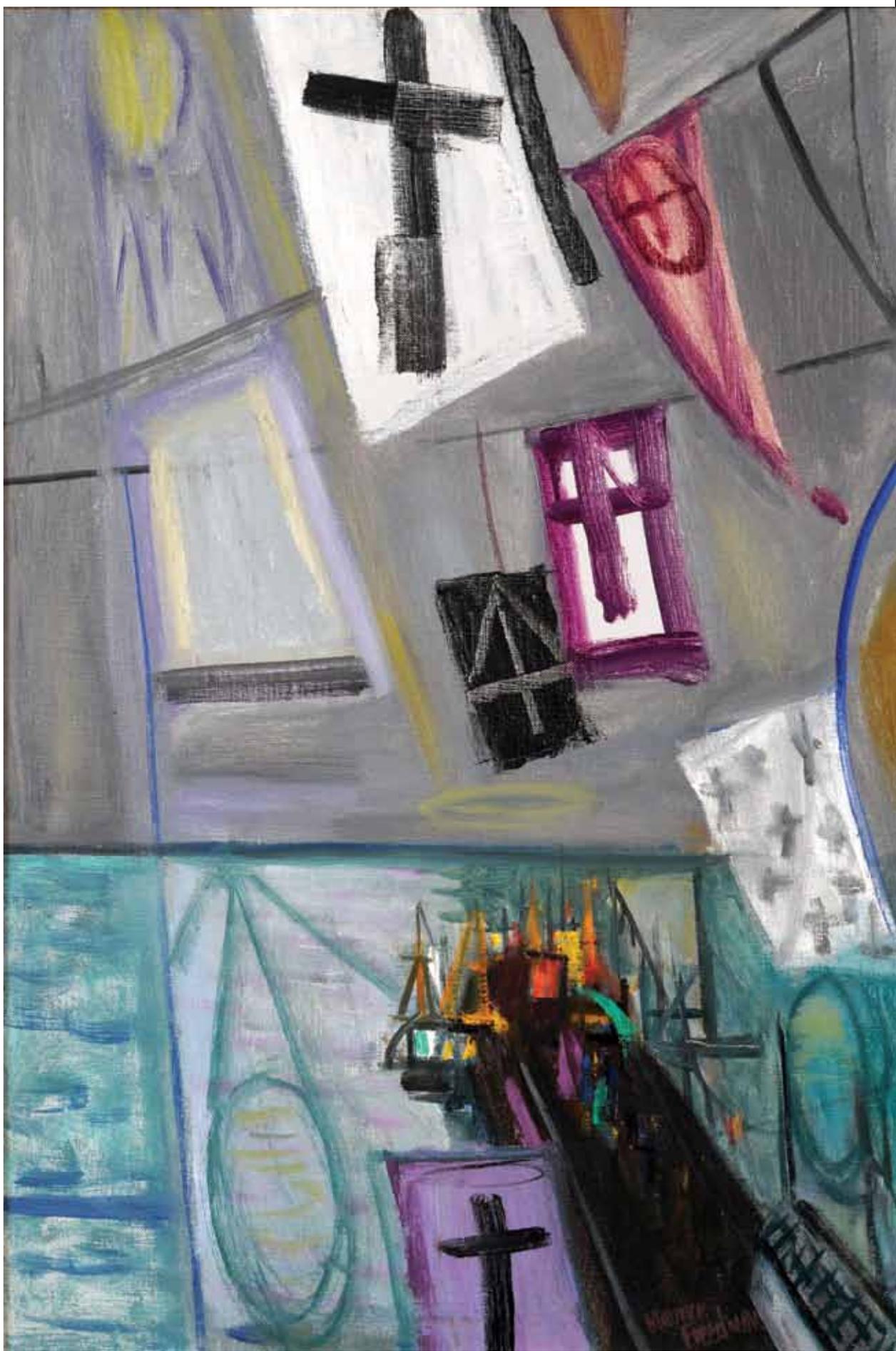


MAURICE FREEDMAN





Maurice Freedman

MAURICE FREEDMAN

LIGHT, PALETTE, ACTION!

Curated by Mary Sherman

Introduction by Christine M. McCarthy
Executive Director, PAAM

July 17- September 13, 2015

Provincetown Art Association and Museum
460 Commercial Street Provincetown, MA 02657
WWW.PAAM.ORG

INTRODUCTION

The Provincetown Art Association and Museum is honored and pleased to present the work of Maurice Freedman which marks a milestone in acknowledging his stature as an American Modernist artist who painted for over six decades. Freedman's contribution to art history is notable as can be seen in the bibliography in this catalog. Associated with Marin, Avery, Hartley and Knaths, his depictions of New England and beyond delight and surprise, and invite us to consider how American artists have interpreted the environment with vitality and spirit.

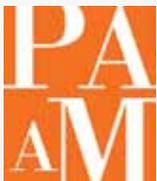
Alan Freedman has committed an enormous amount of time to the realization of this exhibition and accompanying catalogue for which I am most appreciative. I am grateful to Bill Evaul for bringing this proposal forward and to Mary Sherman for spearheading this curatorial endeavor by selecting a range of artworks that savor the physical and emotional act of painting form, light and color.

I extend my deepest appreciation to the private collectors whose generosity in lending these works has brought the project to fruition with beauty and elegance for our audiences.

Marjorie Morrow, the painter, has created a well-designed catalogue and I am extremely thankful for her enthusiasm and creative advice.

Maurice Freedman: Light, Palette, Action!, along with its publication and accompanying programs, has also benefited greatly from the dedication of the PAAM staff. To them, especially Jim Zimmerman, I would like to extend my warmest thanks.

Christine McCarthy
Executive Director
Provincetown Art Association and Museum
April 2015



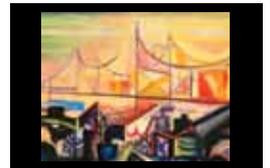
PREFACE: *Setting the Stage*

In 2004 I curated a show of Maurice Freedman's work for the Cape Cod Museum of Art. Spanning his entire career, the exhibit celebrated the centennial of the artist's birth with Freedman's much deserved and highly touted paintings of the late 40s and 50s taking center stage.

In the process of working on that show, I also came across Freedman's lively sketches for film posters in which Hollywood glamour and allure grace every page. To me, these unlocked a key to Freedman's innovative compositions, where time and narration masterfully coalesce into a single frame. For, although Freedman substituted a tactile feel of paint for the camera's love of light, cinema's mesmerizing recreations of reality with all their pregnant possibilities remain. In short, like most films, Freedman's paintings provide escapist reveries. What more could one want from a work of art, let alone from a summer show?

I am greatly indebted to Freedman's son Alan for providing me with access to the breadth of his father's talents and to the Provincetown Art Association and Museum for bringing the work of this wonderful painter back to his summer home.

MARY SHERMAN



MAURICE FREDMAN: Light, Palette, Action!



Drive to Amalfi 1970-72 oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches



Crossing to New York 1948 oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of D. Wigmore Fine Art, New York

MAURICE FREEDMAN

LIGHT, PALETTE, ACTION!

by **Mary Sherman**

MAURICE FREEDMAN was a remarkable painter. Even when the heady days of Abstract Expressionism dominated the art market, his paintings continued to attract collectors and receive critical acclaim.¹

Little, though, has been made of his work with the film companies Pathé, RKO and Columbia Pictures. At a time when people like Saul Bass were substituting movie stars with iconic graphics, Freedman was creating posters sporting close-ups, dramatic juxtapositions and inventive blocks of text, joining star power with narrative verve. The result was instant Hollywood drama and allure; the promise of lives like ours, but more enchanting, beautiful and alive—a life behind suburban blight, Warhol's soup cans and Lichtenstein's comic book sobs.

Whereas his fellow American artist Edward Hopper painted life as if it was a theater set—with a harsh abstract light and spare interiors—Freedman painted it as if it was a movie set, full of glamour and portent. His depicted evenings are often graced by full moons; his landscapes, such as *Drive to Amalfi*, frequently showcase hairpin turns, giving way to beautiful ocean views; and, his scenes of New York typically shimmer with Broadway lights a 'flashing or, as in *Crossing to New York*, appear just beyond a towering bridge with all the city's noir mystery laying in wait. In Freedman's paintings, viewers feel like they have just stumbled onto a Hollywood set.



¹ Accolades include critic Howard Devree of *The New York Times*'s praise of Freedman's 1947 show at New York City's Midtown Gallery; and, even more recently, Ken Johnson's 2005 article in *The New York Times*, which refers to Freedman's work as "so appealing and so accomplished," echoed by Stephen May's review in *ARTnews* in 2009, stating that the paintings are "assertive, brilliantly colored, and astutely composed . . ." (The complete listings of reviews of Freedman's work is available in the catalog's bibliography.)



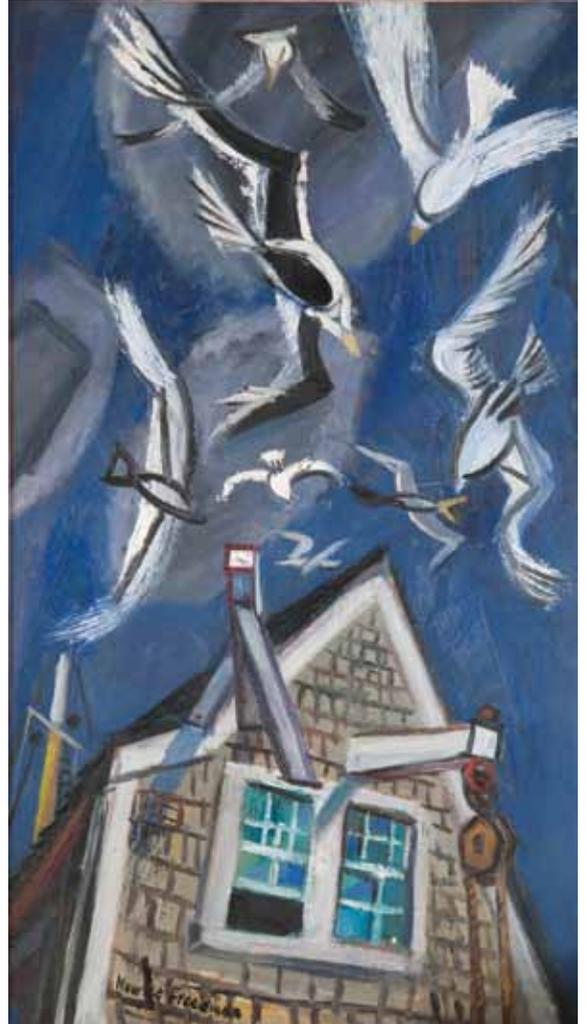
Rock in the Garden 1969
oil on canvas
30 x 40 inches
(Hastings-on-Hudson, NY)

Life is teeming. Flowers, such as in *Rock in the Garden*, are lush and fecund. Interiors are frequently punctuated by multiple possibilities. Doors, as in *Through the Living Room*, are thrown open as if at any moment the action will spring to life, or—more likely—as if there was a pause in the shooting, and the film crew has rushed out to savor the sun and sand of the alluring beach.



Through the Living Room 1967 oil on canvas 22 x 40 inches Collection of Alan Freedman and Joel Freedman

Freedman's paintings often whisk us away into reveries of pleasure, intrigue and action. But they never do so in a pedantic or illustrative way—not even in his film sketches. Instead they do so primarily through masterful juxtapositions. They jump-cut space; frame a setting like a 35 mm camera does and take full advantage of montage/collage, splicing one vantage point onto another for maximum effect. In *Flight over Truro*, Freedman uses the same kind of foreshortening found in Alfred Hitchcock's dizzying camera work for *The Birds*, turning gulls into a menacing demeanor, bearing down on a small, off-kilter window. In *Evening Storm Tarquinia*, Freedman's 'lens' is so zoomed out that the small city has become a maze of dots and dashes, blurred by an overcast sky, dramatically cracking with bolts of lightning—a brilliant tour de force, which came to be Freedman's last work.



Flight Over Truro 1951 oil on canvas 36 x 20 inches



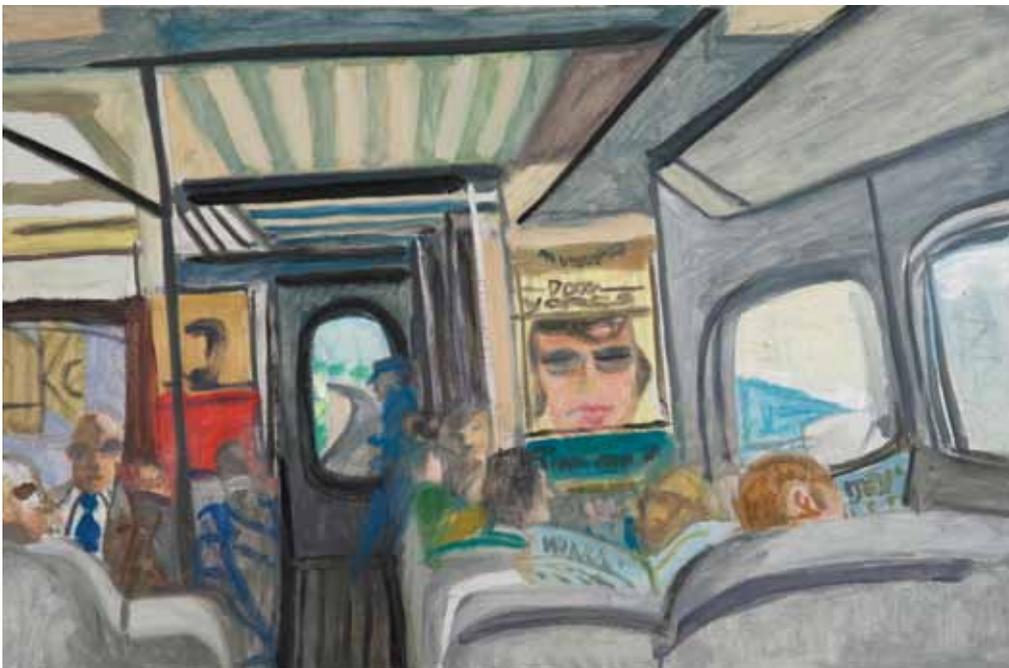
Evening Storm, Tarquinia 1980 oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches





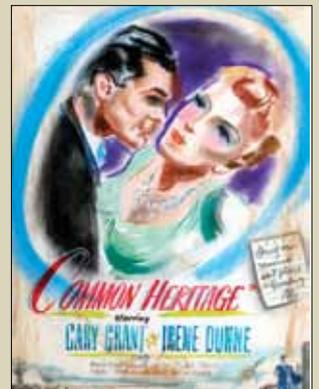
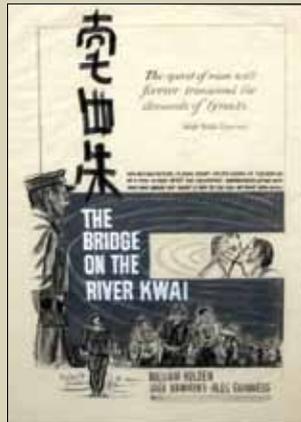
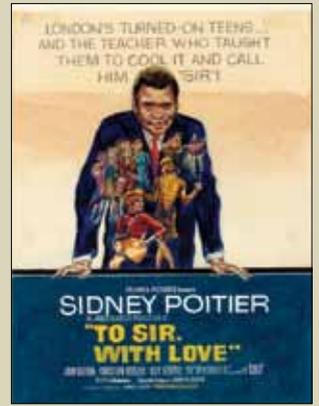
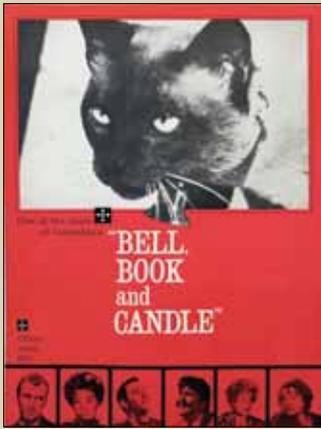
Hudson River Passacaglia 1959 oil on canvas 30 x 60 inches

Freedman's paintings are as informed by film as they are by the art world of his day. Coming of age in the 1920s and working up through the 1970s, Freedman created images that span the period from European Modernism to Abstract Expressionism. His landscapes, still lives and portraits unabashedly delight in the manipulation of paint.

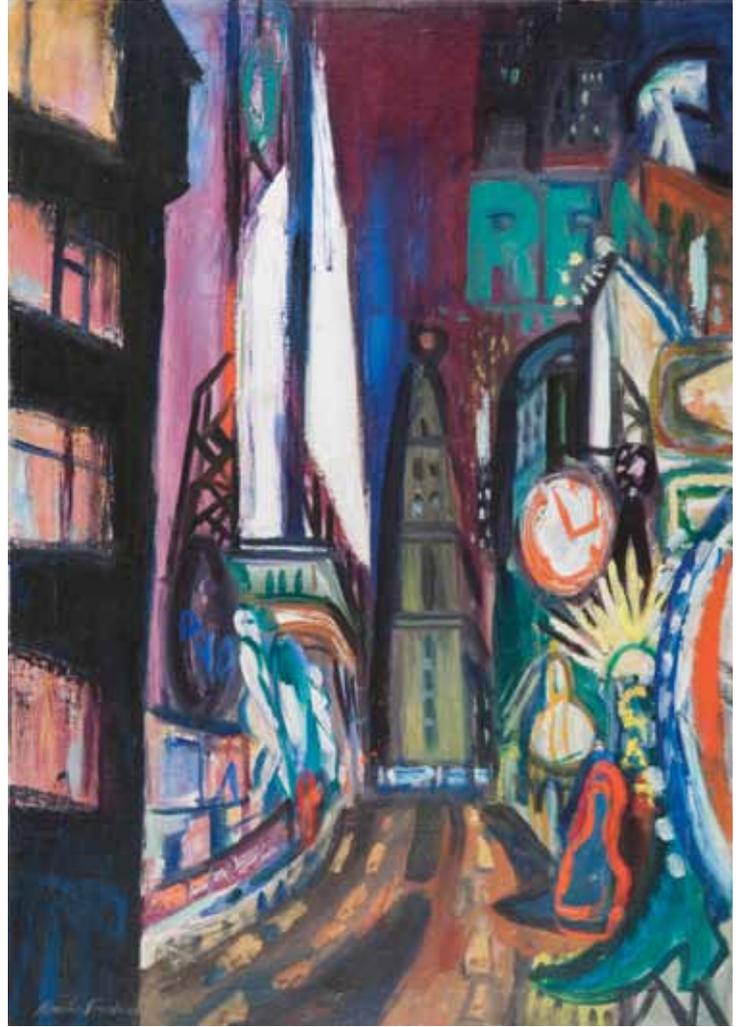


Railroad to New York 1969 oil on canvas 20 x 30 inches

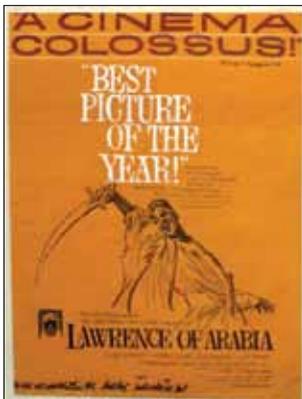




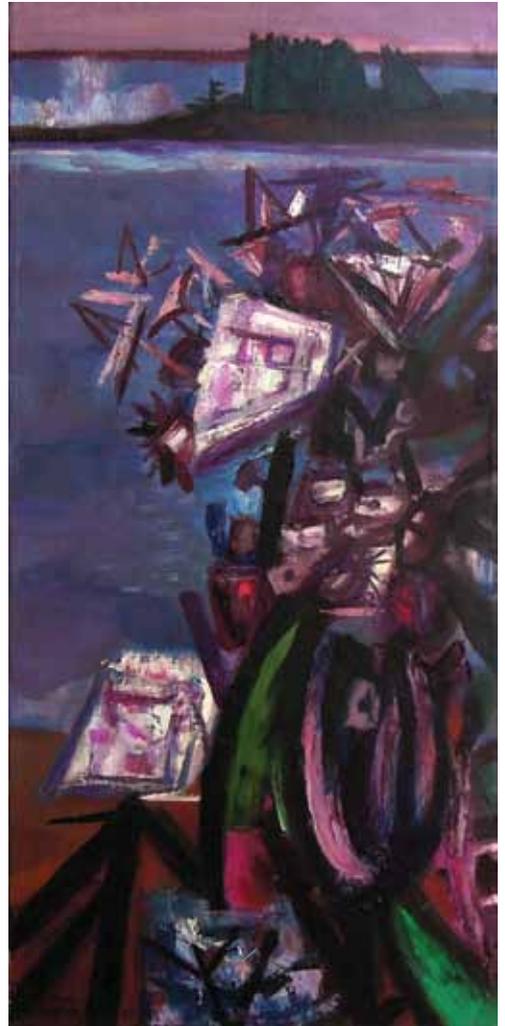
“He learned from Andre Lhôte and others in Paris how to draw with the loaded brush, how to handle rich and strong color without letting it get out of hand, and how to give individuality to the objects of the everyday,” wrote the New York Times critic John Russell of Freedman’s 1982 retrospective at New York City’s Midtown Galleries. “He has never lost that initial vigor of the hand or the driving curiosity as to what may come of it. There are paintings in this show that deserve to go straight into the history of American painting of this century.”



Broadway Night 1950 oil on canvas 30 x 20 inches



Underlining Freedman's style is his training steeped in tradition. Freedman had a fairly academic beginning. He first studied in Boston at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and the Massachusetts College of Art and Design (then known as the Massachusetts Normal Art School), but it wasn't long after that that New York tempted him; and then, like many Americans, Paris beckoned. There he studied with Fernand Léger, Amédée Ozenfant and Andre Lhôte, absorbing the principles of German Expressionism (most notably, as practiced by Max Beckmann) and Fauvism — styles in which artists negated the picture's traditional fore- middle- and background with broad swaths of intense color, often set off like stain glass windows with deep, black outlines. Pattern unified these surfaces. For Freedman, the sheer enjoyment of painting became more and more pronounced as evidenced in *Delaware Reflections* and *Flowers in the Cove*.



Flowers in the Cove 1955 oil on canvas
34 x 16 inches (Christmas Cove, Maine)
Courtesy of Greenhut Galleries, Portland, ME

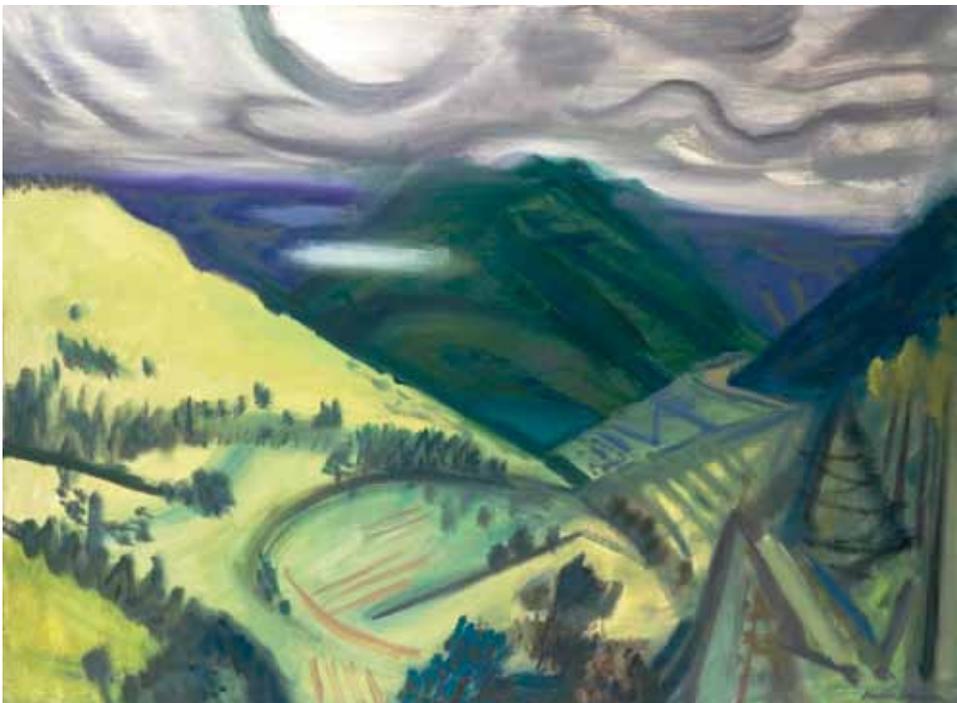


Pyrennes 1974
oil on canvas
22 x 36 inches



Delaware Reflections 1957
oil on canvas
20 x 30 inches

Like anyone in complete command of their medium, Freedman exploited it to the hilt. At a time, when his contemporaries—such as Milton Avery, Karl Knaths, John Marin and Marsden Hartley—were reducing reality to create a tense balance between abstraction and figuration, Freedman added a fervent interest in the physicality of paint—the ability to slather it on and, alternately, scrape it down to a smooth skin, enlivened by strong stabs of color, as can be seen in the rich stroke of viridian that swipes across the center of the *Road to Florence*, leaving us within a triangle of soft, sweeping hills whose brilliant yellow foreground plays tug-of-war with the background's inviting purple haze.



Road from Florence 1975
oil on canvas
30 x 40 inches



Fort Hill View 1974
oil on canvas
24 x 30 inches

Freedman's painting style rarely coalesces into a serene abstraction or succinctly resolved distillation. It is as present as it is inventive, at once static but never quite still. Everything seems on the verge of moving, changing or suggesting of another possibility. Even in one of his most lyrical pieces, *Fort Hill View*, a blue slash rushes across the background, bringing the cool yellow sky dramatically forward. Space is at once deep and flat, like the backdrop of a Hollywood set. In *Low Tide Formations* a deep phthalo blue, separates the ocean from a sky whose sunbeams seem more like stage lights than sun streaming down from the heavens. In *Horse Tuna*, the poor fishes loom dramatically larger than their former ocean home behind. One appears flattened and placed so that it already seems hung like a trophy, while the protagonist—although small in comparison—still reigns supreme, standing above them, absorbed in the bounty of his work and the narrative that unfolds around him.

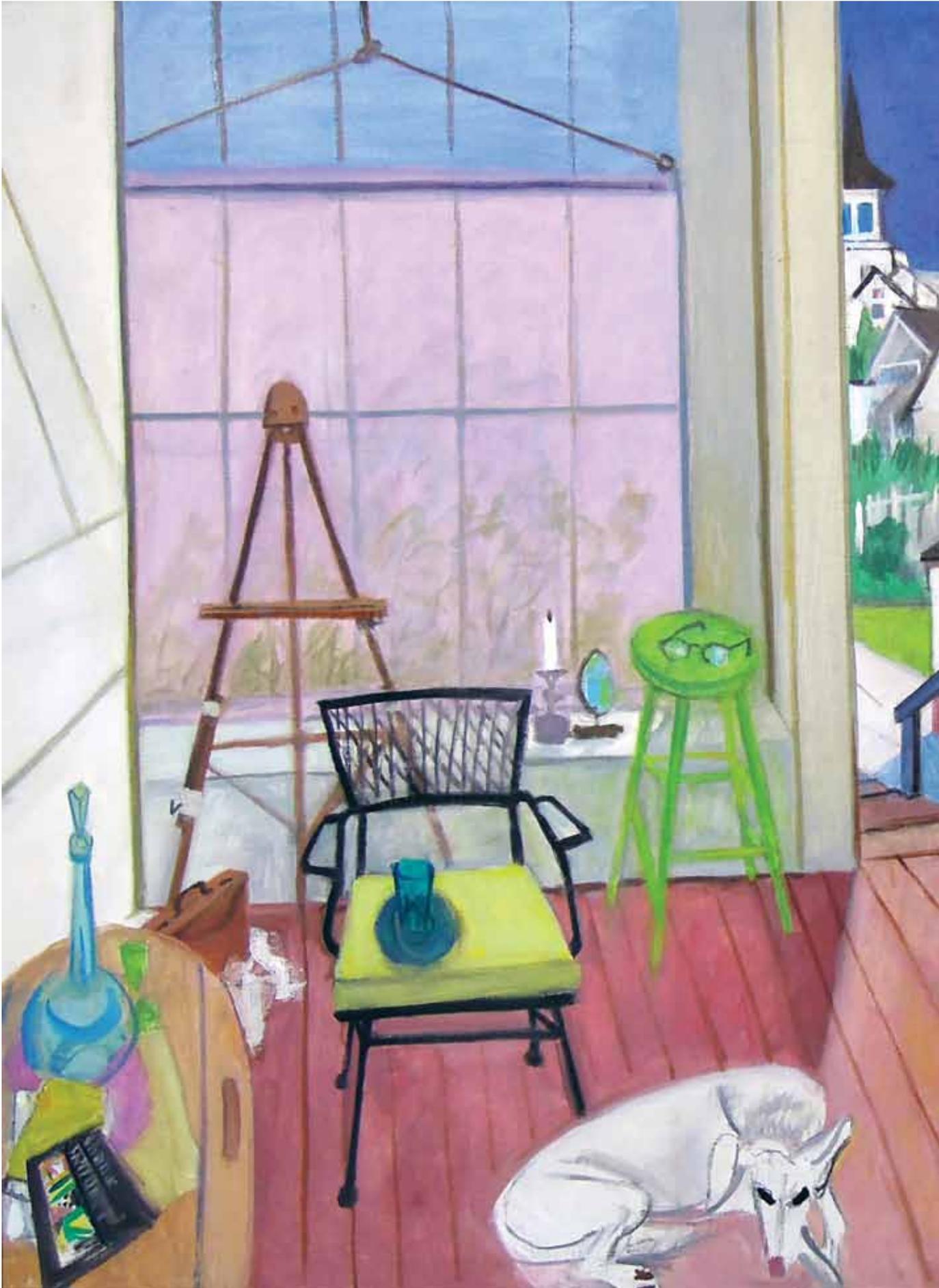
Similarly, in the relatively calm *Wellfleet Studio*, with a dog napping in the foreground of a beautifully suffused mauve and blue sky-lit studio, there is the suggestion that



Horse Tuna 1949
oil on canvas 22 x 40 inches
(Macmillan Wharf, Provincetown)
Private Collection



Low Tide Formations 1951
oil on canvas 20 x 40 inches
Collection of Philip F. May and Anne L. May





Wellfleet Studio 1977

oil on canvas
50 x 64 inches

Courtesy of D. Wigmore Fine Art,
New York

the artist has run off into the night's charms: the door is ajar, a candle snuffed out, glasses left on a stool, brushes abandoned and the dog looking all too knowingly at us — not even bothering to remain alert for his master's return. Clearly, it will be a while. And, since there's nowhere for us to sit—a vase occupies the remaining chair—Freedman's painting suggests that we might as well leave the daily grind of our lives as well and join the artist in the coming dawn of a rosy day, evident behind the left window. The artist has left the scene (exit: center stage), and we are invited to follow.



Summer Still Life 1952 oil on canvas 20 x 36 inches

Freedman politely offers us pleasures, such as a pitcher of summer drinks, a pipe, book and binoculars on a table, enlivened by an arrangement of flowers and shrubs in *Summer Still Life*; or a cask of wine, the promise of candlelight, gifts from far flung places and sun-filled mornings in *Mexican Candelabra*. But, again, it is the saturated colors of the dunes or beach in the background and their suggestion of a more fun-filled abandon that Freedman continues to dangle—almost thrusting it—before our eyes, instantly transporting us out of our ordinary lives—which is no mean feat.



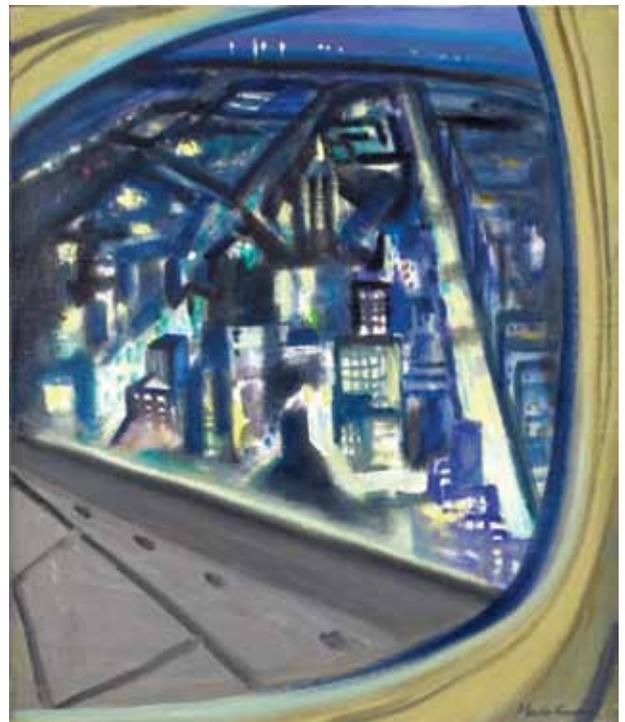
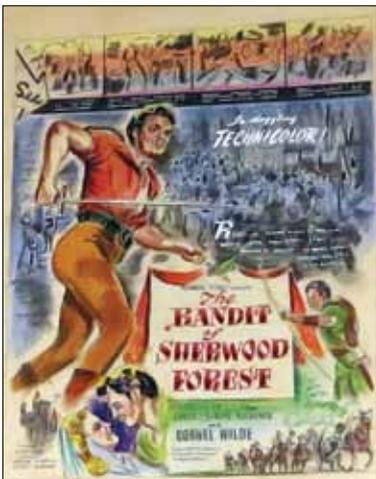
Mexican Candelabra 1969 oil on canvas 30 x 50 inches Courtesy of ACME Fine Art, Boston / Alan Freedman



Morning Departure 1958 oil on canvas 30 x 50 inches



Mast and Stars 1950 oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches
Collection of Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Gift of Philip F. May and Anne L. May



New York Nocturne 1964
oil on canvas 24 x 20 inches

These promises of wistful reveries appear again and again in different guises—as, for instance, a swashbuckling adventure in *Masts and Stars* and the drawing for *The Bandit of Sherwood Forest*, or a jet-setting escape in *New York Nocturne*.

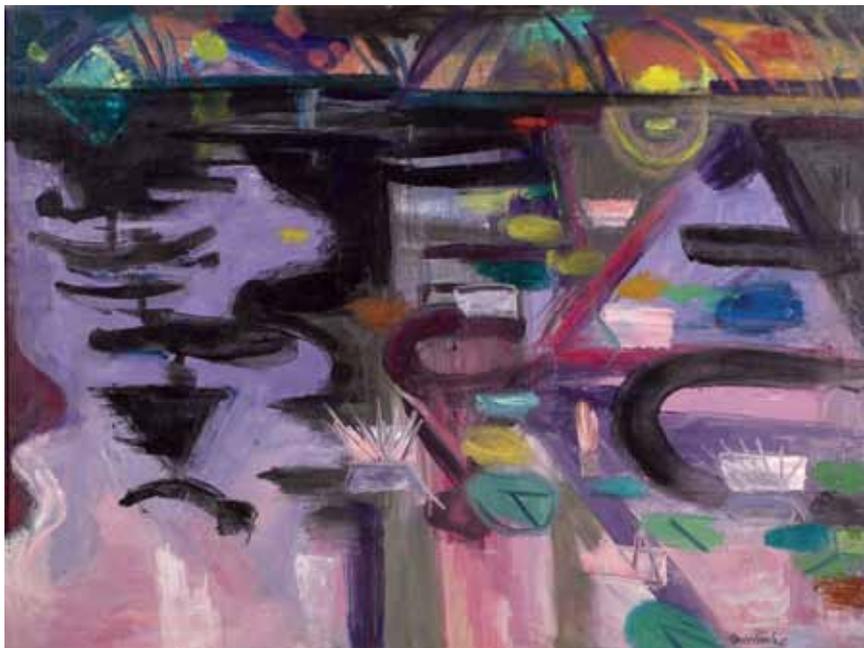
And, of course, romance abounds. Moonlit skies, such as in the stunning *Studio Moonlight No. 3*, borrow from montage, again, conflating time, as is also apparent in *Jeanne Eagles*. In *Studio Moonlight No. 3*, an open window frames Provincetown. Therein, the sky has switched from a deep twilight to a brighter palette filled with city lights. Below is a nearly day lit terrace. Time unfolds before us. Day shifts to night with a glass of wine waiting on the left and the kind of regal, red chair of a star producer, dead center.



Studio Moonlight No. 3 1960 oil on canvas 20 x 30 inches Collection of James Bennette and David Cowan



In other cases, Freedman takes us directly to scenes of glamorous picnics and European vistas. In *View to Ravello*, the viewer is engulfed in verdant, mid-ground fields, left to wander among the geometric Italian plains, the way David Hockney drops us off in the English landscape. But, here, Freedman's surface treatment is more meandering and gentle. This is the land of *Babette's Feast*, where leisure rules the day; whereas, in *Rising Fog*, the mist is at once in front and seemingly behind us. It is easy to feel surrounded. The clouds hover larger than the mist below, just as in *Stonington Lily Pond*, we find ourselves engulfed by the landscape and the horizon line is nowhere in sight.



Stonington Lily Pond 1957
oil on canvas
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of Greenhut Galleries,
Portland, ME



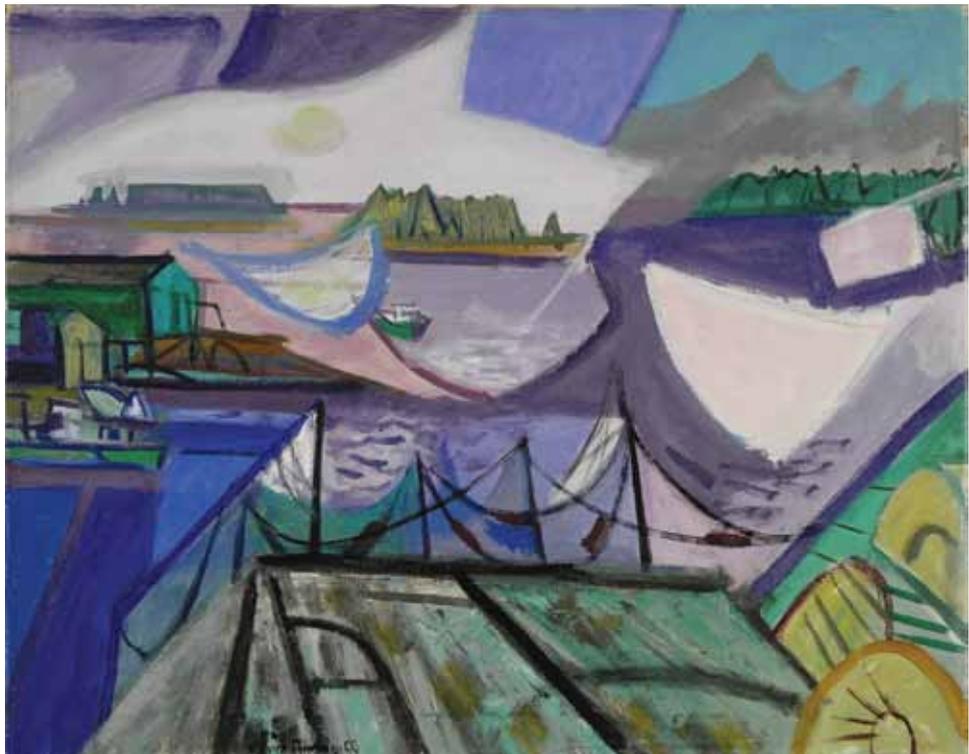
Lobster Picnic 1954
oil on canvas
22 x 33 inches
Collection of Provincetown Art
Association and Museum,
Gift of Judyth and Daniel Katz



View to Ravello 1969 oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches Collection of Philip F. May and Anne L. May

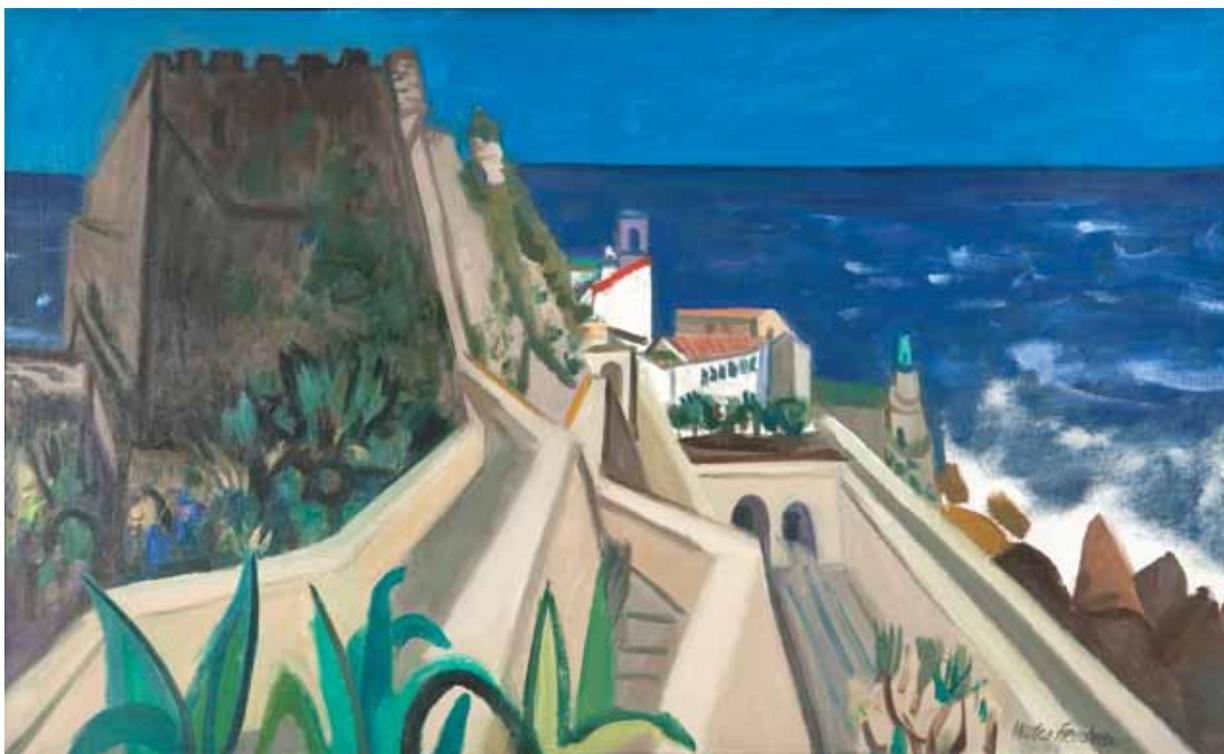
Rising Fog Study 1959 oil on canvas 24 x 30 inches

Collection of Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Gift of Philip F. May and Anne L. May

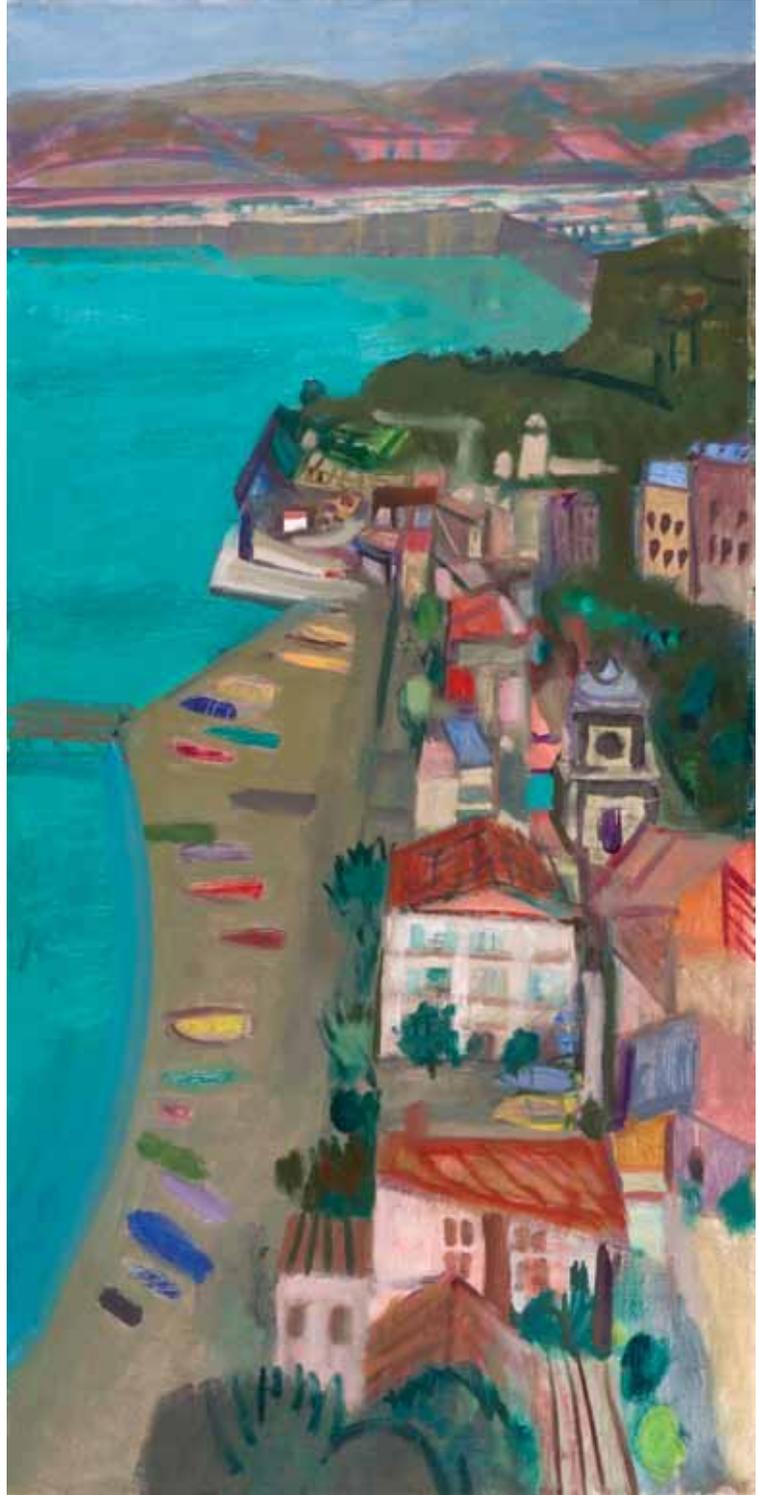




Trapani from Erice 1979 oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches (Sicily)



Mediterranean Citadel 1970 oil on canvas 22 x 36 inches



Sorrento View 1968 oil on canvas 40 x 20 inches
(Amalfi Coast, Italy)



Pemaquid Lobster^{2,3} 1945 oil on canvas 35 x 22 inches

Collection of Kevin P. Mahaney

² Alan Gruskin, *Painting in the USA*. (Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1946).

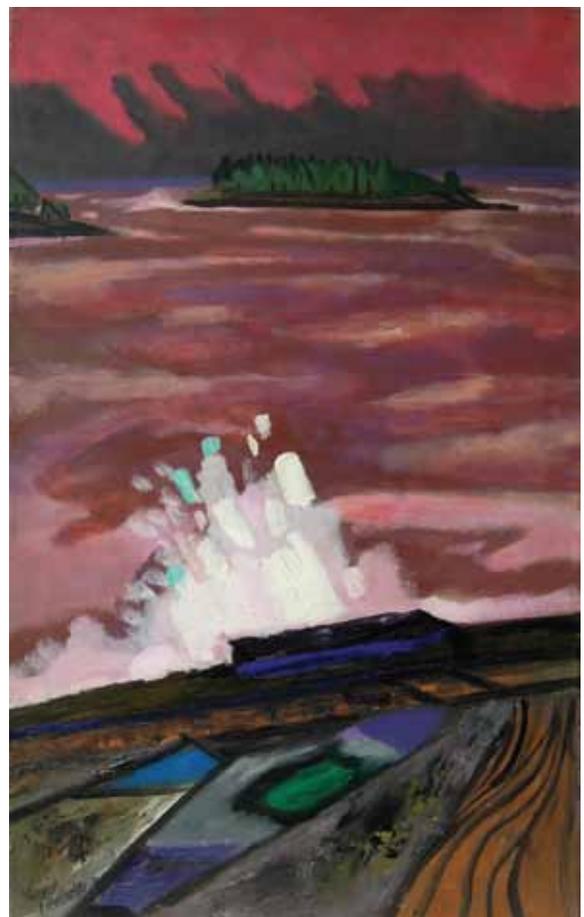
³ *The New York Times*, February 16, 1947. Reproduced and reviewed by Howard Devree "Maurice Freedman has come through with the best work of his career. Quite different in palette and in approach, some of these canvases of the Adirondacks and the Maine coast remind one of the work by Marsden Hartley in their strength and their semi-abstract interpretation of Nature."



Provincetown Pier Gear 1948 oil on canvas 20 x 34 inches

Collection of Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Gift of Philip F. May and Anne L. May

With Freedman, excitement is never far. In *Mediterranean Citadel* the perspective dramatically drops us not even at the ocean's edge, but directly into water. In *Evening Sea* the moment when the wave comes crashing on the shore is captured with the kind of askew balance that only a movie camera can snap from the prow of a boat.



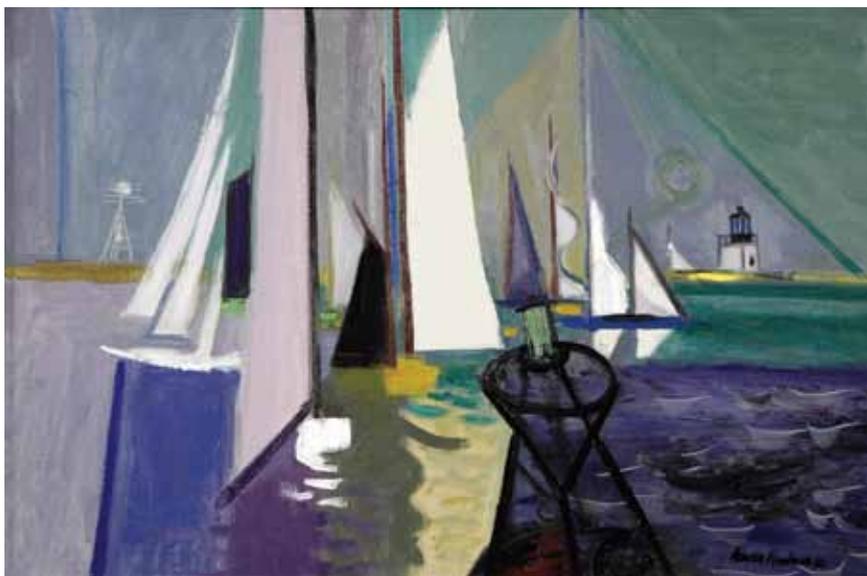
Evening Sea 1957 oil on canvas 34 x 20 inches
(Mt. Desert Island, Maine)

Courtesy of Greenhut Galleries, Portland, ME

These are paintings from the era when the Great Depression had come to an end, America was getting back on its feet, the world's fair was on the horizon and the middle class was on the rise. But, McCarthyism was also there, as were civil rights marches and arctic whiffs of a cold war standoff. Freedman was not blind to this—he worked in the movie industry where America's bigotry was played out in the nightly news; but painting is rarely an adequate vehicle for social change. Life is hard and those who know that best often seek relief elsewhere. Without that, the world grows unbearable. The restlessness in Freedman's canvases reminds of this. They are places of momentary transport. They remind us of life's joys. They encourage us to find pleasure when we can because—as his frequently, non-populated canvases remind us—life is fleeting. Its joys are not to be wasted. Instead they are to be savored with the kind of gusto that only a painter such as Maurice Freedman could serve up for our needed escapes to Provincetown's shores. ■

Mary Sherman, 2015

MARY SHERMAN is an artist, who also teaches, writes criticism and curates. Among the exhibitions that she has curated, two received awards from the Northeast Chapter of the International Art Critics Association. As a critic, her writings have appeared in *ARTnews*, *ARTS Magazine*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Boston Globe* and *Art New England*. She is also the founder and director of the international arts organization TransCultural Exchange.



Long Point Race 1960

oil on canvas

20 x 30 inches

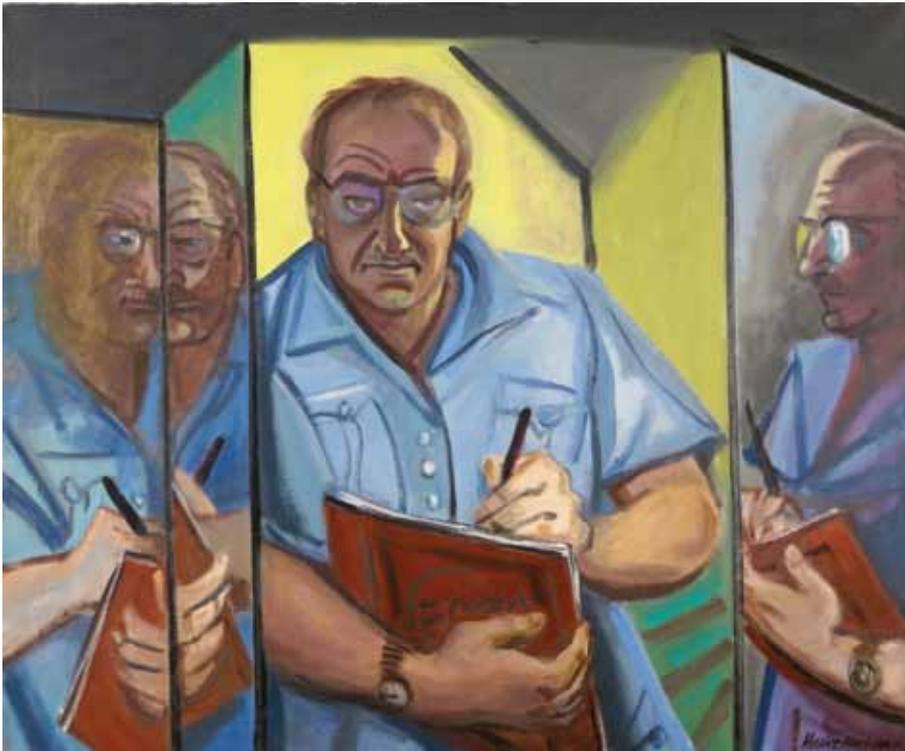
Collection of Provincetown

Art Association and Museum,

Gift of Philip F. May and Anne L. May



Scrub Pine Still Life 1949 oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches



Self Portrait Quatro 1972
oil on canvas
30 x 36 inches

BORN

November 14, 1904 Boston, MA

DIED

January 27, 1985 Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

EDUCATION

School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1919–1921

Massachusetts Normal School of Art, 1922–1926
(now Massachusetts College of Art)

Art Students' League, 1927

Studies with André Lhôte, Ferdinand Léger,
Amédée Ozenfant, Paris 1928–1931



Moonlight Interior 1962 oil on canvas 40 x 20 inches
Collection of the Cape Cod Museum of Art

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Provincetown Art Association and Museum,
Provincetown, MA: 2015

Julie Heller East, Provincetown, MA: 2015

Greenhut Galleries, Portland, ME: 2013, 2009, 2006, 2004

Ogunquit Museum of American Art, Ogunquit, ME: 2009

Acme Fine Art, Boston, MA: 2008

D. Wigmore Fine Arts, New York, NY: 2005

Cape Museum of Fine Arts, Dennis, MA: 2004
Centennial Retrospective

Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown, MA: 1991-2004 annually

Midtown Galleries, New York, NY: 1934, 1939, 1944, 1946,
1948, 1952, 1956, 1959, 1963, 1965, 1969, 1971, 1975,
1977, 1979, 1982 Retrospective, 1985, 1987

Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY: 1989 Retrospective

Hobe Sound Galleries North, Portland, ME: 1987

Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis, MO:
1972 Retrospective

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, NY

Art in Embassies Program, Washington, D.C.

Art Institute of Chicago, IL

Brooklyn Museum, NY

Butler Institute of American Art, OH

Carnegie Institute, Museum of Art, PA

Columbus Museum of Art, OH

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Denver Art Museum, CO

The Jewish Museum, NY

Maine Coast Artists Gallery, Rockport, ME

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

Midtown-Payson Gallery, NY

Midtown Galleries, NY

Museum of Contemporary Art, Madrid, Spain

National Academy of Design, NY

Pennsylvania Academy of The Fine Arts, PA

Shaw Gallery, ME

Toledo Museum of Art, OH

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, VA

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN

Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, PA—
Painting in the USA

Westport Art Center, Westport, CT

Whitney Museum of American Art, NY

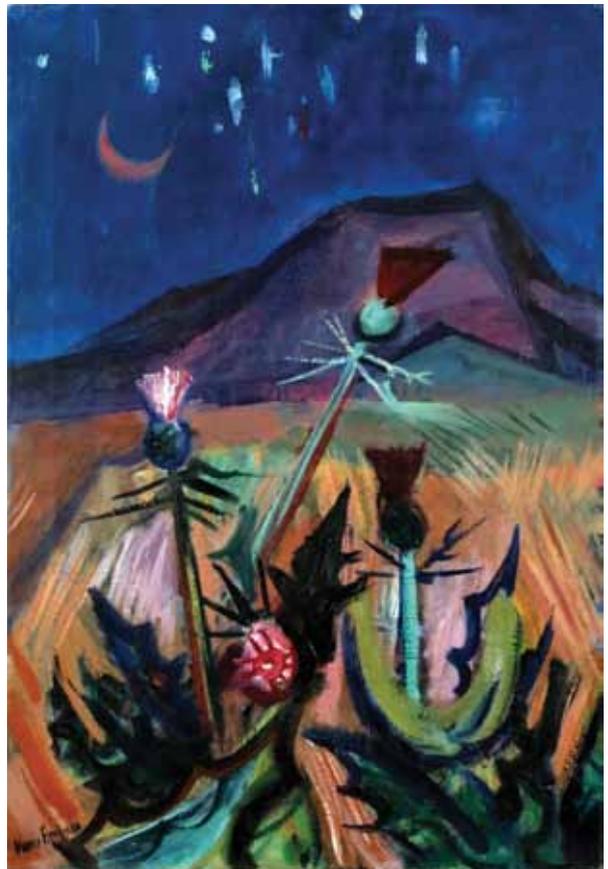
PERMANENT COLLECTIONS / AWARDS

Adirondack Museum, NY
 Allentown Art Museum, PA – Hassam Purchase Award
 Anchorage Museum of History and Art, AL
 Audubon Society, NY – 40th Anniversary
 Smith Binney Award
 Brandeis University – Commissioned Work
 Brooklyn Museum, New York
 Butler Institute of American Art, OH
 Cape Cod Museum of Art, Dennis, MA
 Carnegie Institute, Museum of Art, PA
 Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
 Denver Art Museum, CO
 Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY
 Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, FL
 Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas, Austin, TX
 LaJolla Museum of Contemporary Art, CA

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA
 Milwaukee Art Museum, WI
 Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN
 University of Missouri Museum of Art, MO
 National Museum of American Art,
 Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
 University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC
 Weatherspoon Art Gallery
 Pennsylvania Academy of The Fine Arts, PA
 Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown, MA
 St. Lawrence University, Richard F. Brush Art Gallery, Canton, NY
 The St. Louis Art Museum, MO
 Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, FL
 Tel Aviv Museum
 Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis, MO
 Wichita Art Museum, KS



Maurice Freedman in Europe, age 79



Thistles in the Night 1942 oil on canvas 30 x 20 inches
 (Adirondacks)

"Two New Artists Make Their Bow." *New York Sun*, December 28, 1934.

"Landscapes by Maurice Freedman." *New York Herald Tribune*, December 30, 1934.

"Freedman Holds One-Man Exhibit." *New York Post*, September 30, 1939.

"Atmosphere Emphasized by Maurice Freedman." *New York City Art News*, October 7, 1939.

"Maurice Freedman." *The New York Times*, October 1, 1939.

"Maurice Freedman Showing New Works." *New York World-Telegram*, September 30, 1939.

Sheldon Cheney, *A Primer of Modern Art*. (New York City, Tudor Publishing Co., 1945). p. 83.

Gruskin, Alan. *Painting in the USA*. (Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1946).

Devree, Howard. "Diverse New Shows." *The New York Times*, February 16, 1947.

Exhibition catalog: *Painting in the United States, 1949*. Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, PA. *Caught in the Net*, plate #37.

Preston, Stuart. "About Art and Artists." *The New York Times*, February, 1956.

"Maurice Freedman." *Arts Magazine*, March, 1956.

"Freedman Art." *New York Herald Tribune*, November 29, 1959.

"Maurice Freedman." *Arts*, December, 1959.

"Freedman au Midtown." *France-Amérique, Le Courrier Des États-Unis*, December 6, 1959.

Leon, Dennis. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 10, 1960.

"Maurice Freedman." *Visitors East*, October, 1963.

"Maurice Freedman." *New York Herald Tribune, Art Tour*, November 2, 1963.

Williams, Ellen. "Maurice Freedman." *New York Visitor's Reporter*, November, 1963.

"Maurice Freedman." *Pictures on Exhibit*, January, 1970.

"Maurice Freedman Art Now on Exhibit." *The Hastings News*, January 8, 1970.

"Freedman at Midtown." *Park East*, January 15, 1970.

"Maurice Freedman." *France-Amérique, Le Courrier Des États-Unis*, January 15, 1970.

Powell, Betsy. "Freedman at Midtown." *Park East*, December 30, 1971.

"Maurice Freedman." *Pictures on Exhibit*, January, 1972.

"Maurice Freedman." *The Herald Statesman*, New York, January 13, 1972.

Exhibition catalog: *Maurice Freedman*, Essay by Walter W. Barker for a retrospective exhibition of paintings, 1972 Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis, MO

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS – Alan Freedman, 2015

IN MEMORY of my mother, **Louise Arnstein Freedman** (1915-2001), painter, printmaker and art educator. It's her centennial year!

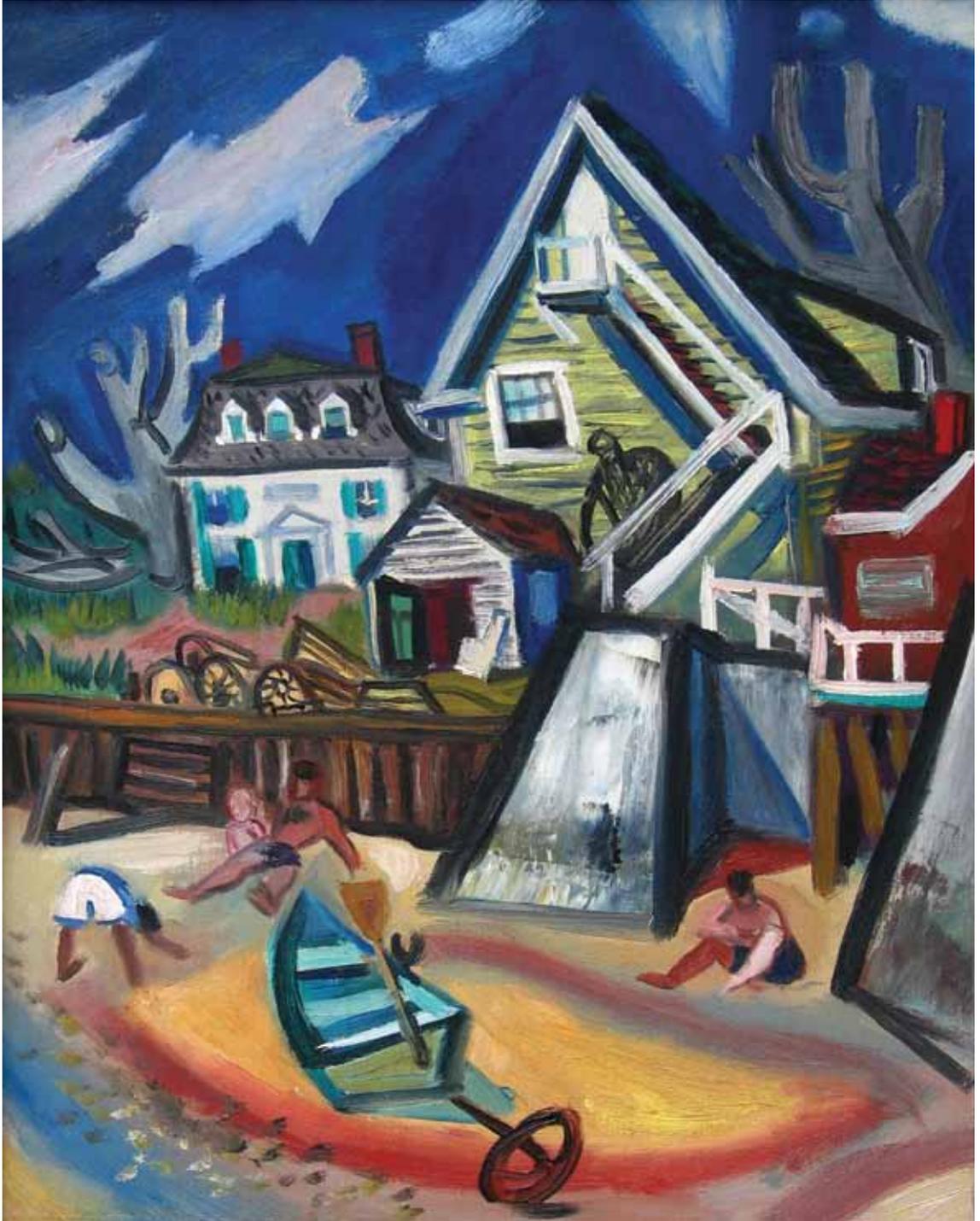
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Bathers Interlude 1948 oil on canvas 28 x 24 inches Private Collection

Front Cover: **Blessing of the Fleet** 1963 oil on canvas 30 x 20 inches

Inside cover: **Truro Sky Fantasy** 1967 (detail) oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches Collection of Philip F. May and Anne L. May

Back cover: **Bay Studio** 1959 (detail) oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches (Sterne House Studio, Provincetown);

Photo by Henry Botkin: Maurice Freedman, 1930, Saint-Tropez

Catalog Design: Marjorie Morrow

LIGHT, PALETTE, ACTION!

MAURICE FREDMAN



