



Image from: [J. M. W. Turner, Snowstorm at Sea, 1842.... in Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850](#)

Summary Article: **marine painting**

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Paintings of the sea, coastline, or ships. Depictions of the sea go back at least as far as the ancient Greeks, who had close commercial and mythological links with the sea. As a specific genre, however, it was created by the Dutch (another nation whose wealth depended on the sea) in the 17th century. Outstanding Dutch marine painters include the an de Veldes and Aelbert Cuyp.

Types of marine painting There are four basic types of marine painting: narrative, nautical, topographical, and picturesque.

Narrative, the earliest of all examples of marine painting, includes ship scenes on Greek vases or Roman walls illustrating legends of Dionysus and Odysseus. There are also medieval manuscript renderings of Jonah, and Flemish and early Italian paintings of shipping associated with legends of St Ursula or St Nicholas. Historical narrative includes portions of the Bayeux Tapestry, and illuminations of Jean Froissart's *Chronicles*; the tapestry of the *Defeat of the Spanish Armada* (Maritime Museum, Greenwich); sea battles by members of the van der Velde family (some studied on the spot), and reconstructed naval engagements by Philippe de Loutherbourg.

Nautical painting consists of accurate depictions of specific or typical ships, correct in all details.

Topographical painting depicts a particular coastal scene, perhaps with appropriate shipping. Examples include views by Canaletto and Guardi of the Venice lagoon – which were imitated by the English painters Samuel Scott (1702–1772) and William Marlow (1740–1813) to represent the port of London. John Cotman's Norfolk coast-scenes with wherries derived from Dutch prototypes by Ruysdael and Cuyp. There are also coastal pictures by Constable and Bonington.

Picturesque painting includes dramatic or romantic views of the sea based on imagination rather than observation; for example, Claude Lorrain's seaports bathed in a sunset glow; the melodramas of Salvator Rosa and Marco Ricci (1676–1730); the French Romantic painter Eugene Delacroix's *Christ on Gennesaret*; and the popular Victorian genre sea picture.

The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, has a comprehensive collection of marine paintings.

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