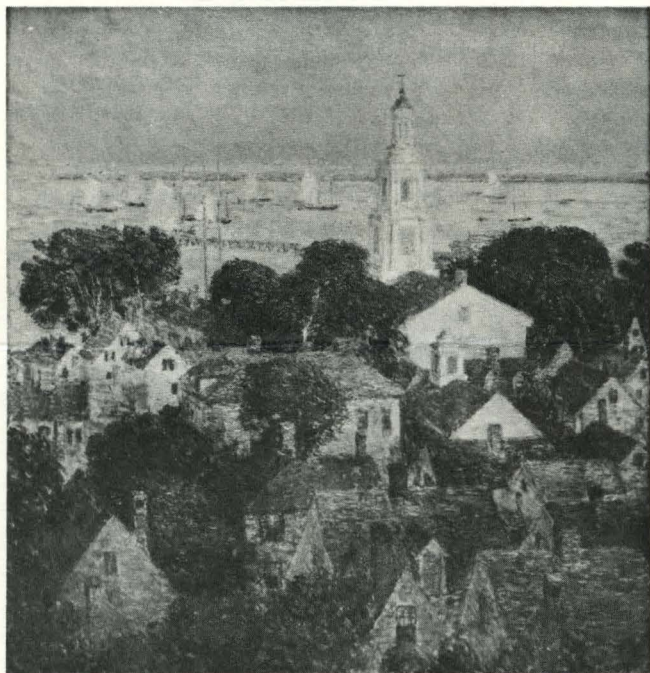


PROVINCETOWN PAINTERS—1890's to 1970's
Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, N.Y.
April 1–June 26, 1977

Provincetown Painters concerns itself with painters who have painted in Provincetown, Massachusetts, America's most prolific art colony or who used it as subject matter or who were inspired in some way by its locale.

Provincetown, on Cape Cod has long been recognized as a unique place in terms of its geography as well as in terms of its inhabitants. The most unusual aspect of its history is the fact that it has attracted a phenomenal number of artists within the past eighty years. Perhaps only Greenwich Village in the nation's largest city has been more densely populated by artists and their followers who gather to enjoy the milieu of art. Provincetown, with a steady permanent population of about 3,500 over the past 75 years has had hundreds of artists migrate to it seasonally as well as year-round. Neither Woodstock, New York; Easthampton, New York; New Hope, Pennsylvania; Taos, New Mexico; Old Lyme, Connecticut; Ogunquit, Maine; nor Carmel, California can match in reputation the tradition of Provincetown as a place that has produced American Art. Few museums with comprehensive collections of American Art are without some paintings painted in Provincetown (The Everson has forty-seven, Syracuse University Collection has over twenty). Provincetown is the origin of many paintings famous in the history of 20th century American Art, not only the place where they were painted, but first exhibited, discussed and first sold. Along with its many artists the town has supported art schools, art clubs, museums, galleries, frame shops and art supply stores, the number and quality of which have hardly been matched in many major cities.



Childe Hassam—**"Provincetown"**—oil on canvas, 24" x 23" from the collection of Canajoharie Library and Art Gallery, Canajoharie, N.Y.

Why this phenomenon? What attracted so many artists to Provincetown—an extremity on the map of the country pointing east? Perhaps its remoteness and perhaps Nature most of all appealing to realists, impressionists, expressionists and abstractionists alike. As an historic old fishing village at the end of a long peninsula surrounded by blue sea and a wild desert-like landscape of dunes, it offered brilliant light, fresh air and the drama of weather and sea. It especially appealed to the romantic nature and free spirit of artists. Added to its natural appeal were its people. Provincetown has always been a casual place with few pretensions. It was never a resort for the merely rich or fashionable. Life-style for townspeople and artists alike tended toward simplicity. So, as nature dominated the environment of Provincetown, artists passing through in cycles somehow saturated the atmosphere of the small town as well.

Young painters came to Provincetown continually since the 1890's to seek teachers in the summer, such as Charles Hawthorne, George Elmer Browne, Ambrose Webster, Henry Hensche, Karl Knaths, Edwin Dickenson, Hans Hofmann, Leo Manso, Victor Candell and Morris Davidson (when a less romantic, less nature oriented, more urban art came into vogue in the late sixties, some painters seemed to prefer the city and the slickness of more affluent resorts for their recreation).

This exhibition pays tribute to Provincetown on its 250th anniversary as a town (it was incorporated in 1777 before which it was a part of Truro, its immediate neighbor to the south, today a much smaller community). *"Provincetown Painters"* consists of the works of many artists; some nationally known (Charles Hawthorne, Milton Avery, Marsden Hartley, Charles Demuth, Stuart Davis, Childe Hassam, Ernest Lawson, Ben Shahn, Raphael Soyer, Niles Spencer, William Zorach, Frederick Waugh, Chaim Gross, Karl Knaths, Edwin Dickenson, Hans Hofmann, Robert Motherwell, Adolph Gottlieb, Franz Kline, Red Grooms, etc.); others best known locally, who may deserve to be better known (Ambrose Webster, Mary Cecil Allen, Gerrit Beneker, Oliver Chaffee, Reeves Euler, Henry Hensche, Charles Heinz, Bruce McKain, Phil Malicoat, Blanche Lazzell, Gerrit Hondius, William Freed, Lilian Orlowsky, Nanno De Groot, Arthur Cohen, etc.); and a few anonymous ship painters completely unknown. Some of these artists have spent only a few summers in Provincetown (Childe Hassam, Marsden Hartley, Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, etc.). Others have spent their entire mature lives summer and winter in Provincetown (Henry Hensche, Karl Knaths, Bruce McKain, Phil Malicoat, Reeves Euler, Jim Forsberg, Sal Del Deo, Myron Stout, etc.). Some spent practically all their summers for many years in the Provincetown area (Charles Hawthorne, Edward Hopper, Frederick Waugh, Hans Hofmann, Robert Motherwell, Jack Tworckov, William Freed, Lila Katzen, Alvin Ross, Fritz Bultman, etc.). And artists came and settled from all over America, Europe and Japan (Hans Hofmann from Germany, Reeves Euler from Nevada, Edward Corbett from California, Bruce McKain from Indiana, Fritz Bultman from Louisiana, Nanno De Groot from Holland, Xavier Gonzalez from Spain, Taro Yamamoto from Japan, Peter Hutchinson from England, Nassos Daphnis from Greece).

Within the realm of *Provincetown Painters*, have been included artists who have lived and worked on its outskirts in neighboring Truro and Wellfleet, since these artists (Ben Shahn, Edward Hopper, Xavier Gonzalez, Jerry Farnsworth, Helen Sawyer, etc.) usually found their social life and exhibited in Provincetown. To the extent possible, paintings have been chosen which have actually been painted at or inspired by the Outer Cape. Occasionally that data was impossible to determine and in some cases the paintings sought were unavailable. Certainly all the painters who ever painted in Provincetown are not included, although the exhibition is basically inclusive rather than exclusive, as it attempts to show the range and to survey the periods of painting there. As many painters as I have been able to determine as having lived and worked in Provincetown between 1890 and 1970 are included in an appendix to the catalogue to accompany this exhibition.

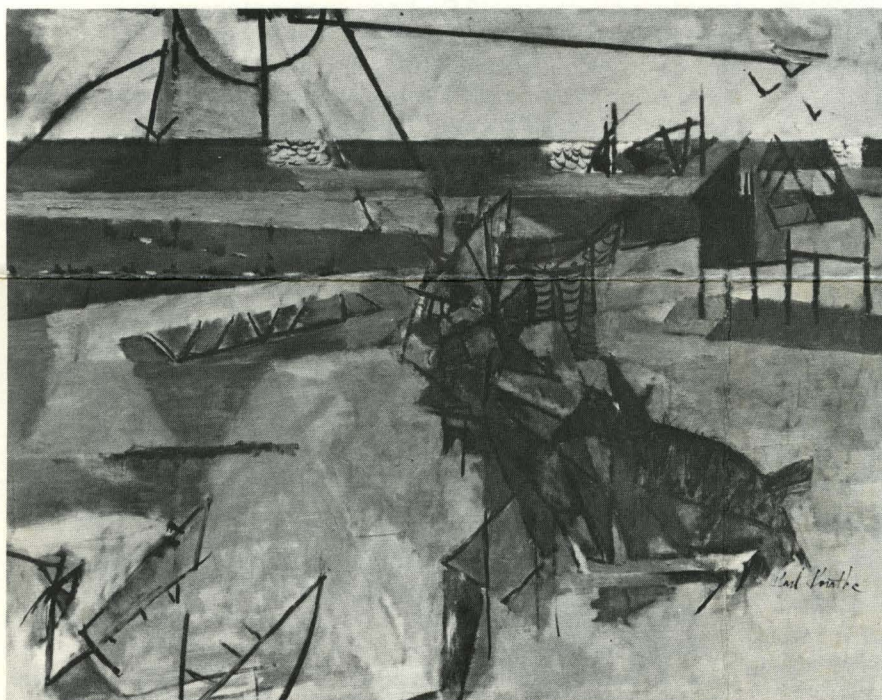
As interest in American Art deepens, as America becomes both more mature and more decentralized culturally and as the idea of the great city as a monolith of art and culture erodes, it seems more and more appropriate to explore such places as Provincetown, a place in which so much painting has been produced.

While no "Provincetown School" is exactly posited; certainly not one to compete with the Boston School nor the New York School, the fact is that many of the artists associated with both these schools of painting did much of their work in Provincetown. Not so much a cultural center however, Provincetown has proved to be a good working place for artists. Something about the intense sunlight reflected off the sea and dunes for the impressionists; the fraternity of artists and "picturesque" subject matter for the realists; the energy of nature and

essential apartness for the abstract expressionists seemingly had much to do with their vitality in this venerable New England town. Nature coupled with a tolerant, modest, nature-tested year-round population of Portugese, Yankee and Bohemian townspeople has made Provincetown more than the fishing village it had been the first hundred and fifty years of its existence. Its nature, ecological and human, made it a working place and an ideal resort for painters and writers alike (among the best known writers on the Outer Cape have been Eugene O'Neil, John Dos Passos, George Santayana, Edmund wilson, e. e. cummings, Tennessee Williams and Norman Mailer).

This exhibition's intent is to convey a sense of the history of Provincetown the "art colony" and to demonstrate the creativity as well as the great productivity of the painters specifically, which its environment has inspired.

Provincetown Painters is made possible through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal Agency and the New York State Council on the Arts. The exhibition was organized by



Karl Knaths—**Number Zero—“Adam”**—1948, oil on canvas, 40" x 50"
from the collection of Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.

Everson Museum of Art. The illustrated catalogue for *Provincetown Painters* contains a history of the art colony by Dorothy Gees Seckler, journalist, painter and long time summer resident.

R.A.K.

There will be a symposium on *Provincetown Painters* with artists represented in this exhibition as well as critics, writers and summer residents of Provincetown on Sunday, April 17th at 2:00 P.M. in Everson Museum Auditorium.