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Talk title: Shoreline Landscapes and the Edges of Empire

Abstract:

Defined as the line where a body of water meets the land, a shoreline is a space of contact, marking the point of convergence between different terrains, peoples, and ecosystems. Shorelines also engender diverse forms of knowledge, including the outer limits of nation states, the geologic history of the earth, or the effect of climate change on global sea levels. Depending on one's point of view, a shoreline can be a beginning or an end, a view in or a view out, a frontier or a familiar place. Landscape painters in Australia and the United States depicted the shoreline, some occasionally, like the Australian Frederick McCubbin, and others almost obsessively, like the Americans William Stanley Haseltine and Fitz Henry Lane. Examples of their work in *Continental Shift* depict the shoreline from the point of view of someone standing on solid ground, gazing across rocks and sand towards the sea. These are strange landscape paintings, for they consist of views that look *away* from the land, displacing terra firma in favor of watery expanses. Such a reconfiguration of the landscape genre raises a host of questions. Of what perceived significance was the shoreline in the nineteenth century in Australia and America, and what cultural, economic, scientific, or socio-political associations compelled its depiction in art? How did paintings of the shoreline configure wilderness in the absence of signifiers of the "wild" typical of the period, and what did shorelines have to say about colonisation? What did it mean, for instance, for McCubbin, the son of Scottish and English immigrants, to paint from the inside looking out, as if to reverse the trajectory of colonisation by adopting the point of view of belonging, of *already being there*? Do the shoreline pictures of Haseltine and Lane tell an analogous geo-political fairy tale? And what stories might these shoreline scenes tell us today, in the age of the Anthropocene?

Biographical note:

Rachael Z. DeLue is Associate Professor of art history at Princeton University. She specializes in the history of American art and visual culture, with particular focus on intersections among art, science, and the history and theory of knowledge. She is currently at work on a study of Charles Darwin's diagram of evolution in *On the Origin of Species* as

well as a book about impossible images. She serves as the editor-in-chief of the Terra Foundation Essays as well as the editor of *Picturing* (2016), the first volume in the series. Publications include *George Inness and the Science of Landscape* (2004), *Landscape Theory* (2008, co-edited with James Elkins), and *Arthur Dove: Always Connect* (2016).

Painting for discussion: Thomas Cole, *Landscape with Figures: A Scene from 'The Last of the Mohicans'* 1826