



Alexis Rockman, *Oceanus*, 2022. Oil and cold wax on Dibond on aluminum substrate. Mystic Seaport Museum 2022.21.11.A-F ¹
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Oceanus is a monumental painting—95¾ by 282 inches (243 by 716 cm)—about the complex and mixed relationships of humankind with ocean ecosystems. Alexis Rockman explores the exploitation of natural resources, the transportation of goods, human migrations both free and enslaved, invasive marine species, pollution, the biodiversity crisis, extinction, and climate change, all through the lens of a global ocean economy.

He tells this story using a timeline of vessels traversing history along the surface of the ocean, culminating in a tsunami of epic proportions and luminescent colors. The painting shows the succession of technologies that rendered each vessel distinctive and their respective exploitation of the sea. The view beneath the ocean reflects underwater impacts, including telegraph cables and the newest technology to arrive in the depths—equipment for deep-sea mining. As we look to our global maritime heritage and seek a more sustainable future, this remarkable painting sparks critical discussions on a crisis that faces us all and a rethinking of what has been and shall be our maritime legacy.

¹ Description adapted from Alexis Rockman, “*Oceanus*,” in *Alexis Rockman: Oceanus*, ed. Christina Connett Brophy (Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport Museum; New York: Rizzoli Electa, 2023), 50.



Detail of Nautilus Minerals deep-sea mining equipment, from *Oceanus*