

Ahoy! View Newcomb Art Gallery's Latest

February 01, 2011 10:15 AM Teresa Parker Farris
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A collection of 50 paintings that document the country's maritime and seaside history over nearly a 100-year period is the focus of "Reflections on Water in American Painting" at the Newcomb Art Gallery of Tulane University, open now through April 24.



Anton O. Fischer captures a yacht race in his painting, *Summer Seas* (1945), which is part of a new exhibit on view at the Newcomb Art Gallery.

New Orleans, situated between the mouth of the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, is a fitting location for the traveling exhibition. Water has brought both economic prosperity and recreational enjoyment, but, with Hurricane Katrina, also served as a destructive force. "Reflections on Water in American Painting" explores similarly diverse manifestations of water in the country's history.

"What is compelling about the exhibition is its unifying theme: water in its various forms," says Jessie Poesch, Tulane professor emeritus of art. "Moreover, the works offer an important survey of the country's diverse watercraft including early ocean-going sailboats, steamboats, racing yachts and 20th-century military ships."

Poesch also says that the show traces the movement away from representational, academic idioms to impressionism. Flourishing at the turn of the 20th century, American impressionism, like its French predecessor, is characterized by loose brushwork and light-filled compositions executed not in studios but, instead, “en plein air” ? outdoors.

The [exhibition](#) also reflects changes in American attitudes towards water, from the early explorers, to the role ships played in fostering economic growth, to the popularity of beaches and, finally, to the rise of industry in urban ports. The show, in turn, subtly raises the question of the future of this important resource.

“Reflections on Water in American Painting” is drawn from the collections of Arthur J. Phelan, who began collecting nautical paintings in the 1960s. Highlights of his collection and the exhibition include James Bard's meticulously drawn Hudson River steamboat, William Trost Richards' breaking waves, William Merritt Chase's intense study of the Arno River, and Reginald Marsh's cathedral-like rendering of a New Jersey railway bridge.

Teresa Parker Farris is the marketing coordinator for the Newcomb Art Gallery in the Woldenberg Art Center.