



John Sloan

Title

Nine Men in a Boat

Medium

Ink on illustration board

Date

1909

Dimensions

11 3/8 × 22 in. (28.9 × 55.9 cm)

Accession number

84.6.1

Credit Line

Purchased with the Museum Volunteers' Fund, 1984

Web Description

John Sloan began his career as a newspaper sketch artist and is perhaps best known for his paintings of urban life. After working for the Philadelphia Press in 1903, Sloan moved to New York City seeking employment. Despite his participation in the well-known 1908 exhibition at Macbeth Gallery in New York, in which he and the other modern painters exhibiting were collectively dubbed “The Eight,” John Sloan struggled financially. None of his works from the 1908 exhibition sold, though he did embark, in the same year, on a more successful illustration venture that lasted several years. Partnering with the author Ralph Bergengren, Sloan provided the illustrations for a popular series of short stories about the pirates of the ship *The Tender Polly*. The series appeared in *Collier's* magazine and *Everybody's Magazine*, with several of the stories eventually collected in the 1922 volume *Gentlemen All and Merry Companions*. *Nine Men in a Boat* illustrates the final scene of one such story in which Captain Red Whiskers, disguised as an animal tamer, and his crew manage to escape local authorities as well as steal a “Royal Man-Eating Bengal Tiger” from a traveling circus. In the illustrations, Sloan imitated a woodcut in his pen and ink drawing, lending an historic air to the tale, which is set in 1830s Massachusetts. The caption inscribed reads: “Nine men in a boat leisurely putting out from the shore towards a small rakish looking schooner—a royal man-eating Bengal tiger purring contentedly beside him King of Animal Tamers”