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On the Waterfront

A View from the Coast (Line)

COLLABORATION BETWEEN CENTRAL BOOKING AND THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

March 3 – April 23, 2023

Curator: Maddy Rosenberg

Opening Reception: Friday, March 3, 6-8pm

March 11, 3pm | From Clipper Ships to Solar Sails | C Bangs, Greg Matloff

March 16, 6pm | The Equity, Ecology & Economy of the 6th Borough, New York Harbor | Moderator: Tim Gilman-Sevcik

March 18, 4pm | The Creature from the Bleached Lagoon | Margaret Craig

March 25, 3pm | Eco-poetry Reading | Desirée Alvarez, Alonso Llerena,
Stephen Massimilla, Thea Matthews, Jo Sarzotti, Elizabeth Zuba

April 2, 2pm | Discovering the Birds of the Brooklyn Waterfront | Heather Wolf

April 9, 1pm | Moving Through Brooklyn | Susan Rostow (at Pioneer Works)

April 16, 3pm | Liberty's People: Red Hook in the Eighties | Maureen McNeil (with Kentler International Drawing Space)

April 23, 3pm | An Accordion Book Song for Our Waterfront | Elena Berriolo

at BWAC

481 Van Brunt Street Door 7
Red Hook, Brooklyn, NY 11231

Brooklyn, NY – Curated by Maddy Rosenberg, the CENTRAL BOOKING exhibition *On the Waterfront: A View from the Coast (Line)*, in collaboration with the New-York Historical Society (nyhistory.org), opens at the Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition on March 3, 2023 from 6-8pm. Exhibiting artists and environmental specialists, in cooperation with partnering waterfront organizations, also offer weekly programming to further investigate the complex relationships of the present and historical ecosystems of this stretch of urban coastline. The exhibition runs through April 23, 2023.

Following CENTRAL BOOKING research collaborations with the New York Academy of Medicine and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the New-York Historical Society was approached for a project steeped in the ecosystems of the Brooklyn waterfront and the last surviving section of functioning port within New York City's boundaries. The life along the New York harbor integrates the wildlife, land and neighborhoods of human-made architectural elements; the New-York Historical Society collections preserve many of the earlier roots along the way to the transformations of today.

The project began with the selection of fourteen artists who embraced the research residency as a starting point for their own exhibition installations. Though a number are New York artists and delve deeply to find more beneath the familiar, some offer the perspective of a distant neighbor, while still others that of a de Tocqueville, as an observer from another nation with the insights and biases of the outsider.

Giovanni da Verrazzano, writing to his patron King Francis I of France in 1524 upon leaving what would become New York Harbor, noted the friendly reception they received from the native people and the beauty of the land, nonetheless placed the greatest value on the minerals that could likely be reaped from those hills within the landscape. Therefore, it is not surprising that **Ellen Levy** ties the work of Thomas Cole's, "The Course of Empire" with land grants and land grabs that may have begun with the Lenape and other first nation people throughout the Hudson River and New York Bay region, but continue into space today. Her installation is wrapped up with contemporary AR components that trigger an animation reflecting back on Cole's work. Likewise, **C Bangs** has explored human interaction with both outer space and

earthly habitats. This time she employs paint, collage and text to focus on schooners and clippers, elemental to the port in both extensive trade development and wartime defense in colonial and post-colonial times. **Paul Tecklenberg** touches on aspects particular to the area's identity, through the outside looking in. With a play on words, he extracts the humor from the naming of Buttermilk Channel that still manages to echo a former iteration of the regional life, along with chopping blocks that touch on the hub of harbor transportation. Steeped in a long association with the Brooklyn waterfront, **Maddy Rosenberg** pieces together the past and present with the in between. Book pages pop into animation in an uncanny tour of time through the landscape, as the waters are invaded, stricken and transformed; while **Susan Rostow** reduces mapping to symbols that are plucked, revealed and molded into creatures that emerge from these pieces of the past to inhabit remnants of rethought and regenerated structures. At first sight, **Graciela Cassel** entices us into thinking we are looking at an elegant, if innovative, furniture grouping, though on closer examination, we see a mirroring and water crossing narrative of Buttermilk Channel embedded within. **Margaret Craig's** idea of repurposing plastic is all her own: Printed gels find their way to becoming artist's books or lanterns in this sculptural installation that pushes form, while remaining cognizant of function. In the latest in a series through the years of translucent fabric layered installations combining both word with image, **Desirée Alvarez** here finds local collaboration with those contributing to the restoration of the oyster beds that once proliferated, as she looks back to envisioning the time when shellfish populated the harbor. But it is **Patricia Olynyk's** AR project that reaches back to the Victorian age in the form of a board game, to view the play of the past in the questions of future climate change weather patterns, previewed in the devastation the area witnessed with Superstorm Sandy. For **Sabra Booth** it is not the first time her art gives voice to ecosystems laid waste by industrial misuse, whether due to oil spills or pesticides. This time she lasers into the Gowanus Bay end of the waterfront and ensuing canal, as she manages to find the beauty even as she highlights the toxicity. Still, the natural beauty of the area prevails and **Elena Berriolo** uses the sewing machine to make her own kind of music to it. This time it sings an installation of music stands each holding unique artist's books, depositing echoes of the flora and fauna from nearby upon the printed and painted sewn pages in celebration. It is **Judith Eloise Hooper** who invites us to see the land from a different viewpoint, three viewpoints, in fact, molded in clay with slices of elevations of the water and earth laid bare as we look down upon them. We are treated to only a hint at the teeming life within each slab, as it remains invisible to the human eye. With **Diane Lavoie**, we return to a pre-industrial time before Buttermilk Channel was dredged, permanently separating Brooklyn from Governors Island and allowing the port to develop. It is an installation seeking to mold through cloth and collage, building a space for the early ecosystems that thrived. Finally, we follow **Helena Kauppila** as she paints the waterfront history back even further- before city, before seaports, before farming, to a time even before any earthly human inhabitants, in a search for representing our genetic beginning in a quest for a better understanding of the urban nature of current New York.

To complement all, an extensive list of events is planned. In addition to the opening reception, programming throughout the weeks include artists and specialists whose long association and expertise connects them with the waterfront. An art and science discussion led by RETI director Tim Gilman-Sevcik focuses on environmental justice narratives and revitalization of the waterfront's natural habitat. Heather Wolf of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and author of "Birding at the Bridge," offers a talk and walk where she discusses the bird diversity and points out some of the waterfront's notable local inhabitants. Artist Margaret Craig takes to the streets, transforming herself into a creature of repurposed plastic in a performance reflecting the human impact on natural estuaries. C Bangs and Greg Matloff examine the connection between maritime and aeronautical technology, in the process revealing a reconciliation between human progress and the enduring strength of our natural environment. Desirée Alvarez, switching hats, organizes an afternoon of Ecopoetry readings, joined by guest poets Alonso Llerena, Stephen Massimilla, Thea Matthews, Jo Sarzotti and Elizabeth Zuba. Elena Berriolo's performance with sewing machine investigates the social, economic, political, and environmental tears in our society through the making of an interactive accordion book.

Partnering with other area organizations on events programming remains essential, as well, to the project. Maureen McNeil, in conjunction with her solo exhibition and curation of the exhibition *Focus on the Flatfiles: Views from Red Hook*, at Kentler International Drawing Space, reads from her collection *Red Hook Stories*. Afterwards, we will take a short walk over to Kentler for a reception and tour of both exhibitions there. At Pioneer Works, Susan Rostow invites the public to collaborate with her and each other on a stop-motion animation, participating in the first Second Sundays of the season.

The 44 page *On the Waterfront: A View from the Coast (Line)* catalog, including a Preface by Margi Hofer, Museum Director of the New-York Historical Society, is available for viewing and purchase [online](https://www.magcloud.com/browse/issue/2399901?__r=32165) (https://www.magcloud.com/browse/issue/2399901?__r=32165) and at the New-York Historical Society Museum Shop.

CENTRAL BOOKING is a multi-disciplinary international art gallery, founded by artist/curator Maddy Rosenberg, dedicated to the expanse of the book as art in dialog with the convergence of art & science.