

MENTO DI STORIA
CA DELLE ARTI

02

170

TÀ DEGLI STUDI
VENEZIA

VINCENT VAN GOGH IN ST REMY

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

COVER: Vincent Van Gogh in St. Remy # 14 (Catalogue No. 34)

DIPARTIMENTO DI STORIA E CRITICA DELLE ARTI
UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI VENEZIA

DZ. 01170

WORLD HOUSE GALLERIES

987 MADISON AVENUE

NEW YORK 21, N. Y.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

MAY 31 - JUNE 24, 1961





William Parker
VI 23/94

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

There is a stubborn inconsistency in Robert Andrew Parker's work. It is abstract and realistic, fantastic and matter-of-fact, wry and romantic, unexpected yet logical. It looks naive and is supremely sophisticated. It is eccentric and personal.

I know few artists who paint as continuously and compulsively as Parker. He works every day of his life, destroys as much as he keeps, and even so produces hundreds of watercolors and drawings in a year, as well as several oils. Two forces prod him: his response to visual experience and his unpredictable imagination. At one moment he will draw a pile of stones with concentrated observation; at the next an imaginary battle or an angel. The strange thing is that the most factual works often have an imaginary aura, while the imagined scenes look like the record of actual occurrences.

I suspect that this is so because of a certain perversity in Parker. Faced with a fact, he searches for an underlying spirit; faced with a dream, he looks for its flesh-and-blood reality. His portraits of actual people, such as the jazz pianist Thelonius Monk, impart a mysterious sense of character behind their expressionless faces, mysterious because its existence is established yet unrevealed. His wild animals are alien to human understanding; there is something secret and feral about them. Even his stones have a look of significance, of something ancient and enduring perhaps. In contrast to these, an imaginary scene like *Prelude to an Assassination* is decked out with all the panoply and circumstantial detail of an observed event; The many paintings dealing with Van Gogh seem to form the true chronicle of a life.

The Van Gogh series, incidentally, reveals one characteristic of Parker's imagination—its persistent involvement in certain themes until they have been formally and spiritually exhausted. In 1955 he was hired by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to do the drawings for its film, *Lust for Life*, in France and Holland. The experience of being Van Gogh in the actual settings and circumstances of his tragic career appears to have drawn Parker into this vicarious voyage through the other artist's life. Before this, World War I absorbed him as obsessively; he painted its pilots, its doughboys, its battles and manoeuvres as if he had been commissioned to record every incident of the struggle—though his pictures were, of course, completely imaginary.

Stylistically, Parker owes small allegiance to any trend or movement. He can paint naturalistically, and he has done total abstractions, although I do not think the latter are his best works. He is too much concerned with the poetry of things and events. This concern often leads him to a romantic emphasis on those aspects of an actual

scene which move him—with a result that may look abstract, but is not. A *Storm Near Key West* is a fluid eruption of swirling forms, not immediately recognizable as clouds; a *View of Amsterdam* is a warring pattern of blunt strokes and rectangular shapes which only slowly reveal themselves as water, buildings, sky. Yet the pictorial forms of both pictures are intimately connected with the artist's response to his subjects.

Parker is a master of line and can make it do an astonishing number of things. He can lay it on the paper in a dense and somber network out of which emerge his stark images of a wolf or three rats. He can use it with a feathery lightness of great delicacy, as in his *Squid Triptych*. He can make it perform ebullient arabesques in describing flying angels of singular elegance. Perhaps most characteristic of all (and surely most difficult) is his ability to endow it with a naive, illustrative, nineteenth-century flavor when he illuminates a ballad like *Twa Corbies*. I can think of no American artist who has evoked a literary atmosphere with so delicate a balance of nostalgia and wry humor since Charles Demuth illustrated Henry James.

In some of his recent work Parker has turned to more painterly means, as if he distrusted his linear virtuosity. There are a number of watercolors in the present exhibition—one of *Gay Head*, one of *poplars*, several views of cities like that of *Amsterdam*—in which the forms are almost entirely constructed of wide, textured brush-strokes giving everything a faceted look, as if they had been sculptured. This approach is carried even further in the oils, where the paint itself is modeled in low relief. Somewhere between his linear and painterly extremes are those watercolors that combine line with areas of pure color, the design conceived more in terms of silhouette and shape than of mass. It is here, I think, that Parker has done his finest work—the *Prelude to an Assassination*, for instance, with its brilliant handling of a crowded scene compressed into flat perspective, or the impressive *Van Gogh in Arles #11* in which the black sky and the freely brushed red-brown landscape make so moving a foil to the silhouetted figure and the white tablecloth with its startling purple accents of wine glass and carafe.

But there is no use in asking Parker to pursue any single direction, nor would one wish to. Consistency is the least of his concerns, spontaneity probably the greatest. Nobody, least of all he, can foretell what subjects will absorb him next or what variations in style and technique he will evolve to cope with them. The reward for the rest of us is that we can safely expect from him the unexpected—not simply novelty but a wonderfully odd, fresh vision.

JOHN I. H. BAUR
Associate Director
Whitney Museum of American Art



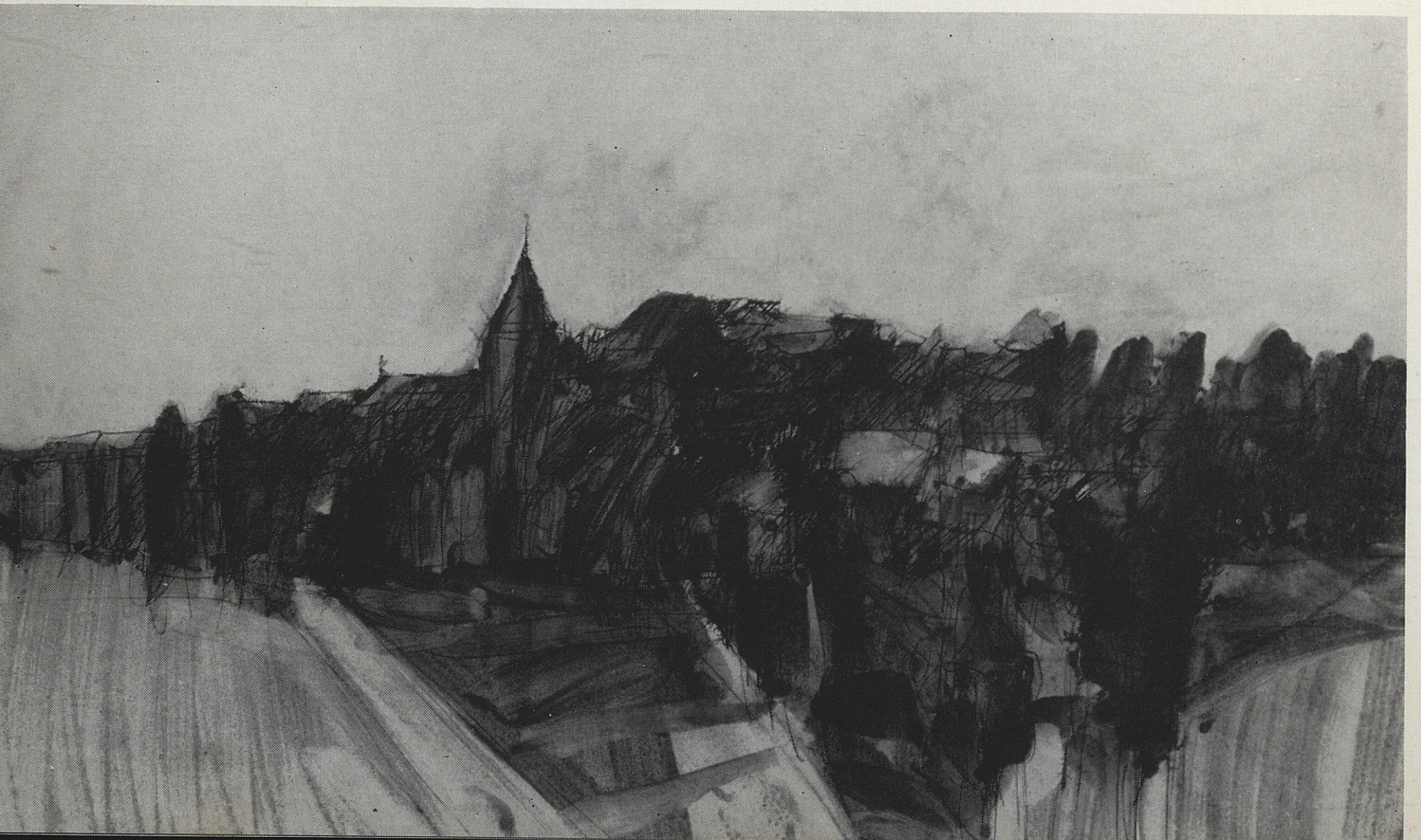








1942. 10. 10. IX. 30. 57









CATALOGUE

Watercolors and Ink Drawings

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|------------|
| 1 | <i>Prelude to an Assassination</i>
Collection Mr. Joseph H. Hirshhorn, New York | 1957 | 16½ x 20¾" |
| 2 | <i>The Assassins</i> | 1957 | 24 x 18" |
| 3 | <i>Epilogue to an Assassination</i> | 1957 | 18 x 21¾" |
| 4 | <i>Angel</i> | 1957 | 22¾ x 18" |
| 5 | <i>Bird Over a Landscape</i> | 1958 | 17¾ x 22¼" |
| 6 | <i>Onions</i> | 1958 | 13½ x 26¼" |
| 7 | <i>Cliffs, Grayhead, Martha's Vineyard</i> | 1958 | 18 x 25" |
| 8 | <i>Les Baux</i> | 1958 | 17¾ x 24" |
| 9 | <i>Magic Mountain #2</i> | 1958 | 17½ x 26¼" |
| 10 | <i>England</i> | 1959 | 18 x 30½" |
| 11 | <i>Arena</i> | 1959 | 17¾ x 25¾" |
| 12 | <i>Near Brewster</i> | 1959 | 18 x 26¼" |
| 13 | <i>Stones</i> | 1959 | 17½ x 22¼" |
| 14 | <i>Groupers, Key West</i> | 1959 | 18 x 22¾" |
| 15 | <i>A Storm near Key West</i> | 1959 | 17½ x 22" |
| 16 | <i>Good Bye to All Dead</i> | 1959 | 23 x 17¼" |
| 17 | <i>Roots</i> | 1959 | 17¼ x 21¾" |
| 18 | <i>Oubari—Western Libya #1</i> | 1960 | 25 x 31¾" |
| 19 | <i>Oubari—Western Libya #2</i> | 1960 | 27 x 35" |
| 20 | <i>Thelonius Monk</i> | 1960 | 24⅛ x 18" |
| 21 | <i>Portrait of Joe Turner</i>
Collection Mr. Joseph H. Hirshhorn, New York | 1960 | 31½ x 18" |
| 22 | <i>View of Amsterdam</i> | 1960 | 24½ x 31" |

23	Syracusa #1	1960	24 x 24 ³ / ₄ "
24	Syracusa #2	1960	24 ¹ / ₂ x 32"
25	Monkey #2	1960	27 x 18"
26	Rats	1960	17 ¹ / ₂ x 24"
27	A Wolf	1960	17 ¹ / ₂ x 23 ¹ / ₂ "
28	View of Leopoldville	1960	17 ¹ / ₂ x 24 ¹ / ₂ "
29	Twa Corbies	1961	24 x 29 ¹ / ₄ "
30	A Squid (Tryptic #1)	1961	41 ¹ / ₂ x 25"
31	View of Tripoli (Tryptic #2)	1961	46 ¹ / ₂ x 27"
32	Vincent Van Gogh in Arles #7 <small>Collection Mr. Joseph H. Hirshhorn, New York</small>	1961	31 ¹ / ₂ x 17"
33	Vincent Van Gogh in Arles #11	1961	34 x 24 ¹ / ₄ "
34	Vincent Van Gogh in St. Remy #14	1961	29 ¹ / ₄ x 24"
35	Vincent Van Gogh in Arles #15	1961	28 ¹ / ₂ x 22 ¹ / ₂ "
36	Vincent Van Gogh in Arles #16	1961	28 ¹ / ₂ x 23 ³ / ₄ "
37	Still Life in Aluminum Platter	1961	29 x 35 ¹ / ₂ "

Oils

38	A Dancer	1959	34 x 24"
39	In Tripoli	1960	46 x 20"
40	A View in Winter	1960	25 x 48"
41	A Chouka #1	1960	26 x 48"
42	Vincent Van Gogh in Arles #20	1961	48 x 30"
43	Vincent Van Gogh in Arles #21	1961	48 x 30"
44	Vincent Van Gogh in Arles #22	1961	48 x 28"

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

- 1927 Born in Norfolk, Virginia.
- 1927-1945 Lived in St. Louis, New Mexico, Seattle, Chicago.
- 1945-1946 Service in the U. S. Army Air Force.
- 1948-1952 Attended and graduated from Art School of the Art Institute of Chicago.
1950—Honorable Mention, Veterans Exhibition, Art Institute.
1951—First Prize, Veterans Exhibition, Art Institute.
- 1952 Scholarship at Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture.
- 1952-1953 Worked under Peter Grippe at Atelier 17, New York.
- 1952 Included in Metropolitan Museum of Art Watercolors, Drawings, and Prints Exhibition.
- 1953 Included in the Museum of Modern Art Young American Print Makers Exhibition.
- 1954 In April, first one-man show of oils, watercolors, and prints at ROKO Gallery.
- 1954 In October, exhibition of illustrations for poetry by W. H. Auden, E. E. Cummings, Christopher Isherwood, William Jay Smith, etc., at ROKO Gallery.
- 1954-1956 Circulating Exhibition sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art: New Artists—A Survey of Recent Work, June 1954-56.
- 1955 January 12-February 20—included in the Annual Exhibition of the Whitney Museum of American Art.
- 1955 May 18th—International Biennial Watercolor Exhibition, Brooklyn Museum.
- 1955 October—One-man exhibition of watercolors at ROKO Gallery.
- 1956 February—included in the New Talent issue of Art in America. Paintings circulated throughout the United States by the American Federation of Arts.
- 1956 October 22-November 17. One man exhibition of Watercolors at ROKO Gallery.
- 1956 November 14-January 6, 1957—Whitney Museum Annual.
- 1957 February 5-28, one-man exhibition of oils and watercolors at THE GALLERY, Katonah Village Library, Katonah, N. Y.
- 1957 January 25-February 22, one-man exhibition of watercolors at the Palmer House Galleries, Chicago.
- 1957 February 27-April 14, Young America Exhibition, Whitney Museum.
- 1957 March 14-April 21, Recent American Acquisitions Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art.
- 1957 May 21, June 14—One-man show exhibition Nexus Gallery, Boston, Mass.
- 1957 June 15, July 14—Five Masters of Line: Calder, Cueva, Stuart Davis, Morris Graves, Robert Andrew Parker.
La Napoule Art Foundation, La Napoule, France.
- 1957-1959 United States Information Service Exhibition Contemporary Graphic Art in the U. S. Circulated through Europe and Near East.
Parker drawing reproduced in catalogues of Brussels Museum, Belgium, and Museum of Modern Art, Rome—drawing used as poster for exhibition in Rome.

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Museum of Modern Art, New York. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
Museum of Fine Art, Raleigh, N. C.

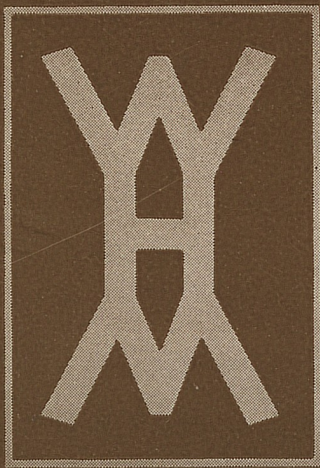
PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Mrs. John D. Rockefeller III, Monroe Wheeler, Jack Levine, Mrs. L. B. Westcott, Marianne Moore, William B. Lieberman, James B. Byrnes, John Gordon, Roy R. Neuberger, Martha Jackson, Michael Leon Freilich, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kulicke.

SCA 37414



The Galleries are open Monday through Saturday 10 — 5:30



DIPART E CRI
UNIVERS D