central figures of paintings. Rockman imagines Potter's lost picture of a bull in his watercolor and acrylic *Paulus Potter, "Bull"* (2020; p. 82). This work has unintended resonance with a 2020 headline about nearly six thousand cattle lost when the *Gulf Livestock 1*, a Panamanian-registered container ship, sank in the East China Sea.[6]

Lost Art (2020; p. 51) portrays a watery graveyard of legendary artwork across history, not subject to time or geography. Lusieri's watercolor and Storck's study reappear on the left side of the painting, now with sea anemones attached to their surfaces. Behind them rests a marble horse from the Roman-era shipwreck *Antikythera*; and facing them is a seascape by Norman Wilkinson,

Fig. 7 Alexis Rockman. *Study for* Life of Pi, 2009. Watercolor on paper, 18 × 24 in. Collection of 20th Century Fox Archives.

Fig. 8 Alexis Rockman. *Maelstrom*, 2019. Oil on wood, 68 × 108 in.

titled *Plymouth Harbour* (1917), that hung in the first-class smoking room of the *Titanic*. An orange brain coral, also out of place, is rendered as delicately as the framed artworks. In the background, a fifteenth-century Vietnamese pouring vessel drifts down unscathed, luckily not hitting the bronze statue of a youth to its right, also from the *Antikythera*. A moray eel swims by, oblivious of the masterpieces, as if to suggest that nature has no need for anything wrought by humans.

Allegory, Symbolism, and Mythology

Rockman's paintings are a salute to the history of narrative painting itself. He incorporates strands from allegorical works by Théodore Géricault, Eugène Delacroix, J. M. W. Turner, and Winslow Homer. He weaves in foreboding and supernatural references from Symbolists such as Arnold Böcklin and Elihu Vedder, and descriptive details inspired by Andreas Vesalius and other anatomists and by illustrators like N. C. Wyeth. The skies and seas, however, are unbridled celebrations of paint *qua* paint. They evoke at times the Neo-Expressionism of Sigmar Polke or Anselm Kiefer, and the flowing surfaces of Helen Frankenthaler. The treatment of sky is often gestural and explosive, in sharp contrast to the controlled application of paint for representational imagery. Rockman's facility with watercolor and acrylic paint is striking, and these various sources underscore his reverence for the history of painting.

Massive in scale and epic in scope, *Maelstrom* (2019; fig. 8, pp. 34–35) and *Waking Dream* (2020; pp. 40–41) are meant as folk catalogs of maritime ciphers. *Maelstrom* is an amalgam of Norse and Greek mythology and an examination of the psychology of early seafarers who couldn't rely on taxonomies or prior science to describe their sightings. Instead, hearsay of fantastic beings like the kraken, the narwhal, the dragon, and other phantasmagoric creatures that appear in Rockman's painting would spread like a collective nightmare. The composition in *Maelstrom* refers to Arnold Böcklin's *Im Spiel der Wellen* (*In the Play of the Waves*) (1883; fig. 9), which depicts what appear to be mermaids, triton, and a sea centaur converging in a massive swell. In place of humanoid beasts, Rockman's creatures are menacing, sharp-toothed predators. A strange explosion of tentacles bursts through the surface

Fig. 9 Arnold Böcklin (Swiss, 1827–1901). *Im Spiel der Wellen* (*In the Play of the Waves*), 1883. Oil on canvas, 70⅞ × 93¾ in. Neue Pinakothek, Munich. Distributed under CC-BY 2.0.

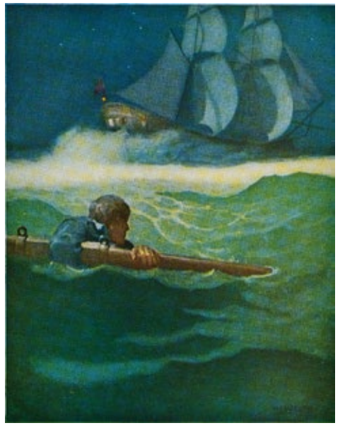


Fig. 10 N. C. Wyeth (American, 1882–1945). The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "The Wreck of the *Covenant*." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 16, 2020.

Fig. 11 Elihu Vedder (American, 1836–1923). *Star of Bethlehem*, 1879–80. Oil on canvas, 36 3/16 × 44 3/4 in. Milwaukee Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Montgomery Sears M1925.2.

of the sea: in a deft deployment of a dramatic Baroque device, one tentacle breaches the picture plane twice. In the upper right corner, an approaching Viking longship with its foreboding dragon figurehead and striped sails provides no comfort in a tumultuous scene.

Likewise, *Waking Dream* is an inventory of seafarer deliria. The shipwrecked man on the lower left is taken from N. C. Wyeth's painting *The Wreck of the Covenant* (1913; fig. 10). Clinging to flotsam, the sailor looks away from hallucinations common to those stranded at sea—an imaginary island in the clouds, and a feast that awaits in a nonexistent future. The specter of death is everywhere in this painting: a skeleton, a ghost ship, and an albatross are uncannily stitched into the scene. The supernatural sky is based on Elihu Vedder's painting *Star of Bethlehem* (1879–80; fig. 11), perhaps another reference to the hope for salvation. Foreboadingly, Rockman translates the North Star of Vedder's painting into a forked lightning bolt.

Unwitting Passengers

Like his Paulus Potter painting mentioned above, Rockman's compositions are framed from the vantage point of beasts, perhaps as a surrogate for all victims of global expansion. Domestic animals being transported for profit take the foreground, and sea creatures beneath the water question the arrival of terrestrial beings in their domain.

A floating cargo of displaced animals and agriculture is depicted in *Nuestra Señora de Atocha* (2018; p. 44), named for the Spanish galleon that played a mercenary role in the Columbian exchange before it sank near Florida in 1622. On the left are pigs, goats, and rabbits coming from Europe to the Americas, and on the right are agricultural items—pineapple, guava, sugar cane—going from the Americas to Europe. This same exchange partook in the Atlantic slave trade, introduced new diseases to peoples of the Americas, and imposed European values and norms, including the concepts of private property and religious education, on indigenous cultures. Rockman's shipwrecked creatures and crops echo this early stage of globalization and its consequences.

Rockman also poses scenarios where wild beasts resist the forces of human activity. In *The Whale Strikes Back* (*after Raleigh*) (2019; p. 96), he erases the hunters from the two whaleboats and focuses the composition on the ocean mammal as it hurls the offending vessels skyward with a blow from its tail. Comparably, Rockman vanishes the possible survivors of the luckless 1845–46 Franklin Arctic expedition in *The Lifeboat of the HMS Erebus* (2019; p. 31) and replaces them with three curious polar bears. As the bears amble aboard the boat, a small still life on the bench suggests a sailor's attempt at fishing for a meal; against the stern, a single leather boot implies that he may have been the one eaten.[7]

Migratory animals out of place are a harbinger of climate change, and unpredictable weather patterns and events like hurricanes sometimes cause people fleeing hastily to leave their pets behind. In *Lusitania* (2020; p. 32) and *Titanic* (2019; p. 33), Rockman fantasizes about animal companions that may have been abandoned on those famous wrecks. The *Titanic* had first-class passengers who traveled with their pets, and the ship's kennel registered twelve dogs, two of which survived the sinking. In *Titanic*, a rodent and a feline look upon the sinking ocean liner, and in *Lusitania*, a cat and a canary occupy a similar vantage point. For Rockman, these creatures are the "fish out of water" of man-made calamities.

Stowaways and Hitchhikers

Many of the pictures in this body of work were painted during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, and virus carriers appear in *The Things They Carried* (fig. 12, p. 43), *Liberty Island* (p. 103), and *Hagia Sofia* (p. 94). In *The Things They Carried*, Rockman includes living organisms that can transmit infectious pathogens between humans or from animals to humans: the langur monkey, the pangolin, the Asian palm civet, the Norway rat, and bats. With a formal structure like that of *Waking Dream*, the sky is aglow with figures from Andreas Vesalius's anatomical studies, perhaps an allusion to mortality. Vesalius himself was the victim of a shipwreck: in 1564, the artist went on a pilgrimage from Venice to Jerusalem but never completed his return trip. En route back to Venice, his ship struggled with bad weather in the Ionian Sea and ultimately wrecked on the island of Zakynthos, where Vesalius died from his injuries a few days later.

Globalization

As places of both extraction and transportation, the seas are easy to exploit, because of their vastness and lack of single jurisdiction. Container ships the size of the Empire State Building fly under "flags of convenience" in order to avoid accountability from stricter ruling authorities while they transport 90 percent of consumable goods worldwide. Whales alter their migratory routes because of the noise created in shipping lanes. Vast amounts of oil are released into the world's waterways, and plastic detritus in ocean, lake, and stream washes ashore for decades. What the economist Kenneth Boulding dubbed the land-based "cowboy economy" (use up the resources and head for the next frontier) might today be termed the shipwreck economy.[8] Rockman tackles some of the most infamous narratives of greed and exploitation in *Luxborough Galley* (2020; p. 45), *SS Sultana* (2018; p. 38), *Medusa* (2020; pp. 36, 87), and *The Boyd Massacre* (2019; p. 97). Each of these stories demonstrates the failure of self-rule on the water, when avarice supersedes human values.

The *Luxborough Galley* played a particularly grisly role in the triangular trade connecting Europe, the Americas, and Africa, and on its last voyage, in 1727, having transported six hundred enslaved Africans (one third of whom died of smallpox before their delivery to Jamaica), it caught fire and sank on a return trip to Europe. Survivors on a small yawl filled beyond capacity resorted to cannibalism before their rescue two weeks later off the coast of Newfoundland. In Rockman's painting, jellyfish beneath the water's surface represent the indifference of nature; a Jamaican green-and-yellow macaw flees the conflagration but will not escape its ultimate extinction from overhunting.

The sinking of the SS *Sultana* remains the worst disaster in American maritime history. In 1865, at the end of the Civil War, Captain James Cass Mason was paid to transport Union prisoners of war from a camp near Selma, Alabama, to the North. The pay was so good that the captain loaded the *Sultana* with more than two thousand passengers, when its capacity was only 376. A faulty boiler exploded during the night of April 27 and threw burning passengers and crew into the overflowing Mississippi River. Some 1,164 people perished, including soldiers who had previously survived prison camp and war injuries. No one was ever held accountable—a familiar outcome of crimes committed on the water. Rockman paints an alligator as witness to the explosion, poking its head out to see what humanity is up to this time.

Fig. 12 Alexis Rockman. *The Things They Carried*, 2020. Oil on wood, 32 × 40 in.

In reality, the captain of the *Sultana* had a seven-foot alligator living in the hull of the boat as the crew's mascot. It did not survive the explosion.

Ark of Humanity

It is a well provisioned ship, this on which we sail through space. If the bread and beef above decks seem to grow scarce, we but open a hatch and there is a new supply, of which before we never dreamed. And very great command over the services of others comes to those who as the hatches are opened are permitted to say, "This is mine!"[9]

—Henry George

Social theorist and economist Henry George first used the metaphor of a ship to illustrate the finitude of Earth's natural resources and the need for governing their distribution in his prophetic 1879 book, *Progress and Poverty*. The author had learned firsthand about the need for rationing, having twice sailed around the world since age fifteen as a lowly foremast boy. To avoid the uneven distribution of wealth, George proposed a tax on everything that is freely supplied by nature. While his proposal was not adopted, scientific efforts to conserve and restore biodiversity through seed banks and habitat rehabilitation might be the life raft of today's environmental movement.

In a November 2017 interview on Boston's WBUR radio station, Rockman said, "The history of life on this planet is psychedelic—it's almost hard to comprehend how exciting it is and how phantasmagorical things can be. The stories of extinction, of invasive species, some of the darker parts of human legacy that have left not only humans doing things to humans, but humans doing things to other life on this Earth."[10] Through the lens of the shipwreck, Alexis Rockman examines the complexity of the human psyche, the rearrangement of material culture and economies, and the exploitation of life, with its intended and unintended consequences. His paintings awaken imagination to the colossal impact of the Anthropocene, and with any luck inspire better captaining of spaceship Earth.[11]

1 The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "Anthropocene" as "the period of time during which human activities have had an environmental impact on the Earth regarded as constituting a distinct geological age." https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Anthropocene.

2 For a story on archaeological discovery that points to Stone Age seafaring, see John Noble Wilford, "On Crete, New Evidence of Very Ancient Mariners," *The New York Times,* February 15, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/16/science/16archeo.html.

3 The United Nations estimates 70.8 million people have been forced to leave their homes because of conflict or persecution; see https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/refugees.

4 Author phone interview with the artist, October 10, 2020.

5 Graham Bowley and Andrew C. Revkin, "Icy Rescue at Seas Claims a Cruise Ship," *The New York Times*, November 4, 2007, nytimes.com/2007/11/24/world/americas/24ship.html.

6 Junko Fujita and Praveen Menon, "More than 40 Crew Missing after Cattle Ship Capsizes in Storm off Japan," Reuters, September 2, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-newzealand-ship-idUSKBN25T3EH.

7 For plausible objects of such a still life, see Leanne Shapton, "Artifacts of a Doomed Expedition," *The New York Times Magazine,* March 16, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/20/magazine/franklin-expedition.html.

8 Kenneth Boulding, "The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth," in *Environmental Quality in a Growing Economy*, ed. H. Jarrett (Baltimore: Resources for the Future/Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), 3–14, http://arachnid.biosci.utexas.edu/courses/THOC/Readings/Boulding_SpaceshipEarth.pdf.

9 Henry George, *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions, and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth: The Remedy* (New York: D. Appleton, 1879).

10 "Fantastical Paintings Illustrate Great Lakes Ecology, Threats and History," Alexis Rockman interview with Robin Young, *Here & Now*, WBUR, November 11, 2013, https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2017/11/13/alexis-rockman-great-lakes.

11 "Spaceship Earth" was an environmental term popularized by R. Buckminster Fuller in his 1969 publication *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*.

When you invent the ship, you also invent the shipwreck[1]

This interview between Alexis Rockman and Brett Littman, director of the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, and curator of the 2013 exhibition Alexis Rockman: Drawings from the Life of Pi *at The Drawing Center, took place on October 20, 2020.*

BRETT LITTMAN Alexis, we worked together in 2013 on an exhibition of your drawings for Ang Lee's film adaptation of Yann Martel's book *Life of Pi* (2009; figs. 13, 14; also see fig. 7). I find it an interesting synchronicity that in *Life of Pi*, one of the major narrative turning points is a shipwreck, and here we are today talking about a new body of work that you have made about shipwrecks.

ALEXIS ROCKMAN My relationship to shipwrecks, to be candid, is very much filtered through media, archaeology, and art history. What I do know is that there is nothing more frightening than a shipwreck, but I have personally experienced one only at a distance. In November 2007, my wife, Dorothy Spears, and I were on an ecotourism trip in the Drake Passage on our way to Antarctica, and we came to the aid of the MS *Explorer*, which had struck an iceberg. Everyone was rescued.

I was brought into the *Life of Pi* project by Ang before production started, to be a so-called inspirational artist. What that means is that I was to set the iconographical tone for the project. As my conversations evolved with Ang, it became clearer that there were certain things I'd be able to help with more than others. I had a couple of drawings of the *Tsimtsum* shipwreck that inspired shots that ended up in the movie, but my energy really went to developing the carnivorous island and how that worked as a credible ecosystem. I continued to work on the film as the project developed, and later designed, with Jean-Christophe Castelli, the "Tigervision" sequence.

BL You were not a sailor growing up in New York?

AR No, unless you want to count sailing a toy boat in the Central Park boat pond!

BL I know you are interested in the life and work of the great naturalist-explorer Alfred Russel Wallace, who lost four years of work—specimens, notebooks, and research—in a shipwreck when he was returning to England from Brazil. From what you have told me, his life story inspired the first shipwreck painting you made in this series, *The Sinking of the Brig Helen*, from 2017 (p. 37). Could you say something about how his life informed that first painting?

AR For those who don't know who Alfred Russel Wallace was, he was perhaps the greatest naturalist-explorer in England, if not the world. He discovered evolution through natural selection while he was in the field in Malaysia later in his life, and wrote to Darwin excitedly about his discovery. Darwin had been working

Fig. 13 Alexis Rockman. *Presentation to Fox (Island Pi Swimming)*, 2009. Watercolor on paper, 18 × 24 in. Collection of 20th Century Fox Archives.

Fig. 14 Alexis Rockman. *Study for the Island*, 2009. Watercolor on paper, 11 × 14 in. Collection of 20th Century Fox Archives.

on exactly the same idea but was reluctant to publish for many reasons. It was Wallace's letter that spurred Darwin to complete and publish his theory of natural selection first.

I have always viewed Wallace as the underdog in the evolution story since Darwin beat him to the punch and took most of the glory for natural selection. In his early years, in order to make a living, Wallace went to Brazil to collect specimens that he could eventually sell as taxidermy. The observations he made in Brazil would have gotten him a foothold in the Royal Society that was unavailable to him beforehand because he was poor and didn't have connections to power. But on his way back to England, the boat he was on, the brig *Helen*, caught fire, and he lost everything, including his notes and specimens.

BL Your painting of this incident is particularly complex, with a lot of dense pictorial information. Could you explain what's happening here?

AR I tried to think about this painting representing the emotional response someone might have if they lost years of work.

I imagined the perspective of the viewer as if they were one of Wallace's specimens or a piece of detritus floating at water level. The viewer can also see above and below the waterline, and flying out of the chaos into oblivion are three species of neotropical parrots. In the foreground on the surface of the water is a squirrel monkey, clinging to what is left of Wallace's prized collection from his expedition, which he will never see again.

BL There are other paintings in this series that have flotsam and jetsam in them, but this one is the densest. This painting, in particular, reminds me of those pictures we see of the plastic floating in the middle of the ocean, because of all the detritus. It seems like a more direct statement on our current oceanographic crisis due to the use of plastics.

AR Yes, I can see that as a way to read this painting. But remember, Wallace's stuff would biodegrade quickly, unlike plastic, which will be with us forever.

BL There is another painting about Wallace in the exhibition, titled *Wallace's Notebook*, which you made in 2019 (p. 47). Are you doubling down here on that sense of loss, capturing that fleeting moment as his notebook sinks to the bottom of the ocean?

AR Yes, I imagined some bioluminescent protagonists at the bottom of a lightless Atlantic Ocean coming across Wallace's prized notebook. Let's just say they're not bibliophiles.

BL I particularly like what I would call, unscientifically, the "light fish" in this painting. You've drawn and painted him quite a few times before.

AR I have. It is actually a character from *Life of Pi* that I constructed—a hybrid of a vampire squid and an anglerfish.

BL So you sometimes take liberties in terms of thinking about species?

AR Yes, sometimes, but for very particular reasons, especially in this project. So much of the history of shipwrecks has to do with the fear of the unknown. Of course, if you're going to be afraid of the unknown, you have to have a fantasy of what's in the unknown. And one of the fascinating things, to me, is that before photography in the nineteenth century, so much of what was believed to be in the ocean was based on rumor and conjecture. As I was planning this body of work, I needed to make the decision to be binary about each image—was it going to be informed by scientific and anthropological accuracy, or was it going to embrace other genres more invested in the fantastic? For example, in a painting like *Maelstrom*, I'm thinking about the most bad-assed "sea monsters," like the kraken, from a mythological tradition—this was not an attempt to paint a scientifically accurate portrait of ocean life (2019; fig. 8, pp. 34–35).

BL Let's talk about the painting *The Lifeboat of the HMS Erebus*, from 2019 (p. 31). This is also inspired by a historical exploration gone wrong.

AR The story of the HMS *Erebus* came to my attention from the excellent AMC series called *The Terror*. It is an existential tale.

The HMS *Terror* and the HMS *Erebus* left England as part of the Franklin expedition to gather data in the Canadian Arctic and find the Northwest Passage. Both ships were lost and the crews were never heard from again. Most likely the ships became trapped in the ice. Over the years, artifacts from the sailors and the ships were discovered in various sites, and there were anecdotal accounts from the Inuit about kettles found with human remains, which only added to the mystery.

I decided to imagine one of the lifeboats from the HMS *Erebus*. I built the content around an article in *The New York Times Magazine* from March 2016 about artifacts that had been discovered from the expedition over time: a pair of glasses, a food tin, a knife. I decided to place these objects on a piece of drapery with some other possible objects, like a cask for water. Forensic examination of the food tins made it clear that many of the sailors went insane from lead poisoning after eating rations out of them. Cannibalism was also confirmed. You will notice a shoe with half a foot sticking out of it in the rowboat, my small homage to these gruesome facts.

BL You are leaving out a very important aspect of this painting—the polar bears.

AR Oh yeah! . . . Actually, three polar bears—they'd be pretty happy to come across this human misfortune! I thought it would be interesting to paint the one underwater with an eye on one of Munch's paintings of bathers.

BL What I also like about this painting is that as you get closer, the objects on the draped cloth really look like a miniature Dutch still life.

AR It is true. I enjoy shifting gears with art history in the same work. If I can bring in several genre traditions together in one rectangle at once—Munch, Willem Claesz. Heda, and even Winslow Homer's *The Fog Warning*—I find that very exciting.

BL There are a lot of seafaring or shipwreck paintings in art history. You even directly address a famous one, Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818–19; fig. 16), in both your painting and your watercolor and acrylic on paper of an empty raft, *Medusa* (pp. 36, 87), from 2020. How did you find your own approach to this by now almost hackneyed image?

AR I'm not sure I agree about Géricault's painting being hackneyed, but it's certainly familiar. My works are a direct reference to that painting and his preparatory studies for it—but filtered through very specific concerns: What happened to the raft after the survivors were rescued, and what types of animals and birds would see the place of tragedy as an opportunity? My research assistant, Alexander Winch, added another twist by suggesting that I use a field guide of Senegalese seabirds and sharks, since the rescue of the raft happened off the coast of Mauritania, which is north of Senegal.

BL I am very interested in the most recent series of watercolors and acrylics you have been making that are focused on lost paintings or objects. Are these actually historically correct images of paintings that were lost?

AR Well, that's a fascinating question. Yes, and no. It depends on the individual work. As you can imagine, many of the lost artworks and artifacts were recorded in a logbook by only title and date, so no image exists, and now they are on the bottom of the sea and long gone. I would look up the artist and find something similar to get an idea of what might have been lost.

BL I guess since some of these shipwrecks you are referring to were in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, there would be no images, no drawings to work from.

AR An example of this would be the painting of the ship in *Abraham Storck "Study for a Man of War"* (2020; p. 90). There was a log

Fig. 15 Alexis Rockman. *Newtown Creek*, 2014. Oil on wood, 68 × 108 in. Collection of Jonathan O'Hara.

Fig. 16 Théodore Géricault (French, 1791–1824). *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818–19. Oil on canvas, 193½ × 282¹⁄₁₆ in. Louvre, Paris. Distributed under CC-BY 2.0.

entry for this painting as cargo on a ship headed to St. Petersburg that went missing. In the log there was the artist's name, and then there was a title. So I went and found something that had the same title and was painted around the same time, and used that as a stand-in. Another important component of these images is the place where the lost art went "down with the ship," as I am painting the specific ecologies and marine life from the region, and what is in the Baltic Sea is very different from what is in the South China Sea!

BL It is interesting to think about all of the diverse human culture lost in the sea over history. There has probably been more cultural interchange through ocean travel than through any other means of travel, in terms of not only commodities and languages but also slavery and disease.

AR When I started planning this project with Andrea Grover in the fall of 2018, we both agreed that we needed to have as many perspectives as possible about these stories. For example, the terrible legacy of slavery and the disaster that befell the *Luxborough Galley* in 1727. The notorious maritime incident occurred on the leg of the journey from Jamaica that carried rum and sugar to the UK, when the rum exploded. The story represents the greatest hits of incompetence, treachery, and cannibalism.

BL In the paintings *Terminus* (2020; p. 52) and *Ablation* (2020; p. 54) you seem to be directly referring to the melting of the ice caps, caused by global warming. Are there other, more historical references in these works?

AR These works are about the fragility of the Arctic landscape and how things are basically falling apart. They are also about my desire to paint these scenes from the perspective of a First People's canoe—for example in *Terminus,* the figure in the canoe is a member of the Nuu-chah-nulth, fifteen related tribes whose traditional home is on the west coast of Vancouver Island and who are vulnerable to climate change and the loss of their own culture through increasing absorption into Western culture.

BL Not many of these paintings have human figures—maybe only about six or seven of the works. One that intrigues me is *The Things They Carried* (2020; fig. 12, p. 43), with these strange figures in the clouds. Can you explain what you were thinking about in this painting?

AR Ah, those figures are based on studies of flayed standing human bodies by the great Flemish-born anatomist Andreas Vesalius. Vesalius died from injuries suffered in a shipwreck.

I made this painting during the pandemic—all of the animals on the driftwood in this work have brought diseases to humans. The figures in the clouds refer to the nineteenth-century American symbolist Elihu Vedder's painting *Star of Bethlehem* (1879–80; fig. 11) with a procession of figures walking up spiraling clouds. For me the twist here is not to put the theological figures in the clouds, but to replace them with Vesalius's flayed figures, who represent human suffering and the history of the investigation of disease and pathology.

BL You have been working on this series of paintings for more than three and a half years. How has your understanding of the metaphor and genre of the shipwreck evolved over this period?

AR One of the most obvious connections is that a ship is planet Earth, and we are all on this ship hurtling toward the future.

Anywhere that humans have ended up far away from their homes, chances are they got there by ship or boat. And along with humans come their pets, their agricultural plants and animals, the stowaways, and what is inside their bodies. Ships and boats totally transformed the globe in terms of biodiversity, and there are so many weird veins to examine and exploit. I could spend many lifetimes just pondering that.

In the end, though, for me the gift of the metaphor or genre of the shipwreck is that it has been a great screen to project meaning onto. I have been able to make so many different paintings and works on paper about so many different subjects. If I had to distill the whole project down to one succinct idea, it would be the exploration of human hope and disappointment, "the best-laid plans," all of the things that might have such great potential but just don't work out.

1 Paul Virilio, as rendered in Natasha Lennard, *Being Numerous: Essays on Non-Fascist Life* (London: Verso, 2019), p. 3. See also Paul Virilio, *Politics of the Very Worst*, interview by Philippe Petit, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Michael Cavaliere (New York: Semiotext(e), 1999).

The Lifeboat of the HMS Erebus, 2019
Oil on wood, 40 × 48 in.

Lusitania, 2020
Oil on wood, 40 × 48 in.

Titanic, 2019. Oil on wood, 32 × 40 in.
Overleaf: *Maelstrom*, 2019. Oil on wood, 68 × 108 in.

Medusa, 2020. Oil on wood, 40 × 48 in.
Opposite: *The Sinking of the Brig Helen*, 2017. Oil on dibond, 56 × 44 in.

SS Sultana, 2018
Oil on wood, 32 × 40 in.

The Fate of the Rebel Flag, 2019. Oil on dibond, 18 × 24 in.
Overleaf: *Waking Dream*, 2020. Oil on wood, 68 × 108 in.

Horse Latitudes, 2019
Oil on wood, 40 × 48 in.

The Things They Carried, 2020
Oil on wood, 32 x 40 in.

Nuestra Señora de Atocha, 2018
Oil on wood, 48 × 40 in.

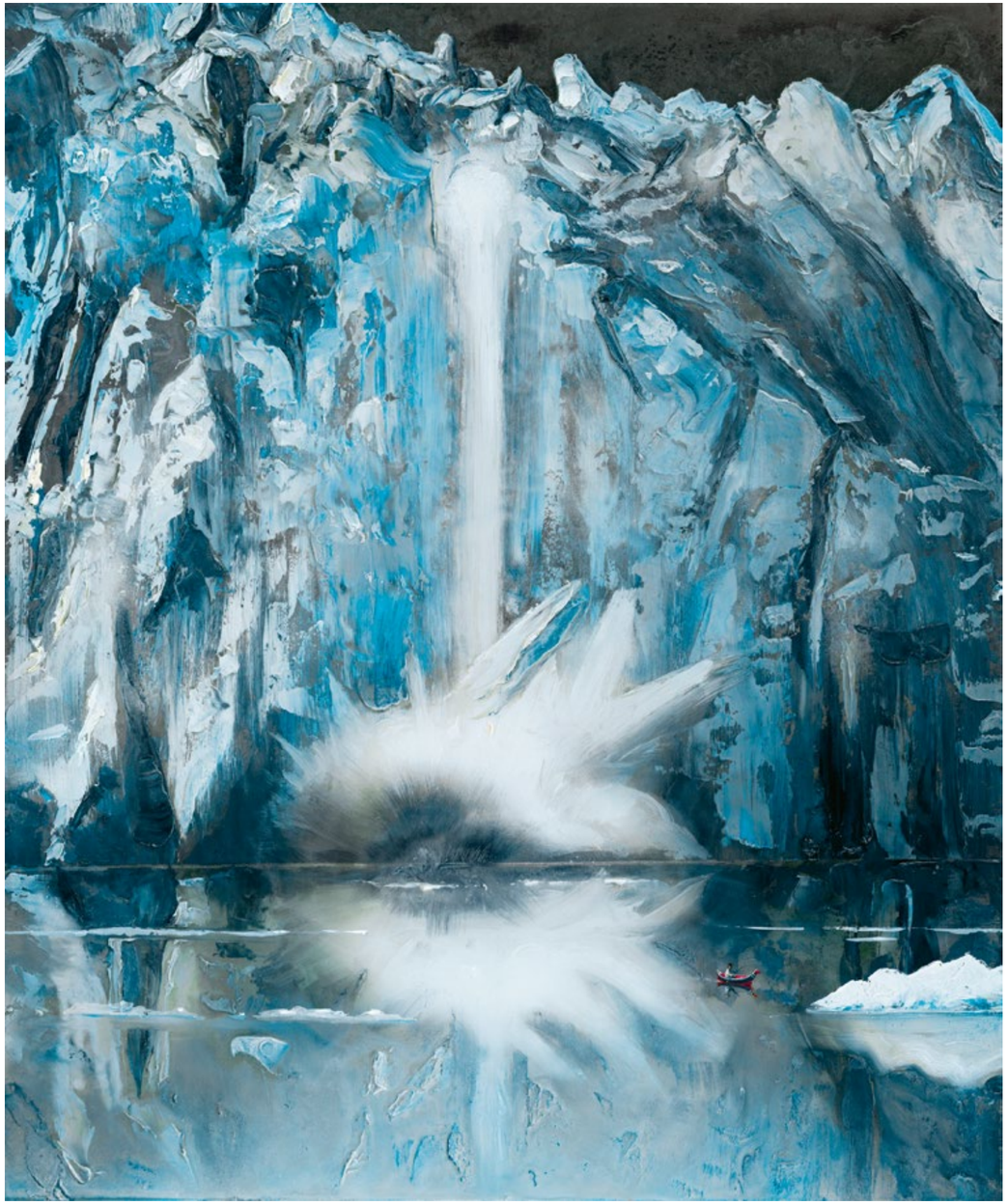
Luxborough Galley, 2020
Oil on wood, 48 × 40 in.

Opposite: *Phosphenes*, 2020. Oil on wood, 56 × 44 in.
Wallace's Notebook, 2019. Oil on wood, 40 × 32 in.

Hawaii, 2020
Oil on wood, 42 × 70 in.

USS Indianapolis, 2020
Oil on wood, 32 × 40 in.

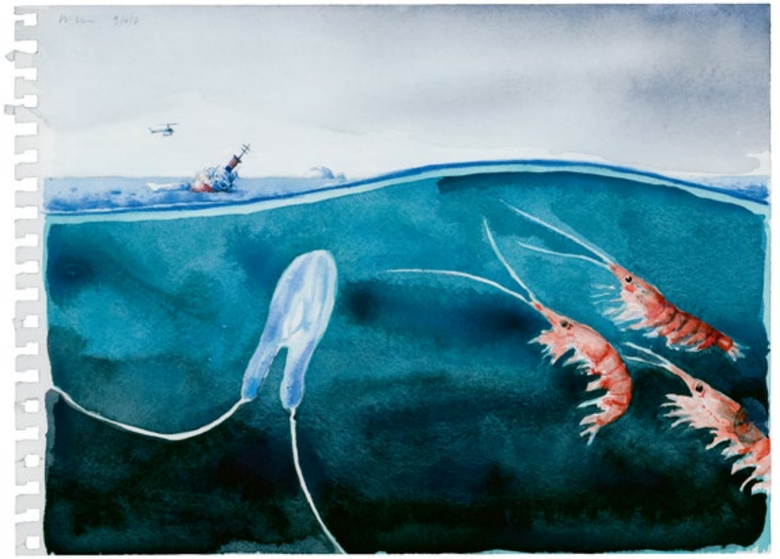
Lost Art, 2020
Oil on wood, 40 × 48 in.



Terminus, 2020
Oil and wax on wood, 48 × 40 in.

Bergschrund, 2020
Oil and wax on wood, 48 × 40 in.

Ablation, 2020
Oil and wax on wood, 48 × 40 in.



Top: *The MV Explorer I*, 2008. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 10 × 14 in.
Bottom: *The MV Explorer II*, 2008. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 10 × 14 in.

Lost and Found at Sea

SASHA ARCHIBALD

The British explorer Sir John Franklin was commissioned in the mid–nineteenth century to complete the charting of the Northwest Passage, a hypothesized travel route from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans via the High Arctic. In 1847, two years after the well-publicized departure of the expedition's two ships, Franklin's wife had still heard nothing. It was known that the food provisions for the crews were intended to last three years; after twelve more months of silence, the search began in earnest. The Arctic was at the time the quintessential blank, an unmapped vista of unknown topography populated by undiscovered creatures. Conducting a search was no straightforward task, and yet, over the next two decades, some twenty expeditions scoured the Canadian Arctic Archipelago for signs of Franklin and his men. When traditional methods failed, would-be rescuers turned creative. The location of rescue ships was printed on bits of colored silk, and these were set inside balloons that were optimistically launched over immense expanses of ice and snow. Franklin's pursuers reasoned that he and his men would be hunting, so foxes were caught and tagged, in hopes the prey would find its predator.

Fluttering silk ribbons were soon combined with another novel strategy. In 1849, a professor and former secretary of the Royal Geographic Society hired a woman known simply as "Emma, the Seeress of Bolton," to use her skills as a clairvoyant to ascertain Franklin's position. Balancing on her head a piece of paper with his handwriting, this "very plain, ignorant, common looking person" was transformed into "a living stethoscope," a human conduit who could sense presence through ocean fathoms.[1] Over several years of readings, each of them reported extensively in the press, Emma conjured images of Franklin's men dressed in animal hides, gagging on fish oil, and encountering "many queer looking things."[2] Eventually, the Seeress of Bolton declared Franklin dead, helpfully offering the latitude and longitude coordinates of his demise.

It was Emma's imagination—a radio signal before there were radio signals—that tied together the known and the unknown, the spectral and the real, geographies of landscape and geographies of the mind. "We dream over a map," wrote the philosopher Gaston Bachelard, meaning that our imaginative faculties are linked to our orientation toward space, whether spaces yet to be charted or (equally beloved by Bachelard) spaces so grooved in memory that they furnish the structures of our thought.[3] Balloons and foxes and psychics seem naive search methods, evidence of a profound underreckoning of the Arctic expanse. Yet they admit the possibility of a world that exceeds direct apprehension, a world vast enough that our encounters with it are limited not only by time and space but also by the strictures of our imagination.

We have been largely persuaded that the globe is a known entity, exhaustively mapped, photographed, and laced with invisible signals—signals that can place a lost dog, a stolen phone, and soon, an ordinary dollar bill.[4] The ocean, however, remains

Fig. 17 John Fulton. Photograph of the excavation of the steamboat *Bertrand*, 1968. Courtesy of John Fulton/National Geographic Creative.

exempt from this hubristic presumption and retains the vestigial mysteriousness of an earlier era. It is still tainted with unknowability and danger. For many centuries, wrecks were ordinary, commonplace occurrences; millions of sailors are buried in watery catacombs. To take just one statistical sliver, 700 ships wrecked off the British coast in the first six months of 1880, and 919 in the first six months of 1881.[5] A pattern of disappearance continues to haunt maritime travel. The legacy of shipwreck is an enduring intimacy between the open sea and the potentiality of lostness.

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To be lost at sea is not to be lost like an umbrella or a piece of mail, but to vanish. "What happens on the sea," Hans Blumenberg writes in his extended essay on ocean metaphors, "is as if did not happen."[6] For most of maritime history, a boat that went down was the same as a boat vaporized. Sir Charles Vere reported a mundane accident in 1836 in which a boat collided with another smaller boat, anchored without a light. The first craft was large enough and the other small enough that the larger plunged the smaller into the sea and continued cruising forward as if nothing had happened. The unnamed captain of the larger boat turned and caught a glimpse of men running from their cabin, shrieking, and then the smaller craft sank, as quietly as that.[7] A shipwreck in the middle of the sea is the antithesis of a car crash or a murder scene, a dissolution that consumes its own trace. When Chris Burden performed his *B.C. Mexico* in 1973, gallery visitors encountered only a note reporting that the artist was on a remote Mexican beach with scant water supplies and 120-degree temperatures. The piece, Burden later said, was a flirtation with disappearance, an artwork about nothing so much as "being gone."[8] Had Burden been something other than an artist, there would have been no note.

Just as a Greek lost at sea was denied the rites of burial that assured his soul safe passage into the afterlife, the partner of a sailor lost at sea was forever suspended between wife and widow. Sailors' wives were doubly or triply bereft, left with no news of disaster, no body to coagulate their grief, no date from which to mark its tapering. The writer John Ross Dix described leagues of nineteenth-century women imprisoned in uncertainty: widows "not *knowing* themselves to be such,"[9] suffering from an ailment perhaps worse than widowhood, or at least with its own distinct countenance.

The avant-garde poet Mina Loy barely survived the unremitting ambiguity of her husband's disappearance at sea in 1918. Arthur Cravan (né Fabian Lloyd), posthumously claimed by the Dadaists, was a boxer and self-styled personality who keenly understood the way in which performing a hyperbolic version of himself constituted an artistic practice.[10] Loy initially disdained Cravan's advances, suspecting that they were motivated by his animosity with Marcel Duchamp, Loy's sometime lover. Eventually however, she fell passionately in love. She nicknamed him "Colossus."

Cravan had fled Europe to avoid the World War I draft, and then, faced with the possibility of conscription in the United States, fled New York. Loy joined him in Mexico City where they were poor and hungry but happy, until that country also became a risky place for draft dodgers. The couple decided to flee again, to Chile.[11] With the help of friends, they devised a plan: Loy would travel by train, while Cravan would begin the trip on a small, primitive boat, then trade it in for something more substantial at a port farther south. One afternoon close to their planned departure date, Loy sat near shore in Salina Cruz, mending the sailcloth of her husband's boat. She was four months pregnant. Cravan hoisted the sail, and was so pleased he announced a test ride. Waving to Loy, he happily sailed away; he was never seen again.

Loy was haunted. Canvassing the prisons and ports of Mexico, writing letters to Cravan's family, and pleading with government officials all proved futile. Shipwreck was the likely explanation, but Loy could not ignore the possibility of intentional abandonment. She was acutely aware that Cravan had staged escapes from many predicaments, fleeing at the moment "the humility of his circumstances mocked his innate sense of grandeur."[12] He had talked often of suicide, occasionally begging Loy to join him. Several years after he disappeared, she seized on the unlikely scenario that he had returned to shore but been murdered on his way home. Even this story couldn't cork her uncertainty. "Why was I never able to find him?" remained the central question of Loy's life, until her death nearly fifty years later.[13]

Fig. 18 Nineteenth-century barquetine *The Mildred*, wrecked off Gurnard's Head, Cornwall, 1912. © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

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"Lost at sea" was such an irrevocable status that when flotsam and jetsam were recovered from a sunken boat, the items were thought to be "found." Like a tube of lipstick left in a public rest room, the cargo of a sunken ship belonged to the person who claimed it. Shoreline communities in continental Europe, Britain, North America, and elsewhere gleaned a rich harvest with the "Finders, keepers" rule. "Wreckers," as the finders were called, did not consider wrecking to be stealing, and neither did British law.[14] In fact, the skillful salvage of goods from a sinking ship was a thriving gray economy, and one that offset the hardships of living an impoverished life on an isolated coast. Cottages were furnished with shipwreck spoils: ornate tables made for much larger homes, and closets stocked with clothing of the same size and cut; opulent wood was repurposed for barnyard fences. A spectacular wreck in 1931 gifted towns in the Clottish county of Caithness and the Orkney Islands with baby carriages, slot machines, swivel chairs, apples, pianos, frying pans, two Cadillacs, and so many condoms a generation of children used them as balloons. Gardeners in Southampton, New York, continue to grow "shipwreck roses," blooms descended from the botanical spoils of the 1842 wreck of the *Louis Philippe*, a steamer that regularly ferried Champagne, furniture, ornamental plants, and fruit trees from France to America.

Maritime law stipulated that spoils from a wreck could not be claimed unless the entire crew was dead. This qualification was something less than an invitation to murder, but sufficient disincentive to erect lighthouses or dispatch rescue boats. Islanders were always aware of ships passing by and going down—the efficacy of their salvage efforts depended on quick response—but there was no code of honor that compelled an attempt at rescue. Rather the opposite: sailors who perished in shipwrecks were simple evidence of the natural supremacy of the ocean. Robert Louis Stevenson remembered his father describing a shipwreck at the turn of the nineteenth century at Pentland Firth, a bit of coastline in northern Scotland where wrecks were as common as rainstorms. Awakened by the boat's signal of distress, an "amphitheatre of placid spectators" watched from their porches as the boat went down and the crew struggled for its life.[15] Among the spectators, Stevenson wrote, "There was no emotion, no animation, it scarce seemed any interest; not a hand was raised; but all callously awaited the harvest of the sea."[16] This was not a display of wickedness or evil, Stevenson clarified, but rather "wise disinterestedness"—passivity born of resignation to a situation of powerlessness.[17] Within these seaside communities, questioning the authority of the sea was a folly more egregious than refusing a person in need. It was thought that even disturbing the corpses from a shipwreck (burying them inland, for instance) might provoke the ocean's ire. She was

Fig. 19 Shell valentine made in Jamaica, mid–nineteenth century. Glass, shell, and wood, 18 5/16 × 9 1/16 × 1 3/8 in. © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

entitled to the trophy of her kill. "Remember," admonished a fisherman from this same stretch of Scottish coast, "the sea is always the master."[18]

This governing assumption—the sea gives and takes as she likes; to sail is to court fate—threads its way through maritime law, through the belated introduction of lifesaving equipment and lighthouses, through the practice of wrecking, and through the attitudes of the general public, even the landlocked public. When Henry David Thoreau chanced upon a shipwreck southwest of Boston in 1849, his equanimity was both strikingly fatalistic and consistent with his times. Wandering through the tragic scene, he was unmoved by the corpses littering the beach, the grieving family members searching for their own, the crude coffins labeled with red chalk. His gruesome description of one victim, a young woman, explicates his detached assumption that her death was a true accident, an incident lacking both cause and agent.

> One livid, swollen, and mangled body of a drowned girl,—who probably had intended to go out to service in some American family,—to which some rags still adhered, with a string, half concealed by the flesh, about its swollen neck; the coiled-up wreck of a human hulk, gashed by the rocks or fishes, so that the bone and muscle were exposed, but quite bloodless,—merely red and white,—with wide-open and staring eyes, yet lusterless, deadlights; or like the cabin windows of a stranded vessel, filled with sand.[19]

In Thoreau's prose, the broken hull is conflated with the "human hulk," and the wreck of the boat becomes the wreck of the body. Ocean disaster has swiftly stripped the girl of her humanity, just as ship cargo doused with seawater no longer has a rightful owner. "Why care for these dead bodies?" Thoreau stonily wonders. "They really have no friends but the worms or fishes."[20] Baptism by sea wipes a very clean slate.

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A true sailor swaps home and heritage for a culture that is raw and anarchic. The sea constitutes its own moral universe—separate from land and beyond the law of the land. This fact speaks to the tradition of pirates, of course, and of other tales of suffering and treachery that rival any land-based sagas. The conditions that permit power to run amok are part of the fabric of the sea. In Christian iconography, the devil appears at sea, and Jesus makes a point of walking on water. This potential for evil must always be kept in check; the sailor is the soldier of the water.

The sailor lives a life stripped of domestic frippery and whittled to its pungent, flinty core. Lean diets, forearms crazed with veins, emotional self-reliance, grand battles with wind and whales and ice—these are the motifs of the romantic image of maritime masculinity. Sailor slang for non-sailors, "landlubbers," expresses its contempt through phonetic sag and air. The underside of myths of maritime identity was exposed by shipwreck. Shipwreck exacerbated what was already a savage code of survival, tipping a contest of bravery and fortitude into a theater of degradation. Shipwreck narratives, recorded by the precious few who survived, often use the phrase "relief of death." Indeed, the victims who drowned immediately were spared the torture of animal desperation. Survivors recount stories in which shipwreck is not the sum of the disaster, but the trigger of greater calamity. The boat is irreparably damaged, and there is no food or water, no

means of navigation, and seemingly no hope of rescue. Sailors often began by eating their cotton shirts and silk handkerchiefs, then proceeded to chew on wood or shells or leather boots.[21] For want of water, they drank salt water—a quick route to death, though that was not their intention—or cut themselves and licked their own blood. In time, they decided whom to kill and eat, and two or three days later, they killed another, and then another. Lost at sea describes not only the death of the body but also the cessation of one's humanity. All travel at sea flirts with the possibility.

For many centuries, it was remarkably easy to become lost at sea—as easy as losing track of time. Unlike navigation by land, ocean navigation can establish a directional axis only through time, and accurate time could be kept, or so it was assumed, only by finding a fixed reference point in the sky that could be gauged against the position of the sun. The sky was studied so that the ocean could be conquered, and the vastness of both ricocheted between them. The demands of sea navigation goaded the discovery of Jupiter's moons and Halley's Comet, the construction of telescopes and observatories, the understanding that the earth has weight and light has speed.

The focus was the search for longitude. Latitude could be determined with a simple device, a cross-staff, which measured the position of the sun against that of the horizon. Using the cross-staff was a daily routine that left many sailors blind in one eye, but the measurements obtained were straightforward and accurate. In his 1492 journey, Christopher Columbus intended to sail a direct route on a single latitudinal line, charting the simplest of all courses toward the New World. Longitude was far more elusive, and could be calculated only by comparing the exact time at a fixed reference point with the exact time on board ship. The problem, as Dava Sobel describes, was that "precise knowledge of the hour . . . was utterly unattainable."[22] Pendulum clocks were useless on a rollicking sea, and changes in humidity and temperature affected both the metal of the clock's innards and the lubricant that all clocks then required. Instead, ship time was judged roughly by high noon, the time at which hourglasses were reset. A more accurate time could be had through a repeated sequence of celestial measurements and consultation of logarithm tables, a process that took four hours to complete and was possible only on a clear day. It hardly mattered whether standard time was set to Paris or Greenwich or Jesus' Bethlehem manger—all credible proposals in the eighteenth century. A seafaring vessel moved in its own temporal bubble.

Devising a method to calculate longitude seemed at first impossible, tempting solely to the delusional crackpot. In Britain, the Longitude Act of 1714 promised a handsome sum to whoever solved the problem, but the judges found no reason to meet for fifteen years. The final engraving of William Hogarth's eighteenth-century suite *A Rake's Progress* depicts a chaotic scene at the Bedlam insane asylum, and among the ill is a character calculating longitude. Half naked, he scribbles nonsense on a wall and frowns in grim frustration.

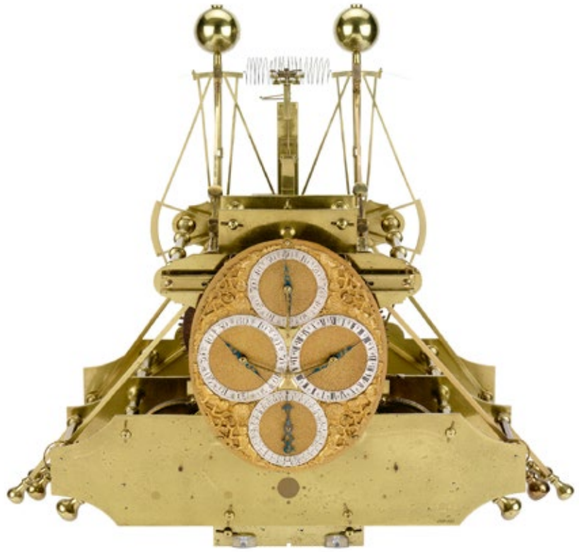

Fig. 20 John Harrison (British, 1693–1776). Marine Timekeeper H1, 1735. Brass, bronze, steel, oak, and lignum vitae, 26½ in. (height). © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

A carpenter and self-taught inventor, John Harrison, finally cracked the dilemma. Rather than pinpoint a new celestial anchor or develop an innovative method of calculation, Harrison more humbly devoted his life to refining the notion of a clock. Thousands of tiny improvements in design and decades of obsessive perfectionism resulted in a timepiece that was such a vast improvement on its predecessors that it deserved a new name. Harrison's clocks were the first to keep time with fidelity enough that time became synonymous with the image of a clock rather than an abstraction measured by a clock. Harrison's first clock, H1, solved the longitude problem, but he continued with a sequence of improved models, each more impressive than the last (1735; fig. 20). H1, completed in 1735, was followed by H2, H3, H4, and finally a clock that could fit in a pocket, with gears of superior accuracy made of diamonds and rubies. These magnificent timekeepers are the origin of our most basic assumptions: that true time can be represented by a device; that the global experience of time is standardized to an objective mean; that precision to the nanosecond is perfectly attainable.

Fig. 21 Ivan Aivazovsky (Russian, 1817–1900). *The Wave*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 119¾ × 198¹³⁄₁₆ in. Collection of the State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg.

Despite the demand for a solution to the longitude query, the reception of Harrison's clock was equivocal. Many of the inventor's peers were not charmed but hostile. In an era of technology worship, Harrison would have been celebrated. Instead, the simplicity of H1 seemed an affront to the scope of inquiry that preceded it, an inquiry that had encompassed the cosmos and plagued the greatest minds of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Harrison's contemporaries could not have intuited that precision in time and location was a great gain that concealed a loss, and yet the mood was melancholic. Centuries later W. H. Auden wrote an elegy appropriate to Harrison's moment: "The stars are not wanted now; put out every one, / Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun."[23]

A version of Harrison's clock, later called a chronometer, quickly became indispensable for sailing. But just as chronometers solved one kind of being lost they soon revealed another mode of lostness. Sailors alone for long periods of time are known to suffer from "time madness"—a specific kind of insanity in which the mariner becomes obsessed with tracking time. One victim of time madness, Donald Crowhurst, was immortalized in a series of artworks by Tacita Dean, as well as poems, songs, theatrical works, and performances. Crowhurst also may have been the inspiration for the artist Bas Jan Ader's final performance, *In Search of the Miraculous*, in which he took off on a small boat from Cape Cod in 1975 and was never seen again (fig. 26). Shortly after Ader's disappearance, a copy of *The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst* was discovered in the artist's locker at the University of California, Irvine.[24]

As described in *The Strange Last Voyage*, Crowhurst was a braggart and amateur yachtsman who entered the around-the-world *Sunday Times* Golden Globe Race in 1968. His plan was to complete the voyage in a trimaran, a lightweight boat with three hulls—a feat that had never been attempted before—and to use sophisticated electrical equipment of his own design to aid navigation. According to his scheme, with which he wooed many supporters, he would not only win the race—prize money and fame—but on his return launch a successful business selling the electrical equipment he had proven en route.

Almost from the start, things went poorly for Crowhurst. Faced with the certainty of failure and crushing debt, he decided to aimlessly trawl the waters of the Atlantic, biding his time until the end of the race, when he could reenter under the pretense of having circumnavigated the globe. The scam required that Crowhurst create fake navigational charts, tracking a fictitious yet plausible route around the world. This counterfeit record absorbed a great deal of his energy, and its intricacies compounded his acute isolation.

Dean's 1997 *Disappearance at Sea II* interprets Crowhurst's fate as a four-minute 16mm film, staged from the top of a lighthouse. The camera follows the same rotation as the lighthouse beam, taking in the curved glass that encircles the electric beacon, and the sea and sky beyond. The audio mimics the rhythmic rotations of the light, a metronome of landed time that taps out rescue for thousands of sailors who would otherwise perish among unseen rocks. In other words, Dean supplies what Crowhurst lacked: an anchor to civilization. At the end of Crowhurst's journey, time had ceased to be an account of an objective mean—figured in Dean's flashing light on terra firma—and had become instead the rhythm of Crowhurst's internal chaos. When his boat was recovered, evidence of his fraudulent trip was in the cabin, but his chronometer was missing. He had jumped overboard, timekeeper in hand, apparently unable to reconcile his finitude in the world with the infinitude of time. His story suggests that although absolute time was the panacea for the navigational burden of ocean travel, the psychic burden of ocean travel remained a thing apart. First sailors were lost at sea for lack of clocks, and then they were lost at sea through the tyranny of the clock.

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The ocean leaves a salty residue where it rubs against the land, such that a diluted bit of seafaring life always perches on the mainland. In port cities, drifters and seekers cash their checks, test their land legs, and satisfy their appetites. The maritime ports of yesterday and today are borderlands, hybrids of sea and shore, transitional settlements that buffer the sailor from the landlubber. The artist David Wojnarowicz gave eloquent voice to these swaths of liminality when he wrote about Manhattan's West Side Piers. Lost now to urban development, in the 1970s and 1980s the piers transmuted the crumbling remains of New York City's maritime industry into a dilapidated landscape of debauchment. As in all ports, the piers were a demarcated zone of lax morality. Wojnarowicz visited often, cruising and photographing. Picking his way through overturned couches, piles of excrement, and fragments of sharp-edged tin, he occasionally wondered why the piers exerted such a pull. Why was he so enthralled, he asked himself, with this sordid landscape?[25]

It is a question asked by many sailors, few of whom rest content on land. The answer is hard to come by. Bachelard supplies as remedy the notion of immensity. To ponder immensity—whether via sea or sky or land—is to wonder like a child and daydream like a philosopher in the same moment. The experience has its devotees, those who are drawn to immensity like alcoholics to the bottle. Bachelard does not speak specifically of sailors or astronauts, parachutists or climbers, explorers or pilots—all these types who avidly pursue the intoxication of feeling small in the face of something large—but he understands that their search for large is a search for the adequacy of small. Such "artisans of immensity," to use Bachelard's phrase, are changed by their encounters with vastness and will forever delimit their egos in ways inimical to the modern world.[26]

Bachelard would have enjoyed the story of the Frenchman Bernard Moitessier, one of Crowhurst's competitors in the around-the-world race. Moitessier was slated to win, but at the last moment he decided to continue sailing rather than dock and collect his prize money. "Don't think I'm mad," he wrote home—which is precisely what everyone thought.[27] Moitessier struggled to explain why he wanted to extend his already prolonged isolation. He had become so much less "brain" and so much more "skin and stomach," he said, and was now entirely unsuited to conventional society.[28] Then he made a jarring analogy, comparing himself to someone who had discovered a remote temple in the Amazon jungle. How could he leave without exploring the place? Apparently, intense solitude is a small price to pay for discovering an Amazon temple in one's own mind. How enviable, and rare, to explore an uncharted interior that yields more pleasure than pain. Sailing remains our most poignant metaphor for venturing forth into a world where lostness is not just a palpable possibility, but an end unto itself. The ocean may be the only place left where undiscovered temples remain to be found.

This essay originally appeared in the exhibition catalogue *Radical Seafaring* (Parrish Art Museum, Prestel • Delmonico, 2016) and is reprinted here with permission of the author and publisher.

1 Dr. Joseph W. Haddock, an early advocate of mesmerism who employed Emma as a domestic servant and also acted as her "agent," quoted in Shane McCorristine, "Mesmerism and Victorian Arctic Exploration," in *Imagining the Supernatural North*, ed. Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough, Danielle Marie Cudmore, and Stefan Donecker (Calgary: Polynya Press, University of Alberta Press, 2016), 156.

2 Haddock, quoted in McCorristine, 157.

3 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 204.

4 Dollar bills can be dusted with radio frequency identification (RFID) "powder," composed of transmitters each no larger than a speck of dust. These minuscule data chips can also be woven directly into the fabric of a bill. According to James Delgado, director of the Maritime Heritage Program at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the bottom of the sea remains more mysterious than the surface of the moon. See "What's the Total Value of the World's Sunken Treasure?,"

Popular Mechanics, February 22, 2012, accessed September 14, 2015, http://www.popularmechanics.com/technology/infrastructure/a7425/whats-the-total-value-of-the-worlds-sunken-treasure.

5 Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*, trans. Steven Rendall (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 67.

6 Blumenberg is describing Goethe's understanding of the sea. Blumenberg, 58.

7 John Palmer, "Awful Shipwreck: The *Francis Spaight* (1836)," in *Outrageous Seas: Shipwreck and Survival in the Waters off Newfoundland, 1583–1893*, ed. Rainer K. Baehre (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 280.

8 Randy Kennedy, "The Balance of a Career: Chris Burden's Feats of Art Are to Fill the New Museum," *The New York Times*, September 6, 2013, accessed October 12, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/08/arts/design/chris-burdens-feats-of-art-are-to-fill-the-new-museum.html?_r=0.

9 John Ross Dix, *Pulpit Portraits: or, Pen-Pictures of Distinguished American Divines, with Sketches of Congregations and Choirs, and Incidental Notes of Eminent British Preachers* (Boston: Tappan & Whittemore, 1854), 122; emphasis in original.

10 In addition to his boxing, Cravan acted the part of an American, a working-class stiff, a poet and an artist. He bemoaned being white instead of black; his hero was the boxer Jack Johnson. Craven's flamboyant stunts included wearing clothes with gaping holes, which revealed his body underneath—said to be magnificent—on which he wrote obscenities, and bringing paper animals to parties, which he addressed as his children. He also claimed to be the nephew of Oscar Wilde. This was widely assumed to be a lie but was actually true.

11 The Selective Service Act of 1917 applied to non-citizens as well as citizens; although Cravan's official citizenship was British and he was in possession of a (presumably fake) American passport, he appealed to the Exemption Board on the basis that he was born in Lausanne, Switzerland, a neutral country. He was forbidden to leave the US while his case was under review; dressed in a soldier's uniform he hitchhiked to Canada and managed to board a boat to Mexico. Many European draft dodgers who had sought refuge in the US also immigrated to South America. They were not only nervous about the draft, but also the 1917 Espionage Act, which classified antiwar dissent as a potential act of treason. Several of Cravan's friends believed themselves to be under US government surveillance and vulnerable to prosecution.

12 Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 247. My account of Loy and Cravan's relationship is indebted to Burke's biography.

13 Burke, 430.

14 Wreckers were officially required to report their gleanings from the ocean, but there was no tooth to the request and no staff to enforce it.

15 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Letters and Miscellanies of Robert Louis Stevenson: Memoir of Fleeming Jenkin and Records of a Family of Engineers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 238.

16 Stevenson, 238.

17 Stevenson, 247.

18 Quoted in Bella Bathurst, *The Wreckers: A Story of Killing Seas and Plundered Shipwrecks, from the 18th Century to the Present Day* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 72.

19 Henry David Thoreau, "The Shipwreck," from *Cape Cod* (1855), reprinted in *The Tragic History of the Sea*, ed. Anthony Brandt (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2006), 270.

20 Thoreau, 273.

21 See, for instance, Mark Twain, "The Burning of the Clipper Ship *Hornet* at Sea," *Sacramento Daily Union*, July 19, 1866, reprinted in Brandt, *The Tragic History of the Sea*, 287–303.

22 Dava Sobel and William J. H. Andrewes, *The Illustrated Longitude* (New York: Walker & Company, 1998), 7.

23 W. H. Auden, "Funeral Blues," part three of "Four Cabaret Songs for Miss Hedli Anderson," *Another Time* (New York: Random House, 1940), 78.

24 Nicholas Tomalin and Ron Hall, *The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst* (Camden, ME: International Marine, 1995).

25 "Deep in the back of my head I wish it would all burn down, explode in some screaming torrent of wind and flame, pier walls collapsing and hissing into the waters. It might set us free." David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 187.

26 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 210.

27 Cited in Tomalin and Hall, *The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst*, 189. Moitessier is also known for enduring a voyage from San Francisco to Mexico with the actor Klaus Kinski, notorious for his emotional volatility.

28 Tomalin and Hall, 189.

The Perilous Romance: An Art History of Shipwreck

CHANDA LAINE CAREY

There is an enduring relationship of humans to the sea, a recurring experience of the perilousness of an environment that is neither our natural habitat nor under our control. The sea has been such a powerful influence on human thought that there are myriad interpretations for consideration. Some scholars have posited journey at sea as a liminal state,[1] imbued with the transformation associated with rites of passage. Others have seen the ocean as that which connects African peoples in their diaspora.[2] Literary scholars see shipwreck as a metaphor for the processes of modernity and the ecological catastrophes that attend it.[3] In *Shipwreck with Spectator*, philosopher Hans Blumenberg argues that shipwreck is a metaphor for existence itself.[4] All these ideas draw on history, literature, art, and philosophy to glean meaning from human trials at sea. From the many of narratives and images in art representing disaster at sea, I will attend to a few of art history's best-known works addressing the subject.

In *A Lover's Discourse*, Roland Barthes begins his essay on the image, "In the amorous realm, the most painful wounds are inflicted more often by what one sees than by what one knows."[5] In images of shipwreck, our blinders are removed, revealing through oceanic trauma the frailty of humankind at its most adventurous. The romance is based in the European cultural tradition of the novel, referring to narrative. Here stories and images of threatened and wrecked ships from around the globe describe a romance of failure, threat, loss, and violence. Romanticizing violence is a distinctive feature of European art, the only culture with an emphasis on shipwreck as a genre of visual art. Seafaring cultures from Asia, the Americas, and Polynesia lack a similar aestheticization of disaster. Historic Asian narratives frequently associate oceanic disasters with the paranormal. This art history of shipwreck is written in the shadow of the human catastrophe of shipwrecked migration visited upon refugees generation after generation, as well as the ongoing role of the sea in human trafficking. Such tragedies follow Africans' subjection to the European institutions of racialization and chattel slavery, and the historic violence of the Middle Passage. The modern history of shipwreck is inextricable from the history of blackness. This is most easily observed in the number of major canonical works of art that prominently feature black bodies in peril at sea.

Literature and visual art have a large number of shipwrecks in their history. The most distinctive difference between visual and literary representations of shipwreck is that in literature shipwreck operates as a plot device, a crisis that moves the story forward; shipwreck collapses the social hierarchy as survivors are forced to adapt to a new reality, frequently situated on an island.[6] In visual art, shipwreck is often an arrested moment, related to historical events, or land- and seascape painting that uses the wreckage to define the relationship of man to the natural world. Rescue and survival may be possible, but the wreck accentuates the desperation, uncertainty, and trauma of crisis, rather than the promise of

new life. While shipwreck plays an important part in Homer's *Odyssey*, three of Shakespeare's plays, and even more modern narratives such as *Lord of the Flies* and the television program *Gilligan's Island*, important works of visual art direct our attention to the fearful realities of confrontation with others and the natural world, and are often influenced by narratives of factual events.

Art and aesthetics can be understood as reflections of a culture's or an individual's religious, philosophical, or political beliefs. The event of shipwreck highlights the role of these types of acculturation in art through representations of crisis. Whether the dangers of traveling by water result in accident, rescue, or death, beliefs and attitudes lend narratives of traumatic events their meaning and power. Ancient narratives foreground the hopeful aspects of the experience of perilous moments at sea. Surviving the wreck may involve the human ingenuity of the hastily constructed raft, or the relief of sighting "dry" land. For the stranded or unwilling passenger, surviving the wreck brings the hope of freedom and escape. The role of divine intervention in ancient narratives of shipwreck varies, as the god, goddess, or divine personage may be the cause of the wreck or may promise safety. The role of deities in testing, punishing, or merely toying with mortals represents the capricious experience of weather as humbling to the fragile human condition.

The ancient world provides key narratives that have been illustrated by artists for millennia. Homer's epic poems are a source of narrative, not only for visual art, but for thousands of years of poetry, plays, and novels in the Western literary tradition. In the attempt to interpret the content of early Greek art, the oral tradition captured by Homer's written word is considered a source of narrative for paintings on Greek pottery. The Late Geometric period of Greek art offers an exceptional image of shipwreck, on an oinochoe (wine pitcher) of c. 740–720 BCE (fig. 22). Abstracted figures of sailors surround a capsized ship. A single survivor sits atop its hull. His stable, upright posture distinguishes him from the splayed, overturned, and supine figures jumbled around him. Despite the ambiguity of the maritime imagery found on this exceptional ceramic work, scholars have consistently associated the imagery with Odysseus's epic.[7] As a decorative element of a functional object, the subject of shipwreck does not cast a long shadow of misfortune on the protagonist of *The Odyssey*. The shipwreck is a scene of action in a familiar story where the main character's successful return home is known and the shipwreck a moment of action and adventure. The oinochoe is thought to have been made within a century of Homer's poem, which includes two shipwrecks. Literary scholar James V. Morrison places Homer's *Odyssey* in a period of Greek culture when population increases in the Aegean stimulated diaspora, colonization, and intercultural contacts bringing trade and conflict that provided a rich historical context for Homer's reciting the adventures of the king of Ithaca.[8] Morrison concludes that shipwrecks are important plot devices in ancient drama that allow someone to arrive "unexpectedly and alone," setting the stage for complicated encounters and happy reunions.[9] This theory holds true for shipwreck tales of ancient India.

South Asia offers another ancient artwork representing shipwreck, found in the Buddhist caves at Ajanta, in the Indian state of Maharashtra (200 BCE–500 CE). The intricately carved caves contain housing for monks and areas for group meditation, as well as an imposing stupa and walls covered with detailed murals. The approach to narrative in the murals is through a series of scenes organized to engage or teach the viewer. The caves were already known to locals and travelers for centuries when a British cavalry soldier of the nineteenth century rediscovered them.[10] He carved his name and rank on the wall over a painting of a bodhisattva in a cave, one of many figures representing jataka tales, myths of the Buddha's past lives that demonstrate how he acquired merit through various acts of morality and self-sacrifice. In Cave One are scenes from the jataka tale of Prince Kalyāṇakārin, dramatizing his shipwreck and unfortunate blinding at the hands of his brother, who gouged out his eyes while he slept, in an attempt to keep for himself all of the wealth that survived the wreck. The elegance of the figures and their stylized representation flattens the trauma of shipwreck into a pleasing representation of a ship, placed in a cluster of images conveying scenes of the tale. Blind and stranded in a foreign kingdom, Kalyāṇakārin became a musician and improbably won the heart and hand of the local princess. He trusted her fidelity, and his eyesight was restored by a spell of truth; he was recognized by the king as the unfortunate prince.[11] In the tale, the ship's journey is marred by crisis and productive of another crisis, which creates for the future Buddha Kalyāṇakārin obstacles to be overcome

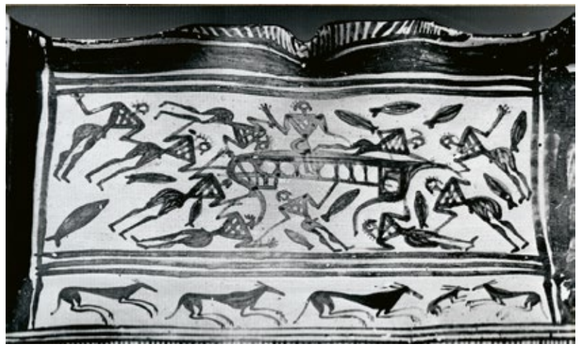

Fig. 22 Late Geometric oinochoe, hunt group, c. 740–720 BCE. State Collection of Antiquities and Glyptothek, Munich. Photograph by Renate Kühling.

through noble and meritorious deeds. Other ancient religious narratives, especially those of the Christian tradition, also represent peril at sea.

With the advancing centuries, and expansion of colonialism and imperialism from Europe, danger at sea became a preoccupation of literature, historical narratives, and visual art.

Among the many accounts of catastrophe at sea, a few have reached significant popularity. *Histoire des Naufrages*, by Jean-Baptiste Eyriès, first published in 1815, gripped the imagination of the French public,[12] while the three-volume *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea; Or, Historical Narratives of the Most Noted Calamities and Providential Deliverances Which Have Resulted from Maritime Enterprise*, by Charles Ellms and John Graham Dalyell, has been issued in fifteen editions since 1812. These narratives based on fact were popular with the public and provided source material for artists. Art's history of shipwreck also reverberates across time. Today, scholars are attracted to Romantic art to analyze and question our collective tragedies. Images of shipwreck create ripples through discourses of crisis, impending disasters, and chronic inequality. Retaining their original context of dramatic evocation of particular aesthetic ideals, Romantic artworks are deployed in the present to remind us of tragic injustice, and the ways in which they can be understood as resonating with contemporary conditions. Infectious disease, climate change, generational trauma, and the work of black liberation welcome Romantic paintings as bearers of historical memory in the service of cultural and political awareness. Even in discussions of current events, the ships' names *Medusa* and *Zong* resonate with the disadvantages conferred upon the many by the few.

Théodore Géricault's (France, 1781–1824) *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818–19) is an unconventional history painting, with a ripped-from-the-headlines subject and a scandalous backstory (fig. 16). The work itself, monumental in scale, somber in color, and representing a hope-filled moment, is the carefully selected event of rescue off the coast of West Africa. The painting is haunted by the gruesome events on the hastily assembled raft that preceded the sighting of the rescue ship, the *Argus*. Like the French and later the international audience, Géricault was gripped by the account of the ill-fated voyage written by surgeon Jean-Baptiste-Henri Savigny, and engineer/geographer Alexandre Corréard.[13] Their story of a ship run aground is a romance of errors and abandonment by an incompetent aristocratic captain, and of the towed raft cut loose from the six lifeboats that fled to safety. One hundred forty-seven people were left on the large raft with standing room only, waist deep in seawater. The raft carried officers, sailors, and a multiethnic, international coterie of soldiers of the French army being sent on the *Medusa* to defend the colony in Senegal, including numerous men of African descent. Women were minimized as passengers on the raft, referred to obliquely and without number. The desperate situation was roiled by conflict and a drunken mutiny against the officers, who had commandeered a secure location surrounding the mast. As their fortunes declined, the sick and weak were thrown off, in an effort to conserve the five casks of wine and two flasks of water in the raft's meager provisions.[14] The lack of food and the fragility of human life eventually led to the consumption of human flesh.

Art historian Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby states that Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and its depiction of cannibalism defined French colonial ideas about Africans and indigenous peoples, as much as it described the behavior of colonists under duress.[15] Grigsby's in-depth analysis of the historical context, sources, and production of Géricault's painting presents the complex web of lived experience, political upheaval, transgression, and formal challenges that the artist faced in the creation of the most celebrated work of his short life. *The Raft of the Medusa* developed through numerous studies, including paintings of enigmatically arranged dismembered human body parts.[16] Géricault experimented with different points in the narrative and with the representation of cannibalism, yet in the end he selected the moment of rescue. His process poses and answers the question of how to represent a community of desperation, without order or taboo, when class, rank, ethnicity, and gender are erased by the will to survive. Ultimately, Géricault explores but chooses not to emphasize the most debased aspects of the event. Dozens have died before we encounter his raft of survivors. Grigsby notes that rather than depict the infamous events, the terror and chaos, and all too easily imagined crimes, Géricault presents all the figures on the raft as victims.[17]

While the subject matter would have been easily recognizable to viewers who encountered it at the Salon of 1819, the government, needing to obscure the origins of the work in the scandal of the day, refused to allow the painting to be mentioned in the Salon and identified it with the less politically fraught title *Shipwreck Scene*.[18] Theater scholar Carol Martin deploys the sociopolitical urgency of *The Raft of the Medusa* in nineteenth-century France to invoke the political consciousness agitated by the contemporary novel Coronavirus pandemic. Martin suggests that the wreck was "largely understood to be 'about' a crisis in leadership," with the French government held responsible. Connecting the painting to our current dilemma in the era of COVID-19, she pointedly asks, "What lies will rationalize our wreck"?[19] Géricault's raft is a potent source for interrogating our contemporary peril and disaster.

Caspar David Friedrich's (Germany, 1774–1840) icebound shipwreck isolates the viewer in a seascape of total defeat under the influence of nature's greatest extremes. *Das Eismeer* (*The Sea of Ice*) (1823–24) refuses all possibility of rescue, positing shipwreck as a disaster frozen in time and space, without survivors

(fig. 23). Literary scholar Alice Kuzniar describes five representational strategies Friedrich uses throughout his oeuvre, and associates them with German Romantic aesthetic theories of allegory: "the decontextualization of signs, the elongation of perspective, the portrayal of barriers, the (non)thematics of temporality, and the interpolated viewer. All five strategies show how oblique, that is, allegorical referral generates an ambivalent response from the viewer."[20] The ship itself becomes an allegorical figure for the presumed loss of life, crushed in an ice floe of enormous, jagged sheets that dwarf humans' large-scale attempts to exert control over the ocean. Friedrich uses distortions of scale and perspective to force the viewer into an impassable waste. The imposing bergs of ice piled in the foreground create an insurmountable obstacle, separating the viewer from intervention in the scene, helpless against their uncertain scale that is complicated by the size of the wrecked ship in the middle ground. Their darkened surfaces give a sense of geologic heft and temporality. The floes reach far into the distance and appear immovable as mountain peaks, with no thaw to soften their rough edges or reduce their merciless weight and force. The ship seems diminutive and fragile, viewed from the stern, its numerous openings attesting, however, to its magnificent size. Its mast, mostly submerged, is twiglike among the sheets of ice that have overwhelmed it. Friedrich hints at other masts, wooden indications of detritus of ships that are not visible other than as the slightest suggestion of timber. The icebound ship is an accessory to the primary natural feature that dominates the scene, an imposing mass of piled-up ice that could be scaled like a peak, in a seascape become solid through frigid temperatures. The impossibility of salvation or survival in the forbidding seascape is reiterated through the obstacles in the foreground and further emphasized by the impression of vast distance. The artist's alterations of perspective and scale create a sense of never-ending frozen water punctuated by ice mountains that signal immense isolation through their diminishing size.

The themes of mortality and melancholy that characterize Friedrich's art are foregrounded in this work that does not rely on the human figure to appeal to the aesthetic experience of the sublime, and may be rooted in personal narrative. *The Sea of Ice* invokes a space of danger that threatens the viewer rather than generating a sense of wonder in nature's grandeur. Other interpretations of the sublime in German Romanticism propose that it resides in a sense of infinity rather than totality, which "the imagination cannot fathom, let alone represent," a quality that permeates the seemingly boundless space of Friedrich's painting.[21] In *A Lover's Discourse*, Roland Barthes responds amorously to the work to write his discourse of the Image. "This void requires that I fling myself into it; I project myself there as a tiny figure, seated on a block of ice, abandoned forever."[22] An otherworldly sense of alienation can be located within Friedrich's work,

Fig. 23 Caspar David Friedrich (German, 1774–1840). *Das Eismeer* (*The Sea of Ice*), 1823–24. Oil on canvas, 38 × 50 in. Kunsthalle Hamburg. Distributed under CC-BY 4.0.

an unsettling sense of remove or isolation that art historian Leo Koerner finds in landscapes in which nature appears as a "universe of death."[23] Personal tragedy and morbidity are considered sources for Friedrich's work, which included numerous medieval gravesites and a lost sepia painting of 1804 titled *My Burial*.[24] Ice constitutes a particular universe of death in the artist's biography. His brother fell through ice and lost his life in 1787. Varying accounts of the event have Friedrich persuading his brother to skate on the ice and watching him drown, while in others the brother drowned attempting to save the artist.[25] The tragic event has remained a part of historical narratives about Friedrich that lend a unique depth of trauma and despair to *The Sea of Ice*.

Slave Ship (*Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On*) of 1840 is one of Joseph Mallord William Turner's (Great Britain, 1775–1851) best-known and most studied artworks, an enduring zone of contradictions and contention across fields of knowledge. Inextricable from the writing of critic John Ruskin, during the nineteenth century the fame of the painting was established by his writing about the work, which was also a part of his collection until 1872. Turner's painting is notable within his oeuvre for its warm colors, which were altered by Ruskin and his father, who removed brushwork in blues and purples.[26] The typhoon mentioned in the title threatens a loosely represented ship, while the canvas is dominated by Turner's distinctive atmosphere, illuminated by a columnar light from a diffused and storm-clouded sun. The painting is presumed to be based on an account of the jettison of some 130 people by the

crew of the *Zong* in the Caribbean in 1781, memorably relayed by abolitionist freedman and autobiographer Olaudah Equiano.[27] The subject of enslaved people being thrown overboard is communicated through reductive forms of hands and chains that defy gravity and appear to float on top of the water. According to art historian Norman Bryson, tones, shapes, and colors define Turner's genius, indicating the liberties taken in representing natural conditions with respect to scale, gravity, and cohesion. Objects are reduced to glyphs, or pictographic forms; sigils that are reductive yet legible.[28] Still, in *Slave Ship*, "the ideogram may not be up to the weight of the transferred emotion it must bear."[29]

Turner's depiction of a black woman's nude body may be understood as unspeakable or even gratuitous in light of the fact that few authors discuss her body with reference to anything other than her extended leg. Her breasts, clearly displayed in the extreme foreground,[30] emphasize the unbearable fact of the black female body as a primary site of colonial violence. Wrecked at sea, sacrificed to the threat of "typhoon coming on," the work is a counterpoint and cultural antecedent to the types of resistance characterized by black-centered social movements and black artists' work committed to representing the culture rather than the precariousness of black life and joy. Literary scholar Christina Sharpe draws on Turner's painting as emblematic of the conditions of black life over centuries. "In style and content," she asserts, "Turner's painting makes visible the questions at the center of the *Zong*—property, insurance, resistance, and the question of ballast."[31] Sharpe maintains that throwing women and children overboard constitutes "one version of one part of a more than four-hundred-year-long event."[32] Thus, Turner's painting functions in the present as an emblem of centuries of black oppression and European art's romanticization of black abjection. Sharpe describes the experience of observing, collecting, and interpreting this legacy of Atlantic slavery as "wake work,"[33] situating black people as functioning within an oceanic reality defined by the ship, its movement through water, and tacitly implies its wreckage. That wreckage is not only of a vehicle of transport, but also of the shipwrecked lives of people objectified by capital and reduced to the categories of property, jettison, and ballast. In our present historical conditions, increased resistance to the reproduction and consumption of both historical trauma and contemporary images of black death in news and art highlights the changing fortunes of Turner's single abolitionist work within the currents of art history. Today, *Slave Ship* and its dead are like ghosts haunting the present. Related histories and aftermath can serve as an allegory for the conditions of blackness in diaspora. Turner lays bare the logic of globalizing capitalism. When capital is storm-tossed and threatened by danger, its impulse is not to devalue black lives, but to render those lives and murders as profitable rather than human.

Pictures of the "floating world," or Ukiyo-e, are some of the most renowned artworks from Japan. Originating in the eighteenth century in popular media, the woodblock prints were not produced as fine art, but were widely disseminated by publishers in Edo, present-day Tokyo. The sophistication of the color printing process and relatively low cost of production allowed thousands of copies of images to be produced. Because of the works' popularity with international collectors, there has been robust scholarship of this distinctive period in Japanese visual culture. The earliest subjects were found in the pleasure quarters of the Yoshiwara district of Edo and in Kabuki theater. The first known appearance of the pictures was in a broadside of 1739, "between the sighting of a foreign ship and the return of shipwrecked Japanese sailors."[34] The context of foreign contact and shipwrecked sailors indicates the transnational cultural context of Ukiyo-e, as well as the importance of marine concerns to the times.

One of the best-known of these pictures of the floating world is known in English as *The Wave off Kanagawa*, or *The Great Wave* (c. 1830), by Katsushika Hokusai (Japan, 1760–1849). Hokusai's image shows three small boats struggling against an enormous wave, with Mount Fuji in the background. Hokusai's wave, in line and color, is the expression of a mature artist, who taught others his techniques. He developed his approach to the representation of surf over decades, with extant examples as early as 1806.[35] The challenges and obstacles presented in *The Wave off Kanagawa* situate the viewer in the same circumstances as the boat, yet with neither peril nor injury in the composition. Part of the artist's series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, this is an exceptional work, not only for the use of the wave as a dramatic framing device, but also for the intersection of magnificent natural forms of earth and water. Nature in its beauty and variety forms the foundation of the Japanese approach to the sacred, Shinto. In nineteenth-century Edo, Mount Fuji was a popular pilgrimage site for city dwellers and others from surrounding regions.[36] Some of the appeal of the series would have been the vision provided of the sacred peak.

Media scholar Christine Guff argues that *The Great Wave* has become a global icon of Japaneseness, translated into a great variety of cultural forms.[37] The work is an excellent example of transcultural exchange through its popularity, and also due to its materials. Such exchanges are central to understanding the art world and its history as global. Hokusai's work is printed in *bero*, Berlin blue, better known as Prussian blue, which was introduced to Japan through trade. Notably, this color charmed European collectors, who exoticized it, assuming it to be "uniquely and mysteriously Japanese."[38] Some scholars have suggested that Dutch maritime book illustrations of naval battles influenced Hokusai's representations of volcanic eruption,[39] but he never represented tragedy at sea. *The Wave off Kanagawa* has proven

Fig. 24 Utagawa Kuniyoshi (Japanese, 1798–1861). *The Ghosts of Taira Attack Yoshitsune in Daimotsu Bay*, c. 1849–52. Woodblock print, *oban* triptych, 14 × 27⅞ in. Bequest of John Newland Barron. Photograph © 2021 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

compelling to a variety of expert audiences; it has become an object of influence and scholarly research across disciplines, including physics and meteorology. In a distinctive collaborative study, the work is described as offering a fractal form that the authors conclude is not a tsunami but a special type of plunging breaker known as a "freak wave."[40]

In addition to his famed prints of cats, sea creatures, and beautiful women, a great deal of Utagawa Kuniyoshi's (Japan, 1798–1861) work is derived from literary sources, especially from popular narratives of outlaws and rebels in Chinese history[41] and quasi-historical seafaring tales of the Heike clan of Japan (fig. 24). The artist was the son of a cloth and kimono dyer,[42] and some of his works manifest the dynamism of textile design, with complex gradations of color in the *bokashi* technique, while others reveal evidence of the sophisticated clothing and many oceanic motifs worn by people of fashion. The deep connection between the people of Japan and the sea is manifested in a rich culture of ghost and horror stories involving sailing. *Tametomo and Son Rescued by Tengu* (c. 1849–51), an *oban* print like that illustrated here, depicts a scene from the popular novel *Strange Tales of the Bow Moon*.

In the print, the composition is dominated by an enormous shark, covered in detailed motifs that add interest to the work's surface. A figure escapes the storm and the imperiled ship by holding on to the shark's back. Ghostlike in their gray forms, the *tengu*, or goblins, descend upon the mariner Tametomo and prevent ritual suicide in the face of disaster. Kuniyoshi's work reflects the influence of Hokusai in the vertiginous forms of the waves and the clawlike sea spray surrounding the belly of the shark. The enduring popularity of Ukiyo-e brings it into our consideration of perilous sea travel, but true shipwrecks are not a Japanese subject.

The Americas and aesthetic Modernism lend new approaches and old narratives to the depiction of shipwreck. As with Greece and Japan, the archipelagic geography of the Caribbean has produced significant works of shipwreck. Winslow Homer (United States, 1836–1910) began his career as an illustrator for newspapers and commerce, establishing a documentary approach to subject matter that can be understood to underpin his fine art. Numerous images of people of different regions and cultures help define the oeuvre of this self-taught artist. The Adirondack Mountains of the American Northeast, the traditional fishing villages of Cullercoats in northeast England, and the African diasporic peoples of the United States and the Bahamas were important subjects for him, and he was sensitive to the diversity of landscape as well as people. One of his canonical is *The Gulf Stream* (1899), an oil painting of a dejected sailor, alone in his craft, rendered impotent through the loss of its mast. The youthful and heavily muscled black mariner in the boat is in a passive posture, contemplating his quandary, made ever more perilous by the sharks ominously circling the boat.

Homer scholar David Tatham locates inspiration for *The Gulf Stream* not in narrative, but in Homer's familiarity with, and respect for, the Gulf Stream itself and the book *The Physical Geography of the Sea*, by naval officer and scientist Matthew Fontaine Maury.[43] Homer deflected questions about the unsettling subject matter of the picture with reference to the prolific maritime scholar, writing, "I regret very much that I have painted a picture that requires any description. The subject of the picture is comprised in its title and I will refer these inquisitive schoolmar'ms to Lieut. Maury, I have crossed the Gulf Stream ten times and I should know something about it."[44] Sailing the warm, fast-moving current of the Gulf Stream can be dangerous, and the turbulent conditions have escalated in the increasingly damaging storms that occur there as a result of climate change. The artist presents the boat's home port as Key West, Florida, and Homer made numerous watercolors of the Bahamas, one of his favorite places.[45] The seafaring cultures of the Caribbean highlight the enduring influence of the Middle Passage and its impact on the region, where the vast majority of people uprooted by the transatlantic slave trade were sent. In addition to Homer's clear interest in the people of the region, his specific interest in the Caribbean and its natural phenomena is supported by equally dramatic works like *After the Hurricane* (1899). This watercolor presents a black figure similar to the sailor of *The Gulf Stream*, shipwrecked onshore with the remnants of a small craft. The man's exhaustion can be interpreted as the subject of the work, while Homer's title helps emphasize the hurricane as the subject, through its aftermath. His journalist's eye resisted interpretations that foregrounded allegory, in favor of the importance of climate, weather, and human subordination to their manifold powers.

The Caribbean is a key site for the cultural production of the African diaspora, which intermingled with indigenous and immigrant East and South Asian cultures, as well as the culture of European colonists. The ocean is a fraught location in black cultural memory, becoming complex and contradictory when seen through the eyes of scholars. Art historian Kobena Mercer notes his response to the supposition "Everything is separated by water" with the observation of "an antinomial rhythm whereby I tend to mis-hear the work as saying that, within diaspora, everything is connected by water."[46] It is this contradictory sense of connection and separation that describes diasporic experience, and the poetics of similarity between Greek and Caribbean islands may produce resonances for black artists deploying Odysseus's narrative. Multiple artists have staged the ancient narrative among the islands and waters of the Caribbean. Poet Derek Walcott's (Saint Lucia, 1930–2017) adaptation of Homer's poem into a play, commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1992, adapts the action to the Caribbean after the Middle Passage, through accents and references to the blues and Vodun.[47]

Romare Bearden (American, 1911–1988), an experienced painter, turned almost exclusively to collage as a mature artist. In 1977, while on the Caribbean island of St. Martin, he created

Fig. 25 Romare Bearden (American, 1911–1988). *The Sea Nymph*, 1977. Collage. © 2021 Romare Bearden Foundation / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

the "Odysseus" watercolor studies.[48] From these he produced a sequence of thirty collages illustrating the story of Odysseus with black figures. One collage, *The Sea Nymph* (fig. 25), situates the viewer in a novel location for a shipwreck image—below the surface of the water. In the upper right corner, Odysseus's ship floats on turbulent seas. The artist's rhythmic repetition of curved lines draws the action down from the surface to figures that strike graceful poses. His use of flat black and gray paper for the figures' skin reduces and abstracts blackness in a manner found among other leading exponents of contemporary African American art, including Kerry James Marshall. Literary and jazz scholar Robert G. O'Meally sees Bearden as an example of developing global consciousness. "'Home,' for Bearden," he writes, "is an attitude toward a pervasive sense of homelessness/exile that seems to go, paradoxically, with our new sense of globality—the global blues."[49] Blues of all kinds attend our images of loss, and are closely associated with the color of the sea, and are also widely appreciated as a historical form of African American music that has come to

describe the emotions of all troubled lives. The blues are another expression of alienation that can connect Romanticism and other melancholic attitudes with the global present.

In April 1975, Bas Jan Ader (Netherlands, 1942–1975) presented photographs of a 1973 performance, *In Search of the Miraculous* (*One Night in Los Angeles*) at Claire Copley Gallery in Los Angeles. The Dutch émigré exhibited photographs of himself taken from behind, like Friedrich's *Rückenfigur*, walking the streets of Los Angeles; doowop song lyrics were handwritten on the surface: "yeh I've been searchin'." At the exhibition opening, a choir composed of students from his classes at UC Irvine sang sea shanties, accompanied by piano.[50] The work was a prelude to the next, riskiest portion of the performance, titled *The Search for the Miraculous*, a solo transatlantic crossing by sailboat from Cape Cod. When Ader ventured out on his pocket cruiser *Ocean Wave* (fig. 26), he was an experienced sailor, having sailed with a companion from Morocco to Los Angeles in 1962.[51] Three weeks after his departure from Massachusetts in July 1975, he lost radio contact. His boat was found almost a year later, off the coast of Ireland in April 1976. His body was never found. While the artist is closely associated with Conceptualism, his choices of texts and music, as well as typography, were anachronistic. Instead of a reductive approach that favored analytical and intellectual responses over emotional ones, Ader appealed to Romantic ideals. The story could end here, a tragic ending to a self-consciously romantic and mystical artist, commemorated in images that highlight the precariousness of his small craft and slight body. The Romantic narrative grows through its retelling like a myth. That myth draws power from the mood that envelops the artist's production, composed of various appeals to search through dark nights, challenging human fragility and raw emotional vulnerability. The work is an intertextual romance of the mystical search, where the artist journeys through time, song, and space. In his search, he ultimately disappears at sea. The invocation of the identity of the artist as constructed by European Romanticism establishes a powerful link between the artist's disappearance and the decline of Romantic aesthetic values in the artist's day. Critic Jan Verwoert suggests a reading of Ader's disappearance as an allegory of the tragic desire for the sublime.[52]

In the context of this essay and his growing legend, Bas Jan Ader's disappearance at sea constitutes a shipwreck narrative very different from those that undergird other works of art. Rather than becoming art through the tides of history, the incomplete work is well known because of its unfortunate outcome. Earlier performances for the film camera like *Fall I* and *II*, *I'm too sad to tell you* (1970–71), and the installation/photograph *Please Don't Leave Me* (1969) accentuated Ader's vulnerability, both emotional and physical. Whether rolling off the roof of his Los Angeles house or riding his bicycle into a canal in Amsterdam, his

Fig. 26 Bas Jan Ader (Dutch, 1942–1975). *The Ocean Wave*, 1975.

performance of physical accident, or failure, highlights a certain melancholic slapstick approach to the use of his body. In two versions of the three-minute film of the artist crying, *I'm too sad to tell you*, he performs the experience of being overwhelmed by the conditions of his existence, representing himself as overcome by painful emotion. Cultural taboos on displays of vulnerability had already been violated by his multimedia work *Please Don't Leave Me*, which exceeds the capacity of Conceptualism to contain its plaintively emotional content. The artist's emphasis on his fear of abandonment, bereft emotional states, and imperiled body require that we examine his last work as freighted with an accumulated narrative of distress.

As an artist whose primary medium was his body, Ader leads us through his work into a different kind of intimacy within the art history of the wreck. To make a wreck of one's body or recognize that one is "a wreck" resonates in an uncanny way with the artist's oeuvre of extreme emotions and bodily trauma. Rather than having the tale of the wreck told by survivors, or the image wrought by a painter, the act of performance makes the artist and the sailor one, and the spectator a survivor. We, as spectators, can reframe our understanding of Ader's disappearance through the narratives generated by prior works. In the context of intimate engagement posited by his use of language, we can reflect on his voyage and ask, Would we ask him not to leave us? Are we too sad to tell others how we feel? A desire to aestheticize his disappearance through conceptual or allegorical modes denies the immediacy of the artist's body in performance art, and the visceral connection we can make with such work. Contemplating Ader's art as that of shipwreck is inevitable, but we must also consider

Fig. 27 Hiroshi Sugimoto (Japanese, b. 1948). *Time's Arrow*, 1987. Gelatin silver print and gilded bronze (seascape, 1980; reliquary fragment, Kamakura Period, thirteenth century), 3 5/16 in. (height). Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery. © Hiroshi Sugimoto.

the deeper personal, emotional, and social ramifications of work that opens us to a space to empathize, a space that is as small as a teardrop and vast as an ocean.

Photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto's (Japan, b. 1948) *Time's Arrow* (1987) combines a thirteenth-century Buddhist reliquary with a seascape of the Caribbean taken in 1980 (fig. 27). The pairing creates a visual poetry that unifies the image of the ocean with a form that is conventionally associated with funerary aspects of the sacred. After this series of traumatic shipwreck images and stories, I suggest another lens—that every image of the sea is always already a shipwreck. Seen through *Time's Arrow*, the temporality of the sea and the artworks it inspires is long, and seems unchanging, even while being altered by time. Sugimoto's relic reminds us of an islander's perspective on the English aphorism "Ashes to ashes . . ." The evolutionary brine of the ocean is a watery grave to which we may all return, like those buried and lost at sea. In the words of ecologist Rachel Carson, "For all at last return to the sea—to Oceanus, the ocean river, like the ever-flowing stream of time, the beginning and the end."[53]

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17 Grigsby, 224.

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33 Sharpe, 13.

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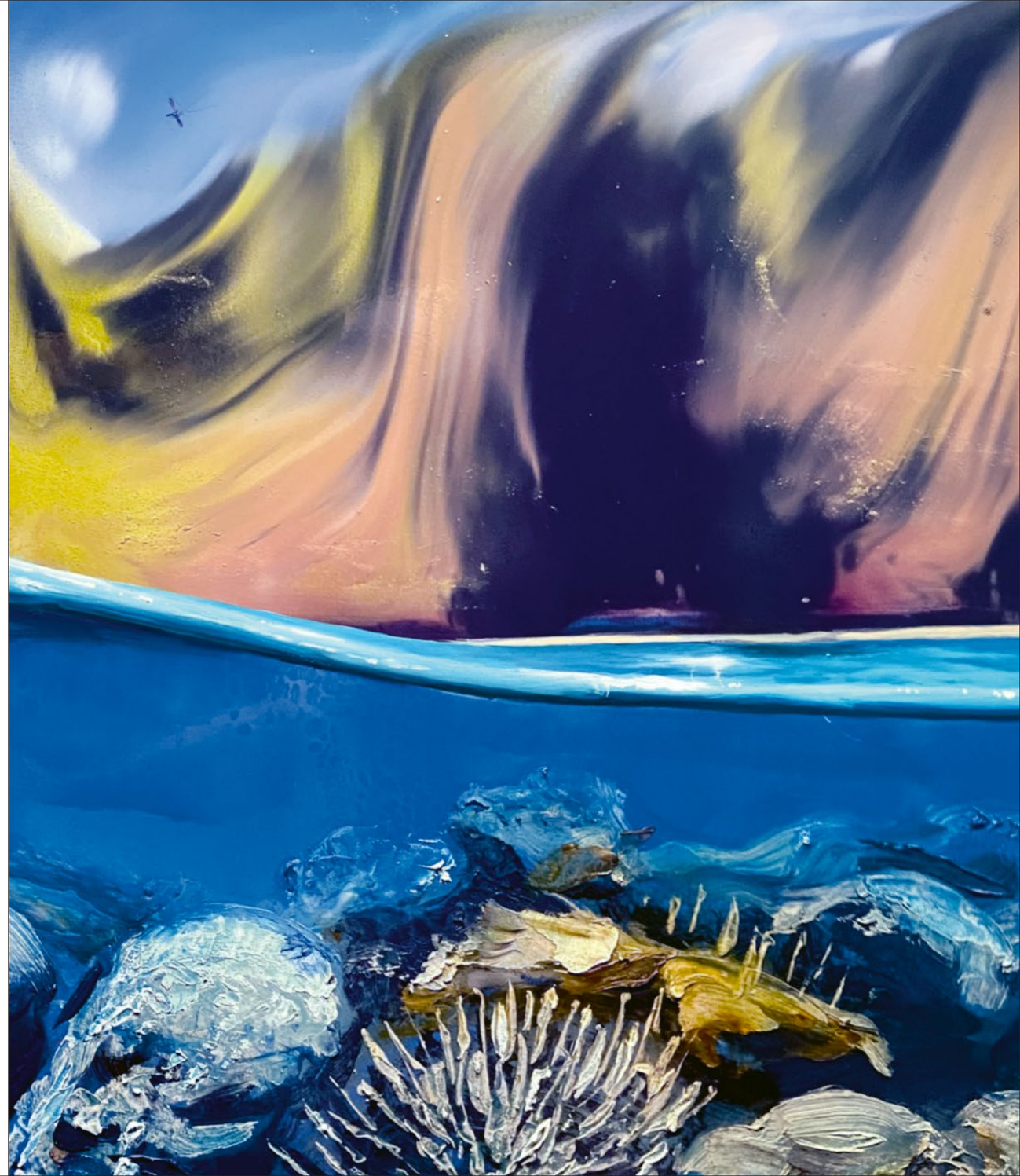
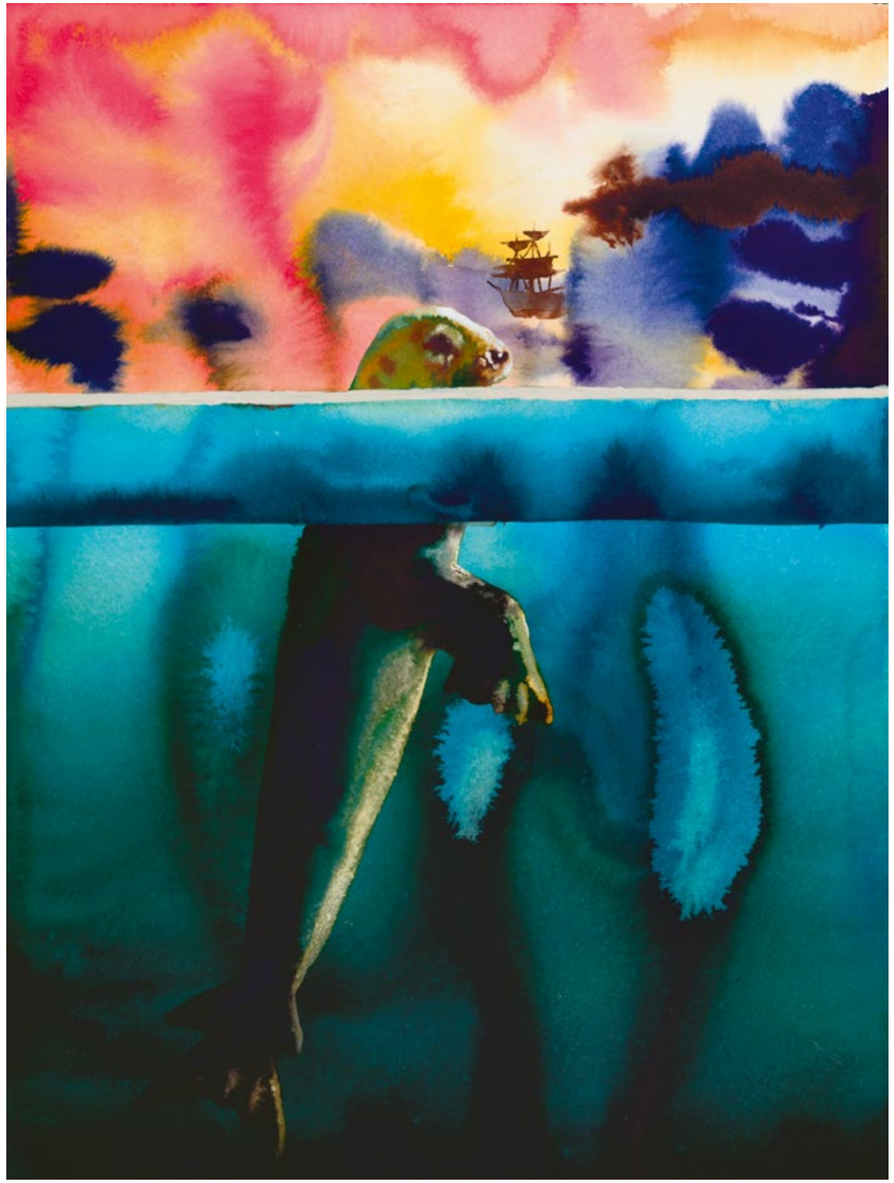


The Kraken, 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Drifting, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Giovanni Battista Lusieri, "Il Tempio di Nettuno a Paestum," 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.



Seal Hunters 2 (after Bradford), 2019
Watercolor, ink, and acrylic on paper, 24 × 18 in.

Paulus Potter, "Bull," 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Steller's Sea Cow, 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Lifeboat HMS Terror, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

The Rime, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

RMS Lusitania, 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 24 × 18 in.

Medusa, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Junk, 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Hardtack, 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 24 × 18 in.

Abraham Storck "Study for a Man of War," 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Robinson Crusoe's Horse, 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 24 × 18 in.

Ca Mau Ceramics, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

The Sargasso Sea, 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 24 × 18 in.

Hagia Sofia, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Calving, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

The Whale Strikes Back (after Raleigh), 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 24 × 18 in.

The Boyd Massacre, 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 24 × 18 in.

Vietnam Cham Sculpture, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Slocum, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

The Nile, 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

South Pacific, 2019
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Egyptian Tomb Bat, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Liberty Island, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Death in Venice, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

Zoonotic, 2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

SELECTED EXHIBITION HISTORY

SOLO

1988 *Currents*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston.

1990 *Alexis Rockman*, Jay Gorney Modern Art, New York.

1991 *Alexis Rockman*, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Salzburg, Austria.

1992–93 *Forum: Alexis Rockman,* Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.

1995–96 *Alexis Rockman: Second Nature*, University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal; Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR; Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI; Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth, MN; Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati.

1997 *Alexis Rockman: Dioramas*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston.

1998 *Alexis Rockman: A Recent History of the World*, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT.

2000 *The Farm*, Creative Time, DNAid Billboard, corner of Lafayette and Houston Streets, New York.

2001 *Future Evolution*, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle.

2004–05 *Alexis Rockman: Manifest Destiny*, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York; Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO; Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA; Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH.

2005 *Fresh Kills*, Gary Tatintsian Gallery, Moscow.

2008 *Alexis Rockman: The Weight of Air*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA.

2010–11 *Alexis Rockman: A Fable for Tomorrow*, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH.

2013–14 *Alexis Rockman: Drawings from* Life of Pi, The Drawing Center, New York; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans.

2015–16 *Alexis Rockman: East End Field Drawings*, Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY.

2016 *Alexis Rockman: Bioluminescence*, Carolina Nitsch Contemporary Art, New York.

A Natural History of New York City, Salon 94, New York.

2018 *Alexis Rockman: Wallace's Line*, Baldwin Gallery, Aspen, CO.

Alexis Rockman: New Mexico Field Drawings, Sperone Westwater, New York.

2018-20 *Alexis Rockman: The Great Lakes Cycle*, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids, MI; Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, Cleveland; Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, Milwaukee; Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis; Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, MI.

2020–21 *Alexis Rockman: Lost Cargo: Watercolors*, Sperone Westwater, New York.

GROUP

1985 *From Organism to Architecture*, New York Studio School, New York.

1989 *The Silent Baroque*, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Salzburg, Austria.

1989–90 *(not so) Simple Pleasures: Content and Contentment in Contemporary Art*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA.

1990 *The Unique Print*, *70s into 90s*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

1992 *Slow Art: Painting in New York Now*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, NY.

American Drawings Since 1960, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles.

Transgressions in the White Cube: Territorial Mappings, Usdan Gallery, Bennington College, Bennington, VT.

1993 *Aperto 1993 Emergency/Emergenza*, 45th Venice Biennale, Venice.

Concrete Jungle: Mark Dion, Alexis Rockman, Bob Braine, Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery, Center for the Arts, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT.

1994 *On the Human Condition: Hope and Despair at the End of This Century*, Spiral, Wacoal Art Center, Tokyo; Ashiya City Museum of Art and History, Ashiya, Japan.

1994–95 *Some Went Mad, Some Ran Away*, Serpentine Gallery, London; Nordic Arts Centre, Helsinki; Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover, Germany; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago.

1997 *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late Twentieth Century Art*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR.

1999 *Get Together: Kunst als Teamwork*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna.

2000 *Desert & Transit*, Schleswig-Holsteinischer Kunstverein, Kunsthalle zu Kiel, Kiel, Germany; Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig, Germany.
Small World: Dioramas in Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego.

2001–02 *Paradise Now*, University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor; Exit Art, New York; The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY.

2006 *Into Me / Out of Me*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma, Rome.

2007 *Baroque Biology: Tony Matelli & Alexis Rockman*, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati.

Failure, *Landesgalerie Linz,* Linz, Austria.

Surrealism, Dada & Their Legacies in Contemporary Art, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

2007–08 *Molecules That Matter*, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY; Chemical Heritage Foundation, Philadelphia.

2008–09 *Badlands: New Horizons in Landscape*, Mass MoCA, North Adams, MA.

2011 *Oceanomania: Souvenirs of Mysterious Seas, from Expedition to Aquarium*, Nouveau Musée National de Monaco.

The Smithson Effect, Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City.

2011–12 *Prospect.2*, New Orleans.

2012–15 *Vanishing Ice: Alpine and Polar Landscapes in Art, 1775–2012*, Whatcom Museum, Bellingham, WA; El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso; Glenbow Museum, Calgary, AB, Canada; McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Vaughan, ON, Canada.

2014 *beyond earth art: contemporary artists and the environment*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Ithaca, NY.

Back to Eden: Contemporary Artists Wander the Garden, Museum of Biblical Art, New York.
Contemporary Art from the Permanent Collection, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

2014–16 *Gyre: The Plastic Ocean*, Anchorage Museum, Anchorage, AK; CDC Museum, Atlanta; USC Fischer Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Natalie and James Thompson Art Gallery, San Jose, CA.

2015 *The Omnivore's Dilemma: Visualized*, Contemporary Art Galleries, University of Connecticut, Storrs.

DUMP! Multispecies Making and Unmaking, Kunsthal Aarhus, Aarhus, Denmark.

2017 *Naturalia*, Sotheby's and Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York.

Future Shock, SITE Santa Fe, NM.

2018–19 *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment*, Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ; Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR.

2018 *The Solace of Amnesia*, Hall Art Foundation, Reading, VT.

2018 Exhibition, The Bunker Artspace: The Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody, West Palm Beach, FL.

2020 *At Sea*, David Zwirner, New York.

2020–21 *100 Drawings from Now*, The Drawing Center, New York.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

SASHA ARCHIBALD's essays about history, art, and film have appeared in *The White Review*, *Places Journal*, *The Point*, *The Believer*, and *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and in many exhibition catalogues and anthologies. Based in Portland, Oregon, she is a frequent contributor to and former editor at *Cabinet* magazine, and teaches critical studies at Pacific Northwest College of Art.

CHANDA LAINE CAREY is an assistant professor of art history and visual culture at the University of British Columbia, specializing in global contemporary art history. Her research focuses on art in a global context, with emphasis on using the lenses of cosmopolitanism and intersectionality to write inclusive accounts of contemporary art. Dr. Carey has published widely on Jean-Michel Basquiat, Robert Rauschenberg, Jack Whitten, and other American artists, as well as international artists Marina Abramovic, Vik Muniz, and Xu Bing. Her criticism has appeared in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*; *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*; and *Artillery* magazine. Her book project on Marina Abramovic analyzes the development of the artist's transcultural performance aesthetic as a reflection of her spiritual life and international travels. The art of the African diaspora features strongly in Carey's new research on artists worldwide who are the subject of their own photographs, including Renee Cox and Samuel Fosso.

DANIEL FINAMORE is the associate director of exhibitions and the Russell W. Knight Curator of Maritime Art and History at the Peabody Essex Museum. He has organized more than fifteen major exhibitions at the museum, on a wide range of artistic and cultural traditions and media. Among his six books are *Ocean Liners: Glamour, Speed, and Style* (a collaboration with the Victoria & Albert Museum); *Fiery Pool: The Maya and the Mythic Sea*; *Maritime History as World History*; and *It's Alive! Classic Horror and Sci-Fi Movie Posters from the Kirk Hammett Collection*. He is currently working on *In American Waters*, a major reassessment of the role of the sea in American painting, in partnership with the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. In his role as associate director of exhibitions, Finamore develops strategies designed to broaden existing museum visitorship and appeal to new audiences.

ANDREA GROVER is the executive director of Guild Hall, East Hampton, one of the country's first multidisciplinary centers, established in 1931. Before joining Guild Hall in 2016, she was curator of special projects at the Parrish Art Museum, where she won an Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation Exhibition Award and an AADA Foundation Curatorial Award for *Radical Seafaring*, a survey of offshore art that featured works by George Brecht, Simon Doonan, R. Buckminster Fuller, Constance Hockaday, Mary Mattingly, Vik Muniz, Dennis Oppenheim, Duke Riley, Robert Smithson, and Swoon. At the Parrish, she established the annual series Parrish Road Show and Platform, which included one-person exhibitions of Jonah Bokaer, Tara Donovan, Maya Lin, and Josephine Meckseper. In 1998, Grover founded the nonprofit moving image art center Aurora Picture Show in Houston; she later created Aurora's annual citywide Media Archeology Festival. She has also curated film programs for the Menil Collection and Dia Art Foundation. Grover has received fellowships from the Center for Curatorial Leadership; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; STUDIO for Creative Inquiry at Carnegie Mellon University; and the Warhol Foundation.

BRETT LITTMAN has been the director of the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum in Long Island City, New York, since May 2018. He was executive director of the Drawing Center from 2007 to 2018; deputy director of MoMA PS1 from 2003 to 2007; co-director of Dieu Donné Papermill from 2001 to 2003; and associate director of UrbanGlass from 1996 to 2001. Littman's interests are multidisciplinary; he has curated more than twenty-five exhibitions dealing with visual art, outsider art, craft, design, architecture, poetry, music, science, and literature, and he was the curator of Frieze Sculpture at Rockefeller Center in 2019–20. An art critic and lecturer as well as an active essayist for museum and gallery catalogues, he also writes articles for a wide range of U.S. and international art, fashion, and design magazines. Littman, a native New Yorker, was named a Chevalier of the French Order of Arts and Letters in 2017.

TREVOR SMITH is the associate director of Multisensory Experience and curator of the Present Tense Initiative (PTI) at the Peabody Essex Museum. In his work for Multisensory Experience, Smith aligns the museum's curatorial activities with its neuroscience and visual literacy programs to introduce experiences that activate the senses and resonate with our communities. As curator of PTI, Smith seeks to celebrate the central role of creative expression in shaping our world and explore how creativity and cultural change emerge at the intersections of cultures, disciplines, or technologies.

At the Peabody Essex Museum, Smith has curated exhibitions of contemporary artists including Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, Candice Breitz, Nick Cave, Susan Philipsz, and Charles Sandison. He organized the acclaimed exhibitions *Strandbeest: The Dream Machines of Theo Jansen* and *PlayTime*, about the changing view of play in contemporary culture. Smith is a former curator in residence at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, and former curator at the New Museum of Contemporary Art. Previously based in Australia, he worked for the Biennale of Sydney, and was director of the Canberra Contemporary Art Space and curator of contemporary art at the Art Gallery of Western Australia. He was also co-curator of the 2011 Singapore Biennial. Smith has produced more than seventy exhibitions and has published widely in exhibition catalogues and journals worldwide.

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Courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner Gallery, New York

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2008
Watercolor and graphite on paper, 10 × 14 in.
Collection of Dorothy Spears

PAGE 55 (BOTTOM)
The MV Explorer II
2008
Watercolor and graphite on paper, 10 × 14 in.
Private collection

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The Lifeboat of the HMS Erebus (detail)
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Junk (detail)
2019
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Collection of Tiffany and Harrison Westwater
Courtesy of Sperone Westwater, New York

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2020
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2019
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Collection of the artist

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Private Collection
Courtesy of Sperone Westwater, New York

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Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.

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Zoonotic
2020
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in.
Private Collection
Courtesy of Sperone Westwater, New York

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(See above)

This book is published on the occasion of the exhibition *Alexis Rockman: Shipwrecks*, organized by Andrea Grover, Executive Director, Guild Hall.

Exhibition itinerary:

Peabody Essex Museum
161 Essex Street
Salem, MA 01970
pem.org
March 6–May 31, 2021

Guild Hall
158 Main Street
East Hampton, NY 11937
guildhall.org
June 12–July 15, 2021

Published in 2021 by Guild Hall and DelMonico Books•D.A.P.

Guild Hall
158 Main Street
East Hampton, NY 11937
guildhall.org

DelMonico Books available through
ARTBOOK | D.A.P.
75 Broad Street, Suite 630
New York, NY 10004

artbook.com
delmonicobooks.com

Designers: Miko McGinty and Julia Ma
Production: Karen Farquhar
Editor: Andrea Grover
Typesetter: Tina Henderson

Printed and bound in China

Front jacket: Alexis Rockman, *The Lifeboat of the HMS Erebus*, 2019. Oil on wood, 40 × 48 in. Courtesy of the artist and Baldwin Gallery, Aspen.
Back jacket: Alexis Rockman, *Junk*, 2019. Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 18 × 24 in. Courtesy of the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020922167
ISBN 978-1-942884-95-8

In this timely publication, the shipwreck narrative is used to explore globalization, colonization, and climate change in the masterful works of contemporary American painter Alexis Rockman. The artist looks at the world's waterways as a network by which all of history has traveled. Through depictions of historic and obscure shipwrecks and their lost cargoes, Rockman addresses the impact—both factual and extrapolated—the migration of goods, people, plants and animals has on the planet. The book includes texts by Sasha Archibald, Chanda Laine Carey, Daniel Finamore, Andrea Grover, Brett Littman, and Trevor Smith.

PUBLISHED BY GUILD HALL AND DELMONICO BOOKS • D.A.P.

ISBN 978-1-942884-95-8

DelMonico Books + D.A.P