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Contact: Rachel Somma, Communications Manager
P: 718.727.1135, ext. 117
RSomma@StatenIslandMuseum.org

Staten Island SEEN

On view September 18, 2015 - September 1, 2016 at the Staten Island Museum at Snug Harbor, 1000 Richmond Terrace, Bldg A



Amesse Photography, 2015.

STATEN ISLAND SEEN traces this borough's unique history and changing landscape from the 17th century to the present. These works are made in a broad range of styles and materials, from ink drawing to anaglyph 3-D video. In the past, artists were attracted to Staten Island for its varied landscape: The shoreline, inland hills, ponds, valleys, waterways, and forests all provided inspiration. Contemporary artists depict these natural features as well as the way we live today, including parking lots, strip malls, tract houses, and other aspects of our suburban landscape.

In this exhibit you will see artists' responses to the changes that have occurred to Staten Island's landscape since the 1930s, including the construction of the commuter bridges (Bayonne, Goethals, Outerbridge, and Verrazano-Narrows), urban-style high-rise housing, tract housing, new communities, and shopping centers.

Some of these developments have occurred in floodplain communities – many established as summer vacation retreats decades ago – that were severely damaged or destroyed by Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

Staten Island is the most rural New York City borough, where you can hike for miles within dense woods, explore wetlands, and climb steep terrain, yet be only a bus and ferry ride away from Manhattan's skyscrapers. These natural aspects are part of what has made Staten Island so attractive to new residents, and led to its rapid development. But while the population density has greatly increased, more than one-third of the island is protected parkland, including the Greenbelt and more than 170 parks. Beaches, wetlands, hills, and little-known places of tranquility are adjacent to bustling commercial strips and residential communities.

Staten Island continues a balancing act between the urban and rural aspects of its character; this contrast is explored in *Staten Island SEEN*.

Featured Artists:

Marylou & Jerome Bongiorno
Nancy Bonior
Brian Brooks
Paul Caranicas
Rackstraw Downes
Nicholas Evans-Cato
Richard Estes
Ned Gannon
Diana Horowitz
Amer Kobaslija
Andrew Lenaghan
Ginger Levant
Stanley Lewis

Cynthia Mailman
Ron Milewicz
Bill Murphy
Lenora Paglia
Stephanie Pierce
Morgan Taylor
Peter Van Dyck
Sarah Yuster

G. W. Barrows
William Henry Bartlett
Ely M. Behar
Cecil Crosley Bell

Louis George Bouché
John Bradley
Ferdinand Busing
James Edward Buttersworth
Alfred DeGiorgio Crimi
Jasper Francis Cropsey
Jasper Dankaerts
Mauritz Frederik De Haas
Mabel Dwight
Johan Peter Eggers
Hermann Feuchsel
Victor Joseph Gatto
Frederick Kost

Percy Leason
William Rickarby Miller
Edward Moran
John A. Noble
Archibald Robertson
Charles Schabelitz
Henry Ernest Schnakenberg
John French Sloan
Anthony Toney
Norman Turner
Robert Wallis
Otto Charles Wigand
C. Winter

Select Highlights from: *Staten Island SEEN*

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The Bay



View of the land on the southerly and southwesterly sides of the great bay between the Neversincks and Long Island...

Jasper Danckaerts (Dutch, 1639- ca. 1703)

Ink on paper, 1679

Facsimile of original in the Brooklyn Historical Society

This sketch is the earliest existing image that includes Staten Island. It may be the very sketch Jasper Danckaerts reports having made in his *Journal of a Voyage to New York and Tour in Several of the American Colonies*, in 1679-80: The Dutch inscription on the top of the drawing says: "View of the land on the southerly and southwesterly sides of the great bay between the Neversincks and Long Island..." Letters of the alphabet indicate the principal

landmarks in the sketch:

- A. Coney Island (today's Bay Ridge)
- B. The Gate to enter (the Narrows, now occupied by the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge)
- C. Sandy Hook (in the far distance)
- D. Rensselaer's Hook (today's Fort Wadsworth)
- E. Some trees serving as a landmark (site unknown)
- F. Kill van Kol

Spouting whales and dolphin are notable in the bay, giving some idea of the plentiful sea life that must have populated the unpolluted waters. Also featured are a few small sail ships.

Villages and Farms



Looking Oceanward from Todt Hill

Jasper Cropsey (American, 1823-1900)

Oil on canvas, 1895

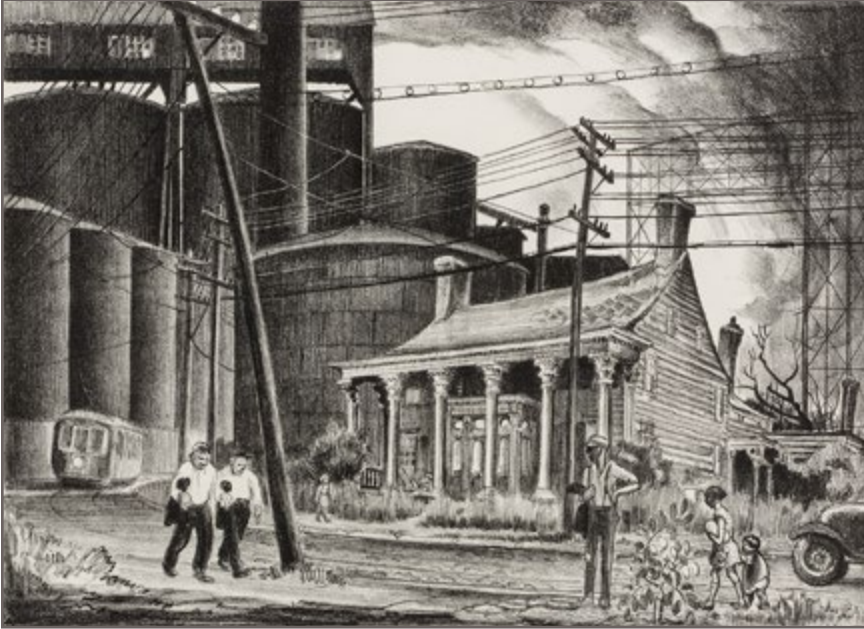
Gift of a Committee of Donors

A1946.3595

Cropsey's sweeping panorama encompasses the hills of Staten Island, the planted fields of the Vanderbilt estate in the middle distance, and the sea beyond. Cropsey, born in Rossville, is considered one of the most important second generation Hudson River School painters (a group of artists who are known primarily for landscape paintings celebrating the American wilderness and farmland). He was particularly noted for his

autumn scenes. Cropsey is still one of the most distinguished "native sons" of Staten Island. The painting was one of the Museum's major purchases, and another artist featured in this exhibition, Percy Leason, was a major promoter of its acquisition.

Industrialization/Urbanization



The Survivor, S.I. (Staten Island Shore)

Mabel Dwight (American, 1876-1955)

Lithograph on paper, 1929

Museum Purchase.

A1975.20.1/2

Mabel Dwight's lithograph is a vivid reminder of a bygone era. The Greek Revival home is overwhelmed by new industrial complexes, trolley lines, automobiles, telephone poles and gas tanks. This was a timely image, made on the eve of the stock market crash that began the Great Depression.

The Cincinnati-born, New Orleans-raised artist eventually settled in Greenwich Village, then a mecca for artists and political radicals. She was critically acclaimed as one of America's foremost print makers, having studied lithography later in life in Paris. She even lived for a while on Staten Island, often representing the contrast between

Staten Island's rural areas, dilapidated old houses and the growing industrial blight. Though a committed socialist, her works were never heavy-handed political propaganda.

Land Use



Cedar Grove Beach, Staten Island Winter

Frederick Kost (American, 1861-1923)

Oil on canvas, c. 1890

Gift of the Estate of Walter C. Schabelitz

A1960.17.6

Frederick Kost's wintry view shows the influence of George Inness' (1825-94) landscape paintings, emphasizing nature's forms fused by light and atmosphere. Kost's family moved to Staten Island in 1867, where he continued to live and work until 1900. In the 1880s he studied in Munich and Paris, where he developed a looser painting style, known as Tonalism, stressing color, brushstroke and texture rather than line. The painting was intended as a poetic evocation of a place and moment in time, rather than a literal translation of its appearance. It shows the rural character of Staten Island just before the Consolidation of 1898, when Richmond County became a part of Greater New York City.

Neighborhoods



Stapleton Corner

Cecil Crosley Bell (American, 1906-1970)

Gouache on cardboard, 1944

Gift of Agatha Bell

A1977.15.27

This lively winter evening street scene, showing the commercial strip near Tappen Park, Stapleton, is typical of Cecil Bell's style. Bell and his wife, Agatha Lewis Bell, moved to Staten Island in 1942. He studied with Ashcan painter John Sloan at the Art Students League, and privately. Sloan's urban realism inspired Bell's style, and the two remained friends, collecting each other's work. John Sloan's etching *Wake on the Ferry*, is also featured in this exhibition.

Bridges and Connections



Staten Island: Bridge over Dizzy Bunker

Paul Caranicas (Greece, b. 1946, American)

Oil on canvas, 1987

Lent by The West

Publishing Company St.

Paul, Minnesota, a division of Thomson Reuters

Caranicas' photoreal-ist painting presents a panoramic "fish-eye" view of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge from the Staten Island side. The foreground shows an abandoned, overgrown gun emplacement at Fort Wadsworth, a former

U.S. military installation, now part of the Gateway National Recreation area, located on The Narrows just north of the bridge. Paul Caranicas' work often focuses on the built environment, containing an implicit message of environmental decay. Ironically, the majestic Narrows, so often the focus of earlier landscapes, is not actually seen in this view. The title is a play on the popular Simon and Garfunkel song, "Bridge Over Troubled Water." The Verrazano Narrows Bridge (opened in 1964) was engineer/designer Othmar Amman's (born Swiss 1879- 1965), last and longest suspension bridge. He also designed half of NYC's major bridges: George Washington, Bayonne (his only arch truss bridge), Bronx Whitestone, Triborough and Throgs Neck.



Along the Arthur Kill

Bill Murphy (American, 1952)

Watercolor on paper, 2008

lent by the artist

The artist, born and living on Staten Island, wrote of this piece:

“Along the Arthur Kill was conceived around 2004 and painted in 2007. The gap of three years was due to an inability to ‘finish’ the painting in my mind as a concept. I had conceived of a large aerial view, including both water and land, but had the all-too-familiar feeling of inadequacy. It wasn’t until I had decided to integrate pieces of the bridge itself that something came alive, as well the resultant desire to paint it.”

The vertigo-inducing view, made from the walkway of the Bayonne Bridge (designed by Othmar Amman, completed in 1928), reverses the ratio of sky to land/water, with just a small wedge of sky at the very top.



Staten Island Ferry Docking in Manhattan

Richard Estes (American, 1932)

Oil on board, 2008

Loan courtesy Marlborough Fine Arts, NY.

Estes’ painting offers a glimpse of riders seated on the covered deck, looking out at New York Harbor on a sunny summer’s day--- an experience familiar to many Staten Islanders and tourists. This work is part of a larger series of Staten Island Ferry paintings by the pioneering photorealist. The series expresses the artist’s continuing interest in views of public transit in New York City, which have included subways, buses and even escalators. The sharp-focus realism, and often unexpected viewpoints, are hallmarks of his style.

Inside Out



Moon and Venus 5 a.m.

Otto Charles Wigand (American, 1856-1944)

Oil on canvas, c. 1930

Lent by Dr. Jonathan D. Wall

One feels the still air of a warm summer dawn from the window of Otto Wigand's home in Grymes Hill, where he and his wife, fellow painter, Adeline Wigand, lived from 1916 to 1944. The view is dense with houses, and beyond with ships, and the Brooklyn shore. The frame-within-a-frame of the window gives the work a stabilizing geometry, and a deeper sense of space. *Compare this work with Stephanie Pierce's recent painting of a Staten Island attic room, which merges the outside view with the interior. The wall seems to dissolve into the wallpaper patterns and light.*

Ecology/Land & Water Use



Extirpated Species/Whispering Reed Villas-Summer;

Exxon Oil-Extirpated Flora; Turn of the Century-Wetlands-Disappeared Flora-Staten Island, N.Y.

Cynthia Mailman (American, 1942)

Acrylic, gouache, gold leaf on paper, 1999-2002

Lent by the artist

Cynthia Mailman's Extirpated Species Eco-Illuminations represent the loss of plants and animals formerly found in specific areas of the American landscape, including the sites on Staten Island

shown here. The gilded borders offer accurate images of species, once common to these areas, while the inset landscapes depict the causes of their disappearance. The style of this triptych is based upon late gothic illuminated manuscripts (some examples found in the Treasure Box Gallery on the second floor). Mailman explains: "All my work is and has been an attempt to address and comment on the same subject: civilization and technology and their effects upon our natural environment. In a subtle, innocuous "pretty" picture I hope to seduce the viewer into seeing the dangers and casualties of our "progress."

Conclusion



New York Harbor and The Narrows

Sarah Yuster (American, 1957)

Oil on canvas diptych, 2013

Lent by the artist, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts

The artist writes: "The sweep of our harbor has been the muse of artists for centuries. I'm attracted to the connection from these past worlds to mine. Inaccessible from a singular, public vantage point, two North Shore hillsides provided the vistas from which I noted the touch of our era." Yuster has chronicled much of Staten Island's landscape over the course of her

artistic career. Her pre-9/11 painting of this panorama included the iconic World Trade Center Twin Towers. This painting was also intended as homage to Jasper Cropsey's panorama of 1895, exhibited on the first floor.



Kissam Avenue, Oakwood Beach,

November 15, 2012

Amer Kobaslija (born Bosnian, 1975, lives in New York City/Gettysburg, PA.)

Oil on Plexiglas, 2012

Gift in memory of Mirsad Kobaslija; Courtesy of the artist and George Adams Gallery, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts

Kobaslija's dramatic depiction of the impact of Hurricane Sandy on Oakwood Beach, gives a sense of the scope and devastation Sandy left in its wake, which included 23 deaths. The artist escaped the Bosnian conflict as a teenager in 1993, finding asylum in the United States in 1997.

His youthful experience of man-made destruction prepared him to represent the disorder that follows disaster, such as Hurricane Sandy, which left this desolate landscape on the South Shore of Staten Island. After originally making this painting as a daylight scene (the artist toured the area during the daytime), he decided to increase the poignancy of the scene by setting it at night.



Stereographic views of Staten Island

from the collection of the Staten Island Museum

The Stereoscope or Stereopticon, precursors of today's 3-D movies, became popular in Victorian England. Photographers all over the world, including Staten Island, began to produce stereoscopic slides of sites and landmarks. This is just a small sampling of the many stereographic views that were

made of Staten Island's sights from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, found in the Museum's Archives. The earliest practical stereoscope was invented in 1838, one year before Daguerre released his earliest photographic process. It was a success of the Great Exhibition (London Crystal Palace) of 1851. Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. developed the Holmes Stereoscope in 1859, which became the standard, hand-held device, using stereocards or stereographs. Some of the images are by Staten Island photographer, Isaac Almstaedt (1851-1921). These vintage stereographs are from the Museum's archives.