

Nautical Art Research Online

An important part of maritime heritage is its art, from images of vessels, mariners, and seascapes artists created centuries ago, to modern images of historical events, from new interpretations of maritime history and the marine environment to the many different places and different media in between. Most large maritime museums, such as the National Maritime Museum in the UK (<http://collections.rmg.co.uk>), Mystic Seaport Museum (<http://mysticseaport.org>: “Maritime Art Gallery” for contemporary works for sale, or “Research the Collections” then “The Collections” for artifacts owned by the Seaport), the Australian National Maritime Museum (<http://emuseum.anmm.gov.au/code/emuseum.asp>) and others, have significant online presences where you can view many of the pieces in their collections.

Many art museums and online art resources have maritime aspects to them as well. The Smithsonian, for example, has not only one of the great maritime collections of the world, but also many maritime-related works throughout its many museums. At “On the Water” (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/>), the online version of their permanent exhibit by the same name, one can learn about many of their artifacts. At their Collections Search Center page (<http://collections.si.edu/search/>), however, one can search for terms like “marine art,” “nautical,” or “schooner,” to find images of works from across dozens of Smithsonian collections. These searches can include user-added tags, which can be a big benefit when searching for specific terms. Without these online features, tracking down maritime pieces at non-maritime repositories would be exceedingly difficult. Also, one can view many, many more works than are ever on exhibit at a given time. New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art also offers online searching of their collections at <http://metmuseum.org/collections>. Searches for “schooner,” “ship,” or even “barque” (but not “bark”) return many results from their collections, again including many works not currently on display.

Peabody Essex Museum, in Salem, Massachusetts, has a useful tool called ARTscape (<http://www.pem.org/artscape>); not only can you search their collections database, but you can also create your own collection of works. Their maritime art collection contains only 326 items online at present, but doubtless more will be added over time. An older set of pages

reflecting their collections appears at <http://www.pem.org/sites/archives/maritm1.htm>.

Beyond museums, one can start with “Art History Resources on the Web,” at <http://arthistoryresources.net>. The site has a wide range of links to online resources, though, surprisingly, it shows no results specifically for maritime or marine art. The “Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History,” hosted by the Met at <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/>, provides an excellent overview of many aspects of art history in relation to world history, with images of many works from the Met’s own collection.

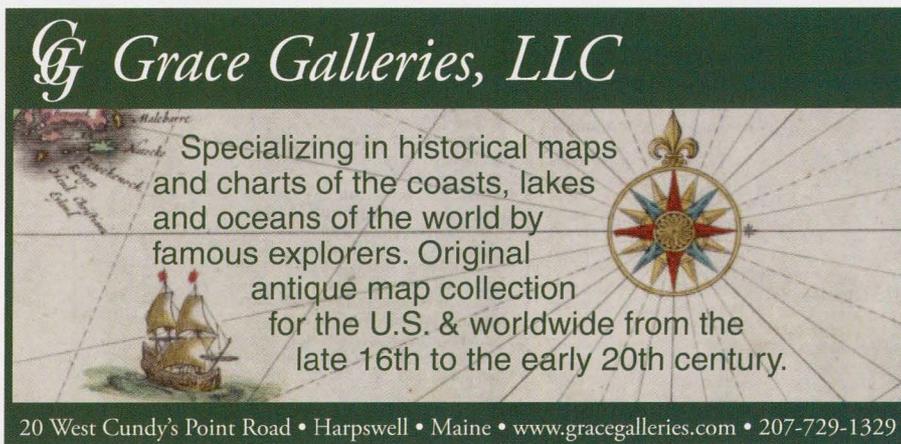
The Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles offers many valuable tools. At their “Getty Research Portal” (<http://portal.getty.edu/portal/landing>), they provide access to digitized art history texts published before 1923. You can locate a particular book in the portal’s online catalog, then go to the contributing institution that has digitized it; there, you can generally search the complete text of the digitized work. You cannot yet search across the full text of all volumes at once, since each participating institution presents its digitized content through a different platform.

Getty also offers access to two important art history indices, BHA and RILA, at <http://library.getty.edu/bha>. These citation databases cover material published between 1975 and 2007. Usually, such subject-specific databases are subscription products, so not accessible for free, but these two resources, however, have been made available online for free.

As always, Google cannot be ignored. The Google Art Project (<http://www.googleartproject.com>) is not large—yet—but over time we can expect it to be expanded to include an untold number of reproductions of works from museums around the world. Many famous works are already at this site, and its ability to display content in very fine detail is quite remarkable.

Finally, Artcyclopedia (<http://www.artcyclopedia.com>) claims to have information on over 9,000 artists. You can find a short listing of its maritime artists at http://www.artcyclopedia.com/subjects/Maritime_Scenes.html.

Suggestions for other sites worth mentioning are welcome at peter@shipindex.org. See <http://shipindex.org> for a free compilation of over 140,000 ship names from indexes to dozens of books and journals. ⚓



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