Little Harbor in Normandy
Georges Braque
Gallery 391

This work is the first fully realized example of Georges Braque’s early Cubist style. He described the English Channel coast in severe geometries and a sober palette, reduced in range and intensity to pale shades of color. His compressed treatment of space and use of a shifting perspective seem to propel the two sailboats forward to the front edges of the picture.

“To further energize the scene, Braque added a fringe of whitecaps to the sea and dashes of clouds across the sky.”

L’Estaque
Émilie Charmy
Gallery 391

Émilie Charmy was among the first women to exhibit paintings in the Fauvist style, marked by an expressionistic and nonnaturalistic use of color. In this boldly hued landscape, she captured the coastal town of L’Estaque, popular with French painters. The swelling shapes along the composition’s edges produce a sense of movement that dissipates at the center in the calm waters of the Bay of Marseille.

“The coastal town of L’Estaque—with its beautiful seaside views—was painted many times over by artists including Paul Cézanne, André Derain, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Georges Braque, and of course, Charmy.”

From Seasides to Lakesides

The museum doesn’t just sit near the shores of Lake Michigan, we also have a number of works where you can almost feel the cooling water breeze.
“Sometimes it can be hard to tell where the sea ends and the sky begins. X-radiographs show that Monet reduced the rocky outcropping on the right to balance the proportions of sea and sky.”

“Renowned for his lush landscapes, Inness often included bodies of water in his works. For this painting, he chose a pine woods, a land inundated with fresh water, as can be seen in the foreground. You can almost smell the salt air off the Gulf of Mexico!”

“The water in this painting takes up nearly three quarters of the canvas and provides the only points of brightness: subtle reflections off its surface of lights and of the moon.”

“The sea has long been a source of sustenance. And what better way to decorate your fish-eating vessel than with fish! This example can be identified as Athenian because of a distinctively Athenian characteristic: the bellies of the fish face outward.”

In the 1870s James McNeill Whistler took a radical step toward abstraction with his “Nocturnes” series. In keeping with his art-for-art’s-sake creed, these works capture the stillness of evening while evoking the artistry of music. The subject of this work—an inlet along the English Channel—is obscured by the approaching night, allowing Whistler to fully explore the tonal harmonies of darkness.

Over his career, George Inness became less interested in detailed paintings and more interested in “poetic truth,” conveying mood and emotion through rich tone and broad handling. He made this painting in Tarpon Springs, Florida, after recently establishing his house and studio there. Through blurred outlines, subtle tonalities, and the solitary figure, Inness evoked the brightening day and peaceful mood of the moment.

This skillfully decorated Athenian plate was made to serve the sea life it depicts. A scallop sits between a gilt-head bream and a red mullet. Opposite them, a lettered perch confronts a spiny scorpion fish. Shells, a small fish, and a mollusk or crustacean ring the outside. The central cavity, decorated with wave patterns, would have collected the delicious juices from the cooked fish.