THE ART OF
WILLIAM O. GOLDING
HARD KNOCKS, HARDSHIPS,
AND LOTS OF EXPERIENCE
EDUCATOR GUIDE
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William O. Golding (American, 1874–1943); Tug William F. McAuley, Atlantic Towing Co., Sav, GA, 1934; Telfair Museums purchase

THE EXHIBITION
This exhibition explores the remarkable art and life of William O. Golding (1874-1943), an African American mariner and artist who made vibrant drawings of ships and far off ports while he was a patient at the U.S. Marine Hospital in Savannah, Georgia during the 1930s. While they resemble such maritime art forms as ship portraits and harbors views, Golding’s drawings come from more personal territory and are more than mere documentation. Autobiography, imagination, private symbolism, and sailor’s lore color his drawings, which contain worlds of information in signal flags, waterfronts, and expressive miniature figures. His drawings combine fact and imagination, sometimes juxtaposing different time periods and locations. His experience was rooted in the South, with the added perspective of a sailor and world traveler who served in the U.S. Navy and as a merchant seaman during times of war. Census records, veterans’ documents, and his death certificate record his surname as “Golding,” the name he signed on many of his drawings. In private life, however, he seems to have gone by the surname “Golden,” as indicated by family and others who knew him. In the guide for this exhibition, the name “Golden” will be used to refer to the man and “Golding” for his art.

This exhibition is organized by Telfair Museums, in association with the Morris Museum of Art, and curated by Harry DeLorme, director of education and senior curator.
ABOUT THE ARTIST

William O. Golding (Golden) was born in Liberty County, Georgia in 1874, and was the adopted son of William Anthony Golden, a state legislator during the Reconstruction. In a letter, William O. Golden described how as a child he was tricked aboard a ship at the Savannah waterfront in the early 1880s and spent 22 years at sea before seeing home again. From 1892-1902 he served in the US Navy during the Spanish American War and Philippine War. In the 1930s, after nearly 50 years working at sea, he was a patient at Savannah’s U.S. Marine hospital where he was treated for chronic bronchitis. There he began drawing, and was encouraged in his art by Margaret Stiles, an artist and teacher who also served on Telfair’s board in the 1930s. Between 1930 and 1939 he created more than 130 drawings of sailing ships, steam yachts, and ports from Savannah to China. Although he received no recognition in the art world in his lifetime, Golden’s work began to appear in art galleries, magazines, and exhibitions in the 1960s and 1970s. This exhibition is the largest to date exploring Golding’s work.

EARLY LIFE IN LIBERTY COUNTY

WILLIAM A. GOLDEN AND THE DORCHESTER ACADEMY

Little is known about William O. Golden’s early childhood. He was born January 15, 1874, in Liberty County, Georgia, and is recorded in the 1880 United States Census as the adopted son of Harriet Rebeca Bacon and William A. Golden, a leader in post-emancipation Georgia politics and education. William A., formally enslaved, was elected to the Georgia legislature in 1868 but expelled less than two months later, along with 33 other African American legislators, by the white majority. Shortly after being reinstated in 1870, William A. chose to dedicate his time to improve the educational system for Black residents of Liberty County. With help in funding from the Freedmen’s Bureau and the American Missionary Association, Golden established Dorchester Academy in 1879, a school for African American students. It is uncertain whether William O. Golden ever attended classes there, although the younger Golden may have had informal lessons from Harriet, his adoptive mother, who had been a teacher at Homestead School, the precursor school to Dorchester Academy.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THIS PICTURE?
WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
WHERE IS THE ARTIST’S DRAWING OF THE GREAT SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES LOCATED?
DESCRIBE THE DIFFERENT FLAGS ON THE SHIP.
ARERE THERE ANY THAT YOU RECOGNIZE?
WHAT MORE CAN WE FIND?

DISCUSS AND DESIGN: THE GREAT SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES

LOOK AT AN IMAGE OF THE GREAT SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES. WHAT SYMBOLS CAN YOU FIND (COLORS, OBJECTS) AND WHAT DO EACH REPRESENT? DESIGN A GREAT SEAL FOR THE UNITED STATES. WHAT COLORS AND OBJECTS WOULD YOU USE AND WHAT WOULD THEY SYMBOLIZE?

RESOURCES:
USS Constellation: https://historicships.org/explore/uss-constellation/
The Great Seal of the United States: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wIaipjo6RM&t=2s
Signal flags are flags used to communicate with other ships. For example, these flags can spell out a message with each flag representing a letter. Using this signal flag chart to draw and color the flag symbols that spell out your initials.

Maritime Signal Flags

Whether braving the high seas or drifting calmly into port, boats and ships may use visual signaling to communicate with other vessels and watercraft. Nautical flags are one form of visual signaling that can announce national origins, warn of danger, declare emergency needs, ask questions, and provide answers.

Individual flags represent letters or the alphabet, numerals, and sometimes entire phrases. Today there is an international code of signals recognized by all members of the United Nations.
THE PORT OF CANTON

The Port of GuangZhou (formerly Canton) is located on the Pearl River about 78 miles northwest of Hong Kong in the People’s Republic of China. It is a major seaport and South China’s most comprehensive port. The Port of GuangZhou is an important transport and economic hub for the Pearl River Delta region. In 1890, the United States passed the McKinley Tariff Act, which required that all goods imported into the United States be identified by the country of origin. Its purpose was to discourage the importation of goods from other countries. Ways and Means Committee Chairman William McKinley of Ohio led the effort in the House of Representatives. McKinley would later become the 25th President of the United States.

THE SAIGON PORT

Saigon Port, a former fishing village before Vietnam annexed the territory in the 17th century, was founded in 1860 under the French. Called Saigon Commercial Port, it was located along the Saigon River. In 1975, it was renamed Saigon Port. The Saigon Port played a significant role in the foundation and development of the city of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City. Today, this port network is the epicenter for export-import of goods in south Vietnam, which accounts for more than two-thirds of Vietnam’s economy.

CAPE HORN

Cape Horn is located near the southern tip of the continent of South America. It marks the northern boundary of the Drake Passage and where the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans meet. From the 18th to early 20th centuries, Cape Horn was used to transport most of the world’s trade. Sailing ships would navigate dangerous conditions such as fierce winds, rough seas, hazardous currents, and icebergs. In 1914, the opening of the Panama Canal allowed a shortcut for ships to avoid using the Cape Horn route. Transcontinental railroads and the Panama Canal caused the gradual decline of the Cape Horn route. Golden claimed, incredibly, that he had rounded Cape Horn 23 times. This may have been an exaggeration, but seamen like Golden regarded any rounding of the Horn as a milestone. In this drawing, he shows a full-rigged ship about to round the rocky, mountainous Horn from the upper right, while a steam vessel proceeds past the cape heralded by a pod of spouting whales. On Cape Horn itself, Golden imaginatively depicts men, women, dogs, and birds walking paved pathways. The post office that Golden depicts did not exist other than as a myth to give hope to sailors facing one of the planet’s most feared passages.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THIS PICTURE?
WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
WHAT MORE CAN WE FIND?

Locate these countries on a world political-physical map:
China
India
Japan
North Korea
South Korea
Vietnam

Locate these entities on a world political-physical map:
Ganges River
Huang He (Yellow River)
Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River
Bay of Bengal
Indian Ocean
Sea of Japan
South China Sea
Yellow Sea
Gobi Desert
Taklimakan Desert
Himalayan Mountains
Korean Peninsula

Learn the difference between a political and physical map:
A political map focuses on boundaries between entities, like countries, states, or counties, and generally are in brighter colors to easily distinguish the boundaries. A physical map focuses on geography and will often have shaded relief to show mountains and valleys.

What is going on in this picture?
What do you see that makes you say that?
What more can we find?

Mapping Activity

Activities

1. Design your compass rose to identify cardinal directions.
2. Use a compass rose to identify cardinal directions.
3. Compare and contrast look at a map that shows the shipping route around Cape Horn vs. the shipping route using the Panama Canal. Compare and contrast the differences between these two routes.

Map and Globe Skills

SAVANNAH’S WATERFRONT

William O. Golden spent his later years in Savannah, much of that time in the U.S. Marine Hospital. Seven images by Golden include the city’s waterfront, and others depict vessels he could have seen there. Golden drew Savannah both as a backdrop and subject, rendering many businesses that existed in 1930s Savannah, some of them located blocks away from the river. Several drawings show the steepled City Exchange building that overlooked River Street when Golden was a boy, while others show the City Hall that replaced it. In these and almost all of his works, Golden noted his location, the place where he made his mark as an artist, his home port of Savannah.

This 1934 drawing depicts the tugboat William F. McCauley cruising down the Savannah River past the waterfront as if to meet a vessel entering the port. Built in 1894 for the Propeller Towboat Company of Savannah, the McCauley was named for the towing company’s then-secretary-treasurer and, later, president of the Savannah Bank and Trust Company. That bank’s 15-story building, then and now the tallest building in downtown Savannah, looms large at the center of this drawing. Other Savannah businesses featured include the Pulaski Hotel, the Savannah Morning News, Germania Bank, and Kress Department Store, all of which existed when this image was created in 1934. On the far left, however, Golden draws the old City Exchange building, which had been replaced by the current City Hall by 1905. Over its lifetime, the McCauley escorted yachts at local regattas, and was commissioned by the Navy in 1918 before being sold in the 1920s to the Atlantic Towing Company.

THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR

The Spanish American War lasted only a few months in 1898. William McKinley, the United States President at the time, wanted to avoid war. Events such as growing awareness and support for Cuba’s independence from Spain as well as the sinking of US Navy ships off the coast of Cuba resulted in war between Spain and the United States. After the Spanish army surrendered, the U.S. and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris, which guaranteed the independence of Cuba and gave control of Puerto Rico and Guam to the United States.

USS TEXAS

The USS Texas was built by the United States in the early 1890s to incorporate the latest developments of naval tactics and design. During the Spanish American War, under the command of Captain J.W. Philip, the USS Texas prepared to engage in the war efforts. It would assist in military support and patrol the area between Santiago de Cuba and Guantanamo Bay, joining other American ships in defeating the Spanish Fleet. After the war, the USS Texas resumed peacekeeping patrols off the Atlantic coast of the United States.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THIS PICTURE?
WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
WHAT MORE CAN WE FIND?

CONTRAST AND COMPARE: LOOK UP PRESENT DAY VIEWS AND IMAGES OF THE BUILDINGS ALONG THE SAVANNAH RIVER THAT ARE REFERENCED IN THIS WORK. COMPARE AND CONTRAST CURRENT IMAGES WITH THIS DRAWING. WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES?
ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE ARTS CONNECTIONS

ELAGSE4W1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting views with reasons.

ELAGSE6RI2 Determine a theme and/or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgements.

ELAGSE7SL2 Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

VISUAL ARTS CONNECTIONS

VA4MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning:
   a. Generates different viewpoints for making an interpreting a visual image.
   b. Develops visual images by combining or modifying open-ended themes/topics in unique and innovative ways.
   c. Observes how the visual relationship of objects and ideas affects contrast and/or proportion and how placement may affect meaning and/or significance.

VA4CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks:
   a. Identifies elements, principles, themes, and/or time period in a work of art.
   b. Discusses how social events inspire art from a given time period.

VA4PR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional art process (drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VA1CN.1 THROUGH VA5CN.1 Investigate and discover the personal relationships of artists to community, culture, and the world through making and studying art; Recognize the unique contributions of contemporary and/or historical art forms, including Georgia artists.

SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTIONS

MAPS AND GLOBE SKILLS
   Use a compass rose to identify cardinal directions
   Use intermediate directions
   Use a map to explain the impact of geography on historical and current events

SSKG2 Explain that a map is a drawing of a place and a globe is a model of earth:
   a. Differentiate land and water features on simple maps and globes.
   b. Explain that maps and globes show a view from above.
   c. Explain that maps and globes show features in a smaller size.

SS1G3 Locate major topographical features of the earth’s surface:
   a. Locate all of the continents: North America, South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, Antarctica, and Australia.
   b. Locate the major oceans: Arctic, Atlantic, Pacific, Southern Antarctic, and Indian.
   c. Identify and describe landforms (mountains, deserts, valleys, and coasts).

SS5H1 Describe how life changed in America at the turn of the century:
   a. Explain how William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt expanded America’s role in the world; include the Spanish-American War and the building of the Panama Canal.
   b. Locate selected features of Canada.
   c. Locate on a world and regional political-physical map: the St. Lawrence River, Hudson Bay, Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, the Great Lakes, Canadian Shield, and Rocky Mountains.

SS7CP9 Locate selected features in Southern and Eastern Asia:
   a. Locate on a world and regional political-physical map: Ganges River, Huang He (Yellow River), Chang Jiang (Yangtze) River, Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean, Sea of Japan, South China Sea, Yellow Sea, Gobi Desert, Taklimakan Desert, Himalayan Mountains, and Korean Peninsula.
   b. Locate on a world and regional political-physical map the countries of China, India, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, and Vietnam.

SS8G1 Describe Georgia’s geography and climate:
   a. Locate key physical features of Georgia and explain their importance; include the Fall Line, Okefenokee Swamp, Appalachian Mountains, Chattahoochee and Savannah Rivers, and barrier islands.
   b. Analyze the importance of water in Georgia’s historical development and economic growth.

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