

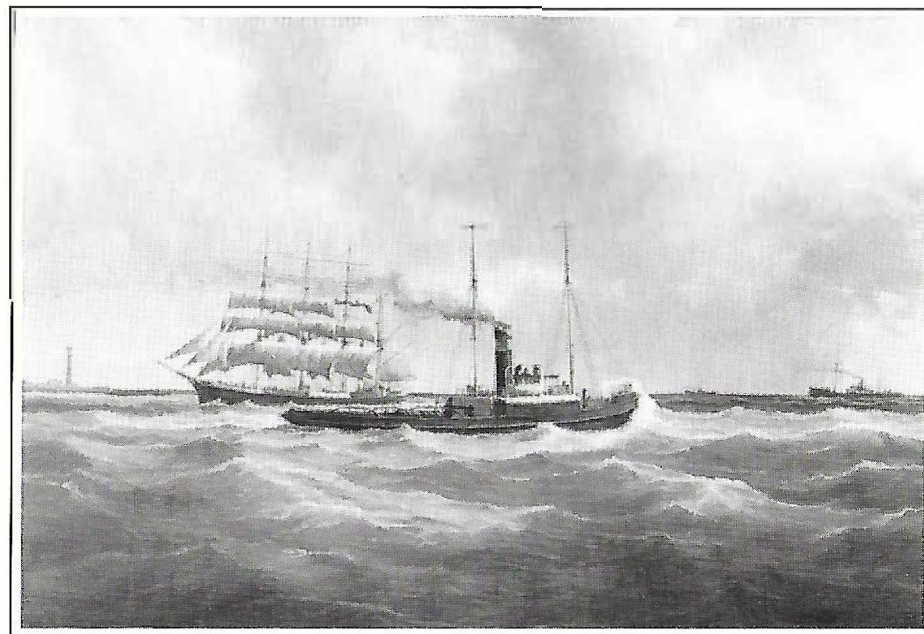


A.J. Koster Gallery Schoorl

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The ships
of Peter
Sterkenburg



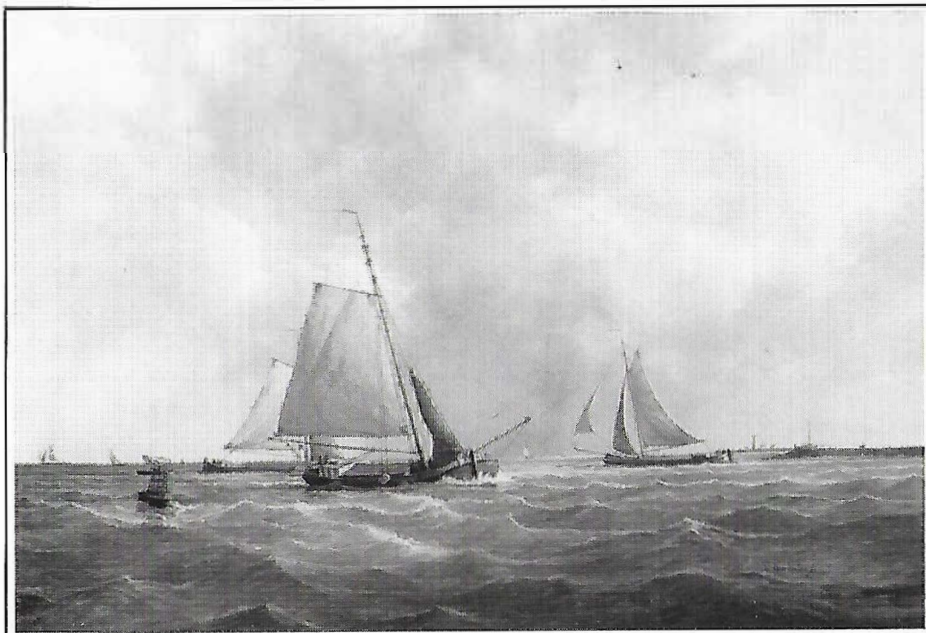
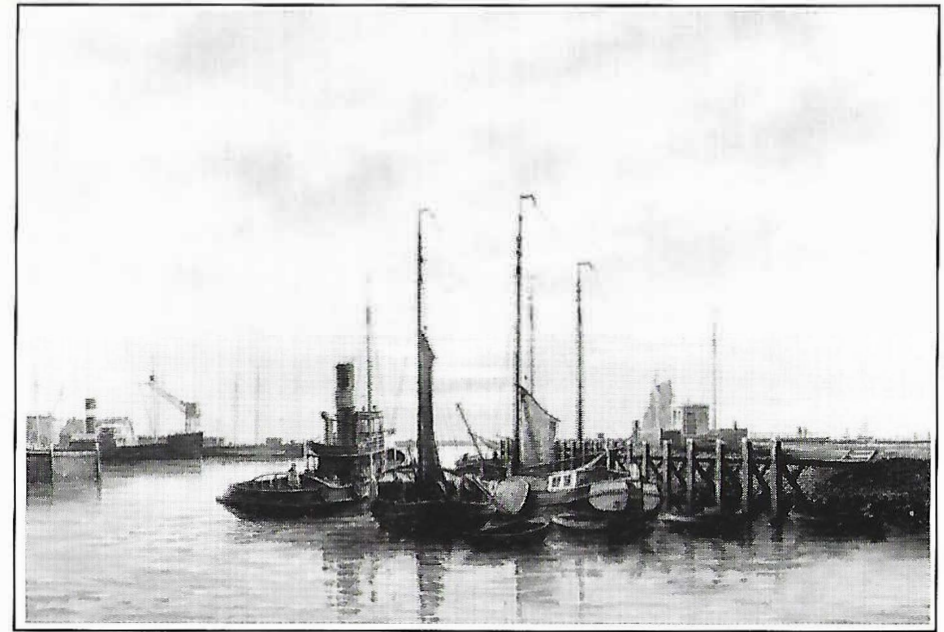
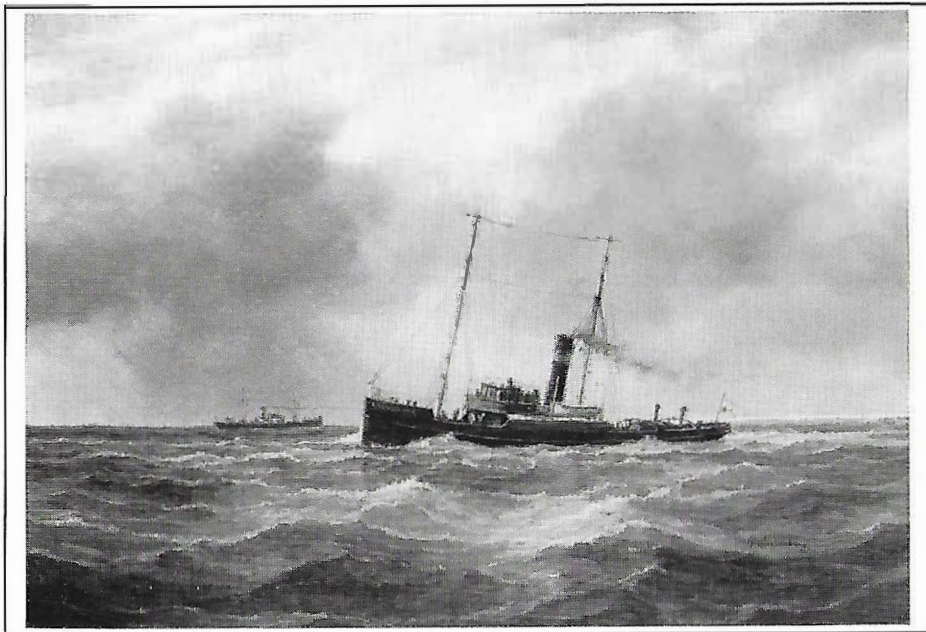
Exhibition A.J. Koster Galery, Schoorl, 1986

The ships of Peter Sterkenburg

Above: Tug 'Noordzee'
Canvas, 68 x 90 cm.

Cover:
Harbour in the winter,
Canvas 50 x 70 cm.

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Top left:
Tug 'Lauwerszee'.
Canvas. 30 x 40 cm.

Bottom left: Into
the harbor, Canvas,
50 x 70 cm.

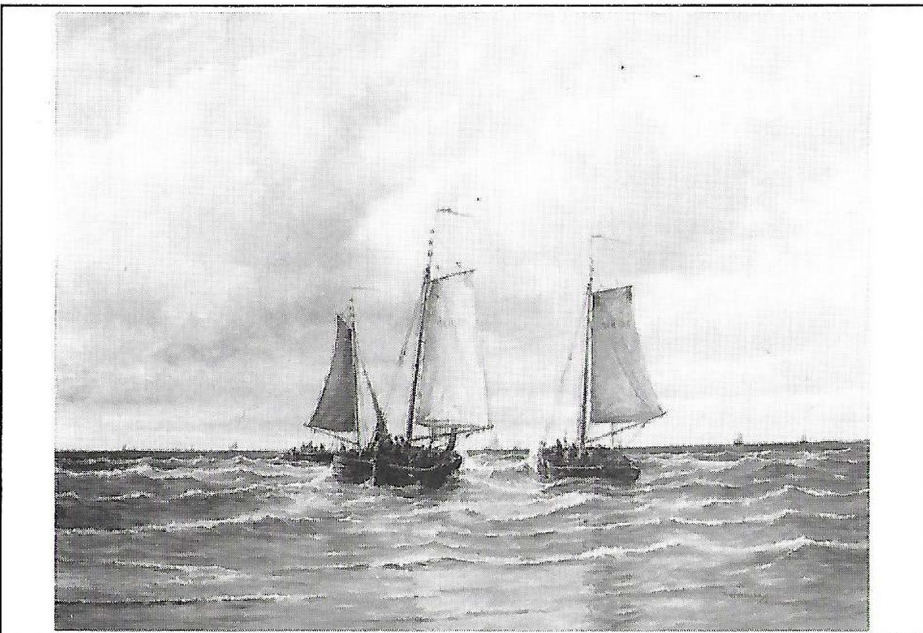
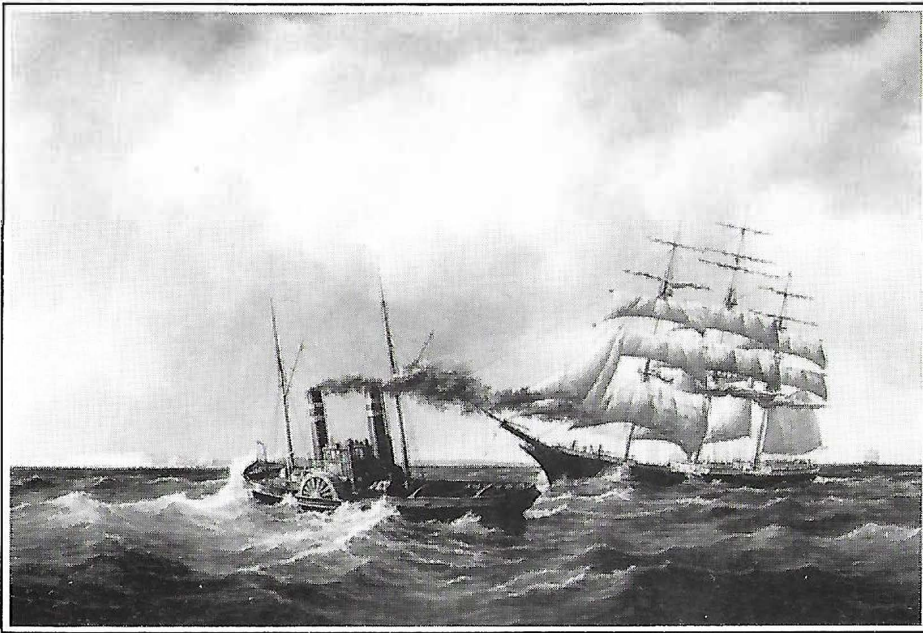
Above: Harbour view,
canvas, 60 x 80 cm.

While the large exhibition of old Dutch paintings "The Dutch landscape" was organized in the National Gallery in London, the curator was at a loss, because she felt that "The Dutch landscape essentially has so little to offer."

If this lady had ever visited our country, she most probably did see little or nothing of its beauty. If she had looked with the admiring eyes of Peter Sterkenburg however she would never have made such a remark at all.

Peter was born on December 18th, 1955, in the Frisian city of Harlingen, a place ideally suited to fall in love with. Not with the beautiful city hall at the Noorderhaven (Northern Harbour) and the attractive old facades, because a boy does not look at that yet at his age. No, young Peter Sterkenburg was fascinated by what happened near and on the water.

There, boats with a cargo of wood came from



Above left: Ships off
Dover.
Canvas, 70 x 110 cm.

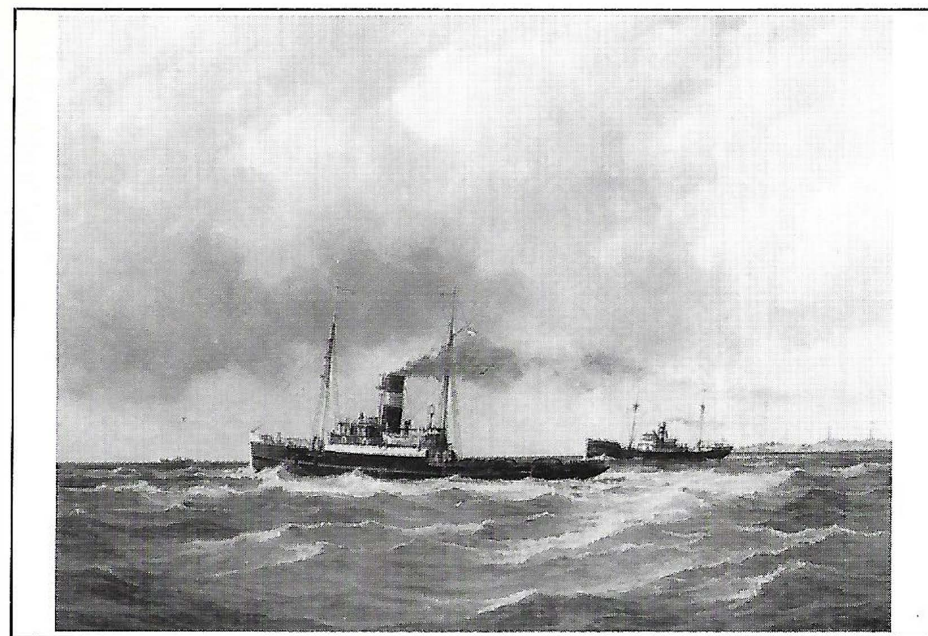
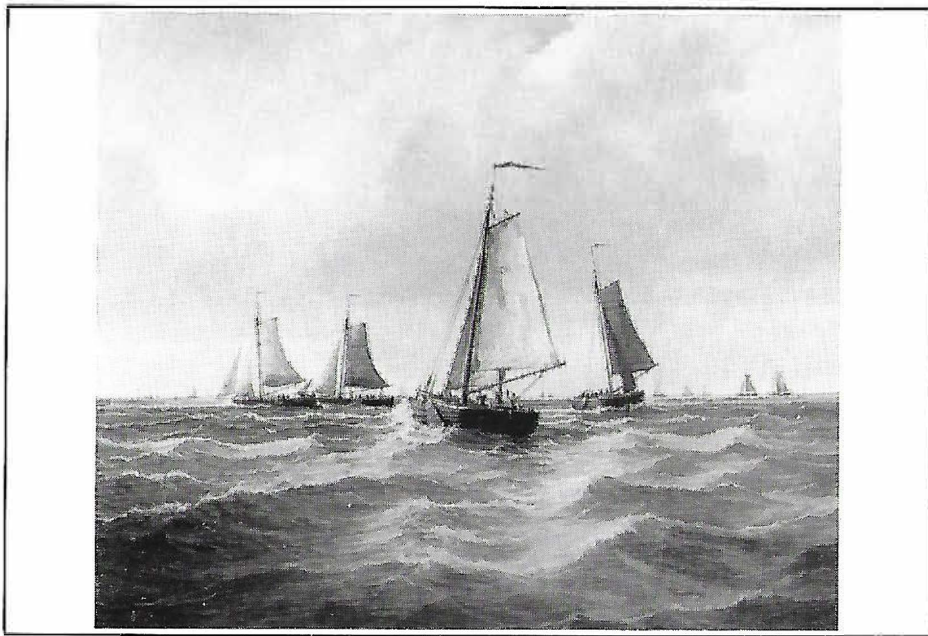
Bottom left: Bom-ships.
Canvas, 50 x 60 cm.

Above: Flat bottom boats.
Canvas, 30 x 40 cm.

Scandinavia, freighters passed on their way to England. From there, the ferries left for the islands of Terschelling and Vlieland or fishing vessels arrived loaded with fish from the Wadden Sea and North Sea.

Outside the city at the shipyards, hammers rattled against metal hulls and drills whined drowning out all other sounds.

Every port has its own writers or painters that become inspired for life. Dutch author Arthur van Schendel wrote his "Frigate ship Johanna Maria" with a longing for the old days of sailing, and Harlingen has its writer Vestdijk, who however hardly wrote about the harbour. But Harlingen also has Peter Sterkenburg with his interest in its brown fleet which does not cease to inspire him. Again and again he creates works of art depicting the old Zuiderzee (Southern sea) with botters from 'Zuidwal' harbour or with turntjalks sailing from Friesland to Holland.



Top left: Fishing boats.
Canvas, 70 x 80 cm.

Bottom left: Harbour of
Harlingen.
Canvas, 50 x 70 cm.

Above:
Ships off IJmuiden.
Canvas, 40 x 50 cm.

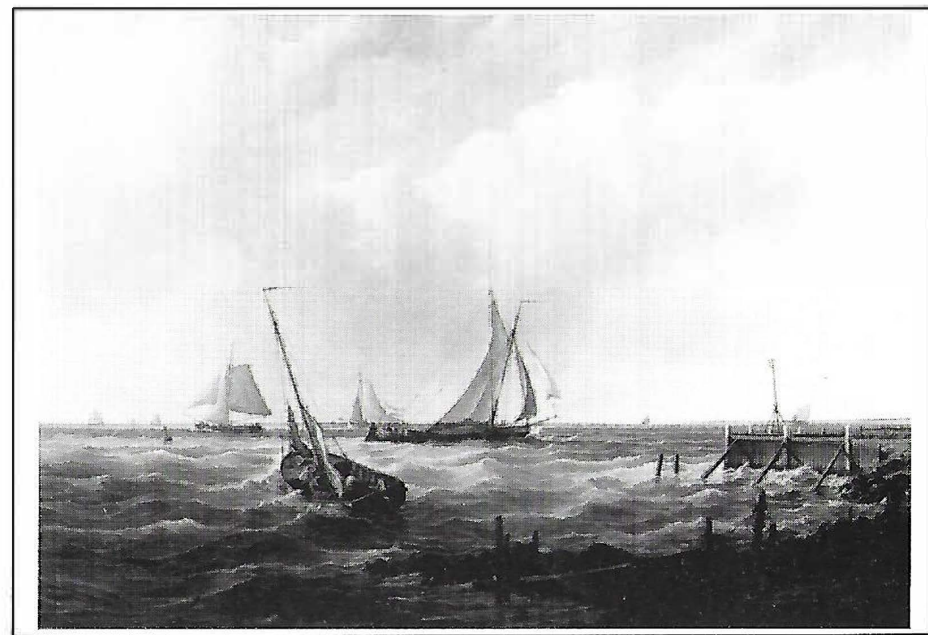
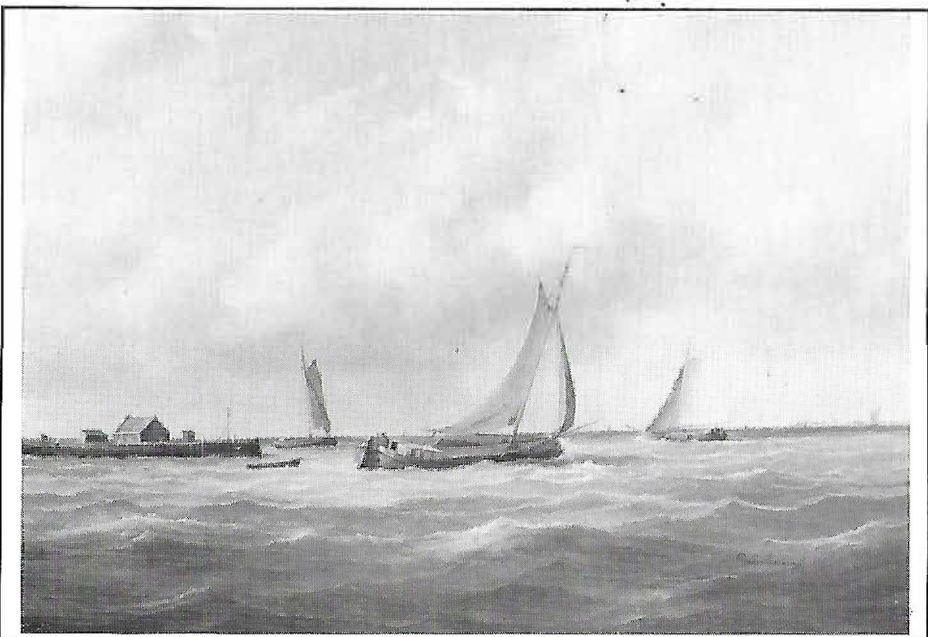
As a boy he dreamed away at the harbour and listened to the stories at school about the old whalers who sailed from Harlingen to Greenland and Spitsbergen.

The stories inspired him but Peter preferred to draw or paint everything. Over the centuries, the Netherlands always had a lot of talented painters and we should know much more about them.

For most of us, our art knowledge does not go beyond famous names such as Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Karel Appel and we feel that this covers it. That is very unfortunate, because there are many important and especially good artists in this day and age as well. One of these is Peter Sterkenburg with his very recognizable own style.

He was busy with pencil and brush already at a very early age but over time his preference for old ships did not fade away and became a recurrent theme in his later work.

Nobody has to tell him anything about halyards and shees, about cattackles and brails, about sails and leeboards.



Top left: Two flat-bottomed boats.
Canvas, 40 x 50 cm.

Bottom left:
Leaving the harbour.
Canvas, 30 x 40 cm.

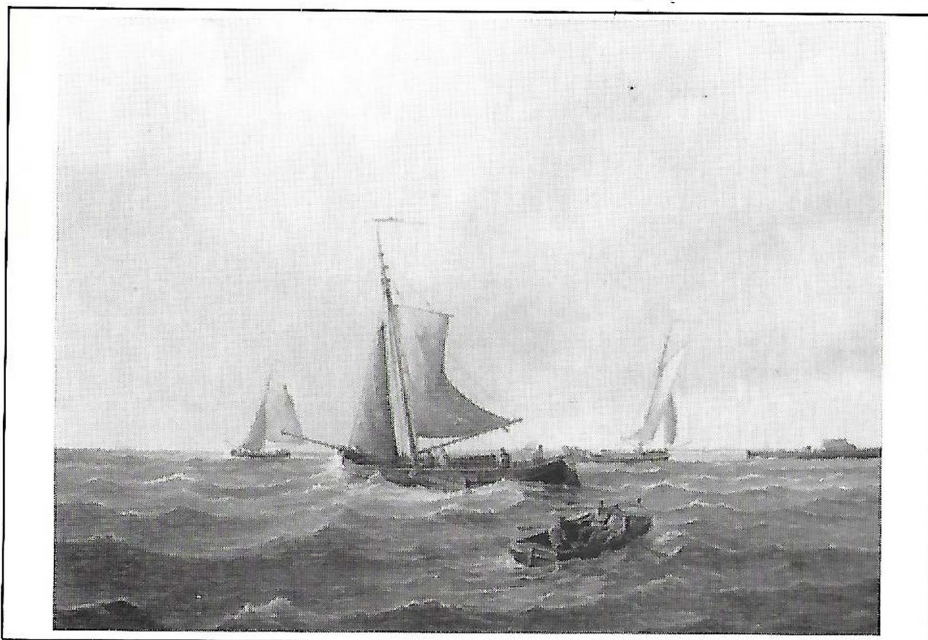
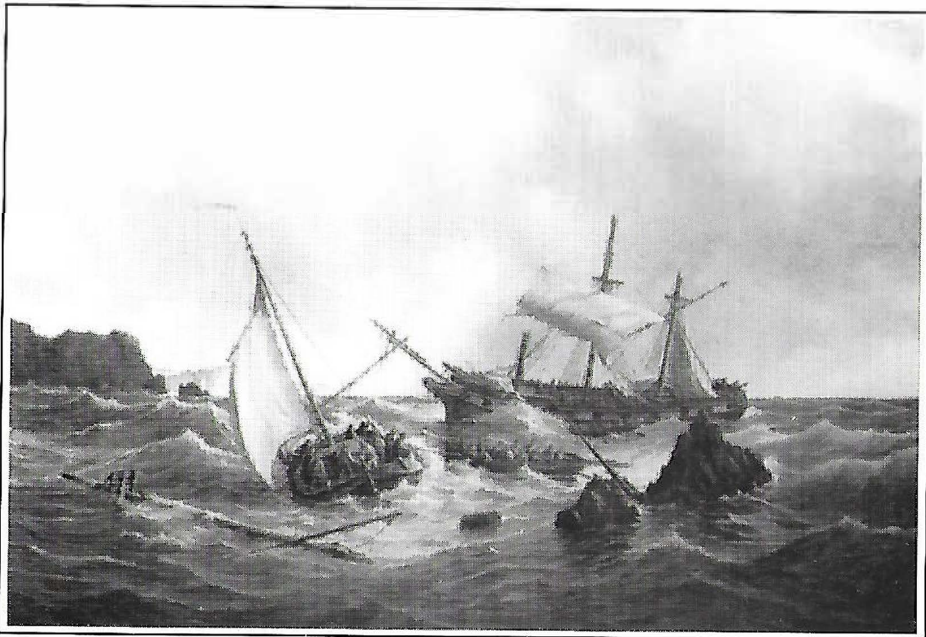
Above:
Ships off the coast.
Canvas, 100 x 130 cm.

A connoisseur can see this immediately by looking at his work. The ships of Peter Sterkenburg tilt under the pressure of the wind as the wind falls in the sails. His reef is taken properly when there is too much wind and his ships are moored correctly in the harbour. His Frisian skûtsje is a real skûtsje, his bomb barge exceeds that of Mesdag.

Peter Sterkenburg himself is part of his sailing world, because his sea is no longer made of oil paint. People are tempted to dip their hands in the painting. His clouds are Dutch clouds above the water, brightly irradiated by the sun or packed together in threatening thunderstorms.

In the romantic style of Sterkenburg with his diligent skills a painting must be flawless. In rare cases his composition is a little less strong, but it's always convincing and lifelike.

Peter Sterkenburg made trips to France, England and later to the United States of America to look around in the harbours and to

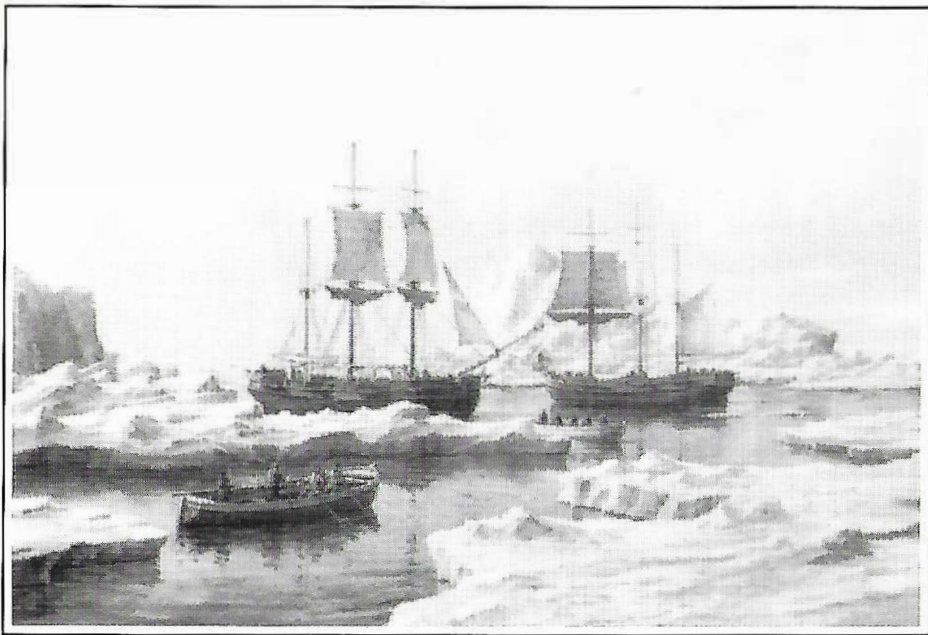


Top left: Ship in distress,
90 x 120 cm.

Bottom left: Flat bottoms.
Canvas, 50 x 60 cm.

Above: Seascape.
Canvas, 60 x 90 cm.

study new subjects, but his great love for the Dutch brown fleet has always remained the same. The quality of his paintings is recognized abroad. They are sold everywhere in Europe, and also in America. Sterkenburg continues to paint with the same perfection and in the same style. However, there are minor changes in his choice of subjects. Previously his seascapes looked as if the ships had days and weeks ahead. The skippers sailed past each other with a show of hands, but waterfronts were rarely visible. The tjalk-boats or tea clippers sailed under a stiff breeze, with a cat rigged sail or askew in front of the wind, in complete silence. Every now and then a quiet evening emerges in his work with ships on the beach in the late sunlight, like they are taking a rest. Such tranquil subjects and harbour views start appearing more often. There are hardly any people to be seen, but we notice historic buildings and recognize ancient fishing villages around the old Zuiderzee or along the North Sea coast. History remains important with



whalers among icebergs and large ice floes evoking memories of the old Harlinger Groenlandfarers. Ships, sea and clouds will always play a main role in Sterkenburg's work and will always be there. In that respect the artist has a lot in common with the great Dutch poet Slauerhoff who, although born in Leeuwarden far away from the sea, also had seawater in his veins.

"I have to go back to sea again, a good ship and in the distance a star to steer by, there's nothing else to wish for. The tugging at the wheel, the creaking of the wood, the sail pressing against it, when the day dawns over a gray sea, through a mist of rain."

That Peter Sterkenburg has a slightly brighter way of looking at the world can be seen at Galerie Koster in Schoorl.

Above:
Ships in sea ice.
90 x 120 cm.