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COLLECTIONS

VOLUME 6 JUNE 2011

Herbert Barnett: A Painter's Painter



*Fine American and European Paintings,
Prints, Drawings, Watercolors and Sculpture*

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COVER **Abstract East Princeton Waterfall, Circa 1967**

Oil on canvas

30 X 24 INCHES

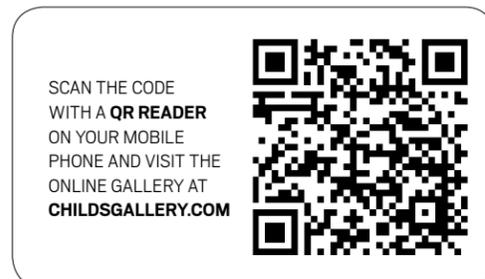
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COLLECTIONS

Herbert Barnett: A Painter's Painter

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Herbert Barnett:

A Painter's Painter

GALLERY EXHIBITION
JUNE 6 - AUGUST 19, 2011



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COLLECTIONS

Childs Gallery Collections is the latest publication in a tradition of more than seventy years of gallery publications. The *Childs Gallery Bulletin* (begun 1950), the *Print Annual* (begun 1976) and the *Painting Annual* (begun 1980) have been firmly established and are represented in almost every fine arts library in the country. As early as the mid-1940s, however, Childs Gallery presented a publication entitled *Currier and Ives Prints: A Collection*, which represented the carefully considered collection of a single owner with Charles D. Childs' commentary that "we cannot recall that a representative collection of these lithographs has been shown in Boston for many years."

We continue to celebrate collections, collecting, and collectors as a pivotal axis of the art world with this sixth Volume of *Childs Gallery Collections- Herbert Barnett: A Painter's Painter*. Childs Gallery has represented Herbert Barnett since May 26, 1978 when we signed a contract with his son, Peter. Since that day we have remained the exclusive representative of the estate of Herbert Barnett and have sold several hundred works. The relationship between the gallery and Peter Barnett has been especially close, collegial, and collaborative. Peter is the leading authority on his father's works and is in the process of preparing a catalogue raisonné. He has also shared his extensive information on the history of the paintings, his father's prior representation and the collections that the paintings have entered—both public and private. We celebrate not only the fine art of Herbert Barnett, but a business, scholarly, and artistic relationship now in its 34th year.

With special thanks to the artist's son, Peter, and Vivian Barnett, New York, NY

LEFT **Abstracted Still Life, Circa 1966**
Oil on masonite

40 X 30 INCHES
Signed lower right.



Herbert Barnett: A Painter's Painter

As was true for countless American artists visiting Europe in the early 1900s, groundbreaking works by Paul Cézanne and the Cubists were revelations to the young Herbert Barnett. Cézanne, he noted, established a new “classical order of volumes,” while Pablo Picasso created “excitement, drama, and even shock” through his reinterpretation of natural shapes. Reconciling those innovations with his training in traditional realism would be Barnett’s life’s work, both as an artist and inspirational teacher.

Though he never abandoned representational forms for the pure abstraction that dominated mid-century American art, Barnett’s fractured planes, bold colors, and pure spontaneity of brushwork clearly delineated him as a modernist, garnering respect from curators and fellow painters alike.

Born in Cranston, Rhode Island in 1910, Herbert Barnett benefited from a close proximity to New England’s prestigious art schools and teachers. While still in high school, he was able to study evenings at the Rhode Island School of Design, and take private lessons from established painters each summer in the Boothbay Harbor, Maine and Rockport, Massachusetts art colonies.

By the time he entered the Boston Museum School in 1927, the teenager’s technically brilliant landscapes had already earned him a one-man show at Boston’s highly regarded Grace Horne Galleries, where he would continue to exhibit until 1943. The gallery was also home to celebrated artists like Karl Zerbe and Edmund Tarbell, who along with Frank Benson, was one of Barnett’s early teachers.

The influence of those noted American Impressionists can be seen in the dreamy lyricism of Barnett’s initial body of work; but he ultimately felt that their approach, though laudable, proffered just a “sparkling imitation of sunlight in an almost volumeless world.” Wanting to learn how to “take my painting apart” before forging ahead, Barnett moved to Europe for three years after graduation to study the techniques of both the Old Masters and avant-garde modernists.

Paul Cézanne and the Cubists would prove endlessly fascinating.

“If your work is ninety-percent shape and ten-percent volume, you’re an abstract painter,” wrote Barnett. “Conversely, a preponderance of volume will bring you dangerously close to conservatism. This is originality: no two people handle volume and shape in exactly the same way.”

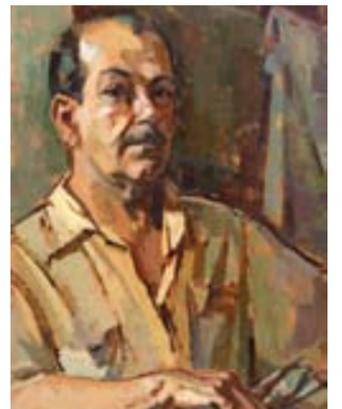
After returning to the United States, he was further influenced by inventive American painters like John Marin, Edward Hopper, Stuart Davis, and most notably, fellow New Englander Marsden Hartley. Dividing his time between coastal Rockport, Massachusetts and New York City, Barnett earned the respect and camaraderie of many of his contemporaries. Accomplished landscape painter Aldro Hibbard was a former teacher of Barnett’s, calling him the best paint handler he had ever seen.

In 1937, Barnett had his first show at Contemporary Arts, Inc. in New York City - a gallery that had introduced such artists as Milton Avery, Mark Rothko, and Alice Neel – and would go on to have eight one-man shows, four at museums, in the following five years.

In 1940, the newly married Barnett accepted a position as head of the museum school at the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts, although it meant a loss of independence. He would teach for the rest of his life, a decision the artist would never regret according to his son Peter:

“Artist-teachers find it notoriously difficult to sustain their own art, and at the time, my father was making a living at painting. But he also had a genuine commitment to teaching, and his painting was drawing increasingly upon art history: teaching and painting in an environment of an outstanding museum collection was a major incentive in his decision to move to Worcester.”

[PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 22]



TOP RIGHT **Self-Portrait**
Circa 1958

Oil on canvasboard
23 7/8 X 17 7/8 INCHES

This self portrait is a mate—in a literal sense—to a portrait of the artist’s wife done at the same time in the same format. It is the last available oil self-portrait of Herbert Barnett.

LEFT **Still Life: Lilies in a Pitcher**
1964

Oil on masonite
30 X 24 INCHES

Signed lower right.



1

1
Still Life: Three Vases of Roses
 Circa 1958
 Oil on canvasboard
 12 7/8 X 21 3/4 INCHES



2

2
Irises and Pitcher
 Circa 1960
 Watercolor and charcoal
 23 1/2 X 17 3/4 INCHES
 From artist's sketchbook. The irises depicted are from
 writer Esther Forbes' flower garden in Worcester, MA.



3

3
Compote, Wine Bottle and Bouquet
 Circa 1949-51
 Oil on board
 30 X 36 INCHES

The loose, spontaneous quality of the composition, the heavy black line underpainting, and the kind of masonite used, all suggest a date range of 1949 to 1951. Most likely painted in Princeton, MA.

4
Two Vases with Red and White Flowers
 Circa 1950
 Oil on canvasboard
 23 3/4 X 30 INCHES

Signed lower right.
 Painted in Princeton, MA. The light touch suggests the early 1950s.



4



5



6



7

5
Still Life: Coffee Pot, Pitchers, Pears, Eggplant and Drapery
 Circa 1955

Oil on canvas
 20 X 30 INCHES

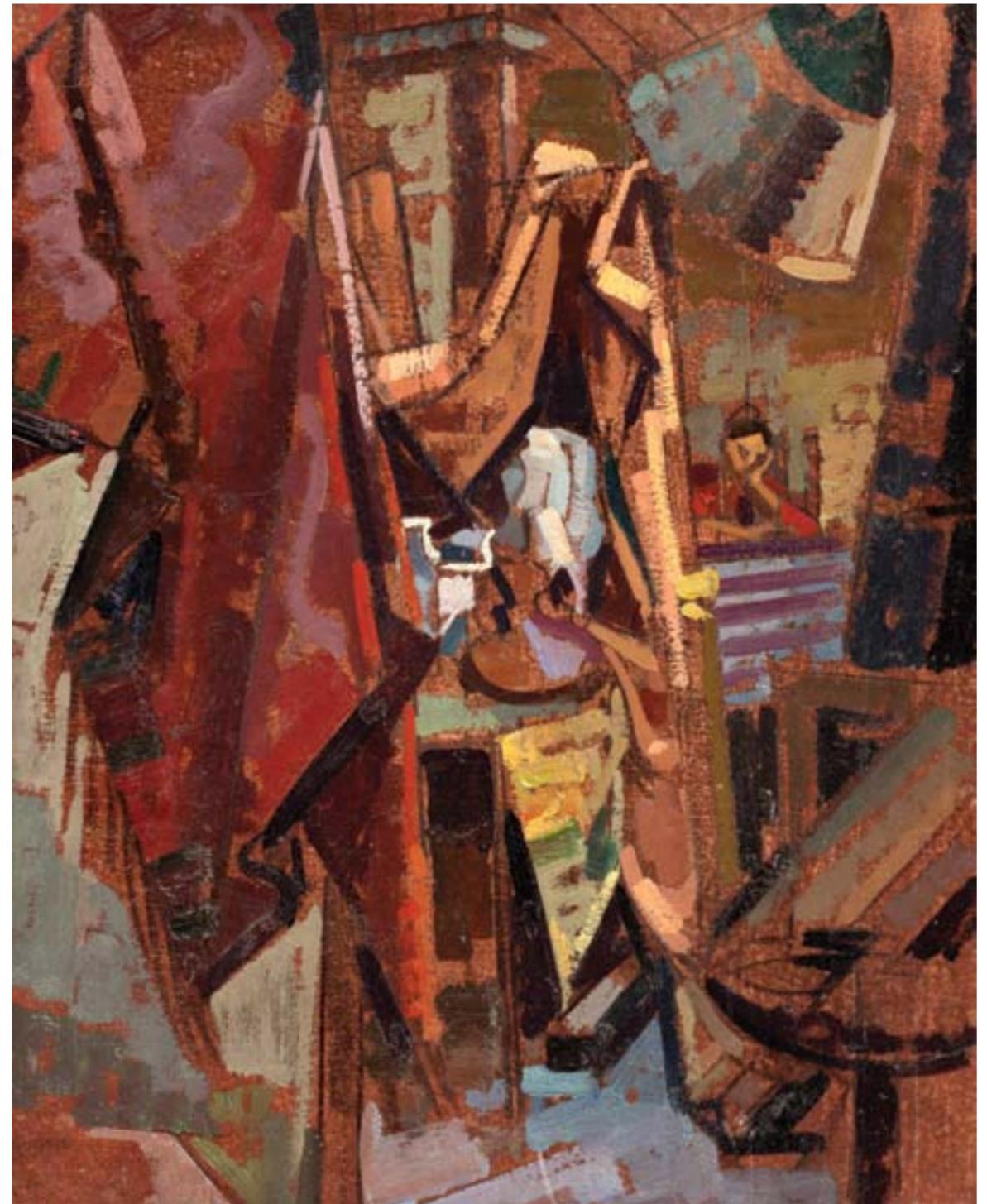
6
Abstract Still Life with Pitcher, Bowl of Flowers, Creamer
 Circa 1950

Oil on masonite
 24 X 36 INCHES
 Signed lower right.

7
Still Life: Art Materials
 Circa 1964

Oil on canvasboard
 18 X 24 INCHES
 Initialed lower right. Label and inscription verso.

EXHIBITED
 North Shore Arts Association, Gloucester, MA, 1976.



8

8
The Artist's Studio, Worcester, Massachusetts
 Circa 1942

Oil on masonite
 20 X 16 INCHES

The Barnett's' apartment in downtown Worcester, MA—19B Elm Street—had one very large room which served as a studio as well as a dining and living area. In this painting, the artist has stepped back to depict—probably as reflected in a mirror—a still life setup with draperies illuminated by a spotlight, an easel, and the artist's wife Elizabeth at a table in the right background.

Here the artist presents a play on "cubist vision"; the still life objects—probably a china gravy boat and a skull—are portrayed as though they were already cubist objects even before being painted.



9



10

**9
Compote and Blue Pitcher
1964**

Oil on masonite

24 X 36 INCHES

Signed lower right.

Painted in Princeton, MA during the summer of 1964. At the time, the artist was working on a monograph on painting for Watson-Guption, a book project inspired by Norman Kent's 1960 article on Herbert Barnett in *American Artist*. While the book was never published, the manuscript has been mined by authors including Charles Movalli and Peter Barnett, the artist's son, to understand the artist's compositional and volumetric principles. Illustrations for the intended book included a number of stages of completion for *Compote and Blue Pitcher*, including charcoal drawing, watercolor, underdrawing, and phases of the final painting.

**10
Study for Compote and Blue Pitcher
1964**

Charcoal and watercolor

18 X 23 1/2 INCHES

Signed lower right. From artist's sketchbook.



11

**11
Still Life with Compote**

Oil on masonite

13 1/2 X 23 1/2 INCHES

**12
Still Life with Pitcher, Vase and Teapot**

Oil on masonite

18 X 24 INCHES

Signed lower right.

One of the artist's finest late still lifes. The densely arranged objects and small format are made for one another, creating rhythm and intensity.

**13
Potato Masher, Pitcher, Teapot, Mirror and Onions
Circa 1960**

Oil on canvas

20 X 30 INCHES



12



13



14

14
Winter Landscape, Cape Ann
 1939-40

Oil on masonite
 16 3/8 X 31 1/8 INCHES
 Signed lower right.

The artist was an active member of the Rockport Art Association from 1927 (age 17) until the 1940s, and frequently summered in Rockport and Gloucester, MA, where he studied and taught painting until 1940. Barnett visited Cape Ann in the fall, winter and spring of 1938 and 1939.

EXHIBITED
 North Shore Arts Association, Gloucester, MA, 1976.

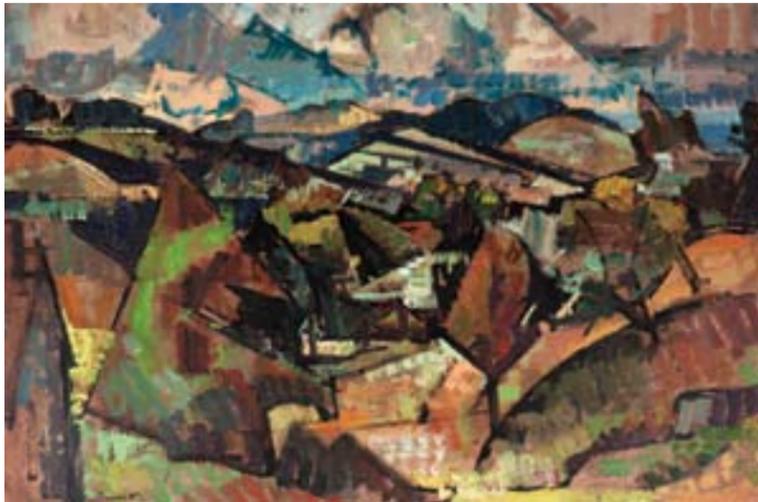


15

15
View through the Willows of Plainfield, Vermont
 1944

Oil on masonite
 24 X 30 INCHES

For this painting, the artist set up his easel on the bank of the Winooski River and painted a view of Plainfield, VT segmented by the curving, intersecting willow branches on the riverbank. The result is a brightly colored, kaleidoscopic abstract design. Several versions of this motif exist.



16

16
Landscape with Cloud Shadows, Vermont
 1946

Oil on masonite
 24 X 36 INCHES
 Signed lower left.

This landscape depicts the valley below Star Pudding Farm in Plainfield, VT, where the artist's family summered throughout the 1940s. The nearer part of the valley is the subject of *The Orton's Pasture*, while the ploughed field in the upper right is the subject of *Ploughed Field with Approaching Storm* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

17
Farm on the River
 1946-47

Oil on board
 24 X 36 INCHES
 Signed lower left.



17

18
Harbor at Corea Maine 2
 1956

Casein on board
 25 X 30 INCHES
 Signed lower right.

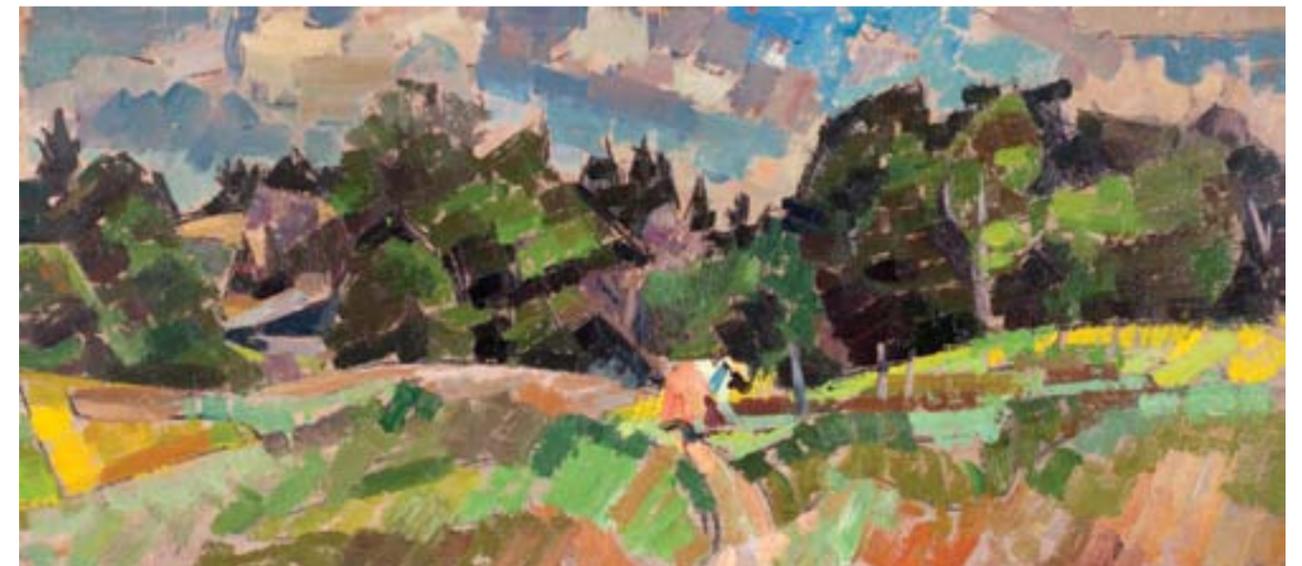
Corea and Winter Harbor are remote fishing and lobstering villages on the Schoodic peninsula, near Schoodic Point of Acadia National Park in Maine. The area was frequented by a number of artists: Waldo Pierce may have "discovered" Corea for painting, Stow Wengenroth worked there, and Marsden Hartley spent his last years there. Herbert Barnett started painting and drawing on the Schoodic Peninsula during brief summer visits to Elizabeth Barnett's mother in West Gouldsboro, ME.



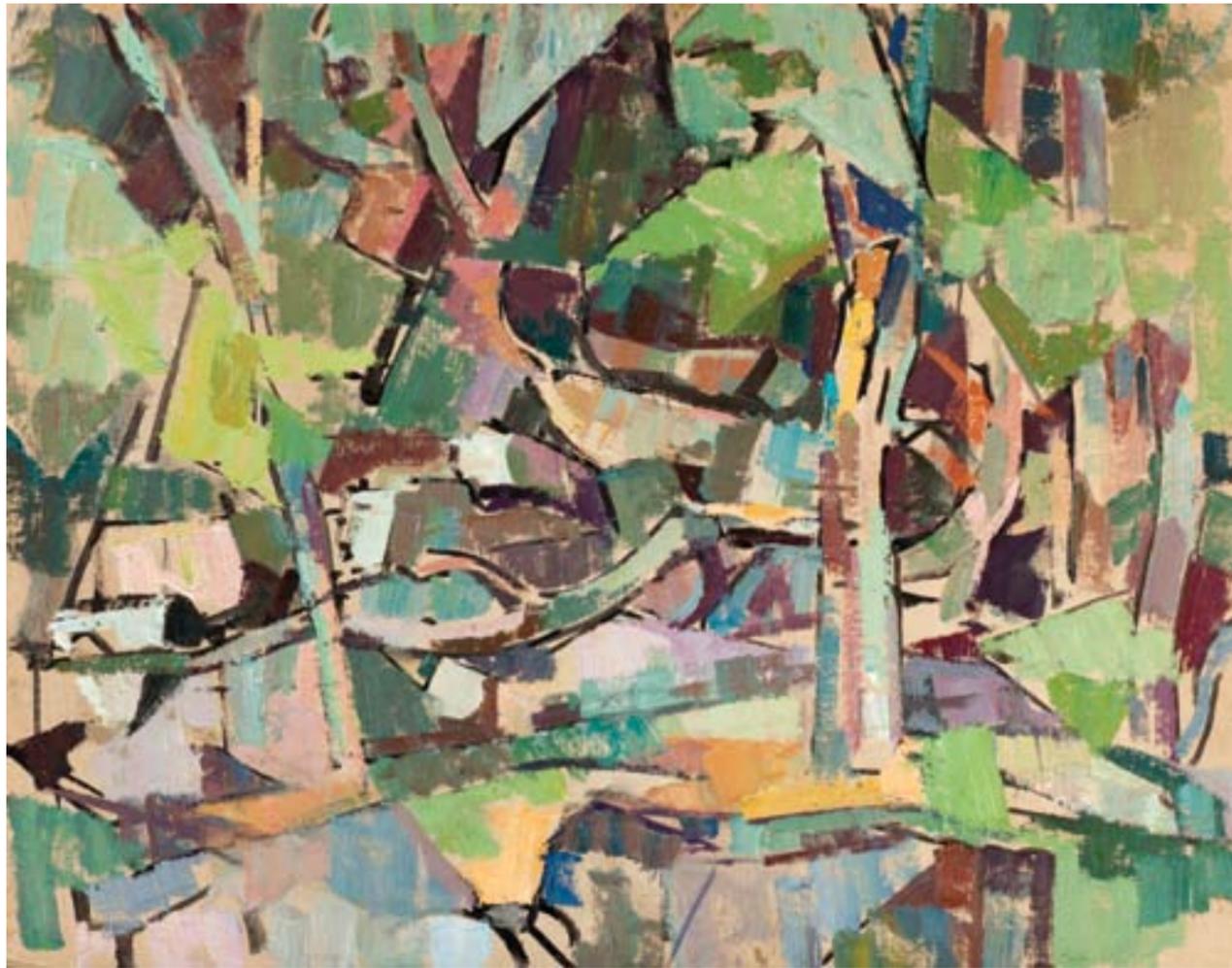
18

19
Field with Woods and a Female Figure
 Circa 1947

Oil on masonite
 12 X 26 INCHES



19



20



21

20
Rocks and Trees by the Millrace, East Princeton
Circa 1962

Oil on canvasboard
25 X 30 INCHES

21
Mill Ruin, East Princeton, Massachusetts
1960-62

Watercolor and charcoal
17 3/4 X 23 1/2 INCHES
From artist's sketchbook.

22
Rocks and Tree Trunks, East Princeton,
Massachusetts
1958-60

Ink and wash
12 X 17 1/2 INCHES
From artist's sketchbook.



22

23
Quinapoxet Bridge, East Princeton, Massachusetts
1951-54

Watercolor and charcoal on paper
17 7/8 X 23 5/8 INCHES
From artist's sketchbook.



23

24
Waterfall from parking area, East Princeton,
Massachusetts
1952-53

Charcoal and India ink on paper
20 X 25 7/8 INCHES



24

25
Rocks and Trees, East Princeton, Massachusetts
1949-55

Ink and wash
13 1/2 X 16 3/4 INCHES
From artist's sketchbook.



25



26

26
The Wounded Knight
1947

Oil on masonite

23 7/8 X 17 7/8 INCHES

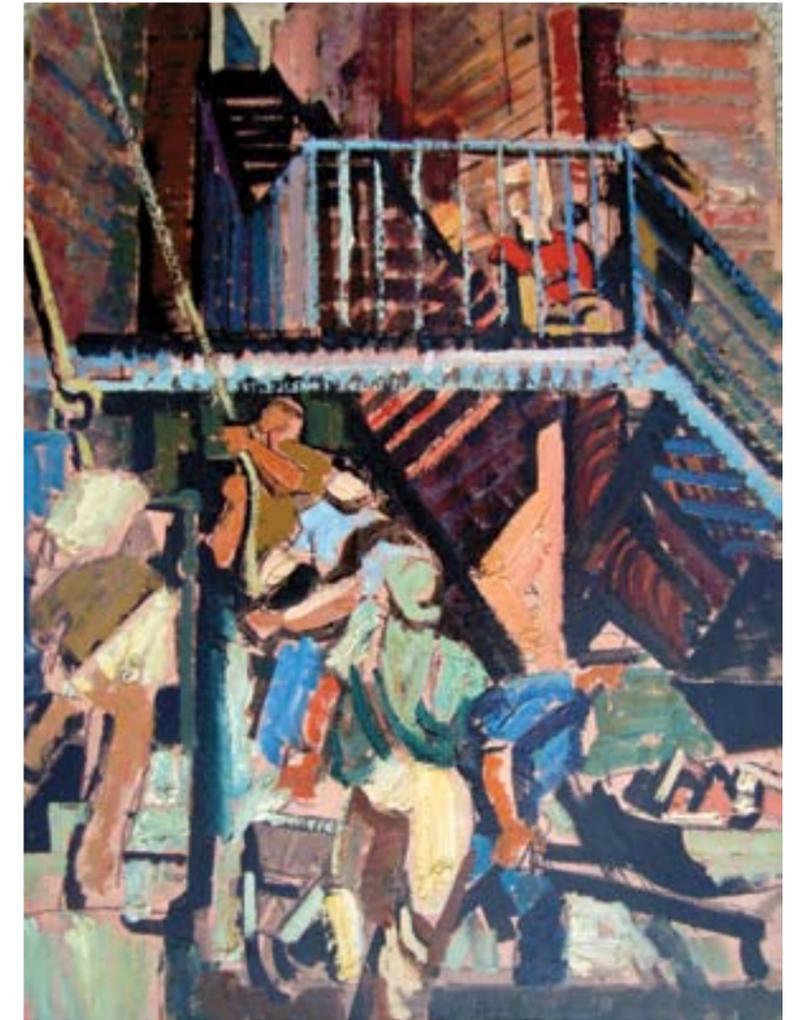
Signed lower right. Inscribed verso.

The subject of *The Wounded Knight* is a small marionette of a knight which hung in the Barnetts' home. The knight's hinged helmet, sword, shield, and breastplate were hammered tin, his clothing included lace, and his articulated body was made of wood. The artist deployed the marionette in a slumped posture, whence the title. The painting's high contrast, intense colors, and abstract composition relate this work to the larger hen paintings of 1947-48 (see page 20) and reflect the artist's admiration of Rouault.

27
Construction Workers, Wreckers, Worcester, Massachusetts
Circa 1948

Oil on masonite

24 X 17 3/4 INCHES



27

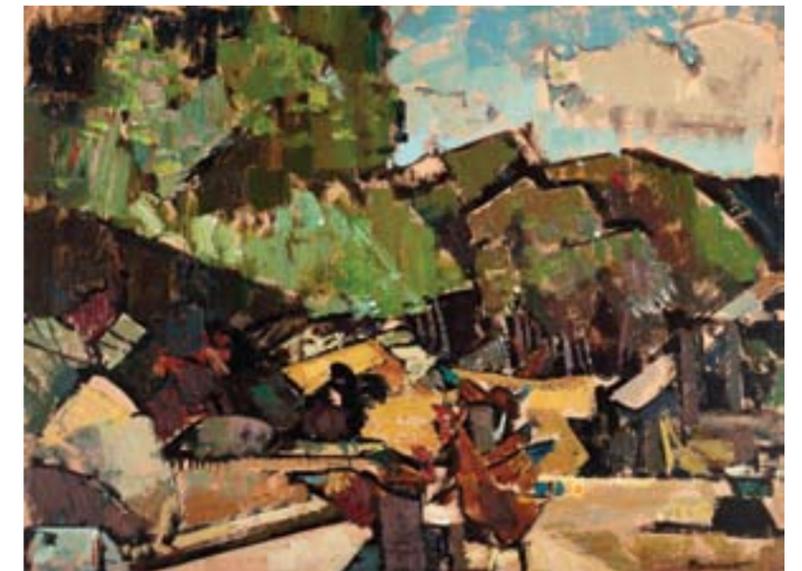
28
Hen Yard
Circa 1948

Oil on masonite

18 X 24 INCHES

Signed lower right. Signed and titled verso.

From the late 1940s until 1969 the Barnetts spent their summers in a Princeton, MA farmhouse owned by Esther and Cornelia Forbes of Worcester, MA. There were several large chicken farms in the town, and many small farmers also kept chickens and sold eggs. While hens are visible in this superb oil landscape, they do not form a central motif as they do in the artist's other hen and dressing fowl oils from 1947-48 (see page 20). Instead, this painting belongs alongside the artist's pure landscapes, including *William Brooks' Farm*, *Barn on a Hill*, and *Rocks and Old Timber*. Despite its small size, this painting is one of the artist's most important landscapes from this period. It combines a sunny pastoral palette with tight composition and vigorous, attenuated brushwork.



28



29



30

29
Hens in Sunlight
1947

Oil on canvasboard
24 X 30 INCHES
Signed lower right.

Hens in Sunlight and *Hens No. 2* both crowd a rather narrow view into a chicken coop with intense color and complex movement. In some areas the impasto is almost perilously thick. The contrast of shadows and bright sunlight on the hens, as well as their complex arrangement, reflect Barnett's interest in Rouault and Soutine.

30
Hens, No. 2
1947

Oil on masonite
24 X 30 INCHES

Titled, signed, and dated verso.

EXHIBITED
Mortimer Levitt Gallery, 1947.



31

31
Still Life with Driftwood
Circa 1965

Oil on canvas
24 X 36 INCHES

Signed lower left.

The subject of *Still Life with Driftwood* is a piece of driftwood the artist hauled back from the Quinapoxet Reservoir. Here the artist's studio in Princeton, MA—which had been a chicken coop—is shown at its roughest.

32
Dressing Chickens, Princeton, Massachusetts
1949-50

Oil on masonite
17 7/8 X 24 INCHES

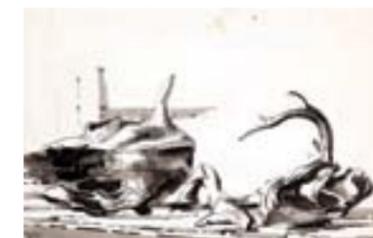
The artist's scenes of dressing hens most likely depict William Brooks, a farmer who lived down the road from Barnett's studio in Princeton, MA. In this painting the artist plays up the genre interest of the subject. These studies have more in common with his work scenes of the 1930s and Vermont haying and auction paintings than with the very abstract and intensely colored close-up hen yards of 1947-8 (see page 20).

33
Animal Skulls
Circa 1950

Ink and ink wash on paper
11 7/8 X 17 7/8 INCHES



32



33

LIST OF WORKS

All available works are listed in title order.

Works illustrated in this catalogue include an **image** number and page number.

TITLE	IMAGE	PAGE	RETAIL
<i>Abstract East Princeton Waterfall</i>		Front cover	\$6,500
<i>Abstract Still Life with Pitcher, Bowl of Flowers, Creamer</i>	6	10	\$7,800
<i>Abstracted Still Life</i>		4	\$8,500
<i>Animal Skulls</i>	33	21	\$350
<i>Compote and Blue Pitcher</i>	9	12	\$7,800
<i>Compote, Wine Bottle and Bouquet</i>	3	9	\$7,800
<i>Construction Workers, Wreckers, Worcester, Massachusetts</i>	27	19	\$5,500
<i>Dressing a Fowl, Princeton, Massachusetts</i>		Back cover	\$5,500
<i>Dressing Chickens, Princeton, Massachusetts</i>	32	21	\$5,250
<i>Dressing Down the Bull, Vermont (study for)</i>	34	22	\$700
<i>Dressing Down the Bull</i>		Inside back cover	\$8,500
<i>Farm on the River</i>	17	15	\$7,800
<i>Field with Woods and a Female Figure</i>	19	15	\$4,000
<i>Harbor at Corea Maine 2</i>	18	15	\$6,500
<i>Hen Yard</i>	28	19	\$5,500
<i>Hens in Sunlight</i>	29	20	\$6,000
<i>Hens, No. 2</i>	30	20	\$7,500
<i>Irises and Pitcher</i>	2	8	\$1,800
<i>Landscape with Cloud Shadows, Vermont</i>	16	14	\$6,500
<i>Mill Ruin, East Princeton, Massachusetts</i>	21	16	\$1,800
<i>Potato Masher, Pitcher, Teapot, Mirror and Onions</i>	13	13	\$6,000
<i>Quinapoxet Bridge, East Princeton, Massachusetts</i>	23	17	\$1,800
<i>Rocks and Tree Trunks, East Princeton, Massachusetts</i>	22	17	\$750
<i>Rocks and Trees by the Millrace, East Princeton</i>	20	16	\$7,000
<i>Rocks and Trees, East Princeton, Massachusetts</i>	25	17	\$750
<i>Self-Portrait</i>		7	\$5,250
<i>Still Life with Compote</i>	11	13	\$3,500
<i>Still Life with Driftwood</i>	31	21	\$6,500
<i>Still Life with Pitcher, Vase and Teapot</i>	12	13	\$5,500
<i>Still Life: Art Materials</i>	7	10	\$5,500
<i>Still Life: Coffee Pot, Pitchers, Pears, Eggplant and Drapery</i>	5	10	\$6,000
<i>Still Life: Lilies in a Pitcher</i>		6	\$8,000
<i>Still Life: Three Vases of Roses</i>	1	8	\$3,500
<i>Study for Compote and Blue Pitcher</i>	10	12	\$1,200
<i>The Artist's Studio, Worcester, Massachusetts</i>	8	11	\$4,500
<i>The Wounded Knight</i>	26	18	\$5,500
<i>Two Vases with Red and White Flowers</i>	4	9	\$6,000
<i>View through the Willows of Plainfield, Vermont</i>		15 14	\$6,500
<i>Waterfall from parking area, East Princeton, Massachusetts</i>	24	17	\$900
<i>Winter Landscape, Cape Ann</i>	14	14	\$5,500

34

**Dressing Down the Bull, Vermont
(study for)
Circa 1941**

Sepia, reed pen and wash drawing

13 3/8 X 11 5/8 INCHES



[CONTINUES FROM PAGE 7] From paintings of the Italian Renaissance Barnett mastered both figure placement and centuries-old techniques of tonal under-painting and translucent glazes; but he made everything look fresh and modern with his quick black outlines and rapid brushstrokes.

“Barnett believed that boldness and spontaneity can occur only when the artist is not worried about spoiling a piece of canvas,” wrote *American Artist* contributing editor Charles Movalli in a 1990 article on Barnett.

That spontaneity can't be missed in *View through the Willows of Plainfield, Vermont* (1944), on view in the Childs exhibit. As noted art critic Henry McBride wrote about Barnett's nature scenes of this period, “At first glance the landscapes ... appear to be abstractions, until the eye is released from the exciting painting surface; then the color shifts and blends and one experiences the sensation of a very real Vermont countryside.”

Though he might have eschewed the Impressionists' “imitation of sunlight” early on, Barnett became a master at capturing its power to grasp or deflect objects in its path, whether en plein air or in tantalizing table settings with their juicy color palettes and delicious fare.

Barnett always considered drawing to be of equal importance to painting, with many fine examples in the Childs show. The black ink and wash nature scenes provide added clues to his compositional process, with studies for possible still lifes also quite revealing.

Barnett's work is represented in many prestigious museums throughout the country including The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, DC; the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine arts, Philadelphia; the Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts; and The Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio. TINA SUTTON, *Art's & Style* JOURNALIST



Herbert Barnett American (1910-1972)
Dressing Down the Bull, Circa 1942

Oil on masonite
33 X 27 INCHES

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Herbert Barnett American (1910-1972)
Dressing a Fowl, Princeton, Massachusetts
Circa 1949

Oil on masonite
23 7/8 X 18 INCHES
See page 20.

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