

INDUSTRIAL



SUBLIME

INDUSTRIAL SUBLIME

*Modernism and the Transformation of
New York's Rivers, 1900-1940*



Hudson River Museum
www.hrm.org



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Foreword

Michael Botwinick

Artists in the Exhibition

Lenders to the Exhibition

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Artists' Sites

Introduction: A Woman's Perspective On the Industrial Sublime

Katherine Manthorne

Rising From the River: New York City and the Sublime

Bartholomew F. Bland

On the Fringe: Picturing New York's Rivers, Bridges, and Docklands, 1890-1913

Wendy Greenhouse

Contested Waterfront: Environmentalism and Modernist Paintings of New York

Ellen Roberts

Picturing Manhatta: Modernism, Urban Planning, and New York, 1920 - 1940

Kirsten M. Jensen

Catalogue of the Exhibition

Kirsten M. Jensen and
Bartholomew F. Bland

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The Civil War tore America apart. Walt Whitman, the country's poet and seer, looked beyond the conflagration and saw a new country birthed and crying out its wants, too great and too many for cottage industry.

*The shapes arise!
Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets,
Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads,
Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast
frameworks, girders, arches,
Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal
craft, river craft,
Ship-yards and dry-docks....*

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Kurt Albrecht

Junius Allen

George Ault

Reynolds Beal

Cecil Crosley Bell

George Bellows

Oscar Bluemner

Daniel Putnam Brinley

Edward Bruce

Theodore Earl Butler

Carlton Theodore Chapman

Clarence Kerr Chatterton

James Rene Clarke

Glenn Coleman

Colin Campbell Cooper

Ralston Crawford

Francis Criss

Aaron Douglas

John Folinsbee

Ina Garsoïan

William Glackens

Robert Henri

Arnold Hoffman

Max Kuehne

Leon Kroll

Ernest Lawson

Martin Lewis

Richard Hayley Lever

Jonas Lie

Louis Lozowick

George Luks

George Macrum

John Marin

Reginald Marsh

Alfred Mira

John Noble

George Oberteuffer

Georgia O’Keeffe

Marguerite Ohman

George Parker

Van Dearing Perrine

Robert K. Ryland

Charles Rosen

Everett Shinn

John Sloan

Robert Spencer

Charles Vezin

Everett Longley Warner

Julian Alden Weir

Sidney M. Wiggins

Jan and Warren Adelson

Amistad Research Center

The Art Institute of Chicago

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Boca Raton Museum of Art

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Joanne and Jim Cohen

Nina and Stephen Cook

Erik Davies

Kristian Davies

The Flint Institute of Arts

The Fralin Museum of Art
at the University of Virginia

John and Sally Freeman

Georgia Museum of Art,
University of Georgia

Kristine and Marc Granetz

Hampton University Museum

High Museum of Art

Elie and Sarah Hirschfield

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,
Smithsonian Institution

Hudson River Museum

James A. Michener Art Museum

Susan Perrine King and Shawn King,
Van Dearing Perrine Estate

Thelma and Melvin Lenkin

Martin J. Maloy

Memorial Art Gallery,
University of Rochester

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute

Museum of Art, Ft Lauderdale/
Nova Southeastern University

The National Arts Club

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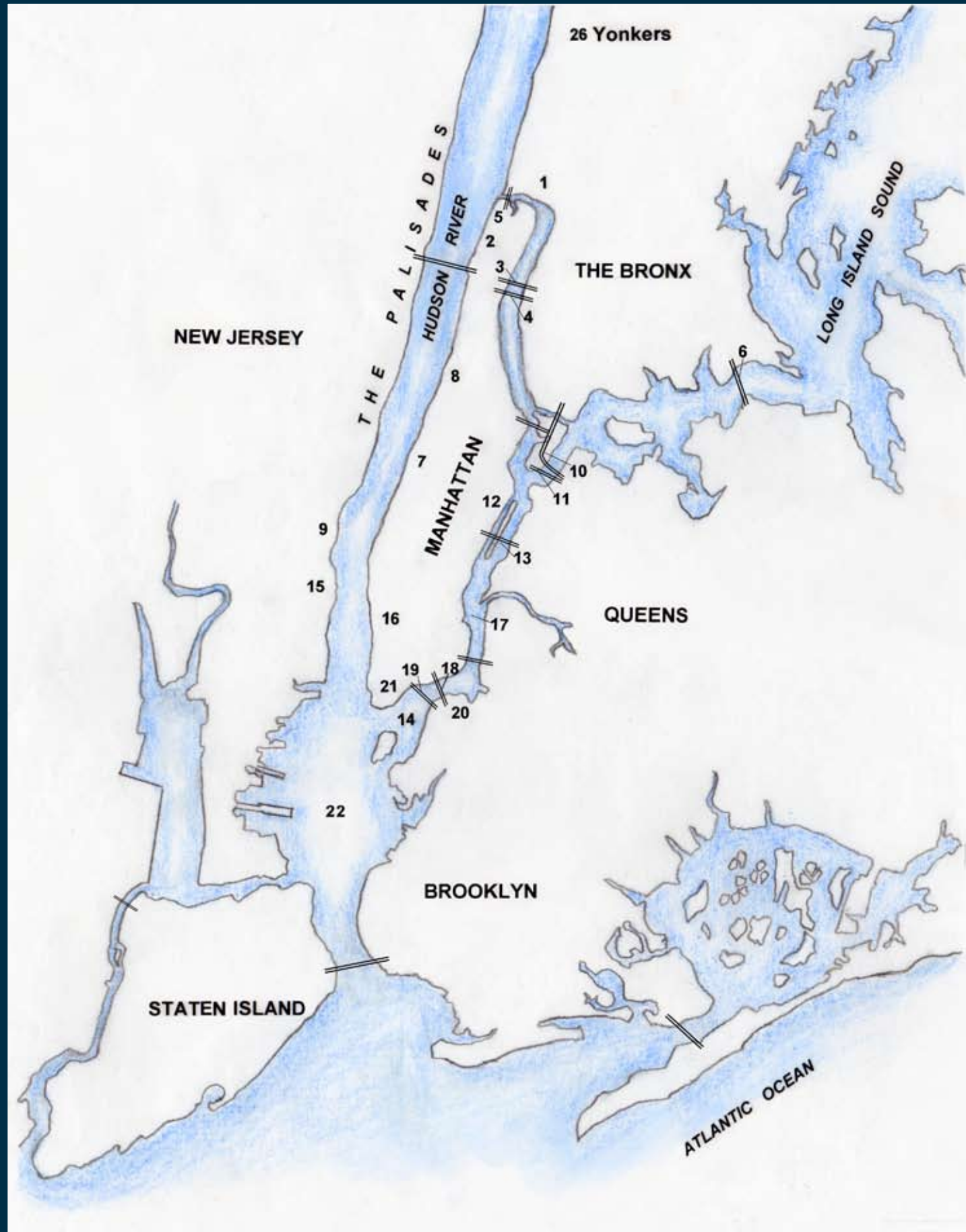
Staten Island Museum

Terra Foundation for American Art

Wichita Art Museum

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NEW YORK'S WATERWAYS



1 Harlem River
Oscar Bleumner, *Harlem River*

2 Washington Heights
Ernest Lawson, *Railroad Track*



3 Washington Bridge
James Rene Clarke, *Washington Bridge*

4 High Bridge
Richard Hayley Lever, *High Bridge over Harlem River*

5 Inwood
Aaron Douglas, *Power Plant in Harlem*



6 Whitestone Bridge
Ralston Crawford, *Whitestone Bridge*



7 Riverside Park
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Richard Hayley Lever, *Riverside Drive and Seventy Second Street*

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A WOMAN’S PERSPECTIVE
ON THE INDUSTRIAL SUBLIME

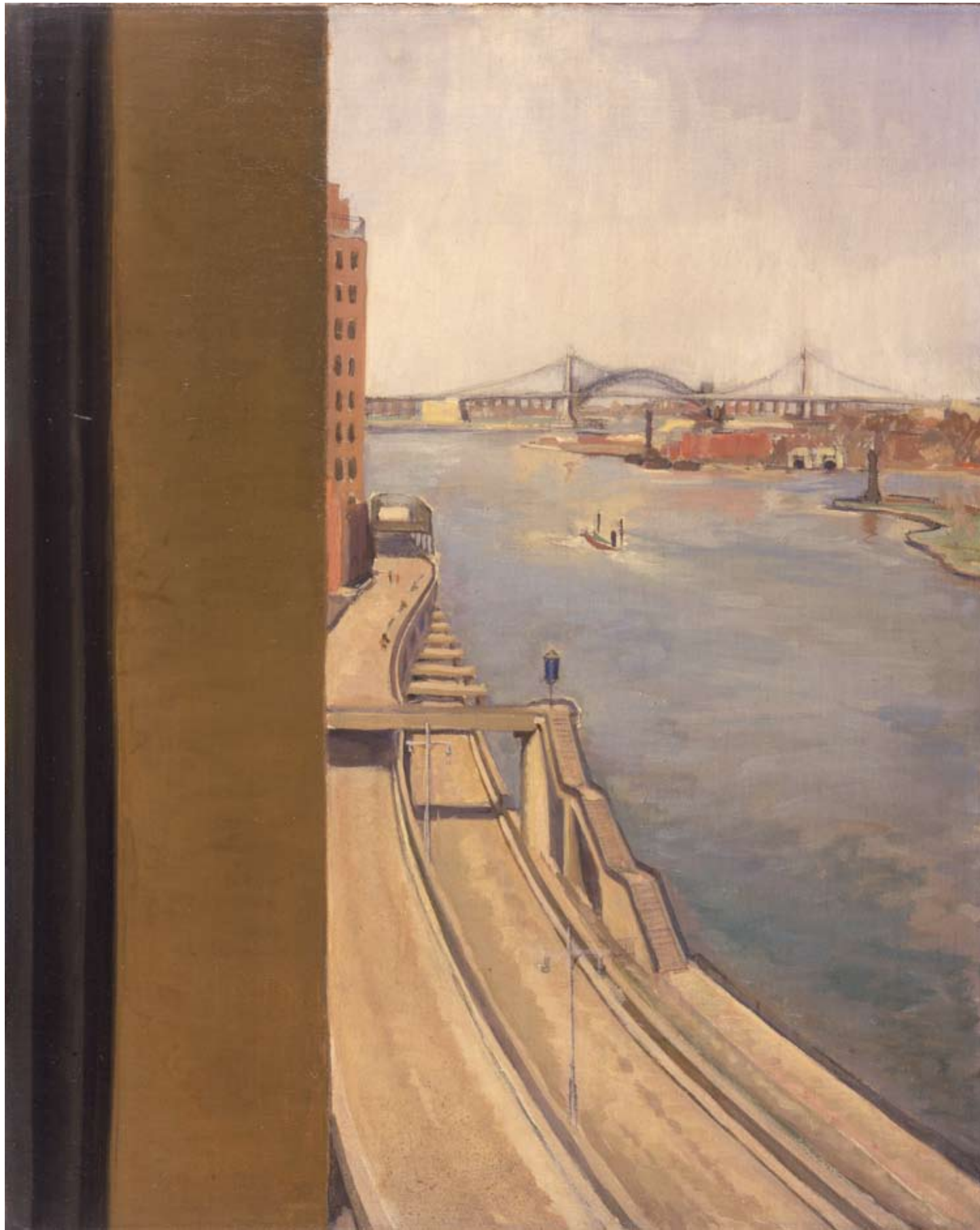
Americans began to embrace the industrial sublime
with as much enthusiasm as they had previously nature.

Gifford Beal. *On the Hudson at Newburgh*, 1918



VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS, earthquakes, and thunderstorms have terrified mankind since Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden. Impressed by such displays of power beyond themselves, human beings sought the language to express their emotions. One of the oldest essays on the subject appeared in a Greek manuscript from the 1st century A.D. titled “On the Sublime,” traditionally attributed to Longinus (although probably erroneously), which declared that Nature “has implanted in our souls an unconquerable passion for all that is great and for all that more divine than ourselves.” For centuries the essay languished until it was printed in 1554 in Basel. By the 17th century — with translations into French and English — the concept of a search for the grand began to take hold. In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1756), Edmund Burke established the sublime and the beautiful as the central — and mutually exclusive — aesthetic categories intimately associated with nature. Both concepts proved especially useful to gentlemen on the Grand Tour, attempting to describe their experiences. It acquired further meaning in the hands of 19th-century American artists, who took up the subject of the grand and untamable, including Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon to inspire awe in their viewers. By the early 20th century these feelings were transferred to machines, war, and factories as the “natural sublime” gave way to the “industrial sublime,” which was both a representational strategy and a philosophical orientation that accounted for fearsome, uninhabitable regions that simultaneously repulsed and excited the beholder.

SIGHTING THE RIVER



Eastside Drive, c.1940
Inna Garsoïan.
Collection of The New-York Historical Society



East River from the Shelton (East River No. 1), c. 1927-28
Georgia O'Keeffe.
Collection of the New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, New Jersey
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INDUSTRIAL SUBLIME

Modernism and the Transformation of New York's Rivers, 1900-1940

BILLOWING SMOKE, booming industry, noble bridges, and an epic waterfront are the landscape of New York changing and growing in the first 40 years of the 20th century. *Industrial Sublime: Modernism and the Transformation of New York's Rivers, 1900-1940* shows the convulsive changes in the New York metropolis and its rivers in modern paintings from Robert Henri to Georgia O'Keeffe.

INDUSTRIAL SUBLIME looks at American Modernism, embraced by artists who greeted The Machine Age, the birth of the country's industrial hegemony, with a fresh vocabulary of color, shape, and their visions, some joyful, others reflecting the darker side of a world newly fashioned by man, no longer bowing to the creative forces of nature or an all-knowing deity. Just as the artists show us arching bridges, swinging cranes, and waters churned by boats transporting goods and travelers to ever new ports of call, five essayists tell the story of the brightest and busiest center of industry — New York. American perceptions of beauty and the sublime awe they experienced as their country built glamorous icons of success from skyscrapers to bridges, and how artists interpreted these icons are examined by Wendy Greenhouse, co-author of *Chicago Modern 1893-1945: Pursuit of the New*; Katherine E. Manthorne, Professor of Modern Art of the Americas, Graduate Center, City University of New York; Ellen E. Roberts, Harold and Anne Berkley Smith Curator of American Art, Norton Museum of Art; and, Hudson River Museum Curator Kirsten M. Jensen and Director of Curatorial Affairs, Bartholomew F. Bland, editors of *Industrial Sublime* and co-curators of the exhibition of the same name.

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Leon Kroll. *Queensborough Bridge*, 1912.
Courtesy of the Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia

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