

The Dallas Morning News

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Arts, Entertainment & Life

Section E

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ART REVIEW

'Coastlines' drifts

Seascapes best fit DMA exhibit's broad theme

By **GAILE ROBINSON**
Special Contributor

The Dallas Museum of Art is spending the summer on spring break. A new exhibition of 66 works inspired by the seashore, "Coastlines: Images of Land and Sea," is on display through Aug. 22. The paintings, watercolors, drawings, prints and photographs from 1850 to the present are in the DMA's permanent collection or are works that have been promised to the museum from local collectors.

Heather MacDonald, associate curator of European art at the DMA, organized the show into a five-gallery presentation of unnecessary and often tortured themes chosen, one suspects, to include disparate works that only suggest an oceanic common denominator.

Bonnie Pitman, the institution's director, says she conceived the show to run in concert with "The Lens of

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Plan your life

Coastlines: Images of Land and Sea runs through Aug. 22. Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 N. Harwood St. \$5-\$10. 214-922-1200. www.dallasmuseumofart.org



Lighthouse Hill, 1927; Edward Hopper, oil on canvas

Dallas Museum of Art



Bather With Cigarette, 1924; Yasuo Kuniyoshi, oil on canvas

The only girl going wild on the walls of the DMA is a smokin' 1924 flapper by Yasuo Kuniyoshi, in a most decorous red knit bathing costume that was surely made of wool.



Duck Island, 1906; Childe Hassam, oil on canvas

Drifting along a broad theme

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Impressionism: Photography and Painting Along the Normandy Coast, 1850-1874 and directed MacDonald to make it so. "Lens of Impressionism," which will be on view through May 23, is much more concise and edifying, as it tracks the nascent attempts of photographers and impressionists in a common setting.

"Coastlines" is all over the globe and the art timeline, with as many art movements on display as there are artists represented.

The first and last galleries hang together well, but when MacDonald sequesters "The Bather: Myth and Modernity" into the middle gallery, the pickings are feeble. There is nothing on view that suggests the sensory balm of sunshine, sand and salt air. Give me a continual loop of Corona beer commercials rather than this awkward selection of bathers. The only girl going wild on the walls of the DMA is a smokin' 1924 flapper by Yasuo Kuniyoshi, in a most decorous red knit bathing costume that was surely made of wool.

The traditional seascapes of the late 1800s and early 1900s are lovely, as are the recent black-and-white photographs by Hiroshi Sugimoto and Harry Callahan. Sugimoto records the endless sea as it melds into the sky with only the faintest horizon line to differentiate between water and air. Callahan takes a more micro view and aims his camera on the wet sand, just washed by a wave exposing the shellfish burrowing for cover. These photographs capture the sense of

enormity evoked by ocean views and the sensual thrill of an aquatic immersion.

To further the sensory experience, MacDonald has added verse to the wall texts and sound to the galleries. Working with graduate students and faculty at the University of Dallas and sound design students at the Université du Sud Toulon-Var in France, the rooms are awash in the sounds of buoy bells, waves and gulls. In some locations, marked by circular carpets, students have created specific soundscapes to accompany a particular artwork. In other locations, works of poetry or passages from watery works are added to the wall texts. The pairing stimulates an emotional resonance. A passage from Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* is paired with a John Frederick Kensett seascape in which the ocean is glassy with midday lassitude.

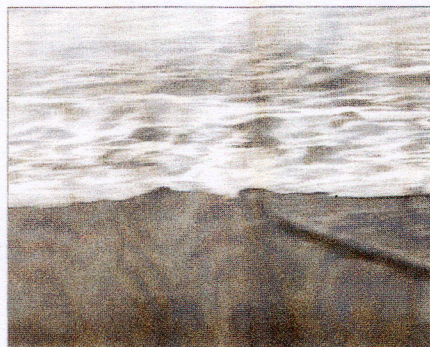
"When beholding the tranquil beauty and brilliancy of the ocean's skin, one forgets the tiger heart that pants beneath it; and would not willingly remember that this velvet paw but conceals a remorseless fang."

Both the inspirational readings and recordings help. The sound is especially effective as it dispels the ashramlike silence of the galleries and interjects another dimension of experience.

While "Coastlines" isn't the best exhibit in recent months at the DMA, the museum's continued effort to mine its own resources for exhibits and to bring more contextualization to the viewing experience is to be commended.



Dallas Museum of Art



Untitled, 1972; Jerry Uelsmann, gelatin-silver print

Pacifica (Surface), 2007; Douglas Leon Cartmel, oil on titanium