

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 1964

Romanos Rizk School of Painting: Painting From Nature

If you stop by the Romanos Rizk School of Painting at 90 Commercial Street some fine morning and find no teacher or students about, do not assume that there are no classes being held that day. Just turn around and look towards the bay. You will most likely see Mr. Rizk and class with easels lined up on the beach, all working very hard and enthusiastically. If you are an old timer, you may recall those days when teachers like Charles Hawthorne conducted class on the beaches, streets and byways of Provincetown.

Romanos Rizk takes his classes out-of-doors as much as possible. "One of the main tasks of any teacher of painting," he declares, "is to try to get students to see. In painting you deal with relationships—relationships of line, shape and color. The painter must develop a keen awareness of differences within these relationships. In sunlight these relationships stand out, since there is more contrast and brilliance. The problem is more clearly defined, thereby making the out-of-doors a perfect place to study the fundamentals of painting."

"Getting students to see is more difficult than one might think," Mr. Rizk observes. "It does not help matters any that students feel that they can see. They just feel that they are unable to put it down. No doubt they expect the teacher to have some formula that will magically open the doors of expression. However I always point out to them that 'if they could see it, they could paint it.' That is an adage Charles Hawthorne used to tell his class over and over again. It always comes as a shock to students that they are not really seeing, and that is why they cannot paint it.

Romanos Rizk uses some interesting examples to prove his point. Anyone who has ever had a pen, pencil or brush in hand will readily grasp what he is talking about. For one thing the sky, which we usually think of as being blue, may be quite pink or even yellow. We customarily paint grass green, yet it is usually more yellow than green. Tree trunks we think of as being brown or grey, although a violet shade is more often the predominant one.

The same thing happens with shadows. Students will often paint the shadow side of an object almost as light as the light side of the object, when in reality it is many times darker. The same is true of shape and line.



Painting from nature. Romanos Rizk and students on a Provincetown beach.

any object that has light falling upon it. This can be a model in a studio, a still life, etc. The out-of-doors has advantages, however, that the studio does not always afford, Mr. Rizk feels. "Outside students are put in the midst of life, as it were. There is much for them to see and to want to express. This communion with nature helps to give students a proper setting in which to begin seeing, feeling, thinking and creating."

While students are learning to see the relationships of color, shape and line in painting from nature, they are at the same time absorbing a sense of these relationships in the abstract. When they go on to deal with more abstract forms of expression, they will have a basis from which to work. "If you can't express what you see," asks Mr. Rizk, "how can you possibly express what you feel! Students who begin with abstractions usually end up with wierd distortions of their subject rather than subtle variances and nuances of their theme."

After working from nature students can make studies in which they develop their own personal sense of color and composition. They begin proceeding along a course that is natural to them. For this reason Romanos Rizk does not deal so much with the teaching of styles and philosophies of art. "The basic elements of painting are the same," he states, "whether you paint representationally, abstractly, semi-abstractly or what have you. You are forever dealing with the relationships of line, shape and color. It is the study of these basic elements of

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The same thing happens with shadows. Students will often paint the shadow side of an object almost as light as the light side of the object, when in reality it is many times darker. The same is true of shape and line. Students might paint an object in the background smaller than one in the foreground, but it may be too small or too large in relationship to the foreground object. "When these things are painted out to students, they become suddenly aware that they have not been seeing," says Mr. Rizk. "When they come to this realization, they are on their way to becoming painters."

The term "painting from nature" does not necessarily mean only painting out doors. The term as a broad one and actually applies to painting

any object that has light falling upon it. This can be a model in a studio, a still life, etc. The out-of-doors has advantages, however, that the studio does not always afford, Mr. Rizk feels. "Outside students are put in the midst of life, as it were. There is much for them to see and to want to express. This communion with nature helps to give students a proper setting in which to begin seeing, feeling, thinking and creating."

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"A painter is like a poet," continues Mr. Rizk. "He becomes excited by something in the world around him and spontaneously expresses what he sees and feels. To paint from nature is to come in contact with the world. Nature will give the painter a sense of something to express other than his own inner doubts and conflicts. Having helped him to see, Nature can now aid the painter in realizing the greatest gift of all—the creative state of mind, the realm of the true artist."

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NEW BEACON

Romanos Rizk To Open School Of Painting



Photo by Pat Weissberg

Romanos Rizk, who has been teaching classes in painting in Falmouth, Hyannis and Orleans, is opening a school in Provincetown this summer. Known as the Romanos Rizk School of Painting, the school will be located at 90 Commercial Street in the West End of town.

Mr. Rizk plans to hold many of his classes out of doors, since he feels that color and form are best studied directly from nature. In this way the school will be reminiscent of the days of Charles Hawthorne, when teachers and students could be seen working by the seashore and along the streets of town.

Classes will cover the fundamentals of various styles of painting so that the student can pursue a course which is natural to him. Having worked extensively in all styles, Mr. Rizk believes that the elements that make up good painting, whether representational or abstract, are the same. These basic factors will be stressed in his teaching.

Romanos Rizk has lived and painted in Provincetown for the last 15 years. He is represented here and in Boston by the Shore Studios.

Rizk Paintings At Cape Cod Art Association

Romanos Rizk of Kiley Court will present a one-man show of his paintings in the Fritz B. Talbot Gallery of the Cape Cod Art Association, 24 Ocean Street, Hyannis from July 6 through the 30th.

Romanos Rizk was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1927 and is of Lebanese descent. He has been a permanent resident of Provincetown for the last 16 years. Mr. Rizk has exhibited widely in group shows and has had one-man shows in New York City, Boston, Providence and Provincetown. He has been a teacher of painting for many years throughout the New England area and in New York City and now conducts a summer school of painting in Provincetown. His work has been shown at the Shore Galleries in Boston and Provincetown, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, the Tonoff Gallery in Providence and the Cape Cod Art Association. He is an award winner.

An opening reception for members and invited guests to inaugurate the Second Jury Show and Mr. Rizk's exhibition will be held at the Gallery on Tuesday evening, July 6 from 8 to 10 p. m. Hostesses in charge of refreshments will be Mrs. Jackson Rice and Mrs. Rosario Celentano.

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Romanos & Grace Rizk were among the first artists of their generation to settle in Provincetown

Artists reminisce on a simpler time

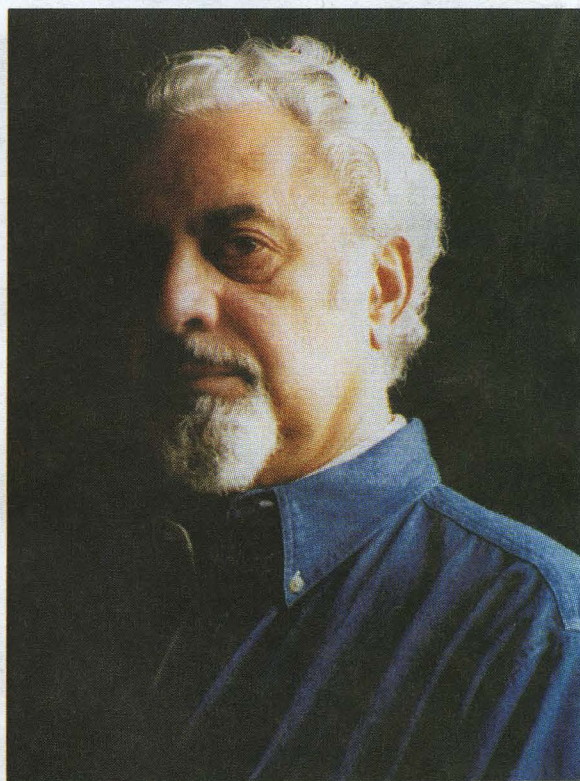
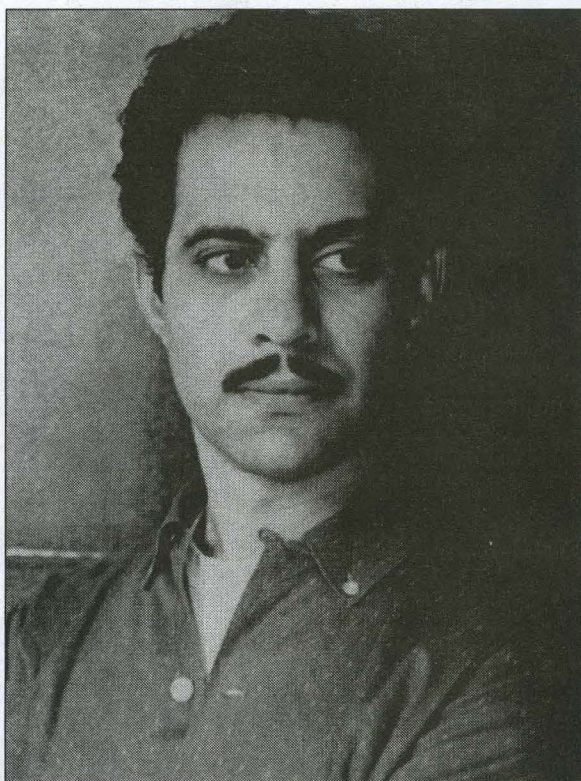
By Ann Wood

It was back when young artists came to Provincetown and knocked on the doors of random houses looking for a cheap place to live. Back when the A&P closed on Saturdays and put its leftover vegetables and fruit in boxes behind its Commercial Street market for artists to pick through. It was back when Provincetown was a serious fishing village, and fishermen gave seafood to the artists in town.

Unestablished artists were able to live here

because of all of those things — and one of the first of his generation to settle here year round was painter Romanos “Ray” Rizk, who originally came to study with Henry Hensche in 1949.

“In the 1950s this town was full of Eugene O’Neill characters, painters and writers,” he says in his East End studio. “The difference between the town then and now... is it really had the



Romanos Rizk's intense gaze has stayed constant throughout the years. Below, an early portrait of Grace Rizk.

appearance of a fishing village not in the United States.”

It was another artist who brought Rizk to town — Sal Del Deo. Del Deo, who Rizk knew vaguely because they were fellow students at the same Providence, R.I. high school, both also attended Vesper George School of Art in Boston. And Rizk noticed that Del Deo didn't paint like everyone else — he wasn't simply filling in drawings with color.

“Sal was painting in Hensche's style, and I said, ‘How come you don't paint like everyone else in class?’” Rizk says. The answer was that he was learning to paint in Provincetown. So Rizk joined him.

“Once I saw [Hensche] put paint on a brush and throw it on a canvas, I knew those other guys couldn't do it,” Rizk says of his art school instructors. “This is



something that those teachers could not do and could not teach.”

Rizk says the most important thing to do was watch Hensche work.

“He painted furiously,” he says, adding that he learned what he had to do. “The object was to learn to see the color and the relationship with the color.”

Hensche used to tell Rizk-the-student that he was over-thinking.

“I was a very analytic student once I started with Henry,” he says, and Hensche would tell him, “If you labor over this it gets boring and it's going to look boring.”

Which is exactly what he learned not to do — and he even changed his style and subject matter. Rizk painted Hensche-style, he painted portraits, he painted still lifes, he painted non-

objective works. He paints all the time.

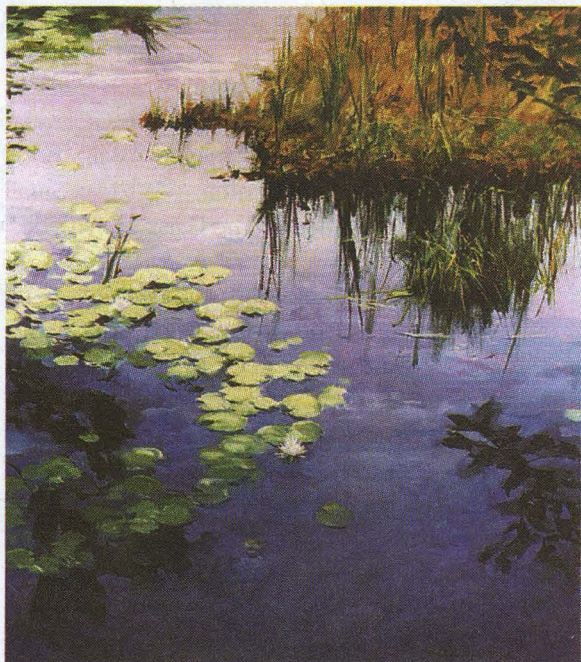
In Provincetown Rizk met Grace, a Broadway actress who had a degree in fine arts and architecture from New York University and trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. They fell in love over a summer, then went their own separate ways, but missed each other too much.

Grace returned to Provincetown and the couple married — just for each other's money, they say laughing. That was 54 years ago. After their third summer here the couple stayed for the winter and never left.

Grace put her own aspirations aside and began making jewelry from beach stones and painted "cave-like" drawings on them. Her husband put the jewelry in a box and brought it to painting class. When the class was over students clamored through the jewelry and bought pieces.

"When you have two artists living together you have to back down a little," Grace says about giving up acting in New York. "To work with other people, you've got to work where they are."

Between that, the \$600 they collected as wedding gifts, free fish and free crates of grapes, peaches and eggs, the couple managed to survive.



One of a series of striking paintings Romanos Rizk created of the lily pond at Beech Forest.

And they were the first of their generation to stay in town year round. Ciro Cozzi, who Grace had grown up with in New York, moved to town the year after that, and Del Deo was the next to stay.

Then, in 1961, Grace Rizk went back into theater. She became one of the co-founders of the Provincetown Theatre Workshop, which put up plays on a collapsible stage at the Provincetown Art Association. The group staged “Bell, Book and Candle,” by John Van Druten, “Visit to a Small Planet,” by Gore Vidal, and “The Glass Menagerie,” by Tennessee Williams.

The second season the theater company produced an original one-act play called “Circles in the Snow,” by local writer Connie Black, plus Chekhov’s “Anniversary.”

“Every year we did a number of wonderful things,” says Grace, adding that the plays ran during the winter and fall because they all had to have summer jobs.

Meanwhile, Rizk was painting away. He found he loved painting portraits.

“Not all heads are that exciting,” he says, but realized (like one of his favorite artists, John Singer Sergeant) that there was money in it. “You had to get in some sort of social life with people that had money. You couldn’t hang out with your poor friends.”

Just as suddenly as he began painting portraits,

he stopped painting realistically and began using color and shape “in the fashion that music is assembled. ... It’s an abstract form. That’s when I began to get more and more abstract. ... Then I became a non-objective painter.”

Although he came to Provincetown to study with Hensche, Rizk’s style wasn’t constrained by Hensche. When his teacher came to a show featuring Rizk’s non-objective paintings, he was nice about it.

“He didn’t know what to say,” Rizk says. “Oh, Ray, they’re very decorative.”



Rizk evolved in his work, moving from realism to using color and shape in a more abstract way.