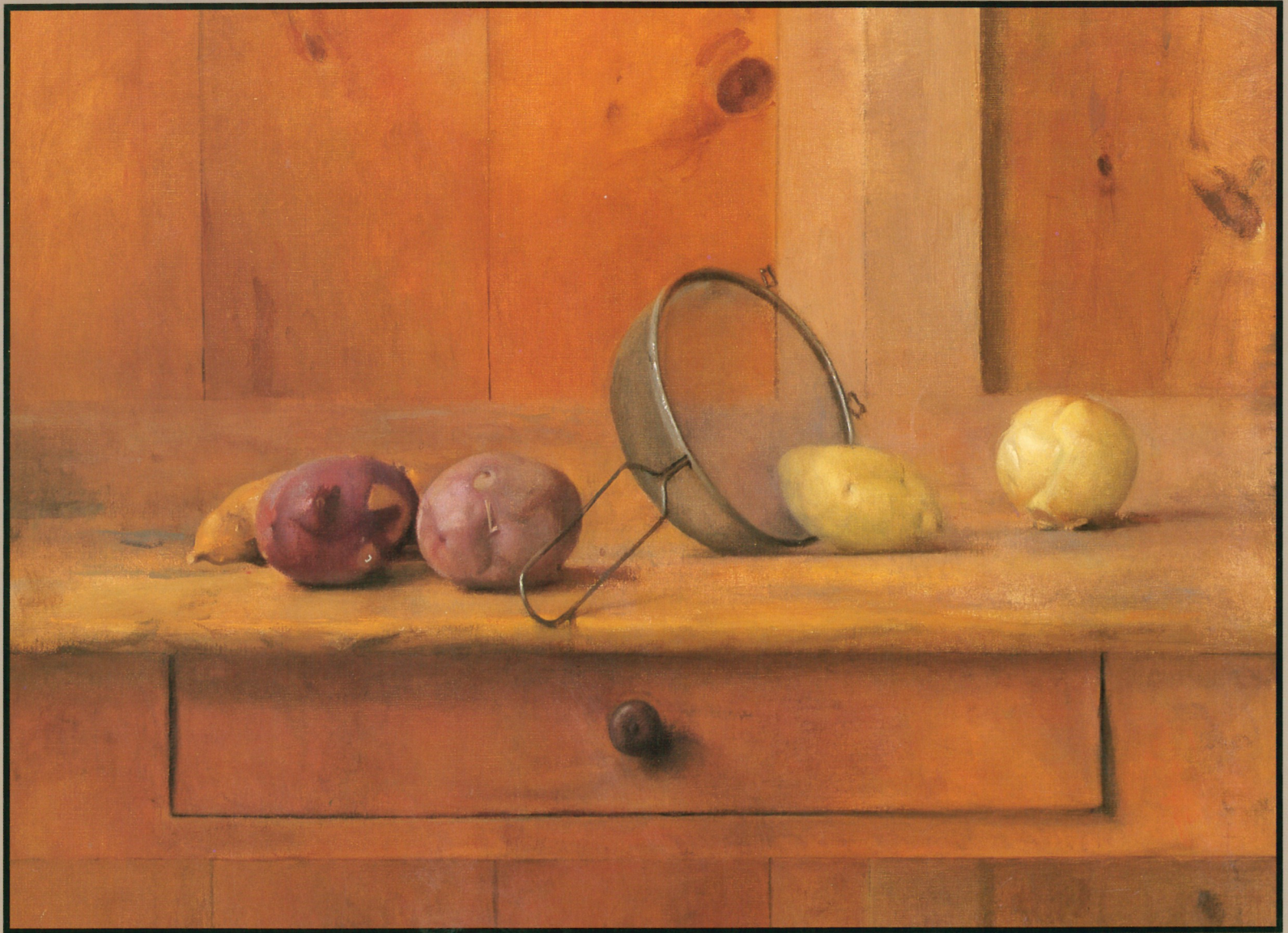


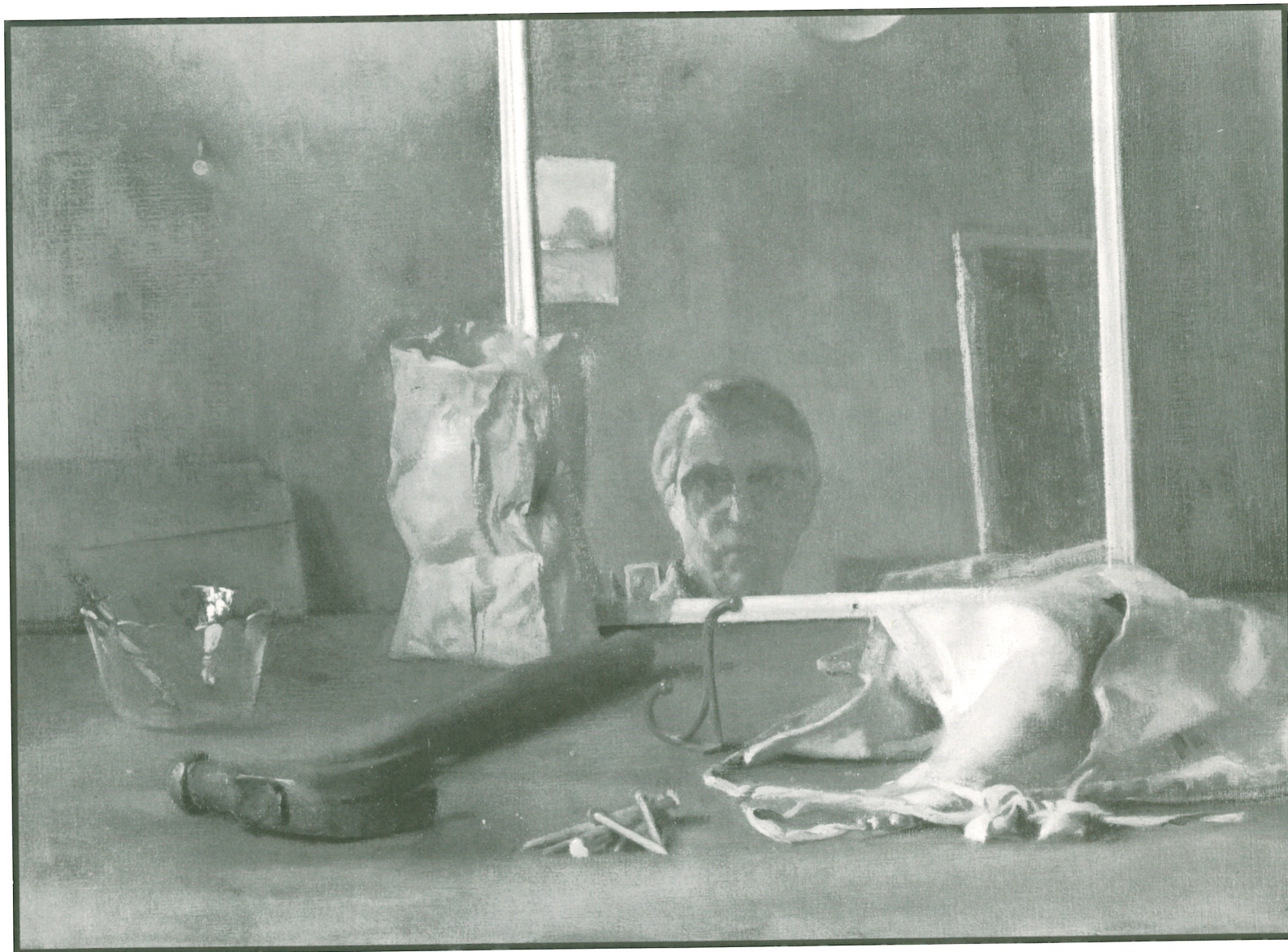
DELAWARE ART MUSEUM, OCTOBER 2 TO NOVEMBER 29, 1992

L E N N A R T



A N D E R S O N

a painter's painter



Self Portrait with Hammer and Nails,
1987, 24 x 26, oil on canvas
Lent by Mr. & Mrs. Richard Menschel

E R R A T U M

Lennart Anderson's *Self Portrait with Hammer and Nails* shown in its entirety



Self Portrait with Hammer and Nails,
1987, 24 x 26, oil on canvas
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L E N N A R T

LENNART ANDERSON:
A PAINTER'S PAINTER

Delaware Art Museum
October 2 –November 29, 1992

*Essay by Rowland Elzea
Chief Curator,
Delaware Art Museum*

On the cover: Lennart Anderson,
*Still Life with Red Potatoes, Yams,
Onion and Strainer*, 1990, oil on canvas.
Collection of the Delaware Art Museum.

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Artists have always been engaged in a dialogue between the past and the present. The past, because the form in which artists communicate, the syntax as it were, is to be learned from what other, earlier, artists have added to the language; the present because what they say comes from their present, unique, experience. There is nothing mysterious about this, it is the way everyone learns about anything. Different artists choose different lines of descent or, to put it another way, they respond to the messages of certain artists more strongly than others. For example an artist who wishes to persuade might find that the work of Michaelangelo, Goya, Daumier, and Kollwitz instructs them while one whose aim is decorative might find Celtic decorative art, Rubens, Tiepolo, Bonnard and Matisse to be his masters.

While all painters must necessarily use the inherited language in all its variety to some degree, some few, like Lennart Anderson, find the richness of the syntax fulfilling in itself. They could be thought of as epistemologists to whom the ordering of knowledge is everything. Since they are painting about the stuff of painting itself, such artists are often called "painter's painters."

Anderson has said that he finds special meaning in the work of the Pompeian fresco painters, Poussin, Chardin, Degas, and, in the 20th century, Morandi and Edwin Dickinson. There is about these artists a certain austerity and sense of self-containment which many find a bit daunting. One tips one's hat with respect as one did to one's high school principal but they are figures with whom one would hardly dare to crack a joke, as one might with Rubens or Renoir. The reason for this is

that such painters leave no tag ends – nothing that has to be completed in words, the medium of communication with which we are all most familiar and comfortable. The message of the artist of persuasion can, or sometimes must, be completed in words and that of the decorative artist needs the ultimate setting of the work for it to be complete. The epistemologist's work, on the other hand, is about order and order is a very human and artificial construct against the ravages of entropy. Therefore, it must be self-contained – a dream of what we would like the world to be like, but it never will be. This austerity is also found in Anderson's work. Even the action shown in the Street Scenes or the Idylls seems somehow frozen as if a sudden and complete silence had fallen over it. It is the silence of order.

Anderson imposes no program on his subjects — no politically active

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teapots or weeping cypresses for him. No "Look Ma, I'm painting" stance, but this does not mean that he is not passionate about what he does. His work is to describe similarities and differences between objects; the up and down, the in and out and right or left position of an onion relative to a knothole, with such a nicety that a spark seems to leap between the two, making their relative positions inevitable, yet alive. He wonders at the life a yellow draws from the green around it, or from that touch of red in another part of the canvas; and he joys in the rightness of an edge that defines the similarity and difference between the two shapes it forms.

There is a certain matter-of-fact diffidence about a painter like Anderson, rather like the acrobat who, when his skill and bravery are praised, replies, "but that is what I do." There are those who have described his work

as "dull," and "passive." If "dull" means being willing to spend the time and energy needed to get it right, with no clever irony or dazzling technical tours de force, then he is dull; if "passive" means being willing to look and see without deceiving himself or others, then he is passive.

Born in Detroit, Anderson did his undergraduate work at the Art Institute of Chicago, working primarily with Louis Ritman. After receiving his BFA, he decided to go on to Cranbrook Academy for his MFA. At that time, Cranbrook was a stronghold of formalist design but, surprisingly, Anderson was more interested in Expressionist and Baroque painting at the time. He worked in Detroit for a year after getting his degree, but in the summer of 1953, left for New York. Through friends, he found a place to live and work among the Abstract Expressionist

artists centered around 10th Street on the lower East Side. On the surface, it might be thought that he would have been seen as an anomaly among the abstract painters, but the fact was, he wasn't and he defined his understanding of the artist's profession there. In the 1950s, painters' problems were painters' problems, no matter whether they were expressed by using subject matter, non-objectively or somewhere in between. Dedication to the profession of painting was much discussed at the famous weekly meetings of the artists' discussion group, "The Club," of which Anderson was a member, as well as in the studios and the street. Seeking and finding on the canvas rather than making and using preparatory studies was another credo of the time and, serene and complete as Anderson's finished paintings seem, they frequently went through much flux and indetermi-

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nacy before they were resolved, with repainting and changing of canvas sizes occurring frequently. The Idylls, begun in 1978 with their germ residing in Bacchanal of 1955, are still unfinished and liable to complete repainting at any time. Although Anderson has done many drawings related to his paintings, they are usually done while the painting is in progress to analyze a problem rather than as preliminary sketches. He dislikes working from drawings as they are already "art," and thus have a form and personality. If, for some reason he cannot work from life, he prefers to use snapshot photographs as they represent an unmodified slice of reality and are not "art."

At the core of Abstract Expressionist painting was the idea of a dialogue between the painting and the artist. A mark made on the canvas dictated another mark in response, and the

subject emerged from the artist's subconscious or imagination and was eventually recognized by the artist during the process of painting, but there was a strong feeling that a picture had to have a subject of some kind. Many were the discussions at "The Club" and in the art periodicals of "nature" and the identity of the "subjects of the painter." Complete non-objectivity was seen as sterile. In a way, this tension between imagination and nature exists in Anderson's work as well. The Street Scenes and the Idylls are compositions from his imagination, while the still lifes, portraits and single figure subjects are from life, but the imaginary work is tempered by the injection of nature in the form of the drawings, often from his own face or figure, done during the course of painting to analyze specific problems, while the work from nature is subject to the transformations and

simplifications of his imagination. Anderson has written, "Nature resists being copied; it flattens and dries out under that approach. I have learned that I must be prepared to be surprised if I'm going to approach nature in its lair. It continually surprises me. For me as a painter, nature is not an apple, but how an apple is seen in its surroundings. Nature has a way of making liaisons between even very disparate elements, and it is my delight when I discover how it accomplishes this."¹

Rowland Elzea
Chief Curator

¹Art of the Real. Mark Strand, ed. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1983. p. 156.

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P H O T O P L A T E S



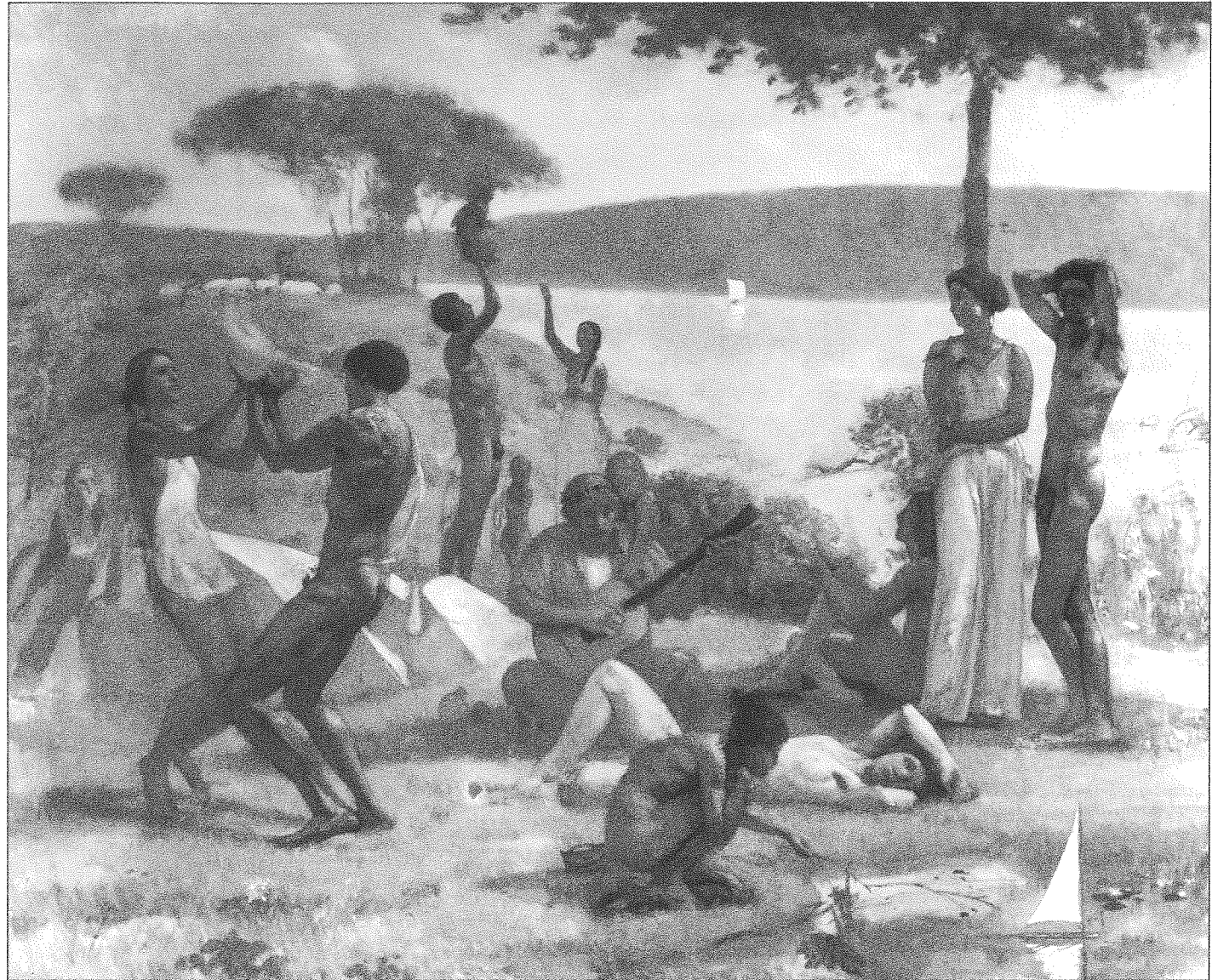
Still Life with White Pitcher, 1956-58, 26 x 34, oil on canvas
Lent from a private collection

P H O T O P L A T E S



Accident (Street Scene), 1955-7, 47 x 57, oil on canvas
Lent by the Palmer Museum of Art, Pennsylvania State University

P H O T O P L A T E S



Idyll I, 1978 to present, 68 x 84, acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, New York

P H O T O P L A T E S



Reclining Nude/Study: Idyll I, c. 1978, 10 1/4 x 16 1/8, pencil on paper
Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, New York

C A T A L O G

1. *Street Scene with Falling Figure*, 1951,
24 x 30, oil on canvas
Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
2. *Still Life with Worcestershire Bottle*, 1955-56,
24 x 32, oil on canvas
Lent by Mimi and Sanford Feld
3. *Bacchanal*, 1955-56,
16 x 20, oil on panel
Lent by the artist
4. *Accident (Street Scene)*, 1955-57,
47 x 57, oil on canvas
Lent by the Palmer Museum of Art,
Pennsylvania State University
5. *Drawing for Street Scene*, c. 1955,
16 x 12, charcoal on paper
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Don Smith
6. *Still Life with White Pitcher*, 1956-57,
26 x 34, oil on canvas
Lent from a Private Collection
7. *American Academy, Rome*, c. 1959,
8½ x 10½, charcoal on paper
Lent by Allison and Donald Innes
8. *Hydra*, 1959,
17½ x 21½, oil on canvas
Lent by Eugene A. Carroll
9. *Street Scene*, 1959,
16½ x 20½, oil on panel
Lent by Mimi and Sanford Feld
10. *Hydra (A Greek Village)*, 1959,
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Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
11. *Street Scene*, 1961,
77 x 99, oil on canvas,
Lent by the Mellon Bank Corporation
12. *Nude*, 1961-64,
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Lent by The Brooklyn Museum, John B. Woodward
Memorial Fund 66.84
13. *Portrait of Ruben Eshkanian*, 1956-58,
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Lent by the artist
14. *Study for the Portrait of Ruben Eshkanian*, 1963,
20 x 16, oil on panel
Lent from a Private Collection, NY
15. *Match Factory, Madison, Maine*, 1965,
oil on canvas
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Peter Carleton
16. *Nude on Chair*, c. 1965,
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Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
17. *Self Portrait with Apple Pie*, c. 1967,
oil on canvas
Lent by Kathryn Graham
18. *Seated Nude*, 1969,
21 x 16, oil on canvas
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Daniel W. Dietrich II
19. *St. Mark's Place*, 1970-76,
94 x 74, oil on canvas
Lent by the Bayly Art Museum of the University of
Virginia, Museum purchase
20. *Still Life with Egg Carton*, 1971,
pencil and charcoal on paper
Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
21. *Still Life with Earthenware Vessel*, 1973,
60 x 50, oil on canvas
Lent by the Bowdoin College Museum of Art,
Brunswick, Maine
22. *Head of Barbara*, c. 1976,
11½ x 8, pencil on paper
Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
23. *Still Life with Etruscan Pot*, 1976,
8 x 12, oil on canvas
Lent by Howard and Joanna Ross
24. *Still Life with Kettle*, 1977,
46 x 38½, oil on canvas
Lent by the Cleveland Museum of Art,
Wishing Well Fund
25. *Standing Man (Study for Idyll II)*, 1977,
23¼ x 18¼, chalk on paper
Lent by John M. Thayer
26. *Portrait of Barbara S.*, 1977,
72 ¼ x 60 ¼, oil on canvas
Lent by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,
Philadelphia. Gift of the Pennsylvania Academy Women's
Committee, Balis and Co., Mrs. E.R. Detchon, Jr., Mrs.
Kenneth W. Gemmill, J. Welles Henderson, The Blanche P.
Levi Foundation, L'Oréal Corp, Dr. Charles W. Nichols,
David N. Pincus, Marion B. Stroud, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley
C. Tuttleman, Mrs. Bernice McIlhenny Wintersteen, and
public subscriptions
27. *Reclining Nude/Study: Idyll I*, c. 1978,
10 ¼ x 16 ¼, pencil on paper
Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
28. *Idyll I*, 1978 to present,
68 x 84, acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
29. *Idyll II*, 1979 to present,
64¼ x 80¼, acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
30. *Standing Woman/Study: Idyll III*, c. 1981,
pencil on paper
Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
31. *Idyll III*, 1981 to present,
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Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
32. *Still Life with Grapes and Two Plums*, 1981,
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Lent by Betsy and Frank Goodyear
33. *Still Life with Popcorn Maker II*, 1982,
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Lent by the Bayly Museum of the University of
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Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
35. *Reclining Nude*, 1984,
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36. *Head of Eliza*, 1984,
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Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
37. *Still Life with Strawberries and Cellophane*, 1986,
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Lent from a Private Collection
38. *Self Portrait with Hammer and Nails*, 1987,
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Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Menschel
39. *Two Butter Fish and a Yellow Tomato on a Broken
Plate*, 1990, 8½ x 12½, Oil on canvas
Lent by Philip H. Sieg
40. *Still Life with Broken Statue, Salt Shaker, Brown
Pitcher, Pencil and Mirror*, 1990, 11½ x 15½,
Oil on paper
Courtesy of Davis & Langdale Company, NY
41. *Still Life with Red Potatoes, Yams, Onion and
Strainer*, 1990, 24 x 29½, Oil on canvas
Delaware Art Museum,
F. V. du Pont Accession Fund, 1991

C H E C K L I S T

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