

THE CONTESTED WATERFRONT

Industrialism triumphed in the United States between 1900 and 1940, turning the country into an economic and global power. Artists, like those associated with the Ashcan School, found regular inspiration in scenes of everyday city life, particularly those documenting the intersection of industry and its busy workers. At the same time, Americans began to realize the damage industrialization was wrecking on the natural environment, once the glory of this continent. The Palisades, the towering rock formation visible across the Hudson River, became the symbol of early conservation efforts — especially as industry encroached (as seen in the rail yards in Arnold Hoffman's *Weehawken*, in this exhibition) and threatened what at one time was pristine, open space. In an attempt to bring nature back into the lives of urban dwellers, some artists appropriated the same strategies they used to depict the city, reminding viewers of nature as an essential aspect of modern life.