

Sarah Winters, "Sean Landers on new exhibitions at Newport Art Museum," *Newport Life Magazine*, May 8, 2025.



## Sean Landers on new exhibition at Newport Art Museum

By Sarah Winters

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Landers presents deeply personal seafaring works in dialogue with Winslow Homer's maritime paintings, which he selected from the Museum's permanent collection

*Newport Life* chatted with artist Sean Landers ahead of the opening reception for his show "Sean Landers: Lost at Sea" at the [Newport Art Museum](#) on Friday May 9th from 6-8 p.m. His work will be on view through Dec. 29, 2025.

### **Q: Tell us a little about yourself. What is your connection to the Newport Art Museum?**

**A:** I'm an artist who uses my own doubts, ambitions, and inner monologue as raw material. For over three decades, I've explored the tension between ego and insecurity, sincerity and satire. I began by writing directly on gallery walls—pages of diaristic text that revealed my personal anxieties and artistic struggles. Over time, my practice evolved to include figurative painting, sculpture, and narrative imagery, but always with the same core intent: to lay bare the human condition through the lens of the artist's mind. Much of my work is about navigating

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success, failure, and the desire to be seen – things many artists feel but rarely admit. Whether I'm depicting a clown adrift at sea or a cartoon lion staring into the void, there's always a part of me in there, asking what it means to make art in a world saturated with meaning and doubt.



**Sean Landers, Sunderland Lighthouse, UK, 2023**

## **Q: What's your art background?**

**A:** I was born in 1962 in Palmer, Mass., and received my MFA from Yale in 1986. I consider myself a painter that explores other areas of art too.

## **Q: Does exhibiting this series in a coastal setting like Newport change the way you experience the paintings?**

**A:** It does. It feels like coming home – a feeling I imagine sailors have known for centuries upon reaching Newport. I'm a native New Englander and spent summers in Misquamicut, the Cape, and Martha's Vineyard. Showing these particular paintings here carries real personal meaning.

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**Sean Landers, Lighthouse Keeps in Shadow, 2022**

**Q: How did you come up with the idea for this body of work, *Sean Landers: Lost at Sea*?**

**A:** It means a few things. First, it refers to me – lost in the subject matter of the sea itself. Second, I use the sea metaphorically, as a stand-in for time and space; it's the setting for many of my characters and their narratives. Third, and perhaps most poignantly, the sea represents the uncertain future of the art I make – adrift, searching for meaning, hoping to land somewhere.

**Q: Why did you decide to use Winslow Homer's work as inspiration for your own work?**

**A:** In 1995, I was transitioning from a more conceptually based practice to one rooted in traditional modes – specifically oil painting. I needed to learn technique, and there's no better way to learn painting than by looking and doing. Because I

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wanted to paint the ocean, I turned to Homer. I rented a house in Amagansett, New York, where I could study the ocean in all its ever-changing states.

## **Q: Why have the themes of adventure, loss, and artistic immortality interested you?**

**A:** The works in this exhibition come from two related series I’ve made over the past decade, both centered on themes of survival and legacy. As an artist, I’m in the business of creating things that I know will outlive me. It’s hard not to imagine the journey these works might take after I’m gone. That thought carries a certain weight, but I try to approach it with both humility and humor – those are the tools that allow me to face the absurdity and poignancy of it all.



**Sean Landers, Sperm Whale Skeleton II, 2023.**

## **Q: Why Moby Dick? Has Herman Melville’s famous novel inspired you in other ways?**

**A:** One of the central themes in Moby Dick is the pursuit of the unattainable. For me, that pursuit has always been about making lasting art – work that matters to

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society, that future generations might care for and treasure. In the novel, when Ishmael finally sees the white whale, he notices the old, broken harpoons from past whalers still embedded in its side. I painted those harpoons into my own version of the whale – they're metaphors for my attempts to reach the "unattainable:" to create a work of art that endures.

**Q: Have any other nautical books inspired you, and are there any seafaring books/movies you recommend?**

**A:** "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket" by Edgar Allan Poe is a favorite.

**Q: What's some advice you have for other artists trying to break out in the local art scene?**

**A:** Work hard. Be honest with yourself. And don't give up – ever.

**Q: Is there something new you're working on now?**

**A:** Yes, I just opened a solo show at Petzel Gallery in New York. I'm now finishing a few new paintings that will be shown at Art Basel in Switzerland this June.

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**Sean Landers, Portland Lighthouse, UK, 2023.**

*Pictured at top is Landers' "Moby Dick, The Whale," 2013/2023.*

<https://www.newportlifemagazine.com/art/sean-landers-on-new-exhibition-at-newport-art-museum/>