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NYMAR's Man About Town– "Get your Art Fix"

By Barry D. Parker for NYMAR



A good starting point for maritime-anything, including art, in New York is the **Olympic Tower** at 51 Street (built by the Onassis family), just east of Fifth Avenue. In the lobby, visitors will find a hanging sculpture by Kalliope Lemos (yes, appropriately from a shipping family) that I call "The Pea Pods". The 15 canoe-like vessels suspended from the ceiling near the waterfall on the north side of the atrium, is officially named "Perpetual Transitions" evoking the intertwining of sea voyages, immigration

and life cycles.

In the mid 1800's, New York accounted for something like half the United States' import and export trade, which, in turn drew the immigrants, which continued the virtuous circle of building commerce, and attracting more people. Many venues offer up a perspective on this maritime heritage, and we can showcase a few. **The New York Historical Society**, located on Central Park West, at 76th Street, offers a perspective back to the early 1800's, a time prior to the launch of the Erie Canal. In these days when a half dozen East Coast ports are fighting for primacy as a "Load Center", this infrastructure project channeled trade flows from the Midwest states to New York.

The Hudson River, the main artery for these cargo moves, itself inspired a whole school of art (in the middle 1800s); the Historical Society's collections include the art of famous painters such as Thomas Cole, and Jasper Cropsey, Asher B Durand and numerous lesser known names. Maritime people who are not art experts will still enjoy this type of work (usually paintings and sometimes sketches) because it usually centers on rivers and ports, often with commercial or passenger ships depicted. Financial types who visit should not miss the 1880's vintage painting "Bulls and Bears in the Market", depicting the creatures on the corner of Wall and Broad, by late 19th century artist William H. Beard.

The Museum of the City of New York, at the top of the stretch of Fifth Avenue known as "Museum Mile" (at 103rd Street), offers exactly what the name suggests. The collection of photographs and prints numbers more than 500,000 items, and includes well known images

of all the icon buildings like the New York Stock Exchange, the fortress-like Federal Reserve building, and various court buildings downtown. This museum is less known for high profile works, but should not be ignored. Its current exhibition, "Glorious Sky: Herbert Katzman's New York" offers an Expressionist view (1950's through 1970's) of New York skylines and sunsets, albeit with less recognizable vessels. Sometimes, to get the feel of a place, the work of a lesser known artist such as Katzman (originally from Chicago) is a good starting point.

For those who disagree, and would rather start with the marquee names, but with European harbor scenes, Caneletto and Turner's views of Venice at the **Metropolitan Museum of Art**, at the lower end of the "Mile" (at 82nd Street) should be your first stop. One of the top museums in the entire world, the "Met" would surely merit an entire article. Its maritime artistry also includes the work of Claude Lorrain, and the Dutch landscape painters (eg van Ruysdael), and the French impressionists (such as Manet and Courbet).

The ships and boats play an important role in all of these genres. The work of Kalliope Lemos, constructed in 2009, reinforces a long tradition where maritime commerce is intertwined with fine art. If there is any doubt, consider that the Niarchos family has had a long association with the **Museum of Modern Art** (on 53rd between Fifth and Sixth, and five minutes from the Olympic Tower), where French impressionist works from the Niarchos collection are displayed. Not too far down the hall is the work of the American artist, George Scheeler, from the 1930's Precisionist school. Yes, in his depictions of the Detroit waterfront, you can see the docks for the big Lakers.