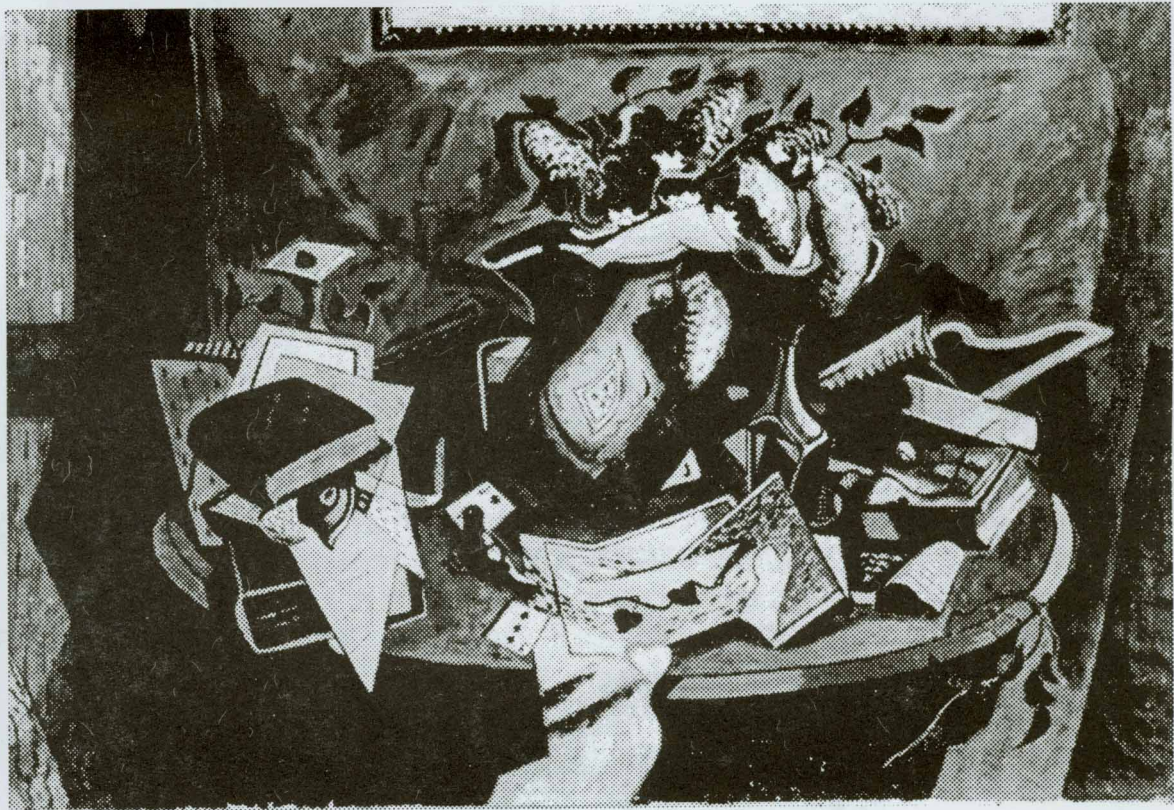


ROSS MOFFETT (1888-1971)

SELECTED WORKS

August 10 - October 12, 1995



PROVINCETOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

CURATOR, JOSEPHINE DEL DEO

PROVINCETOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

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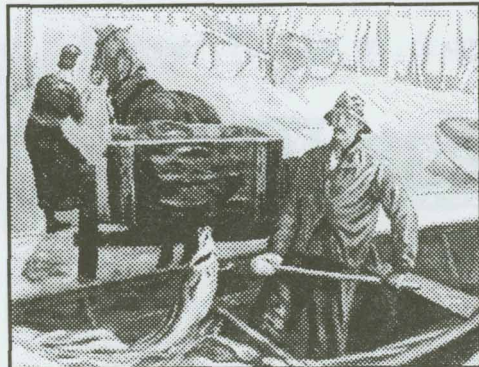
The works of art selected for this exhibition represent some of the central themes which Ross Moffett emphasized and developed throughout his long painting career.

Perhaps the motif which is most nostalgic for us today, and which derived from his early childhood experiences, is the representation of the working

horse as an integral element of daily life. From the large paintings entitled "Plowing Amid the Dunes," and "Hauling Driftwood" this toiling animal is reverently portrayed. The horses of Ross Moffett's youth, Belle and Gyp, take shape again in "Truro Rider," not, perhaps, exactly as they were on the Iowa farm of his father, but as he remembered an image -- incredibly strong-limbed animals majestically on the steady move across the landscape. The white horse of his "Iowa Farm," at ease near the drinking trough, provides a bucolic dimension and, coupled with those of the "Truro

Rider," these horses team up in memories so strong and stable for Moffett that they appear quite naturally transferred to the Provincetown setting. "Crossing at Harkin's Run" momentarily returns us to the farmland of Iowa with poignant lyricism.

When Ross Moffett moved his creative life to Provincetown in 1913, the year he arrived to study with Charles W. Hawthorne, he also transposed his inherent understanding of the mid-western



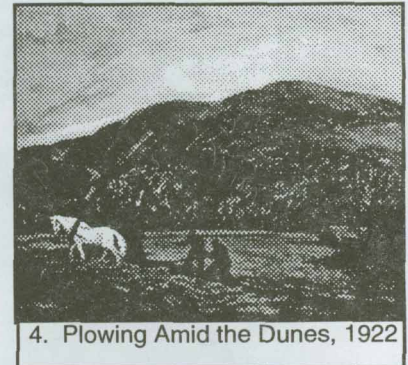
6. The Cod Fisherman, 1926



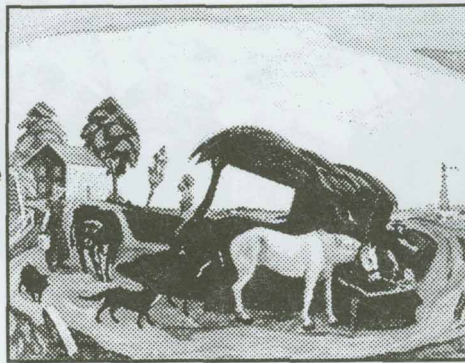
1. Hauling Driftwood, 1926



2. Truro Rider, 1934



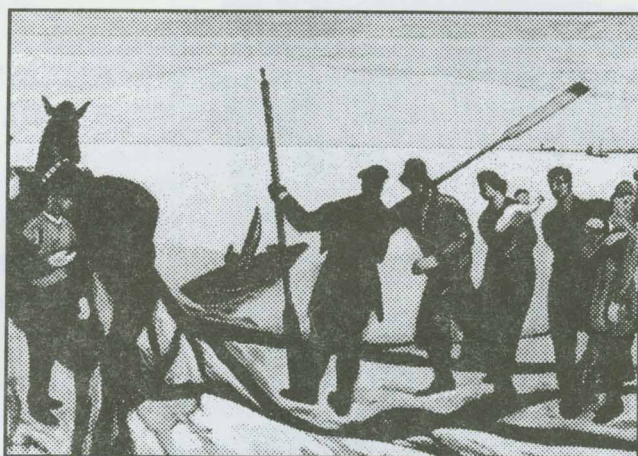
4. Plowing Amid the Dunes, 1922



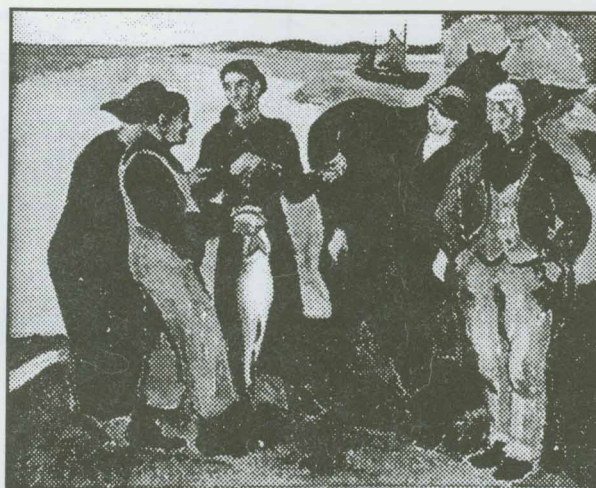
3. Iowa Farm, 1930



5. Crossing at Harkin's Run, 1946



7. Manta Wharf, c. 1928



8. Figures on the Shore, 1927

farmer to the east coast fisherman and his way of life. In the canvases "The Cod

Fisherman," "Figures on the Shore" and "Manta Wharf" and in the monotypes "Provincetown Fisherman" (1941) and "Provincetown Fishermen"

(c. 1927-1929), we can gaze into the heart of that transposition without missing a beat from the rhythm of the farmer to that of the fisherman. It is the same pattern of life repeated but,

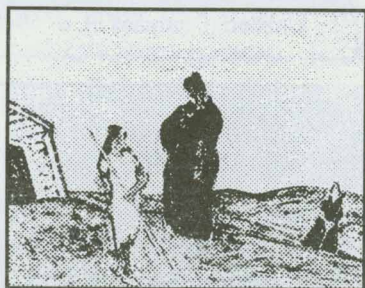
this time, against the dangers of the sea and the hardships of harvesting fish, summer or winter, as opposed to the relentless engagements with the soil. Nature's worst was man's common expectation, in both cases, and an augury which was more frequently fulfilled upon the sea than upon the land. Even though these canvases do not suggest violent drama, they do, however, resonate a sense of place. The figures are moving religious icons set in timeless pose against their fate. They are not melodramatic, but they are dramatic as they are caught in active inaction or in a moment of anticipated resolution. They gain importance through the empathy of the artist, just as did the religious subjects of the Renaissance. Ross Moffett brought the lessons of the old masters to the portrayal of his fishermen as much in the spiritual sense as in his compositional mastery.



9. Provincetown Fisherman, 1941



10. Provincetown Fishermen, c. 1927-1929



12. Untitled, (Two Women Leaning on A Hoe), 1927-1929



13. Untitled, (Woman in White)



14. Cranberry Picker, 1931

Accompanying and sharing the fishermen's life with the same strength of character, were the fisherwomen, -- women as sweethearts, wives and mothers who tilled the gardens at the back of their homes at the edge of the dunes, gathered

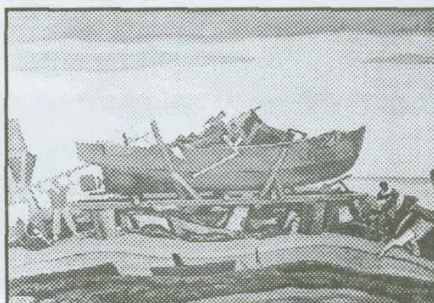


11. Fertado's Wharf, 1935

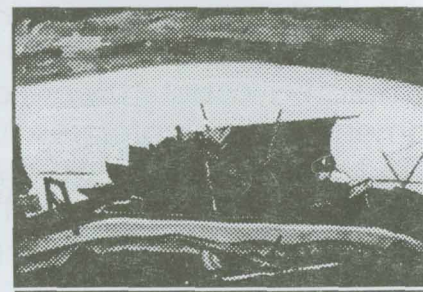
cranberries from bogs tucked between the dunes and the ocean, waited patiently for the Grand Bankers' return or sat and shared a welcome moment of rest on Provincetown wharf, as in the several monotypes in this exhibition: "Untitled" (Two Women Leaning on a Hoe); "Cranberry Picker" and "Untitled" (Woman in White with Shawl); and in the oil painting "Fertado's Wharf." Each of the women in these several works shows remarkable poise as well as an upright carriage, even when sitting down. They do not appear intimidated by the harsh circumstances they mutually share, any more than do the men with whom they share them. Each, as seen by the artist, is a kind of archetype representing, as I have remarked in my biography of Ross Moffett*, "a" man and "a" woman and not "the" definite or particular man or woman. These indefinite archetypes are thereby made more personal for us as we gaze at them over time, for they eventually admit our presence in their lives by allowing us to speculate upon the individual possibilities offered by a general figuration.

Somehow, it seemed that Ross Moffett was drawn, in the early fall of his life, to the quieter reaches of

familiar waters, much as were one of the subjects he loved best, the fishing boat in various stages of dry-dock -- undergoing repairs, as in the canvas "Untitled" (Boatyard I) or being overhauled for another working season,



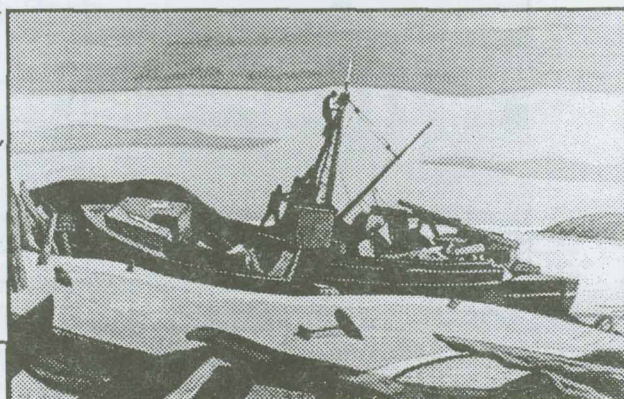
15. Untitled, (Boatyard I), c. 1948-51



16. Untitled (Boatyard II), c. 1948-51

"Wellfleet Harbor," or covered and secured for winter storage, "Untitled" (Boatyard II). On grey and overcast days, the gear of the trade, as opposed to the activity of the trade, could be thoroughly scrutinized, and, here, Moffett made full use of his exceptional eye for the abstract, searching out compositions within compositions and integrating them with infinite subtleties of color and design.

17. Wellfleet Harbor, 1952-53



Such paintings lead us further inward to the still life of the artist's studio. In his treatment of the intellectual landscape, Ross Moffett reveals a great pictorial imagination, and if we did not know he was an active participant in the early development of twentieth century abstract art in America, we would be certain to understand it in looking at the painting "Untitled" (Still Life After the Manner of Braque) or "The Intellectual Pawn Shop."

Narrating the reality of lilacs, for instance, as did his close friend Karl Knaths, he is spellbinding in his insistence that the lilacs share the theater of the table with the comprimario asides of paraphernalia, in such a way that we are forced, whether we are aware of it or not, into the consideration of a two dimensional plane representing three dimensional organization in space. "The Intellectual Pawn Shop" is meant to amuse by its title and, at the same time, reveal the influence of several early abstract painters whom Moffett admired --

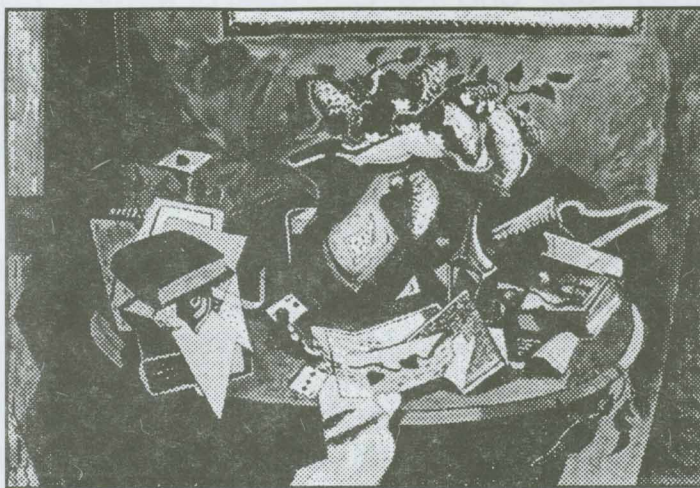
Marcoussis, Severini and Gleizes. In every way, this canvas enlightens our perception of Ross Moffett's challenge to



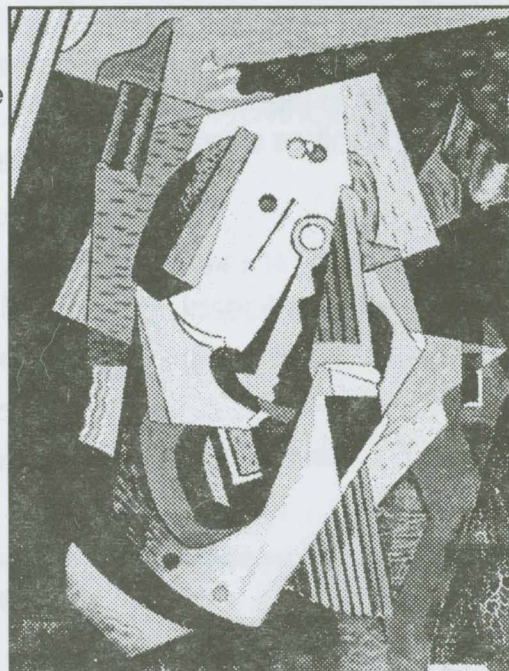
18. Studio Table, 1953

himself. The 1953 still life, "Studio Table" returns, seemingly, to an earlier century, but does it really? Watch out for the obvious objectivity, especially in a painter like Ross Moffett, always turning outward objectivity into the non-objectivity of his organizational space. Richness resonates in this dignified pictorial remark, but beneath the effortless mastery is the flow of the interlocking shapes in "The Intellectual Pawn Shop" and the close harmonies of the "Still Life After the Manner of Braque."

Lastly, we arrive at the heights of Macchu Picchu and the formal disorder of an ancient civilization distributed across that famed mountain habitat. Since the science of archeology, particularly, was an essential construct in Moffett's life, the canvases "Lost



20. Untitled (Still Life After The Manner of Braque), 1929

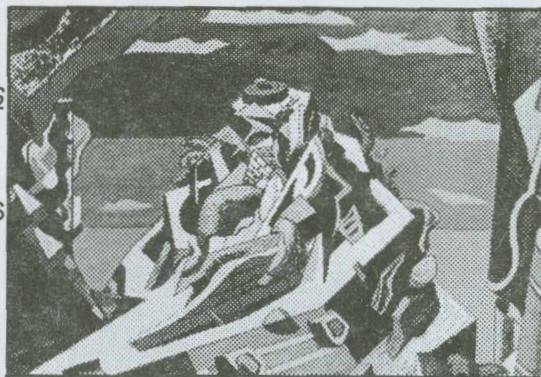


19. Intellectual Pawn Shop, c. 1930

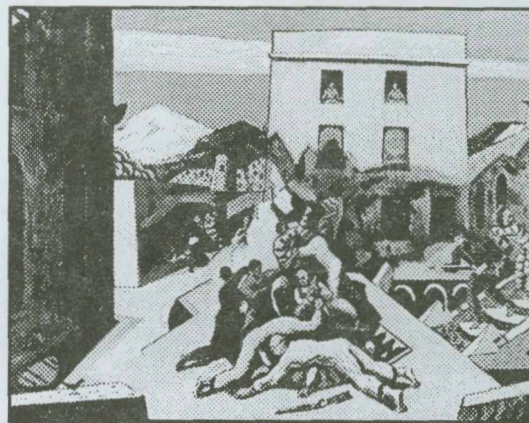


22. Lost City in the Andes, 1929

City in the Andes" and the "Conquest of Mexico" both exhibit a kind of rocketry of enthusiasm for the elements of his art that were marvelously linked to those of his spiritual bone. Displaying a virtuosity that cannot be disputed, he moves through this series of three paintings "Lost City in the Andes," "Conquest of Mexico" and "Prision Riot" as in progressive acts of a great play: "Lost City in the Andes" with a feeling of Picchu's grandeur and archaeological riches perhaps, as yet, undisturbed; "Conquest of Mexico" revealing a symbolic archaeological upheaval in conjunction with a massive anthropological cataclysm and, finally, "Prision Riot," a compositional variation of the other two canvases, based on a contemporary event, with a kind of comic derangement of figurative shapes across a corresponding planal dimension. The whole scene seems commented upon by the artist as a small bird, hardly noticeable, perched on the vantaged citadel of the stone parapet, a detached observer of the passing drama of the indignities of man.



21. Conquest of Mexico, 1930



23. Prision Riot, 1930

Josephine Del Deo,
Curator
July, 1995

Exhibition Check List

1. "**Hauling Driftwood**," 1926, Oil on Canvas on Plywood, 20" x 30, Private collection: Courtesy of Berta Walker Gallery
2. "**Truro Rider**," 1934, Oil on Canvas on Plywood, 20" x 30", Collection: Josephine & Salvatore Del Deo
3. "**Iowa Farm**," 1930, Oil on Canvas, 28" x 30", Collection: Pilgrim Memorial Monument & Museum
4. "**Plowing Amid the Dunes**," 1922, Oil on Canvas, 50" x 60" Collection: The Provincetown Heritage Museum
5. "**Crossing at Harkin's Run**" (also, "October Tapestry"), 1946, Oil on Canvas, 24" x 36", Collection: The Provincetown Art Association & Museum, Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Grossman, 1984
6. "**The Cod Fisherman**," 1926, Oil on Canvas, 48" x 60" Private Collection: Courtesy of Berta Walker Gallery
7. "**Manta Wharf**," c. 1928, Oil on Canvas, 24" x 36", Collection of Monica Kraft & Robert Weinstein
8. "**Figures on the Shore**," 1927, Oil on Canvas on Board, 9 1/2" x 12", Collection: Helen & Napi Van Dereck
9. "**Provincetown Fisherman**," 1941, Monotype, 12" x 15", Collection: Provincetown Art Association & Museum, Gift of Josephine and Salvatore Del Deo, 1983
10. "**Provincetown Fishermen**," c. 1927-1929, Monotype, 13" x 16 1/2, Collection: Provincetown Art Association & Museum, Gift of Dr. & Mrs. Henry Fogelman, 1991
11. "**Fertado's Wharf**," 1935, Oil on Canvas on Plywood, 20" x 30, Private Collection
12. "**Untitled** (Two Women Leaning on a Hoe,) c. 1927-1929, Monotype, 12 3/4" x 16 1/2", Collection: Provincetown Art Association & Museum, Gift of Salvatore & Josephine Del Deo, 1983
13. "**Untitled**, (Woman in White with Shawl,) c. 1928- 1930, Monotype, 13" x 16 1/2", Private Collection
14. "**Cranberry Picker**," 1931, Monotype, 10 1/2" x 16" Private Collection
15. "**Untitled**, (Boatyard I,) c. 1948-1951, Oil on Canvas on Plywood, 24" x 36", Collection: Helen & Napi Van Dereck
16. "**Untitled**, (Boatyard II,) c. 1948-1951, Oil on Canvas On Plywood, 24" x 36", Collection: Provincetown Art Association & Museum, Gift of Robert Kingsbury, 1985
17. "**Wellfleet Harbor**," 1952-1953, Oil on Canvas, 24" x 36", Private Collection
18. "**Studio Table**," 1953, Oil on Canvas on Board, 14" x 20", Private Collection: Courtesy of Berta Walker Gallery
19. "**Intellectual Pawn Shop**," c. 1930, Oil on Canvas, 25" x 20" Private Collection: Courtesy of Berta Walker Gallery
20. "**Untitled**, (Still Life After the Manner of Braque), 1929, Oil on Canvas, 22" x 32" Private Collection: Courtesy of Berta Walker Gallery
21. "**Conquest of Mexico**," 1930, Oil on Canvas, 24" x 30", Private Collection: Courtesy of Berta Walker Gallery
22. "**Lost City in the Andes**," 1929, Oil on Canvas, 20" x 30", Collection: Romolo Del Deo
23. "**Prison Riot**," 1930, Oil on Canvas, 20" x 30", Collection Provincetown Art Association & Museum, Gift of Robert Kingsbury, 1985

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#4 & #15 by George Yater

#5, #9, #10, #16, courtesy Provincetown Art Association & Museum



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