

The Gallery Committee of Harpur College

presents

An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by

MARSHALL GLASIER

for the

FOURTH FINE ARTS FESTIVAL

1959

Opening - April 17, 8:00 p.m.

Closing - May 17

in the Park House Gallery, Endicott, New York

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| 2. The Temptation of St. Anthony | 1950 | Fig. 10 |
| 3. Lazarus Unwinding | 1955 | Fig. 15 |
| 4. Irradiations | 1955 | Fig. 21 |
| 5. Mother and Child | 1956 | Fig. 23 |
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| 6. Egyptian Book of the Dead | 1956 | |
| 7. Look Daddy, No Arms (Self Portrait) | 1956 | Fig. 13 |
| 8. Brown Seascape. | 1957 | |
| 9. Little Pink Seascape | 1958 | |
| 10. Girl With Plaid Skirt | 1958 | Fig. 25 |
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D r a w i n g s

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|---|------|--------|
| 17. Gate of Hell (oil on paper) | 1956 | |
| Collection of Gavin Cullen | | |
| 18. Figure. | 1956 | |
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| 19. Figure. | 1956 | |
| Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Marek Kaplan | | |
| 20. Girl Drawing (oil on paper). | 1955 | |
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| 22. Mother and Child | 1956 | Fig. 7 |
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| 26. Buddha Drawing | 1958 | |
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Prices upon request. Terms may be arranged.

It gives me great pleasure to write a few words of appreciation of the work of Mr. Marshall Glasier.

Look at his drawings and you are aware that you are in the presence of a great draftsman. This is particularly satisfactory in a period where drawing after the model is hardly practised anymore.

Everything is easily labeled today. ART becomes something like a fabricated commercial product on the shelves of the Art Supermarkets. There, of course, Mr. Glasier does not fit in; for he belongs to the few iconoclasts which defy a too easy identification. Look at his work and you discover "human values" . . . there is humor, there is the human figure, there is the sea, shells, twigs and stones . . . you behold a cosmos. His paintings are sometimes like those shells you put to your ear and hear all kinds of rhythms and music. To sum it up, he is in the tradition of the great Fantasists in art.

With these words George Grosz has described the art of Marshall Glasier, an artist who is being presented at Harpur College this month in an exhibition of some thirty works. Since there are few who remember the profile written about him in Esquire (1945), a brief recounting of his formative years is in order.

Like many people of his generation, Glasier "lost" most of the 1920's. His stay at the University of Wisconsin was distinguished only by the few illustrations he made for the 1919 Wisconsin Octopus. He then tried sales work in a Chicago book store. This career was terminated by an ill-starred love affair, the repercussions of which left him an easy prey for a Marine press gang; when he "came up for breath" he was in Haiti wearing the colors. His military stint was then followed by several inconsequential years in Washington, D.C., where he worked in retail layout and advertising. Not much to show for thirty years of life; and there was little which one might call promise.

Contact with George Grosz - who arrived in New York in 1932 - changed the situation. One of his first students at the Art Students League was Marshall Glasier. Who could anticipate the deep friendship which was to develop

between the ex-dadaist and the ex-Marine? Though Grosz was a knowledgeable European gentleman in the midst of a distinguished career, and Glasier was a rough backwoods giant and neophyte, their relationship was fruitful for both participants. It continues to this day. From the German master Glasier discovered line. Though his draftsmanship does not have the trenchancy or facility of his master, it does possess a bluntness capable of lyric as well as forceful expression. Above all Grosz taught his student what it meant to be an artist.

Sometime during the late 1930's Glasier felt the tug of his native state, Wisconsin, and returned to Madison for a long apprentice period. He returned not quite a prodigal because he had an idea. The "smart guys" in Wisconsin who had stroked the fur of their early successes the right way, considered this slow ripener half as a joke and half as a thorn. That a grown man would "idle" away his time in his father's attic caused the great middle-class brow to arch angrily. While the machinery of vituperation spun, Glasier whittled away on his dream and learned that you can't go home again.

For friends he gravitated toward what one prim faculty secretary called, the "freaks" of the University of Wisconsin: people like Rudolph Kolisch of the Pro Arte Quartet; Hans Gerth, sociologist and translator of Max Weber; Warren Gilson, M.D. and electronic inventor; Harry Partch, composer in the 43 tone scale; and Gunnar Johansen, pianist and composer in residence. With devastating insight he took up the cudgel for real causes, and a curious host of devoted students gathered around this big-stomached Falstaff of a man. Concerning this period, Glasier says: "When I started to teach myself to paint, the Italian primitives showed me the way -- the Wisconsin River landscape was also there -- so I put the two together -- Regionalism never interested me -- I wondered at the eternality of the myth -- one paints one's own background nevertheless -- and I wanted to tell stories, old stories in a new fashion." Meanwhile his dream began to unroll in a series of strange drawings and fantastic mythological paintings.



Fig. 1 - Man and Wife, 1957



Fig. 2 - Black Eurasian Hag, 1956



Fig. 3 - Seated Figure, 1956

Fig. 4 - The Tartar Coat, 1956



Fig. 5 - Drawing, 1956





Fig. 6a, 6 - Recumbent Nude, 1956, Private Collection

Fig. 7 - Mother and Child, detail, 1956

Fig. 8 - Sea Floor II, 1957

Fig. 9 - Arabesque, 1949





Fig. 10 - Temptation of St. Anthony, 1950



Fig. 11 - The Beggar, 1940
Collection of Mrs. R. Keeney

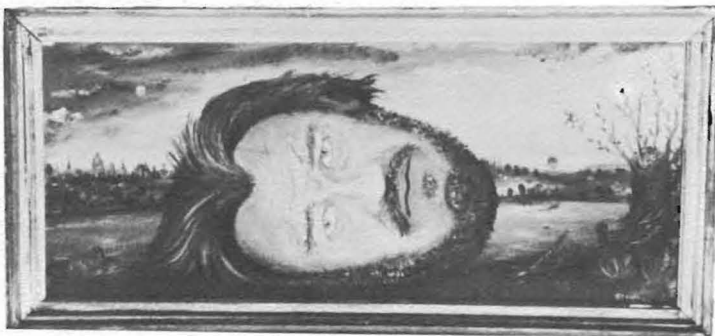


Fig. 12 - St. John the Baptist, 1950
Collection of Brina Gordon



Fig. 13 - Look Daddy, No Hands (Self Portrait), 1956





Fig. 15 - Lazarus Unwinding, 1955



Fig. 16 - On the Beach, 1955

opposite page: Fig. 14 - Seascape, 1958



Fig. 17 - The Guardian, 1958

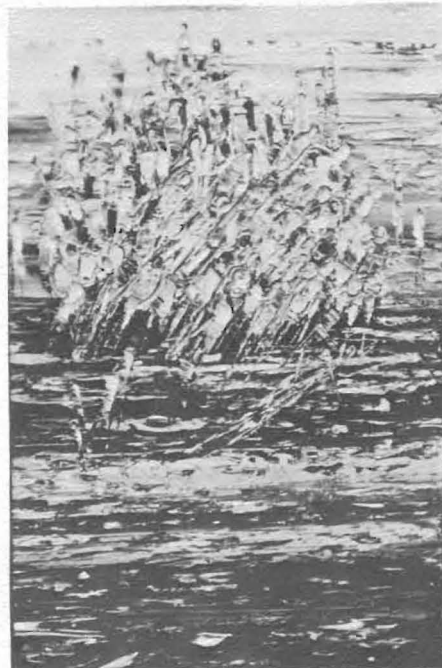


Fig. 18 - The Pile Up, 1958

Fig. 19 - Shale Pocket, 1959

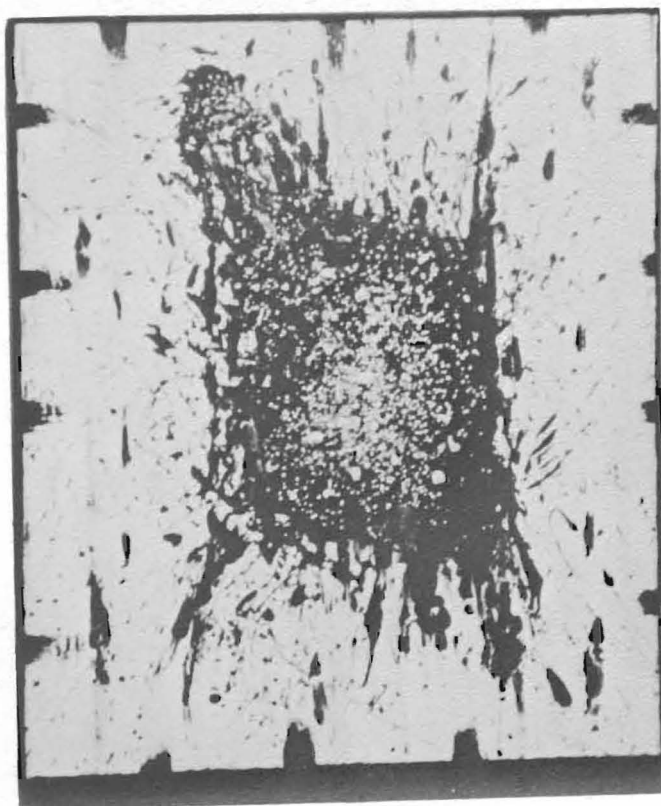


Fig. 20 - Microcosm and Macrocosm, 1959





Fig. 21 - Irradiations, 1955



Fig. 22 - An American in Japan, 1958



Fig. 23 - Mother and Child, 1956
Collection of Marion H. Cullen

Fig. 24 - Others are Watching Us, No. 2, 1953, Collection of Rudolf Kolish





Fig. 25 - Girl With Plaid Skirt, 1958, Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Lindsay



Fig. 26 - The Bride, 1957, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Karli Frucht

In his Temptation of St. Anthony (Fig. 10) a fat-headed business man is uneasily situated upon the grass in front of a decorated wall. A painting of Lake Mendota with the Wisconsin State Capitol hangs on the wall. St. Anthony holds a dollar bill in one hand. With the other hand he makes a fool's gesture that mocks the upward-directed anguish of his eyes. Of the three female temptresses, the one behind him is the most horrible. With her wicked mask and poisonously pointed breasts she tempts him with an apple, all the while disconcerting his shoulder with a Chinese back-scratcher. Upon her G-string patch one sees a dollar sign. Mythology is not fashionable today and certainly not this kind of hinterland sur-realism. Many of the cognoscenti prefer artists who invent new ways of painting nothing with a sponge. But for Glasier, as for Allston, Thoreau or Ryder before him, mythologizing was a means of exploring the geography of his interior life, and a way of preserving and explaining his integrity.

During the following few years spent in Oregon he discovered the ocean and his second, or "Pacific" period began. To deal pictorially with the endlessness and the many moods of the ocean necessitated a new style -- one of greater breadth, vigor and abstraction. Large bold overdrags of paint in horizontal strips enabled him to paint "at once" the stratified movement of the sea. The flat surface quality became evocative, somewhat in the manner of the Oriental art in the Portland Museum which he admired. (Fig. 14).

His Pacific manner still bears fruit today. Often it is refreshed by new design and conceptual problems which are awakened by his explorative draftsmanship. Among the drawings one sees a vital range of expression and technique. In the faces of the three drawings, The Tartar Coat (Fig. 4), Recumbant Nude (Fig. 6), and the Mother and Child (Fig. 7) there is respectively, proud grandeur, classic beauty, and "ugliness", the line varying according to the mood.

After a year as artist in residence at Reed College, Glasier returned to Wisconsin. He was divorced and his beloved daughter went to the mother.

Now Madison was no longer possible. He spent a lonely winter in a wretched New York hotel room and renewed his contact with Grosz. The Pacific seascapes were turned into an Egyptian book of the dead (Cat. No. 6). Figures became splintered and were knitted together with thongs (Fig. 1). In his many family paintings nostalgia and wistfulness alternate with horror and self-flagellation. He began embalming his figures in mummy cloth, as if to wrap up his dreams and put them away.

Glasier, like Caravaggio, monumentized his feelings of persecution. The Beggar of 1940, (Fig. 11), which had turned into a St. Christopher and John the Baptist (Fig. 12) during the Madison period, now became the forgotten artist working in a cave, a demented satyr carrying a screaming child (Fig. 13), or a turtle crawling at the feet of a mother and child (Fig. 23). He became a nameless face, lost in an ugly sea of faces -- graduation pictures of a humanity which had received diplomas from the school of indecency (Fig. 21). Significantly, one of his recent paintings depicts a tangle of shattered figures falling toward a brink (Fig. 18).

These apocalyptic paintings contrast strongly with other recent figure paintings, such as the Girl with a Plaid Skirt (Fig. 25). In this particular painting a young woman is seated by the gaunt post of a pier; behind, the sky, beach and ocean spread out. The blunt unfinished quality of the figure and hands emphasizes the pattern, which in turn brings out the personality of the pose. Above, the lovely head presides as a positive note of certainty -- a redeeming vision.

As one observes the development of Glasier's mythology, it becomes increasingly clear that the war and peace of his figurative confessionism ramifies our own condition, both as single creatures and as a people. The art has begun to surpass the man as a personality. However, to understand this, one has to be able to discern the formidable content which resides within his rough and at times uneven forms.

Marshall Glasier's art is prompted by inner necessity rather than by ex-

ternal factors. Neither the man nor his art is broadly known today since they do not fit gracefully into the delicate inter-locking machinery of the fashionable art world. Like Elshemius, he is not adept in playing the game of self-promotional footsie. His audience consists chiefly of small clusters of friends here and there who keep his paintings on indefinite loan. These friends seem to understand better than an art critic who recently could only say, "You should change your signature", or a gallery director who exclaimed, "But nobody is painting that way today."

True, nobody is. Many talents become submerged in technical problems; others court an easy fame by re-issuing the latest fad; and still others strangle in their first success. As has always been the case, there are few who are willing to explore the consequences of the authentic statement. Glasier has been willing to do so, and in abundance. He is a latter-day romantic whose art contains something of Burne-Jones and Arnold Schoenberg, and yet still remains fundamentally American in spirit.

Kenneth Lindsay

Marshall Glasier was born in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, in 1902. He came to New York in 1930, where he met George Grosz and studied with him for five years at the Art Student's League. He then worked on the WPA Federal Art Project. In 1945 Esquire published an article about his life and work. During 1951-52, Glasier painted in Wisconsin on a grant-in-aid from Bjorksten Research Laboratories. For the years 1952-53 he was artist in residence at Reed College. Since 1957 he has taught at the Art Student's League.

One-man shows:

Milwaukee Art Institute, 1939
Julien Levy Gallery, 1940
University of Wisconsin, 1942
Associated American Artists, 1943
Kalamazoo Art Institute, 1944
Reed College, 1952
University of Wisconsin, 1955
Vera Lazuk Gallery, 1957
Berryman Gallery, New York City, 1958

Group shows:

Whitney Museum, New York
Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.
Albright Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.
Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, Ill.
Cincinnati Art Museum
Pittsburgh Art Museum

The Gallery Committee wishes to thank the Berryman Gallery for its cooperation in assembling this exhibition.

