1. William Roach: Nantucket Whaler, 1833

United States

oil, canvas

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William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 1928.4110

The Rotch or Roach family were among the most prosperous whalers in New England during the 19th century. Their ships hunted whales for the precious resources of oil and ivory, bringing wealth to the region and illuminating and decorating American homes. However, the extractive process of harvesting whales devastated marine populations, contributing to lasting changes in ocean ecologies.

2. Pierre-Jacques Volaire (1729–1802)

born Toulon, France; died Naples, Kingdom of Naples (present-day Italy)

Seacoast with Ships, mid-late 1700s oil, canvas Gift of Andre Emmerich, 1974.0139

The increase in European maritime voyages for trade, exploration, and imperial expansion prompted a cultural interest in images of the sea. Scenes of ships in quiet harbors or on stormy seas became popular. The French artist Volaire was born in the military seaport of Toulon to a family of painters whose work included decorating ships. While this seascape creates a romantic view of seafaring, its inspiration is rooted in the growing importance of shipping in Europe.

3. James Craig Nicoll (1846–1918)

born New York, New York, United States; died Norwalk, Connecticut, United States **Sugar Refineries, East River, NY**, 1884 etching

Gift of Steven Schmidt, Class of 1958, 1995.0096

In the 19th century the East River in Brooklyn, New York, was the center of the sugar refining industry, its banks lined with refineries, including one for Domino Sugar. The river also connected this production hub to maritime locations like the Caribbean, the source of sugarcane crops. The dark lines of the etching capture the urban grit of this industrial waterway. The billowing smokestack also suggests the polluting effect this lucrative business had on its environment.

William Hogarth (1697–1764)

born and died London, England, United Kingdom *In the Mad House*, circa 1735

from A Rake's Progress etching

Gift of Mrs. J. R. Carstairs in honor of Mrs. Henry Werner, 1958.0005.08

Imperial expansion fueled the desire for more efficient ways to navigate the seas. British Parliament passed an act that rewarded anyone who found a way to accurately calculate longitude at sea. The prospect of financial gain inspired more than mathematicians, clockmakers, and sea captains. Hogarth's print shows a well-known London mental institution where a patient behind the doorway draws a globe on the wall; he has gone mad in his quest to find the calculation.



Scan the code to read about the search for longitude.

Buckminster Fuller (1895–1983), artist and cartographer born Milton, Massachusetts, United States; died Los Angeles, California, United States Shoji Sadao (1927–2019), cartographer born Los Angeles, California, United States; died Tokyo, Japan +

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Buckminster Fuller Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States, publisher

Dymaxion airocean world: the Raleigh edition of Fuller projection, 1954

offset lithograph

+

T.R. Smith Map Collection, Anschutz Library, The University of Kansas Libraries

Amidst the escalating tensions of the Cold War, architect and inventor Buckminster Fuller made a map that imagined the world not as a series of national borders but as an interconnected environmental and human space. His Dymaxion airocean map emphasizes the connections between all the continents, with the ocean flowing around them. Color shows the relationship of ecological environments by tracking temperature across the globe. In a period of human divisions, Fuller's projection emphasized a unified world.

Benjamin Martin (1704–1782)

born Worplesdon, England, United Kingdom; died London, England, United Kingdom *octant*, mid 1700s

mahogany, brass, ivory

Museum purchase: Friends of the Art Museum and Helen Foresman Spencer Art Acquisition Fund, 2011.0040

The octant is a navigational device that measures the angle between two objects, usually the sun, moon, or the North Star, and the horizon. Tools like this were the 18th-century equivalent of GPS for calculating one's position at sea but required mathematical knowledge and technical skill to use. The expertise of makers like Benjamin Martin, who crafted nautical instruments using such refined materials as mahogany, brass, and ivory, was essential to the expanding maritime culture of the period.

mermaid, mid 1800s

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United States wood, polychromy, gilding Museum purchase, 1962.0003

In seafaring towns, ship chandler's shops sold all the supplies required to go to sea, from rope and sailcloth to tools and cabin necessities. This carved mermaid would have hung outside a shop door as a fanciful sign advertising the store's purpose. The gold paint still visible on its scales would have glinted in the sunlight, enticing passersby to enter. The artisan who made it likely also crafted ship figureheads.



Kansas Libraries

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Scan the code to read about mermaids across centuries and cultures.

A new chart of the world: on Wright's or Mercator's projection, in which are exhibited all the parts hitherto explored or discovered with the tracks of the British circumnavigators Byron, Wallis, ..., 1794 London, England, United Kingdom

Laurie & Whittle (1794–1858), London, England, United Kingdom, publisher

engraving, hand coloring Department of Special Collections, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Orbis Maps, 1:24, The University of

A projection is a series of calculations that translates the curving three-dimensional shape of the globe onto the flat surface of a paper map. Developed by the Flemish geographer Gerardus Mercator in 1569, this particular projection was meant to assist maritime navigation. For this reason, it turns the arcing lines crossing meridians into straight lines. As a result, the relative sizes of landmasses in relation to each other are distorted,

providing a skewed vision of the world.

Frans Huys (1522–1562), engraver

born Antwerp, Habsburg Netherlands (present-day Belgium); died Antwerp, Southern Netherlands (present-day Belgium)

after **Pieter Bruegel the Elder** (circa 1525–1569) born Breda, Habsburg Netherlands (present-day Netherlands); died Brussels, Southern Netherlands (present-day Belgium)

Hieronymus Cock (circa 1510–1570), publisher born Antwerp, Habsburg Netherlands (present-day Belgium); died Antwerp, Southern Netherlands (present-day Belgium)

Three Men of War in a Tempest, 1561–1565 from Sailing Vessels engraving, etching

Museum purchase: Letha Churchill Walker Memorial Art Fund, 1996.0062

In the early period of maritime exploration, the dangers of travel at sea fascinated and terrified European audiences. This print shows three caravels—small sailing ships—caught in a storm. In the tumultuous sea, a group of fanciful sea monsters poses another threat to the sailors hanging from the ships' rigging. One sea monster is ridden by a sea god with a harp, showing how mythological associations with the sea informed how people imagined actual sea voyages.

Norman Akers

cultural affiliation Osage born 1958, Fairfax, Oklahoma, United States **Landing**, 2019 photopolymer plate relief print Gift of the Print Society of Greater Kansas City, 2020.0014

This complex print by Osage artist Norman Akers combines maps and a seascape with other images of European colonialism. He depicts George Washington and Alexander Hamilton—founding statesmen who shaped US policies on land and at sea—as aliens descending on Indigenous land. While Akers's work tends to focus on territorial borders, this work also visualizes the role of the sea in colonial narratives.

Cara Romero

cultural affiliation enrolled citizen of the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe born 1977, Inglewood, California, United States **Eufaula Girls**, 2015

pigment print (digital inkjet), Epson Legacy Platine paper Museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund, T2023.027.02

Bodies of water interconnect with each other and with human narratives and activities across time. In this photograph from the series *Water Memories*, Chemehuevi artist Cara Romero connects water with creation stories. Great Ocean Woman (Hutsipamamau'u) is the name of the Chemehuevi Creator. Romero also references the 2015 flooding of Muscogee Nation lands in Eufaula, Oklahoma. For Romero, these "photography dreamscapes deal with Native American relationships to water, the forces of man and of Mother Nature."

Bernard Séjourné (1947–1994) born and died Port-au-Prince, Haiti *Erzuline*, 1974 paint, hardboard Mary Lou Vansant Hughes Collection, 2011.0324

Erzulie La Sirène—a Haitian Voudou lwa (spirit) of motherhood and the personification of the oceans—appears suspended in a sea of blue as if through a porthole. Depicted as a shell-like creature rather than the more usual mermaid form, she represents a crossing of realms. La Sirène is related to similar water spirits across the Caribbean and South America that developed from beliefs held by Africans who were enslaved and forcibly brought to these regions.

Winslow Homer (1836–1910)

born Boston, Massachusetts, United States; died Prouts Neck, Maine, United States **Cloud Shadows**, 1890

oil, canvas

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William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 1928.1781

Throughout his career, American artist Winslow Homer was drawn to coastal communities in New England, the Northeast coast of the United Kingdom, and the Caribbean. He represented the everyday lives of the fishermen and women as they labored, worked together, and rested. In this scene, painted near his home of Prouts Neck, Maine, Homer shows a moment of rest for a fisherman chatting with his niece as the fleeting movement of clouds dapples the beach with light.

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Calixte Henry (1933–2010)
born Port-au-Prince, Haiti
three fishing boats and two fishermen on open
water, circa 1955–1985
paint, Masonite™
Bequest of Jane Wofford Malin, 2016.0175

Calixte Henry represents the everyday labor and cooperation of Haitian fishermen in the Caribbean Sea. The abstracted composition plunges the viewer into the action of the arcing boats and fishing nets as two men gather their catch. Although colonial interventions in Haiti have caused political and climate upheaval, Henry's painting celebrates the island nation's intimate relationship to the ocean surrounding it, and the dignity and agency of its peoples living along its waters.

Winslow Homer (1836–1910) born Boston, Massachusetts, United States; died Prouts Neck, Maine, United State West India Divers, 1899 watercolor, scraping, chalk, paper William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 1928.1785

On winter trips to the Bahamas, Winslow Homer captured scenes of the Black divers who collected shells and sea life for the benefit of white tourists. The placement of the swimming figure at the edge of this scene emphasizes his submerged position. In the boat, his young partner guards the riches they have drawn from the sea. Homer's choice of watercolor reflects the translucent and dazzling waters of the Caribbean.

Slide curtain to view the watercolor. Please reclose the curtain after viewing.

Isaac Julien, artist

born 1960, London, England, United Kingdom

Bick Productions, producer

New Museum of Contemporary Art, producer Encore (Paradise Omeros: Redux), 2003

from Point of View: An Anthology of the Moving Image, 2004

4:38 minutes

Museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund, 2005.0007.07

The Atlantic Ocean serves as a motif to explore the diasporic identity of modern-day Caribbean peoples. As images of the ebb and flow of sea waves cross the screen, the voice of the poet Derek Walcott reads lines from his epic poem *Omeros*. The title references the Greek poet Homer, and inspired by *The Odyssey*, the poem narrates the migrations and experiences of its Black subjects. Both Walcott and the artist Isaac Julien have ties to the island of St. Lucia, featured in the video.



Scan the code to read a portion of Walcott's epic Omeros.

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Andrea Chung

born 1978, Newark, New Jersey, United States *untitled*, 2022

resin, pigment, beads, shell, crystal Museum purchase: R. Charles and Mary Margaret Clevenger Art Acquisition Fund, 2025.0038.a,b

The marine blue color, hints of erosion, and inclusion of seashells in this sculpture evoke an object that has lived underwater for a long time. The work references the myth of Drexciya, a vibrant community beneath the Atlantic Ocean created by the descendants of pregnant African women who gave their children to the waves during the Middle Passage rather than subject them to enslavement. In their outstretched arms Black grief is alchemized into hope for a more just and caring future.



Scan the code to read an interview with the artist about Black Atlantis.

Willie Cole, artist

born 1955, Somerville, New Jersey, United States **Highpoint Center for Printmaking** (founded 2001), publisher

Calpurnia, 2012

from *Beauties* intaglio, relief print

Museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund, 2016.0031

Artist Willie Cole used metal ironing boards to create the *Beauties* series of prints. Their impressed forms conjure numerous associations, including portraits, tombstones, and ships. Each print carries a woman's name, connecting to Cole's family history and the history of female Black servitude in the Americas. Formerly a surface to press fabric, here the ironing board's impressions evoke textile patterns. The transoceanic trade of printed textiles, like that of enslaved peoples, propelled modern global imperialism.



Scan the code to watch a video about Cole and his work, including the making of Beauties.

Willie Cole (born 1955), artist born Somerville, New Jersey, United States Highpoint Center for Printmaking (founded 2001), publisher

Bertha Mae, 2012

from *Beauties* intaglio, relief print

Museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund, 2016.0032

Artist Willie Cole used metal ironing boards to create the *Beauties* series of prints. Their impressed forms conjure numerous associations, including portraits, tombstones, and ships. Each print carries a woman's name, connecting to Cole's family history and the history of female Black servitude in the Americas. Formerly a surface to press fabric, here the ironing board's impressions evoke textile patterns. The transoceanic trade of printed textiles, like that of enslaved peoples, propelled modern global imperialism.



Scan the code to watch a video about Cole and his work, including the making of Beauties.

Willie Cole (born 1955), artist born Somerville, New Jersey, United States Highpoint Center for Printmaking (founded 2001), publisher

Lula Bell, 2012

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from *Beauties*

intaglio, relief print

Museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund, 2016.0033

Artist Willie Cole used metal ironing boards to create the *Beauties* series of prints. Their impressed forms conjure numerous associations, including portraits, tombstones, and ships. Each print carries a woman's name, connecting to Cole's family history and the history of female Black servitude in the Americas. Formerly a surface to press fabric, here the ironing board's impressions evoke textile patterns. The transoceanic trade of printed textiles, like that of enslaved peoples, propelled modern global imperialism.



Scan the code to watch a video about Cole and his work, including the making of Beauties.

Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846), author born Wishbech, Cambridgeshire, England, United Kingdom; died Ispwich, Suffolk, England, United Kingdom **London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme** (founded 1724), publisher

The history of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-trade by the British Parliament. Vol. 2, 1808 engraving

Special Collections, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, The University of Kansas Libraries

Thomas Clarkson was an abolitionist committed to raising awareness about the evils of slavery. His book, which traced the social activism that successfully made the British trade of enslaved people illegal, included this diagram of a slave ship. The image shows kidnapped Africans packed into a ship's hold for the Atlantic crossing known as the Middle Passage. Used on posters and pamphlets to make slavery's inhumanity visible, the diagram has become an iconic image of slavery referenced by contemporary artists today.

Mark Dion

2017.0047.02-07

born 1961, New Bedford, Massachusetts, United States *Marine Algae*, 2007–2011

from *Herbarium*spit biting, aquatint, à la poupée photograyure

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spit biting, aquatint, à la poupée photogravure, letterpress, acrylic wash Museum purchase: Lucy Shaw Schultz Fund,

A 19th-century American fascination with seaweed developed in part through interest in natural history and the seacoast tourism industry. Artist Mark Dion's Herbarium is a reimagining of Dr. Henry E. Perrine's (1797–1840) attempts to cultivate, propagate, and capitalize on tropical species in the Florida Keys. These prints offer consideration of the relationships between scientific collection and study, the activities of colonialization and exploitation of marine resources, and the natural beauty of algae.



Scan the code to watch a short video about Mark Dion and the pressing of algae.

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Kenojuak Ashevak (1927–2013)

born Ikirasaq, Baffin Island, Northwest Territories (present-day Nunavut), Canada; died Cape Dorset (present-day Kinngait), Nunavut, Canada

Rabbit Eating Seaweed II, 1999

etching, aquatint

Gift of H. G. Jones in honor of Marynell Dyatt Reece, 2011.0151

The abstract and playful design of this print conveys Indigenous knowledge of Arctic plants and animals. Artist Kenojuak Ashevak describes her image as a rabbit thinking of eating seaweed, centering more-than-human relations and understanding. Diverse species of large brown seaweeds, or kelps, form unique habitats along rocky Arctic coasts. Indigenous knowledge is crucial for understanding Arctic coastal ecosystems and the diverse responses to climate change in one of the most rapidly changing places on Earth.



Scan the code to watch a short video about Kenojuak Ashevak and her work.

Global Indigenous Cultures of the Sea

Indigenous cultures from the Arctic to South America and beyond have long had intimate relations with their companion ocean waters. Such diverse cultures have distinct ways of navigating the ocean and describing its role in their daily life and culture. Small model boats and other crafted items representing the sea served as teaching tools and talismans. Some were also designed to sell to foreigners as a way to support the maker and their community.

1. Tunnuq (possibly Martha Tunnuq Kutsiuttikko),

(active mid-late 1900s) active Pelly Bay, Northwest Territories (present-day Nunavut), Canada **seal figure**, 1958-1972 steatite, bone, carving Gift of Forrest E. Jones, 2007.5855

2. Eelaela

born 1933, active Lake Harbor (present-day Kimmirut), Northwest Territories (present-day Nunavut), Canada seal figure, mid-late 1900s stone, carving Gift from the Menninger Foundation, 2007.5853

3. unrecorded Chimú artist (active 900–1470)

active present-day Peru

of Margaret Frink, 2011.0093

boat-shaped, spouted vessel with a human face,

1100-1475

molding, ceramic, incising Gift of James Frink and Mimi Kaplysh in memory

4. totora reed boat model, late 1800s–1979

Peru plant fiber

Gift of Donato Pilco Pizano, 2007.5430

5. unrecorded Kalaallit (Greenland Inuit) artist

active Greenland

miniature kayak, mid 1800s–1895 wood, sealskin, ivory, sinew, cloth Gift of Lewis Lindsay Dyche, 2007.0558 **Terry Evans**

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born 1944, Kansas City, Missouri, United States 1. Icebergs, Disko Bay, June 27, 2008, around midnight pigment print (digital inkjet) Gift of Terry Evans, 2017.0075.01

- 2. Icefjord that leads to the mouth of the Jakobshavn Glacier, June 27, 2008, morning pigment print (digital inkjet) Gift of Terry Evans, 2017.0074.01
- 3. Chalkboards from a CReSIS classroom and office showing work in progress, including the interpretation of radar data that contributes to an understanding of the glacier, July, 2007 pigment print (digital inkjet) Gift of Terry Evans, 2017.0081.02

The Spencer Museum commissioned Terry Evans to create a photographic series as part of a research project with KU's Center for Remote Sensing of Ice Sheets (CReSIS). Their research focused on the Jakobshavn Glacier in west Greenland to understand ice thickness, information critical to monitoring and predicting sea level rise. Evans's images include CReSIS workspaces and aerial views of the glacier's surfaces. Her artistic research contributes to the multiple methods and perspectives for knowing the Arctic.



Scan the code to read a short article about CReSIS and Jakobshavn research.

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Lewis Lindsay Dyche (1857–1915)

born Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, United States; died Topeka, Kansas, United States

1. icebergs off the coast of Greenland, 1894–1895 albumen print, board Gift of Lewis Lindsay Dyche, 2007.7726

2. icebergs and coastline in Greenland, 1894–1895 albumen print, board Gift of Lewis Lindsay Dyche, 2007.7725

3. *Inuit man in a kayak*, 1894–1895

albumen print, board Gift of Lewis Lindsay Dyche, 2007.0578

The Arctic Greenland coastline has fascinated colonial explorers and researchers for centuries. Lewis Lindsey Dyche, a naturalist from the University of Kansas, participated in 23 Arctic expeditions during the late 19th century. Many of the animal specimens he collected contributed to the development of the KU Natural History Museum. His photographs transport his impressions of polar seacoasts and cultures to the Midwest. A fingerprint on one of the photos also evokes the marks of scientists

palampore (bedcover), 1800s

on Arctic environments and peoples.

India

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cotton, block printing, resist dyeing, mordant dyeing. tabby

Source unknown, 0000.2351

Indian colorfast printed cotton textiles, known as chintz, have navigated global markets for centuries. Like Chinese lacquer screens, these high-demand commodities gained an association with maritime transport along the Coromandel Coast in southeastern India. Part of a transoceanic trade cycle, Europeans traded Indian cottons for enslaved captives in West Africa, whom they forcibly brought to the Americas to cultivate crops for European consumption. Proceeds from these crops then furthered the purchase of textiles and goods in India.



Scan the code to see the stamp of color fastness on the back of this textile, among other details.

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unrecorded Hausa-Fulani artist active Nigeria

cloth with Queen Elizabeth II, 1981

cotton, resist dyeing

Gift of Professor Beverly Mack, 2011.0239.02

This commemorative cloth marks the 25th anniversary of British Queen Elizabeth II's visit to colonial Nigeria in 1956 and celebrates independence since 1960. It exemplifies the mobility of textiles and their patterns across oceans as well as their communicative abilities across continents and cultures. Manufactured on "Dutch wax" fabric, these printed fabrics came to the African continent from Indonesia through Dutch colonial traders. They have become a valued and recognizable material for West African fashion.

Trade between Asia and Europe

The lightness and translucency of Chinese porcelain captivated consumers in Asia and Europe. This fascination fueled European trade for Asian goods and inspired regional efforts to reproduce the quality and decoration of Chinese ceramics using local clay and techniques. Porcelain objects populated European tables, including wares to serve imported Chinese tea. In these ways, global exchange fostered new cultures of taste as well as technical innovation.

1. tea caddy, late 1700s-early 1800s,

Qing dynasty (1644–1911)

China

lacquer, gold, pewter

Gift of Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen and John M. Janzen, 2023.0059.a,b,c

2. vase with lid, circa 1700s

Netherlands delftware, earthenware William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 1928.0505.a,b

3. tureen and cover, circa 1840,

Qing dynasty (1644–1911)

China porcelain

William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 1929.0047.a,b

4. saucer with landscape, 1750s,

Qing dynasty (1644–1911)

China

porcelain, glaze

Enrique Chagoya

Gift of James K. Rowland, 2004.0045

5. sweetmeat tray, date unknown

China

enamel

William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 1929.0029.02

Utagawa Yoshitora

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born Edo (present-day Tokyo), Japan; active 1830–1870 Yokohama Hatoba Keshiki (View of Yokohama *Harbor*), 1861, 2nd month, Edo period (1600–1868) color woodcut

William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 1928.7828

With the arrival of Europeans in Asian waters in the late 15th century, maritime trade entered a global age. Port cities, such as Yokohama in Japan, were often products of unequal treaties forced upon Asian territories. They also facilitated the flow of ideas, cultures, and interactions. This Japanese woodblock print of foreigners in Yokohama Harbor would have appealed both to Japanese and European consumers curious for depictions of overseas society.

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plate with foreign figures, 1700s-mid 1800s, Edo period (1600–1868) Japan

有田焼 Arita ware, underglaze, overglaze Promised gift of the Weare-West Family Trust, PG2023.160

Featured in the central roundel of this plate, three performers are staged in a manner similar to European portraiture with a large curtain draped across one side, opening to an exterior view. A scene with two figures dressed in European men's fashion and seated at a Western-style table repeats across three sections interspersed by ornate decorative panels. This blending of European and Japanese aesthetics illustrates the transcultural transactions of porcelain, a highly valued commodity for overseas trade.

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born 1953, Mexico City, Mexico active United States El Regreso del Canibal Macrobiotico (The Return of the Macrobiotic Cannibal), 1998 color lithograph, woodcut, chine collé Museum purchase: Lucy Shaw Schultz Fund, 1999.0005 Enrique Chagoya practices what he calls "reverse anthropology," using historic colonial images in contemporary political works. In this print, he references early European colonization of South America through the arrival of modern US naval vessels onto a tropical shore featuring Indigenous warriors. This scroll quotes 16thcentury European publications that depicted the Native communities as violent and cannibalistic. In remixing these images, Chagoya makes a statement about the continuing harmful legacies of transatlantic colonialism.

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one of a pair of screens, 1700s–1800s, Qing dynasty (1644–1911) China wood, lacquer Bequest of Helen Foresman Spencer, 1982.0156.,b

Motifs from Chinese bird-and-flower paintings appealed to the decorative tastes of European and European-American consumers, particularly from the 18th and 19th centuries, whether on Indian printed textiles or carved polychrome lacquer screens such as this one. Produced along China's southeast coast, these screens came to be called Coromandel, a name derived from the Coromandel coast in southeast India, a major export center from which these luxury products were shipped for global circulation.



Scan the code to see the other side of this screen as well as the companion screen.