

COMMUNICATING VESSELS

catalogue

communication
publications
services

September 1 - 14, 1998
St. George Terminal of the Staten Island Ferry
Staten Island, New York City, N.Y.

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"*Communicating Vessels catalogue* communication, publications, services"

© 1998, Staten Island/Rotterdam by Arnold Schalks & Ron Rocco.

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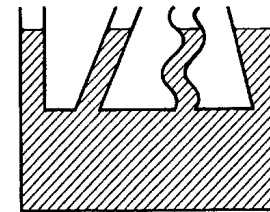
Communicating Vessels was part of 'Ahab's Wife (*Harbor Soundings, Ocean Dreams*)', a series of exhibitions and performances presented by Snug Harbor Cultural Center from May 16 - October 4, 1998.

Communicating Vessels received support from the Rotterdam Center for Visual Arts (CBK), the Consulate General for the Netherlands for North America, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center.

Communicating Vessels thanks the residents and staff of The Sailors' Snug Harbor in Sea Level, N.C., the New York City Department of Transportation, Dr. Schnabel of Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, Melissa Hiller, Michael Null, Kay Takeda, Lisandro Hendricks, Karl Alderson, Cora Schmeiser, Madeline Rocco, Frank Ligtoet, Robert Kloos, Carrie Beeham, Jon Slackman, Allison Mackey, Sebastian Junger, Johann Sebastian Bach, Thomas Paulo, the Jewish Community Center, Materials for the Arts-NYC Department of Cultural Affairs/Department of Sanitation, Staten Island Institute of Arts & Sciences, Lexmark International Inc. and Maptech.

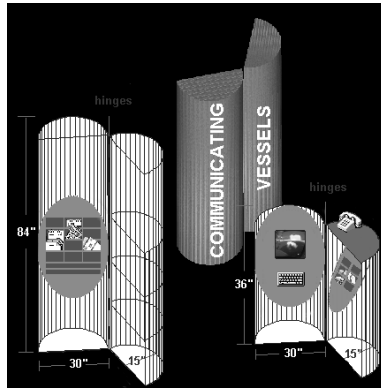
BASICS

The principle of the **communicating vessels** can be used to explain the observed fact that if a container of liquid contains two or more openings, to which are connected tubes of various shapes into which the liquid can rise, and if enough liquid is present in the container, so that the level will rise in those tubes, the liquid will rise to the same height in each.



vessel: a hollow receptacle for fluid; a large ship; a person regarded as the recipient or exponent of a quality

horizon: the line at which the earth and sky appear to meet; limit of mental perception, experience or interest



Newsstand design by Ron Rocco



fig. a



INTRODUCTION

Communicating Vessels is a site specific project created by the Rotterdam artist Arnold Schalks and the New York artist Ron Rocco. It is grounded in language and deals with maritime subjects, technology and historical circumstance.

The project explores Snug Harbor Cultural Center's past as a home for retired seamen. Sailors' Snug Harbor, as it was previously named, was established in 1833 and functioned as a refuge for aged mariners until 1976, when it was relocated to Sea Level, North Carolina, where it continues to operate. Communicating Vessels investigates the ocean as a connective element between the facility's former location on Staten Island, and its present location in North Carolina, using the technology of the internet, cellular phones, and desktop publications. In July 1998, Rocco and Schalks visited Sea Level to interview residents of Sailors' Snug Harbor about living in the Nelson Bay area and register recollections of their maritime past.

An essential component of the Communicating Vessels project is a newsstand kiosk, set up in the waiting area of the St. George Terminal of the Staten Island Ferry from September 1 through 14, 1998, daily from 8 am to 5 pm. The kiosk consists of an 8' and a 4' module (*fig. a*). The 8' module serves as a display for the various Communicating Vessels publications. The 4' module includes a video display, a telephone information service and an internet terminal. From this structure, guests are able to communicate on different levels with other cyber-vessels, send electronic postcards and sample some specially created cyber-goods, including New York's first HTML Pretzels. Additions to the internet terminal allow viewers to track the movements of the Staten Island Ferry through New York harbor, as well as view the Communicating Vessels website and VRML compass. In addition to the kiosk and the various project related products on sale there, boarding ferry passengers receive a copy of The Daily Level. This free newspaper comprises interviews with retired mariners at Sea Level, and articles on naval history and hydrology to intensify the daily nautical experience of the commuters.

With Communicating Vessels, Schalks and Rocco attempt to integrate and extend the visitor's perception and understanding of the way things are connected in thought, time and space. The visitor, in a sense, becomes another connective element, or vessel, between notions of what is past and what is present.

Arnold Schalks & Ron Rocco
New York/Rotterdam, September 1998

THE DAILY LEVEL

'communication for commuters'

daily newssheet, 14 different issues

double sided laserprint, letter size

edition: 350 copies each issue

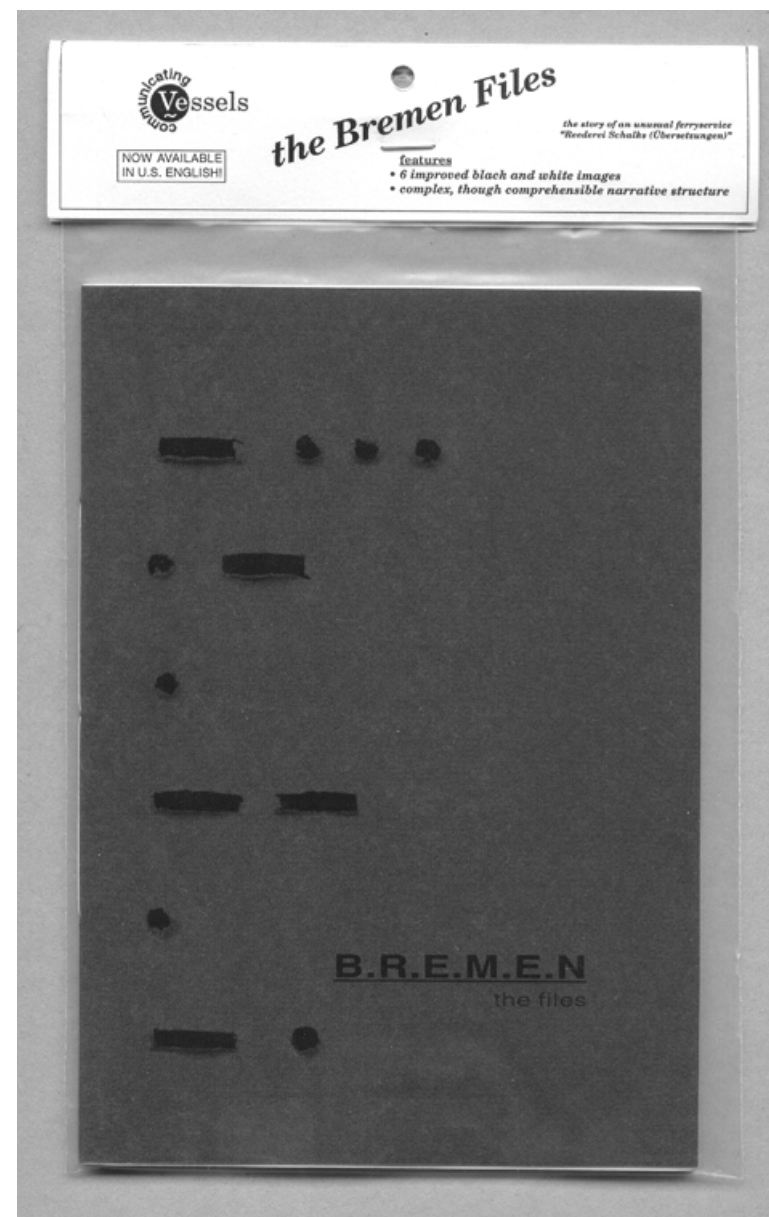
The Daily Level is a free newssheet, distributed daily from September 1-14, 1998, to boarding Staten Island Ferry passengers. It comprises interviews with retired mariners at Sea Level, and articles on naval history and hydrology to intensify the daily nautical experience of the commuters.

THE LAST OF A SPECIES

...oh hell, of course I knew Sailors' Snug Harbor at Staten Island, I used to catch the launch right across the street from it, to go to Bayonne, you know...no, I never went to the facility, nor had the curiosity to just walk across the street to look at it....I met some of the inmates in a bar that I happened to be in...they wandered around and the seamen 'd get them drunk, I mean, it was....oh yeah, everybody knew about Snug Harbor there was always the standard joke, you know...'you can always go to Snug Harbor'....nobody had the intention to go, really...I didn't know the history of it until I came here....I made no effort to find out.....they never ever really gave it a lot of publicity, I mean....it's there....it's available....but now it's getting so difficult to get somebody in here, that the unions are running ads in their papers....well, the source is drying out....we're the last of a species, really....I mean, the maritime industry is most radically changed...it was about time, it had not changed much since Moses in a basket, for God's sake...I mean, all the old traditions that carried on for years and years and years....you can look at these ships here...they all have a mast, but they're actually displaced.... there's no use for them, but they still put them on ships....now, you see a ship, and it's a utilitarian deal....it looks like hell...it's just a floating box with a doghouse set up on top of it...it looks like a seagoing version of the African Queen, for God's sake.... they don't build a ship for esthetics now...the lines of it, the way they look like....well, you could recognize a Dutch ship all over the world by the stern....it was always distinct, it had a sturdy look...just a little line that you could tell...

Horace Twiford, Sea Level, N.C., July 27, 1998.

(from: The Daily Level # 1, September 1, 1998)



THE BREMEN FILES

'the story of an unusual ferry service
'Reederei Schalks (Übersetzungen)'

this publication features:

6 improved black and white images
complex, though comprehensible narrative structure

[...] Over there, on the other side of the Kleine Weser, Reederei/Fähre Schalks had been established. An almost forgotten and useless waterfront, at best good for a short walk. Houses, separated from the water by a road and footpath. On this side: an island that parts the Kleine from the Weser. Reederei/Fähre Schalks: a small wooden house where *Glühwein* and ferry tickets are being sold, and a rowing-boat "t Schalkje V", whereby two passengers will be ferried from one bank to the other (Übersetzung) and possibly, back again. From here it looks like a journey from no place special to nowhere in particular and vice versa. Just moments ago, the enterprise pushed off in a festive mood. The chorus sang sea shanties, his mother christened "t Schalkje" and the first passenger went aboard. Bremen, Sunday February 20th, 1994, noontime, wet snow falls steadily from out of a deep grey cloud cover. *Das Narrenschiff fährt los* (The Ship of Fools pushes off) [...]

Ove Lucas, Bremen, Germany, February 20, 1994.

(from: the Bremen Files, 'A Pedestrian's Report')



COMMUNICATING VESSELS WEBSITE

'the Language of Voyage'

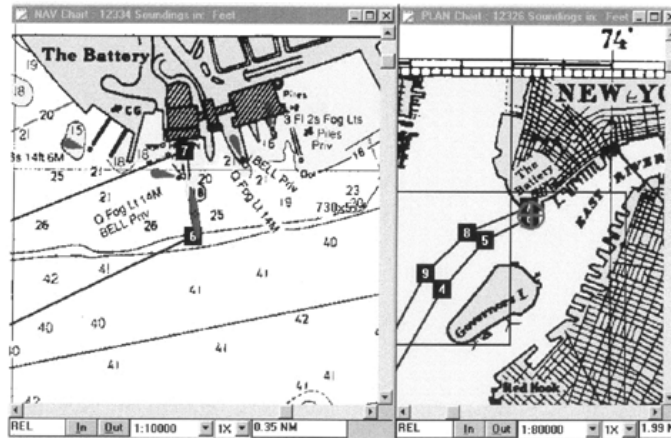
http://www.fine-art.com/ron_rocco/snug/welcome.htm

(the website will continue to exist on the internet after September 14, 1998)

what you'll need to view this site:

- *Cosmo Player 1.0*
- *Real Audio 4*
- *Netscape Navigator 4.0*

The 4' module of the Communicating Vessels newsstand includes a video display, telephone information service and an internet terminal. From this structure, guests are able to communicate on different levels with other cyber-vessels, send electronic postcards and sample some specially created cyber-goods, including New York's first HTML Pretzels. Additions to the internet terminal allow viewers to track the movements of the Staten Island Ferry through New York harbor, as well as view the Communicating Vessels website and VRML compass.



The interface of Maptech's Navigation software, showing the course of the S.I. Ferry through Upper New York Bay.



U.S.-METRIC SYSTEM RECONCILIATION SET

'let's start the next millenium with a new unit:
the MILLINCH '

the multiple includes:

dual scale fiber-glass measuring tape with plastic tag

overall length: 60" / 152.5 cm

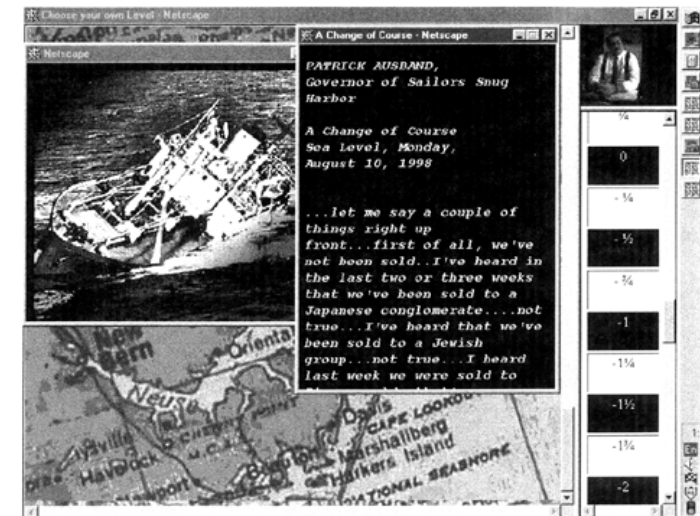
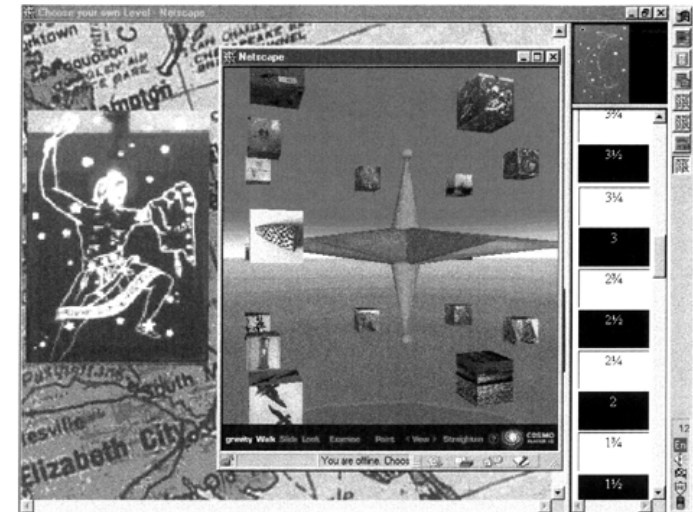
edition: 11

21st CENTURY CONVERSION TABLE

1 millimetre = 0.039 inch

1 inch = 25.4 millimetre

1 MILLINCH = $\frac{25.4 - 0.039}{2} = 12.6805 \text{ mm}/0.494539 \text{ inch}$



'Choose your own Level', Netscape views of the Communicating Vessels website.

HTML PRETZEL

'a binary delicacy for the PC / Macintosh'

2HD floppy disk containing 4 files

edition: 50 (PC)/40 (Mac)

(this disk is not for microwave use)

Congratulations! This is your Communicating Vessels 'HTML Pretzel'. This artwork was produced by Ron Rocco and Arnold Schalks for the installation and performance of the same name which takes place September 1-14, 1998 at the St. George Terminal of the Staten Island Ferry.

Contents of this disk

PRETZ.JPG

30,641 bytes 07-17-98.

Pretzel image file, photographed at the Ferry Terminal.

PRETZE6.WRL

25,926 bytes 05-03-98.

VRML Pretzel to be viewed with Cosmo Player version 1.0 (Link to Cosmo Player Download site to obtain Cosmo Player version 1.0 Plugin for Netscape Navigator 4.0: <http://vrml.sgi.cosmoplayer>) NOTE: YOU WILL NEED Netscape Navigator 4.0.

PRETZEL.HTM

1,661 bytes 08-21-98

Instruction on how to make your own Pretzels.

4 file(s) 58,352 bytes

Enjoy!

(from: the HTML Pretzel 'READ.ME' file)



FREEZE THE MELTING

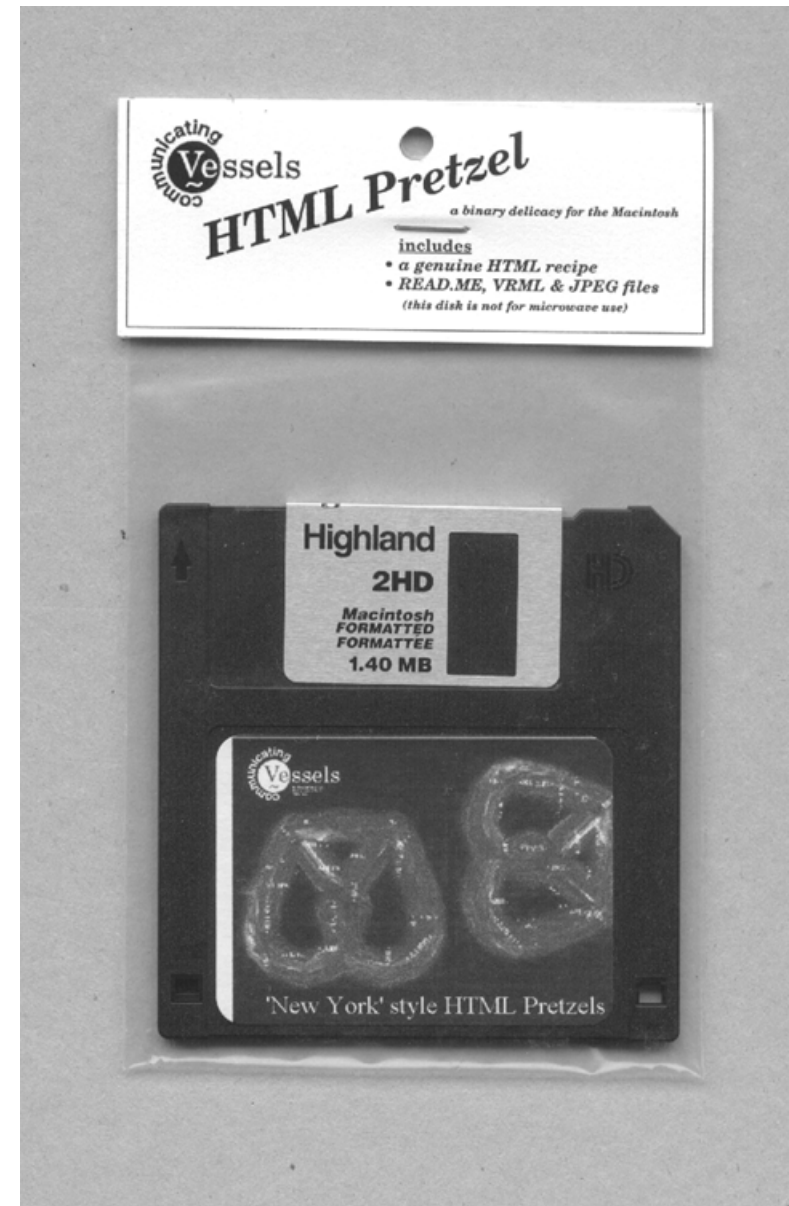
'cool!'

the multiple includes:

1.7 fl. oz./50 ml. plastic container with New York Bay water
2 "Freeze the Melting" participation forms
edition: 50

Because of global warming, ice caps melt and sea levels rise. This seriously threatens lower countries like the Netherlands. Communicating Vessels encourages U.S. citizens to participate in the "Freeze the Melting" project. For that purpose, Communicating Vessels provides a 'U.S.-NL solidarity flask.' This flask contains a sample of non potable New York Bay water. Participants are requested to place it in their freezer for a period of at least fourteen days, thus returning the sea water to its former frozen state. With this symbolic gesture, participants assist in delaying the consequences of the world's changing hydrographic balance. By doing so, they express their solidarity with the people of the Netherlands. All participants receive an official record, confirming their participation. A duplicate of the document will be send to Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

(from: the 'Waterline Tours' guidebook)



LET'S GET METRIC

'an introduction to the decimal system'

the multiple includes:

59.055"/150 cm tape measure

exercise book with fold-out conversion table

golf pencil with cap eraser

edition: 24

Understanding natural things involves describing them. The more accurate the description, the better the understanding. An accurate description is quantitative: a scientific measurement consists of a number and a unit. Every measurement is, in the final analysis, an approximation.

<u>description of measured item</u>	metric • <u>dimensions</u> L x W x H	• U.S.
this exercise book	6.5 x 8.5 cm	$2\frac{9}{16}$ x $3\frac{5}{16}$ '
hypothenuse of pillow		
surface area bathroom mirror		
personal weight		
capacity vitamin supplement jar		
coffee/tea level in filled mug		
outer diameter bagel		
inside leg partner		
distance to front door		

(from: the 'Let's get metric' exercise book)



INCLINATION DETECTORS

'a basic requisite to achieve horizontal awareness'

Just put them on almost any surface to locate all your local depressions and bulges!*

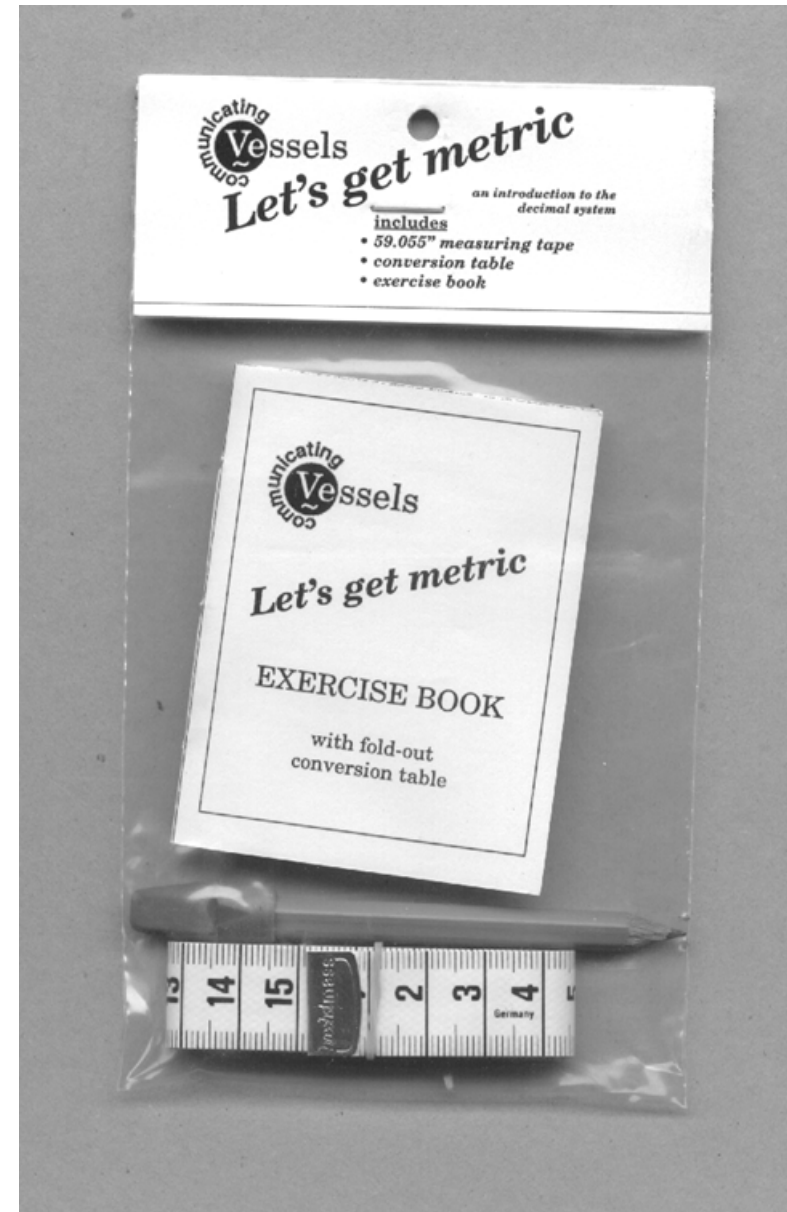
*the detectors do not float

the multiple includes:

7 black glass spheres

easy-to-read instructions

edition: 25



KNOW THE ROPES

'starter kit'

the multiple includes:

3' heavy duty cord and 1 tag
concise index of hoisting gear
edition: 24

Mass, friction and gravity are phenomena that affect our daily life. Pulley systems make it possible to do work more conveniently. However, the system itself is not a source of energy. Rather work is fed into it, and the system may change the work in one of three ways:

- it changes the direction of the force, so that it is more convenient to apply;
- it changes the magnitude of the force in order to decrease speed or distance;
- it changes the magnitude of the force, so that a small input force can be used to overcome a large output force.

Life is so much easier for those who know which wire to pull, for those who know the ropes.

work input = work output
(if no work is wasted)

work input = work output + work wasted

mechanical advantage = $\frac{\text{output force}}{\text{input force}}$

Efficiency = $\frac{\text{useful work output}}{\text{total work input}}$

(from: the 'Know the ropes' concise index of hoisting gear)



MULTI-PURPOSE TUBE

'a basic requisite to achieve horizontal awareness'

the multiple includes:

10' of Multi-Purpose Tube system with two wooden stops
1.2 fl.oz./35 ml. container with Multi-Purpose tube fluid
edition: 25

The Multi-Purpose Tube system is developed for three different applications:

application 1: level

This is an instrument giving a line parallel to the plane of the horizon, for testing whether things are horizontal. The basic tool to achieve horizontal awareness.

Remove the stops from the tube ends, hold both ends up and fill the tube with the blue (non toxic) fluid. The fluid level in both tube ends will be on the same horizontal plane. Roll it out, and check the levels of your natural environment.

application 2: siphon

This is a device to convey a liquid from a container to a lower level by atmospheric pressure. A siphon is a very useful device. It enables you to empty liquid from a vessel, when the vessel is too heavy to lift or tip over.

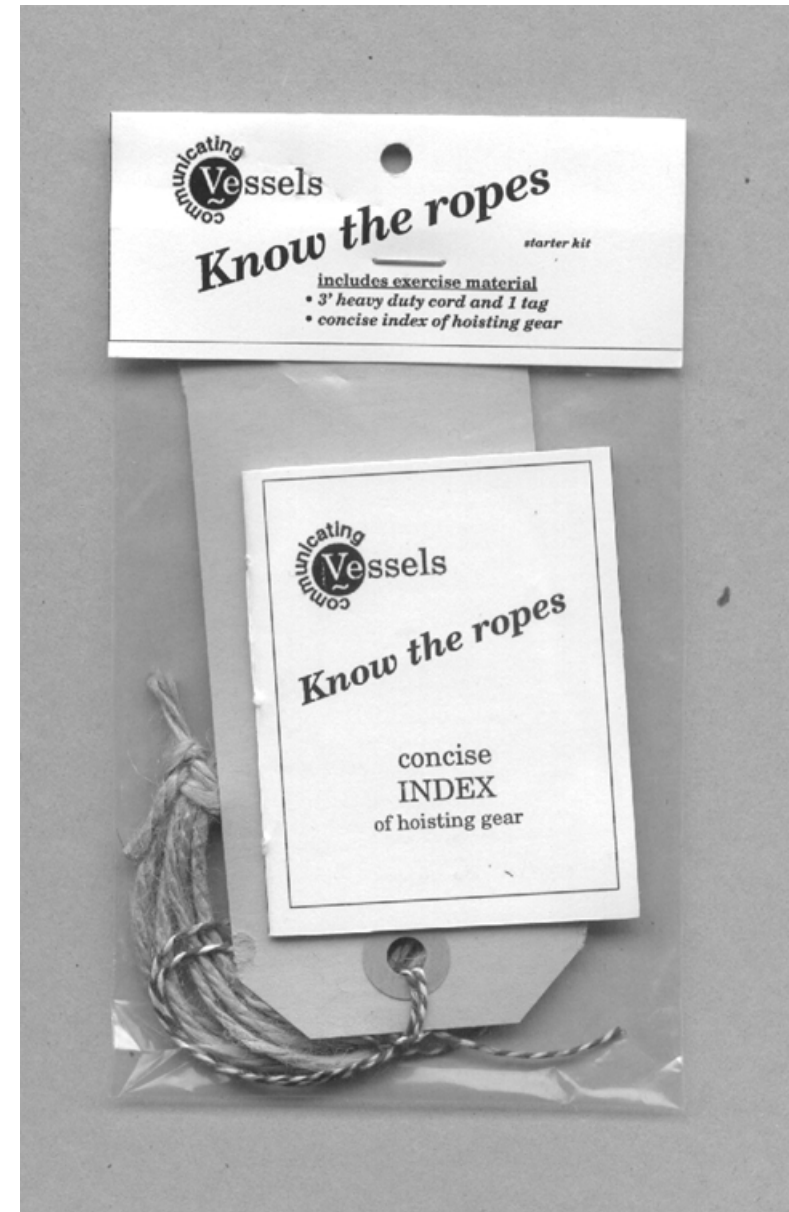
Remove the stops from the tube ends, hold one end of the tube in each hand and completely fill the tube with the liquid you want to convey. Place your finger over the ends of the tube so that no liquid can escape. Quickly place one end well below the surface of the liquid in the higher vessel. Let the other end of the tube hang down above the lower vessel. Remove your fingers from both ends of the tube at the same time. The liquid flows through the tube from the higher into the lower vessel.

application 3: long distance drinking straw

Keep your favorite drink at arm's length.

Remove the stops from the tube ends, and... You've done it before. It only takes a little longer!

(from: the 'Waterline Tours' guidebook)



DUAL PURPOSE CORK SET

'Communicating Vessels' "either/or" bargain'

the multiple includes:

1 'Individual Airbank' -label, 1 'H₂O' message sheet and 1 cork edition: 24

PURPOSE #1: THE INDIVIDUAL AIRBANK™

The burning of fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide: CO₂. The increasing quantity of atmospheric CO₂, together with the effects of deforestation, are expected to cause a significant rise in world temperatures with unforeseen climatic and environmental effects. In order to obtain data bearing on the likely extent of global warming, scientists need objects that are hollow, airtight and datably old. The air, for example trapped in old hourglasses or sealed bottles containing model ships, may help to show how much the atmospheric carbon dioxide levels have increased in recent centuries. The objects will be opened in a vacuum. The amount of carbon dioxide in the trapped air will be ascertained by gas chromatography, and the readings will be compared with measurements of 'modern' air. *Communicating Vessels* anticipates a deficiency of air samples in the distant future. In order to support future research on global warming, it introduces the Individual Airbank™ project. You can help provide for the long term consolidation of atmospheric research, by taking your own private air sample. All you have to do is: place a dry and clean container (for example an empty wine bottle) in an outdoor space, hold your breath and let the receptacle fill up with a quantity of contemporary air. Then close the receptacle with the provided, organic stop. The specially designed cone-shaped cork ensures the required airtight sealing. The included waterproof label, filled in with a permanent marker, will save future generations of scientists the effort of guessing the age of your sample. Please store your Individual Airbank™ sample in a safe place and include a properly worded provision in your Will, on which scientific institution you bestow your sample of trapped air.

PURPOSE #2: H₂O MESSENGER SERVICE™

Are you discontent with the regular message distribution by land or by air? Are you looking for more adventurous, dynamical flows of information? Is the intent to communicate more relevant then its purposiveness. Do you sympathize with Thales* famous statement: 'panta rei'? Let the currents deliver your messages! Local - Long Distance - Worldwide. FREE DELIVERY

* Thales of Miletus (c.624-c.545 BC) = Greek philosopher, mathematician and astronomer. He was one of the Seven Sages listed by Plato and was held by Aristotle to be the founder of physical science. He also credited with founding geometry. He proposed that water was the primary substance from which all things were derived, and represented the earth as floating on an underlying ocean.

** 'panta rei' = everything flows

Waterline Tours

LEVEL READING

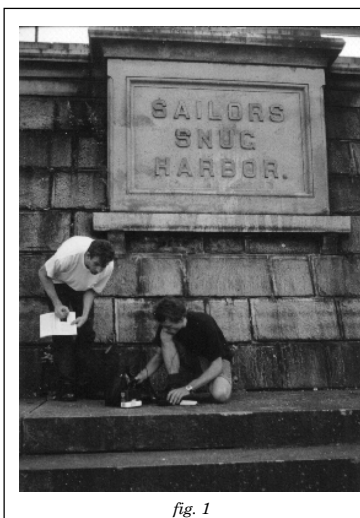


fig. 1



fig. 2

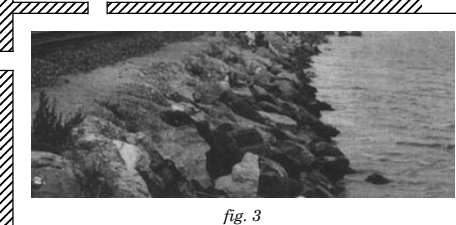


fig. 3



fig. 4

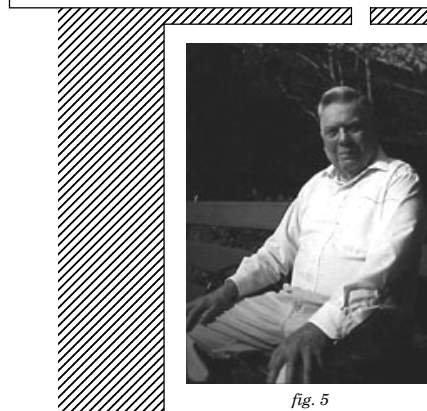


fig. 5

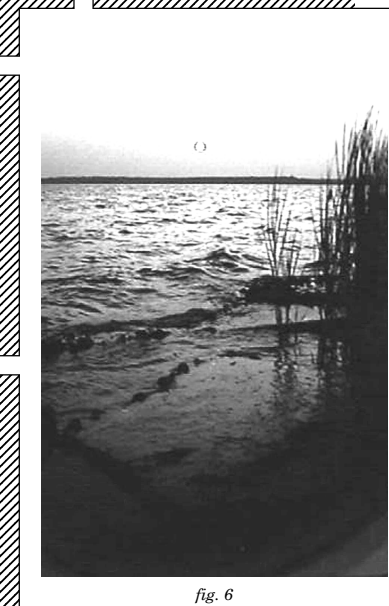


fig. 6

WATERLINE TOURS

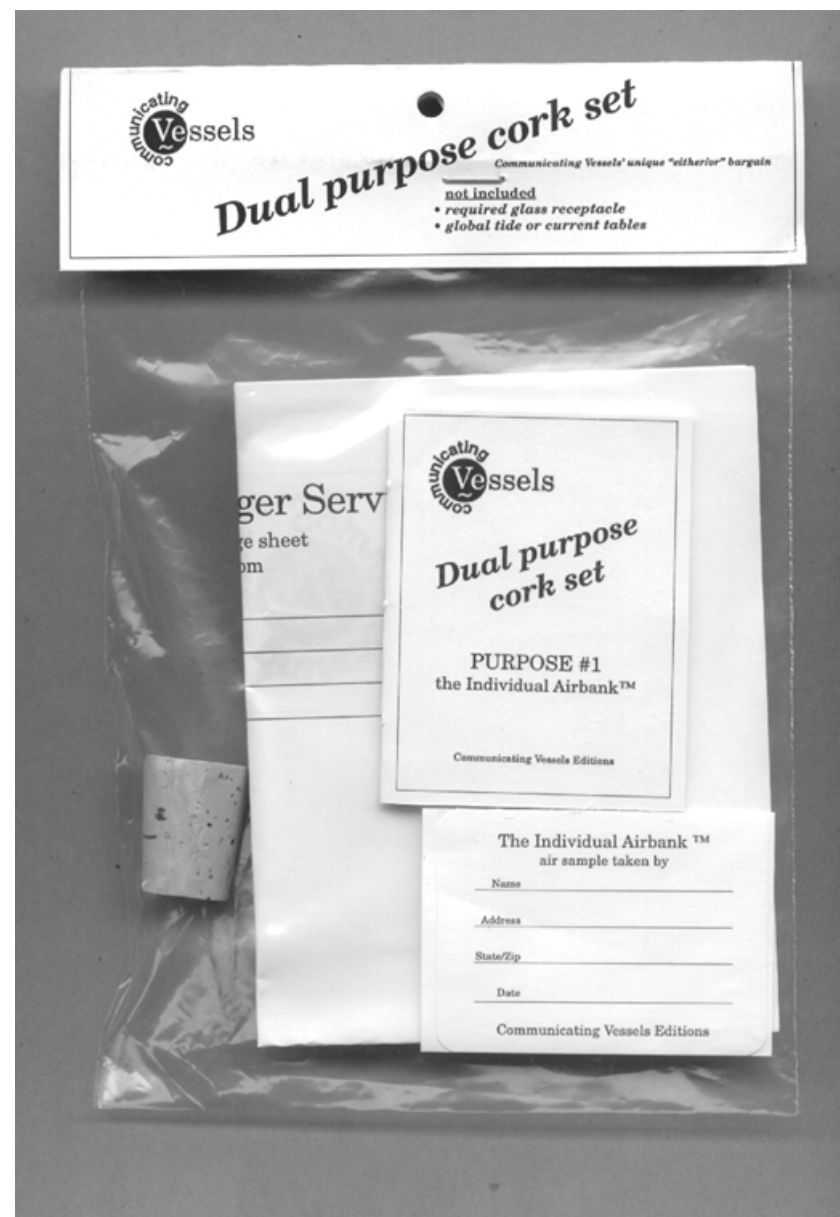
'experience reminders of the past,
enjoy maritime improvisations
and achieve a better horizontal awareness'

Tour passengers receive a cardboard box with 'Waterline Tours accessories' and a 'Waterline Tours guidebook', containing graphical and visual coordination exercises to achieve a better horizontal awareness.

Departure from the St. George Terminal's Ramp F

Duration of the tour: approximately 60 minutes

On September 12 and 13, 1998, Arnold Schalks conducts an exclusive excursion, the Waterline Tour, to a historical site on the bank of the Kill van Kull (fig. 3). A shuttle bus brings tour passengers from the St. George ferry terminal to the site of the former dock of Sailors' Snug Harbor at Richmond Terrace (fig. 1). After a brief historical introduction of the site, the 'LEVEL READING' performance takes place. This part of the tour links the former location of Sailors' Snug Harbor at Staten Island with its present location at Sea Level (fig. 4). The link is produced by the experience on one place (Staten Island) of the condition of a connecting element at that same moment on another place (Sea Level, N.C.). The 'connecting element' is the water of the sea, the 'condition' of the element is the elevation of the water surface: the sea level. Horace Twiford (fig. 5), a resident of Sailors' Snug Harbor at Sea Level, is our N.C. correspondent. He makes a live announcement of the measurement of the water level in Nelson Bay (fig. 6). A cellular phone with a speaker extension is used to provide the communication. At the same time, the Communicating Vessels' vessel, operated by Ron Rocco (fig. 2), serves as a gauge to obtain a measurement of the water level in the Kill van Kull. Through the shared relationship to the tides and a simultaneous measurement, an awareness of space and time is created by way of the connective properties of water and technology. All Waterline Tours passengers receive an official "Level Reading" certificate, stating the concurrent measurements.



DIRECT MESH UTILITY™

'ambiguity-tolerant hardware to fix network problems'

the multiple includes:

1 loaded shuttle

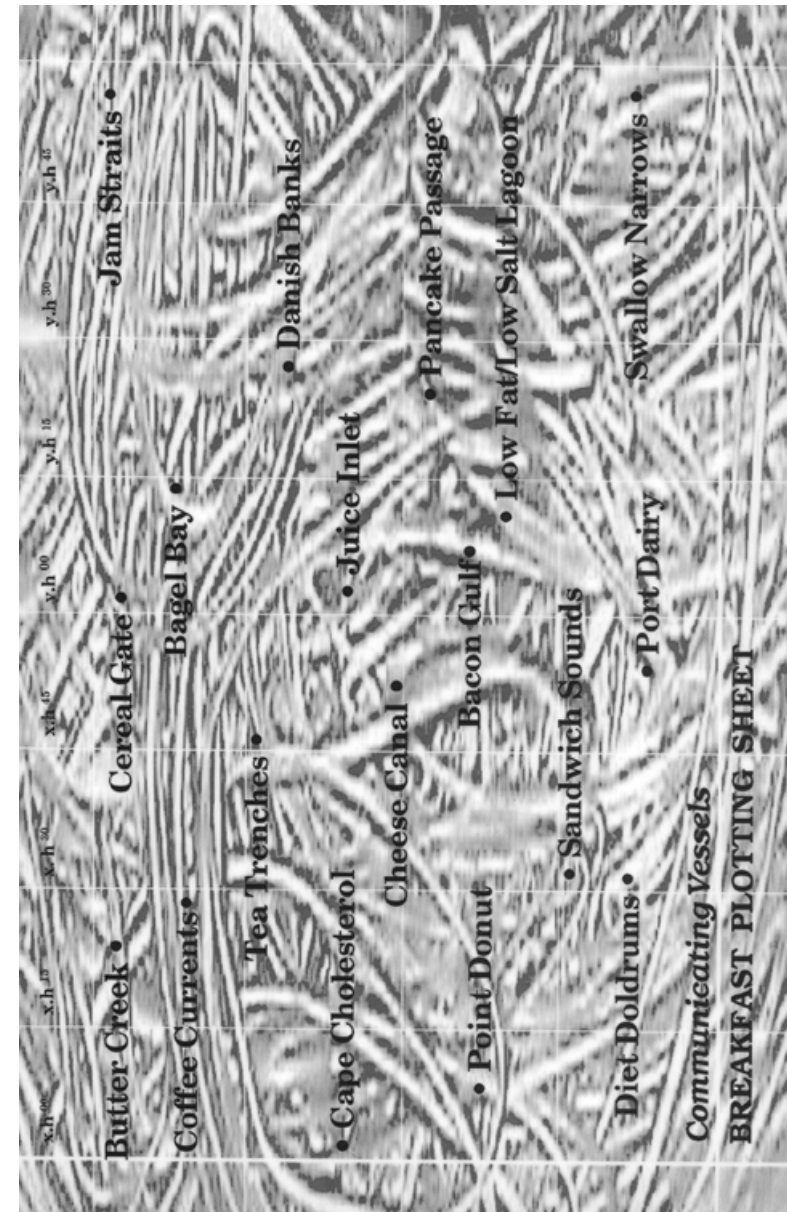
an assortment of 3 first class filaments with 'maritime feel'

1 starting up guide

edition: 10

The Direct Mesh utility represents a new approach to artificial intelligence in networking. The Direct Mesh utility is an ambiguity-tolerant piece of hardware that can fix a variety of network and cable system problems. It comes with a large assortment of first class filaments to exactly match your personal type of network. Preventive maintenance on your network, as on an automobile or anything else, will make it last a long time and keep it in perfect order. Inspect your network after each use on trouble types and locations, such as irregularities in strands, and immediately repair damaged areas or weakened webbing with the Direct Mesh first class filament. Check your knots when they show signs of malfunctioning. There is nothing more disappointing than to lose precious material because your network breaks down. Even though you exercise care in operating your network, you are bound to get a loss once in a while. In those cases the Direct Mesh Utility offers three different applications to repair the network and they all get the job done.

(from: the 'Direct Mesh utility™' starting up guide)



BREAKFAST PLOTTING SHEET

'placemat'

digital color print, laminated

14 x 8.5" / 355.6 x 215.9 mm

edition: 50

Map out your course on the chart of daily appetite.



4 FULL COLOR POSTCARDS

'keep them posted'

6 x 4" / 15.2 x 10 cm.

edition: 200 sets

a set includes the following cards:

- 1 'connect the dots,'
Graphical representation of the regular
course of the S.I. Ferry through New
York Bay.
- 2 A composite image of the S.I. Ferry in a
bottle.
- 3 'K, Kilo'
International Code Flag Signal No. 11:
"Wish to communicate".
- 4 'Sea Level, North Carolina'
View of the sea level at Sea Level, N.C.
Sunset, July 30, 1998.

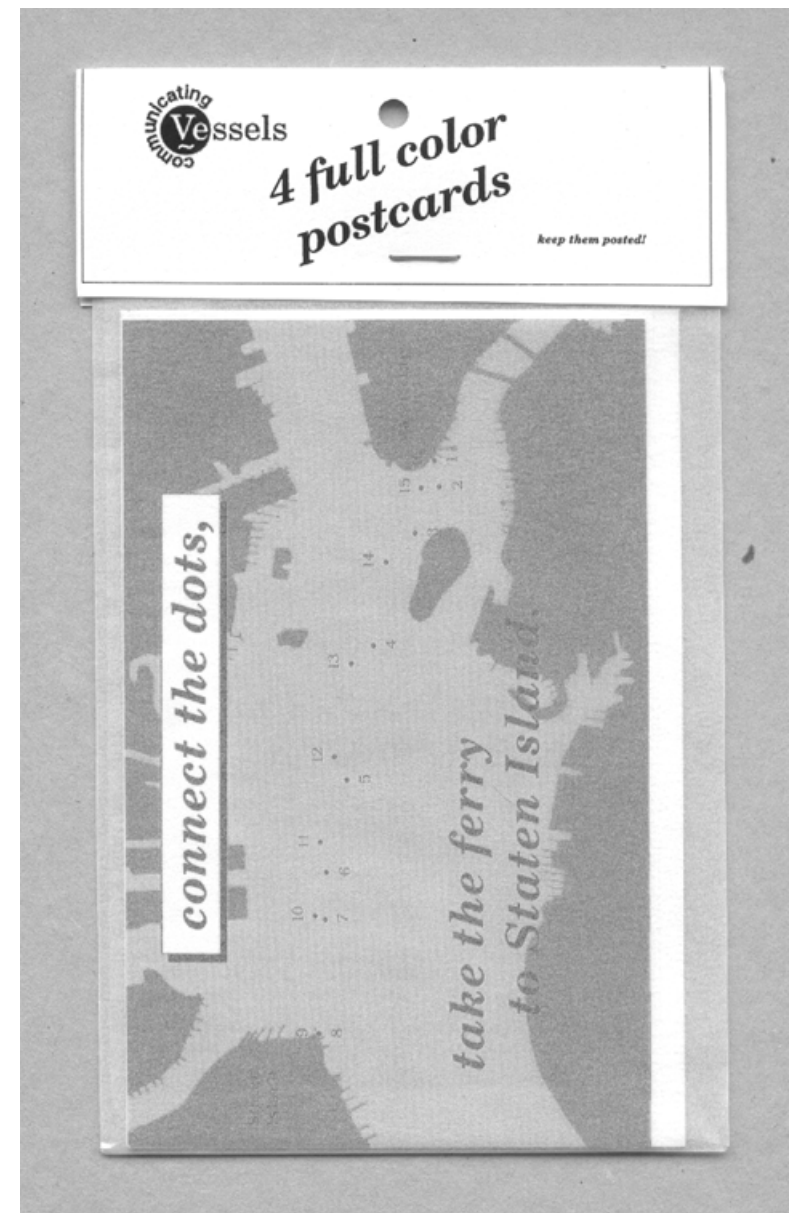
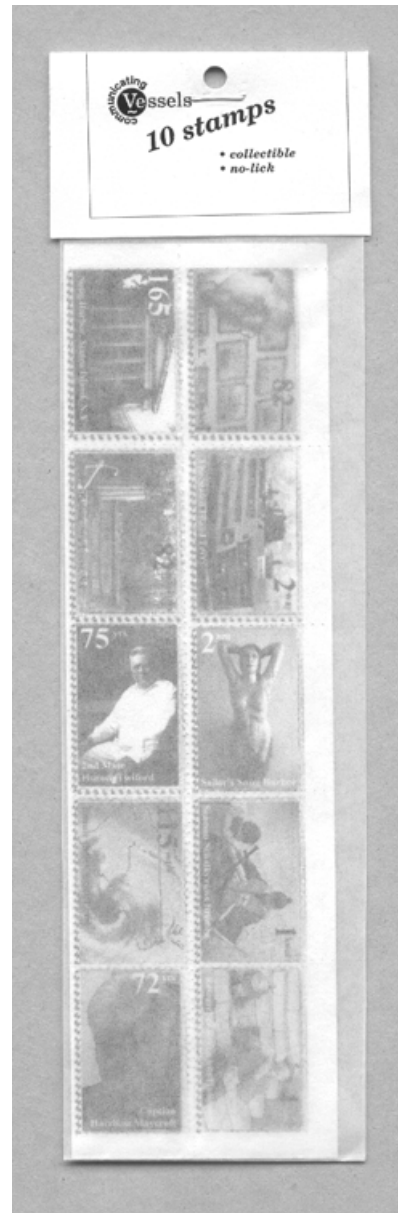
10 STAMPS

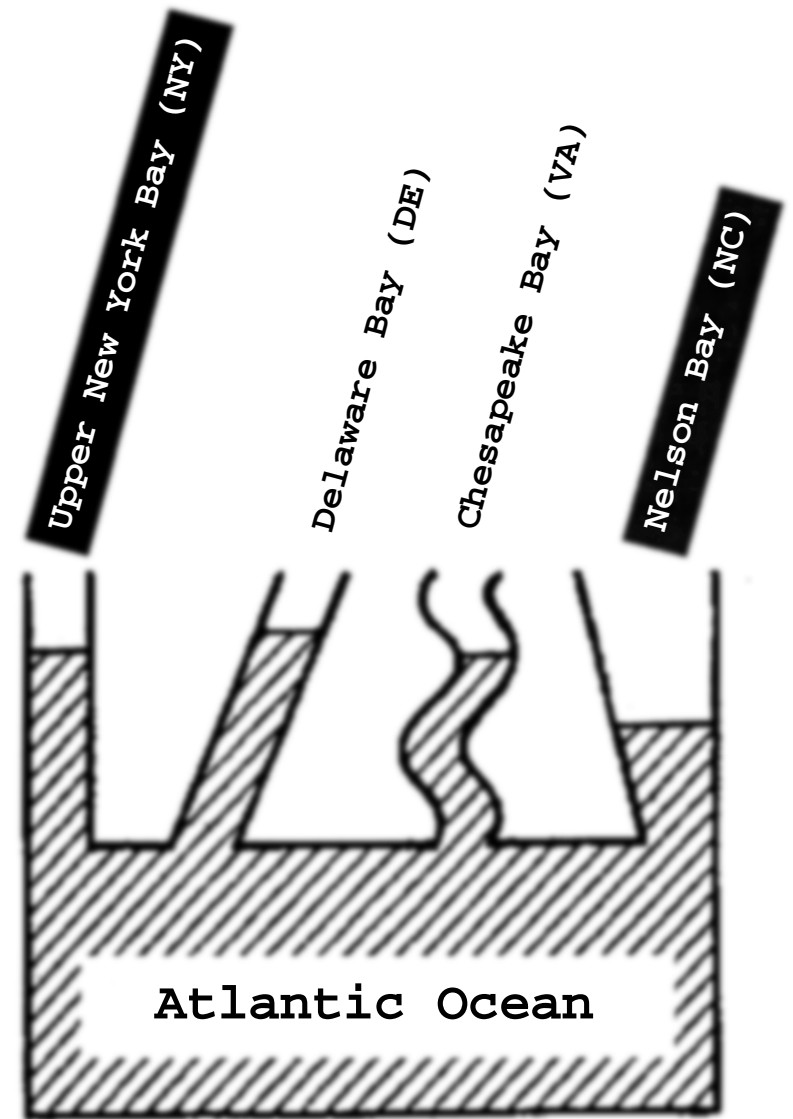
'collectible, no lick'

$2\frac{3}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ " / 6 x 21.5 cm

edition: 100

Save your saliva with these self-adhesive
icons of Francis Bowker, Harrison
Maycroft, Horace Twiford, Ron Rocco,
Arnold Schalks, hurricane Bonnie and
other communicating vessels.





COMMUNICATING VESSELS

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