

# THE SAMSTAG LEGACY

AN ARTIST'S BEQUEST

EDITOR ROSS WOLFE ESSAYS BY LEA ROSSON DELONG AND ROSS WOLFE

SAMSTAG MUSEUM





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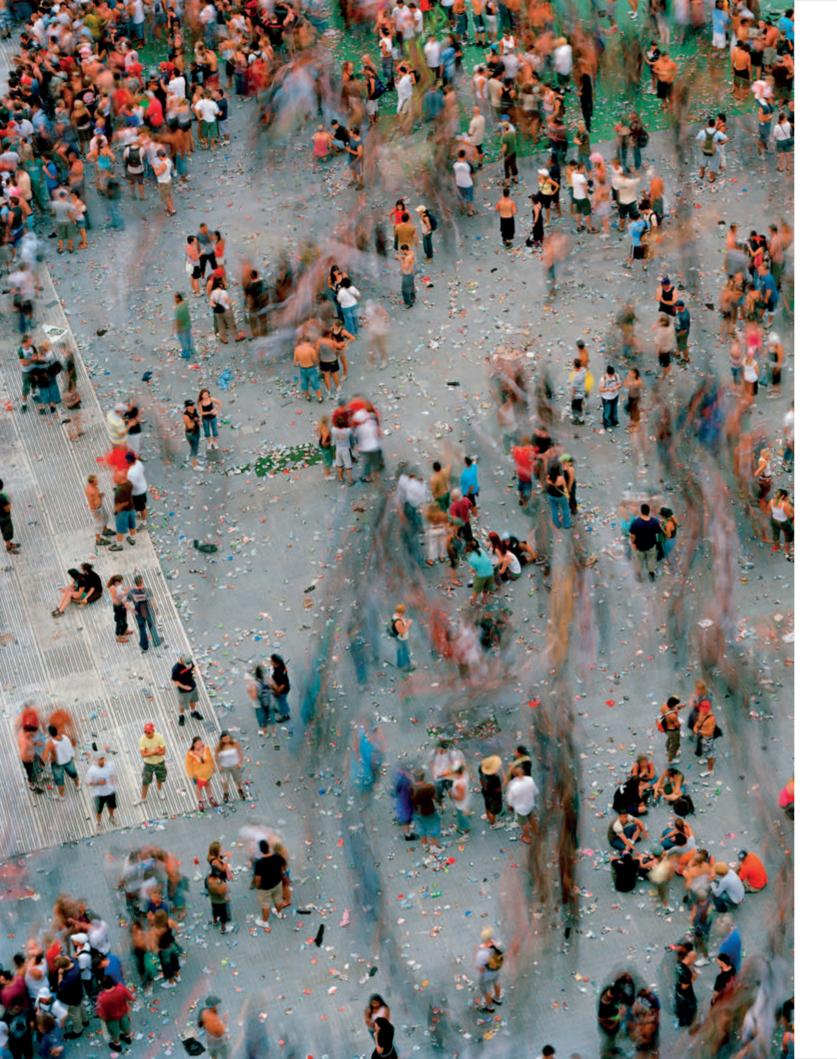
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# PREFACE PROFESSOR DAVID LLOYD

This book pays tribute to two exceptional American philanthropists, Anne and Gordon Samstag, and their magnificent cultural bequest, the Fine Arts Trust, whose primary object is to award international study scholarships to Australian artists.

To facilitate the Samstags' grand vision, Gordon Samstag set out detailed instructions in his will of 1989. These effectively required that a cooperative partnership be formed between his American trustee – the Citizens and Southern Trust Company (now Bank of America, NA), of Naples, Florida – and the University of South Australia (UniSA), whose role under the will was to award and administer the scholarships. That productive partnership between the trustee and the UniSA was formally agreed in 1991.

In the years since, the UniSA has awarded 136 Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships, with a combined value of more than ten million Australian dollars. The Samstag Scholarships are justifiably known in Australia as golden passports to rapid success in the professional visual arts. They are generous, enabling Australian artists to study at a place of their choice, anywhere in the world, for periods of twelve months or more.

It is a matter of pride that the UniSA is so closely associated with such visionary philanthropy. The relationship is all the more special because the UniSA shares a common birthday with the Samstag benefaction: this year, in 2016, we together celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversaries. Among many initiatives being taken to suitably register that milestone is this scholarly publication, *The Samstag Legacy: An artist's bequest*. Produced with characteristic excellence by the UniSA's Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, the book presents a comprehensive biographical account of Anne and Gordon Samstag. It has been many years in the making.

The Samstags, famously, were private people, and although Gordon Samstag worked for nearly a decade in the 1960s at the South Australian School of Art (now part of the UniSA), very little was known about them. It has only gradually emerged, through this project, that they both came from distinguished family backgrounds and, moreover, that Gordon had enjoyed an artistic career of some significance before coming to Australia. With the passage of time, his achievements had largely been lost from view in his country of birth. An objective of the book, therefore, is to inspire further research and discoveries regarding Gordon Samstag's art, particularly among American scholars.

Simon TERRILL (b. 1969)
Swarm, 2005 (detail)
Type C print
180.0 x 220.0 cm (70% x 86% in)
University of South Australia
Art Collection
2008 Samstag Scholar

An ambitious, high-quality fine-art publishing project, such as this carefully researched book, necessarily involves the contributions of a great many individuals. The UniSA is especially indebted to the rigour and commitment of the book's authors, Dr Lea Rosson DeLong and Ross Wolfe. They have each produced thorough (and fascinating) accounts of the Samstags, albeit from different viewpoints, that will serve history well.

I warmly acknowledge the valued support of our colleagues at Bank of America, Florida, and their associates at Bond, Schoeneck & King, of Naples, Florida, the trustee's attorneys. Our successful and rewarding partnership has ensured that Gordon Samstag's matchless vision has not only been fulfilled, but will endure. Indeed, it has been said that 'the Samstag opportunity' will do more to put emerging Australian artists on the world stage than any other. The very accomplished Samstag Scholars – many of whom have their work celebrated in the book – are now a mighty cohort, a force for culture and the future.

I am delighted that the UniSA has been the creative agent enabling this handsome book's production. It speaks to our own cultural values and educational vision to have played a leadership role in bringing the lives of two wonderful, generous and intriguing benefactors to light.

#### PROFESSOR DAVID LLOYD

Vice Chancellor and President, University of South Australia

### FOREWORD FRICA GREEN

Had Anne and Gordon Samstag not come to Australia from America in 1961, and thence to live in Adelaide's quiet suburbs for more than a decade, while Gordon worked professionally at the South Australian School of Art (SASA), then a remarkable story of American ancestry and culture would have been lost to posterity. To begin with, there would have been no historic bequest to Australian artists: that generosity came from Gordon's affection for his students at the SASA – now part of the University of South Australia (UniSA) – where he claimed to have enjoyed the happiest years of his life. Nor, without Gordon's benefaction (in a scheme willingly supported by Anne), would any agency – such as the UniSA, for example – have had the motivation or cause to invest research into his artistic achievements in the period before he and Anne came to Australia. What's more, the intriguing personal biographies of two major benefactors to Australian visual artists, which this book seeks to illuminate, would never have seen the light of day.

The Samstags left few clues for history's gaze, and certainly negligible correspondence of a personal kind. In Australia they effectively concealed themselves, conducting their lives, both privately and professionally, with such social reserve and ordinariness that few friends or colleagues gleaned much, if anything, about their surprisingly rich family histories. It was as if they had come without a past, not wanting to be known.

If it hadn't been for the determined commitment to researching their lives begun by Ross Wolfe in 1992, when he was appointed director of the newly created Samstag Program at the UniSA, then our knowledge of Anne and Gordon Samstag as people, and of their stories and motivations as generous and exemplary benefactors, would have remained spare and insufficient. Instead, what has been discovered over the twenty-five years since the Samstag bequest was first publicly announced has proven revelatory.

Crucially, in 1999, American art historian Dr Lea Rosson DeLong accepted a commission from the Samstag Program to write what was initially conceived as a modest text on the art of Gordon Samstag. A specialist in American art of the Great Depression, Dr DeLong thereupon began a study of the artist's career, and her research soon confirmed Gordon Samstag to have been an artist of significant achievement. The challenge, and her text, kept growing. In the ensuing years, Lea and Ross acted as investigative companions, together researching the elusive Samstags with commendable patience. The Samstag Museum of Art, which has been responsible for producing this publication, has appreciated their acumen and dedication; they have each produced substantial, scholarly essays, that comprehensively demystify the Samstags.

The Samstag Legacy: An artist's bequest is designed with two audiences in mind; Australian and American. The book not only reveals the fascinating biographical discoveries that have been made about the Samstags but also seeks to restore Gordon Samstag, the artist, to a deserved place of recognition in the history of American art. In that respect, Dr DeLong

has produced a searching study into Gordon Samstag's artistic career, covering the period before his emigration to Australia in 1961. She has illuminated his accomplishments as 'a sharp-eyed realist who ... embraced the pictorial philosophy of his own day', and whose distinguishing contribution was 'his sober depiction of labour through his pictures of workers and workplaces'. Her thoroughness is exemplary, and her extensive supporting notes are designed to aid those future scholars who will, we hope, continue the work she has started in rehabilitating Gordon Samstag, the artist.

A consideration of the larger framework of Australian art and society has informed Ross Wolfe's approach to examining the Samstags' life in Australia. Gordon's professional life in Adelaide overlapped with significant developments in contemporary Australian art, and he himself intersected with key individuals and events. The account is enriched by important information secured from old friends of the Samstags, both in Australia and America, and from colleagues with whom Gordon worked during the sixteen years that the Samstags lived in Australia after their arrival in June 1961.

A portrait emerges of Gordon Samstag as a complex and inscrutable man who, though actively involved in the life of Adelaide's professional art world, remained a challenging figure for most of his colleagues at the SASA, many of whom held him at arm's length; nevertheless, others considered him a 'friendly soul', a 'fine teacher', and 'misunderstood'. We discover that the Samstags 'loved Adelaide and felt at home' here. Significantly, Gordon was remembered affectionately by his neighbours, and considered 'fun' among the good friends outside his working life (but also 'shy and sentimental'). Close friend Robbie McBryde believed Gordon and Anne were 'so obviously in love'.

Tony Bishop, an artist colleague of Gordon's from Adelaide, thought Anne was like Katharine Hepburn. 'She had that kind of style,' he said. <sup>1</sup> The impeccably dressed Anne had the bearing of an aristocrat, with a deep New England accent; it has since been revealed that she was, by birth, what might be called 'American royalty'. More often observed in the background, she remained largely unknown to the art world but had very good friends in the eastern suburbs of Adelaide with whom she shared charitable involvements, for example with the Royal Adelaide Blind Society. In the long summer holidays, the Samstags sometimes ventured north to Queensland, where they later moved and where Gordon conducted private art classes before they returned permanently to America in October 1977. It is a tale.

Over the years, there has been curiosity about the formation of Gordon Samstag's bequest, as well as misunderstandings about the administrative arrangements between the trustee and the UniSA for the operation of the Samstag Program. This interest extends to the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, which, though named in honour of its benefactors, is entirely funded by the UniSA. Ross Wolfe has taken the trouble to address all these issues, for those who seek closer understanding.

In her scholarly account, Dr DeLong reveals that the great majority of Samstag's American works remain unaccounted for. She quotes an October 1973 letter from Samstag to Howard E. Wooden, director of the (then) Sheldon Swope Art Gallery, Terre Haute, Indiana (who would later organise two of the earliest exhibitions on realist artists of Samstag's generation), in which Samstag declared, 'My work has not achieved wide popularity during my career'. Poignantly, it transpired that he had effectively disposed of his store of unsold works in 1944, through a 'clearinghouse' for the expedient sale of paintings. Sadly, they remain lost, to this day.

It is especially hoped, therefore, that this publication will encourage increased scholarly interest in Gordon Samstag, the artist, and lead to the recovery of more of his works in America and a heightened appreciation of his art-historically significant achievements. That goal is doubly important, given – by contrast – the clear decline in the quality of Samstag's work from when he arrived in Australia, and later, after returning to America.

The production of this book has benefited greatly from the work of a number of individuals, but I particularly acknowledge our text editors, Ariana Klepac and Scott Forbes, with gratitude. Their knowledge and impressively rigorous approach to their role, and sustained commitment to our project, have ensured the high standard to which we aspired. We are similarly indebted to our designer, Sandra Elms, whose exceptional skills, experience and creativity have guaranteed the design excellence so essential to the success of a major arthistorical publication.

Whatever history may eventually make of Anne and Gordon Samstag and their reasons for coming to Australia, and notwithstanding all that we have learned about them as revealed in this ground-breaking publication, they remain, beguilingly, slightly out of reach and mysterious as people. Perhaps that is fitting. It is our hope, nonetheless, that they would be pleased by this tribute.

#### ERICA GREEN

Director, Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art

<sup>1</sup> Interview in 'The Samstag Story', an episode of the ABC television Sunday Arts program, which aired on November 11, 2007, and reported on the October 2007 opening of the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art at the University of South Australia.

## INTRODUCTION ROSS WOLFE

When I arrived at the University of South Australia (UniSA) as the newly appointed Samstag Program director in August 1992, my brief was clear: to secure the scholarships program administratively, and with some urgency. That consuming task for a time prevented my pursuing other activities, of a kind that might satisfy my curiosity about the benefactors themselves.

Gordon Samstag had made no mention in his will, or in his correspondence relating to the bequest, that resources be devoted to investigating his and Anne's personal histories, let alone that efforts be made to research and promote his own past artistic work. There was not a hint, whatsoever, that he sought or expected such attention as some kind of quid pro quo for his bequest. Indeed, given what we now know of the man (his surprising modesty, his instinct for privacy), it can safely be assumed that such considerations were the least of things on his mind. If he *did* have an eye to history, it was for the scholarships program and its possibilities.

From the perspective of those, such as myself, with a duty to properly honour a major benefactor, there was scant personal information available on the Samstags at that stage, other than the recollections of Gordon's surviving colleagues from the golden days of the South Australian School of Art (SASA) at Stanley Street in the 1960s. Sooner or later, that deficiency would need to be addressed. Fortunately, some vital early clues had emerged from the remnant personal effects found in Gordon's home after his death in 1990, and forwarded to the UniSA by his trustee, the Citizens and Southern Trust Company (now part of Bank of America), in Naples, Florida.

That package revealed nothing about Anne, who had died in 1987, but a brief biography about Gordon – a page torn from the 1986 *Who's Who in American Art* – was informative, as was an obituary the trustee had thoughtfully included, copied from an unnamed Naples newspaper. Other items, moreover, were a revelation. For example, among a number of sizeable blackand-white photographs of works by Gordon was a high-quality print of his 1938 New Deal mural in Reidsville, North Carolina, *Tobacco*. There was also a September 2, 1986, newspaper clipping from the *White Plains [NY] Reporter Dispatch*, of an article that profiled Samstag. It featured a photograph of him standing inside the Scarsdale, New York State, post office, providing just a glimpse, in the background, of *Caleb Heathcote Buys the Richbell Farm*, one of two large murals he'd painted there in 1940 (like the Reidsville mural, they had been commissioned by the Roosevelt administration's Treasury Section of Painting and Sculpture). I was never a man of leisure, a relaxed-looking, octogenarian Samstag declared in the article, while explaining the story of his murals. 'Painting's in my blood.'

It was tantalisingly clear that Gordon had enjoyed a professional career of some accomplishment in America before coming to Australia, about which we were largely ignorant. But while some thirty-six original works of art by Gordon had been sent to the UniSA as well, they were clearly much later, minor works, and of disappointingly low interest artistically. Prudently, however, the trustee had commissioned a qualified Naples fine art valuer

(David C. Eldridge, a member of the American Society of Appraisers), to assess their value. He in turn had tracked down one of the few works by Samstag held in an American public collection, *Proletarian* (1934), purchased by the Toledo Museum of Art, in Toledo, Ohio, in 1935. Usefully, the Toledo Museum had also provided Eldridge with a photocopied biography of the artist, handwritten by Gordon himself in 1936, when the Samstags lived at 27 West Tenth Street, Manhattan.

By and large, these few things constituted the core biographical resource available to us at the UniSA about the Samstags. It wasn't much to go on, but it was intriguing and, importantly, raised obvious questions. Just who were the Samstags and where had their wealth come from? What was the unrevealed truth about Gordon Samstag's career as an artist? Why had the Samstags come to Australia, and of all places, Adelaide? And, finally, what had motivated their bequest? Clearly, more research was needed to achieve a deeper knowledge of the two Americans, whose US\$5 million gift to Australian artists was unprecedented.

#### THE SEARCH FOR ANNE AND GORDON

Our first initiative was to write to each of the fifteen individuals who'd received personal bequests from Gordon in his will of May 31, 1989. I asked would they be willing to share any information about the Samstags that might 'add to our understanding of them, and so in due course enable a complete account of the benefactors'. Three responses were received: from American friends Howard P. Barker and Ray (and Mary) Spilman, and from Florence (Robbie) McBryde, a particularly close friend of the Samstags in Adelaide. Their accounts proved of inestimable value. Unexpected approaches were also received from old Adelaide neighbours and friends of the Samstags – Elizabeth Doyle, Jean Wilcox and Dulcie Wilson – each with marvellous anecdotes to share. Eventually there were others, including Sylvia Ditchburn, who'd been a student in Gordon's private classes, conducted in Cairns, Queensland. The file of scattered information grew. In 1993, an experienced local researcher, Betty Snowden, was commissioned to begin developing a database of biographical details. At that time, however, there were as yet no convenient online search engines to enable us to trawl for further information.

Meanwhile, the reputation of the Samstag Program grew, as did the Samstag trustee's confidence in the UniSA's administration. The financial markets prospered; more funds became available for scholarships (particularly to enhance their fiscal generosity), and for 'promotional' initiatives as sanctioned under the Samstag will. By 1998 it had become clear that a more determined approach to researching the Samstags would be required if an informed biography was to be secured. That year I approached the SASA with a proposal to collaborate, resulting in a successful, joint application to the Australian Research Council (ARC) to fund a PhD candidate (with the Samstag Program contributing funds as an 'industry partner') to research and ultimately publish a biographical account of Anne and Gordon Samstag. The emphasis would be on their time in Australia and their philanthropic legacy.

Jim Cowley, an artist and teacher who'd studied at the SASA after Gordon Samstag's time, was appointed to the PhD role late in 1999. Very sadly, Mr Cowley died on August 9, 2003, without having submitted his thesis. However, his research encompassed tape-recorded interviews with key individuals from the SASA who'd known, worked or studied with Samstag, and these were made available to the UniSA. They have proved an invaluable resource.

To complement the Australian research, in June 1999 I placed an advertisement in the American College Art Association newsletter, seeking contact with scholars 'who might be interested in developing, for publication, well-researched texts on Gordon Samstag and his works.'

As luck would have it, a respondent in October that year was Dr Lea Rosson DeLong, then a research curator at the Des Moines Art Centre, Iowa, who had a substantial publishing profile and expertise in American art of the Great Depression era.

So began my long collaboration with this knowledgeable, determined and reassuringly enthusiastic American art historian. With little more than a trusting handshake (and a modest travel budget), Dr DeLong commenced work on researching Gordon Samstag's as-yet-unchronicled US art career. I suggested to her that she plan for a text of no more than three thousand words, and assume a publication target of three years hence. Considered these sixteen years later, that brief was fanciful: it totally underestimated the passion she would develop for her frustratingly resistant subject, and the exactitude of her research method.

In 2004, thirteen years after the Samstag Program had effectively begun (and with ninety-nine scholarships by then awarded), the old UniSA Art Museum presented an exhibition featuring seven high-achieving Samstag Scholars. The exhibition, KINDLE & SWAG: The Samstag Effect, was the last to be presented at the museum, at that time operating from a converted warehouse on North Terrace. It would soon be demolished to make way for the UniSA's Hawke Building, an architecturally handsome corporate headquarters and 'landmark public education centre', which would also house the newly named, state-of-the-art Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, scheduled to open in 2007.

Attracted as he was to uncharted waters, the Australian art historian, curator and writer on the visual arts Daniel Thomas (emeritus director at the Art Gallery of South Australia and former head of Australian art at the National Gallery of Australia), took it upon himself to write about the Samstags, with the exhibition as the pretext. Researched with characteristic forensic efficiency, his article, 'Meet the Samstags' (published in June 2005 in *Art & Australia*), provided a concise, but considered account of the couple, drawing upon the archive available to us at that time. In addition, Daniel's article was packed with fresh information and insights obtained during several well-targeted interviews he had undertaken. Very kindly, he made that bounty of new information available to me.

Another Australian writer on the visual arts, Adelaide-based Wendy Walker, also became interested in the Samstags when she was commissioned in 2005 to write about them in *Art Monthly Australia*. Her enthusiasm led to my suggestion – made to the then head of the SASA, Kay Lawrence – that Wendy be engaged as a writer-in-residence at the school, to continue the research started by Jim Cowley. Commencing in 2006, the residency would be funded by the Samstag Program for a period of twelve months. The concept of a collegial writer-in-residence was an innovation for the SASA. Kay agreed, and Wendy Walker's research became another important resource in the growing Samstag archive.

#### SOME MYSTERIES SOLVED

Lea Rosson DeLong had meanwhile continued her investigations into Gordon Samstag the artist, despite other commitments for a time slowing her research. That patient approach proved beneficial, as new information continued to surface – sometimes unbidden – with the passage of time. The same proved true of our own efforts in Australia. Two further developments were critical. Firstly, Judith Green, an accomplished genealogist smitten with curiosity, had voluntarily begun researching the respective histories of Anne's and Gordon's families, ultimately producing a detailed and fascinating genealogical portrait that stretched back several generations. In Anne (Davis-Bigelow) Samstag's case, we could now see that her family line traced back to the pioneering 1630 Winthrop emigration to America. Gordon's family, in turn, boasted a distinguished line of high-achieving, nineteenth-century European Jewish migrants.

That left outstanding the mystery of the Samstags' wealth. Indeed, speculation about Gordon's money had been rife among his old SASA colleagues from the time, around 1980, when he began alluding to his intention to leave a bequest, linked to the school. Some were convinced he'd made a killing on the sharemarket while in Australia, purchasing Poseidon mining shares that famously had risen spectacularly in value, late in 1969, only to crash soon after. That theory was fuelled by Gordon's unexpected early resignation from the SASA in 1970.

It was not Gordon, however, who was the source of the money; it was Anne. The certainty of this came from a trove of documentary evidence, generously provided to the UniSA late in 2015 by Boston law firm Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr (WilmerHale). In its former incarnation as Hale and Dorr, that law firm had been trustee of a family trust, the Naomi L. Davis Trust, first established in the nineteenth century by Anne Samstag's grandfather, Henry Corbit Davis. The trust had been maintained by Anne's father, Charles Henry Davis, after his father's death, as the repository for the family wealth. Its largest asset comprised an extremely valuable shareholding in the Kentenia Mining Corporation, which was sold for US\$20 million in 1979, bequeathing Anne and her three surviving sisters a considerable fortune.

Wealth came to the Samstags late in life, and on an unexpected scale. While over the years Anne had enjoyed the security of an assured, periodic income from her trust, the Samstags had lived frugally, albeit with noticeable style. In Australia, besides his salary from the SASA, Gordon had relied upon social security payments from America to bolster their resources. Certainly, the Samstags had never understood the dimensions of their potential wealth until the Kentenia sale, executed at a time when Kentenia's value had grown markedly due to the OPEC-driven world oil crisis of 1973, which had restored the demand (and price) for coal.

#### AN EPILOGUE

Although Lea Rosson DeLong lamented the many works of Gordon Samstag that she was still unable to find, she was by 2014 near to finishing her text. It was by then rather more complete than the original brief of three thousand words could have allowed. But there was no certain plan, as yet, for publication.

In the meantime, however, the director of the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, Erica Green, had recognised that a biographical account of the Samstags, covering their time in Australia and bringing all the accumulated research together as a coherent and resolved essay, required a writer. I had retired from my role as the Samstag Program director in 2009; Erica prevailed on me to be that writer, and to act as the book's editor. She would find the funds. I would provide an account of the Samstags' time in Australia, to complement Lea's prodigious study of Gordon, the artist.

The result is a publication with multiple attributes that has had a markedly long gestation and draws on the contributions of a large number of individuals. It is my hope that this collective effort appropriately honours Anne and Gordon Samstag, those (still) enigmatic companions with whom I've now travelled for probably far too many years, but without whose marvellous and visionary benefaction the Australian visual arts – and our culture generally – would be so much the poorer.

#### **ROSS WOLFE**

Director, Samstag Program, 1992-2009



# SAMSTAG THE ARTIST

LEA ROSSON DELONG



# AMBITION AND APPRENTICESHIP 1923-29

Gordon Samstag's career followed a path similar to that of many American artists who established their reputations in the 1930s. He was a sharp-eyed realist whose work continued a pragmatic, fact-based American visual tradition and was also influenced by the Modernist practice of editing form to its basic elements. At the same time, he embraced the pictorial philosophy of his own day, one that advocated a distinctly American art and which aimed to chart a cultural awakening with no dependence on the Old World. Like other young Americans, Samstag did travel to Europe for study, but the stark, object-focused restraint that has been a quality of much American painting since colonial times was already well established in his style. As Samstag trained in the 1920s for his career as an artist, two factors were converging: one was the American desire to leave behind its deference to Europe and develop what was often referred to as a 'truly American' art and the other was the effects of European modern movements, especially abstraction. Some paintings from early in Samstag's career suggest a sympathy, very broadly, with 'American Scene', an approach that grew strongly in American art of the late 1920s and was characterised by subject matter that was clearly American and was realist in style. And yet, Modernism had its role in his work as well: particularly after World War II, he tried his hand at abstracting his imagery. But even before that, his compositions suggested that he had accepted one of the fundamental qualities of Modernism: an emphasis on essentials and a lack of elaboration.<sup>1</sup>

Artistically, it appears that Samstag's most significant work was produced in the 1930s during the Great Depression. His style – realism – was the dominant one during this period of national economic collapse. There were nearly as many varieties then of 'realism' as there were artists, but they all adhered to the main requirement of American art theory of the time: that the art be not only representational and recognisable, but recognisable as American. This American Scene movement championed art that arose from American experience and was realistic enough that the average American viewer could identify and understand the subject matter. Many realists were associated with a sub-category known as 'Social Realism', in which the artist expressed his sympathy with the poor, the oppressed, and the victims of racism and injustice.<sup>2</sup> A few of Samstag's paintings edge into this Social Realist variant in their depiction of ordinary workers in the midst of mundane tasks and, from the 1930s to the 1950s, the titles

George Laurence NELSON (1887–1978) Gordon Samstag, 1939 (detail) oil on canvas 76.2 x 63.5 cm (30 x 25 in) National Academy Museum, New York, USA of his works suggest a strong identification with workers and scenes of labour, a common theme of the period. Yet, no evidence has emerged to indicate that Samstag was active politically, as were so many who took working people and situations as their theme.

Even during the Depression, there were voices which called American Scene painting backward, un-modern and provincial; after the war they increased so dramatically that American realism was declared dead – not only dead, but discredited and even downright embarrassing. Some artists persevered in their examination of the objective world, but a great many tried to adapt to the new hegemony of abstraction. Many, like Gordon Samstag, who had won prizes and gained significant reputations as important painters from the late 1920s through to the early 1940s, were nearly forgotten. They were relegated critically to the past, and their new work was largely ignored in the national art press. In the late 1940s, many of them tried to respond to the postwar world in the only artistic manner that seemed acceptable and infused elements of abstraction into their work. Some found moderate success with their newly modernised styles, but usually their works continued to meet with little interest in the mainstream art world and, as the decades rolled on, their abstracted art was often judged to have been their weakest.

With their postwar careers not much followed or rewarded beyond their own communities, many of these artists made their living not from the creation of works of art, but from academic positions in the new and revitalised art schools that, like higher education overall, expanded greatly because of the GI Bill. Officially known as the *Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944*, this provided assistance in education, housing, and other benefits to returning veterans. (During World War II, GI or 'Government Issue', came to signify all members of the American armed forces.) Samstag, in fact, established his own 'Approved for Veterans' art school in 1947, the American Art School, where he was a co-director and faculty member. During those years and into the 1950s, he exhibited in the New York area, though not so frequently or at such prestigious galleries as in the past. He ended his directorship of the school in 1961 when he moved to Australia where his career as both painter and teacher continued. By the time he returned to the United States after his retirement in 1972, interest in and regard for the Depression era realists was reviving, and his work of the 1930s was being looked at with new attention. As with many artists of his generation, his art and its significance are today being re-examined and reassessed.

#### A DIFFICULT START

Whatever inspired Gordon Samstag to become an artist is not known. Perhaps it was the creative influence of DeWitt Clinton High School, where his brother, Nicholas, studied and presumably Gordon as well. A progressive all-boys public high school, DeWitt boasts a notable list of creative alumni, including artist Barnett Newman, film directors Stanley Kramer and George Cukor, literary critic Lionel Trilling, cartoonist Will Eisner, actor Burt Lancaster and writer James Baldwin, among others.<sup>3</sup> Although Gordon Samstag came from wealthy and distinguished families on both his mother's and his father's sides (see pages 182–99), little financial privilege seems to have made its way into his young life. His education as an artist appears to have been funded in large part through scholarships, grants and his own employment, and it was not until later in life that he enjoyed the fortune that became the basis of the Samstag legacy. Both maternal and paternal families found success in business and finance, with several of his extended family members noted for their philanthropy and public service. Their largesse, however, does not appear to have been extended to the young



Young Tom Edison, movie premiere, February 10, 1940. Mickey Rooney with Mrs Edison. Port Huron Museum Collection, Michigan, USA

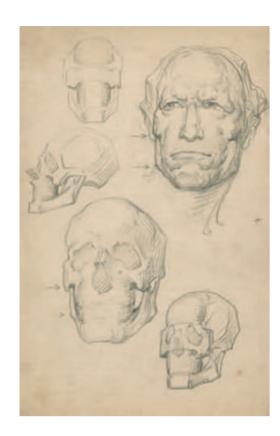
Gordon Samstag worked as a 'candy butcher' on trains for income while he was an art student in the 1920s.

man with artistic ambitions; his only ally in that goal was his mother, Evelyn Scharff Samstag. In recollections later in life, he cited these difficult early years when, to compensate for his family's disdain for his path, he worked at all sorts of jobs to make his way:

'While going to school,' he recalled after opening a one-man show in Philadelphia in 1935, 'I sold orange juice, shoes, hats, jerked sodas, was a candy butcher [a candy seller] on trains, drove taxicabs and trucks and was a silk examiner. My family, with the exception of my mother, thought studying art was impractical, selfish, and a waste of time.'4

This statement, made early in his career when his memories of their disapproval were still fresh in his mind, provides insight into not just the tone of family life, but also into his determination to pursue his unpopular ambition – unpopular at least in his family's eyes.

Young Gordon grew up in New York, where his training in art appears to have begun at the Art Students League in the summer of 1923. The Art Students League of New York has been a major training ground since 1875. Founded and run by artists, the League does not grant degrees, but offers studio courses by established artists, from which the student may choose any number or sort of classes. Part of its mission, historically, has been to make instruction available to aspiring artists of modest means. In June 1923, while he was working as a room clerk in a hotel, Samstag enrolled in three month-long 'Antique' classes taught by George Brant Bridgman (1864–1943), a renowned instructor who taught for nearly four decades at the League. Bridgman specialised in anatomy and life drawing, subjects on which he wrote books that are still published today and still used by artists. His Antique class was similar to many foundational art classes at the time in that it began the artist's training with the drawing from casts of ancient or Renaissance sculpture. Bridgman's approach must have found a solid reception from Samstag, since during his training as an artist he took more



George BRIDGMAN (1864–1943) Human Head Sketches, date unknown, pencil on paper 26.6 x 16.2 cm (10½ x 6% in) Norman Rockwell Museum Collection, Stockbridge, Massachusetts, USA

classes from Bridgman than from any other teacher and, if any of his instructors at the League can be said to have dominated the development of Samstag's style, it may be Bridgman. The cost of these classes was perhaps the motivation for the seventeen-year-old Samstag to run an advertisement in the 'Situations Wanted – Male' section of the *New York Times* in late July and early August of 1923: 'Young man, college education, continuing studies, desires position mornings, evenings or both; best references. Gordon Samstag. 535 W. 111th St.'<sup>7</sup>

Between the time he ran his 'young man desires position' advertisement in August and the beginning of the autumn term, Samstag moved to St Louis, where he lived at his grandparents' large home on fashionable Lindell Boulevard. His grandmother, Carrie Bernheimer Scharff (see page 184), had died earlier in the year (January 17), and Samstag may have gone to St Louis to help look after his grandfather, Nicholas Scharff, who was in his late eighties. Possibly his mother had decided to return to her Midwestern home town to oversee the care of her father, and Gordon accompanied her. For whatever reason he found himself in St Louis, Samstag continued his art training, as well as his employment – it was probably during his time in St Louis that he worked selling candy on trains and at a soda fountain. He enrolled at Washington University, where he registered for the Life Drawing class in the autumn of 1923 and Commercial Design in the spring semester of 1924.8 His Life Drawing class was taught by Gustav Friedrich Goetsch

(1877–1969), a painter and etcher, mainly of landscapes and scenes of Washington University, who taught at the university from 1909 until his retirement in 1952 (except for 1914–17). His works reflect a style formed mainly by French academicism and probably influenced by his study in Europe, with some Impressionist stylisations. Samstag's one class with Goetsch does not appear to have made a significant impression on the young artist. After Nicholas Scharff died in June 1924, Samstag left his grandfather's home and returned to New York.

#### ACADEMIC MENTORS

In the autumn of 1924, eighteen-year-old Samstag started a period of serious study when he enrolled at the National Academy of Design. Founded in 1825, the National Academy is among the oldest art institutions in the United States, consisting of an honorary association of artists, a school of art and a museum that focuses on work produced by Academy members. The school at the Academy followed a traditional curriculum in art, starting with an emphasis on drawing from both existing works of art and from life. It was regarded as a conservative school that took a measured, if not frankly negative, view of Modernism in art. It is unlikely that Samstag would have encountered much encouragement there if he had been inclined to admire European Modernists such as Picasso or Matisse. By the mid-1920s, when he was studying at the Academy, Cubism and abstraction were well established in Europe, and Surrealism was also gathering advocates, but many Americans still considered these styles a form of insanity. Nevertheless, a few New York galleries did display examples of Modernism, both European and the American avant-garde: in places such as Alfred Stieglitz's galleries and what would become the Museum of Modern Art (opened in 1929) Samstag could have seen and been influenced by these Modernist styles. Few examples of work from his student years are currently



Gordon SAMSTAG

Untitled (Standing Male Nude),
c. 1926, charcoal on paper
61.5 x 47.6 cm (24¼ x 18¾ in)
Photograph by Randy Battista
University of South Australia
Art Collection
Gift of Stephen and Mariou
Gottesman, Gainesville, Florida,
USA, in memory of Stephen's
mother, Edna Goldner Gottesman,
and of her friendship with
Gordon Samstag

known, so it is not possible to assess to what extent, if at all, he experimented with Modernist concepts during that period.

In his first season at the Academy (1924–25), Samstag studied with Charles Webster Hawthorne (1872–1930), as he would do for the following year as well. The National Academy employed the atelier system, in which students could choose their instructors and were allowed, in fact, to work only with a single instructor, which is what Samstag did for his first two years there. Hawthorne was among the most highly regarded teachers at the National Academy, known for his portrait and figure studies and his landscapes, as well as his affinity for training young artists. He had studied at the Art Students League and the National Academy in the 1890s and then encountered his strongest artistic influence in William Merritt Chase (1849–1916), whose assistant he became. In 1898, Hawthorne travelled to Europe, where he was most affected by Dutch painting (especially Frans Hals); upon his

return to the United States in 1899, he founded the Cape Cod School of Art at Provincetown, Massachusetts. <sup>12</sup> Hawthorne's style was a painterly one that developed form mainly through colour rather than through drawing. His teaching focused on building up a composition around colour relationships, and it exhibited an Impressionist influence in the lightness and clarity of



Charles Webster HAWTHORNE (1872–1930)

Three Women of Provincetown,
c. 1924, oil on board
121.9 x 152.4 cm (48 x 60 in)
Mead Art Museum, Amherst
College, Massachusetts, USA
Courtesy Bridgeman Images

tone, but without Impressionism's tendency to flatten and dissolve form. A strong sense of an underlying framework was typical of much of Hawthorne's work, especially his figure paintings. These compositions contained, usually, a few large forms (often a single figure; seldom more than three) pushed well into the foreground. Among his favourite subjects were ordinary people, often shown at work, such as the Portuguese fishermen who lived around Provincetown. <sup>13</sup> Hawthorne's influence on Samstag can be traced in the latter's adoption later of similar subjects, in which he presented dispassionate, pragmatic scenes of workers carrying out their tasks, and in his restrained, carefully structured compositions. Samstag's interest, especially in the 1930s, in working with only a few colours, but exploring a wide range of their tones, may also stem from the example and teaching of Hawthorne.

At the same time as he was attending the National

Academy, Samstag was also continuing his study at the Art Students League. From the summer of 1925 through to the spring of 1926, he took four classes with George Bridgman, all of them in life drawing. Bridgman was notorious for his autocratic manner in the classroom and for his insistence on holding to his standards and ideas of correct anatomical drawing. His practice was to assess his students' drawings at the end of the week and then assign them numbers according to quality. The person whose drawing was rated number one had the privilege of selecting the most advantageous seat for drawing the model during the following week. His was a forceful personality that seemed to provoke a wide range of responses in those who studied with him. Theresa Pollak (1899–2002), for example, who studied at the League intermittently between 1920 and 1926, recalled that Bridgman was:

sometimes actually cruel to students in the class. I can see him now, thumbs in lapel buttonholes, underlip thrust out derisively, as he made some especially cynical and cutting remark to a frightened student. With him, I developed a certain amount of discipline and the stamina to stand up under criticism. Also I gained the ability to make a 'number one' Bridgman drawing for three months straight. I left that class, feeling that there was offered no further goal for which to strive and that I had much to unlearn in the way of acquired 'Bridgman mannerisms'.<sup>14</sup>

Lewis Iselin (1913–90), a sculptor, remembered Bridgman even less charitably: 'I guess everybody who went to the League at that time was ruined by George Bridgman ... He had certain stereotype solutions to anatomical problems.' Harry Sternberg (1904–2001), a contemporary of Samstag's also at the League in the 1920s, had conflicts with Bridgman, but in the end regarded him as 'a great teacher in that he humanized his studies always'. What Gordon Samstag thought of him, or if any of his drawings ever achieved the 'number one' status, has not been recorded. His work of the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, suggests that he assimilated Bridgman's assured, well-controlled line and acquired a firm grasp of human anatomy. For instance, his student drawing, *Portrait Study*, dating from 1926 when he would



Gordon SAMSTAG

Portrait Study, 1926

charcoal on paper

28.6 x 23.4 cm (11¼ x 9¼ in)

Photograph by Randy Battista

University of South Australia

Art Collection

Gift of Stephen and Mariou

Gottesman, Gainesville, Florida,

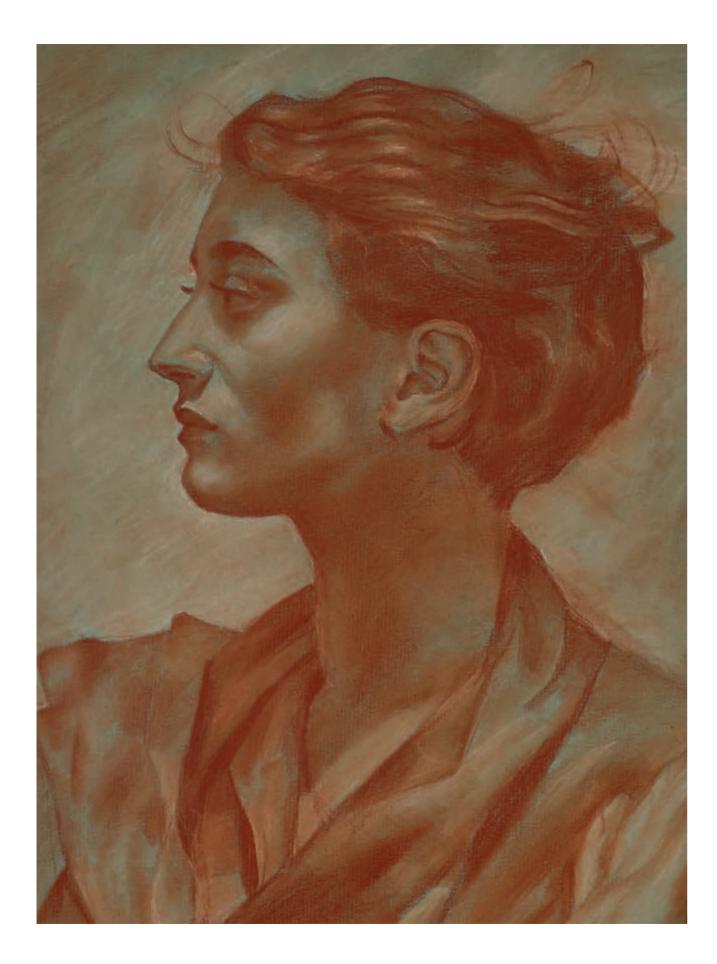
USA, in memory of Stephen's

mother, Edna Goldner Gottesman,
and of her friendship with

Gordon Samstag

have been in Bridgman's class, shows that Samstag had mastered the modelling of the head and was adept at recording individual features, in this case, a sober, composed face that would become typical of his renderings. This drawing has recently been located in a private collection, which also included other works from Samstag's early career, such as *Untitled (Standing Male Nude)*, a work that clearly shows the artist's mastery of the entire anatomy (see page 25). Bridgman's training (and his own practice of drawing the figure) was based on renderings of the skeleton and musculature that were exacting in their accuracy, so that the student was familiar with the structure of the body, leading ideally to a more informed and convincing finished figure.<sup>17</sup> Evidence that Samstag was not in conflict with Bridgman and may actually have been a favoured student is suggested by the fact that at the end of the 1925–26 season the National Academy gave him a 'special commendation' for his work in portrait drawings.<sup>18</sup> In terms of drawing, the training received at both the Academy and Bridgman's classes at the Art Students League would not have been in conflict.

During the summer of 1926, Samstag enrolled in two classes at the Art Students League: an illustration class with William de Leftwich Dodge (1867–1935) and painting







with Kimon Nicolaides (1891–1938). Born in Virginia, Dodge was best known as a muralist and portrait painter, but was also an illustrator. His murals could be found at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the State Capitol in Albany, the Library of Congress in Washington, and numerous hotels and businesses in New York City. His style was formed in the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, with the additional influence of late-century Impressionism; his subjects were mostly classical or literary narratives. <sup>19</sup> Nicolaides was also a painter but much better known as a teacher of drawing. During his time at the Art Students League, his approach to drawing influenced hundreds of students, and his instruction methods were published in *The Natural Way to Draw: A working plan for art study* (1941), a book left unfinished at his death, but compiled by one of his students. Among the League's teachers, Nicolaides was remembered as one who 'earned ... respect ... for his tremendous energy in giving all of himself to help, in any way possible, a serious student'. <sup>20</sup> Of the artists with whom Samstag had so far studied, Nicolaides was the only one whose work embraced any form of abstraction. <sup>21</sup>

When he began his third season of study (1926-27) at the National Academy, Samstag enrolled in classes taught by Ivan G. Olinsky (1878-1962) and Francis C. Jones (1857-1932). Born in Baltimore, Jones was known for his quiet interior scenes, usually populated by women, painted in a typical late-century style that fused academic realism with a light painterly brushstroke. He was particularly well established in the New York art world, where he was a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, advising on and encouraging the purchase of American art.<sup>22</sup> Olinsky's art was slightly more Modernist in tone, but still well within the dominant academic style of the day. Born in Russia, he moved to the United States in the 1890s and studied at the National Academy and the Art Students League, at both of which he later taught. He was an assistant to the painter, muralist and stained-glass artist John La Farge (1835-1910) in the first decade of the twentieth century and was part of the Old Lyme (Connecticut) artist colony in the 1920s. Olinsky's work is similar to that of Hawthorne, displaying a restrained emotional tone and bright, occasionally jewel-like colours, usually in single-figure compositions. The sober, self-contained demeanour of the subjects in several of his teachers' works may have influenced the reticent emotional tone of Samstag's early paintings. During the academic season of 1926-27, Samstag's progress was recognised when he twice won the Suydam Medal, once for his drawing of a portrait head – possibly *Portrait Study* of 1926 - and then for the best work in the men's class; in May 1927 he also was given an Honorable Mention in the Composition class.<sup>23</sup>

In the summer of 1927, Samstag enrolled in his final session at the Art Students League, a painting class led by Homer D. Boss (1882–1956). Boss attended the New York School of Art (also known as the Chase School), where he studied with both William Merritt Chase and

National Academy of Design Suydam Medal awarded to Gordon Samstag in 1927, silver 6.3 x 6.3 x 0.5 cm (2½ x 2½ x ¼ in), recto and verso Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Gift of Stephen and Mariou Gottesman, Gainesville, Florida, USA, in memory of Stephen's mother, Edna Goldner Gottesman, and of her friendship with Gordon Samstag

The Suydam Medal is awarded annually by the Academy for achievements in life drawing and painting.

Opposite:
Gordon SAMSTAG

Edna Goldner, c. 1928 (detail)
pastel on paper
58.5 x 52.0 cm (23 x 20½ in)
Photograph by Randy Battista
Collection Stephen
and Mariou Gottesman,
Gainesville, Florida, USA

Robert Henri (1865–1929), whose styles were each reflected in Boss's mature work. In 1925, Boss began trips to the art colony in Taos, and he moved to New Mexico permanently in 1933. To the painterly approach of Chase and Henri, Boss added the intense colours and more simplified brushstrokes that characterised the work of such Taos artists as Ernest Blumenschein (1874–1960). Like all of the artists with whom Samstag studied at the Art Students League, Boss's work was typical of early twentieth–century academic art that was firmly based in realism, a sure understanding of human anatomy and, often, a limited integration of the colours and loosened brushwork of Impressionism. Portraits, studio figure studies and landscapes were the most common subjects, with only an occasional notice of life beyond the genteel scenes of upper-class life.

In his last season (1927–28) as a student at the National Academy of Design, Samstag's teacher was Raymond P.R. Neilson (1881–1964), who, like many of his other instructors, was primarily a portraitist. He had been trained at the Art Students League (with fellow students Bridgman and George Bellows,) and also by Chase. Neilson taught at the Art Students League for one year (1926–27), then at the National Academy for a decade (1928–38).

Among the teachers with whom Samstag studied, only one is mentioned in his known writings. In the brief biography he supplied to the Toledo Museum of Art, around 1935, he stated that after his year in St Louis, he 'returned to N.Y. and entered [the] National Academy schools under Hawthorne'. None of Samstag's teachers could be described as avant-garde or even modern; a decorative form of Impressionism was perhaps their most progressive influence. The rejection of styles such as Post-Impressionism, Cubism and Expressionism was common in the American art establishment well into the 1920s. By the late 1920s, however, it would have been difficult for an ambitious art student, especially one in New York, to remain ignorant of these Europe-based approaches. But by that time as well, the call for a 'truly American' art was also hard to ignore, and the quest for many Americans was to express their own culture while not clinging to the artistic past. A well-trained, alert young person like Samstag was likely interested in developing a sophisticated blend of America and modernity and was eager to poise their creations between these two positions. New Ports and Ports and Ports and Ports are trained and modernity and was eager to poise their creations between these two positions.

#### A STUDENT'S RECOGNITION

In his final year at the National Academy, Samstag was abundantly recognised, and the awards bestowed upon him were 'quite prestigious' 27 and, just as important for the young artist, carried significant prize money. In May of 1928, he won the School Prize (with an award of \$20) in the Still Life class, the Isidor Honor Award, the Cannon Prize (with an award of \$100) for painting from the nude and, most importantly, the Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship, which included a substantial prize of \$1500.28 The Pulitzer win was marked by an article in the *New York Times*<sup>29</sup> and also noted in the national news magazine *Time*, where his prize was listed as being for painting, rather than as a travelling scholarship. 30 When the other Pulitzer prizes were announced, including Thornton Wilder's win for his novel, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, Samstag's prize was again announced: 'An annual scholarship, having the value of \$1500 to an art student in America who shall be certified as the most promising and deserving by the National Academy of Design ... Awarded to Gordon Samstag of New York City.' 31

Despite the prizes and the wealth of his extended family, Samstag continued to live in modest financial circumstances. During most of the period when he was studying at the Art Students League and the National Academy of Design, he lived on 112th Street on the Upper West Side of New York. In the spring of 1926, he had solicited assistance from the Schepp

Foundation and been rewarded with scholarships for the next two years, until he left on his Pulitzer-funded trip to Europe. The Schepp Foundation was established by Leopold Schepp (1841-1926) with the goal of aiding deserving young men and women in their quest for education and a solid start in life. The child of German immigrants, the young Schepp had had to give up his own education and to work on the streets of New York to help support his family after his father's death. He proved adept at making money and, before he was thirty years old, established a lucrative business in wholesale groceries.<sup>32</sup> He became one of the wealthiest men in New York and, as he neared the end of his life, having given half of his multi-million-dollar fortune to his only child, Florence (who would subsequently run his business and foundation), he decided in 1925 to give away the other half.<sup>33</sup> The New York Times explained his thinking: Believing that those who amass large fortunes should distribute the funds while they are still living and able to observe the benefits which their money may bring, Leopold Schepp ... has begun to divide his millions among old friends, employees and worthy New York boys.'34 He was particularly interested in aiding boys who needed help 'to meet the expenses of a four-year college or professional course', and he further proposed that, should the winners of his scholarships prosper, they consider repaying the foundation so that more people could be served.<sup>35</sup> At one point, Schepp decided to ask the public, via an article in the New York Times, how they thought he should distribute his money. He received an estimated 82,000 letters and was so besieged in his office that he left town, taking with him enough secretaries to read all the suggestions that had been showered on him.<sup>36</sup>

Samstag must have applied for financial support in the spring of 1926; a letter from May of that year solicited by an attorney for the Schepp Foundation from the National Academy reported on the young artist in sterling terms and assured the foundation that his work possessed 'unusual merit'. The letter also explained the significance of Samstag's winning the special commendation for his portrait drawings:

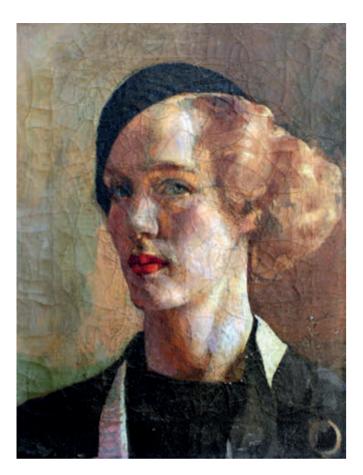
We would state that it is, indeed, a distinctive honor and has occasionally been given to students when their work has been of similar high order, and does indicate unusual merit, in this case, for Mr Samstag's work in portrait drawing. As a prominent officer of the Council remarked at the time, it is a higher distinction than a money prize.<sup>37</sup>

Shortly afterwards, an unsigned memorandum noted that the scholarship was to be given to Samstag and described the circumstances that prompted the award:

Samstag has been studying portrait painting at the National Academy of Design for two years and apparently has shown considerable ability. He has been living with his mother and lists the family income at \$3600 per year. It has been necessary for him to earn his expenses. At the present time he is working at night from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. for the Nedick Co. Previous to that he drove a taxicab. This interferes materially with his progress and he applied for scholarship assistance of \$325 per year. Miss Schepp has approved this as a special case. <sup>38</sup>

It is not clear why, exactly, Samstag's was a special case – possibly his request came after the application period, or he seemed particularly talented, or his financial need was pressing. Whatever the explanation, he was funded for a year of study, which he undertook at the National Academy and the Art Students League.

In February of 1927, Samstag wrote a letter expressing his gratitude for the continuation of his scholarship and explaining how he had used part of the money to buy



Gordon SAMSTAG

Untitled (Portrait of Anne),
c. late 1920s, oil on canvas
46.0 x 35.0 cm (181/8 x 133/4 in)
Collection David Zarella,
San Diego, California, USA

a 'lay figure', which is a model or small mannequin of the human figure that has adjustable joints that allow it to mimic any position of the human body. Because he had this artist's tool, he said, he did not need to use (and pay for) models. 'Believe me,' he wrote, 'I am very grateful for this financial assistance.' Continuing, he characterised himself and his goals as an artist in a way that, even allowing for a student's circumspect humility, seems rather modest: 'My work improves evenly and logically and I have the utmost confidence, in accordance with the encouragement and criticism of my instructors, that granted a fair artistic education, I shall become a competent and successful painter.' He then stated his intention to repay the foundation, 'should it ever be in my power'. <sup>39</sup>

In fact, about a decade later, when Samstag was at a high point in his career, he did go back to the Schepp Foundation to express again his gratitude and offer to repay them, as recorded in a foundation document:

Gordon Samstag came in today with the finest record of achievement. He felt that because it was not a fine financial record we might not care for it, but I reassured him on that point, congratulating him warmly ... He asked about repayments and I told him we preferred that our men and women should

really prosper first. He asked if he might not, in lieu of payment, paint a portrait of Mr Schepp or Miss Schepp. $^{40}$ 

There is no evidence that his offer of a portrait was ever taken or that any further discussion of repayment took place. When he did come into some wealth, perhaps Samstag remembered what Leopold Schepp had said when he established his foundation:

The custom of leaving large sums of money to a few people is wrong  $\dots$  It would be so much better, [he] thought, to spread it out with a view to equipping a number of people  $\dots$  so they may face the requirements of life with a better chance of making a real success of it.<sup>41</sup>

Having been one of those people who had had 'a better chance' because of Schepp's money, Samstag may have been thinking of the help he had received and how crucial it had been when he was starting out in his career. In turn, this may ultimately have inspired his decision to establish the Anne and Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships.

In the spring of 1927, Samstag requested continuation of his scholarship and, in recommending his petition, the Executive Secretary of the Foundation, L. Harold Johnston, advised Florence Schepp that 'the boy studying portrait painting at the National Academy of Design' had received 'two silver medals from the Academy' and been awarded a fellowship for residence at the Tiffany Foundation's studios at Oyster Bay, Long Island. <sup>42</sup> The renowned American designer, Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933), had established a summer retreat, or what he came to call an art guild, at his home, Laurelton, on Cold Spring Harbor at Oyster Bay.

His goal was to give young artists (under thirty-five years old) a chance to work on their own, in the company of other artists, and with an older, successful mentor available, while enhancing their contact with nature. The attendees were encouraged to take nature as their subject; models, they were informed, 'can be used to better advantage in the city [and] will not be employed'. Tiffany's 'chief desire' in founding his program was 'to stimulate love of beauty and imagination by giving free play to individual personality. It [was] his belief that nothing is more vital to the development of personality in art than the appreciative analysis of nature.'44 This approach was clearly demonstrated by Tiffany's own art, in which the forms of nature were exuberantly and inventively employed, especially in his stained-glass designs. He was eager to develop a network of like-minded practitioners and, therefore, if an artist's work was approved by the trustees of the foundation, that person could visit Laurelton at any time and could also offer his work for their annual exhibition. Since the trustees at the time of Samstag's 1927 fellowship included several of his former teachers, <sup>45</sup> his work was apparently well regarded, and he was thereafter welcome to spend time at the foundation, which apparently he did.<sup>46</sup>

#### **EARLY SUCCESSES**

Even before Samstag's Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship and other awards at the end of his study at the National Academy were announced on May 6, 1928, in the *New York Times*, a friend of his mother's wrote to one of his Schepp recommenders to congratulate him on supporting such a successful young man. Irvin H. Kaufman, vice-president of the Blackburn-Smith Corporation, reported that his wife had just been told by Samstag's mother about the 'well-deserved' Pulitzer and other prizes:

I am telling you all this as you will no doubt be glad to know that for once assistance offered a young man is bringing satisfactory results. It is needless to say that the mother as well as Mrs Kaufman and myself greatly appreciate the start which the boy had principally due to your assistance.  $^{47}$ 

Just days later, on May 4, 1928, Samstag himself wrote to inform the Schepp Foundation of his 'good fortune of being awarded the highest honor that can be won at this school. This is the Pulitzer traveling scholarship. It amounts to \$1500.00 with which I am expected to spend a year in study and travel abroad.' He explained further that 'it is the opinion of my instructors ... that I have had sufficient schooling and am very competent technically. They advise me to paint for exhibition now and see and study what other painters have done.' After thanking them for their help, 'without which I do not think I would have been able to win this prize', he asked if he might have an interview to discuss extending their financial support through the summer so that he could 'leave some paintings for sale on exhibition while I am away'. He wrote again to reiterate that he had been advised at the National Academy 'to work by myself all I could from then on and so if it is possible I would like to paint without having to work at something else till I go away'. He added that he anticipated that he would receive another invitation for a one-month residence at the Tiffany Foundation, and he hoped to spend some time at Provincetown that summer. If he could be sustained until he left for Europe, he wrote, 'I do not think that I will need any help from then on.' On think that I will need any help from then on.'

As he hoped he would, Samstag did leave some works for exhibition before sailing for Paris on September 27, 1928. His mother wrote to L. Harold Johnston at the Schepp Foundation, to say that work her son had produced at the Tiffany Foundation over the summer would be shown at the Anderson Galleries starting on November 6. She also expected that

Gordon SAMSTAG

Edna Beatrice Goldner on

Her 21st Birthday, 1928
oil on canvas

101.5 x 87.5 cm (40 x 34½ in)

Photograph by Randy Battista

Collection Stephen and

Mariou Gottesman, Gainesville,

Florida, USA

one of his portraits would be included in a show at the National Academy in November, and she suggested that perhaps 'Miss Schepp will find it convenient to go to these galleries to see the pictures'. One of his paintings was indeed in the Tiffany show, and it was among those recognised in a review: 'Young artists figure impressively in the annual exhibition of the Louis C. Tiffany Foundation at the Anderson Galleries ... Gordon Samstag [and six other artists] ... show works of interest in this exhibition of over two hundred items.' A few weeks later, Mrs Samstag wrote again to confirm her son's showing in the Tiffany exhibition: 'The picture is just a small one – not representing his best work – but rather interesting – perhaps Miss Schepp would like to see it there.' Mrs Samstag was informed later that Miss Schepp had not only gone to see Gordon's work, but that she had actually already seen it when she visited the Tiffany Foundation in the summer: 'Miss Schepp was more particularly anxious to see some of the work he did at Provincetown this past summer, but unfortunately, this was not on exhibition.' One painting, *Still Life*, done at Provincetown was, however, shown at the Provincetown Art Association's exhibition in the late summer of that year. <sup>55</sup>

From the summer of 1928 on, the Schepp Foundation and Samstag parted ways as he began his career, until, as mentioned earlier, he visited them again in 1936 to thank them, to update them on his development and to offer to repay his scholarships. By that time he was able to tell them that he was a teacher at the National Academy, which the foundation had enabled him to attend, he was a frequent exhibitor at the Academy shows, his painting Proletarian (see page 55) had been purchased for the collection of the Toledo Museum of Art, and his painting Nurses (see page 63) had just won a prize as the best oil painting by an American at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. In addition, he reported, he had sold ten pictures in the last year and was to have an exhibition at the Montross Gallery in April. A memo in his Schepp file contained more personal comments about the artist: 'He is a quiet person, modest and pleasant. He says he thinks he cannot be really modest for he feels he really does paint for the applause of others. As an Academy instructor he is conservative.' It also noted that Samstag taught two nights a week at the Academy, 'devoting his days to painting. He is married and his wife does some sort of commercial art work, so they share a studio and have grand times together'. 56 Some of the trustees of the foundation viewed Samstag's one-man exhibition at the Montross, and the secretary of the foundation conveyed to him a personal reaction:

May I tell you how greatly I enjoyed your exhibit at the Montross Gallery. I am no art student and no critic, so I can say none of the clever things I should like to about your work, but I can say how much I enjoyed it and what splendid work I think you are doing.  $^{57}$ 

In addition to the exhibitions in New York in 1928, Samstag enjoyed another significant encouragement when one of his paintings – *Still Life*, likely the same painting he had shown at Provincetown the summer before – was accepted into the prestigious Biennial at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, held in the autumn of 1928 after his departure for Paris in September. His inclusion in this juried exhibition marked his first appearance in a national-scaled exhibition outside of New York, and it must have given him extra confidence and hope as he ended his student days and began his overseas trip. Few original paintings from Samstag's early career – including *Still Life* – have been located, but one significant work from 1928 has recently been rediscovered, and from it we can get an idea of how his development stood as he embarked on a new phase of his life.

Edna Beatrice Goldner on Her 21st Birthday has descended in the family of the sitter, Edna Goldner, who attended the Art Students League and was a particular friend of the artist.



Dressed in a sleeveless shift with a dropped waist, T-strap pumps, a long strand of pearls and with her hair bobbed, she is the quintessential image of young American women in the 1920s. The slight sway in her torso, the tilt of her head and the poised gesture of holding her necklace all suggest Samstag's ability to manage a complicated pose, full of contrapposto and angles, and to do so while conveying a sense of the sitter's personality. The balletic character of the posture gives a foretaste of later compositions such as Nurses (1936), while aspects of the tonality of this early oil are also prescient: the silvery dress, the pearls, the white stockings and the lightcoloured fur will be echoed in the restrained palettes of Nurses, Proletarian and other figure studies of the 1930s. Edna Beatrice Goldner on Her 21st Birthday also indicates that, from early in his career, Samstag often developed form via clearly brushed strokes of colour applied so that, from a distance, they consolidated into a substantial and solid-looking image. What is unusual about this portrait by Samstag is the direct, outward gaze of Goldner, displaying her acute awareness of the viewer. That consciousness, along with her serious, self-possessed face, may suggest less the wild antics for which the 1920s are known than the rapid emancipation of women during that decade. Goldner was also the subject of a pastel, in which she turns her head so that the artist presents her in profile, her left hand brought up to rest against her shoulder. With her uplifted head, slim neck, swept-back hair and her worldly mien, the young woman was insightfully recorded by her friend (see page 28).<sup>59</sup>

#### PAINTING IN PARIS

36

About Samstag's year abroad, little is known. In the brief biography he sent to the Toledo Museum of Art around 1935, he said only that he had 'worked and studied in Paris for a year'.60 In his application for associate status at the National Academy of Design, he stated he had studied at the Académie Colarossi and had travelled also to Spain.<sup>61</sup> The Académie Colarossi in Paris was a loosely organised school, much like the Art Students League in New York, which was attended by many foreign students. But what Samstag studied or experienced or thought there, or even the exact dates of his time in Europe, are not known. One item from March of 1929, an article in the Buffalo Courier Express, provides the only known glimpse of the young artist's time in Paris: 'Gordon Samstag, New York painter, who is in Paris on a scholarship from the Academy of Fine Arts [sic], is busy on a huge canvas in his studio in the rue Vercingétorix. He has been in the quarter a couple of months.'62 The Rue Vercingétorix is a long street running along the western edge of Montparnasse on the Left Bank (in the fourteenth arrondissement), a district associated, since the nineteenth century, with artistic and literary figures. In the 1920s, it was a lively, if somewhat disreputable, place filled with cafés and jazz, where many artists kept their studios. The Académie Colarossi was just north, on the Rue de la Grande-Chaumière, in the sixth arrondissement. Although Samstag was in what must have been a stimulating environment, it is not clear what effect it had upon the young artist, and no works from this period in Paris can be definitely identified, including the 'huge' canvas he was said to have been working on.

One very small oil, *Sketch for The Waiters* (see opposite), may have been painted in Paris; Samstag signed and inscribed its title on the back, but did not date it. It is a simple café scene of a waiter bending forward and a seated violinist drawing his bow across his strings. The waiter, wearing a black jacket and a long white, ankle-length apron – the quintessential uniform of a Parisian server – holds in front of him a rounded form, which may be a tray or a very sketchy, unresolved indication of a table top. The musician faces towards the left, his focus suggesting the space beyond the frame, in an asymmetrical composition reminiscent of Edgar Degas. Both



Gordon SAMSTAG

Sketch for The Waiters, c. 1929
oil on board
15.2 x 25.4 cm (6 x 10 in)
Photograph by C. Richard
Chartrand
University of South Australia
Art Collection
Gift of Dorothy and Peter
Ognibene, Emmaus,
Pennsylvania, USA

figures are rendered in just a few broad strokes with no details. Yet, the posture of the violinist, with his right arm lifted and his wrist arched, and the simple curve of the waiter's back show the artist's clear grasp of the anatomies beneath. His capacity to convey both weight and gesture is obvious. The predominantly darkened tone, mostly browns and blacks, is enlivened by two strong swathes of white: the waiter's apron and the violinist's handkerchief. The simplicity of the composition is a foretaste of Samstag's works of the early to mid-1930s, which often contain just one or two figures in a plain setting; the blank wall behind the two figures, with only a simple horizontal form to indicate the baseboard, will find its descendants in the settings of paintings such as *Young Man Desires Position* and *Proletarian*. As in much of Samstag's art to come, the theme is ordinary workers doing routine tasks, absorbed in their occupation. The tight range of tones, each within the contrast of dark and light, is also prescient of later work. It is possible, of course, that *Sketch for The Waiters* was painted in New York, but the ambience of a Parisian café peopled by two symbols of the artistic life of the city suggests a crystallised memory of his time devoted only to art.<sup>63</sup>

Samstag returned to America from Dunkirk on the freighter *Waukegan*, arriving back in New York City on June 5, 1929.<sup>64</sup> The money from his Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship was intended to cover one year abroad, but if those funds were exhausted Samstag perhaps had inadequate resources to stay on. It is also possible that he felt he had learned enough from his European experience and was eager to start his professional career in New York.



# ART AND LABOUR IN THE DEPRESSION 1930-35

Overall, Samstag's work of the early 1930s, after his European sojourn, does not suggest that he immersed himself in the avant-garde currents of Paris in the late 1920s. Even though he was only twenty-two when he went there, it appears that his style was already established, and he was committed to an American brand of realism which, though solidly structured and at times even elegant in his hands, was representational and essentially conservative. It is possible that he brought some work back with him from France (as he might have done with *Sketch for The Waiters*), or he resumed his activity quickly, because when the National Academy had its annual exhibition in March of 1930 his painting *The Three Dragons* was included in the show. His name also appeared in the list of teachers at the National Academy, suggesting that his former instructors were happy with the direction of his art.<sup>1</sup>

Samstag was among the fortunate Americans who obtained and held on to a job after the stock market crashed in October 1929 and the Great Depression commenced. Its ill effects were seen quickly and clearly in New York, where in 1930 Samstag painted one of the most revealing images of those early days of the economic catastrophe, *Young Man Desires Position* (see opposite and page 42; hereafter referred to as *Young Man*). His painting was a subject observed from life when his friend, Bernard Ognibene (nicknamed Gus), stopped at his studio after a day of unsuccessful job-hunting. Samstag later recalled watching his friend sitting dejectedly, with his portfolio leaned against the chair. He realised that the image in front of him symbolised the plight of many, especially artists, during the Depression:

Gus had a habit of dropping into my studio after a day of frustrating calls on advertising agencies, magazines and 'artist wanted' ads ... One afternoon I shouted the classic phrase 'Hold that pose!' which he was agreeable enough to do ... At the time he sat for me the going was rough, the pickings lean and then, as now, the young man who leaves art school and is confronted by the world's massive disinterest will always be deserving of sympathy.

The title, Samstag explained, was 'intended to point up the twist to which the art student is subjected after he leaves art school'.<sup>2</sup>

Gordon SAMSTAG

Young Man Desires Position,
1930 (detail)
oil on canvas
127.6 x 120.0 cm (50¼ x 47¼ in)
Swope Art Museum, Terre Haute,
Indiana, USA

#### SYMBOL OF THE TIMES

Young Man is among the few works currently located from which we can assess Samstag's style as he, like his friend Gus, was confronting his own 'twists' after art school. He was twenty-four years old and had spent the past five years studying and learning to be an artist. Of course, the character of life in the late 1920s hardly prepared him or anyone else for the hardships of the Depression and, even though he had weathered some financial struggles, he was confronting an unprecedented challenge in the art-world economy of the 1930s. In terms of his training, however, he was as qualified as anyone could be to face it. He was, in addition, unquestionably devoted to art and to being an artist, as his determination to overcome family resistance and obtain funding had demonstrated. The prizes he had won as a student affirmed that he had mastered academic fundamentals such as life drawing and had embraced the traditional basics of artistic practice. He was not a rebel. His time in Europe had not beguiled him away from pictures of his own surroundings, nor had it enticed him much with abstraction. The style that he practised was well accepted in New York and, importantly for the level of assistance he had needed, satisfied the taste of his teachers and the Schepp Foundation. Judging from Young Man, it is clear that his work was sophisticated and firmly grounded in genuine mastery of human anatomy, colour theory and technical prowess. Already, it possessed that airless perfection and contemplative stillness that would be found in later paintings and would bring positive responses from certain critics and collectors.

In Young Man, Samstag's sympathy for his friend and, by extension, for the multitude of others in his predicament, is conveyed in several ways. The slack posture of the figure suggests his exhaustion as well as his emotional burden. Little in the form seems alert and uplifted as the young man sits heavily in the chair - almost as if he can barely support his own weight - while his shoulders slump and his head drifts downwards. The eyes appear downcast, and the facial expression is introspective, if not despairing. Inattentive to both the artist and the viewer, the man's awareness is focused inwards, perhaps imagining his bleak prospects and absorbed in his own fatigue. Just as tellingly, his hands lie motionless and inert as his legs fall out towards the sides, again as if his strength has left him; the right hand barely grips a hat that seems on the verge of being dropped. Samstag brings this low, nearly obscured shape to our attention by a thin line of red tracing the inside edge of the hat, adding a subtle but effective formal device for telling his story. This right hand, which should convey the muscle tension of holding an object, is in fact less energised than the left, which is a more complex form. The left hand that rests on the figure's thigh is open, with the fingers curving as if they were about to grasp something. Of course, Samstag's narrative for this form is that the hands, though open, receive nothing. The uneven silhouette of the hands, especially the left one, echoes the craggy profile of the young artist's face. These rough-hewn, light-coloured, irregular forms add an element of unflamboyant, but affecting, drama to the sombre painting.

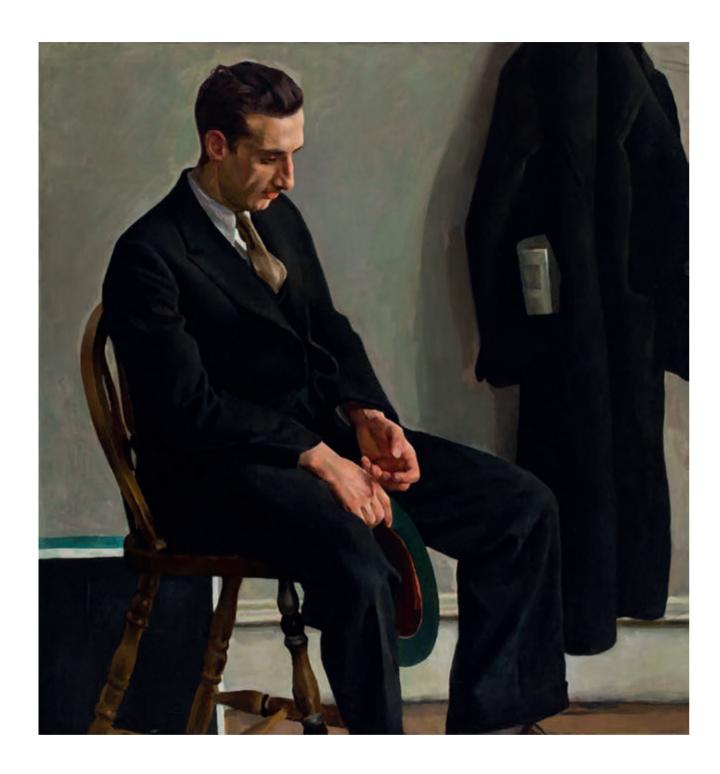
The colour of the painting is solemn and reserved, made up primarily of blacks and greys with accents of white and light-coloured flesh tones. *Young Man* has the sober clarity that links Samstag with much American realist painting of the nineteenth century and which has nearly always been prized in American art. Yet, a closer look reveals that his brushwork had an animation and looseness about it; and, despite the authority of his drawing, it was colour that he used primarily to build up form. The painting is subtle, and even from a slight distance the colours coalesce, but there are multiple discernible brushstrokes that create complex, layered patterns, adding up at last to a firmly recognisable image and an interesting surface.

The composition is stark and organised with just three main forms against a grey, mostly unadorned, background. In addition to the seated figure, the painting includes a black coat hanging as a dark mass on the wall, alleviated only by the rolled-up newspaper stuffed into the pocket. The prominence of this whitish form surrounded by the blackened one emphasises the narrative: the unemployed of the Depression scoured the newspaper wanted ads in search of job announcements and potential employment. The third form is the square, abstract shape of the portfolio leaning in the lower left corner. It balances the black-suited figure angling through the centre of the composition and the substantial vertical shape of the coat at the upper right. The mass of the black square is enlivened by the sharp, narrow bands of white and blue-green which surround it and add to its authority within the composition; it also helps draw the eye to the horizontal line of the wall moulding that runs along the bottom of the composition. As he looked back on his painting in 1973, Samstag indicated that the restraint of the colours and structure of the composition were calculated to convey the tenor of the times: I recall the painting's geometric divisions and its somber tones accentuating its meaning ... [Ognibene's] large black portfolio naturally stabilized his silhouette to my picture minded eye ... The picture soon acquired vertical weight which was provided by his dark overcoat.'3

#### ACCLAIM FOR A YOUNG PAINTER

The strength of the composition of *Young Man* and its topical subject matter were both soon recognised. The painting's first known exhibition and its first critical notice came early in 1930, after it was accepted into the biennial exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. This exhibition of contemporary American painting was judged by Edward Alden Jewell, the critic for the *New York Times*, to be 'the best big group show of contemporary American painting the present writer has ever seen'. He emphasised that, from what he saw at the exhibition, American art could take its place among any others in the world – by which he almost certainly meant European and, more specifically, French art. Even more encouraging for American art, many of those artists whose works he saw and admired were young. He might well have been referring to Samstag when he declared: 'The walls attest an abundance of new promising talent. Indeed, some of the most strikingly successful canvases are by artists whom the writer here encounters for the first time.' Among the dozen or so artists with figure compositions, he singled out Samstag by name, observing that 'Gordon Samstag's "Young Man Desires Position" does more than comment on a current social problem.' 5

The painting was shown again the following year and, this time, to even greater applause. At the National Academy's annual exhibition, which opened in mid-March of 1931, Samstag was selected for the Thomas B. Clarke Prize (which included a cash prize of \$300 – a fortune in those early years of the Depression)<sup>6</sup> and, for the first time, one of his works was reproduced in the *New York Times*. However, in terms of critical reaction to the overall show, it was a matter of day and night. An unsigned article in the news section of the *New York Herald Tribune*, reporting on the Academy's 'varnishing day' (an invitation-only event held the day before the exhibition opened to the public, when the finishing touches were being carried out on the displays), set the tone with the headline, 'Modernistic Art Scarce' and added that the audience was 'mildly entertained by [a] ... thoroughly conventional exhibition'. The reporter went on to characterise the Academy's choices: 'Generally serene in aspect, the show contains scarcely anything which might be considered even slightly disturbing ... [T]here are few pictures on the walls showing more than a slight interest in so-called modernistic ideas.' Whether the writer regarded Samstag's painting as possessing any 'modernistic ideas' or as part of the 'thoroughly conventional' aspects



isn't clear, but in any case, it was singled out in the first paragraph of comments on specific artists: '[O]ne of the many skillfully realized figures ... is a commentary on present conditions of unemployment by Gordon [Samstag] under the title, "Young Man Desires Position".'9

Jewell, the critic for the *Times* who had found so much to praise at the Corcoran in Washington, now damned the show for being dull, conservative and backward. Though he was hardly an unqualified champion of Modernism, he complained that the Academy's selection looked far too much to the past – despite the fact that they had opened up the exhibition to work by artists who were not members of the Academy, as Samstag was not at that point (though he was on the faculty). The works that were exceptions to Jewell's condemnatory judgment were few, but Samstag's *Young Man* was among them:

It is the usual sort of academy affair. Inclusion of the 199 non-members doesn't freshen the walls to any very noticeable extent ... Of course, since an academy jury passes upon all the pictures and sculptures shown here it would be surprising, indeed, were any object too much tainted to the tune of about 99¾ percent 'pure'. In the quarter-of-one-percent section, if you can imagine such a section set aside for them, are found [the work of four painters] and perhaps Gordon Samstag's 'Young Man Desires Position', which has been seen before.

It had been 'seen before' by Jewell in the Washington exhibition, but there is no evidence that it had yet been publicly displayed in New York. Jewell, however, was not through with his castigation of the plodding Academic showing.

For the rest – well, it's the Academy. Going about among all the sweet and stalwart pictures, you ask yourself: 'Can this be 1931?' It often seems as if these artists had been snowed under in the blizzard of 1888 – whose forty-third anniversary has just been marked – and, emerging at last from the drifts, were to be seen taking up life again just where they left it. Most of the sculpture is too discouraging for words. <sup>10</sup>

Within the month, other critics also assessed the Academy's 1931 exhibition and, because he had won the Clarke Prize, Samstag's painting was usually mentioned. In one instance, the prize itself was discussed, and the critic heartily endorsed the awarding of it to Samstag:

The Clarke Prize, as most of us know, carries specifically patriotic or national requirements. It must go to an American figure composition painted in the United States by an American citizen. Gordon Samstag is the American citizen in this case; the title of his picture is topical – *Young Man Desires Position* – and the appearance of his model, of whatever ancestry, is emphatically American. It is a strong piece of work, strong in composition and in characterization, with simplicity of handling, economy of color, and striking contrasts of dark and light. No restriction of age is attached to this award, but it is easy to believe that the 'under thirty-five' limit ... would have been no obstacle. <sup>11</sup>

Samstag was twenty-five years old, and this sort of recognition was given to several of his paintings from the 1930s.

The critic for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Helen Appleton Read, was uninspired by the Academy and declared that it ought to rejuvenate its selection process if it was 'to have any relation to vital contemporary artist expression, if it is not to continue in its present moribund condition'. She complained further that she could not see how any jury could award the grand prize to 'Louis Betts's badly composed nude study' when two other paintings, including Samstag's *Young Man*, 'were certainly more accomplished'.<sup>12</sup>

Gordon SAMSTAG

Young Man Desires Position, 1930
oil on canvas
127.6 x 120.0 cm (50¼ x 47¼ in)
Swope Art Museum, Terre Haute,
Indiana, USA

Another critic, Margaret Breuning, yawned, 'Academy shows differ little from each other in their general impression', and noted the exhibition's 'sedateness and sweetness'. Breuning did not mention Samstag specifically, but her article included a reproduction of *Young Man*. <sup>13</sup> The *New York Herald-Tribune* also reviewed the show, announcing Samstag's award of the Clarke Prize, but did not comment on the painting. <sup>14</sup>

The Art Digest, published twice each month, presented the widest range of information on the art world in the United States and paid special attention to American artists. Young Man appeared on the cover of the issue in which the magazine covered the National Academy exhibition and, as usual, summarised the overall critical reaction. 15 Jewell's comments were quickly referred to, particularly since other New York critics had had a similar response: that the show was "stodgy" and "unexciting", due ... to the fact that the usual type of academic jury succeeded in weeding out almost all aspirants who showed a radical tendency'. 16 Royal Cortissoz, described as the 'stalwart critic of the Herald Tribune', however, 'stood alone in praise' for the Academy's choices. He applauded the exhibition for maintaining 'standards', such as technical prowess, for which he found two particularly good examples:

This matter of discipline is not a pedantic, crystallizing process, but one that is liberating. In learning how to say a thing [an artist] draws nearer to the validation of his thought. [In the Academy exhibition] there is more than one picture emphasizing the fact. We may cite first the 'Sleeping Venus' by Paul Trebilcock. He has found beauty in the nude and he makes you feel it the more through the knowledge of form he possesses, the sensitiveness and the sureness with which he defines a contour. A totally different motive is handled with the same authority by Gordon Samstag in his 'Young Man Desires Position'. Through command of his technique, quite as much as through sympathetic feeling, he drives home a sense of what is human and interesting in his disconsolate figure. There is no question of 'abstraction' here, or of 'pattern'. The solid fact is exactly represented for what it is worth and Mr Samstag contrives to give it pictorial dignity. <sup>17</sup>

His comments seem to place Cortissoz in a traditional American critical stance which finds the greatest strength of an image in its accuracy of rendering appearance; this 'solid fact', as Cortissoz calls it, conveys not only the concrete reality of the physical but, in so doing, most effectively conveys whatever emotion the figure, or the 'fact', contains.

Samstag's ability to draw the exact posture and expression of his subject (which he would have learned from his academic training) was, according to this critical reading, central in his capacity to impart its genuine emotional tone. The artist's 'discipline', as Cortissoz would have it, in drawing the image was far from 'pedantic', but actually gave him freedom and confidence in communicating the 'human' qualities of the discouraged young jobseeker in the picture. Cortissoz's appreciation of Samstag's painting is a foreshadowing of the tenor of the criticism that followed his career for many years: his drawing was technically flawless and his compositions carefully designed, but, although the narratives might be thought-provoking and reflective of the times, the pictures overall were not formally innovative. Like many young artists of his period, Samstag's embrace of Modernism was measured, located mainly in the sense of abstract design that underlay his 'solid' drawing and compositions.

#### CAPTURING THE ZEITGEIST

After the Academy show closed in April of 1931, *Young Man* travelled to at least two museums in the state. It was included in the Twenty-fifth Annual Exhibition of American Paintings

at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo (New York), where two reviews focused on the particularly American quality of the selection. Naming the Samstag painting specifically, one writer exulted that 'the exhibition demonstrates that the work of American artists equals and surpasses that of foreign artists in accurately representing typical American scenes and types ... A general characteristic of the paintings is their clearness and attention to detail which results occasionally in an almost photographic appearance.'18 Quoted in the second review, the director of the Albright-Knox, Dr William Hekking, agreed that this exhibition showed the strength of American art and lauded the way his countrymen were side-stepping European, especially Modernist, influences: 'They are not painting with their eyes on the grandstand and as a group they have not been stampeded by the art of other countries or by those critics who look solely for what is sensational in art. The show reflects our age and our diversified American life', observed the director. The reviewer declared Samstag's Young Man a 'handsome portrait', but found the jobless young subject to be a 'rather pathetic figure'. 19 Such 'pathetic' figures were common in the Great Depression; as for 'our diversified American life', the country's 'diversity' might have been measured in the range of misery found among the citizenry. Samstag's painting was also included in the Summer Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting at the Memorial Art Gallery, in Rochester, New York, where it joined work by Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry and Grant Wood that had been 'selected from leading exhibitions in the larger art centers this last season'. 20

Judging from subsequent notices of the painting, Samstag must have indeed been successful in giving form to the feelings that haunted many Americans during those years. It is surely one of the earliest paintings of the Depression era to capture the desolation of the employment prospects of young Americans, especially artists. Samstag's painting reflects the reality that was already being felt in the lives of thousands of Americans. Magazines other than those devoted to art used the image to illustrate their reactions to the Depression and their proposals for alleviating it. Young Man was given a full-page illustration in the June 1931 issue of the IBEW Journal, the magazine of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. It was a substantial, well-designed monthly publication that included a wide range of articles that addressed issues not simply related directly to labour but also to politics, technology, psychology, education, art and architecture and other topics. Many of the articles naturally related to the building and construction industries, but a number of them had to do with the overall environment in which those activities were carried out, especially in regard to the lives of workers. For example, the issue in which Samstag's painting appeared featured articles entitled 'Obsolete Living Costs Excuse for Wage Cuts', 'Depression Drags Its Slow Length Along', and 'Appalling Employment Trend in Radio Field'. But there also appeared 'Mathematics as a Tool of Trade', 'Electrical Workers Throng New York Classes', 'Psychological Organization of Wives Needed', and 'Head of World Church Talks on Industry'. The lead article that month, 'World Architecture Turns to Light', was a progressive and amply illustrated discussion of the International Style, especially as it was then still being developed in Germany by the Bauhaus. The photographs emphasised the sleek, glass-walled structures and the role that lighting played in their appearance, particularly after dark.<sup>21</sup>

The choice of Samstag's painting as the pictorial highlight at the beginning of the issue did have to do with the Depression and its effect on skilled workers; the editors felt that it expressed clearly and realistically the situation of a well-trained young man like Bernard Ognibene. As if the magazine's commentator had read Cortissoz's declaration that the painting's emotional effectiveness lay primarily in its unadorned reality, his focus was on

the objective, observable characteristics of the composition – praise for Samstag arose from admiration for the simple reality of his painting:

Too little painting has turned to the realities of American life. French and Spanish artists have done better. Now, an American painter, with a foreign name, Gordon Samstag, has won a prize (Thomas B. Clarke prize) offered by the National Academy of Design, for his realistic 'Young Man Desires Position'... Gaze for a moment upon Artist Samstag's work. Note the listlessness of the young man's body; note the wondering, perplexed, somber expression; note the timid posture; note the overcoat—it, too, listless and sad, with the newspaper in its pocket, bearing 'Men Wanted' ads; above all else, note the hands, the strong, competent, hands of the craftsman, so willing to work, now tragically idle in the man's lap. The hands are the centre [sic] of the portrait—the sure stroke of genius on Artist Samstag's part. 'Young Man Desires Position' is a worthy addition to that small, but growing, body of art portraying industrial America.<sup>22</sup>

Samstag might well have been surprised to learn that he had a 'foreign' name; the magazine's notice of that may have had to do with the bias encountered by workers whose families had arrived in the United States only within the past generation and who relied on their labour union for fair treatment. It might also have been an indication of labour's overall identification with the worldwide struggle to establish rights for workers, both skilled and unskilled. It is certainly possible that bringing attention to his 'foreign' name may have been related to a sense of solidarity with the Soviet Union and its supposed elevation of the workers or the proletariat. Samstag is the German word for Saturday, and his forebears did indeed come from Germany and Austria. But the establishment in the United States of his family on both sides well before the Civil War, plus their wealth, was apparently unknown to the magazine's writer. The IBEW Journal stated that it received the photograph of the painting through the National Academy and made no suggestion that Samstag himself had been consulted at all. In this painting and others during the 1930s, he did show a marked interest in people at work, but his art does not convey a strong sense of identification on the part of the artist with the struggles of organised labour in the 1930s. Nevertheless, the writer correctly recognised Samstag's sensitivity to the despair that ended each day of the unsuccessful jobseeker.

The plight of the unemployed was so well documented by the painting that it was used as an illustration for a 1931 article by no less an advocate for change than Frances Perkins (1882-1965), who was Governor Franklin Roosevelt's Commissioner of Labor for the state of New York. In the article she described measures that would, after Roosevelt's election to the presidency in 1932, be incorporated into the New Deal's programs to aid the millions of unemployed.<sup>23</sup> As Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor (she was the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet and she remained in that position until Roosevelt's death in 1945), Perkins helped institute a number of reforms that were central to the New Deal. She was important in creating the Civilian Conservation Corps, which put young men to work on public projects, as well as the Public Works Administration, which provided funds for public buildings and infrastructure, including the hiring of the unemployed for this new construction. Her most important and consequential accomplishment was her role in the Social Security Act of 1935, which established unemployment benefits, pensions for the elderly and welfare for the poorest citizens, among other things. She was instrumental in passing the Fair Labor Standards Act, which outlawed child labour and set on-the-job safety standards. She was also largely responsible for instituting the first laws regarding minimum wages, overtime compensation and the forty-hour working week.

Perkins's article appeared in *Survey Graphic*, a progressive journal that featured programs and proposals for social and political reform and which often used illustrations to bolster the writer's cause. Whether Perkins knew of Samstag's painting and suggested it as an illustration or whether it was an editorial decision at the magazine, her opinion would likely have been considered in regard to its use. The painting was not directly mentioned in her article, but its visual message must have been seen as part of her argument. Several years later, in 1936, *Survey Graphic* ran a small article on Samstag and his paintings of 'unpretentious Americans' and recalled that it had published his *Young Man*, a painting 'of an average fellow in a posture of dejection, which aroused much interest when it was reproduced in Survey Graphic in 1931'. Then, as in the earlier years of the Depression, his picture was apparently viewed as a symbol of the millions of workers who were stunned by the gravity of their loss.<sup>24</sup>

As for the painting's subject, Bernard Ognibene (1908–66), his fortunes did improve, but the Depression left a permanent mark on his life. The son of a successful artist in New York, Bernard also studied at the Art Students League and the National Academy of Design and, like Samstag, was awarded a Tiffany Foundation summer residency. He later founded Ben Ognibene Associates, an art advertising agency, but never completely gave up his painting: he was arranging an exhibition of his work when he died suddenly in 1966 while vacationing in Paris. The two men remained friends for the rest of their lives and, though both had successes, in later reminiscences they shared a tone of regret over the hardships they had endured as they began their careers in the Great Depression. <sup>27</sup>

#### A GROWING REPUTATION

Samstag may have spent part of the summers of 1930 and 1931 at Laurelton, the Long Island mansion that was headquarters of the Tiffany Foundation's art colony (see pages 32-4). His work had been seen in the Tiffany exhibition of 1928, just before he left for Paris and, when he returned, it was included in exhibitions in both 1930 and 1931. A review of the 1930 show praised it as displaying 'a much higher level of achievement' than seen in the past and gave some credit to the influence of Luigi Lucioni (1900-88) who was the visiting artist:<sup>28</sup> 'The talent that is flocking to the Foundation expresses itself in very different terms than was the fashion a short while ago. It is no longer the thing to be interested in style or manner. Draftsmanship and meticulous statement of fact seem to be the order of the day.'The critic was relieved to see that the worst excesses of Modernism were not infiltrating into this group: 'It is very pleasant to see good drawing in vogue again; it puts an end to so much of the meretricious work that has masqueraded under the guise of modernism.' Among those artists who displayed 'basic soundness' and whose 'work calls for special attention' was Gordon Samstag. The review ended, as so many publications of the time did, with a plea for buyers: 'An exhibition such as this offers the collector an unusual opportunity for buying sensitive personal expressions at prices which the young and unknown must necessarily ask.'29 How much, if any, contact Samstag had with Lucioni is not known; they could have also encountered each other at the Art Students League. Samstag's Young Man suggests that he may have admired the steady clarity and restrained simplicity of Lucioni's painting style.

It was unmistakably clear by 1931 that the Stock Market Crash had portended a long-term economic disaster whose consequences were reaching deep into American lives – including those of artists. So the opportunity to work in a setting such as Laurelton could be of enormous benefit, as acknowledged in a review of the 1931 Tiffany exhibition. The Tiffany program, observed the critic, was aimed at younger artists 'who have already received recognition but



Luigi LUCIONI (1900–88)

Paul Cadmus, 1928
oil on canvas
40.6 x 30.8 cm (16 x 121/8 in)
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn,
New York, USA
Dick S. Ramsay Fund, 2007.28

need the freedom from economic cares in order to find themselves'. The writer also lauded the range of expression and the 'fresh vigorous talent' that was being promoted instead of the 'academic non-entit[ies]' that had sometimes characterised scholarship programs of the past. This Tiffany show, the writer declared, was the foundation's best, and part of the credit had to go once again to the 'excellent influence' of the visiting artist, Luigi Lucioni - he of 'the camera eye', whose work was described as displaying 'close observation, meticulous technique, no self-conscious stylism or empty virtuosity'. Gordon Samstag was among those artists singled out for work that was 'notable for its technical excellency [sic] and lack of affectation and its aim to make painting a medium with which to express reactions to life'. This last element may have been a nod to the strong preference for down-to-earth American Scene subjects rather than the 'exercise of theory'. And, once again, the review ended by exhorting the public to support the artists by buying their work: 'The prices are extremely moderate,' it said, and the exhibition presented 'an excellent opportunity for the ... collector of moderate means to make a start in the fascinating pursuit of becoming a patron of American art.'30 The New York Times critic, Edward Alden Jewell, judged this 1931 show as 'the best of the

Tiffany Foundation exhibitions thus far held. Among the paintings one finds especially strong work by Gordon Samstag. $^{31}$ 

Many historians regard the year 1932 as the nadir of the Depression. By mid-year, around a quarter of the American workforce was unemployed, and the usual charitable organisations had no hope of dealing with needs on this scale, while President Hoover's attempts to alleviate the crisis only seemed to highlight his inadequacy. Newspapers throughout the country carried stories of suicide, not just among stockbrokers who saw their wealth (and that of their clients) disappear, but also desperate mothers and fathers who could no longer care for their children. The art world was not immune to these misfortunes, and even well-known artists and successful galleries embarked on years of struggle. Edith Gregor Halpert's Downtown Gallery, for example, one of the premier showplaces for contemporary American art, whose customers included the Rockefeller family, saw its sales decline by 50 per cent. Drastic reductions in prices could seldom persuade Halpert's customers to add to their collections during those stressful years.<sup>32</sup>

Gordon Samstag remained among the fortunate, relatively speaking, in that he continued to be employed as a teacher at the National Academy. He had not yet been accorded the status of Associate of the Academy (that would come in 1939; full membership was awarded in 1965), but examples of his work appeared in almost every Academy annual exhibition from 1930 to 1950 (except for 1934–35, 1939 and 1946).<sup>33</sup> Although apparently not represented by a gallery, he managed to exhibit his work regularly, placing it in a variety of shows in New York and, occasionally, in juried exhibitions beyond the city. In January of

1932, he was elected to the Allied Artists of America, an organisation founded in 1914 partly in reaction to the National Academy. Later that month, two of his works were included in its Nineteenth Annual Exhibition (January 27–February 11), *Bowl of White* and *Brown and White*.<sup>34</sup> Jewell's review in the *New York Times* was lukewarm: 'The canvases in this exhibition are largely decorative or "picturesque". Much of the work is able, though little of it seems really outstanding.' He allowed that among the 'pictures especially marked by charm, originality or technical excellence' was Samstag's 'notable "Brown and White", not specifying which of those qualities he found in the painting.<sup>35</sup> Another reviewer, in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, found the Allied Artists merely a 'pallid Academy' and not very different from the older organisation at all; the Allied Artists members still preferred to send their best work to the Academy, the Brooklyn critic claimed, and consigned their 'next-best expression' to the Allied exhibition. But Samstag's *Brown and White* did merit 'special mention'. <sup>36</sup>

A little later on in the month, Jewell wrote about the Allied show again, but his enthusiasm for the art displayed had not much increased:

It cannot be said that the exhibition by the Allied Artists is very momentous. There is plenty of talent, but it finds expression for the most part in work that is merely pleasing and generally pretty conventional. A particularly strong tendency toward illustration is observed this year, and there is the usual generous quota of brightly decorative work, seasoned with sentimentality.

Yet he did single out Samstag again, writing that 'original and fresh is Gordon Samstag's still-life "Brown and White". <sup>37</sup> Writing on the same day, the critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* echoed Jewell's lacklustre view of the Allied Artists exhibition, calling the best of the group (in the Vanderbilt gallery of the Fine Arts Building) 'fairly satisfying', a second group 'a rather mixed-up proposition', and concluding that in the work hung in the South Gallery 'it was all too apparent, a tolerant jury has made way for an extraordinarily large number of commonplace pictures'. <sup>38</sup>

The National Academy's annual exhibitions were traditionally held from mid-March to mid-April, and in 1932 Samstag's Pink and Yellow was shown; the Academy held a winter exhibition that year in which his similarly titled Brown and White, No. 4 was described by Royal Cortissoz of the New York Herald Tribune as 'appealing in design and execution'.<sup>39</sup> Later in 1932, Samstag exhibited in two group shows, both of which perhaps reflected the reduced opportunities for exhibitions and sales. Midtown Gallery, established in that stressful year of 1932, constituted a kind of cooperative (a popular concept in the 1930s) during its first three years, in which a regular roster of artists displayed their work and helped with the costs and efforts of installing their exhibitions; most of the group worked in a realist style. By the late summer of 1932, Midtown had already become known for its group shows, and the New York Times declared that its current exhibition, the first one in which Samstag had been invited to participate, was 'the best this gallery has yet sponsored'. His contribution, an oil painting entitled *Hors d'Oeuvres* was described as 'a brilliant, if somewhat "slick", salon piece'. 40 It must have been this painting (a 'still life with figure') which was praised by the *Herald Tribune* when it recognised Samstag as a new member of the Midtown group. '[Samstag], an exponent of the new realism, paints with skill and polish, the vegetables and glass on the table being exceptionally well done.'41 What the writer meant by labelling his style as 'new realism' isn't clear, though he may have been affiliating it with the American Scene movement or even, in some of Samstag's paintings, social realism. The subject matter, however, would not seem to lend itself to either category, so the critic may have been referring

strictly to his approach in the rendering of the form. Just a few weeks later, in mid-September, Midtown opened another cooperative exhibition in which Samstag's painting was recognised by Jewell at the *New York Times*: 'And there are other [artists] who merit the visitor's pause, among them ... Gordon Samstag.' 42

#### AN ADVENTUROUS SPIRIT

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Starting in the autumn of 1932, Samstag participated in a series of exhibitions organised by the critic and gallerist Robert Ulrich Godsoe (1906–62).<sup>43</sup> Expressing attitudes that were common in the Depression era, Godsoe's idea was to "take art out of the cloister, and show it in places where it can most easily be seen and most readily appreciated", and to enable artists to show their work at comparatively small cost'. <sup>44</sup> He held his exhibitions in non-traditional venues such as hotels and bookshops, hoping to make art more accessible to the ordinary citizen and broaden the audience for contemporary artists, especially young and needy ones. 45 Samstag was among the artists mentioned in a review for Godsoe's third exhibition, held at the Towers Hotel in Brooklyn in the first two weeks of September 1932, though what he showed is not currently known. 46 The following April at the prestigious Hotel Roosevelt on East Forty-fifth Street and Madison Avenue, Godsoe's sixth and most recognised exhibition, A Group Exhibition of American Paintings: From Realism to Surrealisme [sic], included Samstag's Hors d'Oeuvres, a combined figure and still life painting that was reproduced in the New York Times. In his review of the show, the newspaper's critic, Edward Alden Jewell, recognised Samstag as 'the most accomplished of the realists' and advised his readers not to miss this 'pot-pourie [sic]' that displayed 'an almost startling mélange of styles and talents'. 'The show's title,' he further wrote, 'does not mislead, for here indeed realism and surrealisme [sic] define extremes, with all sorts of quasi material in between.'47 The exhibition was also reviewed in the New York Sun, which noted that the 'artists are all American and ... not yet as widely known as they hope to be; [among those] who attract attention [are] Gordon Samstag'.<sup>48</sup>

In the spring of 1933, Samstag's work was accepted, as usual, into the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design, where he continued to teach.<sup>49</sup> At the 108th Annual Exhibition, he showed *Brown and White*, *No. 1*, a painting that was part of a series of perhaps five works, all with a variant of the title 'Brown and White'. This 1933 Academy entry may be the same painting, then entitled simply *Brown and White*, that he placed in the Allied Artists annual show the year before.<sup>50</sup>

Beyond the National Academy and the Godsoe exhibition of about the same time, however, little indication of Samstag's activity can be found in the year of 1933. Perhaps he was busy with other, more personal, matters. On November 3, 1933, he married Anna (Anne) Lawton Davis (1908–87) in the Municipal Court of New York City. When or how they met is not known, but it may have been when Samstag visited the Cape Cod and Provincetown area, starting in the late 1920s (see pages 33–4). A few months after the wedding, Samstag's portrait of his art school friend, Robert de Postels (1909–64), appeared in the Allied Artists show of April 1934. De Postels had studied at the National Academy and, like Samstag, had won several awards before going on to a fairly successful career in New York. As in years before, critics found the Allied display underwhelming, complaining that it differed little from the National Academy offerings, though Samstag's picture fared better: The exhibition is appropriately quiet and discreet ... Here and there other pictures attract the eye, such as ... the alertness in the portrait of "Robert de Postels" by Gordon Samstag. The critic for the *New York Times* was forthright in his disdain for the show overall, though Samstag escaped the worst of his regard:



Gordon SAMSTAG Untitled (Coal Shed Scene), c. 1934 oil on linen 60.0 x 56.0 cm (23% x 22 in) University of South Australia Art Collection

This undated painting may be from a group produced on Cape Cod in the summer of 1934 and shown in Samstag's first solo exhibition in the autumn of that year.

These exhibitions of the Allied Artists of America are always preponderantly cheerful and academic. The present group looks very much like the groups shown in the past. Nearly all of the work is competent technically; much of it is decorative. Very few of the artists seem to have anything particularly new to say. Among the pictures that should be mentioned as standing in some degree apart from their more conventional neighbors [is] ... 'Robert de Postels' by Gordon Samstag. <sup>54</sup>

Samstag and his new wife apparently spent part of their first summer together with Anne's family on Cape Cod. Gordon showed two paintings at the Provincetown Art Association summer exhibition: *Coal Shed, Dennis* and *Bass River Station*, both depicting locations near the Davis family home. <sup>55</sup> The major event in terms of exhibitions for 1934 was Samstag's first one-man show. By then, his career was well enough regarded that he was taken up by the prestigious Montross Gallery. Established in 1878, Montross had long been a premier showplace for contemporary American art and, during the twentieth century, had also added the work of European moderns, such as Paul Cézanne, to their offerings. Samstag had his first solo exhibition that autumn (October 22–November 3, 1934), displaying twenty-eight oils and seventeen watercolours, including his prize-winning (but still unsold) *Young Man*. The titles of a number of these pictures indicate the time spent the past summer on Cape Cod: *Coal Shed*, *South Dennis*; *Bass River Station*; *Wire Factory, South Yarmouth*, for example. <sup>56</sup>

His exhibition was uniformly well received, with none of the New York critics finding any serious flaws with his work. The prominence of his solo debut was attested to by the article devoted to it in *The Art Digest*. Summarising the primary critical notices, the article quoted from two specific reviews in the *New York Times* and *The Art Digest*:

An adventurous and refreshing spirit is found in Gordon Samstag's first one-man exhibition at the Montross Gallery by Howard DeVree of the *Times*. 'A number of still-lifes, striking in color, design and differentiation of texture, together with a portrait and still-life in one large canvas [this description may refer to *Hors d'Oeuvres*], and some bold, structural water colors are perhaps the outstanding items in a large and diversified list. Here are vigor and animation and vitality in a good one-man show.'57

It also quoted a portion of the assessment of Margaret Breuning of the *New York Post*, whose long and thoughtful review suggested she had considered Samstag's work quite seriously:

Gordon Samstag is holding an exhibition of paintings and water colors at the Montross Gallery. Although this is the artist's first one-man showing, he has been represented in exhibitions and received an award last year at the Academy show for the canvas included in this showing, Young Man Desires Position'. Mr Samstag is obviously not in the class of the young painters who buy some tubes of paint and some brushes and then begin to exhibit, for his work indicates that he has been long and patiently working out experiments in form, in linear pattern and plastic design. Particularly does his discipline in drawing make impression. One feels, especially in the earlier canvases, that often impulse has been checked by this scientific spirit. In the more recent work there is evidence of greater freedom. Finding the artistic idiom which conforms to his conceptions, the artist appears to reach a much fuller and richer expression. If there is something of sheer virtuosity in the painting of textures and surfaces in 'Eggs', there is none in the canvas 'Coal Shed, Bass River', in which the figures are finely integrated in the design, yet diffuse the warmth of human interest through the painting. 'Anne', in its glowing color and vitality of presentment, marks an especial advance in plasticity and soundness in figure painting, while the intensity of feline curiosity that burns in the yellow orbs of 'Black Cat', resting in a debris of household effects, is a characterization not to be despised in the realm of portraiture. The water colors do not seem to interest the painter deeply. They are not so much sketches as sketchy and inconclusive as compared with the finished statement of the majority of the canvases. 58

The reviewer for *Art News* added a further analysis of Samstag's first solo exhibition, opining (as so many other critics would) that the artist pursued realism to the detriment of invention:

While the artist's principal problem is the quest for realism of the uncompromising brand which faithfully and accurately reproduces the objects around him, his painting is soft and free from these hard outlines which attends [sic] such painting as Lucioni's. It is photographic and for that reason probably loses out in imagination. But if one does not seek phantasy [sic] he will find the scrupulous quality of these portraits and still lifes most pleasing.<sup>59</sup>

Samstag's last major exhibition of 1934 was a group show of works by instructors from New York art schools at the New School for Social Research. He joined others from the National Academy, including Gifford Beal, Charles C. Curran and two of his own former teachers, Raymond P.R. Neilson and Ivan G. Olinsky. In the *New York Times*, Jewell commented, 'Some of the work has been seen before; in several instances it is particularly good. The artist-instructors seem all to have on hand characteristic examples.'60

#### THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR

The year of 1934 also yielded one of Samstag's most significant and best received works, *Proletarian* (see page 55), a portrait of an African-American woman working as a maid. Compared to *Young Man*, with the tone of desolation that hovers over its subject, *Proletarian* deals with the theme of labour in a far more affirmative way. Although the work that the woman is doing – housecleaning – might be considered menial, in Samstag's hands it acquires dignity and a sense of purpose. Her immaculate, crisp dress and headwrap suggest pride and self-awareness, and her stooped pose, far from suggesting innervation or submission, is almost balletic in its vigour. Her figure possesses an attentiveness that the unemployed young man cannot muster, as he sits slackly with an air of inwardness and self-absorption. With one arm akimbo and her head upraised, she seems to stop momentarily to assess her progress or to take a quick rest. This posture, with her back bent, has often been used in art to express the drudgery of physical labour, but the energy of the overall form here and the fixedness with which she examines the wall suggest alertness and involvement. If her face were visible, interpretation would likely be easier, but the painter turns her away, so that she can scarcely register as an individual, but *can* represent an entire group, as the title suggests she does.

That this figure is a type, an example of something larger, is affirmed by Samstag's title, *Proletarian*. During the economic struggles of the 1930s, this term would have carried a far clearer comment than it does today. In ancient Rome, the proletariat was the lowest strata of society, but in the nineteenth century, particularly through the Communist philosophy, its meaning evolved to indicate the working class. In the past, a proletarian, a nameless member of the mass of working humanity, had been someone of low regard. But in the 1930s, as the Communist Party gained sympathisers in Depression-afflicted America, the proletariat was more appreciated. In addition, many Americans of that period found that physical labour was the only employment available to them, and that experience may have fostered a new esteem for this type of work. Yet, Samstag did not title his painting 'Proletariat', which would have freighted this figure with the implication of oppression that Communism associated with this class. Instead, with the title *Proletarian*, he focuses on this particular person. Though she remains anonymous, Samstag seems to praise her individual, distinctive contribution to society. No longer a pejorative term, 'proletarian' becomes an appellation of honour, signifying the class that forms the base on which a democratic society rests and functions.

As in many of his pictures around this time, Samstag's composition is sparse and focused on just a few elements. Even more than *Young Man*, this painting is pared down to an almost ascetic composition. In both paintings, the figure is angled into a restrained arrangement that admits few extraneous details. But *Proletarian* is especially stark. Aside from the figure, the only other object is the Chardin-like pail placed prominently in the centre foreground. The woman stands on a vaguely patterned carpet of brown and reddish tones on a brown wooden floor. These colours are echoed in her flesh, in some of the shading of her clothing and the shadow on her bucket. After the figure, and perhaps the pail, the most important element in the composition is that blank wall towards which the woman stares so intently. We see at first that the wall is blank, but, as so often in Modernist paintings, we find that what at first appeared to be blank is in fact full of incident, both in colour and composition. The bottom part of the wall is an abstract form that is defined by the straight horizontal lines of the moulding and the subtlety of its various white tones. This wall functions compositionally as did the wall in *Young Man*: it brakes the movement towards the background and stops the recession of the pictorial space. The result is a shallow picture plane that is like a narrow stage on which the artist places

Gordon SAMSTAG Proletarian, 1934 oil on canvas 122.7 x 106.7 cm (48¼ x 42 in) Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio, USA his figures and objects. This collapsing of the pictorial space into a reduced band near the front of the primary plane (the physical surface of the picture) is a tenet of Modernist painting, and Samstag seems to understand the concept with some sophistication. This disciplined composition affords the artist a limited amount of space in which to manipulate a few strictly chosen forms. The studied restraint of the composition, projecting a tone of thoughtful simplicity, enhances the seriousness of the narrative. The painting is not picturesque or shallow, but suggests esteem for the labour of this anonymous woman as well as the validity of finding aesthetic value in ordinary life.

#### STANDING OUT

Through 1935, Samstag's career gathered steam and, considering the strained circumstances of the Depression, he enjoyed a remarkable number of opportunities for his work. His year began with an important accomplishment in the acceptance of Proletarian at the annual exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in January.<sup>61</sup> This exhibition was among the most important of the national-scaled surveys of American art, along with those at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Corcoran Biennial in Washington, DC. Competition for acceptance into these shows was at a high level, and most Americans of any ambition sought to have their work included. Adding the Pennsylvania annual to his résumé signalled that his reputation continued to expand beyond New York art circles and placed him on a broader stage. His oil paintings garnered the most attention, but Samstag also showed in exhibitions of works on paper, and the early months of 1935 brought his acceptance into the Brooklyn Museum's eighth biennial show of 'Water Colors, Pastels and Drawings by American and Foreign Artists' (February 1-28, 1935). His contribution was Miner's Homes [sic], a title that indicates that he persevered with his interest in workers.<sup>62</sup> This particular title is intriguing since it suggests that Samstag may have looked beyond the northeast for subject matter. As noted elsewhere, Anne's father, Charles Henry Davis, gained much of his enormous fortune through his ownership of mines in Harlan County, Kentucky. Possibly Samstag encountered this subject matter through photographs of the family's enterprise, or perhaps he even journeyed with his father-in-law into Harlan County to see for himself the lives of these workers.<sup>63</sup>

After the Pennsylvania Academy in January, Samstag continued to have an active exhibition season in the spring of 1935. *Proletarian* was accepted into the Twenty-fifth Annual Exhibition at the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts (March 16–April 7, 1935), of which he was a member. Around the same time, Samstag enjoyed the prestige of again being accepted at the Corcoran Biennial (where he had shown *Still Life* in 1928) with his painting *Coal Shed*, *Bass River*, a work likely created in the summer of 1934. Within a month, his work was again being shown, this time in the New York Water-Color Club exhibition, where his lithograph, *Thirty-eighth Floor*, was singled out in a show that contained almost 500 pictures. The *New York Times* critic found the show a lively and interesting affair [though] ... the black-and-white section is not particularly strong. It does, however, contain several stalwart standbys, and some of the new work strikes one as very fresh and able – for instance ... "Thirty-eighth Floor" by Gordon Samstag. The spring of 1935 found Samstag's work in another national survey exhibition of American art, this one at the Cincinnati Art Museum, where *The Shutters* was chosen by the jury for inclusion.

Among the gratifying events of that season was his second one-man show, this time in Philadelphia at the Gimbel Galleries of Contemporary Art in May of 1935. A preview inspired





Gordon SAMSTAG Blonde, c. 1935 oil on board 56.0 x 46.0 cm (22 x 18½ in) Photograph by Ansen Seale Collection John Brookes, San Antonio, Texas, USA

the *Philadelphia Inquirer* critic to write one of the most glowing reviews of Samstag's career: 'A new exhibition ... at the Gimbel Galleries of Contemporary Art, is made up of oils and a few lithographs by Gordon Samstag, who has won his way to his present eminence through many vicissitudes.' The review went on, quoting the artist:

'My family, with the exception of my mother, thought studying art was impractical, selfish and a waste of time.'That the majority of his family was wrong is admirably proved by the pictures he has to show, the group of seventeen being largely still lifes, though of a sort quite beyond the usual array in this category. The three, each merely labeled 'Brown and White', are exceptionally fine in quality, their sundry objects being beautifully arranged in the space at the artist's disposal, the coloring in excellent taste, and the sense of reality and solidarity marked. These same elements are found in such simply named canvases as 'Bottles', 'Brown Bowl', 'Potatoes and Onions', 'Eggs', 'Books', 'Paint Bowl' and 'Bread Box', the last named being of outstanding brilliance. A deep insight into feminine character is discovered in the nude 'Blonde' [and] 'Kay', wherein the hands, held to the sitter's face, have been wonderfully painted, and the large 'Hors

d'Oeuvres', a girl in black, seated at a table on which an array of delectable appetizers has been spread. The simple picture 'Ivy' creates a striking effect and 'Black Cat', the animal lying at graceful ease upon a white cloth, with certain implements of the carpenter's craft as other details ... The two lithographs on view are '38th Floor' and 'Subway Cleaners'. 68

After such affirmation, Samstag must have been even more joyful when the following month (June 1935) he made his first (and, for many years, only) sale to a museum. While his painting, *Proletarian*, was still on exhibition in Philadelphia, he had received a letter from the Toledo Museum of Art, asking if he would lend the painting to the museum's summer show of American artists. 'It is a picture I personally admired ... while [in Philadelphia] last week,' wrote the president of the museum. <sup>69</sup> The artist responded immediately, saying he would be glad to lend the picture for their exhibition and issuing an invitation: 'If you would care to see more of my work the next time you are in New York, I would welcome your opinion.' <sup>70</sup>

Toledo's show, the Twenty-second Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by Contemporary American Artists, opened on June 2.<sup>71</sup> By mid-June, *Proletarian* had apparently been purchased for the museum's collection. Samstag, of course, was pleased to have received a cheque for his painting and wrote, 'I am very happy that you have bought my picture for the Museum. It means a great deal to me to have it there.' He then asked if, after the Toledo exhibition, the museum might return the painting so he could put it into other exhibitions: 'As I painted this picture last winter [1934], I have not exhibited it very much and I wonder

if you can lend it to me next winter to show at one or two places.' He explained that he was expecting to have a show at the Montross Gallery, and he wanted to submit it to the jury for the annual National Academy exhibition, which usually took place early in the year. Typical of his unassuming manner, he added, 'But if this will be inconvenient for you in any way, please do not consider letting me have it.'<sup>72</sup> The president replied that the museum was 'glad to have you in our permanent collection' and assured Samstag that they would be willing to lend him his picture 'for any reasonable time for any exhibition you suggest' because, he explained, 'we are directly interested in American art and are more than glad to be helpful to artists in any way.'<sup>73</sup> During the summer, while the exhibition was up, the Toledo Museum organised special tours for the public that focused on a small group of certain paintings. Near the end of June, Samstag's *Proletarian* was featured, and the *Toledo Blade* described it for its readers as 'a realistic study of a colored cleaning woman pausing a moment from her labors ... The crisp, clean-cut painting in this canvas gives it expression'.<sup>74</sup>

In its report for the year of 1935, Toledo's *Museum News* carried an article about its new acquisition, starting with the statement that implied the museum's commitment to encouraging American artists (especially, perhaps, in the midst of the Depression): 'Gordon Samstag is a young artist.' Based on the handwritten biography he had sent them, which detailed his financial difficulties in going to art school and told of his past honours, the article related his artistic statement: 'He writes that he has his best financial success with his paintings of still life, but prefers people as his subjects, and uses still life only to save on model fees.'The article then went on to discuss 'the splendid picture' that was selected from the museum's summer exhibition to become part of its permanent collection:

[*Proletarian* is] deservedly one of the most popular pictures in the exhibition. The subject is a colored maid at work at her cleaning. He says that he likes best to paint people at work in their natural surroundings. Here he has done so. Against the gray wall the figure, clad in a pale yellowish dress and wearing a white cap, stoops to her labor. The pose has a natural and instantaneous quality. The bluewhite enamel of the bucket, the yellow of the dress, the white of the cap and brown of arms and face, make interesting color notes against the neutral but vibrant gray of the wall. The picture gives the feeling that the artist has accomplished his purpose, which is perhaps the ultimate to be desired.<sup>75</sup>

Proletarian would spend much of 1936 on loan to Samstag for display in other exhibitions (see Chapter 3), but after its return to the Toledo Museum of Art it did not leave the museum again until over forty years later, when it joined other revealing, but nearly forgotten, paintings from the Great Depression in the Wichita Art Museum's 1981 exhibition The Neglected Generation of American Realist Painters: 1930–1948.<sup>76</sup>

In August of 1935, Samstag joined in a group exhibition at the Montross Gallery. He planned to borrow *Proletarian* for the show, but the only work mentioned in the reviews was *Coal Shed*, described as 'grayly silhouetted' and 'possess[ing] vigor of design'.<sup>77</sup> In November, Samstag again associated himself with a prestigious gallery of contemporary American art when he participated in a group show at the Ferargil Galleries, where two of his works, *Flooded Lime Kiln* and *Cheese and Fruit* were recognised as 'outstanding'.<sup>78</sup> His teaching career was stable, and he did have at least one source of steady income: the National Academy named him assistant instructor in its Antique classes for the autumn of 1935.<sup>79</sup>



# ACADEMICS AND MODERNISTS 1936-41

If 1935 had been a splendid year for Samstag in terms of exhibitions, recognition and sales, the following year of 1936 was to surpass it. Moreover, in the context of the Great Depression, his success was particularly remarkable in that he was among the small contingent of American artists who could actually live and support themselves on their art, partly because he continued to work as an assistant in the Antique classes at the National Academy. While Samstag's successes would continue for a few years, towards the end of the decade there would be a decline in exhibitions, recognition and productivity. In terms of the larger world, trouble was stirring and, by 1936, it was already evident that many people, especially in Europe, were dealing with more than hard economic times. The Spanish Civil War began in 1936, and it would prove, in some ways, to be a rehearsal for the far larger conflict of World War II. In addition, the Depression persisted, though New Deal policy had addressed many of the most desperate needs of the population. Samstag held his own for a time, but it appears that he may have had to take on more commercial work and illustration to augment his income in the last years of the decade.

#### A STUDY IN WHITE

At the start of 1936, however, only glimmers of these issues were manifesting themselves, and Samstag seems to have been devoting most of his time to his painting. He had recently completed what would become one of his most noted and widely praised works, *Nurses* (see opposite and page 63). It continued the theme of people at work, but this time with a more complex composition involving two figures. As in *Young Man Desires Position* and *Proletarian*, this painting is a restrained look at labour, both in terms of narrative and formal qualities, with an undramatic emotional tone that declines to suggest any sense of oppression, injustice or drudgery. *Nurses* lacks the emotionally authentic impact of the two earlier paintings, partly because those figures seem unaware of being observed while the two nurses appear to be primarily a studio arrangement. The scene hardly seems like a vignette observed in an actual hospital, largely because of the figures' juxtaposition (which is formally intriguing but narratively odd) and partly because both figures seem to assume an assigned pose. In much of his work,

Gordon SAMSTAG
Nurses, 1936 (detail)
oil on canvas
121.9 x 106.7 cm (48 x 42 in)
Photograph by Gene Antisdel
Collection Santa Clara Valley
Medical Center, San Jose,
California, USA

Samstag seems interested at least as much in the interplay of sharply delineated shapes and a deliberative study of a narrow range of colour as in the story being told.

The setting is nearly identical to that of the two earlier paintings, with only a few feet of space depicted before recession is stopped by the background wall. The standing nurse is holding a bed sheet as white as her uniform, and her posture is almost like a dance movement. Her head is turned so that we can see her features, but we find on them no particular emotion and little that could give us insight into her feelings about her work. Her face is remarkable in its neutrality; even though we do not see the face of the woman in *Proletarian*, we nevertheless get a stronger sense of her engagement with what she is doing, just from the character of her posture. The stance of the standing figure in *Nurses*, while elegant, suggests a pose taken by and maintained by a model, an effect echoed in her features.

The seated nurse is not actively working, but she is far more interesting because in her face and form we can trace some personality or emotional tone. In contrast to her companion, her face is not neutral, and we sense the workings of a mind, an intuition difficult to elicit in the standing nurse. The seated woman is thoughtful and serious, perhaps even a bit troubled, and we note a slight wrinkling between her eyebrows. Her stare is fixed, but the expression of her eyes is that of a person who is not looking in a cognitive way at anything specific, but is concentrated on her own thoughts. The inwardness of her facial expression is similar to that found in *Young Man Desires Position*, in which the figure is also absorbed in the workings of his own mind. In addition, the grip of her hand on her upper arm, painted with strokes of white along her knuckles, seems to betray some tension. That effect is furthered by the firmness with which she holds her pencil and also by the three sharp lines of bright white along her upper arm, indicating that the grip of her hand is pulling the cloth taut towards her elbow. These elements, along with the very slight line between her eyebrows, are subtle clues that suggest strain or tension, but they are telling.

Nurses seems less a portrait of labour than a studiously designed composition that is also an exploration of a colour that is not a colour.<sup>2</sup> It might almost be appropriate to borrow a title from the American painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler and call it a 'symphony' or 'harmony' in white. The chromatic sameness of the painting surpasses even Proletarian.

Except for the hair and flesh of the women, the brown floor, and the bright yellow pencil, everything is a shade of white; nearly every surface shows the effect of light or shadow on white. This sameness, combined with the notion of the spotlessly clean nurses, imparts an antiseptic, preternaturally immaculate quality to the painting. The abstraction inherent in Samstag's exploration of these whitened forms is especially well observed in the hanging coat or uniform that can barely be read as a representational object. More than Young Man Desires Position and Proletarian, Nurses shows that Samstag was at once bound to the observable and drawn to the abstract. Light spreads evenly and dispassionately over all forms in this stilled atmosphere, revealing his exactly defined shapes and surfaces.

#### PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

The year began, as 1935 had, with the annual exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. This time the triumph was even greater. Two paintings were accepted into the juried exhibition: *Nurses*, which won one of the major awards, the Lippincott Prize, and *Domestic* (see opposite), a figure composition of two black household workers, one ironing clothes and the other peeling potatoes. As was often the case in exhibitions of 1930s American art, the tension between Modernism and traditional or more academic approaches was in



Gordon SAMSTAG

Domestic, 1936
oil on canvas
dimensions unknown
collection unknown
Image in Survey Graphic, USA,
vol. XXV, no. 5, June 1936

evidence at the Philadelphia show. Critics often assessed exhibitions in terms of the extent to which Modernism prevailed, or failed to prevail, over more conventional styles, especially the American Scene brand of realism, and then praised or castigated the exhibition according to their own inclinations. Dorothy Grafly, a critic for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, for instance, had nothing to say specifically about *Nurses*, other than calling it 'a large study in white', but she declared the Pennsylvania Annual Exhibition overall to be a 'fiasco'. She mourned:

It is more than a little sad. One stands as if looking backward into the past. The present skulks in corners, shyly, and peers out from fugitive canvases. They are few – these hints of contemporary vitality – and one wonders how even these slipped past a static invitation list and a jury impervious to the tingle of adventure.<sup>4</sup>

It is not clear whether Grafly found *Nurses* and *Domestic* part of the 'fiasco' or among the 'hints of contemporary vitality'. Her reaction appeared in *The Art Digest*, perhaps the most wide-ranging and popular magazine of the contemporary art scene, which also illustrated *Nurses* on its cover. It was Samstag's second *Art Digest* cover, the first one being his *Young Man Desires Position* of April 1, 1931, after it won the Clarke Prize at the National Academy.

Another Philadelphia critic, however, seemed almost relieved to find so little evidence of modernity at the 1936 Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts exhibition. C.H. Bonte took a rather bemused, supercilious attitude towards anything tinged with a less time-honoured, more experimental approach, while, in contrast to Grafly, finding much of interest and worth in the exhibition. Bonte was the same critic who had raved so enthusiastically about Samstag's solo

Gordon SAMSTAG

Nurses, 1936
oil on canvas
121.9 x 106.7 cm (48 x 42 in)
Photograph by Gene Antisdel
Collection Santa Clara Valley
Medical Center, San Jose,
California, USA

show at the Gimbel Gallery of Contemporary Art the previous year; now, however, he had nothing to say about him, other than to list his *Nurses* as having won the Lippincott Prize.<sup>5</sup>

The Pennsylvania exhibition was also reported in New York, with the New York Times offering a parochial view in its headline 'New Yorkers Win 5 of 6 Art Prizes', accompanied by a secondary headline of \$300 Prize to Samstag; Has Best Figure in Oil by American'.6 The information about *Nurses*, similar to Grafly's review, was a terse description of the painting as 'a large study in white, showing two nurses, one of whom is seated'. Though technically a news story and not a critical piece, the article still conveyed something of the preview audience's reaction, reporting a response that was not quite as damning as Grafly's: 'Some of the visitors at the private view remarked that the present show seemed more cosmopolitan than those of the recent past. Those looking for forthright academic paintings can find them, as can those who may be searching for something with a Picasso influence.' A week or so later, Jewell's fuller review did appear in the *Times*, in which he seemed to take a sort of weary, philosophical stance towards the Philadelphia exhibition, indicating that it was not as invigorating as it might have been but was no worse than many such annual surveys of contemporary art: 'The show contains much art that is technically sound, some that is creative in the fullest sense of the term, a vast amount that is slick, pretty and otherwise negligible. It does not ... send one home convinced that one has uninterruptedly drunk from the fountain of Hippocrene.'The fountain of Hippocrene, according to ancient Greek legend, was a source of poetic inspiration, and Jewell was evoking it as a way of lamenting what he saw as the staid, unimaginative character of the exhibition. Other than announcing the prize-winners (such as Samstag), he did not deign to discuss *Nurses* or any other individual work.<sup>8</sup>

And yet, despite the lack of enthusiastic commentary from some critics about the show overall and Samstag's painting in particular, *Nurses* thrived as it went on to other exhibitions, was illustrated in a variety of publications and was eventually purchased by a collector. One of the painting's earliest recognitions was in the nursing profession itself. It was featured on the April 1936 cover of a professional journal, *The Trained Nurse and Hospital Review*, where an editorial commented on audience response to the 'thought-provoking' painting while it was still on exhibit at the Pennsylvania Academy:

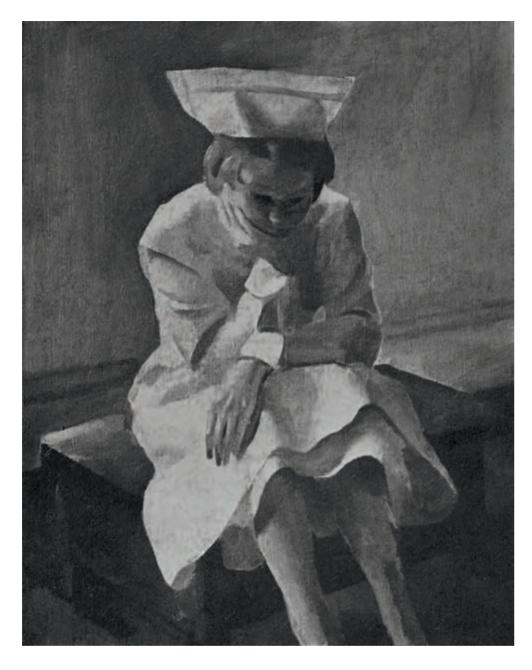
'Nurses', when exhibited in Philadelphia, was the picture to which gallery viewers returned again and again to think through some new interpretation, while others studied the figures as though they were the famous Mona Lisa. Whatever the special meaning, and we can be sure that the artist had one, the picture is a vivid portrayal of the force of personality, the subject which [the author] handles in our opening article and the quality which is more necessary, perhaps, in the nurse than in any other professional worker ... The prize winning picture is beautifully executed in tones of grey that carry the shading into purple-blues and even greens while the crisp sense of linen provides a perfect foil for the delicate, firm skin texture. The two nurses present a striking contrast in mood and in racial heritage.

The magazine must have secured some sort of agreement with the artist to reproduce the picture as an 'appropriate gift for the nurses' residence and as a very lovely work of art for one's own room. The reproduction, which faithfully mirrors all the values of the original,' was 'suitable for framing' at 54 by 60 centimetres (21½ by 23½ inches) and cost \$17 framed and \$15 unframed – rather high prices for the Depression. <sup>10</sup> The magazine also notified its readers of Samstag's solo show at the Montross Gallery during that month of April, which contained works of interest to them:



Gordon SAMSTAG

Disconsolate Nurse, c. 1936
oil on canvas
dimensions unknown
collection unknown
Image reproduced on the cover
of The Trained Nurse and Hospital
Review, 96–97, June 1936
Courtesy University of California,
Los Angeles Library



Several other pictures of nurses will be exhibited in this one-man show. Two are quick sketches – studies, perhaps, for the idea which finally evolved in 'Nurses'. Another is called 'Nurses' Clothes', still another 'The Disconsolate Nurse', as if the artist were playing around his theme to catch the most dramatic moment. <sup>11</sup>

None of the works mentioned (other than *Nurses*) have been located. Two years later, another medical publication used *Nurses* as an illustration in an article on the efforts of nurses to go beyond their technical skills and to be alert to the psychological situations of their patients.<sup>12</sup>

Before the April 1936 one-man exhibition mentioned in the nursing journal, Samstag had been invited to join a group show in March, also at the Montross Gallery, an exhibition that included some of the gallery's 'regulars', such as the realist painter John Sloan (1871–1951) and the Social Realist Philip Evergood (1901–73). The *Times* critic, Edward Alden Jewell,

noted that Montross had given most of its season to younger painters whose work was 'often in a frankly "experimental" stage', but he found this show 'full of variety [with] some very commendable items'. Samstag's contribution may have been among those 'commendable items', but no specific work was mentioned and the artist was simply listed among those participating in the exhibition. That same critic mentioned the show again a little later on in a survey of current exhibitions, but declined to distinguish among them, saying only that the artists displayed their typically identifiable work:

A group show at the Montross assembles work by a score of artists who are regularly identified with this gallery: Henry Varnum Poor, John Sloan ... Philip Evergood ... and Gordon Samstag. As one might expect, it proves to be a show rich in contrasts, and it is a show, besides, that frequently represents the exhibiting artists in their most characteristic aspects.<sup>14</sup>

All of these artists could have been considered exponents of American Scene painting, but their work ranged from the caricature-like social comment of Evergood to the restrained observations of Samstag. The Montross group exhibition in March was also briefly mentioned in *Art News*, which said about Samstag only that 'Gordon Samstag and John Sloan have figure pieces'.<sup>15</sup>

Admittance to juried surveys continued into the spring of 1936. For the second year, Samstag was accepted into the annual exhibition at the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, this time winning the Alice Collins Dunham Prize (\$25) for the best portrait painting. One of the figures in that painting, *Anne and Fidelma*, was surely his wife, Anne Davis Samstag, but the identity of Fidelma (an Irish name) is unknown.<sup>16</sup>

As he typically did, Samstag exhibited in the yearly exhibition of the National Academy of Design, opening in mid-March of 1936. He had borrowed *Proletarian* in January from the Toledo Museum of Art in confidence that it would be accepted, but it was not, and *Coal Shed* became his contribution to the 111th Annual Exhibition (this was presumably the same work he had placed into his 1934 solo exhibition at the Montross Gallery and again in 1935 in the Corcoran Biennial). The painting wasn't mentioned in an article about the exhibition, but the gritty tone that characterised Samstag's *Coal Shed* was apparently shared by many works in the Academy exhibition that year. The writer noted that the city was not a popular subject, but when it was painted, it was usually portrayed as a 'cold, miserable place'. Samstag's painting has not been located, but the subject matter of a coal shed was one he frequently explored in the mid-1930s and was likely a rather grim scene.

#### **BALANCED ASSESSMENTS**

Soon after the Academy show closed, Samstag opened his second solo exhibition at the Montross Gallery (the first had been in 1934), in April 1936. In a group of twenty-seven paintings, he showed his most recent prize-winner, *Nurses*, along with studies for that painting and other works on the subject of nurses. He also included his *Proletarian*, which the Toledo Museum had lent, and *Domestic*. As usual, there were a number of still lifes and studio pictures, but there were also canvases whose titles suggest the artist's ongoing interest in ordinary working people. *Scrubwoman*, *Barber Shop* and *Shipping Clerk* joined scenes entitled *Flooded Lime Kiln*, *Lime Kiln* (two with that title) and *Solomon Bros. Coal Yard*. <sup>18</sup> Now the *Times* critic, Edward Alden Jewell, gave a more considered assessment of Samstag's art, in which he seemed only mildly interested, though he did note that the painter had won prizes in both the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and at the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts exhibitions:



Gordon SAMSTAG
Water-Color, c. 1936
oil on board
23.5 x 56.0 cm (9¼ x 22 in)
University of South Australia
Art Collection
Gift of Dr Walter L. Freedman,
Englewood, Colorado, USA

Samstag's work, if fundamentally academic, possesses individual traits and reveals a very practiced hand. The more ambitious figure subjects, though always capably painted, have a 'posed' look. It is 'studio' art, infused with a clean and rather slick elegance. In some of the smaller works (for example 'Pansies', 'Water-Color', 'Gray and White' and two tiny wine demi-tasse still-lifes) a finer grain is realized. <sup>19</sup>

Though Jewell was not squarely in the American Scene camp, he possibly felt, as many people did, that 'studio' pictures were less to be admired than images that reflected the taxing times that Americans were enduring in those years. A number of Samstag's paintings took up the theme of workers but, with their muted social comment, they often did so in a way that was less psychologically engaged than many observers sought; formal concerns seemed at least equal to, if not more important than, interpretive ones in his work. One of the paintings mentioned as having 'a finer grain' was illustrated in the article; *Water-Color* (see above) depicted a table top strewn with studies of the nude on small sheets of paper, along with a glass of paint-stained water, pens and other small objects. It was a glance inside the artist's studio, and it suggests Samstag's preoccupation with the artistic life, especially in its quiet moments of contemplation in his own personal work place. <sup>20</sup>

*Water-Color* was also singled out by the reviewer in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, who admired the verisimilitude of Samstag's art but who also judged the aloof tone as the central flaw of the artist's approach:

Another artist whose strongest point is brilliant technique is the American painter, Gordon Samstag, now exhibiting at the Montross Gallery. There is no such thing as a difficult subject for Mr Samstag; he can paint anything at all, as easy as rolling off a log. And it will be entirely convincing, firm in draughtsmanship and fresh and limpid in color. The trouble with this artist, if he can be said to have any trouble at all, is that he is so completely engrossed with the wizardry of pigment, and so glued to only the eye-appeal of art that he satisfies only a small part of our esthetic appetite. But in the realm in which Samstag operates, the realm of surface tones, tints and textures, he is without a peer among our present painters. Witness this example of his cleverness in handling pigments; he has painted in oil as a still-life subject a study of a freshly completed watercolor painting, still tacked to the drawing board.



So adroitly has he simulated with oils the appearance of wet watercolor washes that you have to touch the canvas with your hand to make sure that you are actually looking at oil paint and not watercolor.  $^{21}$ 

The unqualified praise for Samstag's technical prowess was often echoed through the 1930s: 'He can paint anything at all'; '[H]e is without a peer among our present painters'. These superb compliments – and they were common among the New York critics – would seem to lift him into the upper levels of the artists of his day. And yet Samstag's emotional reluctance, as if he were removed from the tenor of his own times, left his viewers less than fully engaged with his artistic statements. He seemed intent on depicting his world, but interpreting it only in an undramatic manner.

Another painting in the 1936 Montross exhibition had that quiet tone that characterised many of his works, but in this case the subject demanded it. A sleeping figure is frequently found in art, but it is also often charged with a pronounced psychological character, such as innocence or drunkenness or voyeurism or inscrutability, especially in regard to dreaming. Samstag's Sleep depicts a female figure (who may be his wife, Anne), clothed in a skirt and blouse, lying on a small bed covered with crisp, bright white sheets. The artist views his subject from just a metre or so away and slightly above her, so that we see her face at an angle and can barely discern her sleep-absorbed expression. Her knees are drawn up to create a right angle with her torso, her left arm lies limply extended, and her right hand is tucked beneath her face. The weight of the body and the lassitude of the muscles are clearly conveyed and, even though Samstag forms her body into angles, it nevertheless is an image of languor. No other setting is suggested, and the wall behind the figure is a painterly exercise in large brushstrokes. As in other works, the visual effect seems to be a style of considerable precision, but on looking more closely it is evident that the forms are developed in a fluid pattern of discernible brushwork. The plainness of the composition helps to direct the focus to the somnolent figure, insensible to our gaze and observed in an unconscious state. The painting was illustrated in an April 1936 issue of the national art magazine, Art News, as an example of Samstag's work in the Montross solo exhibition. The topic of the painting might have been seen as an evocative one that gave viewers insight into not just the sleeper but into the artist as well, but the lacklustre caption for

Gordon SAMSTAG

Daisies, 1938
oil on linen
40.8 x 86.5 cm (16 x 34 in)
University of South Australia
Art Collection

the *Art News* reproduction, 'A Characteristic Oil by a National Academician', suggested that Samstag had once again avoided a strong psychological statement.<sup>22</sup>

The *Art News* review was one of the most incisive of Samstag's career. It is a balanced assessment that ascertains his strengths, but also discusses his weaknesses in a way that is not simply pejorative but places them in a stylistic context. The primary fault in the artist seems to be not any technical or interpretive problem, but a failure of the imagination. To some extent, it may be unfair to condemn his 'imaginative powers' since it is possible that Samstag specifically wanted to filter out 'imagination' and focus on a documentary-like frankness. According to the *Art News* reviewer:

In the canvases of Gordon Samstag at the Montross Gallery there is sound draughtsmanship and clean painting in a high, cool key. A teacher at the National Academy of Design, he is an academician in his basic attitude to the art but he has considerable vigor of statement. After a careful examination of his clear, objective, well understood and very unpretentious pictures, the conclusion emerges that he is not strong in imaginative powers. Trained nurses and their uniforms offer him subject matter over and over. *Nurses*, a large composition of two figures will be familiar to many people who remember that it was awarded the Walter Lippincott Prize of 1936 at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. *Shipping Clerk*, another large canvas, is heroic in scope and yet unleavened; it does not quite enlarge our experience. There is true color in *Box of Pansies*, continued honesty in *Watercolor* [sic]. Such a scrupulous talent is well suited to portraiture; although few portraits are included here, Samstag has been very successful in this medium. A number of lithographs complete the showing. <sup>23</sup>

To consign an artist to portraiture as his best venue for his talent is no compliment in American art, traditionally. The primary 'use' for art from the earliest colonial times was portraiture, the recording of a person's features, and many artists through the centuries complained of their limited opportunities for creativity because of it. Samstag did produce a number of portraits, but there is no reason to believe that he ever thought of it as his artistic calling.

Another critic, writing in the *New York Evening Post*, found Samstag's paintings at the Montross to be indicative of the National Academy's approach – and he did not mean it as a compliment. The artist's subjects and his steady treatment of them provoked some double-edged, dubious comments:

Gordon Samstag ... paints lobster and chicken very appetizingly and even a homely cheese becomes quite a glamorous thing under his hands. His clean white painting of nurses, glistening showy painting, [sic] won the Lippincott prize at the Pennsylvania Academy this year ... Mr Samstag's virtuosity is so evenly sustained in this show that I think he is ready for the National Academy. <sup>24</sup>

The *New York Herald Tribune's* critic was more generous with Samstag's 1936 Montross pictures but ended the notice with an assessment that even the others refrained from making – one which must have disappointed the artist:

Gordon Samstag, who has taken several prizes for painting recently, is exhibiting cleverly realized, immaculately painted figure subjects at the Montross gallery ... Few artists seem as skillful as he in painting in the neutral colors he employs. Mr. Samstag uses white on white very deftly and originally and his 'Nurses', a study of two uniformed young women, which won the Pennsylvania Academy Lippincott prize this year, realizes with remarkable clarity the surfaced texture and color of the starched, white costumes. Similar feats of clear-cut representationalism may be seen in his painting of a negro

maid at work, which the Toledo Museum recently acquired, and the small landscape and still lifes which fill out the display. Mr Samstag's art borders closely on illustration, but he is an astonishingly clever performer in paint.<sup>25</sup>

It is possible that Samstag was indeed starting to spend more time on commercial art and illustration as he struggled to make a living during the Depression, but the idea that this sort of work was creeping into his style as a serious painter must have been unwelcome.

The April 1936 Montross exhibition was also discussed in *The Art Digest* that month in a way that emphasised the artist's formal concerns, such as colour and light. The depiction of workers during the Depression years, especially black domestic workers, would have been ripe for social commentary, but almost inevitably, Samstag elided those issues to focus on balletic compositions with figures who seem so preoccupied with their work as to be emotionally distant. Many of his paintings at that time also depict workplaces that, even without the presence of labourers, could have been handled in a way that indicated some economic or social awareness on the part of the painter. The restrained character of his compositions could almost be described as elegant, imparting a dispassionate tone that seldom suggested a probing into the feelings of the figures depicted – or in manipulating the viewer's feelings as well. According to *The Art Digest* (which illustrated its article with *Proletarian*):

Gordon Samstag, [a] 29-year-old painter who was awarded the ... Lippincott prize at the ... Pennsylvania Academy this year for 'Nurses', is exhibiting at the Montross Gallery ... 'Nurses', a large study in white of two nurses, is included in his show, as well as other figure subjects, still lifes and landscapes. Samstag works in crisp tones of white, gray and light-ochre. His paint quality is thick but fluent and often takes on the appearance of water color, especially in his landscapes of coal yards and lime kilns. A peculiar light in these canvases suggests a gray day effect – when the sun, although not shining, casts a strong light. Workers are the favorite models of Samstag. Besides the sterilized and starched uniforms of nurses, the artist also delights in painting colored women. A happy combination is found in his composition of two Negro girls busy with household doings. One is paring potatoes while the other, in an immaculate and starched dress, is ironing clothes, a pleasant occupation for most colored women. Since studying under Charles W. Hawthorne, Samstag has won recognizable recognition [sic]. Besides the winning of national awards, he was given a Pulitzer traveling award at an early age. <sup>26</sup>

The presumptions of the writer of this uncredited article regarding what black female domestic workers find enjoyable are evident, but it can also be said that the painter's emotional engagement with his human subjects, here and in other figure compositions, is so minimised as to be nearly neutral.

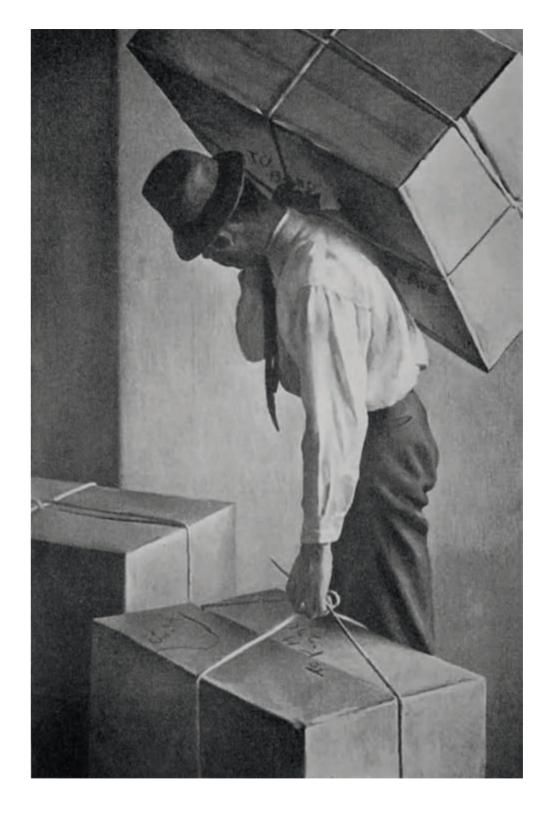
#### PEOPLE AT WORK

Despite the lack of overt emotional appeal or any heightened sense of historic, economic, or social drama in his art, Samstag was becoming known for his pictures of workers. The progressive magazine *Survey Graphic* was concerned with social welfare in the broadest sense, its contents encompassing broadly theoretical issues to specific events and/or individuals, with its articles often illustrated by contemporary art or photography. It had already featured Samstag's *Young Man Desires Position*, at the beginning of the Depression in 1931. In June of 1936, the magazine ran a two-page spread displaying four of Samstag's paintings of working

people, calling it 'People You Know'. *Nurses* took the spotlight at the beginning of the article, followed by pictures of a barber at work in his shop, a man lifting boxes, and the painting of the two black maids, *Domestic*. No titles and little other information about these paintings were included in the brief commentary, which seemed to concentrate on the anonymity and the ubiquity of the men and women depicted:

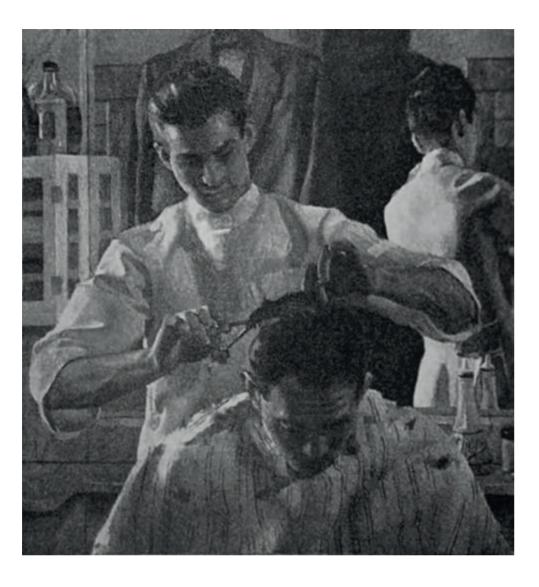
Jane Doe and Richard Roe sit for their portraits in these paintings. The pretty dark-haired nurse and the older stockier blonde one, the sleek young man with comb and scissors, the lean busy brown girls in the kitchen, the tidy shipping clerk are not named but you know them. Gordon Samstag, instructor at the National Academy of Design in New York, seems gradually to be building up his own gallery of unpretentious Americans. To these must be added the housemaid washing woodwork [*Proletarian*], a fine study owned by the Toledo Museum of Art, and a painting called Young Man Desires Position, of an average fellow in a posture of dejection ... At thirty Mr Samstag already has won several national awards. The picture of the nurses received a prize at the Pennsylvania Academy this year. Clean is the word that comes immediately to the mind about his painting, both because of his draughtsmanship and because of his preference for white and cool tones.<sup>27</sup>

Except for Young Man, Nurses and Proletarian, none of Samstag's figure compositions on the subjects of workers have currently been located, and few drawings, watercolours or lithographs have come to light. Exhibition records, however, indicate that he was a prolific artist who showed a range of images in a variety of media. Black-and-white reproductions from newspapers and magazine articles are today the main source of information about most of his art. The 1936 article in Survey Graphic, for example, illustrates four major paintings, three of which remain unlocated; all are likely dated 1935-36. Domestic was the first of them to be placed in a major exhibition and documented in print; it was named in several reviews of the Pennsylvania Academy exhibition and Samstag's gallery shows. This painting comes closer to making a clear social comment than any of Samstag's images since Young Man and is one of the few that allows us to peer into the personality and psychology of the figure depicted. For all the clean and starched uniforms and industrious activity seen here, it is still an image of taxing, uninspired labour. Exertion and drudgery, the two poles of manual labour, are each explored in Domestic. Again, Samstag places his figures in a plain, unornamented setting, but here it has an ambience of oppressive closeness, as if they have been tucked into a tight corner of the kitchen or laundry room. Nothing is here but a hard chair and an ironing board and more laundry hanging against a wall. The instruments of labour – the iron and the ironing board, the simply decorated potato bowl, and the dreary twisted electric cord – all play a compositional role in the picture. The laundress bends to her work energetically, pressing the iron with force and focus. Or is she leaning towards the board in exhaustion? Samstag turns her face away – typically – so that once again we cannot gauge her mood and cannot assign to her an indisputable psychological tenor. Typically as well, he tells her story through posture and gesture and a sure understanding of human anatomy. The young potato peeler is less veiled because Samstag turns her face to us. Though she has a sober, composed expression, her very sobriety suggests long practice with sublimating her feelings and keeping them to herself. Her face is easily seen and might be readable, except that it holds an expression that has coalesced into a permanent facial character of silence, fatigue or depression - or all of them combined. The very small detail of an errant strand of hair that escapes from her neatly tucked style may suggest her weariness and boredom. Not flamboyantly sad or resentful or angry, the young woman shows self-possession, and her sense of quiet resignation adds to the pathos and depth of her character and her intrigue for the viewer.



Gordon SAMSTAG Shipping Clerk, 1935–36 oil on canvas dimensions unknown collection unknown Image in Survey Graphic, vol. XXV, no. 5, June 1936

Gordon SAMSTAG Barber Shop, 1935–36 oil on canvas dimensions unknown collection unknown Image in Survey Graphic, vol. XXV, no. 5, June 1936



Where did Samstag encounter these domestic workers? Surely not in his own household since he and Anne likely could not afford help. Possibly he hired models to act out his visual idea, though that also would have involved an outlay of funds that he may not have had. In contrast to the conscious posing of the women in *Nurses*, however, these women register no awareness of being seen, and they look very much as if they were actually observed rather than posed. Perhaps he is recording something that he would have often seen in the homes of his father-in-law, Charles Davis, who maintained at least two residences, even during the Depression. Or it might be a scene recalled from the St Louis home of his wealthy Scharff grandparents. Countless daily episodes of people working at their jobs on all levels of society surrounded him and, during the Depression, jobs and employment were on almost everyone's mind, as thousands worked in ways they despised. But Samstag's workers are not railing against the system that put them where they were. They have a job and they carry it out, and what they think about their station in life isn't usually something the artist explores directly in his analysis. With the exception of *Young Man*, Samstag's images of labour (at least those currently known) do not forcefully convey an overt, easily read emotional response.

Two other paintings in 'People You Know' depict men at work, one a barber and the other a shipping clerk. *Shipping Clerk* (see page 71) follows a pattern of Samstag's

compositions: a figure (occasionally two), face averted, in a limited, unadorned space, carrying out a fairly quiet activity. Here, the man is surrounded by boxes whose spare geometric forms constitute the most abstract design so far seen in Samstag's art. His face is turned away at about the same angle as the ironing woman in *Domestic*, and he also has one arm straightened in the exertion of his labours. Like the other figures, he is dressed at least partly in white so that the artist exercises once again a tour-de-force within a single colour, tempering a range of tones to describe the folds, creases and shadows of a white object. The clerk may seem a bit overdressed with his white shirt, tie and hat, but it was not uncommon during the 1930s to see that level of formality in dress. Artists – even sculptors – often wore a shirt and tie as they worked in their studios; hats for both men and women were considered part of ordinary dress; and men often wore their hats throughout the day when they were in public (and 'public' seemed to be nearly any place that wasn't the intimacy of a private home) – as many paintings, photographs and movies of the era attest.

Barber Shop (see opposite) is among the most complex compositions of Samstag's currently known paintings of people at work. The setting here is not at all plain but is full of objects, though, as usual, they are contained in a fairly constricted space. Both the barber and his customer look downwards, as most of Samstag's figures do, and both of them have a studied quietness about them. It does not appear to be a convivial barber shop, full of banter and conversation, but a place of work where each person persists in his private thoughts. A third figure is present here, but it is not clear if he is actually another barber or if what we see is the back of the central barber, reflected in a mirror. In either case – a reflection that throws the sense of space back and forth, or an actual third figure who faces outside the frame (as did the violinist in Sketch for The Waiters) – this composition suggests that Samstag was increasing the number of elements to manage, and complicating the layers of space. He may have been challenging himself formally, but it is also possible that the level of visual incidents in this painting belies a veering towards illustration.

All of these paintings reproduced in the *Survey Graphic* article could have been seen in the one-man exhibition at Montross during the summer of 1936. Other titles listed in the exhibition checklist may have also have been part of what the magazine called Samstag's 'own gallery of unpretentious Americans', particularly *Scrubwoman*. He undoubtedly had built up a reputation in New York and, though some critics might have judged his work as conventional and unexciting, other viewers responded and felt that in their daily working lives they could identify with his pictures.

# SHORING UP SUCCESS

Near the end of the year, one last notice of his one-man exhibition at Montross appeared, this time in an international journal. With *Nurses* as its illustration, the *London Studio* recognised his work:

Gordon Samstag's last exhibition at the Montrose [sic] Gallery in New York, included amongst his group of paintings the striking study in white entitled *Nurses*, which won for him the Walter Lippincott prize at the 131st Annual exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art earlier in the year. He works principally in tones of white and grey and light ochre, his pictures being distinguishable for this very often striking feature. <sup>28</sup>

Even this short discussion of his paintings must have been encouraging to him, especially when several American critics seemed to have consigned him to the academic (or even worse, Academic) niche of conservatism in art.

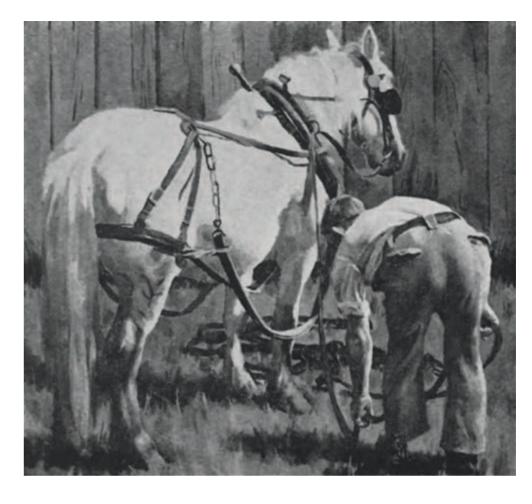
In addition to his solo exhibition at the Montross, Samstag also participated in two group shows there in 1936, one in March, already discussed, the other in June. In March, he had been included with Montross's older, more established artists such as Henry Varnum Poor and John Sloan, but the June exhibition showcased the gallery's younger artists, in which company Samstag garnered more attention. Describing him as being 'well represented' in the group show, a Times review reproduced El Station, a painting that the critic regarded as 'indeed a departure for him'. <sup>29</sup> Perhaps it was deemed so because it was a busy scene of an elevated train station populated by ordinary working New Yorkers, rather than a studied portrait of one or two persons preoccupied with their specific tasks. It was unusual in that it embodied a broader social situation and presented an urban genre scene. Also during that summer, in July, he exhibited with the Silvermine Guild of Artists in Connecticut, one of the groups with which he had become associated.<sup>30</sup> He was also invited again to join the Toledo Museum of Art's summer exhibition, where he contributed the by-now well-publicised Nurses. In a notice in Art News, the critic noticed the painting with the usual descriptions: 'Gordon Samstag's Nurses with its clear cut crispness is typical of the work of this artist, whose painting Proletarian, purchased by the Toledo Museum from its 1935 exhibition, was recently shown at the Montross Galleries in New York.'31

In the autumn of 1936, Samstag experienced several successes that solidified his career. He participated in the 1936 Allied Artists of America exhibition and may have won a prize: in a list of past prize-winners, he is named as having won the Anonymous Prize for Figure Composition in 1936.<sup>32</sup> His *Nurses*, which had been purchased in August by Buell Hammett of Santa Barbara, California, 33 was accepted into the Art Institute of Chicago's annual exhibition of American Paintings and Sculpture - the Midwestern museum had sent a special 'eastern' jury to make selections of works submitted by New York artists for the competition.<sup>34</sup> The critic for the Chicago Daily Tribune, Eleanor Jewett, wrote three articles about the show that year in which she commented extensively about the particularly intense controversy in Chicago over Modernist versus conservative art. The year before had seen an especially contentious situation, when it was felt by many that the Art Institute had leaned far too heavily towards Modernism. Their embrace of the new style had been such that it had provoked one of the main donors of the museum, Mrs Frank G. Logan to object loudly (and perhaps financially) to the avant-garde trend. She even founded an organisation, Sanity in Art, which campaigned against Modernism and promoted traditional, or, she might have said, sane, approaches to art. The Art Institute was acutely aware of how deeply she - and a certain vocal public - had disapproved of their selection in 1935, and the critic alerted her readers that in 1936 'nonmodern painting [would have] a chance in the museum galleries'. 35

When the exhibition opened, Jewett reviewed it in terms that offer a clear profile of the conflict within American art and that also give insight into some of the commentary about Samstag's painting. The Chicago critic laid her partisan sympathies out unmistakably. This annual exhibition was the one:

which last year caused the heavens to rumble and roar and let loose violent comment because of its neurotic and unpleasant character. The patience of the public had apparently been stretched to the breaking point and the criticism leveled at the museum was direct and beautifully abusive. A lesson was learned and subsequent shows have been more satisfactory. <sup>36</sup>

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Gordon SAMSTAG White Horse, Pound Ridge, c. 1936 oil on canvas dimensions unknown collection unknown Courtesy Ryerson and Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago

Jewett then recalled how outraged the donor of the Logan Prize (\$500) had been about the Modernist painting that had been chosen the previous year for her substantial financial award. The painting selected now in 1936 was in the traditional academic realist style, and, when the director of the museum solicited Mrs Logan's approval, she bestowed it.<sup>37</sup> In her final review of the Chicago exhibition, the critic provided the information that fifty-seven of the 376 works submitted for the New York jury were selected, and she also listed Samstag's *Nurses* as among the worthwhile paintings. There were enough 'genuine canvas[es] of merit' to encourage her to say, 'The score or more of satisfactory works in the show indicate that the corner has been turned by some of our artists.' <sup>38</sup> It may be safe to assume that the corner that had been turned was, she believed, away from Modernism.

Chicago was a very important exhibition for Samstag, but the central triumph of that 1936 season was the inclusion of *Proletarian* in the Carnegie Institute's 1936 International Exhibition of Paintings (the Toledo Museum had agreed to lend it.). The Carnegie was perhaps the most prestigious exhibition in the United States, not only because it served as a survey of contemporary American art, but also because it included work from Europe, so that American art was hung on an equal basis with work by prominent Europeans such as Matisse or Picasso, both of whom showed works there in 1936. Samstag could hardly have aimed higher than to have one of his paintings in the Carnegie International.<sup>39</sup>

Of the 276 artists selected, ninety-five of them were Americans, a representation deemed of 'excellent caliber' by the *New York Times*. Jewell, the *Times* critic, also noted that at least twenty of these Americans were enjoying their first acceptance by the Carnegie, but he did

not at any point mention Samstag. <sup>40</sup> A long article by the New York critic Margaret Breuning on the Carnegie International in *Parnassus*, the journal of the College Art Association, admired the 'freshness and vitality' of the American section and declared that American artists were finished with 'slavish imitation' of the School of Paris and had also left behind the devotion of some to the social realism of Mexican art. <sup>41</sup> She then singled out Samstag's *Proletarian* as a fine example of the strength of American figure painting:

If anyone doubts that figure painting is no longer practiced timidly and infrequently in these our United States, he should visit this exposition and see how many excellent practitioners of this form of art have been developed here ... [such as] Gordon Samstag's *Proletarian* (much better than it sounds), the figure of a woman rising from a scrubbing pail (there are many proletarians these days) thrown dramatically against a hard, white background so that there is a heightening of the beautiful arabesque of design carried out in cool, limpidity of color.<sup>42</sup>

#### WORKS OF CLARITY

Samstag's career continued in high gear in 1937, with his paintings shown in major surveys in Philadelphia, New York, Washington, DC and Pittsburgh, along with an active record of gallery exhibitions. Once again, his year began with the annual show of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where he displayed *White Horse, Pound Ridge* (see page 75), a scene of a man fitting a harness onto a sturdy horse.<sup>43</sup> A related painting, *White Horse in Harness*, was his entry into the National Academy's show in March.<sup>44</sup> In the same month, his *Domestic* was accepted into the Corcoran Biennial in Washington, DC.<sup>45</sup> His entry into the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts annual exhibition for 1937 was *Coal Shed, Bass River*.<sup>46</sup>

His year ended with another success when he was once again accepted into the Carnegie International with the much-honoured painting, White Horse, Pound Ridge. 47 In a review of the Carnegie show for Parnassus, the critic Margaret Breuning felt that 'the shadow of war' that had affected much of the European art of the year before had lifted somewhat while in America 'there is less of the violent protest against social conditions'. She hadn't anything against abstraction, but she believed that Americans were culturally not attuned to that form of expression: 'Whatever experiment and discipline the American artist may include in his training, his temperament is seldom congenial to abstraction ... Our artists seem to gain power when they touch reality.' But the American predilection for reality should not impede the quality of their expression, she cautioned: 'This realist element, however, does not imply any pedestrian quality, for it is not the symbol that the artist chooses to express his idea, but his use of it, which lends significance to the work.' For example, she went on, 'There are many figure canvases and good ones.' She admired Samstag's painting and seemed to note an increased interest in formal concerns in his narratives. He was among those artists who 'reveal in their genre pieces ... how thoroughly anecdote may be subordinated to artistic ends so that the importance of a good genre painting lies not in its story, but in the manner of its telling'.48

In between these 1937 surveys, Samstag exhibited in New York galleries, beginning in February with a group show at the Montross, where Howard DeVree of the *New York Times* praised the 'clarity and freshness of [his] out-of-doors pictures'.<sup>49</sup> By May, Samstag had affiliated himself with a new venue, the Village Galleries, where his *Sand and Gravel Pit* was part of a group show. Autumn brought another group exhibition at the Village Galleries at which '*The Barber Shop*' [sic] was deemed 'excellent', although, DeVree observed, 'The prevailing



Gordon SAMSTAG
Girl with Poodle, 1938
oil on canvas
dimensions unknown
collection unknown
Photographic print of this painting
by Colten of New York in Samstag
Legacy Archive, UniSA

tone of the exhibition is decidedly academic.'50 He was also part of the Montross Gallery's summer group show, where his *Sand and Gravel Pit* was described as 'pleasing'.<sup>51</sup>

Samstag showed *Shipping Clerk*, a painting that dated back to 1935–36, at the National Academy's 113th annual in March of 1938.<sup>52</sup> This exhibition seemed to provoke almost no strong comment one way or the other in the *Times* reviews and Samstag's painting wasn't mentioned at all. His participation in a June group show at Montross also brought little comment.<sup>53</sup> However, his solo show at Montross that autumn merited closer attention from DeVree in the *New York Times*. The artist displayed only twenty-two paintings (along with some sketches), several of which had already been seen (such as '*White Horse – Poundridge*' [sic] and *Sand and Gravel Pit*).<sup>54</sup> DeVree structured his October review as a comparison between two artists, both of whom were having solo exhibitions in New York. Fred Nagler (1891–1983) was an older contemporary of Samstag's who had had a similar training at the Art Students League and was a regular on the New York gallery scene. Heading his comparison 'In Striking Contrast', the reviewer wrote:

Two ... one-man shows now current present recent canvases by two painters who need no introduction to New York gallery goers. Fred Nagler's pictures at the Midtown reveal a driving emotional quality and are instinct with an inner vision of beauty that Nagler interprets in vigorous, tense brushwork. The paintings by Gordon Samstag at the nearby Montross are soundly worked out A or V designs – cool, clarified, simplified, realistic. Nagler's landscapes are warm, nervously vitalized, interpreted through a driving lyric mood. Samstag objectifies and lets the posture of figures and the clear, cool colors interpret his people. Nagler obtains an impression which conveys his own feeling directly and forcefully. Samstag

Gordon SAMSTAG

Charles (Henry) Davis, C.E.,
D. ENG., c. 1938
oil on canvas
dimensions unknown
collection unknown
Image in Advance News Service,
no. 7007, issued by National News
Service, USA, May 1946



first coolly calculates his spacing and his lighting. In 'Faggots' he is interested in the highly diverse tones of odd pieces of weathered wood, going on to build his picture with the sharply contrasted rich red of a painted table. Nagler's 'Last Supper' and 'From Afar' reach over into a religious mysticism, ever with an emphasis on the inner life. He is, moreover, emphatic and emotional where Samstag is ever collected, objective, decorative. The art student and the casual gallery goer will both find a great deal to think about in comparing the two shows. <sup>55</sup>

The article was illustrated by *Faggots*, a painting of firewood piled on a chair with a woven seat and a spindled back; the red table mentioned in the review occupies the upper left corner and appears to hold a cloth of some kind. It is a somewhat crowded composition, as the artist looks slightly downwards towards the chair seat and eliminates parts of both chair and table. The geometric clarity of the planes of chair, table, wall and floor is in contrast to the tangled and expressionistic rendering of the wooden sticks.

Another review, this one in the national art magazine *Art News*, found little to seriously criticise in Samstag's one-man exhibition at Montross. It seemed that at the age of thirty-two the artist had matured with assurance and sophistication and, if his style was not shocking or innovative, neither was it shallow or bereft of ideas.

Crisp and vigorous is the style of Gordon Samstag as shown in his current exhibition at the Montross Gallery. The utmost clarity characterizes his work, and not a single canvas in the group is ambiguous

or obscured by unnecessary detail. Light falls rather dramatically on the subject, illuminating its form, but one feels that even without it the artist could present his idea, so clear is his original conception. Girl with Poodle is a vivid treatment, boldly handled. Its two tones of blue and modulated browns are not high in key, but the painting has an effect of brilliant color. Samstag shows several studies of water in a glass bowl, a subject which seems to intrigue him, for he explores its many possibilities. The Door Knob incorporates it in grey tones with one or two elements in the same subdued key, and attains a convincing sense of tactile values. If this work errs occasionally on the side of being too literal, it has the attractive quality of the artist's self-confident style. <sup>56</sup>

Samstag's Montross exhibition of 1938 was important enough that *The Art Digest* summarised the critical response to it:

For all this complaining [about too many shows] though, there is much on the boards to get enthusiastic about and ... there are important performances by Gordon Samstag ... and others. Samstag's exhibition ... measured up to the artist's well-known performance. The most casual incidents serve as subject matter, but they are caught in a web of thought-out composition. 'Striking effects in skillful, flashy painting,' writes Carlyle Burrows in the *Herald-Tribune*, noting a new series of exhilarating characterizations to an already considerable list of successful and prize-winning accomplishments. The paintings are 'always clever and fluently realized,' adds Burrows, but he warns that they 'skim perilously over the thin ice of illustrative superficiality'. The *Times* critic, Howard DeVree, contrasted Samstag's work with Fred Nagler's oils at the Montross ... The artist, he points out, coolly calculates his spacing and his lighting and he remains composed and collected – even decorative – throughout the pictures. <sup>57</sup>

The trend that Samstag was surely spotting in some of his reviews in the later 1930s was a caution about being 'too literal' and edging over into illustration. Some of the commentary that was aimed at his work may also reflect the accelerating rejection of styles of realism, especially those forms that were associated with the Depression era – Social Realism and American Scene. The New York art world was being affected by the numerous artists who fled persecution and disorder in Europe and sought refuge in the United States during the latter part of the decade and then into the years of World War II. They brought with them Modernist influences, Surrealism and abstraction in particular, and American artists, especially younger ones, were responding. Samstag must have been as aware of this development as any other alert observer in those days, and he surely examined his own ideas and ambitions as the world around him changed.

He continued exhibiting with the Allied Artists of America, and his contribution to the 1938 annual show was a portrait of his father-in-law, Charles Henry Davis, founder of the National Highways Association (see page 192), which he listed in the catalogue as not for sale. The portrait depicts a portly man with an alert expression gazing out towards his left over a stack of books topped by a sculpture of an eagle. His vest is decorated by a watch chain and a medal composed of a circle suspended from a ribbon, and he appears to hold a small object, perhaps a pen, in his right hand. The figure is pushed to one side and is placed against a blank wall except for the bottom third of a framed picture. Samstag was also named in the Allied Artists Jury of Awards for that year. The year of 1938 ended with the satisfaction of being accepted again into the Art Institute of Chicago's major survey of American painting and sculpture, this time with his painting *Atlas*. Once again, as in the 1936 exhibition, the Chicago critic, Eleanor Jewett, made her anti-modern feelings abundantly clear by ridiculing those



Gordon SAMSTAG

Anne and Sandra, c. 1938
oil on canvas
dimensions unknown
collection unknown
Photographic print of this painting
in Samstag Legacy Archive,
UniSA

paintings that, from her description, dealt with cubism or abstraction. Since no reproduction of *Atlas* has been located, it is not possible to know if Samstag's painting was among those that increased 'one's wonder at modernism'. 60 In 1936, his *Nurses* had been among those singled out for approval; in 1938, Jewett did not mention his work.

By the later 1930s, it had become clear that conditions in Europe, especially in Germany, were ominous. It was also obvious that the Nazis were targeting Jewish populations for particular oppression, and Americans were responding to the need for aid and assistance. In New York, the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), a Jewish organisation for humanitarian assistance established in 1914, arranged special exhibitions and sales for the relief of 'the distress of victims of race intolerance in Europe'. 61 Samstag participated in at least two of these exhibitions. In 1937, the Women's Division of the JDC held a week-long event (May 2-9) at the Studio Gallery on Fifth Avenue, with Samstag among the 'many well-known artists contributing work for sale'.62 Others included Peggy Bacon, Paul Cadmus, Jared French, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Walter Pach and William Zorach. 63 The following year of 1938 found Samstag again in prestigious company with about 150 other artists (such as Stuart Davis, John Sloan and Philip Evergood) donating work for the relief effort.<sup>64</sup> On the opening night of April 24, the generosity of the artists was matched by the avid response of the public, as over forty works (everything carried a uniform price of \$100) were sold from a group of artists which, according to an article in the New York Times 'reads like a Who's Who in Art in the Metropolitan District ... Many of the works in the exhibition have been seen in gallery shows in New York during the past season.'65 Some of the artists whose works sold early in the week brought in replacements (the price remained at one hundred dollars per work), all for the JDC's 'relief work among the oppressed and needy Jews overseas who have been the victims of the political situation in various parts of Europe'.66

# STANDING OUT IN THE MIDDLE GROUND

In 1939, if Samstag entered his work into any of the major surveys, he had little success other than at the Corcoran Biennial, where his painting *Nude* was admitted.<sup>67</sup> The National Academy did not hold its traditional exhibition that year (because of the 1939 New York World's Fair), and Samstag was also no longer on the faculty, but he was elected an Associate of the Academy in March.<sup>68</sup> It appears that he participated in only two exhibitions that year, both of them group shows, one at the Ferargil Galleries and the other an Allied Artists exhibition. The big art event of the year was the exhibition American Art Today at the World's Fair, in which 1214 works from all over the country were brought together. While acknowledging the overwhelming size of the exhibition as well as the many distinguished works of art, the critic Edward Alden Jewell observed that 'many excellent talents are not represented at all'.<sup>69</sup> As a form of redress, the Ferargil, one of New York's most successful galleries, held an exhibition of around thirty artists it deemed worthy to have been included in the massive exhibition. According to Howard DeVree, 'Gordon Samstag's "Paper Boats" and several other paintings seem sufficient warrant [sic] for the inclusion of these artists among the 1,200-odd rounded up at the Fair.'<sup>70</sup>

Near the end of 1939, Samstag once again exhibited with the Allied Artists of America, and he was named to the 'board of control' at its annual meeting in November. When Jewell reviewed the exhibition for the *Times*, he was cognisant, as he usually reminded his readers, that the Allied Artists was not an avant-garde group but one that maintained an academic approach. While not expecting to be shocked, he also brought some appreciation of the artists' stance with regard to abstraction or, as it was sometimes called, ultra-Modernism:

The dominant note in these exhibitions put on by the Allied Artists of America is always academic. That is not, it should be borne in mind, equivalent to saying that the work lacks in technical soundness. On the contrary, a great deal of the work (especially among the oils) manifests excellent craftsmanship. And here and there one comes upon something that is really fresh. But the bulk of the show honors right-wing fences, and honors them in the observance, not the breach. It therefore becomes expedient in writing about such an event to speak of entries that seem conspicuous for merit within the academic formula established rather than to try to find art that might hold its own in less conventional company. These, then, are a few of the paintings one might select: ... the quite typical 'Painters' by Gordon Samstag ... 72

*The Art Digest* also commented on the Allied exhibition, agreeing that it was a bastion of conservatism, but finding Samstag's *Painters* one of the better works: 'As in former annuals, the predominant note at the Allied Artists show is conservatism ... The bulk of the work is middle ground, technically sound art.'<sup>73</sup>

As an artist of more traditional inclinations, Samstag was invited in 1939 to join the Salmagundi Art Club, an organisation founded in New York in 1871, with which he would exhibit until 1943.<sup>74</sup> He participated in four of the club's regular exhibitions in 1940, including the annual watercolour (and sculpture) show in March of 1940, about which a review in the *New York Times* reported, 'More than a hundred examples have been included, among them papers by ... Gordon Samstag.' By referring to 'papers' rather than specific titled works, the review suggests that more than one watercolour by Samstag was exhibited, although the Salmagundi Club archives record only one title, *The Dock*, described as a 'fishing scene'.<sup>75</sup> In a summer group show of twenty-five artists at Montross, 'a big and well designed figure piece ... higher in color key than is this artist's wont', was cited as a reason to view the exhibition.<sup>76</sup>



Gordon Samstag (top row, first from left) among the Jury of Selection and Assistants, National Academy of Design, in the catalogue for the 114th Annual Exhibition, March 15 – April 11, 1940. Courtesy Archives, National Academy Museum, New York, USA

The titles of Samstag's contribution(s) to the Montross exhibition are unknown, but this unnamed painting to which the review refers was probably Anne and Sandra, which had been his entry into the National Academy exhibition of 1940.<sup>77</sup> The painting was later championed by name in a review of the Montross show as 'a delightful two-figure painting in blue-and-yellow harmony'.78 It was then reproduced about two weeks later in a brief notice of the exhibition.<sup>79</sup> That same summer, during the second season of the New York World's Fair, the National Academy of Design held an

exhibition in the American Art Today building, in which Samstag was invited to participate.<sup>80</sup> He also exhibited at the World's Fair in a joint project of the Allied Artists and the New York Water Color Club in June of 1940.<sup>81</sup>

# THE SHADOW OF WAR

World War II had begun in Europe in September of 1939, and by the following summer of 1940, the Nazis occupied most of western Europe, including France, and the nightly bombardments of the Battle of Britain were reported daily in the United States. The war in Europe and the political circumstances of America as it tried to navigate the situations in Europe and the Pacific (conditions which were about to elect Franklin Roosevelt to an unprecedented third term as president) meant that current affairs could hardly be ignored, as the gallery scene in New York reflected. The Allied Artists held their regularly scheduled autumn exhibition for 1940 (October 30-November 12), and they included a section entitled 'Comments on Today', to which artists (both members and non-members) 'were invited to contribute works on the war in Europe, the election and similar themes'. The public could then vote as to which should receive an award. Samstag contributed to that section, but the subject of his painting is not known. 82 The Allied show brought a familiar commentary from the New York critics: that the art displayed was conservative, but a few interesting things salvaged the exhibition. As was its custom, The Art Digest provided a synopsis of the critical reception: 'With 200 paintings and sculptures ... this year's Allied Artists annual ... had all the outward appearance of a National Academy show.'This comment was particularly pungent since the Allied Artists had begun largely as a reaction against the National Academy. The article went on to quote the critic from the Herald Tribune, Royal Cortissoz, who said he found it to be 'one of the mixed affairs in which it is necessary to hunt out the better things. But a search after excellence is rewarded ... [in discovering] good craftsmanship wreaked upon subjects drawn from contemporary life and studied with sympathy.' The Art Digest reported that another critic, Melville Upton of the New York Sun, could find little to admire in the conservatism of the show, though he did see a few 'sobering, if unexciting pieces' that redeemed it a little; none of those mentioned were by Samstag.83

Though World War II would eventually pull the United States out of the Great Depression, economic difficulties were still very much in force in the late 1930s. Samstag's financial situation seems to have remained precarious, despite his employment. He was not eligible to participate in those New Deal art programs that required a financial need component, but he was eager to win commissions for post office murals from the New Deal art agency that awarded assignments on the basis of merit alone, the Treasury Section of Painting and Sculpture. During the latter part of the decade, much of his time was taken up with producing proposals for murals and entering the government competitions and, from 1937 to 1940, he painted three murals for the Section (see pages 85–117). It is likely he was also much occupied with commercial work, as he struggled to achieve financial stability (see pages 119–45).

Group exhibitions were his main opportunities in 1941, starting with exhibitions of the Salmagundi Club in the first three months of the year. He continued to show at the Montross Gallery where, in February, he presented one canvas, *Barges*, in an exhibition of ten artists. In his review, Jewell detected in that painting a slight change in that Samstag 'seems to have loosened his style a good deal'. Samstag also was included in the Montross Gallery's summer show, described by the *New York Times* critic, Howard DeVree, as 'one of the best this gallery has had this season'. Samstag's *Old White Horse* was recognised as being 'among the high spots in a well diversified and well installed exhibition'. The artist taught during the summers of 1940 and 1941 at the Art Students League, where he joined several other instructors, including Will Barnet, Jean Charlot, Reginald Marsh and Harry Sternberg, in two exhibitions in 1941.

By now, Samstag's successes were diminishing. He continued to be accepted into distinguished exhibitions, but he often showed work that had been seen before elsewhere. Given his involvement with the Section murals and his increasing focus on commercial work, it is easy to see why his production might have fallen off. Other issues may have been at work as well, but in the absence of personal papers and correspondence, it is not clear what they might have been.

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the ensuing declarations of war, Samstag's life, like that of nearly all Americans, was pushed in a new direction. He was thirty-five years old and had successfully created a career in New York during the worst economic crisis in American history. He had been steadily, if not optimally, employed through the decade, his work had been accepted into esteemed exhibitions, and not a single year had gone by without gallery shows (including some solo exhibitions), in several of which his work had been singled out and admired. The traditional character of his painting, set during his student years at the National Academy, had wavered somewhat, but he was regarded as an estimable painter, working with a distinctive, personal style that leaned towards the conventional. Samstag may have felt some particular disappointment in the trajectory of his career in the late 1930s. His exhibition record in New York and beyond remained active, but he had made only one sale to a museum during the entire decade. Works of art surely did sell from his numerous shows and juried surveys, but few collectors' names are currently known. Despite this apparent lack of material success, Samstag's commitment as an artist did not seem to waiver. Some titles of work during this period suggest he was aware of the changing character of American art as it moved away from the styles and social issues of Depression era art towards the two-headed direction of Surrealism and abstract formalism, to be combined soon in the movement known as Abstract Expressionism. There is no reason to think that Gordon Samstag wanted to lag behind as American art altered and moved in new directions while around him societies worldwide were in upheaval. The war years of the early 1940s would prove to be a cleft in his development, as they were for countless others.



# THE NEW DEAL MURALS 1936-40

The Great Depression remains the most catastrophic economic crisis in American history. For over ten years, Americans struggled with unemployment, privation and despair, and many artists, especially younger ones at the beginning of their careers, found their aspirations blunted in these strained conditions. And yet, the decade of the 1930s was perhaps Samstag's most creative and consequential – though what it might have been in more prosperous times can only be guessed. Part of his productivity, like that of hundreds of other artists then, was due to a new attitude towards art in the United States.

In 1932, the governor of New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, ran for president with the campaign promise of a 'new deal' for the common man, a program to deal aggressively with the worst effects of the Depression. After he defeated the sitting president, Herbert Hoover, he soon embarked on a massive marshalling of the money and power of the federal government to address the suffering of much of the citizenry. Roosevelt's policies and programs designed to alleviate the Depression came to be known as the New Deal.

After Roosevelt's inauguration early in 1933, dozens of federal agencies were created to provide work and, in some cases, direct relief to those who could not find employment or, because of age, disability or some other factor, were not able to work. The options for artists and their families were as abbreviated (or non-existent) as for any other profession during the Depression, and Roosevelt was persuaded that they also deserved assistance. In return, artists were invited to participate in the first national program to contribute works of art to public, particularly federal, buildings and, in other ways, make the experience of art available, often for the first time, to the majority of Americans. Art museums were then mostly confined to large urban areas such as New York or Chicago, and many citizens had never seen an actual work of art, beyond perhaps the statue of a Civil War soldier in a town square (a Confederate in the southern states; a Union soldier in the northern states).

The first New Deal art agency was in place by December of 1933 and, although this program (the Public Works of Art Project, or PWAP) was short-lived, it brought a burst of creativity and hope to many American artists. To participate in this program or the two that followed, the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) and the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration (FAP/WPA), the artist had to first show that he or she was destitute

Gordon SAMSTAG

Tobacco, 1938 (detail)
oil on canvas mural
243.8 x 475.0 cm (96 x 187 in)
Photograph by Melinda Stovall
Reidsville City Hall,
North Carolina, USA
Courtesy City of Reidsville and
US Postal Services

and needed financial assistance. Then the applicant's record was assessed to determine if he or she was truly an active, producing artist. With those two criteria met, the artist could hope to be offered a place on the employment rolls of one of the agencies; but, even then, the employment was often short term and full of uncertainty because of the continuous obligation to assure the agencies of one's ongoing needs and constant threats to funding – needless to say, many in Congress despised Roosevelt's philosophy of governing and were ever alert to any possibility of ending his programs.

Established in 1934, the fourth New Deal art agency, the Treasury Section of Painting and Sculpture (later called the Section of Fine Arts, and usually known as just 'the Section') differed in that no financial need had to be established. The goal of this agency was less to provide relief than to secure for the United States high-quality public works of art, usually for federal buildings and especially post offices. Thus the commissions were sometimes given out to artists of firmly established national reputations who were enduring no financial emergency at all, such as John Steuart Curry.

One of the signal accomplishments of these New Deal agencies was the scope of their patronage, which expanded beyond the urban centres to include the entire country. Artists in every state, from Maine to California, Oregon to Florida, were solicited to participate in the New Deal's drive to bring art to the people. In a policy that linked all the regions of the nation, artists were often commissioned to produce works of art for places other than their own home cities or states. For example, an Iowa artist might be asked to produce a mural for Mississippi or a New York artist given an assignment in North Carolina.

#### A COMPLEX PROCESS

Though Gordon Samstag was not employed by the New Deal art agencies for relief, he did successfully obtain work with the Section and thereby became part of that singular artistic army that developed during the Depression in response to the New Deal's embrace of art as an important and worthwhile societal endeavour. The Section usually began its selection process by holding an open competition for a specific building. Hundreds of artists – or anyone, really – might enter these competitions, with the result that, after the winner had been chosen, the government had examples of the work of many artists who were clearly competent, though they had not won that particular contest. These artists would often then be offered a commission to paint a mural in another place. Therefore, even though these artists had not competed, strictly speaking, for the job they were being offered, they had been vetted through a process that judged their abilities.

From the artist's point of view, the application process was complex. It involved having his or her proposals assessed at several levels, consulting with the community in which the mural was to be placed, and then executing the final work to everyone's satisfaction. All of this was usually at the artist's own expense, since the payment for a commission was a pre-determined lump sum and no extras were included. The artist had to fund research, pay for the installation of the mural, purchase all materials (including the wall-size canvases and the photography required by the Treasury) and cover the costs of shipping sketches and designs to Washington.

After being granted an award, artists were expected to acquaint themselves with the city or region where their work was to be placed. They were encouraged to travel to the town themselves, if possible; if not, they were to educate themselves by any means as to the character of the place and the sort of mural that would be appropriate. Most of them corresponded with the postmasters of the town, and some artists asked local citizens what sort of picture they'd like





Gordon SAMSTAG

Caleb Heathcote Buys the Richbell

Farm, (mural study, Scarsdale,
New York Post Office),
March 1939

oil on canvas

20.9 x 76.8 cm (81/8 x 301/4 in)

Smithsonian American

Art Museum

Gordon SAMSTAG

Law and Order in Old Scarsdale

Manor, (mural study, Scarsdale,
New York Post Office),
March 1939
oil on canvas
20.9 x 75.8 cm (8½ x 29½ in)
Smithsonian American
Art Museum

to have in their community. (Most of the works of art were paintings, but sculptures were also installed at some buildings.) Having chosen the topic, the artist sent a study, usually a pencil drawing, to the officials at the Section for an initial reaction. If that first proposal was accepted (and they sometimes were not), the artist went on to do a more detailed colour study, which was then shipped to Washington to be further assessed. Many of these preparatory works remained with the Section and eventually found their way into the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The Section had a small staff, but each study was examined carefully at every stage. Correspondence (which sometimes grew voluminous) then ensued, in which the Superintendent, Edward B. Rowan, made most of the assessments to which the artists were expected to respond. He and others at the Section did not hesitate to make suggestions for ways to improve the designs, and no artist, no matter how well regarded, could expect to have his or her work accepted without comment or criticism. They were often directed to make changes and re-submit their plans. In addition, after the study was accepted at the Section, it was sent to the postmaster (or supervisor of the building) for that person's commentary. The plans for the work were then publicised in local newspapers, occasionally with photographs of the studies, so that any citizen could laud or lament the proposed art for their community. The process of placing a New Deal mural in an American town was complicated and time-consuming, and the artist was judged one way or another at nearly every level.

#### PLANNING STAGES

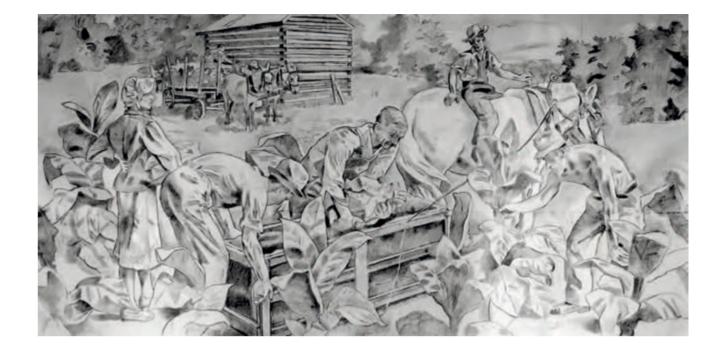
Samstag was given two post office commissions by the Section, one for Reidsville, North Carolina, in 1937–38, and one for Scarsdale, New York, in 1939–40. Designs he had submitted for Section competitions were well enough regarded (especially one he had entered for the San Antonio, Texas, post office) that he was offered both of these commissions outright, without having to compete any further. It was determined in February 1937 that the Reidsville post office would have two murals, each to be roughly three by two metres (nine by six feet), and that the amount of \$1600 was to be allotted to them. In July, the Section invited Samstag to paint the murals, and then offered the 'suggestion' that he 'use subject matter which embodies



Gordon SAMSTAG Sketch for *Haying Scene*, c. 1937 graphite/charcoal on paper dimensions unknown collection unknown Courtesy National Archives, USA

some idea appropriate to the building or to the particular locale of Reidsville, North Carolina. What we most want is a simple and vital design.' Writing to accept the Section's invitation to submit sketches, Samstag explained that he might try to use the design for a haying scene that he had developed for the San Antonio post office (see above), an idea of which the Section approved. The artist was eager to begin work (surely in part because he wanted to begin collecting the \$1600 fee), and wrote in his acceptance letter that he hoped to be on his way to Reidsville 'early next week'.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that Samstag's travel expenses were not covered by the Section but were to be extracted from his fee for the mural did not deter him from making the trip, which was almost 900 kilometres (550 miles), to assess the community and consult the locals about a proper subject. Although the exact dates of his visit are not known, it appears that he did make his trip during the first week of August 1937. On his way home to New York, he stopped in Washington, where he had a conference with a Section staff member on Saturday, August 7, 1937, to explain that he believed a single mural over the postmaster's office door would be better than two panels and that he had an idea for the subject matter. The primary event in Reidsville's history had been its role in the Civil War (1861-65), when it had served as an important rail link for the Confederacy, but Samstag chose not to deal with a conflicted history (though the Section tended to favour tales of American heritage, it generally side-stepped Civil War subjects) and looked instead to contemporary times. After the war, Reidsville had become a major marketing and processing centre for the tobacco farms that flourished in the vicinity. So, rejecting a historical topic for his mural and abandoning the idea of a having scene, Samstag instead proposed a portrayal of the tobacco farming that formed a mainstay of the area's life and economy.<sup>5</sup> The Section directed him to send a black-and-white sketch (see opposite), which the Section staff assessed as 'exceedingly well done and quite attractive', but whose composition they thought could be improved; typically, they recommended specific changes.<sup>6</sup>



By mid-October, it was clear that Samstag's plans were acceptable and that he would be commissioned to complete the mural for Reidsville, but the actual contract was not sent to the artist until November 9, 1937.<sup>7</sup> Having approved Samstag's colour sketch, the Section instructed him to develop a full-scale cartoon of the mural and submit a photograph of it.<sup>8</sup> It was not until mid-December that Samstag finally received the first payment for his work: a cheque for \$500; he had sent a telegram to the Section on December 14, asking when he could expect some money.<sup>9</sup> As did many artists in his situation, Samstag often asked the Section when he would be paid and if they couldn't hurry it along.

Working through the winter, he was ready by late January to ask the Section about hiring someone to affix his mural to the wall. He wondered if there were someone 'near to Reidsville' who could install his mural, explaining that if not, he was 'planning to bring someone down from New York'. <sup>10</sup> Rowan knew of no one near Reidsville, but suggested that Samstag hire Fred Crittenden, of Brooklyn, New York, who had done 'satisfactory work for artists working under this program'. <sup>11</sup> Samstag then asked if the Section could cover the expense of having his mural shipped to North Carolina; the answer was no. <sup>12</sup> Despite the frustrations, Samstag assured Rowan that he was 'enjoying this mural a great deal', and he requested, '[I]f there is any possibility of doing more work for the Treasury Department, either thru [sic] competition or in any other way, I would be very glad if you would let me know.' <sup>13</sup>

On April 13, 1938, Samstag informed the Section that he had completed his mural and would be sending it south to be installed by Crittenden. As well as paying his own costs, Samstag had to pay Crittenden's fee for installing the mural and his travel expenses to Reidsville. On May 2, the postmaster at Reidsville, W.B. Somers, wrote to Samstag to say that the new painting had been hung; he had nothing but praise for the finished mural and for Crittenden's work in its installation. 15

Gordon SAMSTAG Sketch for *Tobacco*, August–September 1937 graphite/charcoal on paper dimensions unknown collection unknown Courtesy National Archives, USA

# FIELD WORK

Samstag's mural for the Reidsville post office depicted a farm family in their tobacco field, working their crop in an activity known as 'priming'. Tobacco ripens from the bottom leaves upwards and must be harvested sequentially over a period from around mid-July to mid-September. If it is not picked at the right time, it 'dries green' and is of no value. Though priming is now done by machine, at the time when the mural was painted it was still carried out by hand about once a week, in a labour-intensive and extended process that continued over several months, depending on moisture levels and other growing conditions. <sup>16</sup>

In the background of the mural, the artist shows the next step in tobacco production: two men work to lift the leaves out of the wagon and then string them together so that they can be hung in a curing barn. Typically, the tobacco leaves were hung in a well-sealed curing barn for five to six days, over slow-burning fires made with logs that had been cut in winter. The process had to be overseen carefully, and it was not uncommon for a farmer to sleep out in the barn with the fire, to keep the hot temperatures constant and to guard against accidents.<sup>17</sup> As the mural implies by the presence of three men, along with a woman and a child, much farming at that time involved the entire family and required strenuous physical labour. No tractors or harvesting machines - nothing with a motor that might make this work easier - is suggested in this mural, as it commonly was not in contemporary murals on this subject. According to the Reidsville Review, the local newspaper, Samstag's 'scene, that of unloading tobacco at a pack barn, was laid at G.E. Crutchfield's farm near here. The horses and mules shown in the painting are the property of Mr Crutchfield and Will Williams and others.'18 The newspaper assigned ownership of the farm animals, but gave no information about the individuals pictured. Samstag surely took photographs and even made sketches during his visit to North Carolina, but no preparatory materials have survived. The distinct features of the mustachioed central worker and the shirtless man at the right suggest that they, as well as the boy, may be portraits, though we do not know if they are the people he met in Reidsville or were models hired in New York. The overalls worn by the central man and the boy are a kind of agricultural 'uniform' for farm folk in 1930s America. The loose, khaki pants of the other two male figures and the street hats worn by both are also commonly found in images from the Depression (Samstag's Shipping Clerk, for example). The facial profile of the woman and her slim, statuesque form may well be modelled on the artist's wife, Anne Davis Samstag.

The boy on the horse appears to be watching his elders work, but not participating, which apparently is what the artist intended. In a letter to a Section official, Samstag explained that 'children enjoy this [sitting on the horse] and are allowed to do it, much as a child would be allowed to sit in the driver's seat and hold the wheel in a parked automobile'. <sup>19</sup> If Samstag's description was the actual situation of this boy, he was one of the more fortunate children in American agricultural families at that time. Child labour was common during the Depression, and it was one of the staples of the American work environment that Roosevelt's policies sought to reduce or eliminate. Partly that endeavour recognised that children took jobs that could go to adults, but the New Deal also promulgated the concept of childhood as a time of nurturing and development, when a child ought to be protected. The Section would not have wanted any images that faithfully depicted the exploitation of children; perhaps Samstag's comment to the Section reflects his awareness of the Roosevelt administration's position. Other federal agencies, however – most famously the Farm Security Administration – allowed their photographers (notably Dorothea Lange) to document the child labour problem conclusively. <sup>20</sup>



As the Reidsville Review had reported, the farm depicted in the mural belonged to Gaither E. Crutchfield (1873-1940), who was an important figure in the town and in the tobacco industry of the area. He was a buyer for the American Tobacco Company, a board member of the Reidsville Town Commission, and a well-regarded figure in the local tobacco economy. He lived in Reidsville but also owned a farm that was located about three kilometres (two miles) north of the city and 'contained excellent soil for the production of tobacco which was the "money crop" in the region'. <sup>21</sup> The farm was actually 'operated by a family of tenants', and most likely it is these tenant farmers Samstag depicted in his mural.<sup>22</sup> (When the Reidsville Review mentioned the mules owned by Crutchfield and Will Williams, it may have been referring to the cooperation among farmers at periods of high activity. It was common practice for farmers to help each other during the harvest, and Williams may have been a neighbour who was 'swapping work' with the tenants on the Crutchfield farm.<sup>23</sup>) By using tenant farmers as the characters in his mural, Samstag was recording one of the agricultural realities during the Depression. Many farms were worked by people who owned the land, but a great many were worked by families who did not - and, in some cases, by families who had lost their own land during the Depression. Tenant farming remained an ordinary feature of American agriculture until about the 1950s.

Tobacco was a North Carolina agricultural staple, and it was the subject of at least five Treasury Section murals in the state, depicting the process from planting to the final sale of the tobacco to cigarette manufacturers at auction houses. The painting most similar to Samstag's was *Harvesting Tobacco* (see above), painted just a few years afterwards (1941) by Roy Schatt for the post office in Whiteville. The farm family here, including a very energetic female figure, work vigorously in a compact composition that also includes two African-American workers. Brightly coloured in a much less painterly style than Samstag's, this mural depicts the green tobacco fields in the background, a mule (now with an adult male sitting atop its back) pulling a sled, and three workers pulling the leaves out so that the woman can tie them up for curing. Nearby is another male figure, who pushes wood into the kiln that will maintain the temperature of the curing barn. Two other murals also focus on the curing aspect of tobacco production. Allan D. Gould's *Gathering Tobacco* (1938) (see page 92) is a complete contrast to Samstag's sophisticated brushwork. Incorporating a folk-art style and doll-like figures, it shows two curing barns and a group of African-American workers in a simplified landscape. Margaret C. Gates's *Landscape – Tobacco Curing* (1940) for Mebane is a quiet scene

Roy SCHATT (1909–2002)

Harvesting Tobacco, 1941

tempera on canvas mounted

to wall

152.4 x 426.7 cm (60 x 168 in)

Formerly Whiteville, North

Carolina Post Office

Southeastern Community College,

Whiteville, North Carolina

Courtesy Southeastern

Community College, North

Carolina and US Postal Services



Allan D. GOULD (1908–88)

Gathering Tobacco, 1938

oil on canvas mounted to wall

172.7 x 414.0 cm (68 x 163 in)

Formerly Roxboro,

North Carolina Post Office

Piedmont Community College,
Roxboro, North Carolina

Courtesy Piedmont Community

College and US Postal Services

of a father and son walking companionably from the farmhouse towards the curing barns and other plain agricultural buildings. Sculptors were commissioned by the Section far less often than painters, but a few post offices installed reliefs (and occasionally full figures), as was the case at Dunn, North Carolina, with Paul Rudin's *Cotton and Tobacco* (1939) (see opposite). Within its simple and stately composition, two African-American figures, a woman picking cotton and a man taking a low leaf from a tobacco stalk, bend to their work as do Samstag's farm workers. The end point of the tobacco harvest in North Carolina is shown in the painting *Tobacco Auction* (1939) by Richard Kenah, for the Louisburg post office: in a low-ceilinged, crowded warehouse, white and African-American men sort and examine the piles of tobacco. Comparing these murals, all of which were created either during or after the time Samstag was painting his *Tobacco*, verifies that he effectively grasped the character of tobacco production in North Carolina and, while retaining his own complex painting style, conveyed a sense of the local life devoted to this demanding, difficult crop.

Of course Samstag had been noted since the early years of the 1930s for his scenes of ordinary workers, such as *Proletarian* and *Nurses*. Whether they were cleaning house, folding sheets or cutting hair, he imbued his figures with a sense of dignity that seemed to originate less from his interpretation of their labour than from the innate character of the individual, acutely observed and recorded by the artist. It was a strength in his art that seemed to dissipate as the Depression wore on, and his work became more detached and disengaged from everyday life. His scenes of people at work take place in close interior spaces that are usually plain and sparsely detailed. The figures never turn from their work to acknowledge other humans (or, by implication, the viewer – or the artist, for that matter), but they maintain their absorption in the task before them. Something similar takes place in *Tobacco*, the sort of subject that Samstag would have surely never encountered or painted had it not been for his New Deal mural commission. Instead of urban workers in tight, unadorned architectural environments, he drew a Southern tobacco farm, along with the arduous, back-breaking labour that maintained it. It is a subject that many artists would have interpreted in a far more inflammatory way, highlighting the poverty and grimness of rural life. But Samstag, as he had with scenes from New York, reported the labour and the steadfastness of the labourers without imparting any persuasive commentary. Perhaps he did not hold with that kind of outspokenness and simply saw labour -



under any circumstances – as dignified within itself. Whatever the case, it appears that *Tobacco* was among his last major paintings on the theme of work and was his only one that was a scene of rural labour.

Because so few of Samstag's paintings are currently located, his New Deal murals offer a significant opportunity to assess his style at the end of the Depression period. *Tobacco* seems to reveal a change from the linear, reserved academicism of Young Man Desires Position towards a far looser, more colour-based approach, where sharp lines and edges are banished in the realisation of form. The overall tone of Tobacco is a light, somewhat pinkish one, with areas of light brown and accents of a rich green in the crisply drawn tobacco leaves. The paint is applied in broad, broken strokes of distinct colours that from a distance coalesce into a readable but nuanced image. Samstag's composition here is more animated, with only a few hints of the restraint found in earlier paintings. Set in a broad landscape with an expansive view, the scene's seven figures are all in motion. The three men in the foreground bend at the waist inwards to form a rough semi-circle, all facing downwards as they concentrate on their work. A strong diagonal established by the two men at the left finishes at the head of the boy, whose gaze then directs the eye back down to the trio of men. The female, who enters at left along the line of the horse's position, moves the eye towards the boy, while she also links the foreground and background, her white bonnet pointing towards the wagon by the barn. The brown, geometric shape of the barn echoes that of the wagon and the sled.

#### A QUESTION OF ACCURACY

The postmaster, W.B. Somers, was extremely pleased with the mural. He wrote to Samstag in early May, 1938, to tell him:

The Mural has been installed and I wish to thank you for your interest and for the splendid manner in which the work has been done. Speaking as a layman I am proud of the painting and I feel sure the patrons of our office will enjoy it for years to come  $\dots$  I hope you will be able to pay us a visit  $\dots$  and see for yourself the wonderful results installing the Mural in the lobby has caused.

Paul RUDIN (1904–92)
Cotton and Tobacco, 1939
plaster, gold metallic paint added
at unknown date
94.0 x 198.1 cm (37 x 78 in)
Formerly Dunn, North Carolina
Post Office
Office of the Dunn Daily Record
Courtesy Office of the Dunn Daily
Record and US Postal Services



Gordon SAMSTAG

Tobacco, 1938
oil on canvas mural
243.8 x 475.0 cm (96 x 187 in)
Photograph by Melinda Stovall
Reidsville City Hall (formerly Reidsville
Post Office), North Carolina, USA
Courtesy City of Reidsville
and US Postal Services

He also complimented Fred Crittenden for his 'pleasing' manners and 'faultless' work. <sup>26</sup> The Section was always eager to learn of a community's response to its murals, and Rowan wrote to the postmaster to ask for a statement 'relative to the satisfactory installation and ... any clippings' from nearby newspapers. <sup>27</sup> Somers replied with a glowing statement that must have fulfilled all of the Section's ambitions for bringing art to the public:

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for furnishing this office with such a splendid piece of painting and to assure you that the mural is a real addition to the decoration of the building. There have been many favorable comments by the patrons of our office and I feel sure they will continue to enjoy this work through the coming years. <sup>28</sup>

However, Reidsville's newspaper seemed to have hardly noticed the new public work of art, and Somers could send only two clippings from the local press. The very small item in the *Reidsville Review*, noted above, echoed the postmaster's regard for the mural when it reported that 'a beautiful oil painting ... is being erected in the local post office lobby by the federal government', and added that it was 'attracting much attention from persons passing through the building'. The artist was identified only as 'Gordon Samstag, New York artist'.<sup>29</sup> The second clipping was from the newspaper in Greensboro, a larger city nearby. It ran a substantial illustration of the mural, which it described as 'adorn[ing]' the lobby of the Reidsville post office. It was credited once again as having been painted by 'Gordon Samstag, of New York, after a visit to tobacco farms around Reidsville'.<sup>30</sup>

Samstag soon received a new mural commission from the Section for Scarsdale, New York, and apparently heard nothing else about Reidsville until about three years later, when Rowan contacted him again. He had shown photographs of tobacco-themed murals in North Carolina to Charles Gage, who was the head of the tobacco division in the United States Department of Agriculture. Mr Gage had then sent written comments on the 'authenticity' of the murals' depiction of tobacco in that state, including the following: 'Inasmuch as these murals appear in public buildings in tobacco-producing areas, they are naturally viewed by many tobacco growers who, I assume, would attach a higher value to realism than to symbolism.'<sup>31</sup> This attention to accurate detail was a constant concern of the Section's staff, who often had to fight off accusations of incorrect depictions of people, places and things from locals, government officials and opponents of the New Deal, especially those offended by its art programs. Sometimes Rowan defended his artists actively or passively (by effectively ignoring the minor criticisms), but at other times he did ask artists to make changes to satisfy someone's objections (as Samstag would soon learn in his Scarsdale commission). In the case of Reidsville, he was content simply to pass along the agricultural expert's judgment:

This picture probably surpasses the others in the accuracy with which the appearance of tobacco in the field is portrayed. The leaves have a much more natural appearance than is true of the others, although the plants are too small. The greatest inaccuracy is in connection with the figure at the right who appears to be removing a leaf of tobacco to go in the sled. The defect of this is that he is taking one of the upper leaves, whereas the priming or removal of leaves commences at the bottom of the stalk where the earliest ripening occurs, and proceeds up the stalk in successive primings until the harvesting is completed.

Rowan added only that he would be 'interested in anything you would like to say relative to the comments of Mr Gage'.  $^{32}$ 

Samstag had been thoroughly tutored in tobacco growing and harvesting by the farmers he had visited in Reidsville and, knowing the Section's desire for accuracy as well as a 'simple but vital design', he had likely made considerable efforts to be correct in every important regard, as he asserted in his reply: 'I made a trip to Reidsville before submitting sketches and made studies and took photographs of several fields of tobacco. I still have on file some photos of tobacco plants which seem to be about the same scale as shown in the mural.' As for the accusation that he did not understand how tobacco was harvested in North Carolina, he felt the problem was that Gage had simply misread what the artist had drawn:

In regard to the figure on the right I believe its position could be interpreted in other ways than that of picking the leaf with the right hand. This hand might be steadying the stalk preparatory to picking a lower leaf with the left hand, especially as the man appears to be looking at the lower leaves.

He ended his letter with an acerbic comment, with which Rowan most likely agreed after dealing with hundreds of such criticisms of public art. I believe, Samstag stated, 'that a mural should be authentic in detail but in a case of this kind I think that an artist can seldom satisfy an expert.'

Today Samstag's *Tobacco* mural remains in its original building, designed in the classic Art Deco style that New Deal construction often employed in its structures of the Depression era. When the post office moved to larger headquarters, the old building became Reidsville's City Hall, and here the mural continues to be part of the daily life of the town.<sup>34</sup>

#### A DEMANDING COMMUNITY

By the time Samstag made his somewhat weary and jaded comment about the criticism of his Reidsville mural and its depiction of tobacco picking, he had placed two more murals, both of them into the post office in Scarsdale, New York. In contrast to Reidsville, where his work of art was barely noticed, the Scarsdale community was well aware of the New Deal art programs, and the process was followed in local media and was even featured in the New York City papers. At the beginning of January 1938, about a full year before Samstag received his commission, no less a personage than the editor of the town newspaper, the Scarsdale Inquirer, wrote to Washington, asking if the government had any plans for the new post office in terms of 'murals, statues or other works of art'.35 It seems that certain Scarsdale citizens were dismayed by the controversy in another Westchester County town over the murals that had recently been installed. Though the editor discreetly refrained from naming the city, it was likely Port Chester, New York - about sixteen kilometres (ten miles) away - where four large murals and nine lunettes had been placed in the post office by another of the New Deal art agencies, the Treasury Relief Art Program, in 1936.<sup>36</sup> The subject there was labourers of different sorts, painted in a vividly coloured style associated with Mexican muralists and American Social Realists.

These Scarsdalians, noted the editor, 'are very anxious to know whether or not' their own town was slated to receive anything, and 'if so, whether it is possible for any citizens to have a look at the art, so to speak, before it is definitely included in the building'. <sup>37</sup> Her letter was forwarded to Edward B. Rowan at the Treasury Section, who told her that nothing would be decided until the building was at least fifty per cent completed, but that they were planning to have a sculpture on the front façade of the new post office building. <sup>38</sup> Another letter from Scarsdale soon followed, this one from the president of the Art Association, informing the





Top: Gordon SAMSTAG Sketch for *Caleb Heathcote Buys* the Richbell Farm, March 1939 charcoal on paper dimensions unknown Courtesy National Archives, USA

Above: Gordon SAMSTAG Sketch for *Law and Order in Old Scarsdale Manor*, March 1939 charcoal on paper dimensions unknown Courtesy National Archives, USA Section that a sculpture would be fine but that they also wanted murals and, in addition, that among the association's membership there were 'several capable mural painters who could do this work acceptably and with due economy'.<sup>39</sup> Rowan acknowledged the letter and assured the Art Association that their desires would be taken into account as soon as the Section was ready to make a decision. In the meantime, he recommended that the painters of the group provide contact information so that the Section's bulletin, 'which is designed to keep all artists informed with every phase of our program', could be sent to them.<sup>40</sup>

When it came time to assign the murals (the idea of a sculpture was dismissed), Rowan surely kept in mind the level of avid interest in the proud community and, rather than stir up dissension among the local artists, he turned to the large pool of painters available in New York City. He may have also kept in mind Samstag's diligence in travelling, at his own expense, down to Reidsville in order to understand the community and develop a mural that would reflect its character. More immediately, in offering the commission to Samstag, Rowan made specific reference to designs the artist had submitted for the post office at New Rochelle, a nearby town in Westchester County. The letter of invitation, dated January 13, 1939, asked him to prepare designs for two murals to be on the east and west walls of the lobby. The artist quickly replied that he was 'very glad of another opportunity to do a mural for the Section' and that he planned to visit the post office on the following Thursday (January 19), with his pencil sketches following as soon as possible.

About a month later, he sent two sketches, along with written descriptions of the events being depicted. He had begun his design process exactly the way the Section recommended: by visiting the community, where he had been 'very much impressed with its charm ... and ... its traditions and history'. <sup>44</sup> In addition to local sources, Samstag had researched the community's history at the New York Public Library and had settled upon scenes from the town's colonial period. <sup>45</sup> The first sketch depicted the purchase of the land on which Scarsdale stood by Caleb





Heathcote, one of several sons from a landed English family, who migrated to the American colonies in 1691; Samstag's design, the artist explained, 'shows him buying the land which John Richbell, one of the colonists, bought from the Mohicans in 1660'. <sup>46</sup> Rowan wrote that this design was 'preferred from the standpoint of its compositional interest and appropriate subject to the locale' and directed the artist to proceed with the colour sketch. <sup>47</sup>

The second sketch, however, created no excitement at the Section. At first, Rowan didn't even acknowledge it, and Samstag had to send a telegram reminding him that the commission was actually for two murals: 'Scarsdale P O invitation called for two murals. Please wire me your decision as to second sketch.'48 Rowan responded: 'Second sketch Scarsdale mural needs restudy. Letter follows. 49 The subject of Samstag's second sketch, entitled Incident at the Varian Inn, was also taken from colonial history and would seem to have been, at least from the artist's description of it (the sketch is unlocated), a more stirring topic than a real estate deal.<sup>50</sup> It depicted a colonial innkeeper hiding his two most precious possessions after hearing of the imminent arrival of the British army during the Revolutionary War (1775-83). Samstag's choice of subject revealed his recently acquired knowledge of Scarsdale history, for the story had local connections, ranging from Caleb Heathcote in the seventeenth century to the contemporary Scarsdale Woman's Club (which had been eager to monitor the new murals). The Varian Inn, where his scene took place, was on land Heathcote had sold in 1717; that same building had become the headquarters of the Scarsdale Woman's Club in 1919; and by the time Samstag painted his murals it had been the home of the Scarsdale Public Library since 1928.<sup>51</sup> James Varian, 'a staunch patriot [who] decided to move his family out of New York City when it was captured by the British', acquired what was also known as Wayside Cottage in 1761 and established the Wayside Inn. 52 According to the local story, a member of General George Washington's staff (reportedly on a spy mission) visited the inn and informed Varian that the British

Top: Gordon SAMSTAG Cartoon for *Caleb Heathcote Buys* the Richbell Farm, May 1939 charcoal on paper 122.0 x 457.0 cm (48 x 180 in) Courtesy National Archives, USA

Above: Gordon SAMSTAG Cartoon for *Law and Order* in Old Scarsdale Manor, May 1939 charcoal on paper 113.0 x 457 cm, (44½ x 180 in) Courtesy National Archives, USA

were nearby. Before the army could arrive, however, Varian moved his two most important possessions into the cellar. A clash of some sort must have occurred since, according to local lore, Henry Noble MacCracken (1880–1970; president of Vassar College, 1915–46) recalled 'picking old bullets out of the inn's shingle roof' as a boy. And the two 'most cherished possessions' that the innkeeper Varian hid from the British? His cow and his Bible.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the dramatic potential in this war story, the Section felt that these possibilities had evaded Samstag. Rowan wrote:

It is our feeling that the second design is in need of further study and possibly the selection of a new theme. The driving of the cow into the cellar was not very convincing to us and it was also our feeling that the insistent palette of the shingled house would not make for great interest in the painting ... It will be appreciated if you can furnish another design at your early convenience. <sup>54</sup>

Typically, with regard to his dealings with the Section, Samstag complied and by early March had submitted a new sketch for the second mural, which they liked much better. 'This sketch is regarded as much more interesting,' wrote Rowan, 'and the subject matter as well as the composition and treatment seem satisfactory.' Samstag was directed to proceed with his colour sketch. 55 When the colour sketches for both murals arrived a few weeks later, the Section was pleased, as Rowan reported: 'Your designs ... were regarded as charming in color and entertaining in pattern and appropriate in subject matter to the building. The designs are approved.' Samstag was directed to proceed with his full-size cartoons, which he was to photograph and send to the Section. Even more encouraging, Samstag could soon expect his first payment. 56

By late March, the news was out in Scarsdale: murals (and not sculptures, as previously planned) were to be painted in the new post office and an artist had been chosen – or rather, he had been 'invited to submit designs'. Rowan and the Treasury Section may have been careful, considering how avidly certain members of the community were following this proposed decoration of their post office, in telling the local newspaper how they had made their choice of 'Gordon Samstag, New York City artist'. The *Scarsdale Inquirer* reported: 'Samstag ... attracted the attention of Federal officials with an entry in the New Rochelle, New York, post office mural competition. While he did not win that competition, his work was considered so good that, without knowing his name, the judges advised the Treasury to give him some other job.'<sup>57</sup> Apparently, this information settled the question of assigning the commission, for no further comment arose in Scarsdale about who was to paint the murals.

# WINDOWS ONTO HISTORY

By mid-April of 1939, the murals were well enough underway that the community was notified of the subjects for their two murals: *Caleb Heathcote Buys the Richbell Farm* and *Law and Order in Old Scarsdale Manor*. A substantial article in the local newspaper described the themes as coming from the town's 'early history' and passed along the artist's compliment that he had found Scarsdale charming during his visit some months earlier. He had read of its history, he assured the citizens, and he had 'thought how well it had been planned and developed'. He went on: 'Wishing to design the murals also in keeping with these traditions, I chose subjects concerning Caleb Heathcote and the time in which he lived.' The newspaper solicited more detailed information about the proposed murals, and Samstag elaborated about the first mural:

Caleb Heathcote in establishing the Manor of Scarsdale purchased land not only directly from the Indians, but in the case of the Richbell purchase he also paid the Indians from whom John Richbell had originally bought his land. This was not uncommon at the time as the Indian conceptions of property were rather hazy. The first mural will show Heathcote at the farm of Ann Richbell in 1697. He and his notary are concluding the purchase and their horses are being held nearby, preparatory to their departure. The scene is significant of the forming of the manor, which was formally granted him by [the English king] William the Third in 1701.<sup>59</sup>

For the second mural, Samstag planned to depict a scene several years later that showed life in early eighteenth–century Scarsdale, with Heathcote hard at work maintaining order on his manor. The artist explained the background:

After the manor was established, Heathcote was by right entitled to hold what was known as Court-Leet and Court-Baron. However, there was even then a democratic spirit in America, and Heathcote, who was very much of his time, did not exercise his manorial rights in the strictest sense. The second mural will show an informal trial or hearing of the litigations and minor difficulties of the countryside, many of which he was requested to settle. The scene here also is outdoors where a table and chairs for the judges have been placed beneath a large tree. A group of people from the scattered farms have gathered to watch the unusual sight. <sup>60</sup>

The newspaper did not publish reproductions of the sketches that Samstag had furnished to the Section, so the townspeople who commented on the artist's plans may have had only his descriptions, not the actual images, on which to base their response. Rowan must have been pleased when the very person who had written to the Section about a year earlier to ask that the post office have murals rather than sculpture and that a local artist might paint them was among those who praised Samstag's ideas most highly. General Edward Clinton Young of the Scarsdale Art Association told the newspaper that 'historically, the two subjects chosen are excellent ... I should say the material is well selected and appropriate for the post office'. He may have had some of his fellow members of the Art Association in mind when he added, 'The subjects deal with the foundation of our town and would make an ideal foundation for any subsequent murals.' A second person, Mrs H. Sidney Ward, 'a mural painter herself', agreed that Samstag's choice of subject matter was 'excellent': 'They sound most Scarsdalian,' she declared. Edward Clinton Young

The thoroughly 'Scarsdalian' quality of Samstag's mural narratives was based on extensive research into the history of the county of Westchester as well as the town itself. In his initial proposal to the Section, he had been careful to cite the historical sources he had consulted and to emphasise that he had blended his impressions of the town as it existed in his own day with what he had learned from reading old books and historical volumes. Samstag may have also been inspired by the family background of his wife, Anne Davis Samstag, who was a descendant of the Richbell family. Whether that family connection was personally important or not, the artist understood that Scarsdale and Westchester County held a high regard for its ancestry, especially in the colonial period. He also recognised that the Section, as an agency of the New Deal, wanted to inculcate in Americans a knowledge and esteem for their own history. The Depression had shaken the foundations of American society, causing many to question the worth of their form of government and the character of American society. One of the aims of the New Deal art programs was to inspire faith in the future by reminding Americans of their past, and images such as Samstag's were lessons in paint for disheartened citizens.



Gordon SAMSTAG

Caleb Heathcote Buys the Richbell Farm, 1940
oil on canvas mural
122.0 x 457.0 cm (48 x 180 in)
Scarsdale Post Office, New York State
installed February 28, 1940
Photograph by Steve Napolitano
Courtesy US Postal Services



Gordon SAMSTAG

Law and Order in Old Scarsdale Manor, 1940
oil on canvas mural
113.0 x 457 cm, (44½ x 180 in)
Scarsdale Post Office, New York State,
installed February 28, 1940
Photograph by Steve Napolitano
Courtesy US Postal Services

Artist unknown [Heathcote Master], (formerly attributed to Evert Duyckinck) *Caleb Heathcote (1666–1721)*, c. 1710–15, oil on canvas 80.0 x 66.7 cm (31½ x 26¼ in) Courtesy New-York Historical Society, New York, USA



Samstag's Scarsdale murals focused on the importance of an orderly society that honoured legal processes. While he acknowledged Native American land claims and the practice of slavery – the two most notorious injustices in American history – he was far more concerned with the European, especially the English, establishment of a legal system that legitimised land ownership, kept the peace and dealt appropriately with wrongdoers. In his statement to the *Scarsdale Inquirer* about the second mural, he specifically mentioned the 'democratic spirit' exercised by the rich landowner, Heathcote, who might have behaved otherwise had he been called upon to 'mete out justice' in a less egalitarian society. Similarly, in his mural about Heathcote's acquisition of the Scarsdale manor, the civil liberties of women was a subtext – Ann Richbell was entitled to inherit her husband's estate and could act as a legal agent of it.

Samstag developed full-scale cartoons (see page 99) and sent photographs of the drawings to the Section in May 1939, along with an explanation from the artist that provides insight into his method of working. I plan to carry the drawing a great deal further in the final stage,' he wrote, 'and have kept the cartoon sketchy to permit working the color in a direct way.' 66 His comment suggests that he wanted to leave himself room for some inventiveness and improvisation in the actual painting and that he saw colour as the primary device for creating form. Samstag's continual classification among the critics who reviewed his work was that of an 'academic', which implies that his approach to rendering form was based in drawing, in finding the firm contours of an object and then applying colour. Without a range of actual paintings to examine, it is risky to make definitive pronouncements about his stylistic development. It appears, however, that Samstag used his brush more than his pencil in developing form,

although it is a matter of degree, as his two mural projects in Reidsville and Scarsdale suggest. The surface of the Reidsville mural was covered with fairly large, abstracted strokes of colour that coalesced into recognisable images when seen from a short distance away. Viewed more closely, Samstag's Reidsville painting was a network of various shades that was complex and sophisticated in its pictorial invention. He would maintain that technique in his Scarsdale mural, though the break-up of the form would turn out to be less dramatic and less abstracted than in the Reidsville work. This subtle change may have been due in part to Scarsdale's more panoramic compositions, which tell a more complicated story than in the Reidsville works, where the subject is a vignette of contemporary labour and not a historical narrative that is the concept for the Scarsdale painting. The impression is that the two Scarsdale murals are more illustrational than *Tobacco*.

# A FIGURE OF AUTHORITY

The hero of both Scarsdale murals, Caleb Heathcote (1666–1721), was born into a prominent and wealthy family of Derbyshire, England, whose seven sons included Sir Gilbert Heathcote (1652–1733), one of the founders of the Bank of England. Gilbert served as the Lord Mayor of London around the same time that Caleb, his younger brother, was the mayor of New York City, from 1711 to 1713.<sup>67</sup> The wealth and international connections of Caleb Heathcote's family paved the way for success after his emigration from the family estate (also called Scarsdale) to the colony of New York in 1692. In addition to his position as a well-funded merchant, he was soon appointed to the rank of colonel in charge of the Westchester militia (and was referred to thereafter as Colonel Heathcote), was named a judge in several courts and, within a few years, began to acquire land.<sup>68</sup>

His first purchase was in 1697 in Duchess County along the Hudson River north of New York City, where he learned to bargain with the indigenous tribes.<sup>69</sup> In New York (though not in all the colonies), the Indians were regarded as having, to some extent, legitimate legal claim to their own lands and could sell them to Europeans, subject to approval by the English colonial authorities.<sup>70</sup> John Richbell had availed himself of this situation when he purchased the land where Scarsdale now stands from the Siwanoy in 1660.<sup>71</sup> A tribal band associated with the dominant Mohicans, the Siwanoy occupied the southern area of Westchester County, down to about what is today the Bronx.<sup>72</sup> Though Richbell seems to have had a somewhat rocky time as a New World proprietor, he did maintain his claim to a significant portion of Westchester County which, upon his death in 1684, was inherited by his wife, Ann.<sup>73</sup> She navigated the legal system of the time, protecting her interests and her heirs in her financial affairs, including the sale of the farm to Heathcote in 1697.<sup>74</sup>

Heathcote also had to re-negotiate with the Siwanoy in order to make certain the tribe would not revive its claim to the area. Though Samstag did not make direct reference to the Indians in the mural, he mentioned them specifically in his commentary when he noted that their understanding of English land transfers was 'hazy' and that Heathcote had paid the Indians again for the same land that Richbell had bought from them years earlier. To Once both parties (the tribe and Mrs Richbell) had been satisfied, Heathcote's ownership of what he would soon name the Scarsdale Manor had to be authorised by the representatives of the English king. Acting in the name of King William III, the colonial government granted the patent, a sort of royal verification, for his land on March 12, 1701.

The intricacies of these early colonial claims, counterclaims and geographic uncertainties are surely part of the reason papers hold so prominent a place in *Caleb Heathcote Buys the* 

Richbell Farm (see opposite). A scrolled paper that is large enough to be a map or a long legal document is tucked prominently under Heathcote's left arm as he finalises the sale. He stands in a relaxed position, exuding confidence, but has removed his hat in deference to Mrs Richbell. She, in turn, also has a paper, but she seems to be less sanguine about the situation than Heathcote, for she holds the document close to her face and appears to be reading it with careful attention. Behind the negotiators are two men whose interaction is more spirited. A brown-coated figure holds a map while a much more richly dressed man seems eager to pinpoint something specific. Though the map is undetailed and difficult to see precisely, it does appear to reflect the general geography of the area. The man's blue coat, frilly shirt and lace-edged cuffs might seem to link him to the wealthy, influential Heathcote, but he may also be acting on behalf of the Richbell family, who owned a considerable amount of land. He leans in, points and looks towards the man holding the map, as if wanting to make sure everyone is clear about the boundaries of the land in question. The costume of the plainly dressed man with whom the blue-coated man is so engaged suggests that he is not of the landed class, so he may be an employee hired by one of the well-to-do families, a surveyor perhaps, or even Heathcote's steward. In any case, the well-dressed man seems at pains to make sure he is communicating in very specific terms with the man holding the map. For these and all the other figures in his two Scarsdale murals, Samstag surely employed models and may have integrated their facial features or those of other people he knew into his characterisations. However, he reported that one figure, Caleb Heathcote, was an actual portrait. For that, Samstag went to the New-York Historical Society, which held a painted portrait in its collection (see page 106).<sup>77</sup> Interviewed when his murals were being installed, Samstag described his subject for a local newspaper. He had a high forehead, a fairly prominent nose and a weak chin.' The article went on to explain that the artist had gone to the New-York Historical Society Library to view the portrait of Heathcote and to the Westchester County Historical Society and the New York Public Library for background on colonial Scarsdale. 'Mr Samstag spoke,' observed the newspaper, 'as if he really knew the village's celebrated settler. "Heathcote was a real estate developer," he said. "He was a deeply religious man. His interest in politics was keen. He became mayor of New York City and surveyor general of customs."'78

The four other figures in Caleb Heathcote Buys the Richbell Farm are not involved in the land transaction in any direct way. A boy is being lifted onto the well covering (unless he is being pulled off it), presumably so that he can better witness the actions of the adults. In the past, the inclusion of a child in certain subjects was often a symbol of the future, suggesting that the event being observed was to have a consequence for subsequent generations.<sup>79</sup> Positioning the boy in such a prominent place may have been Samstag's way of signalling the importance down through the centuries of what might have seemed at the time an ordinary land sale. The two women at the left are dressed in plain, solid-coloured clothing – very different from the flowered chintz and fringed shawl of Mrs Richbell - and appear to be workers, one looking after the child, the other carrying milk pails. 80 Though incidental to the historical tale, the women add an anecdotal interest to the narrative and balance to the composition, while they also sustain Samstag's practice of showing ordinary people at work (but without overt social commentary). His approach is continued when he brackets the mural design with the corresponding figure of a black man on the right, who also leans towards the centre of the composition. By placing gender and race literally at the edges of the mural, the artist alludes to the marginalisation of women and of people of African origin in colonial society - which continued into his own time - and, at the same time, maintains the themes of his earlier paintings such as Proletarian and Domestic.

When he installed his mural in 1940, Samstag made no comment about the strongly realised figure of the black man anchoring the right side of the composition. When he returned about forty-five years later to look at his paintings, he did make an observation that was published in the Scarsdale Inquirer. "You see the black man cleaning the saddle?' Samstag asked, pointing to the mural. "Heathcote would have had a great number of slaves. He would ride through marsh and swamps and bramble and all that and would need a lot of help to remain impeccably groomed."'81 Just as he evaded overt social comment in his paintings, his statement also avoids openly recognising deeper issues. As in the earlier paintings, he focuses on a pragmatic (if not prosaic) interpretation that steers clear of addressing inequities that Samstag surely understood and had feelings about. (Is it coincidence that the horse the servant attends so carefully is white while the darker horse is placed behind it, somewhat obscuring its visibility?) On the face of it, the artist's statement is accurate: Heathcote did indeed own slaves, and he certainly did ride horseback through the rough New York landscape whose natural character is today so urbanised. Slavery was not illegal in New York or anywhere else in the American colonies at that time, though several northern colonies passed legislation beginning in the 1770s that curtailed



it, with the eventual goal of eliminating it altogether. The state of New York outlawed slavery entirely in 1827; it was not ended throughout the nation until after the Civil War. 82

The very act of placing a black man in his mural, as large and fully realised a figure as any of the others, would have reminded viewers that slavery was very much present in the history of their community. And yet, Samstag might have dealt with this important issue more aggressively by, for example, simply pointing out that keeping Heathcote 'impeccably groomed' was not a choice for the slave. How much the artist researched the matter of slavery in colonial New York is not known, or even if he researched it all; he may have simply assumed that a person of Heathcote's rank and wealth in the eighteenth century would have naturally owned slaves. None of the histories of Westchester County which he cited for the Treasury Section address the matter of Heathcote as a slaveholder, but Samstag might have followed up on a minor mention of it in the only published biography of Heathcote. 83 Further checking might have led him to a letter written in 1708 by a newly arrived minister sent to strengthen the Church of England in Westchester County, verifying that Heathcote owned slaves. Reverend Muirson wrote that there were 'only a few negroes in this parish ... save what are in Colonel Heathcote's family, where I think there are more than in all the parish besides'. 84 By describing them as being in Heathcote's family, the writer would have meant that they were slaves (or at least servants) and not blood relatives (or at least not acknowledged as blood relatives).

Gordon SAMSTAG

Caleb Heathcote Buys the Richbell
Farm, 1940 (detail)
oil on canvas mural
122.0 x 457.0 cm (48 x 180 in)
Scarsdale Post Office,
New York State
installed February 28, 1940
Photograph by Steve Napolitano
Courtesy US Postal Services

Had he tried to make more of the fact that Heathcote was a slaveholder, it is likely the Section would have taken a dim view; they did not care to pay for murals that brought up conflicts in American history. For example, few murals commissioned by the New Deal dealt directly with the American Civil War; many people still living had been greatly affected by the war and in the South it remained a volatile subject in some regards. For North Carolina, choosing a topic on contemporary farming was far less controversial than trying to mine Reidsville history for a subject while carefully avoiding its most important experience, the Civil War. In New York, however, history offered a broader source of imagery, if for no other reason than the Civil War had not been fought on that soil. Choosing a scene from colonial history could have special appeal in that it established the deep roots of American society, but at the same time, it could emphasise the story of America's independence and its distinct character as a nation. Little disagreement could be attached to imagined views of the acquisition of land or the establishment of democratic traditions in the courts. Of course, such events were not usually as uncontested or exactly as Samstag presented them in his murals, but few voices at that time would have been raised in reminding Americans that Indians and blacks might have taken a different view. The fortunes of both are referenced, however, in Samstag's mural, as if to remind us that factors other than Euro-American history were involved in the past and that the land on which the picturesque village of Scarsdale now stood was not without instances of injustice.

The inclusion of a black man in this scene of property transfer may have been Samstag's way of acknowledging Heathcote's role in the Slave Revolt of 1712 in New York City, which occurred while he was mayor. The uprising was quickly put down, and the resulting punishments were public and extreme, with effects felt throughout the slave population – and likely by free persons of colour as well. Though much of the action taken against the insurrectionists was directed by the colonial governor of New York, Robert Hunter (1664–1734), the sentences carried out in the city were sanctioned, at least officially, by the mayor, as were the restrictions subsequently instituted against the enslaved community. Had Samstag placed a black man in the mural about Heathcote's administration of justice on his own manor, the historical reminder might have been too obvious.

#### MAINTAINING LAW AND ORDER

For his second mural, Law and Order in Old Scarsdale Manor (see page 104), Samstag moved the scene forwards several years to show Heathcote conducting a Court Leet, a judicial institution in which the landowner is authorised to hear and make judgments about disputes and misdemeanours occurring on his property. From a scene of a Revolutionary War veteran turned innkeeper trying to hide his possessions from the approaching British army, he had switched to a far more pedestrian topic (and thereby gained the Section's approval for his design). Although it was more sedate than a war story, the revised scene – the conduct of an American judicial system – was more consequential not only for colonial society but also for Samstag's own time. (And he didn't entirely give up the drama: he included an angry man being dragged before the court while an armed soldier enforces the arrest.) From the very earliest settlements on the eastern shore of what would become the United States, contracts governed most enterprises, and rules for behaviour were quickly established. The concept of protecting the collective wellbeing was not left behind in the old country, even in the most marginal and precarious ventures. For instance, one of the earliest documents in American history is the Mayflower Compact of 1620, signed before the Pilgrims even got off the boat in Massachusetts Bay.

In that wilderness setting, its purpose was to favour the common good of the group over individual endeavours. <sup>85</sup> Admittedly, the administration of justice was thin at times and inconsistent during early colonial days (especially at the edges of settlement), but founding some sort of judicial system was among the first necessities.

As noted, Heathcote had quickly secured an appointment as the colonel of the Westchester County militia and been named a judge for several courts. He had never been formally trained in the law, but in his campaign to acquire as much land as possible he had often encountered disputes and had dealt with persons just as determined as he was to carry out their ambitions. <sup>86</sup> He could thus bring considerable experience and, perhaps, skills to maintaining law and order on his estate.

The English crown's practice of granting land, on which manors were then created, was transferred to the colonies, and it benefited numerous adventurers and speculators as well as corporate entities. As already discussed in the context of Samstag's first Scarsdale mural, land could be purchased from the tribes, but those sales still needed to be approved by some sort of colonial authority. In Heathcote's case, he had to satisfy the dual legal land claims of both the Richbell family and the Siwanoy, but once that was done, his rights as a landowner were bestowed and protected by the English legal system. He named his tracts of land Scarsdale, in honour of his family's estate in Derbyshire, but, as Samstag pointed out for the readers of the Scarsdale newspaper in 1940, Heathcote seemed to understand that he was part of a new and different sort of society.<sup>87</sup> For one thing, he was not truly 'lord' of the manor, though some contemporary references use that term: no royal titles, capable of being passed on to heirs, were assigned to anyone in the colonies, whether for land ownership (the most common basis for noble titles) or any other reason. 88 However, as a landowner, he still had the obligation to maintain peace and to work with tenants and others who had business on the manor; in that regard, as the proprietor of a manor in colonial New York, he had available a judicial device that had come down from medieval times.

Samstag explained that Heathcote was 'entitled' to conduct two different sorts of procedures, a Court-Leet and a Court-Baron, and the pictorial narrative of his mural suggests that he was right in describing his scene as a Court-Leet. A Court-Baron dealt with civil and practical matters within the manor, with the lord (or his steward) presiding and for which he might convene a jury of his tenants. A Court-Leet was concerned with more active disruptions and could be used to deal with troublemakers, whether they were inhabitants of the manor or not, or as Heathcote's biographer described them, 'enemies of society great and small, the thieves, the cheats, the breakers of the peace'. 89 In his 1940 comment on the court scene, reported in the White Plains Evening Dispatch, Samstag observed that Heathcote was dealing with relatively small-scale offences: 'Mr Samstag noted that crime was not a big problem in those days. There were a few cases of drunkenness, a bit of cattle rustling and quarrels among neighbors. That's about all.'90 Whether the problems were large or small, a descendant of Heathcote's, in his history of the manors of New York, recalled that Heathcote was assiduous in his duties and was often called upon by his tenants, who 'were in the habit of coming to him for aid and counsel in their private affairs, especially in the settlement of family disputes, and he was often called upon to draw their wills'. 91 But it was also noted that he was more inclined to allow the larger judicial system to operate than to exercise his manorial rights. 92

When Samstag's plans for his murals were announced in the Scarsdale newspaper in April of 1939, he explained his concept of the underlying ideas that would be embodied in *Law and Order in Old Scarsdale Manor*. By saying that Heathcote understood the 'democratic spirit' of the time and place in which he lived and emphasising that, as landowner, he was

disinclined to 'exercise his manorial rights in the strict sense', Samstag was instructing viewers in the egalitarian traditions of their country. Heathcote did not administer the law just because he owned the manor, but because those who lived on his land 'requested [him] to settle' the 'litigations and minor difficulties of the countryside'. Samstag's mural is a sort of explanation that the 'informal trial or hearing' in his mural is taking place not because Heathcote had the right and the capacity to define justice on his land, although technically he did. <sup>93</sup> Despite his wealth and official position, despite his power, Heathcote administered justice because he was recognised by the people, and thus he judged 'with the consent of the governed', to use the phrase that Thomas Jefferson would include in the Declaration of Independence a quarter of a century later, on the eve of the American Revolution. Samstag's painted tutorial was reminding viewers in Depression America that the traditions of their society were based on truly substantial ideas – concepts that were pioneered in their country – and were worth valuing and sustaining.

As in the first Scarsdale mural, Heathcote takes centre stage again, this time in not quite so passive and relaxed an attitude. Still dressed in blue with lace collar and cuffs (and still his blue-feathered hat nearby), he rises from the bench and points forcefully with a straight, accusatory arm towards the men in front of him. His features are similar to those in the first mural, though perhaps somewhat older, and now he is wearing a white wig, as does the man sitting calmly beside him, who may be another colonial official. He object of Heathcote's fixed attention is an angry-faced man who struggles against two other men who are obviously coercing his appearance before Heathcote's court. They are reinforced by the soldier who backs up his authority with a firearm and angles slightly towards the offender, as if to prevent his escape and ensure his appearance before the court. The arrested man glares directly towards the soldier, suggesting he is especially enraged by the threatening role of this uniformed figure. If a twentieth-century American looking at the mural hadn't known the period being depicted, the red coat of the British soldier would have signalled immediately that it was colonial times, before the American Revolution.

As in the first mural, papers are prominent, perhaps to suggest the legitimacy of the proceedings. A white sheet is on the desk in front of Heathcote with a quill and ink bottle nearby, suggesting the process has been put in motion, and the documents are awaiting his signature. A large piece of paper is in the hand of the brown-suited man behind the two judges. Like a similarly clothed man in the first mural, he may be the steward or notary of Heathcote or a functionary of the colonial government. He gestures with his right hand, and it may be that he is resting his hand against the tree, but it is more likely that Samstag meant him to be drawing attention to the person who has already been put into stocks. Perhaps he is cautioning the angry, resisting man to settle down and cooperate, reminding him that the court has the power to do the same to him. Slightly behind the tree sits an offender who has already had his day in court and been sentenced to a period in stocks. Stocks took various forms, sometimes confining only a person's ankles, or putting a person's head into a locked positions (pillory) or, as here, locking both hands and feet. It was not a punishment to be taken lightly: it was, first of all, intended to be a public humiliation, but it also meant that the prisoner was exposed to weather of all sorts and, often even worse, was helpless to fend off assaults. 95 The couple at the right edge serve a similar purpose as the water-well group in the first mural: they are observers and examples of ordinary people while forming a compositional balance. Like the black man who bends to his task in the first mural, the elderly man in the second mural also curves towards the centre as he leans on his cane; the woman who bends to assist the boy in the first mural is echoed by the angled (and in this case, aggressive) stance of the soldier.

The 'courtroom' here is nothing more than a table and a bench brought out of doors, perhaps to indicate the rural, colonial setting or to suggest how publicly and unpretentiously Heathcote carried on the affairs of his manor. It is possible that Samstag chose a setting that would match his background in the first mural and would also give an accurate indication of the landscape around Scarsdale. It further served to show the changes that had taken place as the American colonies pushed ahead with their settlement, and society became more complex. 96 In the sources Samstag cited for his research on the Manor of Scarsdale, he would have encountered nineteenth-century descriptions of its natural surroundings as 'overlooked by the hills and crags, half covered with forest'. 97 In his first mural, Samstag shows the 'wild and romantic hills' combined with the 'extensive tracts of woodlands' in the background, but he also depicts a landscape gradually undergoing cultivation. 98 Behind a wooden fence that stretches from the plain wooden barn to the left edge of the canvas are the furrows of two ploughed fields, and the woods seem to have been cut down on the lower side of a large hill in the right background. By his next scene, the forest has been cleared even more, and stacks of grain in a distant field suggest a harvest. Most tellingly, Samstag has included that pictorial icon of American landscape painting that signals civilisation encroaching into pristine wilderness: the tree stump. To the pioneering colonists, the forests of America seemed to stretch infinitely and were a mighty barrier to settling and cultivating the massive landscape before them. The tree stump is a reminder of those forests, now gone forever, and of the determination of the early settlers. In both murals, the yards where the action takes place are strewn with large stones, indicating the remnants of the rocky and often rough landscape of New York. Of the natural features of both pictures, the most prominent one is the tree with its twisted trunk and arching branches. On the Richbell farm, the tree is younger, with its limbs emerging at about the height of the human figures, while in the second mural the trunk is much stouter, though still twisted, and the small branch along the left backside of the tree has thickened into a limb. The architecture has also evolved: in the first scene, the well covering and a stark (though large) barn are the only constructions on the farm, whereas in the later scene the plain barn in the right background is balanced by a more elaborate building with paned windows and shutters, a chimney and a dormer emerging from the second storey.

#### A HAPPY RECEPTION

By early June of 1939, the Section was expecting the murals to be finished,<sup>99</sup> but on July 6 Samstag wrote to say that he would need more time. The reason he gave was that he wanted to submit sketches to the competition for the St Louis post office (his mother's home town) and also to 'make a sketch for the new 48 states competition' and he believed the work for that would 'delay me a little'.<sup>100</sup> Actually, his contract did not call for installation until the following January, and he had not had many exhibitions during that year of 1939. His obligations would not seem so overwhelming that he would worry about a deadline six months in the future, and he did say that he thought he could complete the murals on time, but he still asked for an extension. The Section replied that they were happy he was submitting designs to new competitions and directed him to check back with them when his time was nearly up, and he knew for sure whether or not he could meet the deadline.<sup>101</sup>

There is no correspondence in Samstag's file at the Treasury Section for the period of July to the end of November, but on December 1 he wrote to say that he actually did need an extension until April because of having 'spent most of the summer working on the St Louis and 48 State[s] Competitions ... The Scarsdale murals are progressing smoothly and I believe

they will be completed well before April but I don't want to hurry them.' The Section was amenable, and he got his extension, but they did ask that he keep this office informed on the progress of your work'. The Just over two months later, the murals were finished, and Samstag was advised to install them. Whereas Samstag had had to pay Frederick Crittenden to go to Reidsville to hang his mural, this time he was able to attend in person, on February 28, 1940, as he subsequently told Rowan: Thelped Mr Crittenden install them and I think they look very well. Mr Drury [sic] has the order to raise the lights [which were obscuring the view of the murals] and I believe that will be done next week.' The postmaster wrote to Rowan on the day of the installation to say that the murals had been placed 'in a very satisfactory manner', then added, 'The public comment so far has been very complimentary.' Accordingly, Samstag's final payment of \$500 was authorised. The

In Scarsdale, the public's response to the murals was not only complimentary, it was quick. The day after they were in place, the newspaper ran a front-page story with large illustrations, beginning with rave reviews from the local citizens:

Scarsdale likes its postoffice murals. 'They're lovely.' 'What beautiful colors!' 'Oh, aren't they attractive!' 'They'll be a great addition to this building.' Comments such as these were heard in the postoffice lobby all day long Tuesday while the murals were being put in place under the supervision of the artist, Gordon Samstag of New York. Frequently a resident on his way to buy stamps or mail a package stopped to tell the artist himself how fine the murals are or to congratulate him on the choice of subjects. <sup>108</sup>

In the same article, Samstag reminded the community of how carefully he had planned their new murals:

I spent quite a lot of time on research ... First of all I came out here and talked to a number of persons to learn something about the community and what the people would like. Then I read a great deal about Scarsdale's early history and I found that the New York Public Library had the most complete and interesting information about Scarsdale.  $^{109}$ 

The public response to his murals was everything the New Deal could have hoped for in its campaign to bring art to the people and give them a renewed sense of pride in themselves and their society. The article described his paintings as 'done in soft, greyed colors with quite a lot of blue and red' and then went on to describe his career in glowing terms. It also outlined the steps he had taken to ensure he did the best possible job: 'After completing the research, Mr Samstag began painting. When he had the work well underway, he decided that his studio wasn't large enough to give him the proper perspective. "We had to move to another apartment so I could finish the paintings properly."' He added that it had taken the oil paint a month to dry. <sup>110</sup> The newspaper also gave attention to Crittenden, the installer, just as the Reidsville newspaper had done, noting that 'he put the Scarsdale murals in place [and] is famous for this work. He has been putting up murals since 1906 when he installed some in the Carnegie Institute.' Samstag sent clippings of these reports to the Section, and Rowan replied that 'it pleases all of us to learn of the happy reception of the work'. <sup>111</sup>

Notice of his murals went beyond Scarsdale and appeared in the New York City newspapers. The *Herald Tribune* published photographs of both murals, with an extensive caption describing them as a view of colonial life. <sup>112</sup> The *New York Times*, which had frequently reviewed Samstag's work, also had a small article in which they interviewed the artist, who gave them a short synopsis of the subjects and the history of Caleb Heathcote. It was noted,

of course, that Heathcote had been the mayor of the city in the early eighteenth century. <sup>113</sup> Remembering how little attention his mural in Reidsville had attracted, Samstag must have been pleased with this response.

The universal praise for his murals, however, did not last forever, as often happened with New Deal art - and as Samstag had already experienced when an 'expert' had criticised the figures harvesting tobacco in the Reidsville painting. Within a month of the Scarsdale murals' installation, Samstag had to write to the Section reporting that 'someone' asked the postmaster 'to have a small change made. This is the first figure on the left in "Caleb Heathcote buys the Richbell Farm". The woman lifting the boy onto the well covering ought to have her right foot showing, complained the critic. 114 In the pencil sketch, the skirt dips because the woman is bending as she assists the child; in the colour study, the foot is also mostly covered. In the cartoon, however, which is the last version of the composition before the actual oil painting, the hem of the skirt has risen slightly, though the foot is barely indicated. Samstag explained to Rowan: I had the foot showing at one time but thought the movement was expressed better without it. However if you think it advisable to make the change, I will be glad to do so.'The artist asked to have Rowan's response soon and, as he often did, reminded the official that he was 'hoping to hear from you ... about the possibility of doing more work for the Section'. 115 A comparison of the preparatory works for 'Richbell Farm' with the finished mural reveals another change regarding a skirt. In all the studies, Ann Richbell hikes her skirt slightly in the front, as if she is about to take a step or perhaps curtsy. She never holds a sheet of paper until the final mural, suggesting that Samstag decided to characterise her differently while he was in the midst of painting the mural; the revised depiction of Mrs Richbell closely examining a piece of paper suggests a woman actively engaged in the negotiations and looking out for her best interests.

Samstag did hear back quickly from Rowan, but it was surely not what he wanted to hear. Rowan agreed with the critic and asked Samstag to 'indicate the other foot'. But then he went further. Once he started looking, it seems, he decided that another figure needed some correction: the right leg of the fifth figure from the left (the blue-coated man looking at the map) was 'not realized'. By that he meant that it was not there. It had never been there in any of the studies leading up to the final mural, probably because of the figure's position relative to the man beside and slightly in front of him. Rowan then made a very blunt criticism of Samstag's work and, typical of him, directed the artist pointedly to correct the errors of composition:

If you will refer to the correspondence on this project you will note that from time to time I stressed the importance of your realizing every part of the figure. This is an important factor in creating convincing spacial relations with its accompanying stamp of authenticity and I cannot urge the importance of it too much in your future work. I suggest then that you revisit Scarsdale to tend to the two details ... Kindly inform this office when the changes have been made.  $^{116}$ 

According to their archives for the Scarsdale murals, the Section had not, in fact, cautioned Samstag or expressed any concern about his work – other than their early rejection of the tale of Varian's cow. Samstag was perhaps disappointed after the unqualified praise he had heard at the installation of the murals, but he dutifully wrote Rowan that he would make the changes. <sup>117</sup> The New Deal agencies such as the Section constituted America's first large-scale program for artists, and their officials fiercely believed in their ideals – they even hoped this support for art would become a permanent fixture of their government. They also tried to be responsive to the public, even when they didn't necessarily agree with objections, which may not have been

the case with Samstag's Scarsdale murals. These goals were not always met, but they were an important part of the Treasury Section's mission.

Within a few weeks, Samstag notified the Section that he had made the suggested changes and that the 'Postmaster [had] expressed satisfaction'. <sup>118</sup> He had indeed raised the skirt of the woman at the well and both feet were now clearly visible. As for the missing leg of the man pointing at the map, it did not appear. Samstag may have tried to 'realize' the figure's right leg, but it would have been difficult since its logical placement would have been directly behind the two legs of the brown-suited man, both of which are definitely visible today. <sup>119</sup> The upper leg of the blue-coated man seems particularly unresolved, and its rather undefined shape may be the result of Samstag trying in vain to re-draw that part of the figure. The artist had a similar situation on the right side of the mural, with the two horses and the legs of the groom, but apparently it was felt that he had dealt with that spatial situation satisfactorily. Samstag knew anatomy thoroughly and he was accustomed to devising complex positions of the human body (as in *Nurses* and *Proletarian*, or the combative group in the *Law and Order* mural, for that matter) so the oddities of certain figures are difficult to explain.

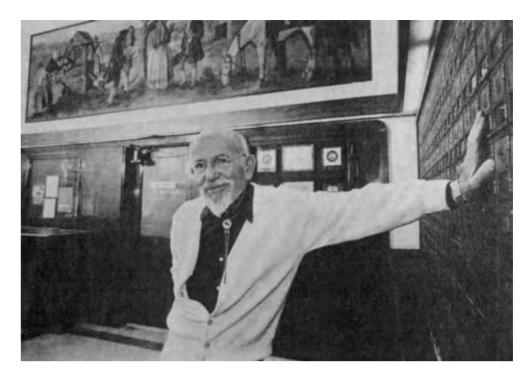
Even after he had made the changes to his mural, requests he probably didn't like (and in the case of the man's leg, ignored), he still included in his last letter to the Section about *Law and Order in Old Scarsdale Manor* one final declaration in his quest for employment: 'I would also like to know if it is possible to get further work from the Section outside of competition work.' <sup>120</sup> The answer for him and for most American artists was no, since the Section was by then under constant attack from anti-Roosevelt factions in Congress and others who believed that the government's investment in art was a waste of valuable resources. As the situation in Europe worsened and relations with Japan grew tense, the United States was less committed to the domestic programs of the New Deal. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Section had to struggle to maintain itself, and the number of commissions dropped drastically. Although the agency responded to the war, in part, by the production of images supporting and directing the war effort (posters, mainly, but also exhibitions), the Treasury Section was closed down in June 1943. <sup>121</sup>

#### EMBRACED WITH ENTHUSIASM

Many years later, in 1986, Samstag went back to see his New Deal murals in Scarsdale. His visit was chronicled in local newspapers, complete with photographs of the artist, then eighty years old, and his murals (see opposite). He told reporters, 'All these things come back to me ... We were very poor then,' and he recounted a story about gathering up dimes so that he and his wife could join a friend in going out for dinner. <sup>122</sup> A few days later, the newspaper in nearby White Plains ran a story in which Samstag recollected his interest in the colonial landowner:

Scarsdale did not come alive for me until I researched its past and saw a picture of Caleb Heathcote ... It wasn't until I saw how rich and influential Caleb was that I got a clear picture in my mind of what early American life was like in Scarsdale and transfer[ed] that image to canvas. He was very American. 123

Both articles cited Samstag's criticism that the murals were poorly lit and that they needed to have explanatory plaques.  $^{124}$  Due in part to public urging, the murals had been cleaned and restored in  $1980.^{125}$ 



Gordon Samstag visiting his Scarsdale murals in 1986. Image from newsclipping: 'Artist hopes to shed more light in Scarsdale', by Kelly B. Seymore, White Plains Reporter Dispatch, Gannett Westchester Newspapers, September 2, 1986

Samstag's experience with the New Deal for art was not extensive, but it was successful, at least in terms of what the New Deal wanted to accomplish through its support for American artists. Both murals were accepted into their communities and, in the case of Scarsdale, embraced with some enthusiasm. Both had provided images that held meaning for their audiences and, again in the case of Scarsdale, educated the citizens about their own history. How important these commissions were to Samstag financially is not clear, though he was certainly clear in his correspondence with the Section about his urgent need for payment and his unceasing desire for further work. He was still actively exhibiting in New York during these years, but he had scored few major accomplishments in terms of prizes, solo shows or museum purchases in the later part of the 1930s. The pace of his career had slowed, and he was probably having to do a great deal more commercial work than he preferred. He described himself as 'poor' when he recollected the Depression decade for the 1986 articles about the Scarsdale murals, but he had maintained employment and had been able to sustain himself, though surely not at the level he wanted. For him and for large segments of the American population, the Depression with all of its stress persisted into the first years of the 1940s. In Samstag's case, it is possible that the momentum of his career and perhaps even his artistic development was retarded and never recovered completely. He persevered, however, and he would continue to exhibit, to teach and to respond to a changed world – particularly a changed art world – through the 1940s.



# A CHANGED WORLD: WAR AND ART 1941-61

In December of 1941 after the attack on Pearl Harbor, America declared war against Japan, Germany and the other Axis powers. The unprecedented demand for production to fuel the war effort finally lifted the pall of the Great Depression, which had gone on for over a decade. Employment statistics improved dramatically, but the art market hardly revived during the war years. As would be expected in the emergency, exhibition opportunities declined and the materials required for gallery and museum publications were rationed. However, many of the major annual exhibitions were still held during the war, and Samstag contributed to several of them.

Just a few weeks after the US joined the war, the Salmagundi Club began 1942 with an exhibition and auction in January, the proceeds to be shared with the Savage Club of London 'for the relief of British artists in the war crisis'.¹ When the club's sixty-fifth annual exhibition opened on February 15, it was described in the *New York Times* as 'one of the liveliest shows the organization has put on', and Samstag was 'singled out' for a small landscape painting, though the painting was not named.² During the month of February 1942, the club sent twenty-two oil paintings to the Arnot Art Gallery in Elmira, New York, including two works by Samstag, *Lime Depot* and *East River Coal Sheds*. Though the viewers in Elmira were assured in an announcement in the local newspaper that the Salmagundi painters were 'among the best known American artists', a review did not find Samstag's realist urban imagery attractive. In a group of paintings enjoyed for their images of the 'placid scenic countryside of the New England States and the section's rugged rock-bound shore', Samstag's 'construction and industrial scenes' were judged to be 'well done, but unesthetic'.³

As he had for well over a decade, Samstag showed at the National Academy. Edward Alden Jewell, the *New York Times* critic, found the 116th Annual Exhibition to be 'the liveliest Academy show (so far as painting is concerned) within this reviewer's memory'. He attributed the new vitality in part to the inclusion of many non-Academicians but also admitted that even some of the Academy members seemed to have revived their art: '[T]here is enough really fresh and reasonably creative work on the walls to startle us – besides which, many of the stronger academicians seem to have outdone themselves this year in the way of breaking new ground.'<sup>4</sup> Samstag's entry of *Crepe Paper Lillies* [sic] was not mentioned in the article, so it is not clear if he was one of the Academic group (he had been an Associate since 1939) that was part of the

Cover detail of *Safety in Flight* by Assen Jordanoff, Funk & Wagnalls, 1941.

Gordon Samstag worked as an illustrator for such publications during World War II.

'fresh' new tone or was among the 'dated and presumably tired old timber' of the past. <sup>5</sup> The war was acknowledged by the charging of a twenty-five cent entrance fee, which was then donated to the British and American Ambulance Corps. <sup>6</sup> Samstag also continued with the Allied Artists of America, exhibiting *The Grey Barn* (which won an Honorable Mention in the awards) in their Twenty-ninth Annual Exhibition, in November of 1942. <sup>7</sup>

In 1942-43, the Federal Works Agency organised and circulated Red Cross Poster Designs, 'an exhibition of paintings, prints, posters and drawings by contemporary American artists submitted in competition for Red Cross work'. 8 Samstag's contribution was Nurse, which was surely not the oil painting Nurses, which won the Lippincott Prize at the Pennsylvania Academy's annual exhibition in 1936. Most of his other exhibition activity in 1943 seems to have been crowded into the early months of the year, beginning in January with the auction exhibition of the Salmagundi Club. 10 The reviewer for the New York Times seemed to admire Samstag's painting (which was Paper Boats) when he observed about a group of works, 'Without wishing to quarrel with the awards, one might well single out oils by ... Gordon Samstag [and others] ... for special attention.'11 The auction exhibition was followed quickly by the Salmagundi Club's yearly exhibition of oils, which featured Samstag's Felicite. 12 In the 117th Annual of the National Academy (February 17-March 9, 1943), Samstag showed Berry Picker<sup>13</sup> in a group of paintings that Edward Alden Jewell of the New York Times, found 'lively', partly because some of the Academicians and Associates (Samstag was still an Associate) were less conventional and slightly more 'modern' in their approach (though it is not known if that observation applied to Samstag's art). 14 In March, Samstag once again was selected for the Corcoran Biennial, exhibiting his *Beach Comber*. <sup>15</sup>

In the following year of 1944, Samstag's appearances at exhibitions diminished even more. As he had earlier, he contributed to an exhibition whose sales proceeds were to be given in part to war needs. In early March, members and associates of the Art Students League held a show of 272 works to help 'raise funds for scholarships that are to be given to service men and women at the end of the war', pledging to give half of their earnings to the Veterans Scholarship Fund. 16 Samstag was mentioned as being among the artists participating in 'this very worthwhile cause', with New York Times reviewer Jewell observing that 'there is work here that should appeal to all tastes, except those that demand alone the most absolute of abstractions. And while most of the work is in more or less a naturalistic vein, there are even a few abstractions or semi-abstractions.' At about the same time, Samstag showed his painting, Flour Mill Hand, in the 118th National Academy exhibition. 18 The 1944 annual brought one of the more damning judgments about the Academy's art when Jewell called the exhibition 'monotonous', though he found it an odd monotony of 'sweetness and light', in which the artists seemed to heighten and intensify their palettes without making insightful statements about colour. <sup>19</sup> He speculated that this chromatic change might be attributable to the influence of the Museum of Modern Art and to the increasing acceptance of abstract and non-objective art; by comparing the Academy's exhibition with that of the American Abstract Artists, he recognised the ascendance of abstraction among New York painters during the war years. No specific mention was made of Gordon Samstag, and the title of Flour Mill Hand suggests that he had continued to explore his theme of ordinary workers. Yet it is certain that he was aware of the changing currents of American art, and he was surely responding to them at some level. He may have been going through a period of transition since it appears he showed in only one exhibition during 1945, the first half of the National Academy's annual exhibition in December of that year, where his contribution was Beach Comber, the same painting he had shown at the Corcoran Biennial of 1943.20

# WAR WORK

As the United States focused intently on the production of armaments, Samstag was among the many American artists who applied their skills to the war effort. There was a need to direct the fabrication of complicated devices so that an ordinary worker could manufacture and assemble weaponry and other war material with precision and absolute accuracy – lives depended upon it. At a later stage in the actual waging of war, mechanics and operators, such as pilots, needed to learn quickly and efficiently the skills that would keep their complex machines and weapons functioning and effective. Again, lives depended upon their being able to understand the aeroplanes and armaments they used. Artists who only a year or so earlier had been eager to secure a post office mural commission or obtain a place on the Federal Art Project now found that their ability to draw and to visualise in both two and three dimensions was in demand. The diagrams and graphic instructions they developed were factors in American productivity and in successes in combat missions. <sup>21</sup>

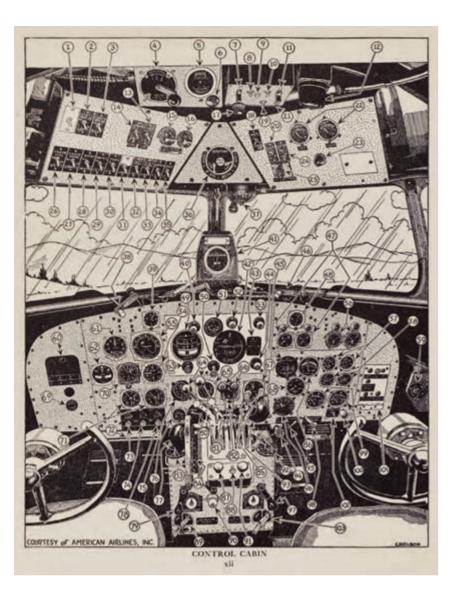
Samstag was employed as a staff artist for Jordanoff Aviation from 1940 to 1944, 'doing Layout and Illustration for manuals for the U.S. Government and private industry'. <sup>22</sup> The founder of the company, Assen Jordanoff (1897–1967), was a Bulgarian immigrant who had begun publishing books in the 1930s on flight and safety in the air and continued writing on the topic into the 1950s; his works include the *Jordanoff's Illustrated Aviation Dictionary* of 1942, which was an industry standard for years. <sup>23</sup> Jordanoff was a pioneer in using visual materials for education, and the abundant and detailed (and visually appealing) illustrations in these books were largely accountable for their widespread use and popularity. The emphasis on easily understood yet precise illustrations that characterised Jordanoff's books in the past was now used to boost the air power America needed for the war. Jordanoff Aviation produced manuals for aeroplanes that enabled flyers to learn with unprecedented speed the flight skills and manoeuvres they would need, and thus the armed forces were able to deploy fighters at a faster pace. In addition to their reliability, these diagrams and schematics were usually drawn with such finesse that they were widely regarded as beautiful. <sup>24</sup>

When Samstag began at the Jordanoff Aviation Company in 1940, the staff was probably relatively small. After America entered the war (December 1941), the business expanded quickly, needing bigger working quarters and more employees, all of whom required a security clearance for their war work. During the most intense phase of the war work, the company operated in the Fuller Building at East Fifty-seventh Street and Madison Avenue. An undated brochure described the company's mission:

The men and women who make up the Jordanoff Aviation Corporation are experts from many fields – aeronautical, electrical and mechanical engineering, architecture, drafting, art, photography and writing. They are also expert at translating by the Jordanoff Method abstruse technical material into terms the layman can understand. In a plant covering four floors of 595 Madison Avenue, New York, this group of specialists builds manuals, charts, handbooks, parts catalogs, technical orders and other training aids for the Armed Forces – material that cuts learning time to a minimum.<sup>27</sup>

The creation of their products was described by the company as a four-stage process, beginning in the Planning Department, which decided on the basic approach to their task, including the number of illustrations and amount of copy for the manual. Next, a crew was sent out into the field to work with the actual aeroplanes or other equipment 'at the source'. They photographed as much of the mechanism as they could, but 'where they cannot penetrate with cameras, they

Illustration by Frank L. Carlson from inside page of *Through the Overcast: The weather and the art of instrument-flying* by Assen Jordanoff, Funk & Wagnalls, 1938.



put their findings into sketch form. All this information is obtained quickly and accurately.' It is possible that Samstag joined these crews on occasion, but it is nearly certain that he would have worked at company headquarters in production, which:

operates its own assembly line. Here blueprints are converted into three-dimensional drawings; photographs into clear-cut 'how-to-do-it' line drawings that are easy to understand. In addition to the men who produce pictures, the Production Department also includes a staff of experienced layout men who design the typography and arrangement of the finished product.

Finally, the manual passed through Editorial, which made sure 'that the text speaks as basic a language as do the pictures'. The Jordanoff explanation ended with a look to the future: 'Jordanoff techniques, which have solved the problem of training inexperienced men in the use of war equipment, offer a logical and efficient means of solving the training and marketing problems of peace.' <sup>28</sup>

By the final year of the war, over 400 employees were labouring in an intense, streamlined system of producing the manuals, as one writer described:

Jordanoff's art-production department looks like the assembly line of a war plant. Hunched over drawing boards lined up almost hub to hub is a small army of layout men, general artists, retouchers, airbrushers, isometric and perspective artists, engineering illustrators, general illustrators, line artists and letterers. Each is a specialist in his own line and does only the kind of job he is best qualified to do. Even in the simplest sketch, one man will do only the background, another will do only the mechanical parts, another will do only the human figures, and still another will do only the figure's hands.<sup>29</sup>

This account is likely similar to Samstag's working situation at Jordanoff. By 1944, he had left the company, 30 but the abstraction inherent in the design process of these illustrations may have had a continuing influence on him and other artists who had previously worked exclusively in realism. The rise of Abstract Expressionism (in its purely formal characteristics) and various styles of non-objectivity after World War II is not likely related directly to this sort of war work, but the capacity of formerly realist artists to adapt to abstraction may have been affected.

In addition to his work for Jordanoff, Samstag taught summer classes at the Art Students League from the late 1930s into the mid-1940s.<sup>31</sup> At some point, perhaps in the late 1930s, Samstag seems to have stepped up his production of commercial work, such as illustrations for magazines or advertising. He was employed at York Studios and Coronet Studios, but it is not known exactly when he was employed there (whether on salary or by contract) or what work he carried out for those organisations; presumably they were design or advertising agencies, but that is not known for certain. He also worked for Amos Parrish, an expert in fashion merchandising who held regular clinics to advise retailers about the coming fashion trends; possibly Samstag illustrated his patterns or other print materials.<sup>32</sup> In addition, he was an employee of Macfadden Publications, a company that published popular magazines such as True Detective, True Romances, Photoplay and many others. This company was operated by Bernarr Macfadden (1868-1955) from 1898 until his death in 1955. Macfadden was best known to the American public less for his magazine empire than for his obsession with health and body-building; one of his first magazines was Physical Culture and, in fact, he is known as the 'Father of Physical Culture'. Samstag cited specifically Woman's Day and Gourmet as the Macfadden magazines for which he produced illustrations.<sup>33</sup> In the December 1946 Woman's Day magazine, one of Samstag's pictures accompanied a short story about a handyman who fashioned holiday wreaths; the illustration is a close-up of an elderly man working industriously with the pinecones that will make up the decoration (see page 127). In addition, two covers by Samstag (dated 1945 and 1946) from the popular pulp magazines have been identified, both with the flaming colours and the melodramatic, even lurid, tone that characterised these illustrations (see pages 177 and 242).<sup>34</sup>

#### A NEW DIRECTION

By the end of World War II in 1945, American art had shifted its path towards a new style that combined the influence of abstraction and Surrealism. Abstract Expressionism was the first style of international significance born in the United States and best exemplified by American artists. Painters such as Jackson Pollock, Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, and Adolph Gottlieb were beginning to be recognised as the leaders of this new art. Among its effects was the rejection of the styles of realism with which most American artists had formed their reputations in the 1930s – a rejection that eventually grew to such dimensions that realist art was nearly discredited as a valid form of postwar expression.



Gordon SAMSTAG

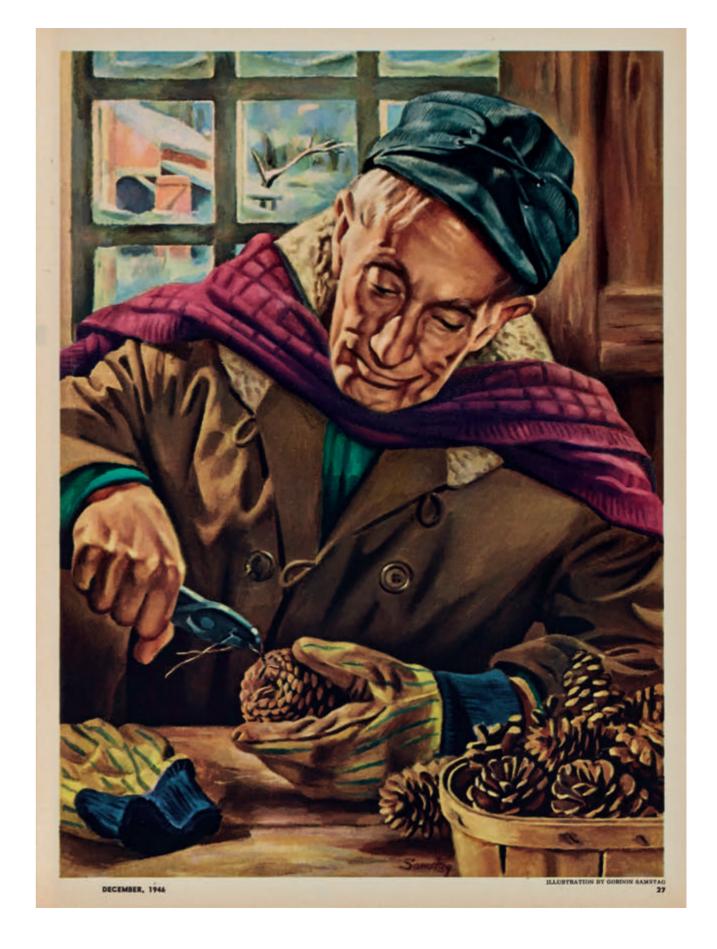
Here Comes Cookie!, c. 1940s
ink and wash on board
30.5 x 45.0 cm (12 x 17¾ in)
illustration for unknown magazine
University of South Australia
Art Collection

Gordon SAMSTAG Story illustration for Think of Steve' in (American) *Woman's Day*, December 1946. Courtesy *Woman's Day*, USA In the late 1940s and into the 1950s, artists can be gauged in terms of the extent to which they did or did not assimilate Abstract Expressionism into their own art. Scores of painters and sculptors re-oriented their artistic characters to reflect the near-universal embrace of abstraction and the accompanying disdain for any style based in realism, especially the forms practised so thoroughly by nearly every American artist of note in the earlier twentieth century.

Social Realism, or imagery that conveyed a sense of the lives of ordinary citizens, particularly workers, was regarded as completely out-of-date (though it continued to be practised by some artists, such as Ben Shahn, with considerable success). The American Scene, or pictures of local places and people, was a thing of the past. It is perhaps difficult to imagine today the finality and vigour with which realism was pushed aside in New York in the late 1940s. The art world in which Gordon Samstag had been trained, had won awards and found recognition was ending along with World War II, and by the 1950s, that sort of realist style was regarded as almost embarrassingly backward by much of the art press and the art market. As it was for many American realists, World War II was a watershed in Samstag's career. The eclipse of reputations and opportunities did not occur overnight, but the late 1940s generally saw a decline in the number and status of exhibitions, notices in the mainstream art press and sales that favoured, or even acknowledged, realism.<sup>35</sup>

And yet, realism did not, of course, die; it continued to have successful and well-patronised practitioners, and realist imagery persisted in some major survey exhibitions of the second half of the 1940s and beyond, with some artists filtering aspects of abstraction into their work. Samstag did not participate in the National Academy of Design show in the year after the war (whether by choice or because of jury rejection is not known), and no other New York exhibitions have been found for him in 1946. But he did have a very significant appearance at the Carnegie Institute's Painting in the United States, 1946, a survey in which he had not appeared since 1937. The painting accepted for the Carnegie exhibition was 'Beachcomber [sic]', presumably the same painting he had shown at the Corcoran Biennial of 1943 and at the National Academy in December of 1945.

In 1947, the National Academy and the Carnegie were the only exhibitions recorded in which he participated. At the Academy's 121st Annual Exhibition, he displayed The Old Wind Mill (which was priced at \$350).<sup>37</sup> In the 1947 Carnegie survey, Painting in the United States, Samstag's work Alternative was illustrated in the catalogue. This painting makes it clear that Samstag was moving his art in a new direction.<sup>38</sup> He continued his realist style, but his subject matter was not the workers, suburban landscapes or still lifes that characterised his earlier work. Alternative (see page 128) is a complex composition that seems to be an allegory taking place in a damaged landscape with leafless, broken trees. A female figure, nude from the waist up and seen from the back, stands between two male figures. A mustachioed man wearing a dark garment holds up one end of a long cloth as he looks towards the female, who turns her head away from him to look downwards at a second figure who is crouched at her left, his back to the viewer. This man, also in dark costume, holds the other end of the cloth in his left hand. With a mask fitted to his face, he looks towards the woman and holds up another mask, as if showing or offering it to her. On the ground near this figure are several other masks. It would seem that the woman is being offered two choices, which may be the meaning of the title Alternative, and the desolate setting may be a reference to the war. The cloth must also surely function in a metaphorical way since the mustachioed man uses it to enclose the female figure, while it extends between



Gordon SAMSTAG

Alternative, 1947
oil on canvas
dimensions unknown
collection unknown
Courtesy The Frick Art Reference
Library, New York



the masked figure and the woman. The gestures of both men could be read as either draping or un-draping the female figure. The woman stands in the classic pose of alarm or confusion with her arms slightly spread away from her torso, open-palmed, with one hand lifted from the wrist as if warding off something fearful or unexpected.

For the last two years of the 1940s, Samstag's exhibition record was slight, though he was accepted in both 1948 and 1949 for the Carnegie's survey of contemporary American painting. The titles of both of the works he exhibited, *Isolation* in 1948 and *Frustration* in 1949, suggest that the subjective tone of *Alternative* had been sustained. <sup>39</sup> At the National Academy in 1948, Samstag showed his painting from the Carnegie of 1947, *Alternative*. <sup>40</sup> The following year, two paintings were accepted by the Academy: *Sorceress* (see opposite) and *Ember*. <sup>41</sup> For those two years of 1948–49, the only mention appearing in the *New York Times* was of his acceptance into the juried exhibition of the Audubon Artists late in 1948. The review of the large Audubon annual suggests the diversity of approaches as artists struggled to deal with the abstracted or fantastical tone of much of the new art: 'The visitor may generalize that there is little ... extremely sensational work; much sound middle-of-the-road work; and a considerable sprinkling of what might be called pseudomodernism – that is, work with the outer appearance of modernism but not informed in spirit.' Although he did not offer specifics, DeVree recorded, 'Among the entries which impressed this visitor were ... oils by ... Gordon Samstag [and others].'<sup>42</sup>

Samstag had been elected to the Audubon Artists of America in 1947, and he participated in most of its yearly exhibitions until he left for Australia in 1961, showing both oil paintings and watercolours. In 1954, he was on the jury of selection for oils and in 1958 on the jury of awards for oils. Begun in 1944, the Audubon Artists (their name came from the John James Audubon house, in which they were headquartered, and not from any particular affinity with the wildlife artist) sought a middle road between traditional painting and the boldly Modernist approaches that were starting to rock the American art world. When the group was



Gordon SAMSTAG
Sorceress, c. 1949
oil on canvas
dimensions unknown
collection unknown
Published in The Art Digest, vol. 24,
no. 8, January 15, 1950

founded, the Audubon Artists declared their 'Credo' in which their fundamental regard for traditional styles was evident, but so was their wish not to be relegated completely to the past:

We believe in artistic progress ... that progress is achieved through evolution – seldom through revolution ... We believe in progress with restraint; in imagination – under control. We believe that there is a very close balance between good and bad ... progress and retrogression, genius and insanity ... and that the deciding factor is control or restraint, as imagination with control spells genius, while imagination without control is insanity ... We believe that real progress cannot be achieved impetuously, that we must accept this truth and be patient and thorough in our work ... that all one can reasonably desire is steady improvement ... We believe, in short, in artistic liberalism, shunning equally the irresponsibleness of the extreme left and the reactionism of the extreme right, offering offense to none and subservience to none, but with respect and encouragement for all who strive for solid progress. <sup>43</sup>

Their judicious approach of trying to mediate between the artistic conflicts of their time reflected the position of many postwar figures who were initially disinclined to follow the new art but who also tried to find in it something that they could incorporate in their own practice. To some, however, the very attempt to reconcile connoted backward thinking.

The Audubon Artists' earnest pursuit of a middle road echoes to some extent the way Samstag reported his artistic progress to the Schepp Foundation during his final season at the school of the National Academy of Design in 1927: 'My work improves evenly and logically.' Logic was specifically among the qualities that postwar artists often rejected, and artists such as Samstag who had been taught to work 'logically' and 'evenly' (and were rewarded for doing so) were challenged, baffled or even angered by styles that prized automatism and the unconscious mind. Because of the lack of personal correspondence and papers left by Samstag, it is impossible to know his thinking, but perhaps the Audubon Artists appealed to him because

Gordon SAMSTAG Monday Morning, c. 1949 oil on linen 56.3 x 76.4 cm (221/8 x 30 in) University of South Australia Art Collection



of its attempt to strike a path of moderation and balance. Abstract Expressionism didn't really encourage lack of control, but many viewers and commentators assumed that it did and, while we don't know what Samstag believed about the issue, we can certainly see the measured, calibrated approach that was the hallmark of his style up to the 1940s. At the same time, the subjects of some of his paintings from the 1940s, such as *Alternative*, showed that he was interested in the dream world as well as themes of mystery and the occult, even if his technique of representing those ideas was linked to realism.

#### THE AMERICAN ART SCHOOL

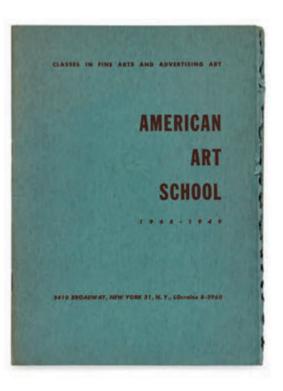
The decline in the number of exhibitions in which Samstag showed may have been due, at least in part, to a new enterprise: in 1947, he opened the American Art School, with himself and Henry S. Maurer (1905–96) as directors. His plans had been announced in the *New York Times*, stating that the new school would open on January 6 to teach 'the fine arts and advertising arts'. In addition to himself, other instructors mentioned in the notice were Robert Brackman (1898–1980) and William Gropper (1897–1977). He both of these artists were well known in the New York art world, with Brackman having a more conservative, academic reputation while Gropper was a prominent Social Realist. A catalogue issued by the school for 1948–49 (the session was to run from September 14, 1948 to June 3, 1949) has twelve pages printed in a sans-serif typeface on shiny ivory paper, with a laid, deckle-edged, light teal–coloured cover. On the first page, the prospective student learns that 'The American Art School provides an opportunity for thorough training in drawing, painting and design for beginners and advanced students under the guidance of instructors of national reputation. In addition to Brackman and Gropper, Samstag had engaged one of the best known designers and teachers in New York, Leon Friend (1902–69). Seven classes were offered in painting, drawing,

illustration and advertising design, along with a Saturday studio class. 46 The catalogue stated that the courses were open to artists of any level, from beginners to professionals, and explained that 'No previous training is necessary to enter the elementary class, but the directors reserve the right to suspend students not showing serious interest or sufficient aptitude.' For all students, it added, 'The faculty will meet periodically to review all work and make recommendations to further the progress of each student.' 47 The school was approved for veterans under the GI Bill of Rights, which provided benefits (including education) to former members of the armed forces, and a small application card was tucked into the back cover of the catalogue.

The four instructors were each given one page in the catalogue, featuring a description of their background and accomplishments as well as an illustration of their work, but exactly which classes they taught was not revealed. The first was Leon Friend, who in 1936 had published the first major book on graphic design in the United States. The illustrations on his page were not his own work, but were examples of record covers by two of his most famous students, Alex Steinweiss and Gene Federico. 48 One of the features of Friend's classes were the 'guest criticisms and discussions' by successful designers, some of whom had

studied with him at Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn, where his capacity to nurture young artists was legendary. The employment of Friend, an artist known and well regarded at the highest levels of advertising and graphic design in New York, suggests that Samstag himself had substantial connections in that field. His brother, Nicholas (see page 185), was also part of the upper echelons of the advertising world of New York, and it is tempting to wonder if the brothers collaborated within these networks.

The second painter introduced in the catalogue was William Gropper, described as a 'distinguished, vital painter'. The entry lists a number of his achievements, followed by a quotation from the artist: 'If we are to develop and enrich American culture, it seems to me that one of the first things to consider is the education, the welfare, the inspiration and encouragement of the youth of our country.'49 Gropper became known at an early point in his career for his searing cartoon-like images of injustice and oppression, expressing a particular distaste for American capitalism. He joined in the founding of the radical magazine The New Masses in the mid-1920s, and in 1928 he travelled with the novelists Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser on a tour of the Soviet Union. He participated in the New Deal art programs, producing murals for Freeport, New York and Detroit, and most famously, a monumental painting of 1939, Construction of a Dam (dams were among the most significant projects of the New Deal), which can still be seen in the Department of the Interior in Washington. During that decade, Gropper was active in artists' organisations such as the American Artists Congress; in 1947 he helped found the Artists Equity Association, a group devoted to the protection of the rights of artists. The illustration in the 1947 catalogue is a caricature-like drawing of a bearded, axe-wielding giant which is likely a study for the mythical woodchopper of the northern forests, Paul Bunyan, in the painting William Gropper's America: Its Folklore (1946). This map of the United States was covered with figures and activities from popular culture, such as Johnny Appleseed and Davy Crockett, as well as scenes from the California Gold Rush, and it was circulated by the State Department as an example of American culture. Senator Joseph McCarthy found the map offensive and summoned Gropper to testify before



Catalogue for the American Art School, academic year of 1948–49. Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Gift of Dr Lea Rosson DeLong



From a page featuring 'William Gropper' from catalogue for the American Art School, academic vear 1948-49. Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA

Gift of Dr Lea Rosson DeLong

his Un-American Activities Committee in 1953. Though Gropper had never been a member of the Communist Party, his leftist sentiments were well known. When he refused to testify before the Committee, he was blacklisted, though his network of support was such that he was still able to find employment.

On his own page, Samstag described himself as a 'well known painter and illustrator' who had been an instructor at the National Academy and the Art Students League, and he included some of the awards he had received. The fact that he described himself as an illustrator suggests the prominence of commercial work in his practice of art at that time. His offering to students was that he '[i]mparts a thorough knowledge of the basic essentials of drawing, painting and composition, stressing development of the student's individuality'. The illustration for his page was White Horse, Pound Ridge, which he had shown at the Carnegie International and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1937.50

The fourth artist who conducted classes at the American Art School in 1948-49 was Raphael Sover (1899-1987), whose fame rivalled that of William Gropper. Born in Russia, Sover arrived in the United States in 1912. He was one of three brothers who had successful careers as artists, the others being Isaac (1907-81), and Raphael's twin, Moses (1899-1974). Raphael was recognised for an urban version of the American Scene as he concentrated, as Samstag sometimes had in the 1930s, on workers. Though his imagery was not as partisan or accusative as Gropper's, Soyer's paintings did convey sympathy with the emotional and economic lives of the people he saw around him. Like

Gropper, he was active in the Depression-era organisations that sought to secure opportunities and rights for artists. He was well known for his studio figure studies and portraits, and the illustration in the catalogue is a non-descript head of a female, seen from the back and slightly to the side. By 1947, when he was teaching at the American Art School, Soyer had already begun to resist the tide of abstraction and to speak for the validity of realism as a form of expression, even in the postwar world. In 1953, he was among a group of artists who founded the magazine *Reality* to argue for and promote their point of view. <sup>51</sup>

Three pages of the 1947-48 catalogue were given over to illustrations of the work of students, all of which displayed recognisable, though sometimes slightly abstracted, imagery; the classes in which they did their work are identified, but not the teachers. The student section details those students who had been given places in exhibitions, and also includes a statement about encouraging their participation in exhibitions and competitions. 52

Other artists who taught at the school were Frank J. Reilly, Jack Levine and Max Beckmann. Reilly (1906-67) was a contemporary of Samstag, studying at the Art Students League and at the National Academy in the late 1920s with George Bridgman. He later taught at the League, as well as several other New York art schools, and established his own art school

there in the 1960s. He was known primarily as an illustrator, though he also produced murals, cartoons and advertising designs. Jack Levine (1915-2010) was, like Gropper, a prominent Social Realist. He maintained his realist style and his acerbic subject matter that criticised power and expressed sympathy for the dispossessed throughout his career. The most famous artist associated with the American Art School was Max Beckmann, who was a major figure in German art, especially the style of the 1920s known as Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity). As a Modernist, he was labelled a 'degenerate' artist by the Nazis, and in 1937 he went into exile, living in the Netherlands until 1947 when he moved to the United States. He joined the faculty at Washington University in St Louis then moved to New York in 1949, where, in addition to his classes at the American Art School, he taught at the Brooklyn Museum.<sup>53</sup> Beckmann died less than six months after his arrival in New York, so his period teaching for Samstag's school would have been short.

#### AN APPRECIATION OF THE WEIRD

Through the entire decade of the 1940s, Samstag is not known to have had a single one-man exhibition. Late in 1949, however, he wrote to Frank Rehn, head of the prominent Rehn Galleries, giving three main reasons

why 'an exhibition of Samstag paintings might prove particularly attractive'. First, he cited the success of the American Art School and the artists who had taught there (he listed Brackman, Levine, Gropper, Soyer and himself). For his second point, he argued that 'the caliber of my work will meet with both your own approval and the approval of your clients'. He justified his statement by referring to his exhibition history, the awards he had won and the two public collections that held examples of his art (Toledo Museum of Art and Santa Barbara Museum of Art). He then wrote one of the few self-assessments that has been found regarding his development:

But most important, my work has continued to progress and has changed completely in the past four years. I have worked toward a freer style and greater imagination in both treatment and subject matter. Since an artist's opinion of his own work might be considered prejudiced, I might mention that Mr Howard DeVree of the N.Y. Times commented on it very favorably last year.<sup>54</sup>

DeVree's review of the annual Audubon Artists exhibition had concluded that it was rather dull overall, but Samstag's work had been among that which had 'impressed' him. 55 His last point of persuasion for Rehn was his assertion that he had 'a "following" of friends and students who are not only interested in art, but who can afford to buy pictures'. 56 He invited Rehn to visit him at his studio in Fleetwood, a comfortable section of Mount Vernon, New York (a little south of the Samstag home in the prosperous suburb of Bronxville, in Westchester County). It appears that Rehn did not offer an exhibition to Samstag.



RAPHAEL SOYER

Page featuring 'Raphael Soyer' from catalogue for the American Art School, academic year Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Gift of Dr Lea Rosson DeLong

In 1950, however, the Milch Galleries did present a one-man exhibition, his first since the Montross Gallery show in 1938. On view from January 9 to 28, Paintings by Gordon Samstag contained twenty works, only one of which had a title that is found in earlier exhibitions. *Frustration* had been shown in the 1949 Carnegie exhibition and would also be accepted into the National Academy's 125th Anniversary Exhibition of 1950 (March 10–April 9).<sup>57</sup> The catalogue for Samstag's show was a modest one: a small, single-fold brochure that included a brief biography (ending with the information that he was a director of the American Art School) and a list of the works of art shown. Media were not given, but some of them may have been watercolours or pastels; prices ranged from \$150 to \$900.<sup>58</sup>

Samstag's exhibition brought reviews in both the *New York Herald Tribune* and the *New York Times*, and both were mostly favourable, noting that he was a changed painter from what he had been in the past. Emily Genauer, the critic for the *Herald Tribune* observed:

Gordon Samstag used to be the most precise and meticulous of realistic painters. His newest pictures, at the Milch Galleries, indicate a rather startling change in his approach. Samstag is still far from being an introvert. He still paints pictures about things and ideas. But his composition is much more stylized, so the effect is almost of whirling movement. And his outlines have become soft and indefinite almost to the point of fuzziness. <sup>59</sup>

The *Times* also found substance in the new pictures and praised them, noting that he continued to work in a realist vein:

Representational subject-matter returns compellingly in Gordon Samstag's new paintings at the Milch Gallery. Samstag specialises in the effects of milky light as it shatters objects into 1,000 glittering fragments. The brushwork is free and much more is suggested than is actually put down. Such painting looks back to Vuillard and Sickert for their 'intimist' approach. And that Samstag is a fine designer is obvious:  $^{60}$ 

Among the journals of contemporary art, *Art News* seemed to remember the critical attention that had been bestowed on Samstag years before (including in its own pages) and published a review of his first solo show in over a decade.

Gordon Samstag's ... exhibition shows a nice appreciation of the weird. Even such an everyday occurrence as a woman crouching with an *Ember* becomes a disquieting fantasy, and the *Sorceress*, with blonde curls which somehow give the impression of incipient devil's horns, has an eerie and disturbed young face which rules out the commonplaces of ca[u]ldron and fluttering bat. On the other hand, the black fiend crouched on the man's back in *Obsession* is too reminiscent of the succubus and the black dog on one's shoulder. This picture, however, is redeemed by the masterly painting of a sprig of yellow ragweed in the foreground. <sup>61</sup>

The Art Digest, which had reproduced Samstag paintings on its covers in April of 1931 (Young Man Desires Position) and February of 1936 (Nurses), also paid attention to his 1950 Milch exhibition, illustrating Sorceress. The review began:

Gordon Samstag is a good painter, thoroughly at home in his *matière* and using his vigorous brushing for concentration of design. He is an artist who impresses one as not only gifted with imagination, but further able to turn his conceptions into concrete forms. An especially striking example of this

endowment is the fantasy of the *Three Fates*, Clotho and Lachesis intent on the spinning and Atropos lurking ready to sever the woven destiny. The white, intricate web set against the figures and the unexpected gleam of dazzling, blue sky beyond give the canvas an arresting appeal. Samstag's fluent modeling of form and his ability to place figures in effective spatial design, evidenced through the exhibition, are only occasionally marred by a tendency to tricky highlights. *Frustration*, *Obsession*, *Sorceress*, are outstanding examples of his skillful interpretation of symbolic significance through a striking design of figures.

Then the reviewer made an observation that could have been applied to hundreds of artists like Samstag who had had successful careers in the realism of the 1930s, but whose work had largely been consigned to the past by the 1950s: 'Like many artists today, Samstag looks over the fence and tentatively tries out the effect of rather meaningless distortions in *Mother and Child*. One hopes that is only an experiment and not a new turning in his path.' <sup>62</sup> This reviewer seems to welcome Samstag back into the round of New York exhibitions, lauding his traditional painting skills, applied to a slightly new but still intriguing subject matter. His imagination is not faulted at all in its application to age-old subjects such as the Fates and a sorceress.

#### AN ALLEGORICAL PLANE

All of the reviews signalled that a change in style had taken place; all noted that his brushwork was looser, more fragmented and more dynamic. As discussed earlier, his work had been perceived for years as academic and precise, and yet, a closer examination showed that his form was often derived primarily from discernible brushstrokes of colour rather than a tight line. His 'loosened' brushwork may be less a major change than a matter of degree. But the tone of mysticism likely was actually new in his art. In connecting Samstag's new paintings with the Intimists, the New York Times reviewer may have been referring in part to his heightened attention to the interior life, revealed through a more abstracted approach to form. The Intimists were mainly two French painters, Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) and Édouard Vuillard (1868–1940), who were part of a group better known as the Nabis. Their work described quiet, domestic interiors, often peopled by women absorbed in thought or preoccupied by a task. These mysterious scenes featured sensual and pure colour and flattened patterns within compositions that were organised by an underlying geometric framework. Walter Sickert (1860-1942), also mentioned in that same review regarding Samstag's newer paintings, was a British artist whose paintings showed domestic interiors, often with some sort of dialogue taking place, but did not have the glowing colour or the underlying abstract approach to Modernist form found in the work of the Nabis.

In his letter to Frank Rehn, Samstag himself had pointed out that his work was different and ought to be looked at anew. A 'freer style and greater imagination' was the way he had described the turn in his art and, in a rare surviving example of self-assessment, he dated the change as having taken place 'in the last four years,' which would place its starting point at around 1945. *Alternative*, reproduced as an illustration in the Carnegie International catalogue of 1947 is an early clue of a new direction, and it may act as a bridge between the realist imagery of the 1930s and his postwar work. In style, *Alternative* appears to partake of the artist's usual solid, minutely realised rendering of form; it may even veer a bit towards Magic Realism in the specificity of the drawing of the figures and their surroundings. But the mysteriousness of the subject is new. It has a deliberately unreadable aspect that leaves interpretation open and, without guidance from the artist, its meaning cannot be certain. Noted in the past for his scrupulous

recordings of the observable world, Samstag had shifted to an allegorical plane where, no matter how sharply painted, the scene is invented and not taken from concrete experience.

Thus when his painting was displayed to the public again – in the 1950 Milch show – it was transformed: few of these works suggest the down-to-earth world of Proletarian or Coal Shed, Bass River, either in form or content. While none of the paintings in the Milch exhibition are currently located, several are known through black-and-white reproductions and thus can offer some insight into Samstag's new approach. Most of these images, as well as titles such as Frustration and Obsession, suggest that Samstag had embraced that aspect of postwar art that eschewed reality and dealt with the subconscious, a factor recognised in the Art News review. Probing the inner, even pre-conscious, mind to discover symbols or psychological imagery that would have a universal resonance (related to Karl Jung's 'collective unconscious') was a device used by numerous New York School painters (such as Pollock, Gottlieb, Rothko, de Kooning and Motherwell). Samstag may have been temperamentally disinclined to embrace automatism to any great extent in reaching that level of awareness, but he apparently did nurture an interest in psychological themes and forms that evoke the inner - and often dark - world of human fears and obsessions. Genauer had credited him with sustaining his attraction for 'things and ideas', which suggests that she regarded Samstag's new direction as not trivial or simply an overlay of a fashionable approach for which he had no natural understanding. Similarly, when the *Times* critic observed that in Samstag's new paintings 'much more is suggested than is actually put down', he may have been noting a strength in the artist's new style.

Several paintings known in reproduction from the Milch show (such as *Ember, Luncheon* and *Sorceress*) are set in ramshackle environments where the rooms evoke poverty or remoteness; certainly they seem very far away from the Manhattan apartments, fine Westchester County houses and Cape Cod mansions that were the normal residences of the Samstags. They could be hardscrabble cabins in Appalachia or even hovels in foreign lands, all with unfinished floors and roughened walls and nothing that would suggest modernity or postwar prosperity. None have the elegantly plain, nearly empty spaces marked by geometric clarity found in works from the 1930s. The restraint of those compositions, such as *Domestic*, has given way to closefeeling rooms constructed of rotting, ragged wood, full of dilapidated objects and crudely built furniture, rendered without the solidity and empiricism of the artist's past. The figures are poorly dressed in ill-fitting, coarsely assembled garments, some that are on the verge of being rags; many are bare-footed. In several pictures, uneasiness or conflict hover about the scene.

Luncheon, for example, presents a situation at odds with the concept of refined midday dining or the nearly haughty ambience of older pictures such as Hors d'Oeuvres of 1932. In a low-ceilinged room with a shabby, plank-like table and benches, a black dog (perhaps similar to the poodles owned by the Samstags) has stood on its hind legs to pull a tablecloth onto the floor, sending dishes tumbling and setting a man and woman to retrieve them and clean up the mess. The seated man leaning over the ornery dog and the stooped woman with a bristly, handmade broom do not constitute a semi-comic vignette of household charm, but seem to be enduring a graceless, troubled existence. The figure in Ember is in an even more miserable state. Swathed in a patched, slovenly sewn robe, the bare-footed figure crouches in front of a crumbling fireplace, head turned to reveal an exhausted or suffering face with closed eyes and the mouth open enough to see two thin rows of white teeth. Holding a poker or similar stick-like instrument listlessly in the right hand, the figure may have dragged an ember out beyond the hearth where it may smoulder and lead to disaster. The designation of 'ember' may also allude to the figure itself, which seems barely able to sustain its light of life.

Three of the paintings known through reproductions have to do with docks and boats. Sailing was an increasing interest of the Samstags, so it is no surprise that he would use such scenes as metaphors. Like the dwellings just described, all of the structures are in a semi-ruined state, especially in *Mooring*, which is a jagged, loosely brushed zigzag composition incorporating a long wooden dock that seems on the verge of disintegration. Stretching out from the shore, the sagging, rickety walkway is missing planks and railings along the way. Neither its beginning on land nor its end out over wave-rocked waters are visible (thus creating, perhaps, a symbol of infinity) as it angles drunkenly on a diagonal across the picture. This kind of composition, along with the fragmented brushstrokes, creates a destabilising effect that is purely formal, yet imparts an emotional tone to the scene. A figure may be anchoring a small rowboat to this shaky support that meanders crookedly out of sight, leading to the speculation that Samstag's intent is to suggest that there is no safe 'mooring' in a damaged, uncared-for world. The fisherwoman in the painting of the same title sits ungracefully in a small, rough boat amidst abstracted, disturbed waters with a number 4 buoy floating nearby. Three Fates, singled out in the Art News review, is the most complex of these paintings both compositionally and metaphorically. Four large figures stand at one end of what appears to be a houseboat – but one that is barely holding together – as they circle around a highly abstracted web of thin, white lines. Splintered wood, broken railings and tattered drapings are scattered across a deck that looks as if it has been through a storm or left to deteriorate. Samstag's message is somewhat difficult to discern since the three standing figures (all naked from the waist up) appear to be handling the delicate white strands while a fourth, seated figure stands by holding sharp-pointed scissors, about to sever the thread of a life. By showing one of the female figures gathering many lines into her hand, the artist may be suggesting the abundance of death in World War II and the Cold War anxiety that followed.

Of the paintings available for study from this exhibition, the most extreme in terms of a new direction in Samstag's art is *Obsession*, a truly disturbing image of a figure pursued and tormented by a very real demon. The artist's staples of a coarsely planed wooden wall and an awkward bench are present here as the central figure twists itself through a rough and unkempt landscape. (Whether the figure is male or female is unclear – the skirt-like rags do not aid in gender identification – and perhaps that was Samstag's intention.) The vicious horned devil clinging to the figure's back pulls his or her hair and relentlessly tortures the soul to which it has attached itself. As the figure bends forward in response to the physical and psychological weight of its burden, a foot and the right hand are highlighted, showing limbs that may be morphing into the hooves and claws of a predatory animal. The obsession of the title may be that of an individual (the artist? the victims of war crimes?) or the horribly consequential obsessions of a society or even the entire human race. However it is read, it is an awful sight that recalls the nightmarish medieval paintings of Hieronymus Bosch or the haunted anguish of the new Atomic Age; the primitive character of everything in the painting is surely part of the artist's metaphor.

Not all of the paintings from the late 1940s and early 1950s have these weighty and perverse themes, however. Samstag persisted in his exploration of real-life subjects, as in *Antique Dealer* and *Trapezist*, and some of the works display his long fascination with people at work. As in the past, these paintings retain a social and emotional neutrality and are conventional figure studies. Whatever the subject, however, all known works from this period demonstrate a drastic and, as it turned out, permanent alteration in the artist's *style*. When he described his new approach as 'freer', he was not exaggerating. These more complicated and dynamic compositions

are formed by very loose and animated brushstrokes, whether they are defining broad sections of a torso or the lacy configuration of a flowering ragweed. Everything from tossing water to opaque wooden benches comes into being through spontaneous-looking brushwork. A few areas, particularly the gathered lines in *Three Fates*, suggest that Samstag had looked at Jackson Pollock's flung skeins of paint and had tried his own measured experiments in automatism. We find in most of these works a sense of the painter's tentative struggle to find his own firm artistic grounding while trying to move in a new direction.

When Samstag revisited his Scarsdale mural in the mid-1980s and was asked about his influences, he cited the 'German impressionists ... and the artists of the New York School. I experiment with methods artists are using around the world.' It seems possible that 'German impressionists' is a misquote; the formal evidence in these paintings suggests that he meant German Expressionists, perhaps like Max Beckmann. The influence of the New York School was commonplace among artists of Samstag's generation who had found themselves nearly forced to deal with its ideas if they were to be taken seriously. His attempts to apply Abstract Expressionist formal devices in his work were genuine and intellectually flexible, even if success was curtailed. The artist with whom he seemed to have the closest connection was Jack Levine, who taught for a time at the American Art School. The bare plasticity of Levine's lightly brushed figures, the close and constricted space with abbreviated backgrounds, and the flickering light of a somewhat artificial character that bounces about the compositions are all characteristics that were infused to one degree or another into Samstag's paintings of this period. Of the Milch paintings, *Gossips* most clearly evokes the relationship to Levine's work.

#### A LOW PROFILE

During the rest of the 1950s, Samstag's exhibition record declined significantly, though he did continue to be included in some of the annual exhibitions of the National Academy of Design. His work was shown there in 1951 (Gossips), 1953 (Driftwood), 1958 (Neutral Components), 1959 (The Accusation) and in 1960 (Circus).<sup>64</sup> As noted earlier, he also participated in the Audubon Artists from the late 1940s through the 1950s, and those exhibitions were occasionally noted in the local Westchester County press. One short article carried a comment on the 1954 exhibition that was actually a good description of the character of the organisation: 'a show of equal emphasis on traditional and modern works'. Samstag's contribution was Susanna and the Elders, but no illustration of that painting has been found and thus it is not known whether to put it on the 'traditional' or the 'modern' side.<sup>65</sup> In fact, it is not known what the critic defined as 'traditional' or 'modern' in the first place.

In late December of 1960, an exhibition called Recent Paintings by Gordon Samstag opened at the Janet Nessler Gallery on Madison Avenue in New York. Seventeen works were listed in the brochure, all of which were, according to the text, 'the work of the last three years'.66 Despite his decade-long absence from the New York gallery scene, the *Times* reviewed his show, but found it disappointing:

A nice agility of touch and a sprightly use of bright color distinguish Gordon Samstag's semi-abstract, semi-geometrical figure paintings at the Janet Nessler Gallery  $\dots$  They show him to be not lacking in talent as an illustrator, fond of going about everyday tasks. Only occasionally does his style deal too arbitrarily with his banal subject matter.  $^{67}$ 



The national journals *Art News* and *Arts* (formerly *The Art Digest*), which had been favourable in the past towards Samstag, published reviews that found little to discuss substantively and were almost dismissive in their brevity: 'Gordon Samstag, co-director and instructor of the American Art School, Pulitzer prize-winner,' reported *Art News*, 'bi- and tri-sects his world with faceted, colored strokes. His people, places and things undulate within a highly modal palette; the surface is becalmed and the pieces fit.'68 The *Arts* review was friendly but still damning, especially in labelling his work 'conservative', a term that was deadly in contemporary art criticism: 'Samstag, who is codirector of the American Art School ... is an experienced painter of long standing. His figures and still-lifes are subordinated to a neat pattern of brightly colored facts, making pictures that are light, gay, and conservative.'69 In the art world of this time, nearly totally given over to abstraction in some form, it may be a measure of the esteem for Samstag's work of the past that his exhibition was even reviewed.

Two works in that exhibition are known through reproductions and one is in the collection of the National Academy. Each of the three is distinctive, and they seem only marginally related. *Preparation for the Wedding* (see above), is a boldly coloured depiction of two women before a wooden structure on stilts and does not appear to be anything he could have observed in the New York area. A description in the curatorial files of the National Academy of Design notes its unusual character: 'Painted with the broad swipes of a palette knife, the

Gordon SAMSTAG

Preparation for the Wedding, c. 1959
oil on canvas
73.6 x 93.9 cm (29 x 37 in)

National Academy Museum,

New York, USA



Gordon SAMSTAG

Art School with Angels, c. 1959
oil on canvas
dimensions unknown
collection unknown
Photographic print of this painting
in Samstag Legacy Archive,
UniSA

preparations of two women standing outdoors in front of a dilapidated wooden construction, are primitive in both execution and context.'<sup>70</sup> The setting is similar to the rough-hewn rooms and boats of the paintings in the 1950 Milch exhibition, as is the nature of the brushwork. The women seem to be standing in the shallow water surrounding the shack, which looks to be in ruins, in front of a rickety wooden barrel that is barely held together by its two metal bands. A woman wearing only a red sarong and nude from the waist up is adjusting the back of the vivid green shift worn by the woman who likely is the bride being prepared for her wedding. Only a few strokes and forms of colour define the figures, and their facial features are scarcely discernible. *Preparation for the Wedding* was presented to the Academy by Samstag at the time of his election to full membership in 1965 – all new members were required to donate a work of art. The painting was shipped back to New York from Australia (but not before Samstag added his new designation, NA, to his signature).<sup>71</sup>

Art School with Angels (see above), known from a reproduction, is an image that does indeed show the 'agility of touch' noted in the *Times* review.<sup>72</sup> Why it would be categorised as illustrational or conservative – descriptions found in that review and others – is less clear, though perhaps those comments were not generated by this particular painting. More fluidly painted than Preparation for the Wedding, the style here has a less geometric, more organic quality and is the work that, of those currently known, relates most closely to German Expressionism. Art School with Angels is a fantasy, somewhat related to certain works of the 1940s and 1950s, such as Alternative (1947), but without the psychological tension and mystery. In a more light-hearted vein, it is a cutaway view down into a multi-roomed structure crammed with students standing at easels, models on pedestals, storage racks filled with paintings and drawings, and pictures affixed to walls. It is an urban-artistic dreamscape, detached from earth and floating in a sky across which drift wisps of white clouds from which cherubs peer down. The interior walls bend and sway while the artists go diligently about their work, registering no awareness at all of their unusual situation. Possibly this painting is Samstag's interpretation of his own American Art School where the students were expected to be serious and focused and yet, follow their imagination. For a neighbourhood publication in the mid-1950s, Samstag wrote an essay, 'The Growing Hobby of Painting', which encouraged readers to try painting and to overcome their hesitation in attending art classes. He assured them that art classes were 'informal places where people work together in a cheerful, novel atmosphere' and that they

wouldn't feel 'conspicuous' because everyone is too absorbed in his/her own work to notice much of anything else. He then described the sort of instructor – himself, perhaps – they would encounter: 'No moustachioed and bereted artiste greets you with tempestuous and embarrassing vigor. Instead a kind calm well adjusted man or woman will discuss your time schedule, taste or subject preferences.' Anyone who practised and really tried would get better and the instructors would provide 'intelligent guidance'. He also declared that mistakes are inevitable and not to be feared for the developing artist:

Mistakes must be made. And you must make them personally. Until you've made a few you won't learn. While many ingenious and crystal clear devices are used in art teaching there is no substitute for a good old fashioned mistake. Comes the dawn too soon after and in most cases the mistakes are repeated. But if your faith in yourself won't survive a couple of disappointments, you may drop by the wayside.

Who would not be willing to encounter a few 'comes the dawn' moments and learn from mistakes in the vividly coloured realm of *Art School with Angels*? He concluded his essay on the benefit of painting – at whatever level – with an example that Americans of the 1950s knew well: 'Painting is fun. Ask Dwight Eisenhower.' (President Eisenhower [1890–1968] was the United States' most famous amateur painter at the time.)

The third painting from the Nessler exhibition that can be studied is *The Rockers*, which Samstag specifically referenced in his artist's statement for the gallery brochure:

The subject often flows from the pencil or brush as the result of a visual stimulus. Curiosity about the relation of the curved surface of the bottom of a rocking chair to the shifting weight above, led to the painting of 'The Rockers'. Soon interest in the mechanics of the chair was replaced by the contrast of a grim, old woman beside her patient young daughter on a summer veranda. Removing the insistent realism and reassembling the elements of this situation into appropriate colors and forms was the final and dominant interest in the picture's development. Each painting, whatever its inspiration, goes from a vague thought to a clear one and then through a modifying and converting final stage. <sup>74</sup>

This statement provides a rare opportunity to see into Samstag's ideas about his art as, for example, when he describes the older woman as being 'grim' and the younger one as 'patient'. With words not available to him as part of his painting process, his goal was to convey the emotional tone of this scene (with its 'grim' older woman and 'patient' younger one) but to do it through formal means. He grounded his concept for the painting in conceptual terms ('the relation of the curved surface of the bottom of the rocking chair') and his goal was to move past the 'insistent realism' of the scene to a synthesis of 'appropriate colors and forms' for the psychological narrative. The most striking aspect of this painting is the Cubist overlay of geometric shapes, a level of abstraction not seen before in his known works. Despite his understanding of the theoretical basis of abstraction ('reassembling the elements'), Samstag does not truly analyse or break down form in the classical Cubist manner. His angular shapes are a decorative device and, as he admits, in the end his interest is more stirred by the human element, restrained though it may be. His statement indicates that he remained engaged at times, as he had been during the 1930s, by quiet, but telling human activities, such as a woman stopping to look at the wall she is washing, a barber concentrating on a haircut, or two women sitting together in a tense silence.

### SUBURBAN PLEASURES

The Samstags had moved away from Manhattan to the suburbs of Westchester County, first to the village of Bronxville in 1945; twelve years later, they moved closer to the waters of Long Island Sound near the town of Mamaroneck, New York, which allowed them to indulge their growing love of sailing. Through the 1950s, they were a fixture in the club-like social ambience of well-heeled New York suburbanites. The Samstags were active in sailing clubs and Gordon was vice-president of the Bullseye Association of Long Island (a sailboat racing group) as well as a member of the US Power Squadron (a non-profit organisation that monitored local maritime safety). The Samstags' sailing craft, the *Admiral Anne* (in several incarnations), brought them recognition in racing along the shore communities of New York and Long Island, and when Samstag purchased another vessel late in 1954, it was covered in the local newspaper, complete with a photograph of the artist. Later, in November of 1957, the *Mamaroneck Daily Times* reported in typically jaunty style that Anne Samstag had been named 'Boatman of the Week'.

It's always a pleasure to salute a lady, particularly when she has been nominated Boatman of the Week by her husband. He wrote proposing her, and we always want to accommodate our readers! Anne Samstag lives with her nominator husband Gordon ... They moved here primarily because they love the water and sail and race upon it with a Bullseye, the class we pushed so hard this summer. It is called, appropriately enough, 'Admiral Anne'. She must be quite a sailor to have earned the following in her favor as written by her nominator: 'Puller of halyards, trimmer of jibs, excellent cleaner and filler of Thermos bottles, sandwich distributor, weather prophet, course analyzer, decider on when to come back, praiser of good landings, consoler of lost races, mopper, shiner.' In short, we'd say that Anne Samstag is quite a sailor and handy to have onboard.<sup>77</sup>

The accompanying photograph depicted Anne holding a round life preserver with one arm and sailing equipment with the other, standing on a dock and dressed for chilly weather, wearing what appears to have been her common costume: a scarf or similar covering pulled tight around her head and very dark sunglasses.

Anne and Gordon also shared a growing devotion to their poodles, and Anne pursued her interest in dog obedience training, gradually collecting a number of awards. <sup>78</sup> The Samstags seemed to have had a knack for friendship, and they led an active social life. Friends were often welcomed in their various homes, which were regarded as elegant and distinctive (as was their own particular fashion in dressing), and they are fondly remembered by many of their friends' children. They describe the Samstags as a memorable and fascinating, almost glamorous, couple who behaved with kindness and indulgence towards children – though their large poodles occasionally made a less favourable impression. The aesthetic quality of the Samstags' way of life, even down to their sense of personal style, was also noted. The Gibsons, whose daughters, Ann and Lauri, knew the Samstags from their childhood, remember evenings spent socialising in Westchester County and, later on, meeting in the city (which often included a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art). <sup>79</sup>

The Samstags were also an important part of the Bernard Ognibene family. As noted earlier, Bernard and Gordon had been friends since their youth in New York, and Bernard had served as the inspiration and model for Samstag's painting *Young Man Desires Position* in 1930. The Ognibenes' son, Peter, wrote a memoir of the friendship between his parents and the Samstags, in which he described their relaxed interaction:

Anne and Gordon Samstag sat opposite each other at the card table in the living room of my parents' apartment. They played bridge with my mother Jo and my father Ben whom Gordon and Anne called 'Gus' after a character my father played in a high school play. The card players ... nibbled on snacks, sipped cocktails, smoked cigarettes and, above all, chatted ... The visits of the Samstags are among my earliest recollections ... On this occasion and the many that followed I stood and observed the bridge game and the visit before retiring to my room ... to drift off to sleep listening to the banter from the living room. The couples entertained me even as they entertained each other. Gordon enjoyed telling stories [and] so did Gus. Animation in the form of mimicked voices and faces illustrated the tales. Laughter punctuated the lines. No inhibitions constrained the banter. The game of cards served only as a template within which the couples thoroughly enjoyed each other. 80

### Like many others, Ognibene was struck by the Samstags' sense of style:

In the years I recall, Gordon and Anne embraced modernism in many of its applications. They drove a Studebaker Champion circa 1949 ... a very avant-garde-style automobile. They appointed their apartment in Fleetwood, New York, in Danish modern furniture, accented with abstract art both painting and sculpture, and with rugs and fabric in abstract designs ... I do believe they decorated their other homes in a modern style also.  $^{81}$ 

It seems clear now that the Samstags' upward mobility was mainly financed by Anne receiving increased income from her father's estate, as a result of changes to the family trust (see page 259). Gordon may also have gained a small inheritance when his mother died in September of 1957; the couple took up residence in Mamaroneck only a few months after Evelyn's passing. <sup>82</sup> Moreover, Peter Ognibene recalled that Samstag confided to him that he had been 'shrewd' in some real estate dealings, so their good fortune may also have been attributable in part to Gordon's own financial efforts. <sup>83</sup> Mamaroneck would remain their home until they left for Australia; they would also maintain a seasonal residence there, after returning to the United States in the late 1970s (while basing themselves in Naples, Florida).

From the mid-1950s, Samstag was a member of the local art association, the Mamaroneck Artists Guild. For one of their activities in 1958, he joined several other members in giving a 'demonstration' of art techniques for the general public and, also, offering to critique the amateur productions of the audience. An article on the demonstration in a local newspaper described Samstag in the, by then, standard way, as the director of the American Art School and winner of numerous awards.<sup>84</sup>

In Mamaroneck, Samstag's 1960–61 show at the Janet Nessler Gallery merited an article in the local newspaper, complete with a photograph of the artist, who seems to have been better known socially for his sailing than his art. The article emphasised his local connection, describing him as 'a well-known artist and teacher [and] a prominent local Bull's Eye [sic] sailor with his wife, Anne ... He is a member, also, of the Westchester Power Squadron and takes an active interest in all things connected with boating.' His professional history was recalled, and his statement for the Nessler Gallery brochure was reprinted. The article also contained the news that the following May of 1961 would see the Samstags leaving for Melbourne, Australia, where he was to teach at the Royal Technical College. Samstag had retired from the American Art School a year or so prior to leaving for Australia, but the school continued under the direction of Henry S. Maurer until his retirement in the early 1970s.

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### CHALLENGING TIMES

It is puzzling why Samstag's career faltered after World War II in terms of exhibitions and recognition. Even had he persisted in his reserved, academic style, he would have found dealers willing to show his work and buyers eager to acquire something other than abstraction. The Forum Gallery is only one example of a prominent New York gallery that specialised in a thoughtful realism that never lacked for shows and a stable clientele. The style that he did develop, to the extent that it is currently understood, with its elements of fantasy, would have been acceptable and well regarded in certain circles. Even the semi-abstract works would have had appeal to some collectors. Moreover, he was solidly connected with artists who produced important work that found a place in the New York art market and art press: nearly all of the artists he employed at the American Art School continued to have patrons and regular exhibitions. Soyer, Gropper, Levine – none of these figures faded from the scene. Obviously, their style of art was not the height of fashion in the 1950s and into the 1960s, and their fortunes fell off to some extent, but they nevertheless commanded a considerable amount of respect and carried the banner of realism and social comment in art. By the 1960s, with the introduction of Pop Art and other styles based in realism (though Pop was hardly more palatable to many than Abstract Expressionism), these artists enjoyed a revival of interest that only increased over the next decades. The art of the 1930s is broadly studied today, and scholars are working to bring about a more integrated view of the art world of the 1930s through the 1950s. At the time, it may have seemed that Abstract Expressionism and other styles of abstraction pushed everything else completely aside, but a balanced look at the careers of artists previously shunted away from view, along with a broader assessment of the art literature, suggests that styles of realism or realism tinged with fantasy were not invisible and that they persisted in having distinguished practitioners. Samstag may be seen as one of those and also as one of those who did try to adapt to his times. No artist wants to be thought of as passé or not possessing a voice appropriate for his own time. Samstag's integrity as an artist and his strong sense of his identity as an artist would have demanded that he try to respond to the times in which he lived. It is nearly certain that Samstag did produce works of abstraction or even complete non-objectivity in the 1950s and likely later on into his career. Few have come to light, but titles such as Neutral Components, a painting shown at the National Academy's annual exhibition in 1958, suggest a purely formal image. At nearly the same time, works such as Art School with Angels reveal that he never abandoned recognisable imagery (though interpreted in an expressionistic or fantastical way).

As will be discussed in Part 2, Samstag did exhibit during his time in Australia, working in a range of styles; his entry in the 1968 edition of *The Encyclopedia of Australian Art* noted that 'exhibitions in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne, 1963–65, show him as a versatile abstract painter, working in many varied styles'.<sup>87</sup> However, when the Samstags returned to the United States from Australia in the late 1970s, Gordon's artistic career grew less active, and his exhibition record is more difficult to trace. Though it appears that he did continue to sell work, the comfort and social status of the Samstags' later lives was almost certainly not funded by Gordon's financial success as an artist.

As he looked back upon his career, he seemed to take a philosophical stance about it, though some comments edge into bitterness. In a 1973 letter to Howard Wooden, who would later organise two of the earliest exhibitions on realist artists of Samstag's generation, the artist admitted, 'My work has not achieved wide popularity during my career and my prices have been consistently modest.' He explained that in 1944 he had consigned much of his unsold work

to the Hall of Art, a sort of 'clearinghouse' for the expedient sale of paintings. He was moving his studio out of Manhattan, and he marked his works 'down to quite low figures as I did not wish to store them'. When Wooden wondered at the low purchase price of *Young Man*, Samstag replied, 'Your description of the price of \$400.00 being incredibly low seemed less incredible to me and actually not very low.' A further observation in his letter was surely generated by his Depression experience, but seemed to carry through to contemporary times: 'Then as now, the young man who leaves art school and is confronted by the world's massive disinterest will always be deserving of sympathy.'88

His unvarnished and frank self-assessment might well have been shared by many of Samstag's generation whose lives stretched across the conflicted and changeful twentieth century. The sharpness of the altered directions of art development may have seemed quite distinctive to those who experienced the art world daily and directly. With perspective, however, the boundaries among traditional American realism, abstraction, Social Realism, fantasy and other 'categories' of twentieth-century art seem less pronounced. As most artists do, he echoed the currents of his time and stayed alert to artistic and intellectual – not to mention economic – matters that defined his society. It seems possible that his distinguishing contribution was his sober



depiction of labour through his pictures of workers and workplaces. However, more examples of work are needed not just to understand its significance, but also to determine what his art was in its entirety. Indeed, the primary hindrance in restoring Gordon Samstag to the story of American art is the disappearance of much of his work. As the reconstruction of his career and the reassessment of his times continues, it is hoped that these missing works will come to light so that his legacy as an artist, as well as a benefactor, can be more properly appreciated.

Gordon Samstag in lawn chair, 1941. Courtesy James P.J. Murphy papers, Georgetown University Library Washington, DC

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### NOTES FOR SAMSTAG THE ARTIST

### AMBITION AND APPRENTICESHIP 1923-29

- In the absence of most of his output, it is unwise to declare any definitive stylistic characterisations of Samstag's work. Only a handful of the several hundreds of titles discovered in the literature are currently located, and the great majority of his paintings cannot, at this point, be observed and studied. Though he certainly did produce abstract art, particularly in the 1950s and beyond, most of his known works are representational, and many of his titles suggest realist subjects. In addition, it seems that he may have varied his approach, working in both painterly and linear styles concurrently.
- 2 Two important and pioneering studies of these artists were Howard E. Wooden's exhibition catalogues: The Neglected Generation of American Realist Painters: 1930–1948, Wichita (Kansas) Art Museum, 1981, and American Art of the Great Depression: Two sides of the coin, Wichita (Kansas) Art Museum, 1985.
- 3 Gordon's older brother Nicholas Samstag studied at DeWitt Clinton High School, New York, when it was at Fifty-ninth Street and Tenth Avenue, now the site of John Jay College. Although the record is unclear, it's assumed Gordon also attended DeWitt. The author thanks Ross Wolfe for providing this information.
- 4 Quoted in C.H. Bonte, 'Native Scene Dominant in Print Club Showing', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 19, 1935. Samstag's one-man exhibition at the Gimbel Gallery of Contemporary Art included oils and lithographs and was highly praised by the Philadelphia critic. In a handwritten, undated biography Samstag sent to the Toledo Museum of Art around 1935, when he was corresponding with the museum regarding its purchase of his painting *Proletarian*, he tersely stated: 'Family in moderate circumstances'. (This document will be cited hereafter as the 'Toledo biography'.)
- 5 Enrolment record of Gordon Samstag, Art Students League, New York. Samstag registered for three classes beginning on June 8, July 9 and August 8, all taught by Bridgman; Samstag's address is given as 535 West 111th Street. The author thanks Stephanie Cassidy, Archivist at the Art Students League, for supplying these and all subsequent ASL records for Samstag and other information (letters to author, October 30, 2001, and February 12, 2002). Samstag's job as a room clerk is mentioned in the Toledo biography.
- 6 Most of Bridgman's books on drawing are currently published by Dover Publications, including *The Human Machine*, Bridgman's Life Drawing and Constructive Anatomy.
- 7 New York Times, July 29, 30 and 31 and August 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 14, 1923.
- 8 Carole Prietto, University Archivist, Washington University, email to author, March 12, 2002. The author thanks Carole Prietto for supplying Samstag's enrolment information. Information on his grandmother's death is contained in the Certificate of Death for Carrie Bernheimer Scharff (Missouri State Board of Health, no. 2978, register no. 655). Samstag refers to his year in St Louis in the Toledo

- biography: 'Moved to St Louis for a year and studied at the Washington University School while working intermittently as a candy butcher on trains, a soda dispenser, etc.'
- 9 For more information, see Gustav F. Goetsch Papers, Washington University Libraries, Department of Special Collections. Washington University holds a small collection of Goetsch's work, as does the Kemper Art Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. The teacher for Samstag's Commercial Design class was Delos Charles Nicholson, born in 1885 in Edgerton, Wisconsin.
- 10 According to his Certificate of Death (Missouri State Board of Health, no. 19183, register no. 6043), Nicholas Scharff died in the family home on June 20, 1924, just before his grandson's eighteenth birthday. The author thanks Diane Everman of the Saul Brodsky Library of the St Louis Jewish Community Archives for providing the Scharff death certificates.
- 11 The author thanks David Dearinger, Chief Curator, and Diana Thompson, Assistant Curator of the Museum of the National Academy of Design, for providing access to the records and files of Samstag in 2002 and 2012. An additional check of the Academy's Samstag file was made on June 12, 2015; the author thanks Diana Thompson, Curator, and Eric Booker, Exhibition Coordinator, for providing access to the file on that occasion.
- 12 Hawthorne's teaching philosophy, as recollected by his students, is found in *Hawthorne on Painting: From Students' Notes Collected by Mrs Charles W. Hawthorne*, Pitman Publishing Corp., New York, 1938, compiled by his wife after his death. For a portion of his archives, see the Charles W. Hawthorne Papers, Frick Collection, Frick Art Reference Library Archives, New York. Hawthorne travelled again to Europe in 1929, where he produced paintings and watercolours in Paris and in Spain. Starting in the autumn of 1928, Samstag was also in Europe, during which time (according to the Toledo biography), he reported that he had visited Spain. It is possible that student and teacher met and travelled together during this time.
- 13 Samstag planned to attend Hawthorne's Cape Cod School in August and September of 1926, but his attendance then or at any other time cannot be confirmed; see unsigned memorandum regarding the application of Samstag for a scholarship from the Leopold Schepp Foundation, New York, July 7, 1926, Schepp file. The author thanks the Leopold Schepp Foundation, New York, and especially its former director, Edythe Bobrow, for providing access in 2003 to their file on Samstag. (This source will be cited hereafter as the 'Schepp file'.) The Cape Cod School of Art, now known as the Cape School of Art, still conducts classes, but could provide no archival information related to Samstag. A search of microfilm reels D38 and 5113 of the Charles and Marion Hawthorne papers, 1870-1983 Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, found no reference to Samstag.
- 14 Theresa Pollak, foreword to The Kennedy Galleries Are Host to the Hundredth Anniversary Exhibition of Paintings and Sculptures by 100 Artists Associated with the Art Students League of New York, March 6-29, 1975, Art Students League, New York, 1975, p. 23. Samstag's name appears in 'A Selected List of Artists Associated with the Art Students League of New York, 1875-1975', p. 246.

- 15 Interview, April 10, 1969, Lewis Iselin Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; available online at www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/lewis-iselininterview-11962. accessed October 20, 2013.
- 16 Interview, March 19, 1999–January 17, 2000, Harry Sternberg Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; available online at www.aaa.si.edu/collections/ interviews/oral-history-interview-harry-sternberg-12394, accessed October 20, 2013. During this interview, Sternberg gives an account of Bridgman's practice of rating his students' drawings at the end of the week.
- 17 Portrait Study was first found as a reproduction in an Academy publication, 'Art Schools of the National Academy of Design', in a file at the Leopold Schepp Foundation. The originals of both drawings were recently discovered in a private collection and subsequently donated to the Samstag Museum of Art, by Stephen and Mariou Gottesman.
- 18 'Academy of Design Announces Awards', New York Times, May 5, 1926.
- 19 Dodge also studied in the atelier of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904), and the florid subjects and styles of nineteenth-century academicism were common in his work. Some of Dodge's records can be found in the William de Leftwich Dodge and Sara Dodge Kimbrough Papers, 1891–1973, in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. See also Frederick Platt, 'A Brief Autobiography of William de Leftwich Dodge', American Art Journal 14, no. 2, spring 1982, pp. 55–63.
- 20 Pollak, p. 24.
- 21 Nicolaides's book remains in print through Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. A collection of his papers can be found in the Mamie Harmon Papers relating to Kimon Nicolaides, 1935–85, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. During World War I, Nicolaides served in a camouflage unit, and that experience may have inspired his interest in abstraction.
- 22 Jones served as trustee from 1917 to 1930. He was memorialised by his Metropolitan colleagues as possessing 'integrity of character and genial personal qualities'; see 'In Memoriam: Francis C. Jones', *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, XXVII, July 7, 1932, p. 170; available online at www.metmuseum.org/pubs/bulletins/1/pdf/3255063.pdg. bannered.pdf, accessed October 16, 2013.
- 23 David Dearinger, Chief Curator, National Academy of Design, email to author, February 11, 2002. Samstag gave his Suydam Medal, as well as *Portrait Study* and *Untitled* (Standing Male Nude), to his fellow art student and friend, Edna Goldner, in whose family it was retained until donated to the Samstag Museum of Art in 2016.
- 24 The Raymond Perry Rodgers Neilson Papers, c. 1930s– 1950s, can be found at The Frick Collection, Frick Art Reference Library Archives, New York.
- 25 Toledo biography.
- 26 For a discussion of American artists adapting to the new styles of their own times while doing so in a way that expressed their distinctive sense of America, see Wanda M. Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern art* and national identity, 1915–1935, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999.

- 27 Dearinger, email to author, February 11, 2002.
- 28 Ihid
- 29 'School of Design Awards Honors; Gordon Samstag Wins Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship of \$1500 for Study Abroad; Takes Other Prizes Too', New York Times, May 6, 1928.
- 30 'Pulitzer Prizes', Time, 11, Issue 20, May 14, 1928, p. 35.
- 31 'Wilder Novel Wins Pulitzer Award; Five Winners of Pulitzer Prizes for 1927', New York Times, May 28, 1928.
- 32 Benjamin Phillips, Leopold Schepp, 1841–1926, ed. Banning Repplier and Joy Mayo, Schepp Foundation, New York, n.d. The author of this small booklet, available from the Schepp Foundation, was a trustee of the foundation. In addition to describing how Schepp gained his wealth, the booklet details the success of his coconut business and the fleet of ships he built to service it. Schepp's method for drying and shredding coconuts resulted in the product known as desiccated coconut. According to the booklet, he came to be called 'The Cocoanut [sic] King of New York City'. The Leopold Schepp Foundation continues today to provide support for deserving scholars, whose accomplishments and impact in a global context can be seen on the foundation's website: www.scheppfoundation.org
- 33 'Charity Gets Half of Schepp's Riches', New York Times, April 4, 1926.
- 34 'To Divide Millions While He Is Alive; Leopold Schepp, Cocoanut [sic] Man, Plans \$2,500,000 Fund to Aid New York Boys; to Demand Two-Year Pledge', New York Times, March 18, 1925.
- 35 'Schepp Enlarges Plan to Aid Boys', New York Times, July 13, 1925. At this point, Schepp had in mind boys from thirteen to sixteen years old, and he expected them to take a pledge to maintain good character. The foundation extended its philanthropy to girls in 1926; see Phillips.
- 36 See the following articles from the New York Times: 'Schepp Asks Public to Guide His Giving; Welcomes Suggestions as to How to Help People to Success, but Bans Self-Promoters; Permanent Good His Aim; Retires From Cocoanut [sic] Business at 85 to Spend Millions in Philanthropy', July 22, 1925; 'Thousands Swamp Schepp with Pleas; Philanthropist Decamps to Escape Army Seeking to Spend His Money', July 23, 1925; 'Mr Schepp Flooded with Letters', letter to the editor, signed 'The Committee', August 10, 1925; and 'Schepp Gets 82,000 Letters Telling How to Spend Cash', August 18, 1925.
- 37 R. George Smith, Clerk of the National Academy, to Manfred W. Ehrich, May 13, 1926, Schepp file. Ehrich was an attorney in the firm of Ehrich, Wheeler and Walter at 67 Wall St. He forwarded the letter to Florence Schepp (Ehrich to Schepp, May 14, 1926, Schepp file). Samstag's commendation was announced in 'Academy of Design Announces Awards', New York Times, May 5, 1926.
- 38 Unsigned memorandum, July 7, 1926, Schepp file. The Nedick Company was an early fast-food restaurant that was known for its hot dogs on buttered buns and its orange drink. It may be this employment to which Samstag referred in his Toledo biography when he wrote that he sold orange juice. His Schepp payments were allotted in monthly increments, with \$50 for July, August and September and then \$25 per month from October 1926 through April

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- 1927. The memo also recorded that Samstag planned to take two courses that summer at the Art Students League and then would attend the Cape Cod School in August and September before resuming classes at the Academy. The memo states that in addition to the recommendation to Miss Schepp from Manfred Ehrich, a Mr Bernheimer 'endorsed' Samstag. This Mr Bernheimer may have been Samstag's great uncle, Sidney Bernheimer, a wealthy businessman in New York.
- 39 Gordon Samstag to L. Harold Johnston, Executive Secretary, Schepp Foundation, undated but marked as received on February 1, 1927, Schepp file.
- 40 L.T., memorandum, 'Gordon Samstag, 27 W. 10', February 3, 1936. An addition to the memo stated that 'Miss Schepp asked him and his wife to luncheon on 2/16/36, and I imagine will then answer his question about portraits.'
- 41 'Schepp Asks Public to Guide His Giving'.
- 42 Johnston to Florence Schepp, May 16, 1927, Schepp File. He also reported that a total of \$325 had been paid in monthly increments from July 1, 1926, to April 1, 1927, with an additional \$35 in December 'for the purchase of a lay figure'.
- 43 Art Guild, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, MCMXXVIII (ninth edition), 1928, 5 (reel N69-26, fr. 260), Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Records, 1918-1968, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
- 44 Art Guild, 1928, 5 (fr. 260). The Tiffany Foundation continues to give grants to artists, but it no longer conducts residencies; the Laurelton estate was sold in 1946.
- 45 In the 1928 foundation brochure, the list of trustees includes Samstag's teachers Francis C. Jones, Charles W. Hawthorne and Kimon Nicolaides (reel 3, fr. 258). It also reported that in the previous summer of 1927, when Samstag was a fellow, the 'better known artists' who were available for counsel to the younger ones were Gifford Beal, Gari Melchers, Daniel Garber and Charles Hopkinson (reel 7, fr. 261).
- 46 The exact dates of Samstag's attendance at the Tiffany Foundation are unclear. According to records kept at the Morse Museum of American Art at Winter Park, Florida, Samstag was a fellow in 1927 (Jennifer Perry Thalheimer, Curator and Collection Manager, email to author, September 5, 2012). Samstag's participation in the Tiffany exhibition in 1928 is cited in the records of the Schepp Foundation. A search of the microfilm records of the Tiffany Foundation at the Archives of American Art indicates that he was included in the lists of 'Former Resident Artists of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation' published in the brochures for 1928 and 1929. In the 1928 list, he is described as 'Painter' (reel N69-26, fr. 264); in the 1929 list the description is 'Gordon Samstag, Painter, Pulitzer Trav. Scholarship' (reel N69-26, fr. 273). For a brief description of the Tiffany experience by one of Samstag's contemporaries, see the interview with Luigi Lucioni, July 6, 1971, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
- 47 Irvin H. Kaufman to Edmonds Putney, May 2, 1928. Edmonds Putney (1875–1930) was an attorney in the firm of Putney Twombly and Putney, and may have been a trustee or held some office in the Schepp Foundation, since the letter was part of Samstag's file at the foundation.

- The president of the Blackburn-Smith Corporation was William B. Putney, but it is not clear what the relationship between these men was. The letter does suggest, however, that Samstag's mother enjoyed some useful connections among the well-to-do business community in New York.
- 48 Samstag to Schepp Foundation, undated but stamped as received May 4, 1928, Schepp file.
- 49 Ibia
- 50 Samstag to Johnston, undated but marked as received May 6, 1928, Schepp file. Samstag asked for \$80 a month for four months and \$25 for materials while at the Tiffany Foundation. A handwritten, initialled (illegible, but probably by Johnston) note at the bottom of the letter indicates that the interview took place on May 15: 'He has been advised to study alone. This means hiring his own models and renting a studio. Therefore, he needs more money.'
- 51 Evelyn Samstag to Johnston, October 15, 1928, Schepp file. The address on Mrs Samstag's stationery is 521 West 112th St. The National Academy's exhibition was held November 26-December 16, 1928.
- 52 J.K., 'Further Comment on Exhibitions in Various Galleries', New York Times, November 11, 1928. The title of Samstag's painting in this exhibition is not currently known. The Tiffany Medal was awarded to Luigi Lucioni; see 'Tiffany Medals Bestowed', New York Times, November 8, 1928.
- 53 Evelyn Samstag to Johnston, November 10, 1928, Schepp file.
- 54 Johnston to Evelyn Samstag, November 22, 1928.
  Johnston wrote that Miss Schepp had 'visited the
  Academy and has seen Gordon's picture. Incidentally, she
  had seen it at the Tiffany Foundation last summer, if I
  recall the time correctly.' The Tiffany exhibition took place
  November 7–24, and the National Academy exhibition
  was November 26–December 16. Though the time between
  these exhibitions (two days) was short, it is possible that
  Samstag's painting was included in both shows.
- 55 James Zimmerman, Archivist, Provincetown Art
  Association, email to author, April 7, 2005. See also
  Provincetown [Massachusetts] Art Association,
  Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of Paintings, Drawings and
  Prints, July 29-September 8, 1928; in the unpaginated
  brochure, Samstag's Still Life was no. 26 (Provincetown
  Art Association Records, 1914-c. 1975 (reel D 79, fr. 362
  and fr. 372), Archives of American Art, Smithsonian
  Institution). The painting, Still Life, may have been the
  same painting exhibited at the 1928 Corcoran Biennial
  in the autumn of 1928; see note 58.
- 56 L.T., memorandum, 'Gordon Samstag 27 West 10', February 3, 1936, Schepp file. It was at this meeting that Samstag offered to paint the portrait of Leopold and/or Florence Schepp.
- 57 L.T. to Samstag, April 23, 1936, Schepp file. Samstag's file at the Schepp Foundation holds no further correspondence with the artist but includes notices of some of his exhibitions.
- 58 Eleventh Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, October 28-December 9, 1928. Still Life was no. 196 in

- the exhibition; Samstag's address was listed as 521 West Eleventh St. See Peter Hastings Falk (ed.), *The Biennial Record of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1907–67*, Sound View Press, Madison, Connecticut, 1991, p. 240.
- 59 Edna Goldner's sister, Helen Goldner Loring, was also depicted in a pastel, which may have been intended as a pendant to Edna's portrait. She is shown in a three-quarter view with her eyes averted to the side and her left hand resting at her neck. The author thanks Dr Stephen Gottesman for an image of the pastel portrait of his mother (Edna) and Peter Goldman for the image of his mother's portrait (Helen).
- 60 Toledo biography.
- 61 Questionnaire, 'To the Academicians and Associates of the National Academy of Design', undated, probably c. 1939, the year he received associate status, Samstag file, National Academy of Design. The records for the Académie Colarossi were destroyed, but a website for the school lists Samstag as being among its notable attendees (www.tfsimon.com/academie-colarossi-paris.htm, accessed September 29, 2015).
- 62 H.W. Dunning, 'From Hereabouts to Europe', *Buffalo Courier Express*, March 29, 1929. Why notice of Samstag should have been published in a Buffalo, New York, newspaper is not known; no mention of his time in Paris has been found in the New York City newspapers.
- 63 The painting is small enough that it could have been packed in a suitcase and brought back to America.

  Measuring 15 by 25 centimetres (6 by 10 inches), the oil on board is inscribed on the back: 'A sketch by Gordon Samstag for The Waiters'. Samstag's solo exhibition at the Montross Gallery in 1938 included a title, Waiters, but since neither the painting nor a reproduction of it has been found, the relationship between the two paintings cannot be determined. Samstag gave his little painting to his close friend Bernard Ognibene. The Ognibene family later donated the work to the Samstag Museum. The author thanks Peter Ognibene Sr for his recollections of his parents' friendship with the Samstags and for providing an image of Sketch for The Waiters.
- 64 The author thanks Ross Wolfe for providing this information.

# ART AND LABOUR IN THE DEPRESSION 1930–35

1 105th Annual Exhibition, March 20-April 6, 1930
(exhibition catalogue), National Academy of Design, New York, 1930, p. 19; Samstag's The Three Dragons is no. 78 in the exhibition; his address, 521 West 112th Street, was his mother's residence, and he is listed as a faculty member (p. 1). See also Peter Hastings Falk (ed.), The Annual Exhibition Record of the National Academy of Design, 1901–1950, Sound View Press, Madison, Connecticut, 1990, p. 458. Samstag was still at too early a point in his career to have established a particular subject matter as distinctively his; until late in 1928, most of his works of art would have been done as assignments at the Academy or the League. Nevertheless, the theme of three dragons suggests a decorative feature of a European building and not a common American subject matter. The Three Dragons may

- have been a sort of presentation piece that signified his time beyond his home shores.
- Gordon Samstag, letter to Howard E. Wooden, Director, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery, Terre Haute, Indiana, October 5, 1973, Swope curatorial file. The author thanks Lisa Petrulis, Curator of Collections and Exhibits at the Sheldon Swope Art Museum for providing information and records about the painting, acquired by the Swope in 1944. When Wooden became director of the Wichita (Kansas) Art Museum, he organised two exhibitions on the Depression, in both of which he used works by Samstag: 1981's The Neglected Generation of American Realist Painters: 1930-1948, which included Samstag's Proletarian in the exhibition and in its catalogue illustrated both Proletarian (fig. 43) and Young Man (p. 9, black and white only); and 1985's American Art of the Great Depression: Two sides of the coin, at which Young Man was shown and illustrated in colour on the cover of the catalogue and in black and white in the text (p. 90). The Swope conserved Young Man in 1965.
- 3 Samstag to Wooden, October 5, 1973.
- 4 Edward Alden Jewell, 'A Fine Native Showing: Big Exhibition in Washington Reveals Contemporary American Art at Its Best', New York Times, December 7, 1930.
- 5 Also mentioned by Jewell among the artists showing figure compositions were Robert Spencer, William Meyerowitz, Paul Sample, Margaret Sargent, Gifford Beal, Alexander Brook, Bernard Karfiol, Guy Pène du Bois, Kenneth Hayes Miller, John Steuart Curry and Peppino Mangravite.
- 6 106th Annual Exhibition, March 15-April 5, 1931 (exhibition catalogue), National Academy of Design, New York, 1931; Young Man was no. 90. Samstag continued to be listed among the faculty. See also, Falk, Exhibition Record of the National Academy, pp. 13, 458. Announcements of Samstag's winning of the Thomas B. Clarke Prize, awarded for the best figure composition by an American citizen, include: 'Academy Award \$6000 Art Prizes', New York Times, March 14, 1931; 'Design Academy Awards Prizes to 20 Artists; Several Residents of City Among 18 Painters Sharing Laurels Worth \$6,000', New York Herald Tribune, March 14, 1931, p. 11 (Samstag's address is listed as 203 West Eighty-first St); and Jewell, 'Art With a Vengeance; New Shows Everywhere at Once – Academy Prize Winners', New York Times, March 22, 1931.
- 7 'Sculpture and Painting From the Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design', New York Times, March 22, 1931. Young Man was reproduced with a caption identifying it as 'the winner of the Clarke Prize of \$300, awarded to Gordon Samstag'.
- 8 'Modernistic Art Scarce at 106th Academy Show; Varnishing Day Reception Opens Annual Exhibition at Fine Arts Building', New York Herald Tribune, March 15, 1931, p. 24.
- 9 Ibid. Samstag's name is given incorrectly as 'Gordon A. Amtag'.
- 10 Jewell, 'Art. National Academy Show Opens', New York Times, March 14, 1931. Jewell visited the exhibition on varnishing day; the exhibition opened to the public the following day, March 15, 1931.

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- Elisabeth Luther Cary, 'The National Academy of Design Exhibition', American Magazine of Art XXII, no. 4, April 1931, pp. 346–60; the discussion of Samstag is found on pp. 349–50 and Young Man is illustrated on p. 352.
- 12 Helen Appleton Read, 'Fewer, Better Academies', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 22, 1931. Traditionally, the Academy bestows a number of prizes upon a selection of its annual exhibition entrants. Louis Betts's painting, which the Brooklyn critic found so incompetent and undeserving, was *Eternal Eve*; it won the Saltus Medal for Merit. The other painter, along with Samstag, whom she felt produced a better painting, was Paul Trebilcock. Of the three Hallgarten prizes (graduated according to merit, with the first as the highest grade) presented, the third one was given to Samstag.
- 13 Margaret Breuning, 'Formidable Array of Important Exhibitions Breaks upon the Art World ... Spring Opening', New York Evening Post, March 21, 1931.
- 14 'Design Academy Awards Prizes to 20 Artists', New York Herald-Tribune, March 14, 1931. The article gave Samstag's address as 302 West Eighty-fifth St.
- 15 '20 Prize Winners Reveal the State of Academic Art in America', *The Art Digest* 5, no. 13, April 1, 1931, pp. 5–7. The cover was a reproduction of Samstag's painting, with the caption '*Young Man Desires Position* by Gordon Samstag (New York). Winner of the Clarke Prize at the National Academy of Design.'
- 16 *Ibid.* The names of these other critics are not mentioned in the article.
- 17 Ibid. The Art Digest article quotes from Cortissoz's review in the New York Herald Tribune, 'The Spring Academy and Some Other Things', March 22, 1931, VIII, p. 8. The critical position of Royal Cortissoz can be judged in part by his admiration of one of Samstag's teachers, Charles W. Hawthorne, one of the conservative figures of the Academy (see page 25). When, after Hawthorne's death in 1930, his wife published the book Hawthorne on Painting: From Students' Notes Collected by Mrs. Charles W. Hawthorne, Pitman Publishing Corp., New York, 1938, Cortissoz contributed an 'appreciation' that praised Hawthorne as both artist and teacher.
- 18 'Rum Smuggler Is Depicted in Exhibit of Art', Buffalo Courier Express, April 27, 1931. The exhibition ran from April 26 to June 22, 1931. Young Man was no. 108 in the catalogue and was listed as having won the Clarke Prize at the National Academy. The author thanks Gabriela Zoller of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery for information on the exhibition.
- 19 'Exhibit at Albright; Salon of American Paintings Offers Much of Interest to Art Lovers', *Niagara Falls Gazette*, April 30, 1931.
- 20 'Gallery Has Portraits of George Eastman and Dr. Rush Rhees', Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, July 14, 1931. Others mentioned in the exhibition along with Samstag were Benton, Curry, Wood, Ernest Blumenschein and George Luks.
- 21 'Magazine Chat', IBEW Journal XXX, no. 6, June 1931, p. 281.

- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 281. The full-page illustration of *Young Man* is found on the frontispiece, p. 282.
- 23 Frances Perkins, 'Unemployment Insurance: An American Plan to Protect Workers and Avoid the Dole', Survey Graphic, LXVII, no. 3, November 1, 1931, pp. 116–19, 173. The full-page illustration of Young Man on p. 116 carries the credit line 'Courtesy National Academy of Design Exhibition, 1931'.
- 24 'People You Know: Paintings by Gordon Samstag', Survey Graphic, XXV, no. 5, June 1936, pp. 376–77. The article did not reproduce Young Man.
- 25 Announced in 'Local Notes', New York Times, May 5, 1929. Bernard's father, Andrea Ognibene (d. 1967), studied painting at the University of Fine Arts in Palermo, Sicily; around 1910, he established a business painting decorative murals and frescoes in the New York area, specialising in religious and classical imagery.
- 26 Obituary for Bernard Ognibene, New York Times, May 21, 1966. Ben Ognibene Associates was located at 101 Park Ave in New York.
- 27 Peter Ognibene, Sr, emails to author, August 13–17, 2012, and essay of reminiscences, September 2012. The author expresses gratitude to Peter Ognibene, Sr, for his extensive recollections of Anne and Gordon Samstag and for insight into the character of their lives.
- 28 Lucioni later recalled the practice at the Tiffany Foundation:

  'You were left on your own. You worked by yourself except every once in a while, once a month, there would be a well-known artist come out to visit and just give a few criticisms. Everybody worked on his own.' Oral History Interview with Lucioni, July 6, 1971, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian; available online at www.aaa.si.edu/ collections/inteviews/oral-history-interview-luigi-lucioni-11775#transcript, accessed August 21, 2012.
- 29 'In the Galleries', Brooklyn Daily Eagle, November 19, 1930.
- 30 'In the Galleries; Tiffany Foundation Gives Good Account of Itself', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 15, 1931. These specific reviews in the *Daily Eagle* are not signed, but they may have been written by Helen Appleton Read.
- 31 Jewell, 'Show by Oyster Bay Group', New York Times,
  November 10, 1931. Jewell explained that the art was that
  of 'artists who have been enjoying the opportunity for
  uninterrupted work'. He added, 'Each year the little colony
  at Oyster Bay shows what has been produced through the
  Summer months in painting, sculpture and craft work. The
  present affair may confidently be pronounced the best of
  the Tiffany Foundation exhibitions thus far held.' The titles
  of any works Samstag exhibited are not currently known.
- 32 Lindsay Pollock, The Girl with the Gallery: Edith Gregor Halpert and the Making of the Modern Art Market, Public Affairs, New York, 2006, p. 147. See Chapter 8 for a discussion of Halpert's efforts to maintain commissions for her artists in the early years of the Depression.
- 33 Falk, Exhibition Record of the National Academy, p. 458.
- 34 Samstag's election is recorded in Minutes of the Society and of the Board of Control, Records of the Allied Artists of America, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Box 2 (p. 191), and on microfilm (reel 854,

- fr. 357). Of the twenty names submitted, seven were elected at a special meeting on January 24, 1932. The records of the Allied Artists are incomplete, and not all have been microfilmed; both the microfilm and the actual archives were searched for information on Samstag. In the exhibition catalogue, *The Allied Artists of America; Nineteenth Annual Exhibition* (New York, 1932) Samstag's *Brown and White* was no. 290 and his *Bowl of White* was no. 184. The author thanks Stephanie Fletcher at the Ryerson Library of the Art Institute of Chicago for providing information and scans relating to Samstag from the Allied catalogue.
- 35 Jewell, 'Allied Artists' Shows Open', New York Times, January 27, 1932. Samstag did not win any of the several prizes awarded.
- 36 'The Week in Galleries', Brooklyn Daily Eagle, February 7, 1932.
- 37 Jewell, 'Plenty to Choose From: Two of the Season's Big Group Shows, Here and in Philadelphia – Radio City Again', New York Times, January 31, 1932.
- 38 Carlyle Burrows, 'News and Comment on Current Art Events', New York Herald Tribune, January 31, 1932, VII, p. 9. Samstag's Bowl of White was in the Centre Gallery, on which Burrows did not comment specifically, but his Brown and White was among the 'commonplace' offerings in the South Gallery; obviously, Burrows and Jewell (who found Brown and White 'original and fresh' (see note 37 above), differed as to the quality of this painting. The author thanks Stephanie Fletcher of the Ryerson Library of the Art Institute of Chicago for ascertaining the specific placement of Samstag's paintings in the 1932 Allied exhibition.
- 39 Falk, Exhibition Record of the National Academy, p. 483. Pink and Yellow was no. 42 in the Academy's catalogue. 107th Annual Exhibition, March 27-April 17, 1932, National Academy of Design, New York, 1932; Samstag was listed as a faculty member on p. 1; his address was 203 West Eighty-first St. In the winter exhibition (November 26-December 21, 1932), Brown and White, No. 4 was no. 14; the artist's address was 49 West Twelfth St. The Cortissoz comment on Brown and White, No. 4 ('appealing in design and execution') is from a clipping, presumably from the New York Herald Tribune, 'The Salient Pictures in the Winter Show of the Academy', dated December 1932 and is found in Samstag, Gordon, Artist file - Blue Cards, Subseries 4: Note Cards, Series 1: The Index of Twentieth Century Artists, College Art Association of America Records, in The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives. The author thanks Susan Chore for providing access to these records.
- 40 Jewell, 'Current Shows in and about New York', New York Times, August 14, 1932.
- 41 'Briefer Comment on Current Art Events', New York Herald Tribune, August 14, 1932, VII, p. 8. The writer found that though oils (such as Samstag's painting) and prints were included in the show, the 'special distinction' was an 'excellent group of water colors'. Samstag was one of the two new members of the Midtown Gallery group noted in the review; the other was Fuji Nakamizo, who was in other group shows with Samstag.
- 42 Jewell, 'Midtown Galleries Exhibition', New York Times, September 17, 1932. The article noted that it was the seventh cooperative exhibition at Midtown and that

- it would continue until the end of the month. Samstag apparently did not maintain his relationship with Midtown after 1932. The records of the gallery list him in two brochures: Isabel Bishop, Midtown Galleries Cooperative Exhibition, October 3-15, 1932; and Bertram Goodman, Midtown Galleries Cooperative Exhibitions, November 1-15, 1932. Both brochures accompanied exhibitions by other artists, but Midtown's roster of artists is included on the back page of each and that's where Samstag's name appears. On the back of the Goodman brochure are handwritten numbers, prices likely, beside nearly every artist's name; there are no numbers after Samstag's name on this list. See the records of the Midtown Galleries, Series VII: Printed Matter, Archives of American Art, reel 5420; the Bishop exhibition brochure is fr. 730; the Goodman brochure is fr. 732. The gallery's records from these early cooperative exhibitions are incomplete.
- 43 'Robert U. Godsoe', New York Times, November 13, 1962.

  Among his other activities of the 1930s, Godsoe was head of the Uptown Gallery at 249 West End Ave, where he championed the work of several artists who would become part of the New York School, such as Mark Rothko (then Markus Rotkowitz) and Adolph Gottlieb (see H[oward] D[eVree], 'Young Americans', New York Times, May 23, 1934).
- 44 K.G.S., 'Art in Review: Robert U. Godsoe Begins Series of Neighborhood Exhibitions for American Artists', New York Times, July 12, 1932. For further information on Godsoe's exhibitions, see 'Godsoe Explains His Plan', New York Times, March 1, 1933, and 'Public Needs in Many Forms Served by Art Exhibitions,' New York Herald Tribune, August 21, 1932, VII, p. 8.
- 45 Godsoe's first exhibition was held on July 11-23, 1932, in the Outdoor Gallery of the Gotham Book Mart, a popular bookstore frequented by literary and artistic figures (see 'Art in Review: Robert U. Godsoe Begins', 'The Week in New York', New York Times, July 17, 1932). His second exhibition opened on July 18, 1932, on the twentieth floor of the Franklin Towers Hotel, at 333 West Eighty-sixth St; originally planned to continue 'indefinitely', it was described as 'pleasantly mad' in the New York Times (see 'The Week in New York', July 24, 1932). The third exhibition (September 1-15, 1932) moved to the Towers Hotel in Brooklyn, at 25 Clark St (see 'Art: Five Exhibitions Open', New York Times, September 2, 1932, which notes Samstag's participation; 'Activities Here and Out of Town', New York Times, September 4, 1932; and 'Art Roster: Exhibitions Recently Opened Here', New York Times, September 11, 1932, which also mentions Samstag). For his fourth exhibition (December 1-15, 1932) Godsoe returned to the Franklin Towers Hotel, where the work of 'young, new, or needy artists' was featured (see 'Openings of Yesterday', New York Times, December 2, 1932; 'Art Roster: New Exhibitions', New York Times, December 11, 1932: Edward Alden Jewell, 'Art in Review: Robert U. Godsoe Opens New Exhibition of Work by Americans at the Hotel Franklin Towers', New York Times, December 15, 1932). The fifth exhibition, held also at the Franklin Towers Hotel, was mainly the work of 'younger American artists' (see H[oward] D[eVree], 'Art in Review: Twenty Exhibitions to Open in This City Today', New York Times, February 20,

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- 1933). The sixth exhibition, at the Hotel Roosevelt on East Forty-fifth St and Madison Ave, 'A Group of American Paintings: Realism to Surrealisme [sic]' (April 17–30, 1933), appears to have been the last before Godsoe joined the Uptown Gallery and is the only one for which a specific title is known (Jewell, 'Laurel Wreaths and Marching Ranks', New York Times, April 23, 1933, X, p. 8). Another source of information on Godsoe's exhibitions of 1932–33 is the scrapbooks of the painter Samuel Brecher (1897–1982), who was among the artists featured in several of the shows; see the Samuel Brecher Papers, reel 3267, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; the portion of the catalogue for the sixth exhibition, 'Realism to Surrealisme', is found in fr. 27.
- 46 'Art: Five Exhibitions Open.'
- 47 Jewell, 'Laurel Wreaths'.
- 48 'Attractions in the Galleries', New York Sun, April 22, 1933.
- 49 Samstag's teaching position was noted in the spring 1933 Academy catalogue of the 108th exhibition, and his appointment as the assistant to George Laurence Nelson (1887–1978) in the Antique class for the following autumn term (September 1933–April 1934) was announced in 'More Midtown Art Is Shown', New York Sun, September 9, 1933.
- 50 108th Annual Exhibition, March 25-April 18, 1933 (exhibition catalogue), National Academy of Design, New York, 1933; Brown and White No. 1 was no. 271. For the Allied exhibition of 1932, see note 37, page 151. A painting entitled Brown and White No. 4 was Samstag's contribution to the National Academy's winter 1932 exhibition (November 26-December 21, 1932). For a general review of the 1933 National Academy exhibition, see Royal Cortissoz, 'Some Salient Works Seen at the Academy', New York Herald Tribune, April 2, 1933.
- 51 See *The Allied Artists of America Twenty-First Annual Exhibition, April 6–May 6, 1934* (exhibition catalogue), Allied Artists of America, New York, 1934; the exhibition was held at the Brooklyn Museum. Samstag's painting, listed as 'Robt. De Postels', was no. 93, and his address was given as 49 West Twelfth St. The author thanks Alexander L. Wallace of the Libraries and Archives of the Brooklyn Museum for providing a scan of portions of the catalogue. See also, the Records of the Allied Artists of America, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (reel 853, fr. number illegible).
- 52 'School of Design Awards Honors; Gordon Samstag Wins Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship of \$1,500 for Study Abroad', New York Times, May 6, 1928. This article also reported that de Postels won a school prize of \$25 for Painting from the Nude (Samstag won the highest prize in this category, \$100), a \$10 prize for Still Life, and the Isidor Fund prize of \$50 for Composition. De Postels's work in the Corcoran Biennial of 1930 was noted in Jewell, 'A Fine Native Showing; Big Exhibition in Washington Reveals Contemporary American Art at Its Best', New York Times, December 7, 1930. Other reviews of his art include Jewell, 'Water-Color Show Will Open Tonight', New York Times, January 3, 1936, and 'A Water-Color Annual', New York Times, January 5, 1936; and Howard DeVree, 'A Reviewer's

- Notebook: New Shows', New York Times, April 12, 1942. See also de Postels's obituary (New York Times, January 9, 1964).
- 53 'Art Shows Across the Bridge; Allied Artists and Miniaturists Exhibit in Brooklyn Museum', New York Sun, April 7, 1934.
- 54 Jewell, 'Annual Exhibition by Allied Artists ... Much of New Display Is Found Decorative and Cheerful, as in Groups of the Past', New York Times, April 7, 1934.
- Association and Museum, emails to author, April 7, 2005, and August 25, 2012. The Provincetown archives record that Samstag had also exhibited one painting, Still Life, in 1928. See also Provincetown Art Association Records, 1914–c.1975, Archives of American Art; reel D79, fr. 511 is the title page of the brochure for the Twentieth Annual Exhibition, August 5–September 3, 1934; fr. 513 includes Samstag's Coal Shed, Dennis (no. 2); and fr. 514 includes Bass River Station (no. 56). Bass River Station is likely the railroad station (no longer extant) near the Davis family home, the House of Seven Chimneys. The author thanks Mr and Mrs William Gately and their neighbours for information about local place names.
- 56 Montross Gallery, Paintings by Gordon Samstag (October 22-November 3, 1934), New York, 1934, found in pamphlet file P-19423, Ryerson Library, Art Institute of Chicago, and other repositories. The list of oils includes No. 1 and No. 2 of his Brown and White series, as well as Hors d'Oeuvres, Robert de Postels and Anne.
- 57 'Vigor in Still Life' in 'New York Criticism', The Art Digest, vol. IX, no. 3, November 1, 1934, p. 14. Howard DeVree's review appeared originally in 'In the Galleries: Rowlandson to Fledglings', New York Times, October 28, 1934, IX, p. 9, with the heading for Samstag's specific exhibition 'Ideas and Variety'. The exhibition was also announced in 'Paintings by Gordon Samstag' in 'Calendar of Current Art Exhibitions in New York', Parnassus, vol. 6, no. 5, October 1934, p. 32; 'Art Exhibitions Opening in the Coming Week', New York Sun, October 20, 1934 and, on the same page, an advertisement for the Montross exhibition 'Paintings by Gordon Samstag', October 22-November 3, 1934; and 'Paintings by Gordon Samstag at the Montross Gallery' in 'New Art Exhibits Show Wide Range', New York Times, October 22, 1934. A reproduction of Samstag's Coal Shed, South Dennis appeared with an identifying caption but no comment in the New York World Telegram, October 27, 1934.
- 58 Margaret Breuning, 'Montross Gallery', New York Post,
  October 27, 1934. This clipping was found in Samstag,
  Gordon, Artist file Blue cards, Subseries 4: Note Cards,
  Series 1; The Index of Twentieth Century Artists, College Art
  Association of America Records, in The Frick Collection/
  Frick Art Reference Library.
- 59 Jane Schwartz, 'Around the Galleries', *Art News*, vol. XXXIII, no. 4, October 27, 1934, p. 9.
- 60 Jewell, 'Art by Students Placed on View; ... Instructors Are Represented by Display in New School of [sic] Social Research', New York Times, December 18, 1934. The exhibition ran from December 17, 1934 to January 15, 1935.
- 61 Catalogue of the 130th Annual Exhibition, January 27– March 3, 1935 (exhibition catalogue), 2nd edn, Pennsylvania

- Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1935, p. 19. Listed (no. 189) as *Proletariat*, the painting was also reproduced in the catalogue (n.p). The author thanks the Library of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts for providing copies of this and other catalogue pages relating to Gordon Samstag in their exhibitions. The painting is also cited (as *Proletariat*) in Peter Hastings Falk, *The Annual Exhibition Record of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*, vol. 3, 1914–68, Sound View Press, Madison, Connecticut, 1989, p. 408. In a letter to the Toledo Museum of Art, Samstag made clear that the name of the painting had been misspelled in the Philadelphia catalogue and should be called *Proletarian* (Samstag to William A. Gosline, Jr, President of the Toledo Museum of Art, February 26, 1935, curatorial file, Toledo Museum of Art).
- 62 Miner's Homes [sic] was no. 312 in the catalogue. The author thanks Jennifer Neal of the Library of the Brooklyn Museum for providing information regarding this exhibition
- 63 For details on the holdings of Samstag's father-in-law, Charles Henry Davis, in the Kentenia Mining Company, see pages 195-7.
- 64 Twenty-fifth Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings and Sculpture, March 16-April 7, 1935 (exhibition catalogue), Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, Hartford, 1935; Proletarian was no. 11 in the catalogue. The back of the frame of Proletarian contains a sticker from this exhibition, as well as the notation of '\$500', which is likely the price Samstag was asking for its sale (there is no indication in the Academy's catalogues that this amount represents a prize). Samstag was a member of the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts from 1935 to 1940, during which time he exhibited in their annual exhibitions of 1935 (Proletarian). 1936 (Anne and Fidelma, which won the Alice Collins Dunham Prize for portrait painting), and 1937 (Coal Shed, Bass River). The author thanks Natalie Belanger, Visitor Services Associate, and Sierra Dixon, Research and Collections Associate, at the Connecticut Historical Society for providing information and copies of documents relating to Samstag's exhibition history at the Connecticut Academy.
- 65 Falk, The Biennial Exhibition Record of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1907–1967, Sound View Press, Madison, Connecticut, 1991, p. 240; Coal Shed, Bass River was no. 419 in the Fourteenth Biennial (March 24–May 5, 1935).
- 66 The New York Water-Color Club's Forty-sixth Annual Exhibition took place on April 13–28, 1935, at the American Fine Arts Building at 215 West Fifty-seventh St; see Edward Alden Jewell, 'Water-Color Club Assembles Show; Annual Exhibition Includes 500 Pictures', New York Times, April 13, 1935. In a later review ('A Water-Color Annual', April 21, 1935), Jewell seems to have lowered his opinion of the show: 'It may be called an "average" show, containing much sound painting, a few particularly creditable performances, but upon the whole little adventure. The prevailing tone is more conservative this year, decorative, picturesque and illustrational effects predominating.' He did not mention Samstag.
- 67 Cincinnati (Ohio) Art Museum, The Forty-Second Annual Exhibition of American Art, May 9-June 9, 1935. *The Shutters*, lent by the Montross Gallery, was no. 132 in the

- exhibition. The author thanks Jennifer Hardin of the library at the Cincinnati Art Museum for providing information relating to this exhibition.
- 68 C.H. Bonte, 'Exhibitions in the Art Galleries ... a Fresh Offering at the Gimbel Galleries', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 19, 1935. The exhibition opened on May 22, but its closing date is not known. Searches in the libraries and archives of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and other museums of the region have produced no materials relating to this exhibition other than this review.
- 69 William A. Gosline, Jr, to Gordon Samstag, February 26, 1935. The author thanks the Toledo Museum of Art for providing this and other documents from their curatorial file on *Proletarian* and for arranging a viewing of the painting; particular gratitude goes to Andrea Mall and, especially, Lori Mott, of the Registrar's Office. Gosline was a trustee of the museum from 1912 to 1947 and served as president of the Board from 1934 to 1947 (Anne O. Morris, Head Librarian, Toledo Museum of Art, email to author, November 4, 2004).
- 70 Samstag to Gosline, February 28, 1935, curatorial file, Toledo Museum of Art. Samstag gave his address as 27 West Tenth S.
- 71 Catalogue: Twenty-second Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by Contemporary American Artists June 2-August 25, 1935 (exhibition catalogue), Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo (Ohio), 1935; Proletarian was no. 54 in the catalogue.
- 72 Samstag to Gosline, June 17, 1935, curatorial file, Toledo Museum of Art.
- 73 Gosline to Samstag, June 25, 1935, curatorial file, Toledo Museum of Art
- 74 'Figure and Portrait Studies Are Shown in Museum Tour; Nudes and Realistic Oils in Summer Show of Contemporary American Paintings Are Displayed in Art Galleries', *Toledo Blade*, June 27, 1935, p. 17. Other tours were announced on June 7 and August 16, 1935. The author expresses gratitude to Ann Hurley, Local History and Genealogy Department, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library at Toledo, Ohio, for significant assistance in searching the Toledo newspapers for notices of Samstag's *Proletarian*.
- 75 'An American Painting Acquired', The Toledo (Ohio) Museum of Art News 73, December 1935, pp. 7–9; Proletarian was reproduced on p. 8. Proletarian was also included in Susan Strickler, The Toledo Museum of Art: American Paintings, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, 1979, p. 96, pl. 195.
- 76 See note 2, page 149.
- 77 H[oward] D[eVree], 'News of the Art World', New York Times, August 4, 1935. Several variations of this title have been found; the simplest one Coal Shed is also recorded for the National Academy's 111th Annual Exhibition in 1936. DeVree may have indeed seen a painting entitled Coal Shed in this Montross group exhibition of thirty artists, or he may have mis-stated the actual title.
- 78 DeVree, 'Among the Art Galleries: A Busy and Varied Week', New York Times, November 10, 1935. Samstag's participation was also noted in 'Local Art Shows Now in Full Swing', New York Times, November 4, 1935.

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- Other artists in the Ferargil exhibition included Clarence Carter and Louis Bouché. The author thanks Margaret Z. Atkins, Reference Services of the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, for assistance in researching the records of the Ferargil Galleries.
- 79 'Art Faculty Is Named', New York Times, September 23, 1935.

### ACADEMICS AND MODERNISTS 1936-41

- 1 111th Annual Exhibition, March 18-April 10, 1936 (exhibition catalogue), National Academy of Design, New York, 1936, p. 74. Samstag is listed as an assistant for the Antique classes.
- 2 Chromatically, white is the presence of all colours, but it is often read as emptiness and as devoid of colour.
- 3 Catalogue of the 131st Annual Exhibition, January 26– March 1, 1936 (exhibition catalogue), Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1936; both Domestic (no. 210) and Nurses (no. 224) were listed (p. 20), and Nurses was illustrated (unp.). The exhibition showed 348 oil paintings.
- 4 Grafly is quoted in 'Pennsylvania Annual Criticized for Lack of Contemporary Vitality', *The Art Digest*, X, no. 9, February 1, 1936, pp. 5–6.
- 5 C.H. Bonte, 'Academy Opens 131st Annual Exhibition ... Modernism Present But Not Pronounced', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 26, 1936, p. 12. Bonte commented on the subject of black Americans in the exhibition: 'Nor are there so many Negroid themes as one might expect. Colored Girl by Sarkis Sarkisian; Negress by Miriam Buchholz; and Cordelia by Glen Mitchell, a gorgeous brown body set off against vivid blue, are the only ones definitely recalled, though there may be a few others.' Oddly, he did not recall that one of the others was Samstag's *Domestic*, with its two black housemaids.
- 6 'New Yorkers Win 5 of 6 Art Prizes; Paul Sample's 
  "Miners Resting" Takes Medal for Best Oil in Philadelphia 
  Show; \$300 Prize to Samstag; Has Best Figure in Oil 
  by American', New York Times, January 26, 1936. Though 
  not credited, the article may have been written by Edward 
  Alden Jewell. The only prize not won by a New Yorker, 
  the article pointed out, was one required to be given to 
  a female participant from Philadelphia.
- 7 'New Yorkers Win.' As an example of the 'Picasso influence', Byron Browne's Constructive Elements was cited. Presumably, Samstag's Nurses would have fit into the 'forthright academic paintings' category.
- B Edward Alden Jewell, 'Two Large Group Shows; The Pennsylvania Academy and Women's National Association Hold Annuals', New York Times, February 2, 1936. Throughout his review, Jewell emphasised the mediocrity of what he had seen in Philadelphia and the predictability of the show overall.
- 9 Just a Word With You', *The Trained Nurse and Hospital Review*, 36, April 1936, p. 311. *Nurses* is reproduced on the cover. The author thanks Catherine Reed Thurson at the Hardin Library of the Health Sciences at the University of Iowa for providing a copy of this article. The editorial page is signed only as 'Your Editor'. The reference to 'racial heritage' in the commentary on *Nurses* is puzzling; in the

- context of the 1930s, it is not always possible to know the exact meaning. A similar observation about the 'ancestry' of one of Samstag's models (in *Young Man Desires Position*) was made by Elisabeth Luther Cary in her review of the National Academy's 1931 annual.
- 10 Ibid., p. 569. Reproductions of Nurses could be ordered from Reinthal and Newman at 33 West Thirty-fourth St in New York City. This company specialised in postcards and reproductions of works of art.
- 11 Ibid., p. 311. The Disconsolate Nurse was reproduced on the cover of The Trained Nurse and Hospital Review, vols 96-97 (June 1936). The author thanks the staff of the Parks Library at Iowa State University for providing a copy of this document.
- 12 Ada Belle McCleery, 'A Simple Bench', The Modern Hospital 51, no. 3, September 1938, pp. 85-86, reproduced on p. 85 with the caption 'Gordon Samstag's study of two loyal hospital workers'. The author thanks Catherine Reed Thurson at the Hardin Library for the Health Sciences at the University of Iowa for providing a copy of this article.
- 13 Edward Alden Jewell, '20 Artists Joined in New Exhibition; Paintings and Water-Colors by Americans Are Shown at Montross Gallery', New York Times, March 4, 1936. The exhibition ended on March 14. Samstag's Coal Shed [sic] is listed though not discussed in Henry McBride, 'The Academy's New Regime', New York Sun, March 21, 1936. The group exhibition is mentioned, though not Samstag specifically in 'The Critic Takes a Glance Around the Galleries', New York Post, March 7, 1936.
- 14 Jewell, 'E Pluribus; Among New Group and Solo Flights', New York Times, March 8, 1936.
- 15 Ann Hamilton Sayre, 'A Variety of Styles in Twenty Painters', in 'New Exhibitions of the Week', *Art News*, XXXIV, no. 24, March 14, 1936, p. 8.
- 16 Twenty-Sixth Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings and Sculpture, March 7-29, 1936 (exhibition catalogue), Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, Hartford; Anne and Fidelma was no. 94 in the catalogue. The announcement of the awarding of the Alice Collins Dunham Prize for the best portrait painting by a member of the Academy was made in the catalogue of the following year, 1937; the award is also cited in American Art Annual, XXXIII, MacMillan Co., New York, 1936, p. 108. The painting is currently unlocated. The author thanks Natalie Belanger and Sierra Dixon of the Connecticut Historical Society for providing information about Samstag's exhibition record at the Connecticut Academy.
- 17 'Few City Scenes in Academy Show; Idyllic Landscape and Figure Studies Predominate in Annual Exhibition', New York Times, March 16, 1936.
- 18 Montross Gallery, Gordon Samstag: Exhibition of Recent Paintings, April 13–25, 1936, New York, 1936. Samstag showed twenty-seven paintings, including Nurses; Disconsolate Nurse (no. 4); Sketch for 'Nurses' (nos. 8 and 9); and Nurses [sic] Clothes (no. 18); Domestic (no. 22), which he had shown at the Pennsylvania Annual Exhibition that year; Flooded Lime Kiln (no. 7), which had been in his Ferargil exhibition in November of 1935; and Proletarian (no. 13). Solomon Bros. Coal Yard (no. 17) may depict a place in New York City. In 1936, the Solomon Brothers Coal

- Company moved from Sixth St on the East River to a new location between Thirty-first and Thirty-second Sts on the East River because of the construction of the East River Drive (see 'Coal Plant for River Front', New York Times, June 17, 1936). An announcement of the Montross April show is found in Parnassus, 8, no. 4, April 1936, p. 33. The brochure for the exhibition is found in Samstag's file at the Schepp Foundation and in the vertical files of several museum archives
- 19 Jewell, 'In the Realm of Art: Early Spring Potpourri; Perennial in a High Key', New York Times, April 19, 1936, X, p. 7. The solo exhibition had earlier been announced (with no commentary) in an article, 'Water-Color Club to Open Exhibition', New York Times, April 13, 1936.
- 20 Jewell, 'In the Realm of Art'. Water-Color is reproduced with the caption "Water-Color"(oil), in one-man show of recent work by Gordon Samstag at the Montross'. The painting is now in the collection of the Anne and Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, having been donated by Dr Walter L. Freedman, MD. It descended in his family from his parents, Samuel Z. Freedman, MD, and Martha K. Freedman of New York, who obtained it from the artist 'probably before 1940'. Samstag was a patient of Dr Freedman, Sr. Email from Dr Freedman to Erica Green, August 27, 2009.
- 21 Charles Z. Offin, 'The Jacobis Rudolf and Annot; Notes on Their Versatility – Gerald Brockhurst – Samstag', Brooklyn Daily Eagle, April 19, 1936, C13. The author thanks Ashleigh Whatling, Curatorial Assistant at the Samstag Museum of Art, for locating this review.
- 22 Ann H. Sayre, 'New Exhibitions of the Week ... Honest Canvases by Gordon Samstag', *Art News*, XXXIV, no. 29, April 18, 1936, p. 9.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Jerome Klein, 'The Critic Takes a Glance around the Galleries', New York Evening Post, April 18, 1936. The Klein comment is also found in a clipping in Samstag, Gordon, Artist file – Blue cards, Subseries 4: Note Cards, Series 1: The Index of Twentieth Century Artists, College Art Association of America Records, Frick Art Reference Library Archives, Frick Collection. Among the titles in Samstag's Montross exhibition were Lobster and Cheese and Fruit.
- 25 'Clever Painting', New York Herald Tribune, April 18, 1936. This clipping was in Samstag's file at the Schepp Foundation
- 26 'Out, Damned Spot!: Says Samstag in Paint', The Art Digest, X, no. 14, April 15, 1936, p. 13; repro: Proletarian.
- 27 'People You Know: Paintings By Gordon Samstag', Survey Graphic, XXV, no. 5, June 1936, pp. 376–77, 377. The painting of the barber is probably Barber Shop, shown in the Montross exhibition of April 1936 (no. 12); the man lifting the boxes is probably Shipping Clerk (no. 27). Survey Graphic ceased publication in 1952. The records of the magazine (1891–1952) are found in the Survey Associates Records of the Social Welfare History Archives at the University of Minnesota Libraries in Minneapolis.
- 28 B. Holmes, 'International Art News: America', *The London Studio*, XII, July-December 1936, p. 50.

- 29 DeVree, 'The Art Gallery Trail; New Group Exhibitions Include Paintings, Sculpture, Etchings by American Artists', New York Times, June 28, 1936, X, p. 7; repro: El Station. The Montross group exhibition was also recorded in 'At the Galleries', Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 5, 1936.
- 30 'Art Colony Memoranda', New York Times, July 12, 1936. The Silvermine Guild operated a gallery near Norwalk, Connecticut, in which, for this particular exhibition, they featured portraits by their members. A brief review stated that the group's exhibition presented 'considerable art diversity' ('The Silvermine Season', New York Times, July 16, 1936). Silvermine was an artists' association, colony and exhibiting organisation which was formed in 1922 by Solon Borglum, who was known for his portraits and frontier themes; he was a younger brother of Gutzon Borglum, who carved the heads of four American presidents at Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. Starting in about 1924, the group began organising summer exhibitions and it continues to organise exhibitions and offer classes in art. For a history of Silvermine up to c. 2005, see The Silvermine Guild Arts Center, n.d. (a copy is available in the vertical files of the Smithsonian American Art Museum library).
- 31 'Toledo: A Summer Contemporary Show', in 'Art throughout America', Art News, XXXIV, no. 38, July 18, 1936, p. 12.
- 32 Records of the Allied Artists of America, Archives of American Art (reel 854, fr. 6? [illegible]).
- 33 The purchase was recorded in the personal records of Benjamin deForest Buell Hammett (1895-1945), from a prominent St Louis family, who may have known and wished to support the artist. The author thanks Mr Hammett's son, Benjamin Cowles Hammett, for searching the family records and providing information about Nurses. According to the family's collection card, Nurses was painted in 1935 and purchased from the artist in August of 1936. The card also records the donation of the painting in 1946 by Hammett's widow, Harriett Cowles Hammett Graham, to the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Buell Hammett was a founder of the museum and was its first president when it opened in 1941. The painting entered the museum's collection officially (SBMA 4710.1) in 1947 and was de-accessioned in 1965 (telephone conversation with Sherry Sommers, Registrar at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, October 24, 2001). Gratitude is expressed to Michael Redmon, Director of Research, Santa Barbara Historical Society for further information, in emails of January 27 and 31, 2005. Today, the painting is owned by Santa Clara Valley Medical Center in San Jose, California.
- 34 Art Institute of Chicago, American Paintings and Sculpture; Forty-seventh Annual Exhibition, October 22–December 6, 1936, no. 179. Regarding the jury, see Eleanor Jewett, 'Annual National Exhibit Current at Art Institute', Chicago Daily Tribune, October 25, 1936. The author thanks the Ryerson Library of the Art Institute for providing information on this exhibition, in addition to making available their pamphlet file on Samstag.
- 35 Jewett, 'US Artists' Annual Exhibit Opens Oct. 22; Institute Show to Feature Contemporary Works in Painting and Sculpture', Chicago Daily Tribune, September 27, 1936. The Art Institute of Chicago's annual survey of American art was scheduled to open about three weeks afterwards.

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- For this and other clippings of the 1936 exhibition, the author thanks Marie Kroeger, Archives Volunteer, Ryerson Library of the Art Institute of Chicago.
- 36 Jewett, 'Art Institute "Gets Religion" in New Show', Chicago Daily Tribune, October 22, 1936.
- 37 *Ibid.* The painting chosen for the Logan prize of \$500 was *Olympia* by Robert Philipp; it depicted a female nude leaning against a table. Jewett noted that although Mrs Logan approved of the choice, 'she was heard to comment as she walked through the exhibition, "Isn't it surprising the amount of trash you have to go through to find any good pictures?"'
- 38 Jewett, 'Annual National Exhibit Current'.
- 39 Carnegie Institute, The 1936 International Exhibition of Paintings, October 15–December 6, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1936. Samstag's *Proletarian* was no. 62 in the exhibition. The author thanks the Department of Fine Arts at the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh for supplying copies of catalogue materials related to Samstag.
- 40 Jewell, 'Carnegie Exhibit Will Open Today; Six Nations Are Represented in the Annual Display of International Painting; 276 Artists Are Showing; List Includes 181 Europeans and 95 Americans – 60 of Group Make Debut at Event', New York Times, October 15, 1936. The six nations were Great Britain, France, Germany, the United States, Italy and Spain. The American painter Leon Kroll won first prize, and second prize went to the French artist Pierre Bonnard (Jewell, 'Leon Kroll Wins Carnegie Prize; Repeats American Art Triumph', New York Times, October 16 (1936)
- 41 Margaret Breuning, 'Carnegie International, 1936', *Parnassus*, vol. 8, no. 6, November, 1936, pp. 4–8.
- 42 Ibid., p. 5.
- 43 Catalogue of the 132nd Annual Exhibition, January 21– February 28, 1937 (exhibition catalogue), Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1937, p. 18; White Horse, Pound Ridge is no. 172 in the catalogue and is illustrated (unp.). Pound Ridge was a small community northeast of New York in Westchester County.
- 44 National Academy of Design, 112th Annual Exhibition, March 13-April 13, 1937. White Horse in Harness was no. 27. For the first time since 1930, Samstag was not listed on the faculty; his address was recorded as 215 West Thirteenth St.
- 45 Falk, The Biennial Exhibition Record of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1907–1967, Sound View Press, Madison, Connecticut, 1991, p. 38. Domestic was no. 340. The Fifteenth Corcoran Biennial was on view March 28 – May 29, 1937.
- 46 Twenty-seventh Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings, Sculpture, and Black and White, March 6–28, 1937 (exhibition catalogue), Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, Hartford, 1937. Coal Shed, Bass River was no. 128 in the catalogue.
- 47 The 1937 International Exhibition of Paintings, October 14-December 5 (exhibition catalogue), Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 1937; Samstag's White Horse, Poundridge [sic], was no. 82 in the catalogue.
- 48 Breuning, 'The World's Art: Pittsburgh 1937', *Parnassus*, vol. 9, no. 6, November 1937, pp. 30–34, 32.

- 49 DeVree, 'A Reviewer's Notebook; Brief Comment on More Than a Score of Current Shows in the Local Galleries', New York Times, February 14, 1937. No specific titles were mentioned in the review.
- 50 DeVree, 'A Reviewer's Notebook; In Galleries: Current Attractions about Town Include Group and Solo', New York Times, May 23, 1937. Samstag's painting Stone Quarry was mentioned as being in the Village Galleries May exhibition. Another notice in June that cited Samstag suggested that the Village Galleries exhibition was extended through the summer ('Events Here and There', New York Times, June 27, 1937). Samstag's Barber Shop, in the October exhibition at the Village Galleries, was reviewed as 'excellent' in DeVree, 'In the Realm of Art: The Season', New York Times, October 3, 1937. The Village Galleries was at 349 Sixth Ave, not far from Washington Sq.
- 51 DeVree, 'Among the New Group Exhibitions', New York Times, June 27, 1937. The Social Realist Philip Evergood was among the other artists in this Montross group exhibition.
- 52 National Academy of Design, 113th Annual Exhibition, March 16-April 13, 1938. Shipping Clerk was no. 180 in the catalogue and Samstag's address was listed as 39 West Twenty-seventh St.
- 53 DeVree, 'National Cross Section; The Third National Exhibition Proffers a Report on Contemporary Activities; Local Shows', New York Times, June 19, 1938. Samstag was among a few names listed from among a show of thirty artists at Montross.
- 54 Montross Gallery, Recent Paintings and Sketches by Gordon Samstag, October 17–29, 1938. 'White Horse, Poundridge' [sic] was illustrated in the brochure. Copies of the brochure are found in Samstag's file at the Schepp Foundation and at the Ryerson Library at the Art Institute of Chicago (P-19520). Several of Samstag's titles suggest that he persisted with his theme of workers: Painters, Waiters, Farm Hand, Fishermen and Housework. He also included one painting entitled Catastrophe, but the rest of the group appears to have been still lifes and figure compositions (such as Anne and Sandra) and several on the theme of boats. An announcement of Samstag's one-man exhibition at the Montross Gallery is found in Elizabeth McCausland, 'Gallery Index', Parnassus, 10, no. 5, October 1938, p. 38.
- 55 DeVree, 'A Reviewer's Notebook; A Noteworthy First New York Showing – Current Group and Solo Exhibitions', New York Times, October 23, 1938, IX, p. 10.
- 56 'Roundabout the Galleries: Two New Exhibitions', Art News, 37, no. 4, October 22, 1938, p. 2.
- 57 Paul Bird, 'The Fortnight in New York', *Art Digest*, 13, no. 3, November 1, 1938, p. 22.
- 58 Records of Allied Artists of America, Archives of American Art (reel 853, fr. number illegible). Held, as most Allied exhibitions were, at the Fine Arts Building (215 West Fiftyseventh St), the Twenty-fifth Annual Exhibition dates ran from October 15 to 31, 1938. Samstag served on the Jury of Awards that year (fr. 940? [illegible]). A page listing the Davis portrait (no. 537) gives the dates as May 6–30, 1938, and the exhibition as the 22nd Annual (reel 853, fr. number illegible). The painting appears on the cover of 'One-Man

- Displays Lead in Art Field', May 2, 1938; 'Art Notes', January 12, 1940; Thomas C. Linn, '200 Art Works to Help Exiles', January 21, 1940.
- 59 Catalogue of the Forty-Ninth Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture, October 20-December 4, 1938 (exhibition catalogue), Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, 1938: Atlas was no. 190.
- 60 Eleanor Jewett, 'Institute Opens 49th American Exhibit Today', Chicago Daily Tribune, October 20, 1938. The author thanks Marie Kroeger, Archives Volunteer, Ryerson Library of the Art Institute of Chicago for locating and providing copies of Jewett's reviews of the Art Institute's 1938 show.
- 61 'Art Sale Will Aid Drive; Party to Open Exhibition Today for Maintenance of Refugees Fund', New York Times, May 2, 1937.
- 62 'Many May Shows On Art Calendar ... Sale of Works at Studio Guild Will Aid Fund of the Joint Distribution Committee', New York Times, May 3, 1937.
- 63 JDC Art Exhibition Opens With Social Function', *The American Hebrew*, 140, no. 25, May 7, 1937, G. The JDC holds no records relating to these exhibitions (Misha Mitsel, JDC Senior Archivist, email to author, May 13, 2014). Searches at the New-York Historical Society and other repositories produced no records of these JDC exhibitions. The author thanks Marilyn S. Kushner, Curator and Head of the Department of Prints, Photographs, and Architectural Collections at the New-York Historical Society for her assistance.
- 64 H[oward] D[eVree], 'Artists and Relief Work', New York Times, May 1, 1938. Among the other artists named were Isabel Bishop, Luigi Lucioni, Jonas Lie, Niles Spencer, Thomas Hart Benton, William Palmer, Peter Blume and William Gropper (who would later be on the faculty of Samstag's American Art School).
- 65 H[oward] D[eVree], 'Public Buys Art at Bargain Sale; 40 Works Sold for \$100 Each on Opening Day of Benefit', New York Times, April 28, 1938.
- 66 The 1938 exhibition and sale was organised by the New York artists Edith Bry and Renée Lahm, who had also served on the committee for the 1937 event ('Artists and Relief Work'). The exhibition ran from April 25 to May 9 and was held, as the 1937 exhibition had been, in the Studio Guild Galleries ('Events Here and There', New York Times, April 24, 1938). Other notices of the 1939 JDC exhibition (all New York Times) were: 'News of Art', April 19, 1938; 'One-Man Displays Lead in Art Field', May 2, 1938; 'Art Notes', January 12, 1940; Thomas C. Linn, '200 Art Works to Help Exiles', January 21, 1940.
- 67 The Sixteenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, March 26-May 7, 1939 (exhibition catalogue), Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Samstag's Nude was no. 297 (p. 61). See also Falk, Exhibition Record of the Corcoran Gallery, p. 240. Nude was loaned by the Montross Gallery.
- 68 'National Academy Names 16 Artists', New York Times, March 20, 1939. Samstag was elected as an Associate of the National Academy of Design (ANA); he was elected to full membership in 1965.

- 69 Jewell, 'The Contemporary Show at the Fair', New York Times, June 4, 1939. See also 'Exhibition of Art to Open on Thursday; Contemporary Works Will Be Shown at the Fair', New York Times, May 28, 1939.
- 70 DeVree, 'A Reviewer's Notebook; Group Exhibitions of Work by European and American Contemporary Artists', New York Times, June 11, 1939. Also among the thirty artists in the Ferargil exhibition were Ann Brockman, Edward Bruce, Luigi Lucioni and Paul Sample.
- 'Art Notes', New York Times, November 25, 1939. Samstag was one of three members of the Allied Artists of America who were elected to the board of control; the other two were Joseph Barr and Ogden Pleissner. Samstag's election is also recorded in 'Minutes of Annual Meeting (Record Book)', November 22, 1939, Records of the Allied Artists of America, Archives of American Art (reel 854, fr. 376–77).
- 72 Jewell, '9 Prizes Awarded by Allied Artists', New York
  Times, November 10, 1939. The exhibition opened with
  a preview on November 11. Painters is no. 286 in the
  catalogue, The Twenty-Sixth Annual Exhibition of The Allied
  Artists of America, November 11–26, 1939, Allied Artists
  of America, New York, 1939. The author thanks Autumn
  Mather of the Ryerson Library at the Art Institute of
  Chicago for providing copies of this catalogue.
- 73 'Allied Artists Open Their 26th Annual', *Art Digest*, 14, no. 4, November 15, 1939, p. 10.
- 74 The author thanks Bob Mueller, Chairman, Curators Committee, Salmagundi Club, for providing Samstag's exhibition record (email of August 26, 2011). For the records of the Salmagundi Club during Samstag's participation, see Alexander W. Katlan, Salmagundi Club Painting Exhibition Records 1940–1951 and Water Color Exhibition Records 1900–1951, Alexander W. Katlan and Salmagundi Club NYC, Flushing, New York, 2009. The author thanks Alexander Katlan for assistance in researching Samstag's history with the Salmagundi Club.
- 75 DeVree, 'A Reviewer's Notebook; Brief Comment on Some Recently Opened Exhibitions – Old Friends and New', New York Times, March 24, 1940. The description of The Dock as a 'fishing scene' is found in Records of the Salmagundi Club, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (reel SC 1, fr. 724). Samstag's Salmagundi Club exhibitions of 1940 were: Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings (February 11–March 1, 1940), no. 99 Scrubwoman; Exhibition of Water Colors and Sculpture (March 16–29, 1940), no. 30 The Dock (\$25 prize); Summer Exhibition of Pictures (May 10–September 27, 1940), no. 38 Coal Shed, Bass River, and Annual Black and White Exhibition (October 11–25, 1940), Office Building (Katlan, pp. 35, 282, 362, 569).
- 76 DeVree, 'A Reviewer's Notebook; Newly Opened Exhibitions Include Works By European and American Artists', New York Times, June 30, 1940. A Montross exhibition brochure, Twenty-five American Artists, has an opening date of June 24, but no other dates so it cannot definitively be cited as the correct brochure for this summer exhibition; its checklist includes two paintings by Samstag: no. 36, Anne and Sandra, and no. 37, Old White Horse (pamphlet files of the Ryerson Library at the Art Institute of Chicago).

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- 77 Falk, Exhibition Record of the National Academy, p. 458. The 114th Annual Exhibition took place during March 14–April 11, 1940; Anne and Sandra was no. 8 in the exhibition. In the National Academy's catalogue for 1940, Samstag was included in a photograph of the Jury of Selection and Assistants (p. 33).
- 78 DeVree, 'Summer Spreads Its Diverse Feast', New York Times, July 7, 1940.
- 79 DeVree, 'In Support of Our Art Further Discussion on Some Problems of Artists and Metropolitan Policy', New York Times, July 21, 1940. The painting was reproduced with the caption "Anne and Sandra", by Gordon Samstag, is in the current group exhibition of paintings by contemporary Americans at the Montross', with no other comment.
- 80 H[oward] D[eVree], 'Among the Recently Opened Shows', New York Times, July 14, 1940. The Times described the National Academy's contribution to the American Art Today exhibition at the New York World's Fair as 'a representative exhibition by members of the National Academy of Design', with more than a hundred works to be shown. The fair was open for two seasons: it opened on April 30, 1939, and closed in October, then re-opened in April of 1940; it closed permanently on October 27, 1940.
- 81 Allied Artists Records, Archives of American Art (reel 853, most fr. numbers illegible). The Twenty-seventh Annual Exhibition (October 30–November 12, 1940) may have included Samstag's Sand and Gravel (fr. 544? [illegible]). Samstag was a member of the Board of Control in 1940. The joint exhibition of the Allied Artists and the New York Water Color Club was held at the American Art Today building at the New York World's Fair, June 1–19, 1940.
- 82 'Modern Art to Be Shown; Canvases to Illustrate the Topic, "Comments on Today", New York Times, November 6, 1940. See also 'Allied Artists Seek a "Simpler Sincerity" in Annual Exhibition', The Art Digest, November 15, 1940, p. 16. It is not certain what Samstag showed in either of the Allied Artists exhibitions in 1940, whether at the World's Fair (with the New York Water Color Club) or in the regular annual exhibition in November; see note 80. Sand and Gravel is named in the Allied Artists' records reel 853, fr. 544? [illegible] but it is unclear to which exhibition that listing refers.
- 83 'Allied Artists Seek', The Art Digest.
- 84 Mueller, email to author, August 26, 2011; exhibition records of Salmagundi Club. The 1941 exhibitions of the Salmagundi Club that featured Samstag were Annual Exhibition and Auction Sale of Pictures (January 12–24, 1941), no. 56 *Demi-Tasse*; Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings (February 9–28, 1941), no. 80 *Anne and Fidelma*; and Exhibition of Water Colors and Sculpture (March 15–28, 1941), no. 69 *The Shoppers* and no. 110 *Harwichport*. The January 1941 exhibition also involved an auction, from which *Demi-Tasse* may have been sold.
- 85 Jewell, 'Americans: A Print Collection; Recent Paintings', New York Times, February 23, 1941. He also participated in a group exhibition of twenty-five artists that opened at the Montross on June 8, 1941.
- 86 Howard DeVree, 'A Reviewer's Notebook: New Shows ...', New York Times, June 8, 1941. According to this review, the Montross exhibition included twenty-five artists.

87 According to records at the Art Students League, Samstag was employed during the summers of 1940, 1941, 1942, 1945 and 1946 and is listed as teaching 'Life Drawing, Painting, Portrait, Still Life, and Composition'; email from Stephanie Cassidy, Archivist, Art Students League, May 29, 2014. The author thanks Ms Cassidy for her timely and helpful assistance. The date of one exhibition is given as July 15-August 1 in 'Events Here and There; Galleries Taking Part in the Exhibition Next Week', New York Times, July 13, 1941; the second is dated August 5-22 in DeVree, 'A Reviewer's Notebook: Annual Founders Show at Grand Central Galleries', New York Times, August 3, 1941. In the early 1960s, Samstag recalled his position at the League as 'Instructor in painting and drawing' from 1938 to 1940 (Author's Questionnaire, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, April 2, 1961, in the Alfred A. Knopf Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin). Samstag completed the questionnaire in the course of the publication of Training Your Own Dog, a book written and illustrated by Anne and Gordon and published by Knopf in 1961.

### THE NEW DEAL MURALS 1936-40

- 1 The primary source of information on the murals at both Reidsville and Scarsdale is the National Records and Archives Administration (NARA) in College Park, Maryland. All the relevant records are contained in Record Group 121, Records of the Public Building Service, Records Concerning Federal Art Activities, Textual Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Buildings Administration and Its Predecessors, Case Files Concerning Embellishments of Federal Buildings, 1934-43 (abbreviated as RG 121). For Reidsville specifically, records are found in Box 64; the records for Scarsdale are in Box 79. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations and information regarding each mural site can be found in these boxes. The author thanks Eugene Morris, Reference Specialist, for his help in accessing these documents, and Nancy Malan, retired NARA archivist, for her accommodation and useful advice in this research. For information and commentary on all the New Deal murals in the state of North Carolina, see Anita Price Davis, New Deal Art in North Carolina: The murals, sculptures, reliefs, paintings, oils and frescoes and their creators, McFarland and Co., Inc., Jefferson, North Carolina and London, 2009 (see pp. 129-33 for the entry on Reidsville), and Audrey Middleton Whitehurst, 'Taste, Talent, and Tradition: Art and the New Deal in North Carolina', master's thesis, East Carolina University School of Art, August 1977 (for Reidsville, see pp. 66-67).
- 2 Memorandum to the Director of Procurement, February 17, 1937. This memorandum includes the initial proposal of two murals.
- 3 Edward Rowan to Gordon Samstag, July 22, 1937, RG 121, Box 64.
- 4 Samstag to Rowan, July 26, 1937. In his letter, Samstag asked the Section to return the 'hayfield' sketch he had submitted for the San Antonio (Texas) post office competition. He had not won this mural commission, but he wanted 'to work the hayfield scene into the sketches' for Reidsville. It was not unusual for New Deal artists to incorporate visual ideas from one design into subsequent mural proposals. Replying to Samstag, Rowan stated that

- he was 'pleased' that the hayfield scene ('which all of us in this office remember with a great deal of pleasure') could be used in another design (Rowan to Samstag, July 30, 1937). Some of the designs that artists sent to the Section were photographed and many of these photographs entered the Still Pictures division of the National Archives. One such photograph appears to be of Samstag's haying scene.
- 5 Inslee Hopper, Assistant Superintendent, to Samstag, August 11, 1937. Hopper wrote to 'confirm your conference with Miss [Maria] Ealand on Saturday', at which Samstag had proposed one mural instead of two. While acknowledging Samstag's suggestion of a tobacco subject, Hopper also suggested that the artist consider a scene related to the Resettlement community that the New Deal had established in Reidsville. No trace of this community or recollection of it can be found today (author's email of January 13, 2015 to the Rockingham County Public Library; emails of January 26, February 7, and April 12, 2015 to the Museum and Archives of Rockingham County). The absence of local memory regarding a Resettlement community is echoed by Dr Lindley Butler of the board of the Museum and Archives of Rockingham County (MARC) (email to author, April 13, 2015). With regard to the date of Samstag's Reidsville visit, it might be expected that the awarding of a mural and the visit of a New York artist might have been reported in the local newspaper, but apparently it was not.
- 6 In addition to the tobacco subject, Hopper still wanted Samstag to develop a new sketch of a haying scene and submit them both (Hopper to Samstag, August 11, 1937). He did so, and both sketches received praise, but he was directed to carry forward only the tobacco scene into a colour sketch with some changes: 'The only suggestion is that the upper left hand section can, in our estimation, be made more interesting by bringing the wagon now stationed at the shed somewhat down right on a diagonal. We believe that such procedure would more happily break up the large area referred to. A little more definition in the background landscape might prove an advantage in the color.' (Rowan to Samstag, September 30, 1937). This exacting commentary was typical of the Section.
- 7 The Section recommended the official approval of Samstag's design and his commission on October 12, 1937 (Memorandum to the Director of Procurement, signed by Rowan). Samstag sent samples of the canvas he planned to use and assented to the completion of the mural (to be titled *Tobacco*) by May 31, 1938 (Samstag to Rowan, October 15, 1937). The Reidsville postmaster was informed of Samstag's commission and the expectation that the artist would see to its proper installation (Supervising Architect to Postmaster, October 22, 1937). A contract dated October 29, 1937, was mailed to Samstag on November 9, 1937 (Rowan to Samstag). The actual signed contract is not in the Reidsville file in Box 64.
- 8 Rowan to Samstag, November 24, 1937. Cartoons were working drawings on paper in the size of the actual mural, and few of them have survived, as Samstag's apparently has not. Although photographs exist in federal records, none of Samstag's preparatory works for the Reidsville mural have been located. In addition to their attention to subject matter, style and the competence of the artist, the Section also required detailed information on the materials

- to be used they intended that these public works of art be carried out to the highest technical standards. In a signed, undated (though probably around October, 1937) questionnaire, Samstag provided complete information on his materials, including the following: for his paints, he planned to use 'Dry Artists Colors; Fezandie and Sperle'; the installation adhesive was to be 'Water Adhesive'; the colours in his palette were 'Cremnitz White, Cadmium Yellow Light, Deep and Red Burnt Sienna, Cobalt Blue, Ultramarine, Viridien Green, Ivory Black'; and the other media were to be '1/3 White Damar Varnish, 1/3 Linseed Oil, 1/3 Turpentine and a very small quantity of Siccatif de Courtray'. When asked to describe his 'method of working as to technique', he explained, 'I work directly, allowing surfaces to dry before working on them again. I work over the entire painting several times eventually covering the canvas opaquely.'The dating of October 1937 is based upon correspondence between Samstag and Alexander Ables, Technical Advisor of the Section: Abels to Samstag, October 21, 1937, and Samstag to Abels, October 25, 1937 (in which Samstag states his plan to use one of the two canvas samples submitted). The author thanks Eugene Morris of the National Archives (see note 1, page 158) for suggesting a search of these technical questionnaires.
- An accounting sheet dated December 6, 1937, recorded that Samstag was to be paid \$500 out of the \$1600 allotted to the mural project. Near the end of January 1938, Samstag's progress was deemed sufficient to warrant a second instalment of the \$1600 fee (memorandum to the Director of Procurement, signed by Rowan, January 31, 1938).
- 10 Samstag to Rowan, January 24, 1938.
- 11 Rowan to Samstag, February 1, 1938.
- 12 Samstag to Rowan, February 21, 1938, and Rowan to Samstag, March 19, 1938.
- 13 Samstag to Rowan, January 24, 1938.
- 14 Samstag to Rowan, April 13, 1938.
- 15 W.B Somers (Reidsville postmaster) to Samstag, May 2, 1938.
- 16 C. Alton Pearson, telephone conversation with author, October 30, 2001. The author thanks Mr Pearson, a Reidsville farmer and businessman, for providing general information on tobacco farming in the area. According to Mr Pearson, what was called 'priming' on the farms around Reidsville was called 'cropping' elsewhere in North Carolina, especially the eastern part of the state.
- 17 Pearson, telephone conversation.
- 18 'Oil Painting Being Hung in Post Office', Reidsville Review, May 2, 1938. It seems likely that Samstag's guide during his visit to Reidsville was the postmaster, W.B. Somers, whose correspondence with the Section suggests his complete cooperation and even strong support for the painting of a mural for his town's post office. In Reidsville today is a Crutchfield Road, which was named for the farm used in Samstag's mural. Since the artist himself did not return to Reidsville to install his mural, nor is there any indication that the newspaper contacted him regarding the short article about his murals, the information about the precise location probably came from Somers.

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- 19 Samstag to Forbes Watson, quoted in Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas: Post offices and public* art in the New Deal, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 47.
- 20 For an overview of the situation of children during the Great Depression, especially as labourers, see Kriste Lindenmeyer, The Greatest Generation Grows Up: American childhood in the 1930s, Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, 2005. For examples of Lange's Depression Era photographs, see her book (with Paul Schuster Taylor), An American Exodus: A record of human erosion, Reynal and Hitchcock, New York, 1939. For an overview of documentary photography in Depression America, see R. Jack Hurley, Portrait of a Decade: Roy Stryker and the development of documentary photography in the thirties, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1972.
- 21 Bob Carter, 'The "Tobacco" Mural in the Reidsville, North Carolina Municipal Building', April 2015, supplied in an email to the author, April 13, 2015. The author sincerely thanks Mr Carter, the Rockingham (North Carolina) County Historian, for passing on his detailed research into the Crutchfield farm and family, and for his important contribution to the history of the mural. Mr Carter is associated with the Museum and Archives of Rockingham County (MARC); the author thanks Joyce Anderson, president of MARC, for facilitating contact with Mr Carter.
- 22 Ibid, and email to author, April 13, 2005. With regard to the Crutchfield farm, Mr Carter also noted that 'over the years the system of tenant farming ended and the farm was leased to other farmers'.
- 23 Ibia
- 24 *Ibid.* According to Bob Carter, in one way the Whiteville mural may depict a more common practice regarding the labour of women than Samstag's mural does: 'The scene is a little unusual because most women did not "prime tobacco" but worked at the barn "stringing" the tobacco leaves onto sticks to be hung in the barn for the curing process.'The prominence of the woman in the mural may have been Samstag's inclination (surely promoted by the Section) to show farm work as a family endeavour. It may also have reflected his interest in the labour of women: in both of his Scarsdale murals, he showed women at work. *Harvesting Tobacco* is now installed at Southeastern Community College in Whiteville. The author thanks Shirley Fairfax Lewis, Archive Librarian, Southeastern Community College for assistance regarding the Schatt mural.
- 25 For short discussions of each of these murals and their artists, see Davis (Dunn, p. 62; Louisburg, p. 100; Mebane, p. 110; Roxboro, p. 146; and Whiteville, p. 187) and Whitehurst (Dunn, p. 64; Louisburg, p. 73; Mebane, p. 79; Roxboro, p. 55; and Whiteville, pp. 89-90). The mural in Roxboro is now housed at Piedmont Community College; the author thanks Elizabeth M. Townsend, Director of Public Information and Marketing, for assistance regarding the Gould mural. The sculpture Cotton and Tobacco is now in the office of the local newspaper, the Dunn Daily Record, a building formerly occupied by the Dunn post office. The author thanks Tracy J. McLamb, Plant/Production Manager, Sunbelt Press, for assistance regarding the Dunn sculpture. A mural in the post office at Wake Forest, North Carolina, Richness of the Soil, II (1941) by Harold G. Egan, depicted a farmer reaching down towards a tobacco plant; the current status of this mural is uncertain.

- 26 Somers to Samstag, May 2, 1938.
- 27 Rowan to Somers, May 5, 1938.
- 28 Somers to Rowan, undated, but with Section reception stamp of May 19, 1938.
- 29 'Oil Painting Being Hung'.
- 30 'Farm Scene Faithfully Depicted in Mural', Greensboro [North Carolina] Daily News, May 11, 1938. The clipping is located in the file on Reidsville in Box 64 of RG 121.
- 31 Rowan to Samstag, quoting from a letter sent from Charles Gage, USDA, to Rowan, July 29, 1941.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Samstag to Rowan, July 30, 1941.
- 34 The author thanks Angela Stadler, City Clerk, for facilitating a visit to the mural in March of 2001.
  Unfortunately, the records of the post office were destroyed when it moved to its new building (Karen Wagner, Postmaster, telephone conversation with author, March 9, 2001) and the local library and historical organisations have no archives relating to the mural or its artist.
- 35 Ruth Nash Chalmers, Editor, Scarsdale Inquirer, to Louis Simon, Supervising Architect, Treasury Department, January 17, 1937. Unless otherwise noted, all citations regarding Samstag's murals for the Scarsdale post office are found in Record Group 121, Records of the Public Buildings Service, Records Concerning Federal Art Activities, Textual Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Buildings Administration and Its Predecessors, Case Files Concerning Embellishments of Federal Buildings, 1934–43, New York, Poughkeepsie Springville, Box 79, Entry 133 (abbreviated as RG 121, Box 79). The Scarsdale newspaper was published weekly.
- 36 Ibid. The Port Chester murals were painted by Domenico Mortellito (1906–94).
- 37 Chalmers to Simon, January 17, 1937. Chalmers ended her letter by citing the interest of the local art community in the issue, with perhaps a hint that someone from among them might be selected as the artist: 'The Scarsdale Woman's Club has a very active art section which is interested in this question, as is also the recently organised Scarsdale Art Association.' It was common for communities to wonder if a local artist might be employed, and the Section did try to accommodate those desires from time to time, but not in this case.
- 38 Rowan to Chalmers, January 21, 1938. Rowan requested the address of the Scarsdale Woman's Club and the Art Association so that he could notify them when 'the sculptor selected to do the work will have an opportunity of conferring with them'.
- 39 General Edward Clinton Young, President, Scarsdale Art Association, to Rowan, February 3, 1938.
- 40 Rowan to Young, March 19, 1938.
- 41 The change from sculpture to murals was authorised on September 1, 1938, maintaining the funding of \$1200 (Memorandum for Section of Painting and Sculpture).
- 42 Rowan to Samstag, January 13, 1939.
- 43 Samstag to Rowan, January 14, 1939. The postmaster at Scarsdale was notified that Samstag had received the commission for the murals and would be visiting the post office on January 19 (Rowan, telegram to Postmaster, Scarsdale, January 18, 1939).

- 44 'Postoffice [sic] Mural Subjects Will Record Early History; Caleb Heathcote Will Buy the Richbell Farm, Mete Out Justice in His Manor', Scarsdale Inquirer, April 14, 1939. The Section acknowledged receipt of two sketches for Scarsdale (Rowan to Samstag, February 16, 1939). The Scarsdale Inquirer article and other materials regarding the Scarsdale murals can be found in files of the Scarsdale Public Library. The author thanks the library, especially reference librarian Florence Sinsheimer, for assistance during a 2001 visit, and for help again in 2015.
- 45 'Postoffice [sic] Murals Draw Praise from Community', Scarsdale Inquirer, March 1, 1940.
- 46 'Historical Note on Proposed Murals for Scarsdale N.Y. Post Office: "Caleb Heathcote Buys the Richbell Farm". Samstag's written description of his two designs was undated, but they include his address as 332 West Twenty-eighth St. Rowan's reply acknowledging the receipt of these materials is dated February 16, 1939 and refers to Samstag's 'notes' of February 6. In those notes of c, February 6, Samstag cited his sources as Bolton, Scharf [sic] and Shonnard and Spooner's History of Westchester County'. These books, all of which could be found at the New York Public Library were: Robert A. Bolton, A History of the County of Westchester, New York, from Its First Settlement to the Present Time, A.S. Gould, New York, 1848; J. Thomas Scharf, History of Westchester County, New York, including Morrisania, Kingsbridge, and West Farms, L.E. Preston and Co., Philadelphia, 1886; and Frederic Shonnard and W.W. Spooner, History of Westchester County, from Its Earliest Settlement to the Year 1900, New York History Co., New York, 1900. In Scharf, the fourth chapter, 'The Origin and History of Manors in New York, and in the County of Westchester', was written by Edward Floyd De Lancey, a descendant of Heathcote's; material from this chapter will be cited as Scharf.
- 47 Rowan to Samstag, February 16, 1939.
- 48 Samstag, telegram to Rowan, February 18, 1939.
- 49 Rowan, telegram to Samstag, February 21, 1939. Rowan also sent a letter that day, detailing his disapproval of the sketch.
- 50 Samstag, 'Historical Note on Proposed Murals'. Samstag's handwritten description of 'Incident at the Varian Inn' was based partly upon Bolton and Scharf, but mainly upon Elise Lathrop, Early American Inns and Taverns, R.M. McBride and Co., New York, 1926. The artist wrote, 'The Varian Inn, later called the Wayside Inn is now the Scarsdale Public Library and while much restored is still a famous historic building. Its ownership is known from 1717 when Edmund Tompkins bought it from Caleb Heathecote [sic]. The scene in the sketch shows the Varian family who bought the Inn in 1775. The story of how Varian hid his cow and bible in the cellar to prevent their seizure by the British is related in most of the best known source books.'
- 51 For a history of the building, see 'Wayside Cottage' on the website of the Junior League of Central Westchester: www.jlcentralwestchester.org/wayside-cottage, accessed January 15, 2015.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Lathrop, Early American Inns, pp. 91–92. Lathrop refers to the Wayside Inn as 'Scarsdale's oldest house'; though

- the exact date when it was built is not known, it was first documented in 1729
- 54 Rowan to Samstag, February 21, 1939.
- 55 Rowan to Samstag, March 4, 1939. Soon after, Samstag also provided details of the materials and techniques he would employ, including the types of paint and varnishes (handwritten questionnaire, March 14, 1939). The Section was quite particular about the materials artists used, and it's notable that most New Deal murals, unless they have been deliberately damaged, have endured. The technical questionnaires Samstag filled out for the Section are our only evidence of these preferred techniques and materials at that point in his career, and reflect his academic training. Samstag's technical questionnaire for Scarsdale is similar to that for the Reidsville mural; see note 8.
- 56 Rowan to Samstag, March 30, 1939.
- 57 'U.S. Treasury Orders Murals for Postoffice [sie]', March 24, 1934, p. 1. In saying that the judges did not know his name, the article refers to the typical practice of the Section competitions of judging the works of art without knowing who the artist was. The article also informed readers that the cost of the mural had been covered by savings in the construction of the building. Aware that not everyone supported Roosevelt and his policies, the Treasury Section liked to emphasise the frugality of its program.
- 58 'Postoffice Mural Subjects'.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 *Ibid*.
- 62 Ibid. The article noted that Mrs Ward had 'just completed the fifteenth in a series of large murals for the New York Aquarium'.
- 63 Samstag to Rowan, probably February 6, 1938.
- 64 One of Ann Richbell's daughters, Mary, married into the Mott family, among whose descendants was Anne Davis Samstag. One of Anne Samstag's sisters was named Martha Mott Davis. The author thanks Ross Wolfe and Judith Green for information on the ancestry of the family.
- 65 'Postoffice Mural Subjects'.
- 66 Samstag to Rowan, May 11, 1939. The photographs of the cartoons are in the Still Pictures section of the National Archives and Records Administration: 121-GA-SAMS(2)-3502 (Caleb Heathcote Buys the Richbell Farm) and 121-GA-SAMS(2)-3501 (Law and Order in Old Scarsdale Manor). With acceptance by the Section of these cartoons, Samstag's second payment of \$400 was authorised (Memorandum to the Director of Procurement, May 15, 1939; the authorisation for the payment voucher was dated May 24, 1939).
- 67 Caleb Heathcote was born on March 6, 1666. His oldest brother Gilbert had been granted a royal title and was reputed to be the richest commoner in England at the time of his death. See Dixon Ryan Fox, Caleb Heathcote, Gentleman Colonist: The story of a career in the Province of New York, 1692–1721, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1926 (reprinted by Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., New York, 1971), p. 6. Though Samstag did not cite Fox's biography as a source, he surely consulted it in educating himself about Heathcote.

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- 68 See Fox. Several sources, including Fox, mention a failed romance as the cause of Heathcote's emigration from England. His fiancée, Mary Dawsonne, married his brother, Samuel, in 1690 (Fox, p. 7). According to Fox, the Westchester militia had a reputation for disorderliness, and Heathcote was known for his ability to mediate disagreements. Samstag may have had these factors in mind when he chose a scene of a contentious prisoner being brought into Heathcote's outdoor court in Law and Order in Old Scarsdale Manor.
- 69 Fox, p. 70.
- 70 For further detail on the legalities of land transfer, see Fox, pp. 67–68, 86.
- 71 For accounts of Richbell's purchase, see Bolton, p. 13; Fox, pp. 73, 102–105; Scharf, pp. 143–47; and Shonnard and Spooner, pp. 130–31. Scharf reproduces the documents relating to the Richbell purchase, including the Indian deed. It was signed on September 23, 1661 by Wappaquewam, acknowledging payment, in part, of twenty-two coats, 'one hundred fathom of Wampum', twelve shirts, twelve 'barrs' of lead, fifteen hatchets and three kettles, all to be paid by the following spring. As a good faith gesture, Wappaquewam personally received from Richbell 'two Shirts and Ten Shillings in Wampum' (pp. 144–45).
- 72 The sources Samstag consulted in preparation for the Scarsdale mural contained considerable information about the Indian tribes of Westchester County, notably Bolton in his 'Introduction: Aborigines', p. ix, and Shonnard and Spooner in their Chapter 2, 'The Aboriginal Inhabitants', pp. 26–27. In Shonnard and Spooner, the Siwanoy were described as a band of the Wappinger division of the Mohican (p. 24).
- 73 Concerning the business adventures of Richbell, see Shonnard and Spooner, pp. 130–31, and Scharf, pp. 143–49, which includes the text of documents for his various land dealings. Samstag may have read these pages with interest since they had to do with his wife's ancestry.
- 74 Ann Richbell vigorously defended her rights to the lands purchased by her husband, who died in 1684. For example, she brought a suit against the city of Rye over her rights in one of her properties, which was decided in her favour in 1696 (Scharf, pp. 149–51). Samstag's depiction of her closely examining a piece of paper may reflect his research into the history of Scarsdale and the Richbell family.
- 75 'Postoffice Mural Subjects'. According to Bolton (pp. 97–98), the 'indenture' that settled the matter 'between Col. Caleb Heathcote on the one part, of Mamaroneck, gentleman, and the Indian proprietors, Patthunck, Beaupo, Kohawney, and Wapetuck, on the other part' was signed on March 20, 1701. Heathcote appears to have paid in New York currency. See also Scharf's account of the Indians' transfer of the property (p. 151), and Shonnard and Spooner's (p. 183).
- 76 Samstag could have read the papers relating to this sale in several places, including the sources he cited. The full text of Heathcote's patent is recorded in Bolton, pp. 98–101; Scharf, pp. 141–43; and Fox, pp. 287–91.
- 77 Like many New Deal artists, Samstag would have been careful to be as accurate as possible in every detail, including historical dress. The clothing for Heathcote and

- his similarly attired associates is at least partly based on Heathcote's portrait in the collection of the New-York Historical Society. The Museum of the Historical Society gives a date of c. 1710–15 for its oil on canvas (80.0 x 66.7 centimetres/31½ x 26¼ inches; 1913.3; Purchase, The Louis Durr Fund). Samstag may have also known the full-size sculpture of Heathcote on the Chambers St façade of the Surrogate's Court of Manhattan, carved by Philip Martiny (1858–1927) as part of the sculptural program for the Carrère and Hastings building (1907). For Martiny, see www.philipmartiny.com/martiny1.htm, accessed January 27, 2015; the Philip Martiny Papers are found in the Archives of American Art.
- 78 'Heathcote, Scarsdale Founder, Thrives Again in New Murals; Samstag Research for Postoffice [sic] Paintings Brings to Life Village Father Who Was Once Mayor of New York City', White Plains [New York] Evening Dispatch, February 28, 1940. This same article, with only minor changes, was published as 'Days of Scarsdale Research Make Artist Historical Authority; Samstag Says Heathcote, Village Founder, Was Real Estate Developer, Politician Murals Received', Yonkers Herald-Statesman, February 28, 1940. Both of these articles are found as clippings in Samstag's file at the National Academy.
- 79 Among the well-known paintings in which the presence of a child is often interpreted as a symbol of the future are Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830, and Gustave Courbet's *The Artist's Studio*, 1855, both of which Samstag could have seen during his stay in Paris in the late 1920s.
- 80 The flowered and somewhat delicate-looking material of Mrs Richbell's skirt, with its elaborate border of contrasting fabric, would have likely been imported from Europe, and thus would have been costly. The ordinary colours and weaves of the other women's clothing could have been produced in the colonies and could, in fact, have been dyed and woven on the Richbell farm.
- 81 Pam O'Brien, 'Painter of Scarsdale History Returns',

  Scarsdale Inquirer, August 16, 1986. Samstag followed his
  comment on the black slave by adding, 'Just picture this
  great gentleman with good influence with King William
  in England ... and instead of coming down the highway in
  his Rolls-Royce, which is what he would do now, he would
  ride his old nag through the woods from town to town.'
- 82 See the exhibition mounted by the New-York Historical Society: 'Slavery in New York', October 7, 2005–March 26, 2006; the online exhibition materials at www.slaveryinnewyork.org, accessed January 28, 2015; and the accompanying publication, Ira Berlin and Leslie M. Harris, eds, Slavery in New York, New Press and W.W. Norton, New York, 2005. For further background, see Thelma Wills Foote, Black and White Manbattan: The history of racial formation in colonial New York City, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004. The author thanks David N. Gellman for his very helpful consultation on the subject of slavery in New York during his visit to Des Moines (April 25, 2015), and for the information contained in his book Emancipating New York: The politics of slavery and freedom, 1777–1827, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2006.
- 83 Fox's biography was published in 1926 and thus would have been available to Samstag.

- 84 Fox, pp. 115 and 123, n. 45; letter from George Muirson, 'Anglican Church at Rye', to the Secretary of the Society for Propagating the Gospel, January 9, 1708, reproduced in *The Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York*, vol. III, 1695–97, available online at http://babel.hathitrust.org, accessed January 27, 2015.
- 85 For a short essay on the Mayflower Compact, based upon a painting by the American artist N.C. Wyeth from his series 'America in the Making' (1938–40), see Lea Rosson DeLong, N.C. Wyeth's America in the Making, University Museums, Iowa State University, Ames, 2011, pp. 20–25.
- 86 On the character of the Westchester militia, see Fox, p. 45; for Heathcote's mediation of the Rye Rebellion of 1696–97, see Fox pp. 46–49. Among his appointments as judge were the Westchester Court of Sessions, the Court of Common Pleas and the Prerogative Court, all before he acquired the manor of Scarsdale. For more on Heathcote's experience as a judge, see Fox's chapter, 'The Colonel and the Judge' (pp. 44–64).
- 87 'Postoffice Mural Subjects'. In this article Samstag was reported as saying, 'Heathcote was by right entitled to hold ... Court-Leet ... However, there was even then a democratic spirit in America, and Heathcote, who was very much of "of his time" did not exercise his manorial rights in the strict sense.'
- 88 Land grants remained common after American independence, even into the nineteenth century. Abraham Lincoln, for example, was given a grant of land in Iowa territory for his service in the Black War of 1832. The creating of manors was a practice largely limited to the eastern colonies and especially to colonial New York. For discussions of manors, see Fox's chapters 'The Land Speculator' (pp. 65–95) and 'The Lord of Scarsdale' (pp. 96–123), and De Lancey's chapter 'The Origin and History of Manors in New York and in the County of Westchester' in Scharf (pp. 31–160, especially pp. 141–60). Heathcote's was the last manor to be created in New York.
- 89 Fox, pp. 107-108.
- 90 'Heathcote, Scarsdale Founder'.
- 91 De Lancey, in Scharf, p. 152.
- 92 Ibid. Heathcote's biographer accounted for his lack of enthusiasm in exercising his manorial rights by noting that since Heathcote was the judge of these other colonial courts, he would end up presiding over the cases anyway: 'Whatever the court might call itself, it was Colonel Caleb Heathcote who dispensed justice in those parts' (Fox, p. 108).
- 93 'Postoffice Mural Subjects'.
- 94 Heathcote's curly brown hair in the first mural may be his natural hair, since it does follow the style of the period. In Law and Order in Old Scarsdale Manor, his status is even greater, so he wears a more formal hairstyle. His hair is undoubtedly a powdered wig (as is that of the well-dressed man seated with him on the bench), which was the fashion of the early eighteenth century and which would have been appropriate to his station in life.
- 95 A sentence in stocks could stretch into several days. The practice was mostly ended during the nineteenth century and it became regarded as a benign or even comic sort of punishment, as Samstag himself suggested in his 1986 comments about his mural: 'Upon seeing the Scarsdale

- murals again, Samstag had a few suggestions. "Now what occurred to me ... was that it would be a lot of fun, a good idea, if you had a public-spirited group to build a stocks somewhere in the public square to use for drug users and drunk drivers these are the two most popular community crimes. And if you put a stocks up, put a little plaque saying, "These were used in this village in 1743 and they should be using them again.'" (O'Brien, 'Painter of Scarsdale History Returns'). Since Heathcote died in 1721, Samstag must have misstated or incorrectly recalled the date of 1743 in his statement, or else he was misquoted.
- 96 Keeping the backgrounds of the two murals consistent was probably a prime consideration of Samstag's, one that he used effectively as a way to show the passage of time.
- 97 Scharf, p. 141.
- 98 Bolton, p. 114.
- 99 The Department of the Post Office, believing that the murals were 'nearing completion', advised the Procurement Division to authorise the Scarsdale postmaster to permit their installation (Purdum to Procurement Division, May 29, 1939). Rowan then wrote Samstag that he could go ahead with his installation any time. Rowan's letter was addressed to Samstag at 'Briarcliff' (the correct name is Byrdcliff) at Woodstock, New York, indicating that he had gone to the upstate artists' colony for the second time; a June 15 letter from Samstag to Rowan, sent from 332 West Twenty-eighth St in New York, suggests that the Byrdcliff stay was only a week or two (Rowan to Samstag, June 2, 1939).
- 100 Samstag to Rowan, July 6, 1939.
- 101 Maria Ealand, Administrative Assistant, to Samstag, July 12, 1939.
- 102 Samstag to Rowan, December 1, 1939. Samstag's return address was noted as 39 West Twenty-seventh St, indicating that he had moved since July.
- 103 Rowan to Samstag, December 13, 1939. A letter from W.E. Reynolds, Commissioner of Public Buildings to Samstag, January 24, 1940, confirms the extension of the deadline.
- 104 Ealand to Samstag, Feburary 19, 1940. As required, Samstag sent photographs of the completed murals.
- 105 Samstag to Rowan, March 1, 1940.
- 106 H.M. Dury, Scarsdale Postmaster, to Public Buildings Administration, February 28, 1940. His letter was acknowledged by Forbes Watson, March 6, 1940.
- 107 Forbes Watson, Memorandum to the Commissioner of Public Buildings, March 1, 1940, requesting payment voucher. The voucher for \$500 was dated March 9, 1940.
- 108 'Postoffice Murals Draw Praise From Community', *Scarsdale Inquirer*, March 1, 1940.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Ibid.
- 111 Rowan to Samstag, March 12, 1940.
- 112 'Murals Depicting Colonial Life to Be Installed in Scarsdale Postoffice; Postoffice at Scarsdale Gets Murals Tomorrow; 2 Paintings Depicting Historical Incidents to Be Installed', New York Herald Tribune, February 26, 1940.
- 113 'Scarsdale Gets Murals', New York Times, February 28, 1940.

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114 Samstag to Rowan, March 25, 1940. Samstag wrote, 'As you will see in the photograph [of the finished mural], the skirt hides the left foot of this figure and the request was to have the foot show.'The artist must have been mistaken when he identified the offending foot as the left, since it is clearly the right foot of the figure, which sometimes is and sometimes isn't hidden by her skirt in the various preparatory works.

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- 116 Rowan to Samstag, March 28, 1940. Rowan also wrote that same day to the postmaster at Scarsdale, telling him that 'the members of the Section of Fine Arts concur in this criticism and the artist has been instructed ... to make the necessary changes'. The following day, he wrote again to Samstag to acknowledge the artist's March 25 letter asking for Rowan's recommendation about the criticism, and he used the letter to emphasise his instruction to make the changes in the figures (Rowan to Samstag, March 29, 1940).
- 117 Samstag to Rowan, April 2, 1940.
- 118 Samstag to Rowan, April 16, 1940
- 119 The author thanks the Postmaster of the Scarsdale Post Office, Michael Calabrese, and the Manager, Soraya Watson, for facilitating a visit to the building in May 2015 to inspect the current state of the mural.
- 120 Samstag to Rowan, April 16, 1940.
- 121 Samstag participated in one of these exhibitions, which was co-sponsored by the American Red Cross and toured the country, beginning in 1942. A competition was held to select the works for the exhibition and Samstag's oil painting entitled *Nurse* was accepted. It does not seem likely that this painting is the same as *Nurses* of 1936. See 'Red Cross Exhibition (New York and the Middlewest)', n.d., RG 121, Records of the Public Buildings Service, Central Office Records of the TRAP and the Fine Arts Section, 1934–43, General Records. Papers relating to this exhibition can also be found on microfilm reel DC 40, fr.1332–38. The painting or any photographs of it have not been located.
- 122 O'Brien, 'Painter of Scarsdale History Returns'. Samstag also expressed his frustration that he didn't get to paint any more murals for the Section, and said that he thought it might have been a political issue: 'They were a rather pink group,' he said a reference to what some supposed to be the leftist leanings of the federal art programs. However, no documents so far discovered suggest that any federal agency questioned Samstag about his politics, and the art agencies of the New Deal were generally noted for their non-partisan character and their lack of discrimination.
- 123 Kelly B. Seymore, 'Artist Hopes to Shed More Light on Scarsdale Post Office Murals', White Plains Reporter Dispatch, Gannett Westchester Newspapers, September 2, 1986.
- 124 The postmaster received Samstag's suggestions for explanatory plaques and improved lighting very favourably, calling them both 'good ideas'. He echoed the best of the commentary that had initially been bestowed on Samstag: 'They're (the murals) very attractive and well-done pieces of artistry ... I think better lighting would enhance them' (Seymore, 'Artist Hopes to Shed More Light').
- 125 The campaign to clean and restore Samstag's Scarsdale murals started when, on December 13, 1978, Grady E. Jensen sent a letter to Jane Hackett, Village Historian,

to report 'the dingy state of the two murals ... I believe that the murals should be cleaned and cared for both because they relate to the Village's history and because they resulted from the WPA artists' program. After the cleaning was accomplished, Jensen wrote (on February 19, 1980) to the *Scarsdale Inquirer* suggesting they publish a story on the murals. This and other correspondence can be found in the Post Office file of the Scarsdale Public Library.

### A CHANGED WORLD: WAR AND ART 1941-61

- 1 'Salmagundi Club Opens 65th Show; Annual Exhibition in 47 Fifth Avenue to Include Auction of 250 Paintings; Aid for British Artists; Part of Proceeds of Sale will Go to London - Haggard at Preview Reception', New York Times, January 11, 1942. The exhibition/auction dates were January 10-30, 1942. Samstag's name leads the list of artists whose works were exhibited; others were John Taylor Arms, Ivan G. Olinsky, Stow Wengenroth, Ogden Pleissner and Eugene Higgins. Haggard was Godfrey D. Haggard, the British Consul General in New York, who attended the preview and praised the club for keeping 'the light of art burning in the gloom of war'. In a correct but perhaps ironic comment, he added that the Europeans might 'inspire American youths to great ideas'. The artistic emigrants did certainly influence Americans; as it turned out, however, many of them (members of the New York School were of the same generation as Samstag) developed styles that put them into conflict with organisations such as the Salmagundi Club.
- 2 Howard DeVree, 'A Reviewer's Notebook: Brief Comment on Some of the Recently Opened Shows - Three Annual Events', New York Times, January 28, 1942. According to the records of the Salmagundi Club, Samstag's entry was an oil painting, Coal Barn, South Dennis (no. 96), and the dates of the exhibition were February 15-March 6. The exhibition/auction dates were January 10-30, and these two showings may have been regarded as sections of the 65th Annual Exhibition. It is not known if Coal Barn, South Dennis was also in the auction/exhibition earlier in the month (Bob Mueller, Chairman, Curators Committee, Salmagundi Club, email to author, August 25, 2011; the author thanks Mr Mueller for his assistance). A brief account of the Salmagundi's War Art Committee is found in Alexander W. Katlan, 'The Salmagundi Club: A Prestigious History,', available online at www.salmagundi. org/SalmagundiClubHistory.pdf, accessed May 30, 2014; see also Katlan's The Salmagundi Club Painting Exhibition Records, 1889-1939: A Guide to the Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings and The Annual Exhibition and Auction Sale of Pictures, Flushing, New York, 2008.
- 3 Samstag's inclusion in the Arnot Art Gallery (now the Arnot Art Museum) exhibition is recorded in 'Art Gallery Notes', Elmira [New York] Star Gazette, February 21, 1942. Three undated, unidentified newspaper clippings were provided to the author by the Arnot Art Museum. 'Its [the Salmagundi Club] members are among the best known American artists' is in 'Arnot Art Gallery Notes'. The description of the 'peaceful and soothing', 'placid, scenic countryside' pictures in contrast to Samstag's 'well done but unesthetic' construction and industrial scenes' is found in a review, 'Paintings of New York Salmagundi Club

- Delight Visitors to Arnot Art Gallery'. The exhibition is also described (without mention of Samstag) in 'Art Gallery Notes'. Mary Manly of the Arnot Art Museum kindly provided the exhibition brochure, *Exhibition of Oil Paintings by Members of the Salmagundi Club New York*, February 1942 (no more specific dates are included in the brochure). Of the twenty-two paintings in the exhibition, Samstag's are no. 17, *Lime Depot*, and no. 22, *East River Coal Sheds*; all of the paintings were for sale.
- 4 Edward Alden Jewell, 'Academy and Independents Approach; Once Sharp Border Between Them Thins With Passage of Time, Current Exhibitions Reveal', New York Times, April 12, 1942. This exhibition was the first in the National Academy of Design's new headquarters at 1083 Fifth Ave.
- 5 Jewell, 'Academy and Independents'. Jewell's full comment is 'A diminishing quota of manifestly dated and presumably tired old timber remains to slow the generally accelerated tempo.' For Samstag's entry, see Peter Hastings Falk, *The Annual Exhibition Record of the National Academy of Design, 1901–1950*, Sound View Press, Madison, Connecticut, 1990, p. 458. *Crepe Paper Lillies [sic]* was no. 71 in the catalogue; Samstag's address was listed as 39 West Twenty-seventh St.
- 6 Jewell, 'Academy and Independents'.
- 7 The exhibition was held at the New-York Historical Society (October 31–November 29), and *The Grey Barn* was no. 136 (Records of the Allied Artists of America, reel 854, fr. number illegible, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution). Samstag's Honorable Mention is cited in 'Prize Winners at Annual Show of Allied Artists of America: Awards Bestowed on Eight Artists', *New York Times*, October 30, 1942, where the painting is titled *Gray Barn*.
- 8 Red Cross Exhibition (New York and the Middle West), RG 121; Preliminary Inventory 110, Records of the Public Buildings Service, General Records of the Fine Arts Section, 1934–43 (fr. 1332–1334); Archives of American Art (microfilm DC 40, fr. 1332–1334). Wartime posters were included in some exhibitions, where their effectiveness as part of the war effort was recognised by Edward Alden Jewell: 'The time to use those telling posters is now, not after the war has been won.' ('The Artist in Time of War; Besides His Practical Services to Our Country, There Remains His True Function as the Interpreter of His Age', *New York Times*, March 7, 1943.)
- Red Cross Exhibition record. Nurse (oil, RC-71) is listed on p. 2 of the document (fr. 1334). According to the federal records, the exhibition visited, in sequence, the Syracuse Museum of Art (now the Everson Museum of Art) in the last months of 1942, the Memorial Art Gallery at the University of Rochester, New York (from January 4, 1943) and the City Art Museum (now the St Louis Art Museum), St Louis (from January 28). In St Louis, the exhibition, titled Red Cross Poster Designs, was among the special exhibitions at the City Art Museum and was described as 'Sixty designs and posters by American artists selected from a nation-wide competition held last spring under the auspices of the Federal Works Agency' (Monthly Announcement of Exhibitions, Lectures and Other Activities, February, 1943). The author thanks Lu Harper, Director of Library Services, for details of the exhibition in Rochester, and Clare Vasquez, Librarian, St Louis Art Museum, for

- information on the exhibition in St Louis as well as other information regarding Samstag (emails of July 4-6, 2012).
- Mueller, email to author, August 25, 2011. The auction sale for 1943 took place from January 10 to 29. Samstag's *Paper Boats*, was no. 72.
- 11 Howard DeVree, 'A Reviewer's Notebook', New York Times, January 17, 1943. He added about the Salmagundi exhibition, 'It is a large, diverse and diverting show of small pictures.'
- 12 *Ibid.* The exhibition took place from February 14 to March 5. Samstag's *Felicite* was no. 125.
- 13 Falk, p. 458. Berry Picker was no. 220 in the National Academy exhibition, and the price was cited as \$350. For this year of 1943, Samstag did not list an address.
- 14 Jewell, 'National Academy Annual; The 117th Yearly Round-Up Proves to Be Quite Characteristic As an Exhibition', New York Times, February 21, 1943.
- 15 The Eighteenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, March 21–May 2, 1943. Samstag's painting, *Beach Comber* (no. 246) is listed on p. 32 of the catalogue.
- 16 Jewell, 'Students League Opens Art Show; Large Exhibition in Fine Art Building to Aid Veterans' Scholarship Funds', New York Times, February 22, 1944. The exhibition opened on March 11.
- 17 *Ibid.* It is not known what work Samstag contributed to this exhibition.
- 18 Falk, p. 458. Flour Mill Hand was no. 188 and was listed with a price of \$700. The exhibition was held from March 29 to April 25, 1944.
- 19 Jewell, 'The Two Academies; Right and Left Represented in Current Annuals', New York Times, April 2, 1944. The other exhibition with which he compared the National Academy's was the annual of the American Abstract Artists.
- 20 Falk, p. 458. The Academy's 120th annual was held from December 4 to December 21, 1945; the 119th was earlier in 1945 (March 14-April 3), with the result that the Academy records list Samstag as having shown in '1945-II' (this late 1945 exhibition was not reviewed by the New York Times). The exhibition held from March 14 to April 1, 1946, was referred to as the second half of the 120th annual. This odd sequence restored the order that had been disrupted when the Academy did not hold its official exhibition in 1939 because of the New York World's Fair. The Academy's records for late 1945 give Samstag's address as 806 Bronx River Rd, Bronxville, New York.
- 21 Another example of such an artist was the Texas painter of Dust Bowl scenes, Alexandre Hogue, who worked for North American Aviation in Dallas 'for the duration', as the common phrase went. His drawings demonstrating how to assemble tools and devices were marvels of clarity and ingenuity. His job, he explained, was to draw in such a way 'that the greenest workman may understand'. See Lea Rosson DeLong, Nature's Forms/Nature's Forces: The Art of Alexandre Hogue, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1984, p. 28.
- 22 Author's Questionnaire, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, April 2, 1961; in the Alfred A. Knopf Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

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- 23 Born in Sofia, Jordanoff served in the Bulgarian forces as a pilot in World War I and in 1921 moved to the United States. His first book, Flying and How To Do It, was published in 1932, followed by others which explained aviation with clarity, detail and accessibility. For a detailed biography of Jordanoff, his writings, his businesses and his importance to the Allied victory in World War II, see Plamen Antonov, 'Assen Jordanoff The Man Who Contributed to America's Airpower', 2008; available online at http://pantonov.com/thoughts/assen\_jordanoff.php, accessed May 4, 2014. If Samstag contributed any drawings to it or any other books, he is not credited. Jordanoff's obituary ('Assen Jordanoff, Aviation Pioneer', New York Times, October 19, 1967) recalled, 'He contended that much time in instruction could be saved by illustrated, textual lessons.'
- 24 Indeed, some of the drawings made for North American Aviation by Alexandre Hogue (see note 21) were exhibited at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts in 1944; see DeLong, p. 30.
- 25 Daniel Hoffman, Zone of the Interior: A Memoire, 1942-47, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2000. pp. 1, 6; for the security clearance requirement for Jordanoff employees, see p. 15. Hoffman reported that, when he began his employment in June of 1942, Jordanoff operated out of his apartment on New York's east side and had only four employees. Whether Samstag was a full-time employee at that time or worked only intermittently by contract is not currently known since the artist's employment records have not been released by the Social Security Administration. Jordanoff's papers are deposited at the Archives of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum (NASM); no reference to Samstag has been found in the Jordanoff Papers. The author thanks Elizabeth C. Borja, Reference Services Archivist in the Archives Division of the NASM in Washington, DC, for assistance with the Jordanoff records (Borja to DeLong, June 27, 2014).
- 26 For information on the shift from the Jordanoff Aviation Company to the Jordanoff Corporation, see 'Jordanoff Set-Up Changed', New York Times, May 4, 1943. For the move into larger headquarters in New York, see 'Business Houses Get Large Space', New York Times, October 14, 1943.
- 27 'Craftsmen', undated document, in Assen Jordanoff Papers (Acc. No. 2006-0037; Biographical Technical Files, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Archives Division, 177 [handwriting unclear].
- 28 Untitled typescript, on Jordanoff Corporation letterhead, undated, in the Jordanoff Papers. The author thanks Elizabeth C. Borja for providing a copy of this document.
- 29 This article of 1945 also described the significance of Jordanoff to aviation, especially in wartime: "Today Assen Jordanoff is as important to American aviation as gasoline. His books on how to fly have become classics of aeronautical literature. The "visual education" manuals that his company turns out by the thousands to speed the training of American pilots, navigators, bombardiers and ground crewmen have become the "Bibles" of the Army Air Forces. And his transvision training booklets little cellophane pamphlets that enable a student to take even a P-47 apart in his hands, layer by layer, just by turning the pages have made an "onion peeler" who is bringing tears

- to the eyes of our enemies.' Don Romero, 'The Man Who Sees Things', *Modern Mechanix*, June 1945; available online at http://blog.modernmechanix.com/the-man-who--seesthings/, accessed May 4, 2014.
- 30 According to Hoffman, who left the company in January 1943, it underwent significant changes during the course of the war, becoming an organisation of 'competitive business types [who] engaged in intrigues of Machiavellian complexity' to get lucrative contracts. Soon after it became the Jordanoff Corporation on May 3, 1943, the original staff was dismissed. Samstag dated the end of his employment with Jordanoff as 1944, but it isn't known if the changes Hoffman described were involved.
- 31 For details of Samstag's employment at the Art Students League from the late 1930s to the mid-1940s,.
- 32 Author's Questionnaire, Knopf.
- 33 For a biography of Bernarr Macfadden, see Mark Adams, Mr America, Harper and Brothers, New York, 2009. According to Mr Adams, the files and records of Macfadden Publications are unlocated (email to author, July 31, 2011). Samstag also indicated in the Author's Questionnaire for Knopf that he had produced book jackets for Macmillan Publishers and others, but archives related to the work he would have done for Macmillan are unlocated.
- 34 Louise Dickinson Rich, 'I Think of Steve', Woman's Day, December 1946, pp. 26–27, 46. The covers of Speed Detective of August 1945 and Adventure of February 1946 are illustrations by Samstag. These magazines were all located by the staff of the Samstag Museum of Art.
- 35 Samstag was still well enough known at this time that his autographed photograph was requested by James P.J. Murphy, who collected materials (usually signed photographs, but occasionally letters and works of art on paper) related to famous artistic figures (such as painters, actors, musicians and writers) from 1930 to 1965. The snapshot of Gordon Samstag shows the dark-haired, unsmiling artist sitting out of doors in a lawn chair; it is signed 'Gordon Samstag' in the upper right corner. Two dates are written in ink on the back: '1941' with four indecipherable marks beneath; in a different handwriting is the date January 8, 1945. It seems likely that '1941' is the date Samstag gave for the photograph, and January 8, 1945, was added by Murphy as the time he received it from the artist. The James P.J. Murphy Papers are collected at the Georgetown University Library Special Collections Research Center in Washington, DC; the Samstag photograph is found in Box 7, folder 97, item 38424. The author thanks Scott S. Taylor of Special Collections for assistance with the Samstag material.
- 36 It is not known if Samstag submitted any work during the years between 1937 and 1946 for the Carnegie jury. Many juried exhibitions do not retain records of the rejected works. In the years immediately following World War II, the Carnegie was a survey only of American painting.
- 37 The National Academy's 121st Annual was held in two sections in 1947, the first from January 4 to 22 and the second (in which Samstag showed) from March 19 to April 13; see Falk, p. 13. Samstag's *The Old Wind Mill* was no. 34, and his address was listed as 806 Bronx River Rd in Bronxville; see Falk, p. 458. The Academy's exhibition does not appear to have been reviewed in the *New York Times*.

- 38 Samstag's Alternative was no. 275 in the catalogue, and the illustration was plate 113. The exhibition was held from October 9 to December 7, 1947.
- 39 In the Carnegie catalogue for the 1948 show (October 14–December 12), Samstag's *Isolation* was no. 227; in the 1949 exhibition (October 13–December 11), *Frustration* was no. 162
- 40 Falk, p. 458. Alternative (no. 44 in the exhibition) was priced at \$1200; the National Academy's 122nd Annual Exhibition took place from March 25 to April 14, 1948.
- 41 Falk, p. 458. Sorceress (no. 37) was priced at \$1100 and Ember (no. 104) also at \$1100. The National Academy's 123rd Annual Exhibition was held in two stages: March 10–23, 1949, and March 31–April 13, 1949. The Academy held its 124th from November 11 to December 11, 1949 (see Falk, p. 13). Samstag's inclusion in the National Academy exhibition was also noted in his home town newspaper in Yonkers; both Sorceress and Ember were mentioned by name. His address of 806 Bronx River Rd was given ('Works By Four Yonkers Artists Exhibited By National Academy', Yonkers Herald-Statesman, November 17, 1949). Both paintings are also mentioned in 'Artists Exhibiting Work at Academy of Design In N.Y.', Mount Vernon [New York] Daily Argus, November 17, 1949.
- 42 Howard DeVree, 'Courbet the Vital ... Audubon Annual', New York Times, December 5, 1948.
- 43 In addition to occasional newspaper notices and reviews, Samstag's participation in Audubon Artists of America can be partly traced through the records of the organisation. Unfortunately, these records have very few materials from the late 1940s and the 1950s, the very time in which Samstag was active. The records do, however, contain a complete run of catalogues for their annual exhibitions, so his exhibition record can be established. He won no awards, and therefore no illustrations of his works appear in the Audubon catalogues. Their Credo was first published in their initial brochure of 1944. See Box 6, 'Printed Material, 1944–2001', Audubon Artists Records, 1944–2001, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
- 44 'Art Notes', New York Times, December 21, 1946. The American Art School was at 3410 Broadway, near the City College of New York; in 1951, it moved to 145 West Fifty-sixth St. Registration for the new school was scheduled to open on December 27, 1946, with classes beginning on January 6, 1947. Also listed as an instructor was Joseph F. Powers, about whom little is currently known. Henry S. Maurer, the co-director, was not listed among the instructors. Samstag may have continued to teach occasional courses for schools other than his own. According to a friend and former student, in 1948 Samstag took on a summer class normally taught by Frank Vincent DuMond at the Art Students League; he was described as 'not flamboyant in either ... manner or ... teaching' and as a gentleman and a 'fine instructor' (Howard P. Barker, letter to Ross Wolfe, November 12, 1993; curatorial files of Samstag Museum of Art)
- 45 American Art School, 1948–1949, American Art School, New York, 1948, unp. An advertisement for the school for the autumn session of 1949 lists the instructors as Leon Friend, Jack Levine, Gordon Samstag and Raphael Soyer (Brooklyn Daily Eagle, August 18, 1949, p. 33).

- 46 American Art School, 1948–1949. Class 1 was Elementary Drawing and Painting (Morning); 2: Creative Composition, Drawing and Painting (Morning); 3: Painting, Drawing and Illustration (Afternoon); 4: Portrait and Figure Painting (Afternoon); 5: Advertising Design, Layout and Lettering (Evening); 6: Painting, Drawing and Illustration (Evening); and 7: Saturday Studio Class (Morning). The catalogue indicates that these classes met for three hours on five days of the week, with the Saturday class meeting for three and a half hours.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Steinweiss and Federico were two of the most successful designers of mid-twentieth-century New York. Steinweiss was known for his innovation in phonograph record cover design and Federico for his experiments with type design; both have been inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Art Directors Club.
- 49 American Art School, 1948–49. Among the collections listed for Gropper's work were the Metropolitan and the Museum of Modern Art, both in New York, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Also listed is the Guggenheim Fellowship of 1937, which enabled Gropper to visit the Dust Bowl series, resulting in a series of paintings on that subject.
- 50 *Ibid*.
- 51 For an understanding of the struggle in which Raphael Soyer felt he had engaged for the re-embrace of realism, see his Self-Revealment: A Memoir, Maecenas Press/Random House, New York, 1967.
- 52 American Art School, 1948–1949. The catalogue explained, 'Student work is selected from the classes and put on display at the school throughout the year. Efforts are also made to secure exhibitions for advanced students.'
- 53 It is possible that Samstag became acquainted with Beckmann through his St Louis connections. His association with the American Art School is mentioned in 'Max Beckmann in New York', at http://kuenste-imexil.de/KIE/Web/EN/Navigation/Special-exhibitions/MaxBeckmann/04NewYork/new\_york.html, accessed May 2014. A search of Beckmann's records in the Archives of American Art (reels 1213-1214, 1237, 1240-1241 and 1250-1254) has not revealed concrete information about his teaching at the American Art School.
- 54 Samstag to Frank Rehn. Frank K.M. Rehn Galleries, October 8, 1949. Rehn Galleries Records, reel 5863; Series 1: Correspondence, fr. 1353-54, Archives of American Art. The address on Samstag's letterhead is 806 Bronx River Rd, Bronxville, New York.
- 55 DeVree, 'Courbet the Vital'.
- 56 Samstag to Rehn.
- 57 Falk, p. 458. *Frustration* was no. 19 in the catalogue of the National Academy's 1950 exhibition.
- 58 Milch Galleries, Paintings by Gordon Samstag, January 9–28, 1950 (New York). A copy of the Milch Galleries exhibition brochure is found at the Ryerson Library of the Art Institute of Chicago, P-19520, and at the Brooklyn Museum Library. The author thanks both libraries for their assistance in research on Samstag. The Records of the Milch Galleries at the Archives of American Art include a brochure with notes on it indicating the prices (which

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- are not printed in the brochure). Four of the titles have a check mark after them, which may indicate that they were sold, though no names of purchasers were noted. The list of titles with handwritten prices is as follows: 1. Mooring, \$450; 2. Monday Morning, \$325 crossed out, \$350 written in; 3. Luncheon \$275; 4. Three Fates, \$900; 5. Frustration, \$650 (with a check mark); 6. Adagio, \$300; 7. Ember, \$700; 8. Obsession \$525; 9. Fisherwoman, \$450; 10. Sunday Morning, \$275; 11. Seven-Thirty \$250 (with a check mark); 12. Gossips, \$425; 13. Sorceress \$700 (with a check mark); 14. Antique Dealer, \$300; 15. Chess Player, \$150; 16. Trapezist, no price. Lent by Mr and Mrs Wm McDonald; 17. Mother and Child, \$400; 18. Susanna, \$220 (with a check mark); 19. Two Fates, \$450; 20. Tight Rope Walkers, \$425 (Records of the Milch Galleries (reel 4455, fr. 460-461), Archives of American Art; another copy of the brochure is found on reel 4456 [Printed Matter, Clippings], fr. 1201-1202.) Samstag's exhibition at Milch was reported in Scarsdale, where his New Deal murals hung in the local post office: 'Exhibition by Painter of Post Office Murals', Scarsdale Inquirer, January 12, 1950; the clipping is found in Samstag's file at the National Academy of Design.
- 59 E[mily] G[enauer], 'Art Exhibition Notes', New York Herald Tribune, January 12, 1950. This review is also found as a clipping in the Milch Galleries Records (reel 4456, fr. 1198).
- 60 S.P., 'Variety of Shows in Art Galleries', New York Times, January 14, 1950, L, 13. This review is also found as a clipping in the Milch Galleries Records (reel 4456, fr. 1199). On the same page as the review is an advertisement for the show, entitled 'Paintings'.
- 61 R.T., 'Exhibitions and Previews', Art News, XLVIII, 9, January 9, 1950, p. 46. The review begins by saying that the Milch show is Samstag's eighth exhibition, but it isn't clear what is meant by counting it as his eighth exhibition. Samstag had had his three one-man shows at the Montross Gallery (1934, 1936 and 1938) and at the Gimbel Gallery of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia in 1935, so 'eighth' surely does not apply to solo exhibitions.
- 62 M.B., 'Samstag's Significant Symbols' in 'Fifty-Seventh Street in Review', *The Art Digest*, 24, 8, January 15, 1950, pp. 18–19. *Sorceress* is illustrated on p. 18. In Greek mythology, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos are the names of the Fates who determine the length of life.
- 63 Pam O'Brien, 'Painter of Scarsdale history returns', Scarsdale Inquirer, August 16, 1986.
- 64 The author thanks the Ryerson Library at the Art Institute of Chicago for access to the National Academy's exhibition brochures for these years: 126th Annual Exhibition, March 23-April 8, 1951 (no. 75, Gossips); 128th Annual Exhibition, April 2-26, 1953 (no. 145, Driftwood); 133rd Annual Exhibition, February 20-March 16, 1958 (no. 112, Neutral Components); 134th Annual Exhibition, February 19-March 15, 1959 (no. 111, The Accusation); and 135th Annual Exhibition, February 25-March 20, 1960 (no. 10, Circus). Samstag's oil painting Driftwood was cited in a local newspaper as being part of the National Academy's 1953 exhibition: 'Four Area Artists Represented in Show', Bronxville Review Press and Reporter, April 23, 1953.

- 65 Samstag's Milch Galleries exhibition of 1950 contained a painting, Susanna, which depicts loosely brushed figures of a female nude viewed by a bearded male lurking behind her. The comment on the modern and conservative character of the Audubon Artists annual exhibition is found in 'Area Artists Exhibiting At Audubon Show', Yonkers Herald-Statesman, February 2, 1954. Other notices in the Westchester County press concerning Samstag's Audubon Artists participation are: 'Four Area Artists Represented in Show', Yonkers Herald-Statesman, February 5, 1953; 'N.A. Exhibit', Bronxville Review Press, February 4, 1954: '2 From Area Show At Audubon Exhibit', Yonkers Herald-Statesman, January 30, 1956; '3 Area Artists Exhibit in Audubon Show', Yonkers Herald-Statesman, January 19, 1957; 'Gordon Samstag's Oil Painting on Display', Bronxville Review-Press and Reporter, January 24, 1957. The Bronxville clipping of 1957 is found in Samstag's file at the National Academy of Design; the painting in the exhibition was his oil Still Life with Figures. Several Westchester County local newspapers, such as those in Mamaroneck, Yonkers, Bronxville and White Plains carried news about Samstag, but it was as likely to be about his activities in boating as for his art.
- 66 Recent Paintings by Gordon Samstag, Janet Nessler Gallery, New York, 1960. The gallery was at 718 Madison Ave, the exhibition dates were December 19, 1960-January 7, 1961. The exhibition consisted of seventeen works: 1. The Rockers; 2. Boutique; 3. The Old King; 4. Sunbathers; 5. Reading Circle; 6. Net and Seashore; 7. The Accusation; 8. Sketch for 'Circus'; 9. Circus; 10. Reading Circle; 11. Commuters; 12. Tete a Tete; 13. Corner Bar, 14. Aquarius, 15. Preparation for the Wedding, 16. Artificial Lilies; and 17. Art School with Angels. 'Gouaches' appears at the bottom of the list of works, but the number and titles of the gouaches is not given. The author thanks the Brooklyn Museum Library for providing a copy of the Nessler brochure. In addition to a comment on Rockers, the brochure also contains a brief professional history, along with the information that this is his fifth one-man show and that his works are to be found in many private collections.
- 67 Stuart Preston, 'Art Contemporaries: Five Painters' Approach to Subject Matter Displayed in Galleries Here', New York Times, December 23, 1960.
- 68 V[alerie] P[etersen], 'Gordon Samstag', Art News, 59, 8, December 1960, p. 55. The prices are given as \$200-\$750.
- 69 V[alerie] R[aynor], 'Gordon Samstag', Arts 36, 4, January 1961. p. 65.
- 70 Information sheet on Samstag's Preparation for the Wedding in his file at the National Academy. Samstag did not provide a date for his painting. It was included in the Nessler exhibition (December 19, 1960–January 7, 1961), so its date must be no later than the autumn of 1960 and is likely earlier than that.
- 71 National Academy of Design, file on Gordon Samstag. The author thanks Diana Thompson, Curator of the Museum of the National Academy for access to paintings by and relating to Samstag and to information from his Academy file. Thanks also to David B. Dearinger, Chief Curator, for information and assistance.

- 72 The whereabouts of this painting remain unknown. A black-and-white photograph of the work (verso inscribed 'Janet Nessler Gallery') was among the few personal items recovered from Gordon Samstag's home following his death in Naples, Florida, in 1990. It was forwarded to the University of South Australia by his trustee.
- 73 Samstag, 'The Growing Hobby of Painting', East of Fifth, February 1956. East of Fifth was published from early in 1956 until February of 1957. This clipping was found in Samstag's file at the National Academy of Design. At least one of his students did include the American Art School among her credentials. Irene Gross had several exhibitions in the New York area, and she described herself as a student of Samstag; see 'Library Shows Paints By Irene Gross', Cortland [New York] Standard, March 19, 1964, in which Gross is recorded as having studied at the school with Robert Brackman and Raphael Soyer, in addition to Samstag, and 'Paintings on View at N.B.W. Office', Yonkers Herald-Statesman, September 16, 1964, covering her exhibition at the National Bank of Westchester in Mamaroneck, in which Gross again listed her study with Samstag.
- 74 Nessler, Recent Paintings.
- 75 These clubs were listed as Gordon's 'principal occupations' in his Author's Questionnaire for Knopf, after Anne and Gordon published their book *Training Your Own Dog* with that publisher in 1961. Inquiries placed at these organisations, plus the Bass River Yacht Club (near Anne's home town on Cape Cod in Massachusetts) brought no information about Samstag.
- 76 Art Dunn, 'Covering Our Local Waterfront', Mamaroneck Daily Times, December 30, 1954. The short notice gives a sense of the convivial life shared by those, like the Samstags, who enjoyed boating in these shore communities. Below a photograph of the smiling artist was a caption that was typical of the way he was characterised in publications of the 1950s: 'Gordon Samstag of Bronxville ... bought the first May Craft from that lady down at McMichael's. He's director of the American Art School and member of the National Academy. Also of the Power Squadron. He specializes in fine arts illustrating and advertising. He won a Pulitzer prize on graduation from the National Academy of Design which took him abroad for further study. He has one-man shows here and there and some of his paintings hang in various museums. He's named his boat "Captain Anne III".'The clipping is found in Samstag's file at the National Academy.
- 77 'We Salute Boatman of the Week', Mamaroneck Daily Times, November 13, 1958. The author thanks Patrick Raftery, Librarian at the Westchester County Historical Society, White Plains, New York, for providing this clipping from their files (email to author, March 26, 2015).
- 78 One of the earliest notices of her proficiency in training and showing her dogs is found in the article 'Bronxville Dog Gets CD Degree', \*Bronxville Press and Reporter\*, March 18, 1954, which reports that 'Renee, a standard poodle owned by Mrs Gordon Samstag of 806 Bronx River Road, scored the necessary points ... to complete his Companion Dog (CD) degree.' Another is 'Canine Colt Takes Charge', \*Yonkers Herald-Statesman\*, September 6, 1960, regarding a miniature poodle owned by Anne.

- 79 Ann Gibson Chapman and Lauri Gibson, emails to author, September 12, 2012, and August 11, 2013. The Gibsons purchased an oil painting, Monday Morning, which is now in the collection of the Samstag Museum of Art; their daughters estimate that the painting was purchased in 'the later part of the 1940s'. They recall the Samstags' Mamaroneck house as being 'very design oriented in black and white ... includ[ing] leaving the New York Times on a coffee table in a certain manner' (email of August 11, 2013).
- 80 Peter Ognibene, 'Memoire of Anne and Gordon Samstag', in email to author, August 17, 2012. The author expresses gratitude to Peter Ognibene who kindly formalised his reminiscences of the Samstag's into this memoir.
- 81 Ognibene, 'Memoire'.
- 82 'Samstag Is Named in Mother's Will', *Yonkers Herald-Statesman*, December 2, 1957. Evelyn Samstag died on September 5. The article informed the public that Gordon would share her estate with his brother, Nicholas. Exactly what his inheritance was to be could not be specified since the 'size of the estate is unknown pending appraisal'.
- 83 Ognibene, 'Memoire'.
- 84 '4 Will Show How It's Done at Mamaroneck Art Barn', New Rochelle [New York] Standard Star, February 6, 1958. The other three artists were Paul Seckel, Aurelio Yammerino and Alton Tobey. This clipping is in Samstag's file at the National Academy. The Mamaroneck Artists Guild retains no records concerning Gordon Samstag.
- 85 'Samstag Art on Exhibit In N.Y. Gallery', Mamaroneck Daily Times, December 21, 1960. This clipping is found Samstag's file at the National Academy of Design.
- 86 Henry Maurer, email to author, June 4, 2014. Henry Maurer was the son of Henry S. Maurer, co-director of the American Art School, who was born on June 9, 1905, and died on October 31, 1996 (Henry Maurer, email to author, April 19, 2015).
- 87 Alan McCulloch, *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, Hutchinson, Richmond, Victoria, 1968, p. 490.
- 88 Samstag to Wooden, October 5, 1973. His detachment from his past was such that he could not remember precisely when Young Man Desires Position had won the Clarke Prize, and he suggested that Wooden contact the National Academy to obtain the exact date.

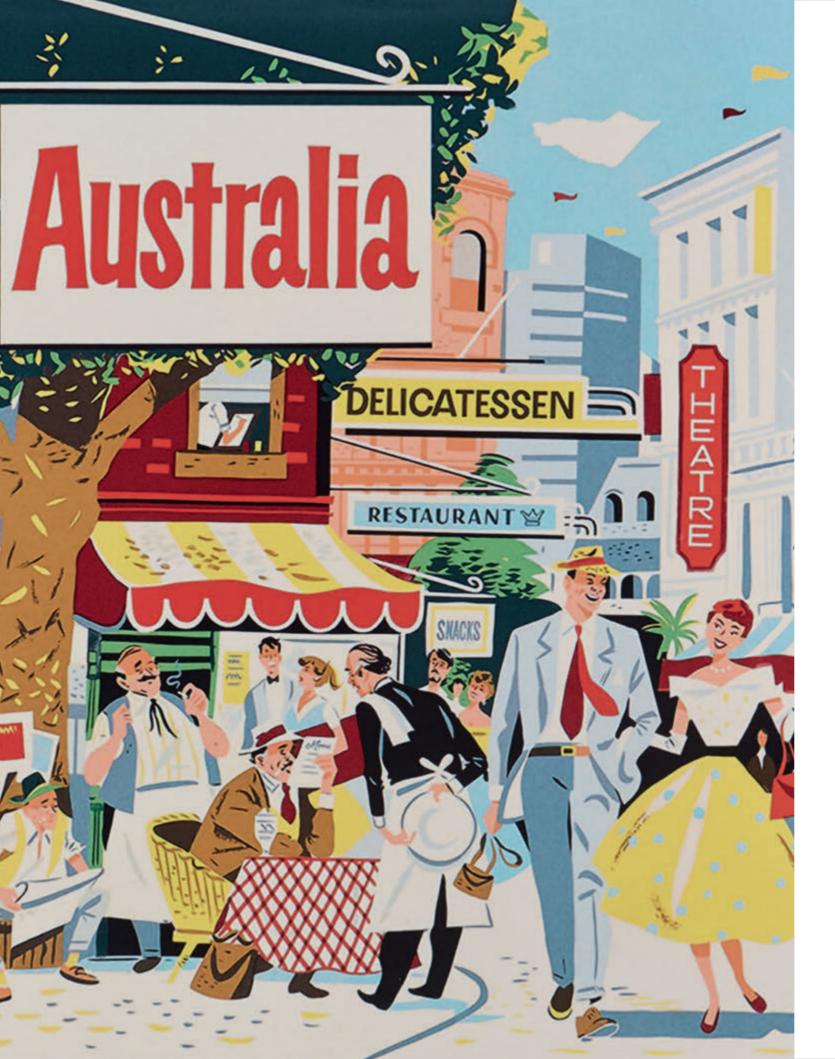
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# THE SIREN CALL OF THE SOUTHERN SEA:

ANNE AND GORDON SAMSTAG IN AUSTRALIA

ROSS WOLFE



# PRELUDE TO A JOURNEY

When Anne and Gordon Samstag arrived in Melbourne, Australia, as professional immigrants in June 1961, they had come about as far as was possible to travel from their comfortable American home in Mamaroneck, some 40 kilometres (25 miles) north of Manhattan. Their old friend Howard P. Barker, who'd known Gordon since 1948 when he was enrolled in Gordon's summer landscape painting class at the Art Students League, described the Samstag condominium there at 111 Fenimore Road as having 'a lovely view' overlooking Harbor Island and being near the boats on Long Island Sound, Westchester County, New York State. One of the boats was Gordon's. A keen sailor, he owned a 16-foot Cape Cod Bullseye Class yacht, the *Admiral Anne*, which he loved to race. <sup>1</sup>

The Samstags had come to Australia for professional work, travelling first to Sydney on May 31 from Auckland on a Tasman Empire Airways flight. They'd secured a three-year business visa in March.<sup>2</sup> The year before leaving America, Gordon had negotiated with a leading Australian art school, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (now RMIT University), to teach 'Illustration, Figure and Portrait Drawing', although only temporarily, part-time.<sup>3</sup>

Why travel so far for so modest and tenuous a position, particularly at Gordon's age? He would within a month turn fifty-five; Anne was fifty-two. Married in New York City in November 1933, they had no children. What was it about Australia – antipodean home to strange animals, eucalyptus trees and vast, arid landscapes – that had captured their interest? Had they been here before? There was surely more to it than need of money or even professional status, given they were subsequently revealed to be rich?

Perhaps the Samstags simply were tired of their lives in America and seeking fresh beginnings? Elizabeth Doyle, a neighbour of the Samstags when they later moved to Adelaide, thought that to be the case. As a young adult growing up next door to them in suburban St Georges in the 1960s, Elizabeth knew the Samstags as intimately as most and had observed them shrewdly, though with affection. 'Anne,' she said, was 'tall and slim, with straight grey hair cut close to her head', while Gordon was 'of medium height and build, with a very neatly trimmed goatee beard'. And if Gordon 'spoke slowly', then 'Anne's words came at a snail's pace in a drawling accent which defied description' (though as Elizabeth

William HAYTHORNTHWAITE and Nobby CLARK (designers) Fly TEAL, c. 1960 (detail) Poster for Tasman Empire Airways Limited (later Air New Zealand) W. Haythorn-Thwaite Advertising Limited

Anne and Gordon Samstag's
Australian visa application photos.
D4878, AMERICAN SAMSTAG, A.
and D4878, AMERICAN
SAMSTAG, G.
Courtesy National Archives of
Australia, Canberra





gleaned later, it showed the influence of Anne's childhood homeschooling by tutors and governesses, 'some of whom were Irish').<sup>5</sup>

Never once suspecting that the Samstags might be seriously rich, the entire Doyle family had relished the 'delightfully eccentric' couple as neighbours, especially enjoying Gordon's 'child-like' enthusiasm as a backyard gardener, an activity which he clearly loved but for which, amusingly, he appeared to lack competence (though Elizabeth suspected it was an act), showing as much pleasure in the soursob weeds, which he presented proudly to her mother as 'flowers', as for his tomatoes, which suffered from his reluctance to kill the snails. The Doyles were given to understand that the Samstags 'had all their lives both lived in the city, and were totally ignorant when it came to nature and practical matters'. Indeed, Elizabeth observed, both Gordon and Anne lacked any knowledge in the simple things of life, such as fitting a light bulb, changing a washer or replacing a fuse. A slug in the lettuce was 'a major drama'. Elizabeth's mother too, soon realised that Anne appeared to have had very little domestic experience prior to coming to Australia – for example in cooking – as she frequently called for help with the most ordinary kitchen appliances, professing 'amazed admiration' when given assistance.

And although Anne was a qualified dog trainer who conducted obedience classes in Adelaide, her own 'bulldog-like pet', a pug called Donna, ignored all her commands and on the Samstags' glacially slow evening walks around the neighbourhood (during which they 'inspected gardens and nature with surprise and delight') Donna would have to be carried most of the way. It seemed not to matter.

Sometimes in the morning Gordon would offer to drive Elizabeth and her brother to university in the city, a privilege they did their best to avoid since it meant being late. Elizabeth thought that Gordon seemed to have 'no experience of driving a car', as he drove more slowly than the bus, 'keeping close to the gutter all the way', his inaudibly soft-voiced conversation adding to the tension of the trip. She thought he was provoking and testing her.

It had nevertheless been a happy experience for them all. Reflecting on the Samstags many years afterwards, Elizabeth Doyle mused that they had come to Australia 'at a time when life in a fast-paced city was no longer congenial to them' and that in Australia 'they discovered a whole new lifestyle – far slower, more to their liking – that they came to love'. 6

But could something else, other than a simple desire for a sea change have lain behind the move to Australia, and the significant upheaval it involved? After all, Gordon's artistic career had lost momentum long before; the realist art and classical values for which he was so comprehensively trained, and at which he excelled, swept aside by the unstoppable changes in contemporary art. There certainly appeared little critical currency remaining in the 'American Scene' genre to which he fundamentally belonged and where his reputation had been forged, all of it now overwhelmed by New York—led Abstract Expressionism and what was following in rapid order, not least Pop Art. There were many artists of his ilk who'd lost their way, or given up.

Gordon hadn't given up, of course. Despite his apparently reduced opportunities after World War II, he'd stayed in the game. He had runs on the board and, above all, class. As well as his authentic success as an artist before the war, he had from 1947 directed, in partnership with his good friend Henry Maurer, the private Manhattan-based American Art School. Even during the global conflict he had continued to work as an artist, contributing to the war effort by working with the Jordanoff Aviation Corporation on the preparation of educational handbooks and manuals for the armed forces. Afterwards he'd turned his skills to freelance work as an illustrator for popular magazines; he was

GORDON MACCREAGH
ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN NARD JONES

THE SWORD OF SHINTO by SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

good at it. (For full details of Samstag's art career, see Part 1, Samstag the Artist.)

Anne, meanwhile, had continued to pursue her long-time passion as a dog obedience trainer. Her particular love was poodles, which from the 1930s had become the focus of an emerging 'sport' of dog obedience in the United States: Anne was associated with the Poodle Obedience Training Club of Greater New York, and was a member of the American Kennel Club. In 1960, just before they came to Australia, the Samstags had two standard poodles, Rene C.D.X. and Guy, who presumably remained in America. But Anne also took care to develop her profile as an illustrator and textile designer, achieving quiet success designing high-quality, rolled-edge and embroidered linen handkerchiefs for the prestige retail market, commissioned by M.H. Kimball and Company for speciality department-store chains, such as the Manhattan-based Lord and Taylor.<sup>8</sup> Anne's handkerchiefs – sought after today as vintage treasures of their kind - embodied imaginative designs with diverse motifs such as roosters, weathervanes and leaves (see page 178). The best of them, though, featured standard poodles: coiffured aristocrats in a variety of colours. They were graphically adept, with a charming touch of humour. While there couldn't have been much money in it, Kimball's recurrent commissions would have dignified Anne's identity as a professional artist and no doubt strengthened her collaborative relationship with Gordon.

Gordon SAMSTAG cover illustration, *Adventure*, vol. 114, no. 4, February 1946. Popular Publications, Chicago, Illinois, USA © 1946 Popular Publications, Inc., assigned to Adventure Pulp LLC. All rights reserved.











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### A DISTURBANCE IN THE FORCE

In the increasingly volatile world of fine art after the war, Gordon had done his best to adapt to change, even if that had meant concessions to dominant fashion, for example by introducing an expressive, looser quality to his work coupled with subjects that were increasingly fantasist and strange (see pages 128–9). He'd even begun experimenting with abstraction and collage, a practice he would later embrace fully once in Australia, though arguably he was not so good at it. In fact, he was a bit all over the shop. Perhaps it no longer mattered to him?

But if pragmatism had enabled him to sustain his profile as a professional exhibiting artist, albeit modestly, it had also meant a putting aside of his own deep values. There was surely little real satisfaction in it, particularly measured against his past accomplishments. With declining professional opportunities at home, it does seem feasible that Gordon, with Anne in agreement, may have been in dignified retreat, seeking a new start away from America in relative anonymity.

Moreover, other forces at work in the United States leading up to 1960 may have weighed on the Samstags, potentially adding incentive for them to move. Disturbing things. Despite economic prosperity, there had been ongoing pressures for most Americans since the end of World War II, with no respite from the burdens and challenges that came with the country's role of international leadership. There had been the vicious and costly Korean War, for example, and the unrelenting brinkmanship with a nuclear-powered Soviet Union, an aggressive, expansionist competitor, presenting genuine threats to homeland security that impacted on individual wellbeing. The notoriously belligerent Soviet Premier, Nikita Khrushchev, had caused an international sensation – and much alarm in the United States – when he reportedly threatened 'we will bury you' in a speech to Western ambassadors at the Polish embassy in Moscow, in November 1956.9

The shadow of McCarthyism and a sinister drift to censorship in American life would also have alarmed and threatened the Samstags. Gordon, a Jewish artist with a mildly socially engaged, if not activist, profile (judging by his sympathetic portraits of working people and his New Deal mural links), would have needed to keep his head down. Indeed, the US government's House Un-American Activities Committee had maintained a probing assault on cultural workers well into the 1950s, its investigations into communist allegiances and its ideological hostility towards Roosevelt's 'socialist' New Deal programs destroying the careers and lives of prominent filmmakers and artists – many of them Jewish – on a mere whisper.

By 1961 America was a country under growing social pressures, its populist image of nationally shared cultural values disguising fault lines, not least the unequal circumstances of African-Americans. The Civil Rights Movement was mobilising; there was trouble brewing. Most ominously – in 1959, just across from Florida – Fidel Castro had won the Cuban Revolution. The Soviets, meanwhile, were not only leading America in the Space Race, they were almost at the door. <sup>10</sup> It was a dangerous world. For Americans, things were fraught.

Living as close as they did to what realistically was a nuclear-targeted New York City, the Samstags could well have been imagining safer ports, and they possessed the means and the freedom from ties to act. Confirmation that these fears had influenced the Samstags comes from Peter Ognibene, the son of Gordon's old art school friends Ben ('Gus') and Jo Ognibene. In a memoir he wrote about the Samstags for Lea Rosson DeLong, he recalled a number of conversations around this topic, including one about the Samstags' decision to remain childless:

Anne SAMSTAG handkerchiefs, 1950s printed hand-rolled linen 38.0 x 38.0 cm (15 x 15 in) Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA

The shadow of McCarthyism.

Members of the 'Committee for the First Amendment', including Danny Kaye, Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart, arrive in Washington, DC, to support the Hollywood Ten, during the House Un-American Activities hearings, October 26, 1947.

The LIFE Picture Collection Photographer Martha Holmes Getty Images



Scene from the film *On the Beach*: Anthony Perkins (Peter Holmes), Gregory Peck (Dwight Towers) and Fred Astaire (Julian Osborne). National Film and Sound Archive of Australia © MGM 1959



Gordon said he believed the world unfit for children. He made the remark in the 1950s during the height of the Cold War and the threat of nuclear war. At the time teachers taught their pupils to hide under their desks if an air raid siren sounded ... Public service messages appeared on TV advising viewers to stockpile food and water in a shelter where they could wait out the effects of nuclear radiation. In response to my question about their plans to emigrate to Australia Gordon told me that he and Anne wanted to escape the threat of nuclear war. World wind patterns made Australia a sanctuary from nuclear war, he told me. Another reason for selecting Australia for their new home may have been their admiration for [Australian artist] Hayley Lever, who taught at the Art Students League during the years Gordon, Gus and Jo studied there. 11

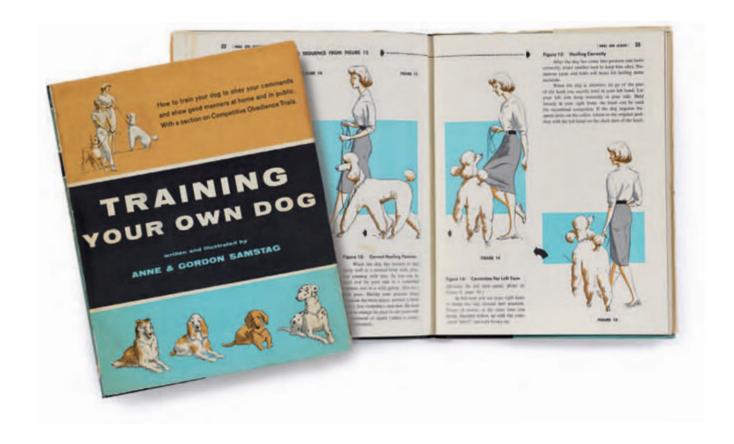
Their choice of Australia as a sanctuary might even have been reinforced by Stanley Kramer's chilling, post-apocalyptic 1959 film, *On the Beach*, in which Melbourne becomes the unlikely haven from deadly radiation spreading inexorably south, having already killed everyone in the Northern Hemisphere following a nuclear war.<sup>12</sup> Melbourne? Fanciful or not, just two years after the film's release, this same Melbourne would become Anne and Gordon's new home (a city that was, actress Ava Gardner had famously quipped, 'the perfect place to make a film about the end of the world'<sup>13</sup>).

Whatever the real underlying purpose of their migration – flight, boredom or adventure – it seemed there actually was no great urgency involved. Close family friend Susan Spilman recalled that later in the 1950s the Samstags had taken to 'not working and spending a lot of time sailing around in the Caribbean' and moreover, 'to many parts of the world'. Urgency? No worries there? To all appearances, they were relaxed and unhurried.

And in 1961, just months before the Samstags arrived in Australia, a book written by Anne and illustrated by Gordon was published in New York by Alfred A. Knopf Inc. The book, *Training Your Own Dog*, was an initiative of Anne's, who had approached Alfred Knopf personally in 1959 with her manuscript, then titled *Companion Dog Training*, and met him in November that year at the publisher's premises on 501 Madison Avenue. Knopf editor Angus Cameron thereafter became responsible for the publication's development, in the process forming an enduring and cordial business relationship with the Samstags. Significantly, the book's dust jacket described the Samstags as about to 'leave shortly for an extended stay in Australia, where Gordon will teach in Melbourne'. Clearly, the great southern adventure had been some time in the planning. It was a measured strategy, with purpose, not a holiday. They were going to be away for a while.

In fact, the Samstags were to remain in Australia for sixteen years.

Anne and Gordon SAMSTAG
Training Your Own Dog,
Alfred A. Knopf Inc.,
New York, 1961



### AN UNLIKELY COUPLE

As Americans abroad, the Samstags would have enjoyed almost effortless cachet in Australia, certainly on first acquaintance (at least for a while). In a country that had opened its doors widely to European migration after World War II, Australia was still overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon in demographic character. And yet Americans were the exception, a novelty, and rarely encountered.

Almost naively, Australians tended to like Americans. They were easily charmed by them, sometimes simply by virtue of the colourful difference in their language, but often as a result of the unwitting but common Australian assumption that Americans (and well-spoken English people) were products of a 'superior' world and were therefore, by default, better educated, more worldly and glamorous, and, usually, richer.

Older Melburnians would have known differently. They would have remembered the arrival of a division of American marines in January 1943, on 'liberty' leave for respite and

recovery from the terrible Pacific War after fighting the Japanese on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, many of them badly wounded or suffering the effects of malaria. The soldiers – country boys large among them – were in the main very young and decidedly unworldly, though popular with the local girls. <sup>16</sup> As many as one million American servicemen passed through Australia in this manner during World War II, preparing for war and also recovering from it. Now, they had all gone.

However, that was then: Anne and Gordon were something else, quite different. Indeed, viewed through American eyes, the Samstags were an improbable couple, their incongruous religious matrimony alone – Quaker and Jewish – placing them at odds with the social mores of the day, at least

enough to raise eyebrows, had anyone known. But what especially singled them out was their extraordinary family histories: they each boasted long and rich ancestral trees that, in Anne's case, harked back to America's earliest immigrant and colonising past. That they had found each other as partners in life was remarkable, and in Australia they would not be easily understood.



American and Australian soldiers in the reading room of the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute, Sturt Street, 1942. Museum Victoria, Melbourne

### GORDON

Born Samuel Gordon Samstag in New York on June 21, 1906, the second son of Solomon Monroe Samstag (1869–1931) and Evelyn Maude Scharff Samstag (1881–1957), Gordon came from a distinguished line of high-achieving European Jewish economic migrants. <sup>17</sup> He became a richly educated artist of very considerable, noteworthy achievement. Trained rigorously in materials, technique and composition and with an inherent vision for excellence, he had won major scholarships as a student, and his mature works as a Social Realist painter of the 'American Scene', showed rare skill. In October 1928, aged twenty-two, he had travelled to Paris on the prestigious Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship, spending eight months studying at the Académie Colarossi, a relatively informal international school popular with Americans. With so much time, cause and opportunity to visit galleries and museums in the progressive



Albert TUCKER (1914–99)
Victory Girls, 1943
oil on cardboard
64.6 x 58.7 cm (25% x 23% in)
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Purchased 1971
© Estate of Barbara Tucker
Courtesy Sotheby's Australia

Paris of Gertrude Stein, it is certain that Gordon would have encountered works by Cézanne and Matisse along with the Cubist innovations of Picasso, Braque and Léger, and even seen the fledgling Surrealists. But Gordon was drinking from a different well. The artist had been formed and for the time being at least, was not about to change.

Gordon's forebears, on both parents' sides, had come to America in the 1840s and 1850s, either because of the European Revolutions of 1848 or as entrepreneurs seeking opportunity. All of them were educated, hardworking and cultured; some already had money. They took to the American way of life as patriots and several became mercantile high achievers of very considerable wealth, with a strong instinct for philanthropy, though little of the family money seems ultimately to have trickled down to Gordon. 18

On his mother's side, Gordon was from a distinguished St Louis family that had roots in antebellum Mississippi. His great grandfather, Samuel Bernheimer (1812–88), had come from Hohenems, Austria, in the 1840s and settled in Mississippi, where he became a wealthy 'Southern gentleman' selling imported luxury goods and general merchandise from a large store in Port Gibson, Claiborne County. He married Henrietta Cahn (1827–1904) in New Orleans, and they had six children, including Carrie (1851–1923) – Gordon Samstag's

grandmother – Jacob (1863–1911), Marcus (1847–1912) and Sidney (1858–1930). <sup>19</sup> The Bernheimers were 'leaders within the Jewish community and outstanding in civic life'. <sup>20</sup> Samuel was also a supporter of the Confederate South in the Civil War, but when General Ulysses S. Grant took over Port Gibson – after prevailing in the day-long May 1, 1863 battle that had cost more than 200 Federal and Confederate soldiers' lives – he occupied Samuel Bernheimer's house and for a time made it his Union headquarters. It was said that Grant had spared the town of Port Gibson from being razed (as had happened to most neighbouring places), because he considered it 'too beautiful to burn'. <sup>21</sup>

Evelyn's father, Nicholas Scharff (1836–1924) – Gordon's maternal grandfather – had migrated from Bavaria in the 1850s and, it was said, fought for the Confederate army during the Civil War. Nicholas married Samuel Bernheimer's daughter Carrie in 1870, and in 1875 established a large, wholesale grocery business in St Louis, Missouri – Scharff, Bernheimer and Company – in partnership with Carrie's brother Marcus (whose diligence was credited with restoring the family business in Port Gibson, after it suffered significant financial losses in the Civil War). They also manufactured flour, and sold grain and farming implements.<sup>22</sup> Nicholas and Carrie had eight children, including Gordon's mother, Evelyn Scharff.

Carrie's brother Jacob had remained in Mississippi as manager of the family Bernheimer & Sons business and on his death in 1911 his estate – variously described at the time as worth one to two million dollars – passed principally to Carrie and her brother Sidney. Marcus received only a token payment of \$5000 because he was estranged from Jacob. He then contested the will, was unsuccessful and famously collapsed and died in the courtroom as the verdict was announced. The court subsequently instructed Carrie and Sidney to apportion part of their inheritance to Marcus's children. <sup>23</sup>

Gordon's paternal grandfather, (Seligmann) Samuel Samstag (1837–1906), had come to America from Southern Germany in 1856 and settled in Washington, DC, where he married Augusta Pribham (1840–1913), whose family hailed from Prague. He was an auctioneer and did well running a successful cigar and liquor store. The Samstags and Pribhams supported the North in the Civil War and, unlike the liberal Bernheimer/Scharff family, were orthodox Jews.<sup>24</sup>

Led by patriarch Samuel, the extended Samstag family had moved from Washington to New York in the mid-1890s; they lived on the West Side just a couple of blocks from Central Park, at 223 West Seventy-eighth Street. Sadly, Samuel died in New York City the very month that Gordon was born. Gordon's father, Solomon Monroe Samstag established himself as a dress merchant with a staff of workers. Meanwhile, Solomon's brothers, Henry (1865–1940) and Louis (1877–1937), had together set up a highly successful importing and retail business (haberdashery, handbags and quality jewellery) in a partnership with the Hilder Brothers, from as early as 1907. Originally at 557 Broadway, Manhattan, Samstag & Hilder Bros later moved to 1200 Broadway, with Henry as company president, until the business was liquidated in 1931, a casualty of the Wall Street Crash of 1929.

Unfortunately, Solomon proved a less astute businessman than his brother Henry, who prospered magnificently after the Crash in real estate and brokering. Henry's son, H. Robert Samstag (1897–1984), followed his father into the sharemarket as a partner in the New York brokerage house, Hamershlag, Borg and Company, having previously worked as secretary of his father's importing business. <sup>26</sup> Brother Louis similarly remained 'comfortable'. Having established his reputation as the Samstag & Hilder Bros designer and manufacturer of quality costume jewellery, L. Albert Samstag married into the Rothschild family, later becoming vice-president of the Rothschild Realty Company at 100 Fifth Avenue. <sup>27</sup>

Solomon may have met Evelyn when she was visiting her uncle, Sidney Bernheimer (one of Carrie's brothers), a well-to-do businessman in New York. <sup>28</sup> Little is known about the couple's courtship; however, they married on November 12, 1902, at the 'beautifully decorated' Columbia Club, a Jewish social institution in St Louis. Evelyn 'was attended by her twin sister Maud Scharff, as maid of honour, and Albert Samstag served the bridegroom as best man'. <sup>29</sup> They divorced in the 1920s, with Gordon's father largely disappearing from his life after that.

### NICHOLAS SAMSTAG

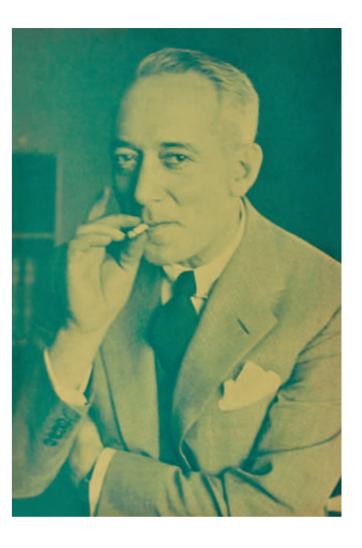
Gordon's only sibling, Nicholas Samstag (1904–68), had a similar creative impulse to Gordon's, though he channelled it into writing. Just two years older than Gordon, he was educated at New York and Columbia universities. He worked with great success in advertising and promotions, becoming one of *Time* magazine's most senior executives (he was *Time*'s director of promotions for seventeen years). In 1960, he set up his own public relations company with an address on Fifth Avenue in Midtown Manhattan. Nicholas Samstag Inc. specialised in public relations, advertising and promotional advisory services for companies in the communications industries.<sup>30</sup>

As a young author in his twenties, Nicholas had poems regularly published in *The New Yorker* magazine

and wrote a children's book, *Kay Kay Comes Home: a Fable of Enthusiasm*, illustrated by Ben Shahn, and celebrated by the *New York Times* as one of the best children's books of 1962.<sup>31</sup> He later wrote ironically humorous motivational books, for example *The Uses of Ineptitude, or How Not to Want to Do Better*, published in 1962.<sup>32</sup> In that book's acknowledgments, Nicholas cites Gordon – by then living in Australia – giving 'puzzled gratitude for [his brother's] thoughtful suggestions, creative needling and unswerving determination to find the right publisher'.

In June 1962 Gordon was also instrumental in advocating to Alfred A. Knopf publishers, on behalf of his brother, a novel to be written by Nicholas about 'Time-Life types'. A draft 'first chapter' of the proposed book – deemed by the Knopf editors as a 'tough, cynical business novel, with its exposé of a big publishing company's sales organization' – was considered wrong for the Knopf list and declined.<sup>33</sup> But the book would later be published by Doubleday in 1966, as *Come and See My Shining Palace*. An autobiographical work, it closely follows Nicholas's own life. While the names of people and places are changed, it is clear that his own family and personal history are the subject, and so the novel gives insight into Gordon's early family life.

During his long years at *Time* as the enterprising promotions director, Nicholas Samstag worked in the Time-Life Building on Sixth Avenue, also home to the iconic, fictional 1960s advertising agency Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce, of television's *Mad Men* fame. Indeed, *Come and See My Shining Palace* could be seen as a precursor to this celebrated series, if not an inspirational model.<sup>34</sup>



Back cover portrait of Nicholas Samstag from his book *The Uses of Ineptitude*, Obolensky, New York, 1962.



Nicholas Samstag lived at the Dakota apartment building at 1 West 72nd Street and Central Park West, New York City. Authenticated News/ Getty Images

A benefactor to Columbia University's Business School, Nicholas Samstag was married five times, had three children<sup>35</sup> and lived in the upmarket Dakota building at 1 West Seventy-second Street, facing Central Park. Built in 1884, the architecturally iconic Dakota – designed by Henry J. Hardenbergh who also designed the Plaza Hotel – later became famous as John Lennon and Yoko Ono's home, outside of which Lennon was murdered in 1980.<sup>36</sup>

Nicholas died of cancer on March 26, 1968, at the Upper East Side Manhattan, Lenox Hill Hospital. In a strange and sad twist, his much younger fifth wife, Suzanne (Bachner) Samstag, was found dead at the International Hotel, near Kennedy Airport, the day after Nicholas's death. She was thirty-eight. (Nicholas and Gordon's long-lived uncle – their mother Evelyn's brother, Sidney Scharff – passed that same year in November, aged ninety-four.)

Nicholas Samstag had a whimsical, though sharp and irreverent humour. When *Shining Palace* was remaindered and pulped by Doubleday only two years after its release, he wrote a derisively funny, self-mocking 'review' for *Ramparts* magazine about the fate of the book. At the end of the review (published in February 1968, the month before he died) he instructs the Doubleday manager to 'go pulp himself'. Nicholas's *New York Times* obituary described him as having 'a flair for the unusual', reporting that he'd run an advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* the year before his death offering to teach, over weekly lunches, everything he knew about the advertising and promotions business to anyone willing to pay a fee of \$10,000. Among the more than fifty replies he received was one from a West Coast heiress, who wrote, 'Have money, will travel'. 37

A 'Nicholas and Suzanne Bachner Samstag Scholarship' is still awarded by the Columbia University Business School.  $^{\rm 38}$ 

### INTIMIDATING RELATIVES

In 1923, when he was a young art student, Gordon Samstag lived for a time in St Louis at the home of his maternal grandparents, Nicholas and Carrie Scharff. His grandmother had died earlier that year and Gordon and his mother, Evelyn, may have gone to St Louis to take care of the ailing Nicholas, who passed away the following year, in June. Whatever remained of Carrie and Nicholas Scharff's inherited wealth – and the proceeds of their St Louis wholesale grocery business, Scharff, Bernheimer and Company – was then divided among their seven surviving children, including Gordon's divorced mother, Evelyn, then forty-three. <sup>39</sup> Each share may therefore have been relatively modest and the inheritance seems to have been of little benefit to Gordon, who continued to work in a variety of menial roles to support his early art career (see page 23).

Gordon's circumstances could not have been in greater contrast to those of his prosperous relatives, not least, for example, his three hyper-wealthy paternal first cousins, Henry Robert, Mathilde and Kathrin Samstag (his uncle Henry's children) who all built impressively on their privileged beginnings by marrying well. In 1935, H. Robert Samstag (1897–1984) married Renee Baruch (1905–94), daughter of wealthy financier, economist and prominent government adviser, Bernard Baruch (1870–1965), who had been Chairman of the War Industries Board in

World War I and a longtime friend of Winston Churchill. The highly influential Baruch had helped frame the economic provisions of the Versailles Treaty in 1919, and was also US representative to the UN Atomic Energy Commission in 1946.<sup>40</sup>

Mathilde Samstag (1905–96) married a distinguished architect, art collector and philanthropist, Alexander Bing. Kathrin Samstag (1899–1984) – an 'heiress' according to the *New York Times* <sup>41</sup> – married industrialist and future AMAX President Walter Hochschild. In the 1930s they moved to the renowned Emery Rothdesigned residence at 1200 Fifth



Avenue, occupying the penthouse, designed by Pleasance Pennington. The Hochschild family also maintained a holiday residence in the Adirondacks, New York State, and a lifelong philanthropic involvement in the Adirondack Museum at Blue Mountain Lake. <sup>42</sup> Kathrin, who had at one stage attended the Art Students League, had an avid appreciation for art and would from 1930 become closely involved with the then fledgling Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), comfortably rubbing shoulders with the Rockefellers. She and her husband hosted many of MOMA's key formal social events and from 1956 Kathrin became a long-serving trustee, along the way donating most of the Hochschilds' rich art collection to the institution.

These then, were Gordon Samstag's typically imposing relatives. However, apart from his maternal grandparents, Nicholas and Carrie Scharff, Gordon seems not to have been close to his parents' extended family. <sup>43</sup> Despite having grown up surrounded by the larger Samstag family's wealth, prestige and success, he would have to make his own way, at least until finding Anne.

### FINDING ANNE

Exactly when Gordon met Anne remains unclear. In the summer of 1926, he spent some time at Charles Hawthorne's Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, set on the natural harbour at the very end of the Cape where, famously, the Pilgrims had first dropped anchor in the *Mayflower* in November 1620 (see page 190). It was less than fifty miles (eighty kilometres) north of Anne's family's summer residence at Yarmouth. It seems likely he returned to the area in 1928, when he exhibited one of his works with the Provincetown Art Association, though during that particular summer Anne was away in Europe with her mother, Grace, and her sisters Helen Maria and Frances, and did not return to America until September, just as Gordon was about to leave for Paris. After his return from Europe, Gordon travelled to the Cape many times, seeking subjects to paint. There is, however, no record of his encountering Anne there.

It is possible that they may have met instead in New York City at the 'Studio Club' at 35 East Sixty-second Street. <sup>44</sup> According to Anne's sister, Patt, around 1927 she, Anne and another sister, Priscilla ('Prill'), stayed there while Patt was enrolled in a sculpture class at the

President John F. Kennedy meets with financier Bernard Baruch, July 26, 1961, Oval Office, White House, Washington, DC. Courtesy Associated Press via Australian Associated Press

Charles Webster Hawthorne painting en plein air, c. 1910. Courtesy Charles Webster and Marion Campbell Hawthorne papers, 1870–1983 Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC



Art Students League on West Fifty-seventh Street. We don't know if Anne, too, was enrolled at the League, but Gordon was studying there between 1923 and 1927, and it was just a few short blocks from the League to the Studio Club.

Wherever the initial meeting occurred, Anne and Gordon must have become very close by the early 1930s, as they married on November 3, 1933, in the Municipal Court of New York City. The marriage licence listed his profession as artist and hers as designer; the marriage was witnessed by Samstag's mother, Evelyn, and Anne's father, Charles Henry Davis. <sup>45</sup> The presence of the parents at the ceremony suggests that neither family opposed the union; yet it seems that neither family supported them to any great extent financially, through the ensuing hard years of the Depression.

### AMERICAN ROYALTY

Anne had been born Anna Lawton Davis on December 12, 1908, at her family's summer residence, known as The House of Seven Chimneys, on Bass River, South Yarmouth, Cape Cod; it was north of Martha's Vineyard, off Nantucket Sound. The exceptionally grand family home had been built by her Quaker father, Charles Henry Davis (1865–1951), a civil engineer, businessman, visionary and ardent yachtsman who'd grown up in Philadelphia but whose ancestors came from Nantucket and the Cape. For a time, Charles H. Davis was one of the richest men in America: a tycoon.

Anne's lineage was rare. Her mother's family – the Bigelows of Boston – were Unitarian Christians; they traced their ancestors back to the pioneering Winthrop Fleet emigration of 1630. On her father's side, the family were Quakers from Philadelphia; the orthodox Davis family, who'd come from Wales in the eighteenth century, joined to the progressive and liberal Motts, anti-slavery abolitionists. Benjamin Franklin was closely linked to her impressive ancestral tree through the Folgers. She may even have had a claim to a link with the *Mayflower*, through the legendary Coffins of Nantucket. 46 She was American royalty: a blueblood.



Adelaide JOHNSON (1855-1955) The Portrait Monument -The Suffragettes: Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) and Lucretia Mott (1793-1880), 1921, marble c. 213.3 x 176.8 x 152.4 cm (c. 84 x 695/8 x 60 in) United States Capitol rotunda, Washington, DC Photograph by Dr Ronald V. Wiedenhoeft Courtesy Saskia Ltd. Scholars Resource

From left to right in this photograph the figures are Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.

Known in the family as 'Bay' (from Anne having been, for a while, the 'baby'), she was the fourth of six daughters born to Charles and his second wife, Grace Bigelow Davis (1867–1933). <sup>47</sup> She had been named after Charles's aunt Anna (Coffin Davis) Hallowell (1838–1913), sister of her paternal grandfather, Henry Corbit Davis. It was said, though never substantiated, that the socially progressive Anna Hallowell and her husband, Richard, had been the inspiration for Henry James's 1886 novel *The Bostonians*, a controversial portrait of feminism and social politics in nineteenth-century America. The book scandalised Boston society due to its assault on the conventions of the day and its hint at lesbianism in the two female protagonists.

Anne and her sisters had grown up enjoying a life of unmatched privilege, with almost annual, extended trips to Europe (from a certain age), travelling on the best ocean liners, sometimes supported by a retinue of maids. Typically, their father Charles would have business in England (where he would usually stay at The Ritz in London), requiring that the family group be accompanied by his secretary, Alice Bancroft (a second cousin, and later, his third wife), leaving Grace – who had studied art in Paris and knew Europe and its cultural treasures well – to guide and shepherd her daughters around France, Italy and Germany.

Anne was first taken to England when she was two, but her trips as a young girl commenced in 1922, when she was thirteen, her passport having been secured that year in April. Her parents were by then divorced. In fact, the last occasion that Grace and Charles travelled overseas together seems to have been in 1914, when (travelling without the children) they arrived back in New York City on September 18, 1914, sailing from Liverpool on the ill-fated *Lusitania*. <sup>48</sup> Grace was forty-seven; she and Charles had been married eleven years.

There was also time spent at Swiss finishing schools, at least for some of the girls. On one trip, for example, when Anne was thirteen, she and her sisters, Patt, Prill and Frin, attended the Institut des Essarts international school in Territet (now the Institut Monte Rosa) on Lake Geneva, near Montreux, while their older sister Helen Maria was enrolled in the University of Geneva. On a subsequent trip in 1925, when Anne was sixteen, she and her sister Priscilla attended a school in Lausanne. All of it was a prerequisite to their anglophile father's aspiration

(ultimately unfulfilled) that the girls marry into the English aristocracy. <sup>50</sup> Most often, the family would return to America from England, an almost *de rigueur* destination in the schedule. Anne's final trip of this kind most probably was in 1931 when, on August 22, aged twenty-two, she returned alone with her mother from Europe on the *Britannic*. <sup>51</sup>

If they weren't travelling in Europe with their mother, the Davis sisters would spend their summers at the family compound on the Cape. Otherwise, from 1911 when Anne was three, they lived for most of the year in Cambridge at the stately eighteenth-century Georgian residence known as Elmwood, in Reservoir Street, Cambridge – now the official residence of the Harvard University President. Built around 1767 by Thomas Oliver, Elmwood was formerly the long-time home of American writer and diplomat, James Russell Lowell (1819–91), and before that the family residence of Elbridge Gerry (1744–1814), one of the signatories of the US Declaration of Independence and Vice President of the United States. 52

The girls went to the best schools: Buckingham School in Cambridge and, when they were old enough, the progressive 'Miss Winsor's School' in Boston.<sup>53</sup> Along with their many privileges of class and affluence, Anne and her sisters also inherited a progressive, reformist

family tradition, and they benefited from a Quaker culture that supported equality for women. One of her most luminous ancestors was Lucretia (Coffin) Mott (1793-1880), her father's paternal great-grandmother. She was famous as a pioneering abolitionist and women's suffrage activist: her contemporaries described her as 'the greatest American woman of the nineteenth century'. 54 As a Quaker minister, Lucretia had been at the forefront of the anti-slavery movement – a commitment she passionately shared with her principled and equally activist Quaker husband, James Mott (1788-1868). They were exemplary. With Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia also organised the seminal 1848 convention at Seneca Falls, New York, that launched the American women's rights movement. A sculpture by Adelaide Johnson celebrating Lucretia Mott and her colleagues, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, is displayed in the US Capitol Hill building. There were also stamps: she is revered.



Portrait of Grace Bigelow Davis, c. 1900, gelatin silver process 14.7 x 10.4 cm (5¾ x 4⅓ in) Radcliffe College Alumnae Memorial Biographies Courtesy Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, USA

### **GRACE BIGELOW**

Anne Samstag's mother, Grace Bigelow Davis (1867–1933), was descended from the pioneering family whose forebear John Bigelow (1617–1703) is understood to have come to America in 1630 with the eleven-ship Winthrop Fleet of some 700 colonists, ten years after the *Mayflower*. Though not the first

to arrive, they nevertheless formed the consolidating core of the Massachusetts Bay Colony near present-day Boston, and effectively were the founding fathers of New England.

The Bigelows were distinguished Bostonians, and in Grace's family, culture, literature and publishing were a vocation. She grew up in Cambridge where her father, Marshall Train Bigelow (1822–1902) was an early proprietor of Harvard University Press, a role in which he became respected as America's leading editor, setting national benchmarks for the standard of his publications and his exactitude in editing. Grace inherited copyright on her father's diverse





Joseph DANFORTH Sr (1758–1788) Mug, c. 1780–1788 pewter 11.1 x 8.3 cm (4% x 3¼ in) Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Gift of Francis Hill Bigelow

Artist unknown

Tumbler, c. 1780–1820
engraved glass
19.05 x 14.6 x 14.6 cm
(7½ x 5¾ x 5¾ in)
created in Germany or Bohemia

Museum of Fine Arts Boston
Gift of Francis Hill Bigelow

publications.<sup>56</sup> Her maternal uncle, John H. Warland (1807–72) was a noted poet and journalist who had edited newspapers in Boston and New Hampshire, and as editor of the *American Star* newspaper was a chronicler (albeit a partisan one) of the 1846–48 Mexican War. His well-regarded book of poems, *The Plume: A tuft of literary feathers*, was published in 1847.<sup>57</sup>

Grace was well educated, particularly for a woman of her day. At thirty-two she had been among the earliest graduates (Class of 1899) of the recently established Radcliffe College, Cambridge, a progressive and pioneering school that facilitated liberal arts education for women. It was a time when the all-male Harvard University was trenchantly opposed to higher education for women, and was closed to them.<sup>58</sup>

Anne's parents' marriage had progressively declined over many years, although for appearances' sake, the years-long liaison between Charles and his secretary, Alice Bancroft, had remained publicly discreet. According to Anne's sister Patt, their parents were estranged from at least 1916, when Anne was eight. The end of her marriage, and the potential for stigma, had been a source of 'hurt' to Grace. <sup>59</sup>

All the same, the family continued to travel together overseas, including with Alice Bancroft. It was an unusual arrangement; even after the formal divorce, Grace still claimed to be married when travelling abroad, presumably for dignity. For example, she declared herself as 'married' in her travel documents on returning from Europe with Anne on the *Britannic*, on August 22, 1931, although she was by then divorced. Charles had married Alice Bancroft earlier that year in New York City, on May 4, 1931.<sup>60</sup>

Grace was especially close to her older, bachelor brother, Francis Hill Bigelow (1859–1933), who remained unmarried throughout his life.<sup>61</sup> A knowledgeable and discerning antiques dealer, he became an important collector of American colonial silver and a recognised expert on the subject, donating much of his silver collection to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In 1917 he authored the still-influential book *Historic Silver of the Colonies and Its Makers*,<sup>62</sup> and for a time he was curator of silver at Harvard and, in this role, an affiliate with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. An ardent advocate for museological best practice in the handling and conservation of silver, he also collected period American furniture and colonial memorabilia. When Grace later finally separated from her husband Charles, she moved in with Francis at the old Bigelow family home on 4 Channing Street, Cambridge, just around the corner from Elmwood. Grace and Francis both died in 1933, the same year that Anne and Gordon were married in New York City.

### AN ARTISTIC HUB

When Charles Henry Davis married Grace Bigelow in 1903, he was thirty-eight and she thirty-six.<sup>63</sup> It was Charles's second marriage: his first wife, the artist Helen Maria Hinds (1861–1902), whom he'd wed in November 1896 in New York City, had died the year before of tuberculosis; there were no children. Helen Hinds had for several years lived in Paris, studying art with her older sister Alice (1859–1953), before returning to New York in 1886. Grace, too, had spent the best part of a year in Paris in 1890, when she was twenty-three, and it's likely that Alice, Helen and Grace had been friends, though most probably in Boston.<sup>64</sup>

In 1893, well before Helen married Charles, Alice and her artist husband, William Stone (1842–1913) – who both taught at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston – had purchased a summer retreat on Cape Cod at Bass River that sat immediately alongside Charles Davis's property. The Stones' estate included the old settlement-era Matthews House and the famed eighteenth-century Judah Baker Windmill. Larger than life as he was, and known to his friends as 'Carl', Charles robustly embraced and collected people in the Yarmouth district, especially sailors – grist for his Bass River Yacht Club – and Alice too was 'collected' by Charles. Over the years, and particularly after 1913, when her husband died, 'Aunt' Alice Stone's relationship with the extended Davis family became intimate. No doubt she also provided companionship to Grace, as Grace's marriage to Charles deteriorated.

The extended Davis family included both of Charles's sisters – Lucy Davis (1863–1951) and his half-sister Martha (Pattie) Davis (b. 1877), daughter to his father's second wife Naomi C. Lawton, and twelve years younger than Charles – who remained spinsters all their lives. Perennially attached to Charles and his family, the sisters lived alongside him, either at Cape Cod or in Charles's Manhattan house at 117 East Thirty-first Street, off Park Avenue, which was also shared with Alice Bancroft (who later inherited the residence from Charles). Martha often travelled with Alice Bancroft to Europe. 67

Aunt Alice Stone was a worldly, free-spirited artistic force, and it seems apparent that she also was a significant and enduring influence on Anne and Patt, nurturing their creativity and future life choices. When Patt was twenty, for example, Alice travelled with her to Spain, visiting museums, exploring and painting in the Alhambra at Granada.<sup>68</sup>

There was a lot to do around the Cape district if you were interested in art. For example, one could take summer classes at Charles Hawthorne's Cape Cod School of Art in nearby Provincetown, where Gordon Samstag would later study. And for young adults who otherwise lived for most of the year in Cambridge, there were the more structured courses offered by the reputable School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. No doubt inspired by the example of Aunt Alice Stone, both Anne and Patt would each later pursue a formal education in art, and while they were never particularly close as sisters, they would throughout their lives always identify themselves as 'artists'. For example, Anne, in a handwritten biography presented to her publisher Alfred A. Knopf, in 1961, described herself as 'a freelance artist and textile designer,' who had 'received her art training at the Boston Art Museum School'. 69

### CHARLES HENRY DAVIS

Charles had been born in Pennsylvania's Montgomery County, on May 4, 1865. When he was young, his father, Henry Corbit Davis (1839–1901), moved the family for several years to Nice, on the Côte d'Azur in France, due to the poor health of Charles's mother, Martha Mellor Davis



Charles Henry Davis (1865–1951) driving Model T Ford date unknown Courtesy Historical Society of Old Yarmouth, Massachusetts, USA

(1842-74), returning to America after she died of tuberculosis in 1874, aged thirty-one. Charles's mother was buried in Nice. His father later married his first wife's cousin, Naomi C. Lawton.

Charles trained as a civil engineer and graduated top of his class at Columbia University in 1887.<sup>70</sup> His acumen as an entrepreneur was quickly evident when his newly formed business, Charles Henry Davis & Partners, began securing contracts in 1889 for sophisticated engineering and electrical work, for example, reportedly building the nation's first successful electric trolley line – the Washington, Alexandria & Mt Vernon Electric Railway – which began transporting people between Alexandria and Mount Vernon, northern Virginia.<sup>71</sup>

Charles's grandfather, Edward Morris Davis (1811–87), had been a successful Philadelphia businessman and an investor of impressive vision. When he died in 1887, he left an estate of significant assets, which passed to his three children – Anna Hallowell (1838–1913), William Morris (1850–1934) and Charles's father, Henry Corbit – most probably in a trust. As the oldest male, Henry assumed the role of managing the estate's complex assets. When Henry himself died four years later, in 1901, Charles had the good fortune of inheriting his father's share of the estate, and he was also charged with the task of administering it all on behalf of the family.

Charles was ambitious. He wasted no time in seeking to buy out the other family shares bequeathed to his father's two siblings. But his terms were hard, and caused a row, threatening division in the close, extended family. As a consequence, William (a distinguished geomorphologist and influential Harvard professor, whose original scientific work led to him being called the 'father of American geography') reluctantly acquiesced to Charles's terms, to his own disadvantage. It was said that he did so for the sake of Quaker family harmony, as William 'always placed family ties far above financial considerations'. <sup>72</sup>

One of the assets gained by Charles – the American Road Machine Company of Pennsylvania – was a substantial operating business that had built the very first machines for mechanical roadmaking. After becoming president of the company in 1901 and further developing its commercial potential, Charles profitably sold the asset in 1913, gaining valuable business experience along the way, and a growing financial war chest. 73

The House of Seven Chimneys, Bass River, Mass., date unknown (early 20th century), colour postcard 9.0 x 14.1 cm (3½ x 5½ in) postcard published by E.D. West Co. South Yarmouth, Cape Cod, Massachusetts Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA



A modern, determined and in some ways eccentric man, Charles Henry Davis was ahead of his time, a genuine visionary. At nearly six feet (183 centimetres) in height, he was physically imposing.<sup>74</sup> His personality was forceful and could inspire fear; his daughter Patt – later judged as his favourite and who (unlike the fair-haired, grey-eyed Anne) 'shared his brown eyes and brown hair' – claimed to have been terrified of him as a child. She wrote of his 'big size and loud voice and stern ways', and that he would 'swear at his secretaries'.<sup>75</sup>

There was a lot to do. When it was still in its infancy, he foresaw the growth of the American automobile industry and in 1911 created the National Highways Association, ambitiously promoting the concept of a planned national highways system at a time when the federal government was content to leave infrastructure development to the states. Davis's passion for the development of a federal system of roads was obsessive. He devoted personal resources to developing road maps for each state, and for years travelled the country in his Hudson car (with a spare vehicle following behind in case of breakdowns), promoting his cause under the banner slogan 'Good Roads Everywhere'. His car was festooned with forty-eight licence plates he'd secured from virtually every state and territory of the USA, all of them a '#25'.76

### THE CAPE

The Cape was a magnet to Charles. There was a compelling force to the place – the water and the boats, the unpredictably wild weather, the idyllic summer life, the appealing remove from the mainland. He'd holidayed there as a child: it drew him back. Though he'd grown up in Philadelphia, Cape Cod was his ancestral heartland, home to his great and high-achieving forebears, the colonising Coffins and the Folgers. He deeply craved to be there.

Wealthy even before gaining his future inheritance, Charles had the means, and the ambition, to acquire swathes of property on Cape Cod around South Yarmouth, along the Bass River. Before long he'd garnered a group of three existing Cape houses and a barn – one of them floated across from Nantucket and rolled up the hill from the river – and joined them together to form the nucleus of an unusual family compound. This would eventually become a seven-

building complex set around a courtyard, with magnificent views to the river. Known as The House of Seven Chimneys, it famously comprised 36 rooms, 17 front doors, 217 windows and 15 open fireplaces, as well as an underground cellar – with furnaces, hot water heaters and huge coal storage areas – in which his daughters and the local children often played. There was no town water or electricity, and just one hand-cranked magneto telephone: call Hyannis 49.<sup>77</sup>

Besides donating the land to establish the Bass River Yacht Club, Charles maintained a large, ocean-going powerboat, the *Ildico*, which figured in a famous rescue off the Cape in 1907. A three-masted schooner, the *Charlotte T. Sibley*, had foundered fifteen miles (twenty-four kilometres) out to sea on Dogfish Shoal during a huge, once-in-a-lifetime storm, and its crew of seven had abandoned ship; but they were saved by the *Ildico*, 'with Charles at the helm'. As a member of the prestigious New York Yacht Club in Newport (where he rubbed shoulders with the likes of Cornelius Vanderbilt III, John Pierpont Morgan, Sir Thomas J. Lipton and the young Franklin D. Roosevelt), Charles had boasting rights.

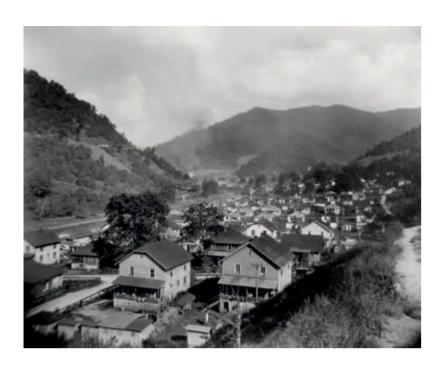
Living in South Yarmouth, however, was not merely a pleasurable summer convenience for the family, nor simply an escape for Charles to indulge his seriously intense sport of sailing. It was also a place from which to work, and for Charles to run his growing number of enterprises. Davis flew his own seaplane, a Curtiss, commuting occasionally between South Yarmouth and New York. It caused a sensation when he was the first to land on the sheltered Bass River on July 17, 1922, bringing the plane to a stop alongside his house. 80

Charles had a large and ambitious view of things, though some of his plans were improbable follies. Brought up an orthodox Quaker (though liberal himself), he campaigned vigorously in the 1930s for world peace (to be achieved through world government). Such was his indefatigable self-belief, he declared himself a candidate for the American Presidency in 1944. One journalist described him as 'the Quaker Patriot of Cape Cod. Dressed in the uniform of the N.Y. Yacht Club, six medals hung from ribbons on his chest (that) turned out to be half dollars commemorating the Oregon Train.'81 After World War II he proposed building a giant, eighty-foot (twenty-four-metre) triumphal statue of Winston Churchill on the cliffs of Dover (holding a cigar, as the Statue of Liberty holds its torch), to be sculpted by his artist son-in-law, Viggo Brandt-Erichsen, who out of deference to his father-in-law had reluctantly produced a handsome maquette, now in the collection of the Elverhøj Museum in Solvang, California. The Mayor of Dover politely declined the offer. 82

### THE KENTENIA MINING CORPORATION

The most significant of all of his grandfather's assets that came to Charles Henry Davis were the coal and mineral rights to vast tracts of coal-rich land in Harlan County, Kentucky. These were to become the source of great wealth for him. The 86,000-acre (35,000-hectare) Ledford-Skidmore-Smith-Farmer mining patent, issued in 1845, had been acquired speculatively by Charles's grandfather Edward in 1870 (at one dollar an acre). With questions still clouding the certainty of title to the lands, Charles acted quickly after inheriting the patent, arranging definitive new geological surveys in 1901, which cleared the title.<sup>83</sup> He was efficient.

The trove of high-grade Kentucky coal was one of the richest in America, but had sat undeveloped because the means of accessing and mining the 'practically inexhaustible supply' of it – set in the heavily forested hills along the County's Martins Fork – would only become feasible with suitable railway infrastructure. In a shrewd and enterprising move, in 1907 Charles formed the Kentenia Mining Corporation (an abbreviation of Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia) as a holding company by which to exploit the potential of the mining rights.



Employees' homes in the west end of Benham, Harlan County, c. 1920s. The Kentucky Historical Society, USA

His principal partner was Warren Delano Jr, fortuitously a director of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad and, as it happened, maternal uncle of the future President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

It seems reasonable to assume that Franklin D. Roosevelt became a minor shareholder in the Kentenia Corporation, along with other family members. However, he had a stake of a different kind in Harlan County, as a result of a visit there in the summer of 1908. Then twenty-six and still fit (he would not be stricken with polio until 1921), Roosevelt accompanied his uncle Warren Delano Jr to inspect the Kentenia holdings, leaving the train at Hagan and travelling rough on horseback. In a series of letters to his wife, Eleanor, he described the view of Harlan County from the top

of Cumberland Mountain as 'one of the most beautiful I have ever seen' and later, after a ride up Martins Fork from Harlan Town, referred to that valley as 'the most beautiful we have seen yet – the sides of the valley going up 2,000 feet, heavily wooded with great poplars, chestnuts and a dozen or two other deciduous trees and every mile or so ... a stream of splendid water'. 84

Confidently anticipating the arrival of the railroad, the Kentenia partners began aggressively accumulating rights to more Harlan land, offering Kentenia stock in exchange. In 1911, the Louisville & Nashville Railroad 'finally reached the mother lode of Harlan County coal'. When they were done consolidating, Kentenia Mining Corporation leased the rights to mine the coal to several different mining companies in exchange for royalties. One of these was the Henry Ford Corporation, which would eventually purchase its own mines but, in the meantime, would willingly pay a premium for reliable access to the quality coal assured by the Kentenia lease; Kentenia also gained the bonus of a royalty payment for each motor vehicle that Henry Ford produced. From a modest start-up production of 17,860 tons (16,200 tonnes) of coal in 1911, Harlan County's fifty-nine mines were by 1928 annually producing 14,500,000 tons (13,154,000 tonnes). If he had not been a rich man before, Charles Henry Davis was certainly rich now.

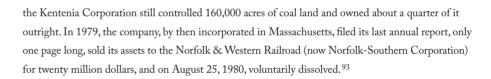
The Kentenia Mining Corporation's active role during the infamous Harlan County mining 'war' of the 1930s remains unclear, but warrants comment. A classic struggle between capital and labour, the war was precipitated by the Harlan County mine operators when, in 1931, they reduced the price of coal (and the miners' wages) in search of wider markets and profitability during the Great Depression. <sup>88</sup> The conflict escalated into a protracted and bloody confrontation, with the operators using lethal force to resist the miners' attempts to organise themselves, so as to improve their conditions or join labour unions. <sup>89</sup> Even after the Roosevelt administration legislated the *National Labor Relations Act* in 1935 (known as the *Wagner Act*, it guaranteed workers the right to collective bargaining through unions of their choice), the Harlan County Coal Operators' Association was intransigent. <sup>90</sup>

Although the Kentenia Corporation did not operate mines itself (rather, mining companies leased from Kentenia the rights to mine on Kentenia-controlled land in Harlan

County), its fundamental relationship with the mine operators would have left a stain of association, if not complicity. However, according to author Harry M. Caudill, Franklin D. Roosevelt had 'crushed the Harlan operators through the Kentenia Corporation'. In his book, *Theirs Be the Power* (and quoting Cleon K. Calvert of Pineville, an attorney for the operators' association), Caudill claims that, leading into 1937, the Kentenia leases to the operators had expired or were about to do so, and that 'Roosevelt persuaded his kinsmen and friends in the company to notify its lessee-operators that unless they made peace with their miners there would be no renewals'. Facing the loss of their investments, the mine operators capitulated. 91

Although he seems later to have suffered significant financial losses as a result of the Great Depression, Charles Henry Davis remained a wealthy man, not least because his magnificent asset, the Kentenia Mining Corporation, endured. Indeed, 'seventy years after Roosevelt's visit [to Harlan County, in 1908], more than a quarter of a billion tons of coal had been extracted from the Kentenia lands alone'.

When the mines eventually closed at Kentenia:



In due course, Charles Henry Davis's significant share of the Kentenia Mining Corporation assets would be held in the Naomi L. Davis Trust, the family trust established by his father, Henry Corbit Davis, of which Charles's five daughters would become the principal beneficiaries. In the meantime, however, some of them would struggle.

### SIBLING DESTINIES

By 1933, the year that Anne married Gordon in New York City, the five surviving Davis siblings – in order of seniority, Helen Maria, Martha Mott ('Patt'), Priscilla ('Prill'), Anna ('Anne') Lawton and Frances ('Frin') Bigelow – had begun to drift apart. Their mother Grace had died earlier that year, and would most likely have left a modest inheritance for her daughters, providing a degree of encouragement for Anne and Gordon to marry in the midst of the Great Depression. Anne was about to turn twenty-five. Having grown up bound together by the intensely close-knit Davis family culture and their shared travel, the sisters would as adults be drawn to different roads in life, with unpredictable destinies.

Helen Maria (ominously named after her father's deceased, first wife) had returned home from her college studies in Switzerland in 1925. She was twenty-one and had reportedly suffered a nervous breakdown while studying in Geneva. Little is known about Helen's subsequent life, other than that she continued to suffer depression, and that from 1929 her father, Charles, engaged the renowned Austrian psychotherapist Alfred Adler (1870–1937) to provide her with therapy (deemed by Adler's biographer, Edward Hoffman, to have been so 'dramatic', that Davis began financially sponsoring opportunities for Adler to work and lecture in America). 94 Helen later lived in New York, reportedly dying there in April 1949, aged forty-five.



Franklin D. Roosevelt sailing at Campobello, New Brunswick, Canada, 1908. Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum

Martha Mott painting her son David Brandt-Erichsen, c. 1954. Courtesy David Brandt-Erichsen and the Elverhøj Museum of History and Art, Solvang, California, USA



Priscilla (Prill) Davis moved to Los Angeles in 1938, where she became a nurse. Around 1935 she had married Warner (Leigh) Matteson (1897–1968) in Boston; he was a Hearst reporter with the International News Service and a part-time resident of Bass River, on the Cape. Matteson and Priscilla had two children: Lucy (Matteson) Holmes (1936–99) and Charles (1938–2010). Leigh Matteson and Priscilla would later divorce; otherwise, little is known of her life, except that she – unlike Anne's other sisters – was named as a substantial beneficiary in Gordon Samstag's 1989 will. She died the same year as Gordon, with that inheritance passing to her children, Lucy and Charles.

Frances (Frin) Bigelow Davis, the youngest of the five Davis siblings, is another of Anne's sisters about whom little is known. She seems to have been a generous-hearted soul, who remained single and lived in an apartment in the town of Brookline, Massachusetts, near Boston. Her niece, Patt's daughter, Jean, later wrote an autobiography in which she recalled that her Aunt Frances was one of her favourite childhood companions, lived in Boston and 'had no family', was 'fun-loving and jolly' and spent much time with Jean and her mother during their Cape Cod summers after Patt's separation from her first husband. She also noted that in 1940, when Patt came down with measles while in Orlando, Florida, Frin came readily to nurse her.<sup>97</sup>

As noted earlier, Patt had at one stage (around 1927) lived with Anne and Priscilla at the 'Studio Club' in New York (and had entered a sculpture class at the Art Students League). Afterwards she returned to Cambridge to be with her mother, Grace, and became engrossed in art-making projects, particularly illustration. Later she would teach art, and depend upon it for a living. <sup>98</sup> A deeply creative woman, Patt for a time had a difficult life. She married the American-Armenian composer Alan Hovhaness (1911–2000), <sup>99</sup> with whom she had her daughter Jean in 1935 (named after Jean's godfather, the Finnish composer Jean Christian Sibelius).



Martha Mott in front of Elverhøj House 1956. Courtesy the Elverhøj Museum of History and Art, Solvang, California, USA

She divorced the talented but philandering Hovhaness in 1938 and almost a decade later married the Danish artist Viggo Brandt-Erichsen (1896–1955), a widower and skilled sculptor with whom she had a son, David, in 1947. It was a love match, and they shared a vision for a different life on the West Coast. Together with Viggo's son Thor (1939–2008) from his earlier marriage, the family in 1949 drove across America with their belongings in a trailer, travelling from Jaffrey, New Hampshire, to California (via Cape Cod, to say farewell to Patt's father, Charles). Entirely by chance and good luck, they discovered the expatriate Danish community of Solvang, in California's Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County, and promptly settled there. Though he was unwell and would soon be stricken with cancer, Viggo was hardworking, and by 1952 he and Patt had built an architecturally distinctive residence and studio, 'Elverhøj'. Viggo died in 1955. It had been an intensely happy, but tragically short relationship. Many years later, after Patt's death in 1983, the Brandt-Erichsen's home became the Elverhøj Museum of History and Art. <sup>100</sup>

After Viggo's death, Jean (Hovhaness) Brandt-Erichsen, by then nineteen (and having graduated in biology from the University of California at Berkeley), moved to New York for graduate studies at Columbia University. During her year in New York, she visited Anne and Gordon at their Bronxville apartment, and in her autobiography recalled that Gordon loved sailing, and had taken her out on Long Island Sound. Jean thought that Anne 'was something of a fashion plate, and maintained a fashionable skinniness even more pronounced than Prill'. She also recalled that Anne 'had this almost exclusive interest in her [poodle] dogs, so that you can see that mother and she simply had nothing much to talk about! Of the two Samstags, she found Gordon the more interesting personality, 'and he was also the kind of person that was interested in other people – he used to ask lots of questions about what I was doing at school, etc. Except for that one year, I had little contact with them, and they rarely wrote to mother.' <sup>101</sup>

Patt's son, David Brandt-Erichsen, similarly thought that Anne was the 'least close' (of the Davis sisters) to his mother, although he believed that was as much because of geographical distance. Nor did he himself have any contact with Anne, whereas he did with the other sisters (with the exception of Helen, who had died in 1949). 102 According to Jean Nandi, the Samstags 'came to visit us in Solvang' many years later while on their way to live in Florida, having returned to America from Australia late in 1977. After that, 'I never saw them again', she wrote. 103



## STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

As someone who had carefully researched the history of colonial settlement in North America's Westchester county, in preparation for his 1940 history murals in the post office of suburban Scarsdale, north of New York City (see pages 85–117), Gordon Samstag may have learned and become curious that America's colonial past was in many ways similar to that of Australia's. The two countries shared not only a history of pioneering European migration and trailblazing exploration, for example, but they had in common, as well, Britain's expedient 'system' of transporting convicts to its colonies.

In America, that practice came to an end with the American Revolution just as it was beginning in Australia, where in 1788 a British 'First Fleet' of transported convicts – and soldiers to guard and control them – established the penal colony of New South Wales. It was on a site – soon to be called Sydney – alongside a magnificent, unsullied harbour that Lieutenant James Cook had mapped and named eighteen years before. Some said Port Jackson was the greatest harbour in the world. <sup>1</sup>

Among the hardened riffraff and villains from Britain's overflowing jails were skilled artisans and educated men who had fallen foul of the law – builders and carpenters, architects, artists and forgers – all providing the human stock upon which colonial Australia would be built.<sup>2</sup> Soon enough, as the Australian colony prospered and grew, transportation gave way to immigration. Among those seeking opportunity, perhaps imagining Australia as a place of Arcadian promise, were free-settler artists. They came from Britain and Europe in the main, some to stay, and all in different ways documented and contributed to Australia's colonial development.<sup>3</sup> Gradually, after harsh beginnings and through a tumultuous history leading up to the federation of its six colonies in 1901,<sup>4</sup> Australia claimed a rich and unique artistic heritage.

The ultimately successful colonisation of Australia, however, would come at the dire expense of the original inhabitants of the continent, the Aboriginal peoples, who were widely displaced from habitats they'd enjoyed uninterrupted for over 50,000 years. In 1788, as many as one million Indigenous people lived along the coastlines and rivers and (more sparsely) in the outback, comprising perhaps 250 different language groups; collectively, they were the oldest continuously living human culture on Earth. As the First Fleet colonists arrived and set up camp

Joseph LYCETT (1774–1825) View of the Heads, at the Entrance into Port Jackson, New South Wales, c. 1823 (detail) watercolour and gouache on paper 17.5 x 27.7 cm (6% x 10% in) Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

at Port Jackson, several Aboriginal communities visibly were living in and around the vast waterways of the pristine harbour.

Nevertheless, the British government deemed the continent to be *terra nullius*, 'land belonging to no-one', a fiction that legitimised possession of the land on the basis that no indigenous population was found to exist. As a consequence, the British colonisation of Australia has since been described, controversially, as 'an invasion', its unreconciled nature a continuing stain on Australia's social progress.<sup>5</sup>

### FROM THE HIBERNATING SLUMBER

If by travelling halfway around the world to the distant Antipodes it was Anne and Gordon Samstag's intention to abandon their old selves and be largely forgotten, then they had chosen their destination well. Australia, historically, had comfortably swallowed without a trace many a spirited migrant lured by the promise of adventure, or such, only for them to be lost to the anonymous life of the country's cities (or in some cases, the dry, empty heart of the unforgiving outback).

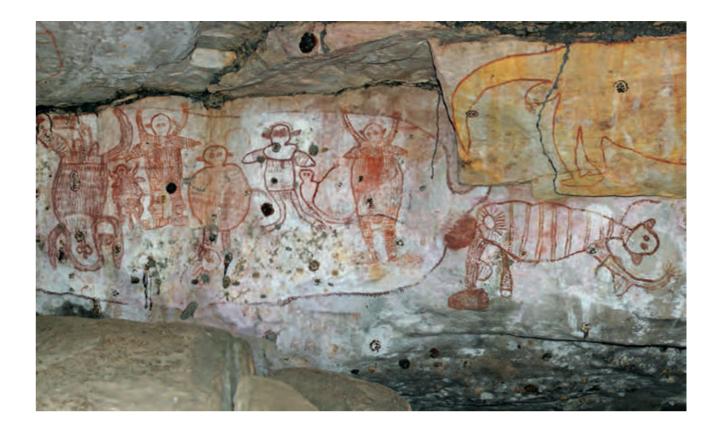
A secular society of some ten million people, the postwar Australia to which the Samstags were migrating remained an isolated, little-known part of the world. Paradoxically, it was a country forever geographically anchored to Asia, but which clung tenaciously to the cultural template of its British colonial origins. And yet the vast southern continent was so distant as to have largely severed Australian society from the living, Northern-Hemisphere Western culture to which it effectively belonged. That meant that Australian society had evolved with differences that were subtle, while distinct.

For a start, there was a peculiar emptiness to the modern Australian city. At its core, it was a machine for governance, business and the big retail department stores. It was for work, or shopping; no one much lived there. Indeed, although it was alive in the day with streaming pedestrians and boisterous traffic, come sunset the city was largely deserted, the workers and shoppers gone.

There were of course cafés and cultural facilities in the city, usually state-funded public galleries and libraries, along with a tertiary institution or two for the comparatively few undertaking higher education. There was also an abundance of city 'pubs' – public bars and hotels for social drinking – patronised mostly by working men, although some were bohemian enclaves, tribal gathering places for artists and their kind (Sydney and Melbourne particularly were richly endowed with them). But in most Australian states since 1916, public bars had been obliged by law to close their doors at six o'clock each evening, a temperance measure that stifled social life beyond the home.

Actually, there was not much for an average Australian to do at the end of the working day beyond returning home to the suburbs that sprawled flat to the horizon, where the national love of sport counted high as recreation, along with weekend beachside picnics and Hollywood movies at Art Deco–fronted cinema houses. Life tended to the quiet side; Australians resisted change. Television did not arrive until 1956, when whole families stood in the cold at night on the street, outside shops, to watch it – children in their bedtime pyjamas and gowns, spellbound.

To be fair, there was an egalitarian decency to Australian life, in many ways a legacy of the nationally shared burdens of two World Wars, the Great Depression and, before any of that, the impossibly hard and brutal trials of white settlement. It was also a country to which modernity had arrived manifestly, no more evidently so than when the Sydney Harbour Bridge



finally opened in 1932 – a symbolic triumph against the dark spectre of the Great Depression – its long period of construction providing a popular subject for artists.<sup>10</sup>

But, truth be told, the place was exotic only to those who had never been there. White Australian society at large was predominantly bland and uniform in character, and despite an advanced civil infrastructure and stable government, insular. Protected by a kind of benign hibernating slumber, Australia was yet to experience the transformative awakening that would come with late-1960s social upheaval. 11

Nonetheless, something was in the air: had the Samstags heard? The surface fabric of Australian society concealed surprising cultural depth. After World War II, for example, the federal government had ambitiously rebooted planned migration and waves of European migrants had taken to the Australian way of life with relish (recognising its safety and economic promise). They were turning the country for the better towards an urbanity it formerly had lacked (although non-English-speaking Southern-European migrants would be held suspiciously at arm's length for some time yet, not entirely accepted and equal, nor publicly free to flower). <sup>12</sup>

Modern Australians had also inherited a familiar regard and healthy curiosity for art, at least the sanctioned forms of it to be found in the still-gloomy public art museums that in most capital cities – at least until World War II – were controlled by conservative administrators and boards, many of them preoccupied with resisting the corrupting invasion of Modernism in visual art ('putrid meat ... the product of degenerates and perverts', according to one senior Australian art gallery director in  $1939^{13}$ ), looking instead to the steady British example as a template for values in art.

Unlike many artists who travelled, most Australians had rarely seen any original twentieth-century international modern art until a major exhibition called French and British

Spirit figures including Jilinjas and Ungud (a large mythical snake), painted in a cave near the Lawley River in Western Australia's Kimberley region, post-Gwion, within Wanjina period (< 4000 years ago).

Photograph by Mike Donaldson Image courtesy Mike Donaldson and Wunambal Gaambera people

Grace COSSINGTON SMITH (1892–1984)

The Bridge In-curve, c. 1930 tempera on cardboard

83.6 x 111.8 cm (32% x 44 in)

National Gallery of Victoria,

Melbourne

© Estate of Grace Cossington

Smith



Contemporary Art, of some 217 paintings and sculptures by eighty-eight international artists, was brought to Australia in 1939 by the media baron Sir Keith Murdoch (proprietor of Melbourne's *Herald* and *Weekly Times*, and father of Rupert Murdoch). Sponsored by the *Herald* and organised by its art critic, Basil Burdett (a co-founder of Sydney's important Macquarie Galleries, in 1925),<sup>14</sup> the well-promoted exhibition was a popular sensation, eliciting huge public interest. It toured widely in Australia after opening in Adelaide in August 1939, thirteen days before the start of World War II.<sup>15</sup> Although not the only progressive initiative of importance between the wars, the exhibition contributed to fracturing the unproductive institutional hold on Australian visual arts culture, energising artists and ushering in change. <sup>16</sup>

In any event, the contest with institutional authority had long been gathering strength. From early in the twentieth century, small enclaves of progressive Australian artists and their like-minded colleagues in other cultural disciplines – especially the ones who were aware of European avant-garde culture and responsive to its innovations – had rebelliously been fanning the smouldering zeitgeist, reinventing Australian art in a way that decisively broke from the limiting past. Sixteen thousand kilometres (ten thousand miles) from Europe's heartland – disconnected by isolation and the fog of distance – they were creating an experimental Australian Modernism. Though not entirely original, it was in its way unique: a lively, second-degree hybrid fired by the spirit of images discovered in overseas journals of art, and the word of mouth from those fortunate to have travelled. For a time, few seemed to know, or care, that they were there. It didn't matter: they would eventually prevail. The tide was turning.

### IN MELBOURNE

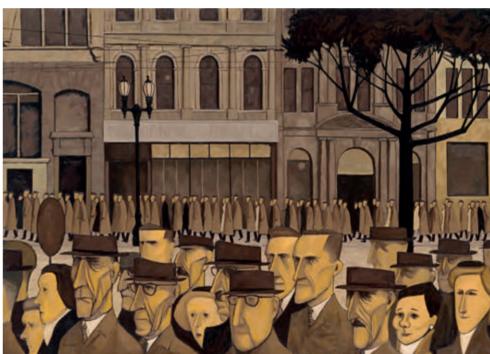
Whatever purpose was driving the Samstags' voluntary upheaval from America and informing their vision of Australia, they had made their plans carefully, at least up to a point. Even if ultimately they were flying blind and chancing to luck – as seems likely – they were up for



Charles MEERE (1890–1961)

Australian Beach Pattern, 1940
oil on canvas
91.5 x 122.0 cm (36 x 48 in)

Art Gallery of New South Wales,
Sydney
© Charles Meere Estate/
Licensed by Viscopy, 2016



John BRACK (1920–99)

Collins Street, 5 pm, 1955

oil on canvas

114.8 x 162.8 cm (45¼ x 64½ in)

National Gallery of Victoria,

Melbourne

© Helen Brack

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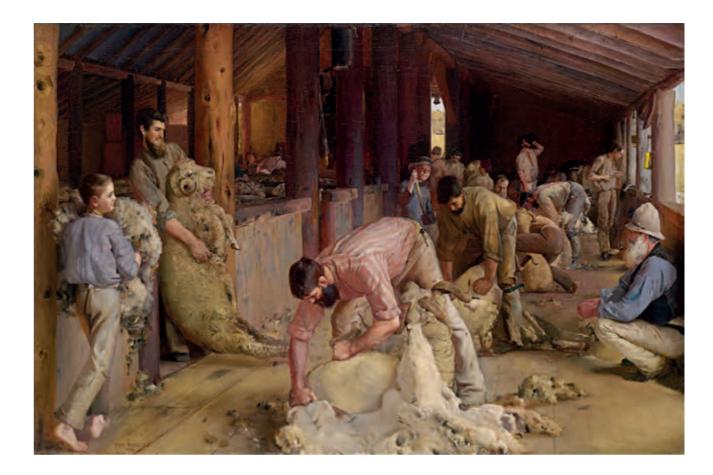
Eugene von GUÉRARD (1811–1901) North-east View from the Northern Top of Mount Kosciusko, 1863 oil on canvas 66.5 x 116.8 cm (261/s x 46 in) National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Purchased 1973

the ride. It was an adventure after all; what did they have to lose? It would be no different, really, than sailing their yacht off Mamaroneck on Long Island Sound, and tacking into the wind as a means of making reliable forward progress, something at which they were well experienced and loved to do. All that was required was to calmly set sails in the manner appropriate for challenging weather, brace, and then head confidently into the swell.

Melbourne in 1961, when the Samstags arrived there in June, was in many ways like most Australian cities at that time, though its history was special. A mere colonial frontier town when first settled in 1835, it had been transformed by the wealth and population growth of Victoria's mid-nineteenth-century gold rush into one of the world's great cities. Mark Twain had described it as the 'stately ... capital of the southern world', following his visit to Australia in 1895.<sup>17</sup>

Certainly, Melbourne and its older rival, Sydney, were the two largest of Australia's cities by far, though Sydney's public architecture was less grand. As a measure of its scale, Melbourne boasted the largest urban tramway network in the world. Its state art museum, the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), had in 1861 been the first established in Australia, preceding that of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art by several years. Thanks to a huge bequest by philanthropist Alfred Felton on his death in 1904, the NGV subsequently had grown to become a museum of international standing; it had the early good fortune, for example, to acquire major works from the Russian Hermitage and Pushkin Museum collections following the 1917 October Revolution. 18

Gordon Samstag would not have known that, in 1867, a 'National Gallery Art School' also had been founded in Melbourne as part of the NGV. The Gallery School was led initially



by the well-travelled Eugene von Guérard (1811–1901), an Austrian-born painter of patient, skilfully precise, romantic landscapes, who in 1852 had been lured from Europe to seek his fortune in the goldfields of Victoria. <sup>19</sup> The school's express purpose was the professional training of artists, as at the American schools at which Samstag himself had been trained. Over time, the Gallery School (now the Victorian College of the Arts at the University of Melbourne) had produced a proud lineage of well-trained and highly accomplished Australian artists, not least Tom Roberts (1856–1931), whose celebrated 1890 painting of Australian rural working life, *Shearing the Rams*, strangely anticipated Samstag's 1937–38 North Carolina mural, *Tobacco*. Another graduate, the young Emanuel Phillips Fox (1865–1915), effectively settled in Paris from 1887, studying and working there successfully for several years and, between trips back to Australia, becoming a full member of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. <sup>20</sup>

Samstag, however, was in Melbourne to teach at a different kind of school. He would commence his temporary, part-time role at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), on June 5, 1961. He and Anne had come to Melbourne immediately after landing in Sydney by air the previous week. Although RMIT did have a school of art, Samstag was not employed to teach fine art. The institution's educational mission reflected RMIT's origins in providing practical education for working men, through teaching traditional technical and applied skills relevant to trades. Indeed, RMIT's original antecedent had been the Working Men's College, established in 1887, which became Melbourne Technical College in 1934. Its incarnation as RMIT had been announced only in 1960.<sup>21</sup> The scope of its courses had grown over the years to include architectural and mechanical drawing, photography and advertising.

Tom ROBERTS (1856–1931)
Shearing the Rams, 1890
oil on canvas on composition board
122.4 x 183.3 cm (48¼ x 72½ in)
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Felton Bequest 1932

Emanuel Phillips FOX (1865–1915) The Ferry, c. 1910–c. 1911 oil on canvas 114.6 x 152.4 cm (45 1/8 x 60 in) Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney



Samstag was to teach approximately twenty hours each week on the Advertising and Illustration course, covering subjects including illustration, and figure and portrait drawing. He would work under Harold Freedman, an Australian illustrator, who was also Jewish and ten years Samstag's junior. Freedman had been an official war artist in Borneo and during the war had produced instructional illustrations for assembling weapons, used in Allied forces training manuals. It was similar work to that which Samstag himself had performed during the war for the Jordanoff Corporation (see page 122). <sup>22</sup>

Any goodwill that Samstag might initially have enjoyed at RMIT, as an American abroad, was short-lived. It didn't take long for his new colleagues to perceive him critically. Rod Clarke, a young lecturer at RMIT when Samstag arrived (and much later dean of the Faculty of Art),<sup>23</sup> described him as 'terribly laid back and slow-talking ... but we accepted him'. According to Clarke, Samstag gravitated towards the Fine Art staff. Clarke credited Samstag with persuading RMIT to purchase an expensive Polaroid camera. 'Give Samstag credence,' he said, 'it was the latest marvel from the USA; a significant early innovation at RMIT!' But it wasn't enough. As Clarke noted, 'He was so slow. He was the antithesis of the go-getting, fast-talking American.' <sup>24</sup>

Another RMIT colleague was also unimpressed. Twenty years younger than Samstag, Franz Kempf had been at RMIT since late 1960; he too was Jewish. <sup>25</sup> Like Samstag, he was an untenured lecturer in the 'over-riding' Illustration Department, in which he taught 'Drawing and Painting from Memory & Knowledge'. Effectively, it was a painting class, and he had the same students as Samstag. Like Rod Clarke, Kempf considered Samstag a poor teacher and found him 'peculiarly laconic'; he also noted that the students didn't get his humour. Kempf gained some insight into the American artist's past when the head of the RMIT School of Art, Vic Greenhalgh, showed him some of Samstag's work, probably in the form of photographs and clippings. Freedman had thought well of it. Kempf saw it as illustration: 'a bit like Norman Rockwell'. <sup>26</sup>



Harold FREEDMAN (1915–99) Telephone Exchange, 1945 oil on hardboard 32.0 x 43.2 cm (125 x 17 in) Australian War Memorial, Canberra

It was Kempf who helped Samstag find another professional position that would ultimately prove historically significant, when he drew Samstag's attention to an advertisement (in *The Age* newspaper) for the job of Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at the South Australian School of Art (SASA), in Adelaide, a small, but charming coastal city of roughly 700,000 people, a day's drive west of Melbourne. <sup>27</sup> He even agreed to provide a good reference, though he later said it was partly 'to get rid of him'. <sup>28</sup> Ironically, Kempf would soon become Samstag's colleague once again, when he joined the SASA in 1962.

So, only five months after arriving in Australia, Gordon submitted his resignation from RMIT, effective October 27, 1961. He and Anne were off to Adelaide. The job was a prestigious leadership position in a highly regarded Australian art school, one of the oldest in the country. Most importantly, however, it was fine art. Unexpectedly, the cards were falling his way.

### A NEW BEGINNING

Although Gordon finished up at RMIT in Melbourne late in October 1961, he would most probably not have started teaching at the SASA until the beginning of the academic year, in 1962. That left him and Anne time to get the measure of things in Adelaide, particularly their situation in an unfamiliar new city during its hot, Mediterranean-like summer. The heat appealed to Anne, though she would later complain about the ants.

The land around Adelaide is the traditional home of the Indigenous Kaurna Nation. The modern city, with its flat terrain and its grid pattern of city-centre streets, nestles below the Mount Lofty Ranges (a protective ring of agriculturally productive hills, insulating the city from desert country to the north) and faces an enormous bay, the Gulf of St Vincent.<sup>29</sup> The Gulf runs down a west-facing coastline south of the city, first of bayside suburbs then the rich farming land and vineyards of the Fleurieu Peninsula. It's a bucolic landscape, much painted by South

Grenfell Street, Adelaide, South Australia, July, 1961. Image © News Ltd/Newspix



(1899–1958)

Hay Stooks, Port Willunga, c. 1942
oil on canvas on cardboard
51.4 x 58.4 cm (20¼ x 23 in)
Art Gallery of South Australia,
Adelaide.

Bequest of Miss G.A. Hardy, 1974
© Ian Trenerry

Horace TRENERRY

Australian artists such as Horace Trenerry, Dorrit Black and, in Samstag's time, his lively SASA colleagues David Dallwitz, Brian Seidel and Geoff Wilson (who'd been close friends since their time together in teacher's college).

The southern coastline features dry, craggy cliffs – it's like a South Australian Big Sur – with majestic views up and down the coast and out to sea. At the peninsula's end and on past nearby Kangaroo Island, the gulf opens up to the Great Australian Bight, effectively the Great Southern Ocean. Traversed by enormous whales on their feeding and spawning cycles, it is magnificent. There is nothing to the south, but Antarctica.

Anne and Gordon had an immediate need for accommodation. They must have been well advised, because soon enough they found rented premises in St Georges, a fashionable suburb at the base of the foothills, slightly east of the city and high enough to afford a view across town and down to the shoreline beaches. They had helpful, friendly neighbours – the Doyles – and time to explore. The house would serve their needs for several years.

Rod Clarke and his colleagues at RMIT had been 'surprised' by Samstag's departure for the SASA. Clarke was aware that the SASA was 'better funded: the front-runner in Australia in the 60s, for staff, space, equipment'. But he was intrigued that Samstag had shifted to teaching in fine art. Clarke had assumed he had come to Australia for retirement, 'an easy life of part-time teaching for a short while'. Unaware of Samstag's background of academic training in fine art and his history of achievement as a painter and New Deal muralist, Clarke could not possibly have understood how Samstag would have relished the opportunity to walk a new stage, where his authority would be on display and his experience and knowledge could shine. After the professional uncertainties of the previous decade, the SASA role promised self-esteem, rejuvenation, dignity.

In most respects Samstag's appointment was outright luck: he had been in the right place and time to take advantage of a period of reform and exceptional change at the SASA

that had begun under South Australia's state Superintendent of Technical Schools, M.H. Bone, and the Slade-educated principal of the School of Arts and Crafts, as the SASA was previously known, Frederick Millward Grey (1899–1957). The Grey's predecessor as principal (1941–45) was John Goodchild (1898–1980), a World War I veteran who had been president of the influential Royal South Australian Society of Arts in 1937. An adept printmaker and draftsman with conservative, mocking views on 'experimental' art, Goodchild was nonetheless a staunch defender of the School of Arts and Crafts against Education Department intrusion and was well respected by his students (Jeffrey Smart in his memoir, described him as a 'distinguished watercolourist' and a friend). Goodchild left the school in March 1945, when he was commissioned as an official war artist by the Australian War Memorial, in which capacity he later joined the Pacific Fleet. 32

When Grey retired in 1956, he was for a short while replaced by acting principal Douglas Roberts. Subsequently, with the appointment of Paul Beadle (1917–92) as the new principal in 1958, the old South Australian School of Arts and Crafts was formally given a new name, the South Australian School of Art. According to Neville Weston – the recognised authority on the history of the SASA Paul Beadle was appointed principal through the advocacy of Ruth Tuck, who had worked with him at Newcastle Technical College, in New South Wales, where he was head of the School of Art and had made 'drastic changes to create a first-rate and professional school'.

The renaming was a first step towards the SASA freeing itself from the iron grip of the state government's Education Department. That educational bureaucracy – with its mandarins and rules-driven inspectors and its overarching focus on the labour needs of South Australian industry – had for the previous fifty years strictly controlled the school's role, which principally was to train art teachers for gainful employment in secondary schools. It was incidental if any students emerged to pursue careers as professional artists. <sup>36</sup> The SASA's original antecedent

South Australian School of Art, Exhibition Building, North Terrace, 1963. Photograph by Allan Sierp, June 1963 Courtesy Friends of the South Australian School of Art Inc., and the Marshall family



The South Australian School of Art, Stanley Street, North Adelaide, Summer 1977. Photograph by John Copeland Courtesy Friends of the South Australian School of Art



school of art – the modest School of Design – had been founded in 1861 through the South Australian Society of Arts on broadly based, liberal fine arts principles. Supervised by Charles Hill, a far-sighted artist who previously had operated a small private art school in the city, the School of Design had barely twenty student enrolments. However, the subsequent appointment in 1882 of an Englishman, Harry P. Gill, as the Master of Design (to what by then, for a time, consisted of the School of Design and a separate School of Painting) – a figure who would become an influential 'art supremo' in Adelaide for the next thirty years – set the growing school on a clear, though conservative, educational path, from which it would not significantly diverge until the advent of the SASA.<sup>37</sup>

Gordon Samstag was one of several new staff engaged partly to relaunch the SASA as a more contemporary art school, better suited to the changing times.<sup>38</sup> It would now be an 'institution for higher studies',<sup>39</sup> more devoted to the professional training of artists than had been possible with the former, all-encompassing generic art course. Moreover, Samstag's



was a key lead role. He would be responsible for implementing a major component of the 'new' art school, in which there would be three distinct courses and awards offered to students: Applied Art, Teacher Training, *and* Fine Art. <sup>40</sup>

And as if to wipe the slate clean, it also had been announced that the SASA would be relocated from the crumbling old Exhibition Building premises on North Terrace, which it had occupied since 1891, to a new, purpose-designed complex in the nearby inner-city suburb of North Adelaide, on a quiet cul-de-sac in Stanley Street. Work had already begun. The new building would have thirty main rooms, including twenty-seven studios, an exhibition gallery, a lecture theatre and a specialist art library. There would be a student cafeteria on the top floor and, importantly, a pub, the Kentish Arms, was just across the road.

The changes were momentous. Rod Clarke had been right; there was no other art school in the country that could compare with the SASA's new amenity. It was all an unprecedented concession to the many voices – including a hostile local media – that had for some time been criticising the school's performance. Certainly, there had been a growing public perception through the late 1950s that the School of Arts and Crafts was stagnant, there having been for several decades 'no major changes in syllabuses, staffing or accommodation'<sup>42</sup>, and that it was out of touch with the changed world of professional fine art. In a series of critical articles between 1957 and 1959, Adelaide's two newspapers, *The News* and *The Advertiser*, had campaigned for reform, reporting especially on the grievances of students. Elizabeth Young, the knowledgeable senior art critic for *The Advertiser* – and wife of Robert Campbell, the Scottish-

Hans HEYSEN (1877–1968)

Patawarta: Land of the Oratunga,
1929, oil on canvas
66.2 x 92.0 cm (26 x 36¼ in)
M.J.M. Carter AO Collection
1969. Given in memory of Sir
Edward Morgan, Chairman of the
Art Gallery Board 1944–56 and
1963–69
Art Gallery of South Australia,
Adelaide
Courtesy Chris Heysen

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born director at the National Gallery of South Australia (1951–67) – for example, considered art education in South Australia to be moribund. In an August 7, 1957, article ('Plans to Improve Art School') she wrote that 'the School of Arts and Crafts which in the past trained quite a few of Australia's distinguished artists has so little to offer that advanced students have been forced to leave the state in search of further education'.

The clouds had begun forming some while before. South Australian artist Hans Heysen, for example, had counselled talented young artist Lawrence Daws to eschew Adelaide's dubious art education for the Gallery School in Melbourne, which was thought to be better.<sup>43</sup> (Jeffrey Smart similarly persuaded another aspiring artist, Michael Shannon, to go.) Heysen was a septuagenarian artist with a distinguished national reputation; he was regarded as a sage of sorts, and his opinion was relevant and influential. Having begun his art training modestly in Adelaide, he had himself gained valuable experience as a young man, spending four inspirational years overseas from 1899, studying in Paris and travelling in Europe, courtesy of generous South Australian patrons. Heysen's deep love of nature led him to an unwavering, lifelong devotion to painting and drawing the Australian landscape, a process in which he not only excelled but through which he forged an authentically original and 'truthful' artistic vision, albeit within the scope of the landscape tradition. His success was so great that for a time his art popularly came to define a conservative and nationalist ideal of Australian art. However the achievement was counterproductive; as the historian Bernard Smith noted, 'where Heysen pioneered, others followed'. 44 Ironically, Heysen's iconic rural scenes and closely observed, affectionate renderings of eucalypt trees, sheep and cattle, ultimately bred so many (lesser) artistic imitators that the originality of his vision was diminished by repetition. He nonetheless remains a towering figure, and his later paintings of biblically arid lands in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia anticipated developments in Australian art that were yet to come.<sup>45</sup>

The belief that things were better in Melbourne, however, was ill informed. Despite its reputation, Melbourne's Gallery School in the postwar period was – like South Australia's – considered by some to be moribund and its approach to art education deeply conservative and orthodox. In his signature biography of the painter Fred Williams, art historian Patrick McCaughey – referring to the Gallery School during Williams's time there in the mid-1940s – suggested that 'the overwhelming impression of those years is [one] of intellectual and artistic impoverishment. There was so little stimulus, so little information and so little instruction offered. That was where the private art schools of the period came into their own.' What the private schools, such as George Bell's, had, McCaughey suggested, 'was a point of view' – 'they at least taught something about art'. 46

Nevertheless, the push for change at the SASA was constructive. One of Adelaide's most respected artists, the surrealist painter Ivor Francis (1906–93), who was a strong critic of the Education Department's supervision of the school and who enjoyed a position of wide influence in Adelaide's cultural community, used his independent forum as a critic – in the monthly publication *Ivor's Art Review* – to maintain the pressure for reform. In February 1957, Francis launched a lengthy critique of the Education Department's failure to look beyond its existing staff, after it had appointed Kenneth Lamacraft as School of Arts and Crafts principal in 1956.<sup>47</sup> As it transpired, Lamacraft would resign less than one year later. <sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, the art school's roots didn't run deep. Like Adelaide in its isolation, it was a culture to itself, and closed. Without greater exposure to more progressive influences, the school would atrophy into irrelevance and die.



Fred WILLIAMS (1927-82)
Forest of Gum Trees III, 1968-70
oil on canvas
183.5 x 152.6 cm (72¼ x 60½ in)
Private collection
© Estate of Fred Williams

Dorrit BLACK (1891–1951)

Mirmande, 1928
oil on canvas
60.0 x 73.8 cm (23% x 29 in)

Art Gallery of South Australia,
Adelaide
Elder Bequest Fund 1940



## GRANDEES OF THE ART SCHOOL

It hadn't always been this way. Despite the art school's relative provincialism, over the years there had been several worldly and dedicated teachers who had brought a liberal sophistication to their teaching role, providing receptive students with an inspirational vision about art that transcended the school's pedestrian methods. Many of them were women.

The kindly Marie Tuck (1866–1947), for example, was an early positive force. Tuck had spent several years in France from 1906, studying art and absorbing French culture: she was ardent and hardworking. In Paris she had carried out chores for Australian expatriate artist Rupert Bunny in exchange for lessons. <sup>49</sup> Tuck (with Ivor Hele, <sup>50</sup> an early positive influence on Jeffrey Smart) taught painting and life drawing for twenty years at the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts, from 1919, always insisting that the models be nude and gifting valuable insights to her students about the craft of painting (she laid out her French palette with 'reverence' – the same palette, she said, as had been used by Degas and Manet). <sup>51</sup> She hosted students at her studio-home on weekends, where the conversation was always about Paris.

Mary P. Harris (1891–1978), who had trained at the Edinburgh College of Art and migrated to South Australia with her Quaker parents in 1921, taught for thirty years at the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts (and at its subsidiary institution, the Girls Central Art School) until 1953. Highly literate and generous of spirit, she fostered experimentation in her students, wrote and lectured on art, and edited a magazine of arts and poetry, *The Forerunner*. Her riverside home, 'Bundilla', visited regularly by her students, was full of their art. The curator Jane Hylton, an authority on South Australian art and artists, has described Harris as 'unconcerned by the philosophical differences between the numerous art movements', and as having 'accepted and promoted all art that could be considered inspiring and uplifting'. <sup>52</sup> Max Harris (no relation) called her 'that most lovely and tolerant of teachers.' <sup>53</sup>



Jeffrey SMART (1921–2013)

Morning Practice, Baia, 1969
oil on canvas
58.0 x 81.0 cm (22% x 31% in)

Private collection
© Estate of Dr Jeffrey Smart AO

Mary Harris effectively sowed a seed for the 1942 formation of the Contemporary Art Society (CAS) of South Australia when, in 1939, she organised an exhibition, The Testament of Beauty, which featured seventy works principally by her own recent graduates (inspirationally, their first such public exhibition), including future young 'rebels' Ivor Francis, David Dallwitz, Victor Adolfsson, Jacqueline Hick, Ruth Tuck and Jeffrey Smart.<sup>54</sup>

Another female South Australian artist and teacher of importance, Dorrit Black (1891-1951), had been in France at the same time that Gordon Samstag was at the Académie Colarossi in Paris. Black studied with Harry Gill at the old Adelaide School of Art until 1915, and later at Julian Ashton's Sydney Art School. Her hunger and curiosity for experimental art would take her to Europe in 1927, first to study linocut technique with Claude Flight at London's Grosvenor School of Modern Art, then to André Lhote's Académie in Montparnasse, Paris. She was one of many international students there, all keen to learn about Cubism; later, she would also spend time with Albert Gleizes. In September 1928, just one month before Gordon Samstag arrived in Paris to take up his Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship at the Académie Colarossi, Black was at Lhote's summer school at Mirmande, in Provence, with her Sydney friends Grace Crowley and Anne Dangar, painting the landscape with her new insights into Cubism, employing Lhote's principles of composition and design (by seeing the straight lines, the angles and the curves).<sup>55</sup> She travelled widely in Europe between 1927 and 1929, painting and visiting art museums - looking closely at Europe's great treasures of art - before returning to live in Sydney, where she was among the vanguard of artists working experimentally. Such was her zeal to promote modern art, that in 1931 she opened a privately run studio and gallery, the Modern Art Centre, producing exhibitions and offering classes. Grace Crowley joined with her to teach life drawing, until they fell out and the centre closed.



Margaret PRESTON (1875–1963) Flying over the Shoalhaven River, 1942, oil on canvas 50.6 x 50.6 cm (19% x 19% in) National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Purchased 1973

© Margaret Rose Preston Estate/ Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Although Margaret Preston studied with H.P. Gill from 1898 at the old School of Design, she left Adelaide in 1904 and her impressive career developed elsewhere.

Black returned to Adelaide in 1935 to look after her unwell widowed mother. Unmarried, and with an inheritance from her father, she did not especially need to work for income; rather, she was concerned to make art and to contribute to the artist community. All the same, she commenced teaching part-time at the School of Arts and Crafts, and also ran the Sketch Club at the Royal South Australian Society of Arts (RSASA). After twenty years away, she brought a close knowledge about European Modernism and the confidence from having practised art professionally for several years – indeed, her rich experience was unmatched by anyone in South Australia. Although little heralded in her home-town at the time, Black would later come to be recognised as one of the most important Australian artists of her era. Yet, sadly, her impact on the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts would be limited to just a small (though significant) coterie of motivated art students, notably Jeffrey Smart, Ruth Tuck and

Jacqueline Hick. Black died tragically in a car accident in 1951, aged fifty-nine, driving her distinctive blue Fiat convertible.<sup>56</sup>

Jeffrey Smart (1921–2013), a student of Black's – and (with her) arguably the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts' most successful and distinguished graduate <sup>57</sup> – would later study under Fernand Léger in Paris, as would also his close friend Jacqueline Hick (1919–2004). <sup>58</sup> Black undoubtedly had inspired them. As Smart recalled in his 1996 memoir:

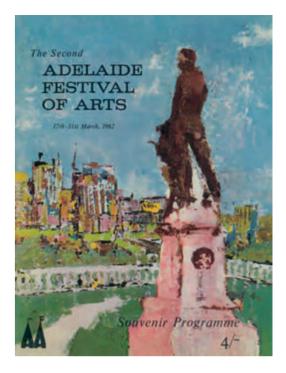
While I was at art school, a group of us were invited to Dorrit Black's studio. We all liked her immediately. She sat us down and then generously gave us all her notes, details of Dynamic Symmetry, which she had learned from Lhote and Gleizes in Paris. Cubism became immediately acceptable to us and it was marvellous to go to an artist's studio built for that purpose. Dorrit taught us above all to make pictures. <sup>59</sup>

The teacher-training priority that had dominated the old School of Arts and Crafts was not without incidental benefits. As Neville Weston observed, the school's overarching vocational purpose ensured that, during the Great Depression, it continued to be sustained by government and so remained stable and viable. And if it was true that the intractable culture of the school provided limited scope for committed artists to gain a complete professional training in Adelaide, this did not prevent the success of significant numbers of them, particularly leading up to, and into, the 1950s. Those graduates who were determined to become professional artists, for example, would find their transition greatly assisted through reliable employment as secondary-school art teachers and the unexpected opportunities that the teaching experience would bring. Among them, in no particular order, were Ivor Francis, David Dallwitz, Dora Chapman, Douglas Roberts, Jacqueline Hick, John Baily, Geoff Wilson and, most especially, Jeffrey Smart.

The subsequent careers of these individuals illustrated the truism that art school training is merely a beginning, at most a doorway to the hard world beyond; that the typically uncertain journey for artists is ultimately a self-taught and solitary one. Of course, a student would be fortunate if, at the beginning, they found themselves at an art school endowed with true professionals, committed to imparting worthwhile knowledge and skills with inspirational enthusiasm. And it would be a special bonus to discover mentors of generous spirit.

As Gordon Samstag gathered his thoughts in preparation for his new leadership role at the SASA, nothing had really changed in that regard. What *had* changed was that, where once radical Modernism had confounded and outraged popular sensibility in the first half of the twentieth century, something different now was afoot. The remarkable success on the world stage of New York–led Abstract Expressionism had effectively opened the experimental floodgates for a new generation of artists. The visual arts were emerging as a free zone of bewildering diversity and change: Pop Art was imminent and more would follow. There was a restless impetus to it all; nothing was certain, core values were in dispute. It would take quite some time for things to unfold.

Samstag, the product of an academic, early twentieth—century art school culture, whose experience as an educationist was limited to stints at the Art Students League and the elementary syllabus of his small, private American Art School in New York, may not have fully appreciated that the old paradigm of art school education — long anchored in the structure and strict routines linked to objective painting and drawing — was beginning to fall away. In the art schools in Australia, nationwide, few barely grasped what the changes meant or had fashioned strategies to deal with them educationally. Instead, a kind of expedient anarchy was emerging. For the moment, there would be less emphasis on 'training', and more on 'discovery': the student would not be led, so much as encouraged to express, and to find. Everyone was swimming; it was revolution.



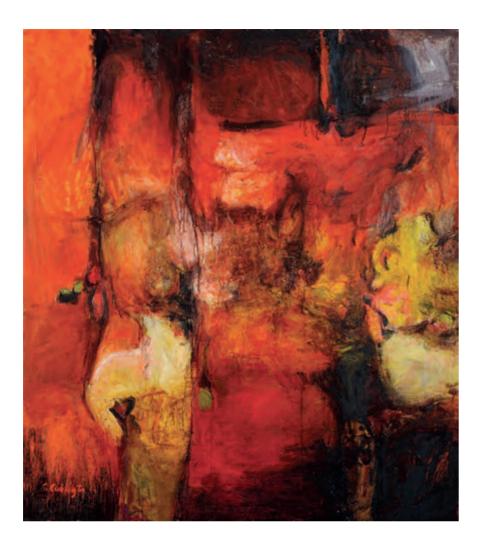
The Second Adelaide Festival of Arts, March 17–31, 1962, souvenir programme cover designed by Charles Reddington Courtesy The Adelaide Festival of Arts

#### THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL OF ART

When Paul Beadle resigned his position as principal of the South Australian School of Art, late in 1960, after only three years in the role, it was a serious loss to the school. Beadle strongly believed that Australian state-run art schools – typically controlled by education departments in a 'stereotyped fashion' – needed the vigour of 'new blood from overseas' to remove the 'shackles' created by ill-informed public servants, and he'd been given a licence to instigate change. <sup>62</sup> Before Samstag arrived late in 1961, Beadle had already appointed several 'international' staff to the SASA, including Udo Sellbach (1927–2006), the Cologne-born-and-trained printmaker who'd been art master at Adelaide's top private boys' school, St Peter's College. Under Beadle's direction, Sellbach would establish a nationally regarded printmaking department at the SASA, along with his wife, Karin Schepers, and Jacqueline Hick.

Also among the new colleagues that Samstag would meet at the SASA was a fellow American painter and printmaker, Charles Reddington, a thirty-two-year-old Abstract Expressionist who'd trained at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, one of America's best (and oldest) art schools. Twenty-three years younger than Gordon, the somewhat footloose Reddington had come to Australia two years before the Samstags, in 1959, also (coincidentally)

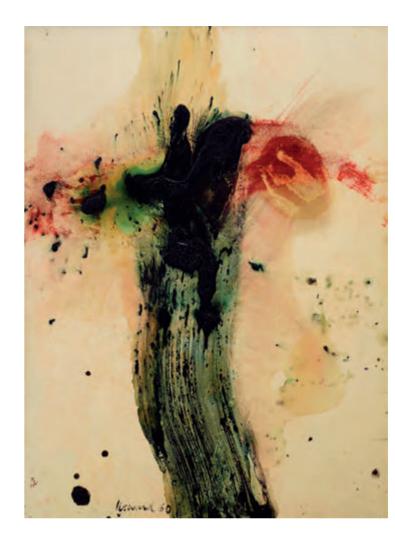
Charles REDDINGTON
(b. 1929)
Season in Hell, 1964
oil on canvas
137.1 x 121.9 cm (54 x 48 in)
Private collection
Courtesy Charles Nodrum
Gallery, Melbourne



to work at RMIT in Melbourne. In 1960, after a year there, Reddington was alerted to an art school position advertised in Adelaide and was brought over for an interview. It was with Beadle. Over lunch they hit it off and Reddington – who thought Beadle 'magnificent' – was offered the job.<sup>63</sup>

A good-natured man, Reddington quickly developed a special rapport with Beadle, who'd made it clear he wanted the conservative school culture 'stimulated'. Reddington also forged a bond with the urbane Udo Sellbach, who encouraged his strategies for shaking up the students by getting some 'Dada back into the art', challenging their comfort zones with books and ideas, and nurturing their critical intelligence with demanding, participatory group reviews of work at the end of each painting class. He was popular, it was dynamic; he felt himself to be a 'prime mover'. 64 Sydney Ball, a South Australian abstract artist and graduate of the SASA who later studied in New York, considered Reddington – with his 'gutsy abstract expressionism' – the teacher who'd influenced him the most as a student at the SASA. 65 Reddington's local standing became so strong that he was commissioned to design the official poster for the 1962 Adelaide Festival of Arts, a biennial event, begun in 1960, that would soon become internationally renowned as Australia's premier festival of the high arts.

Reddington had already been at the SASA for two years when Samstag arrived, appointed to the new position of senior lecturer in fine art by Allan Sierp, who took over after Paul Beadle resigned.<sup>66</sup> Had Beadle stayed, the job would almost certainly have gone to



Peter UPWARD (1932–1983)

Surry Hills Green, 1960

oil, synthetic polymer paint
on hardboard

162.2 x 120.5 (63% x 47½ in)

Art Gallery of New South Wales,
Sydney
© Courtesy Julie Harris

Reddington. It caused tension, if not ill will.<sup>67</sup> By 1963, Reddington had resigned and gone to Sydney, which he'd visited with great enjoyment the previous year, befriending artists such as Peter Upward, Clement Meadmore and Horst Liepolt, and exhibiting at Betty O'Neil's legendary Hungry Horse Gallery in Paddington, later to be purchased by prominent art-world figure Kym Bonython. 'I was just gobsmacked by the fact there was so much artistic activity there', he told fellow artist Guy Warren, fifty years later. Sydney was 'exciting'; there were 'opportunities and ... important conversations'.<sup>68</sup> It would prove a wise decision.

Interviewed by Warren when he was eighty-five, living in Ecuador and still painting after a recognised career, Reddington was reluctant to speak disparagingly of Samstag. The most he would say was, 'we were working against each other ... I was the wall he used to bounce his ball against'.69 Although both Americans, Samstag and Reddington were utterly dissimilar. Reddington's 'modern' education as an artist had been largely self-directed. His eclectic values had been forged by almost daily visits as a student to the Art Institute of Chicago (which adjoined the art school), an art museum superbly endowed with treasures of all periods, including significant examples of modern European and American art. Matisse, particularly, had inspired him. By contrast, Samstag's education – traditional and formal, untouched even by Post-Impressionism – had been completed in 1928, before Reddington was born. As a teacher, he would have drawn on his own experience as a student, perhaps channelling the methods of his most influential teachers, such as the painter Charles W. Hawthorne from the National

Academy of Design and, especially, his 'autocratic' (but rigorous) drawing teacher at the Art Students League, the dour George Bridgman (see page 23). Moreover, at fifty-five, Samstag was the oldest member of the faculty by far.<sup>70</sup>

However, it wasn't just the generational difference that would from the start define Samstag's relationship with a number of his SASA colleagues, and in the coming decade taint the attitudes of many of the students towards him (although, crucially, not all). Rather, it was the inscrutable and frustrating nature of his personality; his teasing method as a teacher with the odd, unsuspecting student; his manner of shuffling around the studios ('waddling', one former Samstag student called it), which drew attention; and, significantly, his aggravating

aloofness from the tribal culture of the faculty pack. In the eyes of many colleagues he was miscast, and an anomaly.

Despite his advantage of seniority, he was an outsider.

Jo Caddy (c. 1916–2005) especially developed

Jo Caddy (c. 1916–2005), especially, developed what another former student, Peter McWilliams, considered a pronounced dislike of Samstag. An American-born portraitist who had trained in Canada at the Vancouver School of Art, Caddy had been appointed to the SASA lecturing staff in 1958 (when she was fortytwo), after moving first to Tasmania in 1951. Well before Samstag's arrival on the scene she'd become close to Alex Leckie (1932–2010), a charismatic, Glasgow-bornand-trained ceramist who'd been at the school since 1956, where he taught pottery and sculpture (in the process 'collecting admirers and scandalous tales' alike). Indeed, it was said that Caddy's relationship with the fiery Leckie was intimate – openly and passionately so.

Notoriously a volatile personality, Leckie was considered wild by colleagues. His lifelong Scottish friend Jimmie Macgregor described him as 'a force of nature ...

a wee bull who caused havoc in many a china shop'. <sup>74</sup> Famously, one day late in 1961 he leapt naked into Adelaide's River Torrens (in fact, more a modest stream that flowed through the city and in one part formed an artificial lake). His mistake was to wander afterwards through a group of kindergarten children, unclothed. He was arrested. Although defended as highspirited, the offence was fodder for the tabloid press in conservative Adelaide and attracted sensational headlines. As a government-employed teacher he was finished, and the Education Department soon dismissed him. <sup>75</sup> Caddy became aggrieved, blaming the senior staff at the SASA for failing to support him. According to McWilliams, Caddy for some reason held Samstag especially accountable, unfairly so, and she allegedly waged a damaging campaign against him. <sup>76</sup> In practice, even the SASA's most senior staff – the incoming principal Allan Sierp, and the vice principal, Des Bettany – would have been powerless to influence the Education Department's ruling once the offence was successfully prosecuted. Samstag, in his first year at the SASA (and like Douglas Roberts at that time, further down the hierarchy as a senior lecturer), would have had no say.

Caddy left the SASA in 1964, early in Samstag's tenure. However, a negative seed had been sown, whose lingering effects would influence attitudes at the school towards the enigmatic American artist for some time ahead.<sup>77</sup> As one student, Rob Jones, reportedly observed, 'It's very fashionable to dislike Mr Samstag, isn't it?'<sup>78</sup>



Gordon Samstag at the South Australian School of Art, Stanley Street, 1969. Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Courtesy Antonia Chaffey and Wendy Walker



# AN AGENT PROVOCATEUR

As the art school consolidated its shift from the old Exhibition Building in the city to Stanley Street in North Adelaide, several of the incumbents at the SASA moved on, bringing new players and other changes to the faculty paradigm. The changes set the stage for the decade ahead and beyond. When Allan Sierp resigned in 1963, for example, Douglas Roberts (1919–76) – a younger man, much respected locally as an artist, who had been heading up the school's teacher-training functions and who had already been acting principal (1957–58) – was soon appointed the SASA principal. He would remain in that role until his death, in 1976.<sup>79</sup>

Beadle's philosophy of recruiting experienced individuals without prior links to the institution seemed no longer important; there was now a greater emphasis on youth. A number of new staff appointees were not only young and inexperienced, but also graduates of the SASA. Others, however – for example Geoff Wilson (who taught design with Helen McIntosh) and David Dallwitz – were recruited to the SASA on the basis of proven performance as secondary-school art teachers, as was the steady and likeable Geoff Brown (1926–2014). A South Australian who'd studied in London at the Central School of Art, Brown came across from Adelaide's St Peter's College, where Udo Sellbach had once been art master before him. <sup>80</sup> Max Lyle, an RMIT-trained artist who'd been teaching at the Gordon Institute of Technology

Gordon Samstag teaching First Year Common Course, South Australian School of Art, Exhibition Building, North Terrace, Adelaide, 1963. Photograph by Allan Sierp Courtesy Friends of the South Australian School of Art Inc., and the Marshall family

in Geelong, Victoria, arrived late in 1962 (to replace Alex Leckie), joining Owen Broughton and Regina Jaugietis in the sculpture department on the eve of the move to Stanley Street. And Franz Kempf, who'd worked with Samstag at RMIT, found himself again sharing the staffroom with the American when he came to the SASA in 1963. There were others.

Max Lyle didn't dislike Samstag, but he was wary of him, and also wary of the games that he played with students and the 'disarray' this caused to those 'unable to cope with it'. Lyle had met Samstag immediately on starting at the old Exhibition Building, before the move to Stanley Street, and understood that he'd be taking orders from him. However, Lyle disagreed with certain of Samstag's strategies, particularly his strong preference for 'examinations' as a way of determining a student's performance. Like most of his colleagues, Lyle preferred 'assessment' – that is, a process of considering a student's work over time, in depth, and informed by a discussion between the lecturing staff. For a time, a charade of sorts was required to accommodate Samstag's preferred method. Eventually, however, assessments won the day.<sup>81</sup>

Ron Hawke (1933–2001), who came to teach painting and drawing at the SASA in 1969, late in Samstag's tenure, <sup>82</sup> described him as 'deliberately provocative', and thought he pushed students and staff 'to see how far they would go. He was always playing private little jokes: he was an infuriating person!'. <sup>83</sup> Bill Clements, head of sculpture at the SASA from 1963 to 1970, even suspected that Samstag might have been with the CIA and that he was in South Australia undercover, to monitor the British nuclear testing at Maralinga, on Indigenous lands about 800 kilometres (500 miles) northwest of Adelaide. <sup>84</sup>

Before Allan Sierp resigned as principal, he initiated a procedure (through staff meetings) for determining the content of the Fine Art course and – given his overarching role – Samstag sought to influence these. <sup>85</sup> As Max Lyle said, 'He wanted to have his finger in all the pies, even though his interest, really, was only in painting.' Samstag's grasp of sculpture, as a subject to be taught, was poor, and Lyle and his colleague Owen Broughton quietly worked around him, ultimately designing a diploma course for sculpture independently of Samstag, with its own specific history and methods.

Lyle recalled that at Stanley Street, in that period, students often worked in a self-directed way (following the common first year), in an overlapping range of disciplines and courses, for example interchanging informally between painting and sculpture. The school and staff accommodated this. It was a good dynamic; Lyle considered it 'excellent!'. Re For Samstag, however, there was a limit to educational flexibilities. He had particular principles when it came to the functions of a fine art course and the language that described them; they were principles he would defend. In a July 1966 letter to the SASA principal, Douglas Roberts, Samstag sternly objected to a proposal Roberts had made to have an exhibition of student work based on 'materials and methods'. While not opposed in principle to there being an exhibition of student work, Samstag argued that the proposal confused technical matters with 'creativity', and would 'jeopardize the planning and usefulness of the Materials & Methods subject', which was taught by his colleague Barrie Goddard. Samstag effectively demanded that Goddard and Roberts change their plan. Representations of the student work of the planning that the proposal confused technical matters with 'creativity', and would 'jeopardize the planning and usefulness of the Materials & Methods subject', which was taught by his colleague Barrie Goddard. Samstag effectively demanded that Goddard and Roberts change their plan.

It was an arcane issue; Samstag's point was subtle, perhaps even pedantic. But it illustrated his pedagogical certainty about studio art education. The letter also revealed the underlying battle of wills between Samstag and the principal. It was widely known that Roberts's relationship with Samstag was an unhappy one, and fraught with conflict. As heads of department, Samstag and Albert (Alb) Smith (1924–2016) were both on the school's advisory board with Roberts (Smith, also the school's art history teacher, had replaced Roberts as head of teacher training when Roberts became principal). Interviewed by researcher Jim Cowley, Smith



Sidney NOLAN (1917–92)

Death of Constable Scanlon, 1946
enamel paint on composition
board
90.4 x 121.2 cm (35 % x 47 ¾ in)
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Gift of Sunday Reed 1977

revealed he had a covert role at meetings, to help bolster Roberts against Samstag. 'For some reason, he and Roberts didn't get on well; I don't know why,' said Smith. 'Doug would get me in there to counteract Gordon's attitudes and ideas.' <sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, Roberts was at pains to keep any conflicts he had with Samstag discreet and managed. Max Lyle commented that 'if Doug heard anyone discussing such matters in the staffroom, or saying anything derogatory about Gordon, he would jump on you!' <sup>89</sup>

The 'antipathy' between Samstag and Roberts was obvious to Milton Moon, appointed head of ceramics at the SASA in 1969. A Queenslander with considerable overseas experience gained on a Churchill Fellowship (and later a renowned figure in Australian ceramics), Moon had been recruited by Roberts after meeting him at a Melbourne conference on the training of artists. When invited by the Samstag Museum of Art's director, Erica Green, to reflect on his time working with Samstag, Moon wrote that, at the very first staff meeting he attended – at which he also met Samstag – he'd found it 'unusual, at that staff meeting [that] Gordon Samstag and Doug Roberts sniped at each other. Really sniped!'. Moon thought they were 'two ends of the spectrum. I couldn't get to know Gordon as well as I did other staff members,' he wrote. 'For one thing, I rarely saw him at morning teas, where most staff congregated in the staff room. He seemed to be a loner'. <sup>90</sup>

Alb Smith shared the end-of-year review of student work with Samstag. He felt they had a 'cordial' relationship and described Samstag as 'a friendly bloke'. He considered him to be readily accepting of the teacher-training culture, without displaying a superior attitude or any sense that the fine art side of the SASA 'was the be all and end all' of the art school. 91

Appearances could be deceptive, however. Jim Moss, a student late in Samstag's tenure (and later still, a long-serving history/theory lecturer at the SASA), formed the impression that there was a 'distinct dislike' between Samstag and Alb Smith. 92 But Smith singled out Samstag for praise as having been the only member of the SASA staff who showed awareness and

Joan Griffiths, Geoff Wilson and Brian Seidel painting at Athelstone, Adelaide, 1950. Photograph by Alb Smith Courtesy Brian Seidel and The Beagle Press



'genuine sympathetic concern' for a tragic issue in Smith's personal life, concerning his daughter. Smith related that Samstag provided him with support and would talk 'encouragingly' to him: 'He was the only one on the whole staff who did.'93

Alb Smith also thought that Samstag had been 'given a tough time' at the school, though he didn't say in what way. Amusingly, he judged Samstag 'a pernickety old monster [but] I think that if you were able to get below the surface he was a sincere bloke who needed a friend'. Smith thought the dynamic at Stanley Street in the 1960s was as good as any that he'd ever known: he enjoyed the school's culture immensely and would of a day 'hop in his car and look forward to getting there'. The students were 'good, hard-working people, the staff keen and interesting'. <sup>94</sup> He recounted how on one occasion when the distinguished artist Sidney Nolan was in town, Nolan had asked to be given a tour around the art school. (It's likely that Nolan was in Adelaide for his exhibition 'African Paintings by Sidney Nolan', at the Bonython Art Gallery during the 1964 Adelaide Festival, the works having been inspired by Nolan's travels, with his wife, Cynthia, to Africa in 1962. <sup>95</sup>) Samstag proposed that Nolan should present a talk to a mass assembly of students; however, Nolan refused and Smith (to his pleasure) was given the job of hosting the tour. Later, after touring the studios with Smith, Nolan was reluctant to leave, proclaiming that 'the smell of the oil paintings [made him want to] just strip off his coat and get on with it!' <sup>96</sup>

Another staff member who got to know Samstag was Brian Seidel. A South Australian artist, he had been appointed head of printmaking at the SASA in 1964, after Udo Sellbach had left for RMIT in Melbourne. It was a position in which he would play a leadership role – along with Franz Kempf – during a burgeoning time for printmaking in South Australia. <sup>97</sup> A high-achieving painter and printmaker, Seidel (b. 1928), had originally studied under Jeffrey Smart and Ivor Hele at the old South Australian School of Arts and Crafts. He returned to the SASA with international experience, having travelled to the United States on the back of a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship and gained a Masters in Fine Art degree in 1962 at the distinguished University of Iowa School of Art, where (Professor) Grant Wood had

been the most renowned faculty member until his death in 1942, and Mauricio Lasansky taught printmaking (1945–86). (Philip Guston had also taught at Iowa [1941–45], and, in recognition of the School of Art's 'creative reputation and innovative approach', Peggy Guggenheim had donated Jackson Pollock's iconic 1943 painting *Mural* to the university in 1951.) Seidel would become closely engaged with the national scene and influential in a variety of ways, including as a writer about art. He got along well with Samstag, whom he considered a 'gentle and friendly soul'. He was in no doubt that Samstag was given a hard time by many of his SASA colleagues. 'It was his difference,' Seidel suggested in an interview with the author, 'and perhaps also because he was Jewish.' He cautioned Samstag that he would need to be careful 'in a small town where prejudice easily finds a mark!'. '98 Later, reflecting again on his relationship with Samstag, Seidel wrote:

Gordon was a true gentleman and, as well, a fine and dedicated teacher. He very much enjoyed his involvement in the school and he nurtured some fine young artists. When I arrived at the school I was forewarned by some staff that he was a difficult person, whereas on the contrary, I found him to be easy to communicate with and constructive whenever discussing students. 99

# THE SERENITY OF SAMSTAG

Of course, whatever their thoughts about Gordon Samstag may have been, or their expectations, no one really knew that he excelled at something artistically (his superior training and accomplishments), that his peers at SASA could not easily emulate. Nor, for that matter, did they know anything about him; he remained mysterious and unfathomable. At no stage would Samstag reveal anything about his past, especially not his insider experience of professional art-world life in Manhattan. It was a card up his sleeve; it gave him an advantage and he knew it. But his reticence set him apart. Deceptively mild and soft-spoken, seemingly distracted and at times the object of covert jokes, Samstag kept his own counsel and preserved his privacy. No matter the storm, he appeared blithely untroubled, almost serene.

'Tati-like,' according to Peter McWilliams, who twigged early that Samstag provoked his students for a reason. 'You're defiant, aren't you, Peter?' Samstag asked approvingly when McWilliams resisted his suggestions to 'add a little bit of green, perhaps' to his painting. The suggestion to 'add a bit of colour' was a favourite ploy of Samstag's. McWilliams recalled that he typically would also press a gullible student to 'put a little piece of hessian on their canvas'. The mild and timid would comply. At assessment time, however, Samstag – prone to long, dramatic silences – would stare at such a canvas, and after a deathly, hushed time finally say, 'I really do not like that piece of hessian on your canvas'. 100

It was a game that Samstag clearly enjoyed. If you were confident enough, you ignored him; however, only a handful of students actually fathomed his guileful, provocative and testing method of teaching. One of them, Ross Anderson, had come to study at the SASA after spending time at the highly regarded National Art School in Sydney (the old 'East Sydney Tech'), because he'd heard the SASA was more progressive and that the environment encouraged students to experiment and think for themselves – in other words, that 'good things were happening there'. <sup>101</sup> With his prior experience, Anderson considered himself 'less susceptible to Samstag's often strange suggestions'. He recalled, however, that he did one day alter his work in the manner Samstag suggested. The change didn't work. Later, discussing the painting in review, Samstag asked him why he'd done it, as if puzzled by Anderson's acquiescence.

Anderson was fond of Samstag but found him 'exasperating'. He recounted that Samstag had a store of materials in a small room and would occasionally hand these out to select students, but that there was 'always some perverse game attached'. Samstag offered him some canvas, for example, but what he gave him was a mere strip, insufficient to do anything with; later, however, he took Anderson to his store and gave him a generous amount. 102

Loene Furler, whom Samstag led to believe 'was his favourite student', was another encouraged to 'put a bit of red here – only this much'. But 'he left us to teach ourselves and didn't debate,' she said. 'We all worked hard.' Furler thought Samstag liked the students' 'fun-loving spirit'. She also noted that in his own painting (about which she thought he was 'passionate'), Samstag adopted an Abstract Expressionist style that was very 'similar to Charles Reddington's', and she assumed Reddington had influenced him.<sup>103</sup>

Others simply were respectful. Jim Moss, for example, said that 'you went to Gordon for *The Word*, because he was New York, and looked ... in touch, an authority, like a New York Jewish intellectual'. <sup>104</sup> Helen James had been a student of Samstag's, one of the comparatively few at that time undertaking the fine art diploma, starting the four-year course in 1964. 'The students in my group were a cocky bunch,' she said, recalling that they would occasionally give Samstag 'a hell of a hard time! They could be very cruel.' Working alongside Samstag in the SASA studio, James would observe students making jokes at his expense; but she realised that in an odd way he 'enjoyed being made fun of', and actually 'drew that from people'. No matter how much he was provoked, he remained 'unruffled and cool'. <sup>105</sup>

James was not at all in awe of Samstag. He'd often call her into his office and 'pick her brains', then nod in recognition and appreciation. He gifted Helen 'some very good tubes of oil paint', old and obscure ones such as 'Italian Pink', which he claimed was 'made from the urine of Indian cows'. When discussing her work with him (when he would predictably ask, 'Don't you think there should be some more blue here'), she would ignore his suggestions. (In fact, she considered another lecturer at the SASA at that time, the American Tom Valentine, a far greater influence on her than Samstag, partly because he introduced her to the work of artists such as Marcel Duchamp and John Cage.) James thought that Samstag's skill was in allowing the studio to be an environment of experiment and freedom, a place that nurtured creativity. It was what the students wanted. And, many years later, looking back, most of them would agree those were golden years.

There can be little doubt that Samstag was a bundle of contradictions. Certainly, his capacity to irritate colleagues was at odds with his seemingly benign willingness to play the fool with students, habitually concealing himself in the guise of mischief – perhaps an oblique way of imparting wise counsel. But when it suited him, Samstag could be gravely serious. As the lead speechmaker at the 1964 'Presentation of Diploma and Prizes' ceremony (conducted by the SASA in May that year for graduating students of the fine art diploma course), <sup>107</sup> Samstag talked about the 'precarious' path ahead for the graduates of a career in art, and the lecture provided rare insight into a man of many faces. Prefacing his remarks with the theme, that 'love of the work is the necessary key to all accomplishment', he proceeded to laud the importance of 'independent thinking' as perhaps the most important quality in contemporary art, along with 'imagination and feeling'. He distinguished between students with natural talent ('not always an asset'), and those 'who seemed completely lacking in aptitude and had only love for the work [who] will suddenly show unexpected depth and subtlety'. He traced the trajectory of an artist's career, and its challenges, invoking Jacques-Louis David, John Ruskin, Henry Moore, Emil Nolde, Ben Shahn and Herbert Read. Importantly, he praised the Bauhaus, acknowledging that 'art schools foster and produce creative accomplishment in a variety of changing ways'. And he

concluded, by saying that at the 'new' SASA the 'emphasis is no longer on careful preparation and painstaking craftsmanship. It is on the individual.' As had become evident before he came to Australia, Samstag was now an unabashed Modernist. He'd moved on.

When it came to his professional relationships, Samstag may well have been his own worst enemy. It was in his nature to be provocative, and he could also be difficult and obdurate: wilfully so. His old and loyal American friend, Ray Spilman, recalled an incident when Gordon had got himself into a physical fight at the Spilmans' apartment one night, after World War II, in the Fleetwood, Bronxville, complex where they all lived in the 1940s. As Ray told it years later, he and his wife, Mary, had invited a group of mutual friends to dinner, including the Samstags, and among the guests was an Englishman who worked at the United Nations and who also lived in the Fleetwood complex, on a floor above the Samstags. During the evening, Gordon and the Englishman somehow became embroiled in an argument. According to Spilman, Gordon was never a rational debater but instead, typically, would bait his conversational opponent, constantly shifting ground illogically and irritatingly, or would simply remain silent when a point against him was well made. However, the Englishman (a 'rational soul') managed to penetrate Gordon's defences with a well-chosen remark, at which point Gordon lost his cool and suddenly proposed a fistfight on the verandah outside, to settle the matter. The Englishman accepted the challenge, and to everyone's shock they both went at it, 'beating each other up' until they became exhausted and their wives pulled them apart and took them home. 109 Improbably, it seemed that the mild-mannered Samstag could (literally) take the fight to his opponents and hold his ground, without stepping back.

#### **BUENA VISTA**

In 1966 the Samstags decided to buy some land and build their own, architect-designed home. They purchased an allotment at 14 Bayview Crescent, Beaumont, among a bundle of new subdivisions on land that had been undeveloped since Adelaide's settlement era. It was close to St Georges, but much higher up on the hillside of Mount Osmond, where in the nineteenth century silver had been discovered and mined. The land subsequently had sat there unused, except as pasture for roaming sheep, unattractive as marketable real estate until the 1960s, perhaps due to its relative isolation and inaccessibility.

For the Samstags to have bought property was significant. Their relationship with Adelaide until then had been provisional: they could, if needed, simply have walked away and, for example, returned to America at short notice. But now they were making a commitment, suggesting both were comfortable with their new Australian life, that things were working out and that they intended to stay. Indeed, even if it *was* true that Gordon was unpopular with his colleagues at the SASA (as some suggested), then that clearly was of little consequence to him.

The Samstags chose well. The block at Bayview Crescent had more elevated and dramatic views to the coast than their old place down in St Georges, and was one of only a few properties in a cul-de-sac that connected directly to the Mount Osmond Reserve. In effect, the Samstags would be surrounded by a vast wilderness of pristine bush and walking trails, Crown land that would forever be reserved for recreational community use. And the view at night across the gridded suburbs to the bay was a spectacle of light, much like Los Angeles when seen after dark from Mulholland Drive. As real estate, it was special.

The move also revealed the Samstags' evident desire for quietness and privacy, away from the madding crowd; soon they would be waking to the hilarious call of larrikin kookaburras, the mellifluous fluting of magpies, and the idle calm and invigorating smell of the Australian

bush. All the same, had any of Anne and Gordon's old American friends been observing their progress in Australia, they might have been puzzled at the choices being made. 110 Certainly, their circumstances bore no resemblance to what they'd left behind in Westchester County, with their boat and the waters of Long Island Sound.

The new house at 14 Bayview Crescent was ready to occupy in late 1966.<sup>111</sup> By then the Samstags had been in Adelaide for five years . In all that time, Gordon had effectively managed to keep his professional life (his daytime job at the art school) separate from his private, domestic one with Anne. They were two entirely different worlds. The only real overlap occurred when the Samstags began offering privileged hospitality to Gordon's most favoured students, in the form of end-of-year summertime parties at Beaumont. The students were encouraged to bring their bathers and enjoy the backyard pool; they were greeted by hired waiters serving drinks and sandwiches on the patio, and given freedom to roam the house. Of course they were all curious to see the Samstags' hillside home – its modernity was rare in Adelaide. The students were impressed; the experience offered glimpses of a wider world. They saw Samstag in a new light. Indeed, it cemented an intimate and enduring bond between them all. Gordon especially would cherish the memories long after he and Anne had returned to America.

What Anne did with her days up in isolated Beaumont was anyone's guess. Apart from tending to a spot of gardening, and the dogs, there surely wasn't much to do. But although Anne didn't drive and relied upon Gordon and friends for transport around town, it seems not to have limited her. On the contrary, over the years she developed a number of friendships linked to charitable and volunteering activities that gave purpose to her life in Adelaide, as well as mobility. Anne's connections also provided ready entrée for her and Gordon to an Adelaide social world that was independent of the SASA. Well before Anne and Gordon moved up from St Georges to Bayview Crescent, for example, they had become friendly with Florence (Robbie) McBryde and her husband, Lucas. The McBrydes also lived in Beaumont, but further down the hill at 5 Lascelles Avenue, close to the Samstags' old place in Sunnyside Road.

Anne had originally been introduced to Robbie McBryde by her friend Enid Thomas (a doctor's wife), who was a charity volunteer at the Spastic Centre of South Australia in Woodville, an Adelaide suburb. Anne and Robbie developed a shared involvement with the Spastic Centre, and this led to other friendships for Anne, and other charitable involvements. One of these was a role with the fundraising committee of the esteemed Pulteney Grammar School, a prestigious private boys' school down on South Terrace in the city. It involved organising Pulteney's 'art competition' and on one occasion Gordon was recruited as a judge (with local artist David Dridan); he also donated 'two small collaged paintings', both of which were purchased by Robbie McBryde's aunt. 112

Anne also helped out at the Royal Adelaide Blind Society, a link most likely made through the local vet, Kate McCarthy, a close friend of the Samstags who was connected to Adelaide's dog-training culture. With Anne's prior experience of obedience training for dogs in America – and her impressive illustrated book on the subject (published in New York City by the reputable Alfred A. Knopf Inc.; see page 181), she would have been a standout among the local dog-training cognoscenti, a distinguished authority. Interviewed by Wendy Walker in 2006, McCarthy recalled that she had met Gordon on Beaumont Common (a local heritage public park) when they both were walking their dogs. McCarthy and her husband, Kingsley, were among a number of local professional people with whom the Samstags socialised; over dinner, Gordon and Kingsley apparently would discuss sailing. McCarthy also remembered that additional friends were often invited for drinks, before or after dinner, and the evening generally began with a glass of sherry (although 'Gordon's preference was for whisky'). According to



Anne and Gordon Samstag's neighbours' house being built in Beaumont, Adelaide, 1966. The Samstags' home can be seen in the background.

Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Photograph gift of Dora Wilson



Anne and Gordon Samstag's home in Beaumont, Adelaide, 1995. Photograph by Ross Wolfe Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA

another friend, Betty Welch, whose husband, Howard, was also a general practitioner in Beaumont, conversation during dinner at the Samstags' was 'always intelligent and interesting, and sometimes even controversial!'. 113

Robbie became one of Anne's best friends. The McBrydes and the Samstags would go to exhibition openings together and often eat out at restaurants in the city. In Robbie's opinion, the Samstags 'loved Adelaide and felt at home here'. She also thought Anne and Gordon were 'absolutely devoted' to each other. 'He was very gentle towards her,' she wrote. 'They were so obviously in love.' Gordon, she said, was 'shy and sentimental, and easily moved to tears; he cried while telling an anecdote about a shearer'. Robbie thought him 'much misunderstood: in fact fun, a dapper gentleman, always beautifully dressed'. His voice 'was very soft'. Anne, however, 'had a harsh, typically American voice'. 114

The Samstags' immediate neighbours in Beaumont were Jack and Dora (Dulcie) Wilson, who lived at 12 Bayview Crescent. The Wilsons first met the Samstags when – having gone up to look at their recently purchased block – they discovered that building work had already begun next door. They became enduring friends and would have dinner together every few weeks. In fact, such was the cordial nature of the relationship that Gordon designed the fence between their properties to sympathetically complement the Wilsons' home. 'The Samstags never showed any sign of wealth,' Dulcie told the author in 1993. 'Their home was comfortable, but there was only seagrass matting on the floor!' <sup>115</sup> The Samstags' house at number 14 was higher in the cul-de-sac incline than the Wilsons' block, and there were steps built down between the two properties. 'They were used every day,' Dulcie Wilson wrote, 'until Gordon and Anne sold the house and moved to Queensland.' <sup>116</sup>

The Samstags also became friendly with neighbours who lived two doors down in Bayview Crescent, on the other side of the Wilsons, 'travel writers' Alf and Trudy Cox. Gordon and Anne would cross the Wilsons' place to visit the Coxes, all of them becoming friends and 'enjoying many nice dinner parties' together. Unfortunately, however, Gordon and Alf later 'fell out' over a block of land in Bayview Crescent that they both wished to buy. 'After that,' according to Dulcie Wilson, 'things were never the same'. Nevertheless Dulcie Wilson retained fond memories of the Samstags: 'I will always remember Anne, with her dear little dog,' she wrote. 'She always had the same style of clothes on: long white or grey frock, a little white cap to keep her hair tidy, but no show of wealth.' <sup>117</sup>

Few of Gordon's SASA colleagues ever met Anne; mostly she was viewed at a distance. Among those who did have occasional contact with her, however, there was a sense that she spent considerable time on her appearance, ensuring it was first class. Certainly, when Anne did appear in public, she was without fail impeccably dressed and groomed. 'She was very cool,' according to Franz Kempf, who would meet Anne occasionally at the CAS in Adelaide's Parkside, where Gordon had become involved and Kempf played a leadership role as president for four years (1965–68), immediately preceding Gordon's controversial term (see page 256). She was 'neat and tight', he said, 'much better dressed than most in Adelaide'. <sup>118</sup>

#### A REGULAR GUEST

A little-known side of Anne and Gordon's social life in Adelaide was their friendship with John Edmund, an English actor who had come to Australia in the 1950s and started his own theatre in Adelaide in 1962. That was the same year, effectively, in which the Samstags had arrived from Melbourne.

Edmund was enterprising. His Theatre 62 was a small, semi-professional playhouse, adapted from an old cinema building on Burbridge Road (now Sir Donald Bradman Drive) in suburban Hilton, on the other side of town from where the Samstags lived. <sup>119</sup> It appears that Anne and Gordon were early patrons of Theatre 62, suggesting they had a wider field of interests than was known to Gordon's SASA colleagues. The Samstags' involvement may well have been inspired by Anne. From 1927 when she was eighteen, The Cape Playhouse had brought professional summer theatre to Cape Cod, in Dennis, near Anne's childhood home in Yarmouth. That theatre's inaugural production, *The Guardsman*, starred Basil Rathbone; actors such as Bette Davis, Gregory Peck and Humphrey Bogart also made appearances there early in their careers. <sup>120</sup>

While still living in St Georges, Samstag had flattered Edmund by inviting him to pose for a formal portrait that Gordon revealed he intended submitting to the Archibald Prize, a high-profile national prize for portraiture conducted annually by the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), Sydney's leading public gallery. There was an associated, popular exhibition of the short-listed works. 121 Edmund's visits to the Samstags' house for the portrait sittings were invariably followed by lunch. He recalled:

For quite a number of weeks I would sit on this stool, while Anne prepared lunch. While Gordon painted, we would talk. We would talk about everything: cabbages and kings, America, the theatre. He would ask me questions about my life: how I became an actor, how I came to start a theatre. He said he wanted to transmit it all into the painting. 122

Edmund and the Samstags became friends. Indeed, it appears that Samstag recruited some of his students to help produce stage sets for Theatre 62, as part of their fine art course. 123

The frequent lunches ('on a Sunday') grew into an enduring social arrangement following the portrait's completion and continued for several years, long after the Samstags had moved to Beaumont. It was always, however, only the three of them:

[It was] just me, Anne and Gordon, never anybody else. I found that I loved going. The food was exquisite, beautifully done. Anne was a lovely woman: stylish, but most of the time very quiet, although she laughed readily. She loved her garden, her flowers, her dogs; but

it was very much Gordon's environment. Anne appeared to adore him. They were delightful people; they gave me their support. Although may I say [adopting a whisper] I don't think that Gordon would have suffered fools!  $^{124}$ 

Samstag may have become interested in the Archibald after seeing a selection of works from the 1963 prize in an exhibition, 'Selected Entries from the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Competitions', one of several 'special' exhibitions presented at the National Gallery of South Australia (as it was then named), during the 1964 Adelaide Festival of Arts. <sup>125</sup> That he was attracted to entering a work in the prize was understandable, a temptation perhaps. It was the kind of award that ideally suited his traditional skills (had he chosen to employ them). Hypothetically, had he in years gone by – when at his best – entered the contest for 'the best portrait, preferentially of some man or woman distinguished in art, letters, science or politics, painted by any artist resident in Australasia', he would likely, at some stage, have won it. And such was the prestige of the Archibald – which carried the imprimatur of academic respect – that, had he won it, he would immediately have become recognised nationally, in fact distinguished. Commissions would have followed. <sup>126</sup> But now, in Australia, having nailed his colours to the mast of abstraction, that raised the question of what kind of painting he was likely to produce. As it transpired, the life-size portrait (see above) was relatively conventional.



Gordon SAMSTAG

Portrait of John Edmund, c. 1964–65
oil on canvas
c. 210.0 x 120.0 cm
(c. 82 % x 47 ¼ in)
collection unknown
Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA
Photograph gift of Jean Wilcox

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'About seven by four feet [210 by 120 centimetres],' according to Edmund, and painted on a crude hessian, the same material used to line the walls of Theatre 62. Edmund is depicted objectively, as a puppet-master, holding a pair of knee-high marionettes (representing actors) from a device with strings. He is smartly dressed, seated on a stool and looks modern. Samstag has added collaged elements, including a strip of theatre tickets and a newspaper clipping.

Samstag's portrait was not accepted for exhibition in the Archibald.<sup>127</sup> When it came back from Sydney, he gifted it to Edmund for the Theatre 62 foyer, where the painting hung for many years, welcoming patrons, and was, according to Edmund, a great success. I loved it, he said, I thought it was absolutely fabulous. Sadly, the portrait was later lost and its whereabouts remain unknown. As with many of Samstag's works produced during his time in Australia, only a black-and-white newspaper clipping remains.

# THE SWAP, AND THE GIFT

Samstag readily gifted his paintings and drawings to friends, neighbours and students, with a generosity that suggested he placed a low material value on his work. Perhaps after becoming a full-time art teacher in South Australia he had developed a different sense of purpose for the activity of making art. Often it would involve an exchange; however, not everyone felt they gained the better of the arrangement. One such exchange, with his SASA colleague Milton Moon, was of distinct practical value to the Samstags. Gordon, Moon wrote in 2015, had approached him asking to do a swap:

He wanted something as a feature to be placed near his swimming pool. I had just made a largish ceramic sphere. I'd been intrigued, when in the United States, how ceramics were commonly used with modern architecture. Gordon wanted the sphere I had made and I gave it to him. My wife Bette and I were invited to the house to see it installed. I wondered what he would offer as a swap, [but] what he gave was not what I expected.

It turned out that one day, when out driving, Samstag had noticed a length of a slab of a tree:

the outside of which was terribly eaten and eroded by nature, and the heart wood sculpted by termites. It was a slightly curved piece of a quite largish tree, and [once reduced by Samstag] was framed on a white background about 40 by 150 centimetres [16 by 60 centimetres], on top of which he'd rubbed some colour.

It was this that Samstag offered Moon as his swap. 'The truth is,' Moon wrote, 'I was disappointed by the exchange, but said nothing.' But years later, he saw it differently. 'It is only now, when revisiting the whole exchange [that] I realised Gordon was absolutely right – it *was* appropriate. I have learned more about the subtleties of what we call "art" from that exchange than I would have otherwise.' <sup>129</sup> Moon's evident regard for Samstag was undiminished.

Helen James, too, thought Samstag got the better deal when they swapped works. James had been to the Samstags' house in Beaumont 'a number of times', and not only for the student gatherings but on occasions when it was only her, Anne and Gordon. Helen thought Anne 'very civilised, very nice, witty, quiet and very, very subtle'. She considered the Samstags' house 'really well designed, sophisticated and modern', and attributed this to Anne's sensibility. She was impressed by the placement of the house – its view over the valley, the stone terracing,

the garden and the materials used, the glass and the stone. Years later, looking back, she realised she now appreciated it even more. 130

Helen thought that Gordon, too, was subtle and humorous, but also 'complex and vulnerable'. When Helen was in her last year at art school, Samstag had taken a shine to one of her paintings. She rated her own work; they were 'large paintings that were loose, free and spatial', and they were attracting attention. 131 Gordon had been watching this particular painting of Helen's develop on the easel, and he began to call it 'my painting'. At a certain point he suggested that the painting was 'finished', and implored her to stop working on it. He offered to swap one of his own works for it: she could choose anything from his collection, 'anything at all' (with the exception of a particular self-portrait). And so she came up to Beaumont and rummaged through every work in his collection, discussing each of them with Samstag in turn and eventually selecting a small collage. Samstag declared that he had secured the best of the deal. Helen agreed. In fact, her opinion of Samstag's work was not high; she thought it 'timid and thin', that it lacked authority and wasn't 'real art'. But nor did she judge him principally for that; she viewed him foremost as a teacher, and valued the experimental latitude that he consciously allowed his students. She also felt, instinctively, that Gordon had a drive to be engaged: 'you just knew that he wanted, somehow, to be contributing more,' she said.<sup>132</sup> In aggregate, he enjoyed her respect. <sup>133</sup>



# ADVANCE AND RETREAT

In 1967, a major exhibition of postwar New York School paintings, Two Decades of American Painting, was brought to Australia by the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and toured to the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) and the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW). It caused a sensation among Australia's reactionary media, and attracted huge audiences. The show was considered 'one of the most important travelling exhibitions to arrive in Australia', and featured works by a wide range of leading contemporary American artists, largely of abstract art. It had already been to Kyoto in Japan, and New Delhi, India, and it was the first of several international exhibitions organised by MOMA that would tour Australia over the following decade.<sup>1</sup>

Samstag took a group of his students by train to Melbourne to see it.<sup>2</sup> Among the rich collection of works by already famous artists such as Mark Rothko, Philip Guston, Ad Reinhardt, Joan Mitchell, Roy Lichtenstein, Cy Twombly, James Rosenquist and Robert Rauschenberg, there were also masterpieces by Jackson Pollock, Jasper Johns, Willem de Kooning, Barnett Newman and Andy Warhol. Other than in the Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art, brought to Australia in 1939 (see page 203) by newspaper mogul Keith Murdoch, Australia had never seen anything like it.<sup>3</sup>

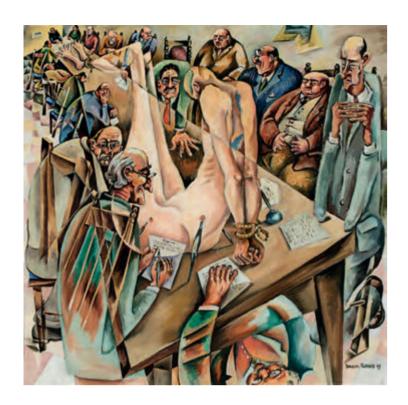
One work especially, however, would have caught Samstag's attention and possibly lingered in his mind long after he'd returned home to Adelaide. Helen Frankenthaler's 'landscape-like abstraction', *Cape (Provincetown)* had been painted in 1964, only three years after Samstag came to Australia. It offered a reminder of his own time painting around Cape Cod years before, and his past life as an artist in America, now a distant world and time, long gone.<sup>4</sup>

There was a certain irony about Manhattan-born-and-trained Gordon Samstag's migration to the furthest reaches of Australia, where it had long been customary to lament the country's extreme geographic and cultural isolation. And in the visual arts especially, regional centres such as Adelaide were at one further remove, being situated far from the dominant east-coast cities of Sydney and Melbourne. Yet, while Adelaide's community of artists was small compared with those in the larger Australian cities, it was also tribal and coherent, with a history and narrative of its own that informed local practice and shaped relationships between players. Unless they travelled interstate (or even better, overseas), however, artists in Adelaide

Helen FRANKENTHALER (1928–2011)

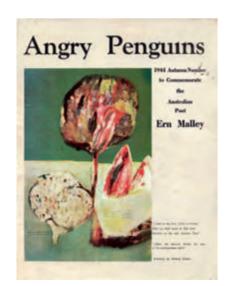
Cape (Provincetown), 1964
synthetic polymer paint and resin on canvas
278.5 x 237.2 cm (109% x 93% in)
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne

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Foundation, Inc./Artist Rights
Society (ARS), New York.
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Douglas ROBERTS (1919–76)

The Tribunal, 1949
oil on canvas
61.3 x 61.8 cm (241/8 x 241/8 in)
Elder Bequest Fund 1984
Art Gallery of South Australia
Adelaide © Paul Roberts



Angry Penguins, Autumn 1944, published by Reed and Harris, Melbourne Courtesy Samela Harris and ETT Imprint, Exile Bay

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were fated to exist in a kind of bespoke bubble, drifting disconnected from the larger world of art. They might just as well have settled on the moon.<sup>5</sup>

For those who did stay, however, it was possible to build a respectable profile *locally* as an artist with comparative ease, even if one's work and identity might not register beyond the border. For many artists in Adelaide, the privilege of local status was sufficient. But they would first need to secure recognition from the Royal South Australian Society of Arts (RSASA). From its establishment in 1856, the RSASA had provided a valuable forum for local artists and also assured their status through its membership regime.<sup>6</sup> With its important public gallery space, the RSASA's leadership also controlled the manner and context in which artists could professionally exhibit their work, while adjudicating and sanctioning the nature of that work. Unfortunately - like an aristocracy secure within its estate -

the RSASA had for too long insulated itself from troublesome outsider influences, Modernism in particular. Out of touch with change, its influence became retrograde.

The RSASA's hegemony began eroding in 1942, when a group of progressive South Australian artists formed the Contemporary Art Society (CAS) of South Australia. They were seeking independence from institutional authority and an audience for their alternative

values; their society brought kindred spirits together. Although local in vision, the initiative was inspired by Melbourne's Contemporary Art Society of Australia, which had been established in 1938, just before the war. Adelaide's CAS – diplomatic in spirit and at pains to avoid confrontation with the RSASA – was not as radical as Melbourne's, whose culture was more volatile and complicated by competing art-world politics.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, an exhibition by the 'RSASA Associates Contemporary Group' in July 1942 – preceding establishment of the CAS in Adelaide – caused such alarm in certain quarters that questions were asked in the South Australian Parliament.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, two years later, in 1944, the Adelaide establishment of the day would show its true, reactionary nature, when the South Australian publisher and poet Max Harris (secretary of the CAS), was prosecuted for publishing poetry deemed obscene. The precocious Harris (1921–95), then twenty-three, had become one of the driving forces in the establishment of the South Australian branch of the CAS after he formed a close relationship with the radical arm of the Melbourne CAS, particularly its patron, John Reed, who became Harris's partner in publishing the avant-garde journal *Angry Penguins*.

In 1944, a notorious edition of *Angry Penguins* featured previously 'undiscovered' poems by one Ern Malley, purportedly an unknown and deceased poet. In fact, Malley was fictitious; the poems – comprising brilliantly evocative, abstract and cut-up prose – were a hoax contrived by two conservative Australian poets (James McAuley and Harold Stewart),

who wanted to damage the Modernist cause and selected Harris as a target. It would lead to his prosecution in conservative Adelaide, in September 1944, on a dubious charge of obscenity (relating to language in the Ern Malley poems). Harris was found guilty and fined five pounds (or, in default, six weeks imprisonment). Douglas Roberts – one of the young rebels of the CAS movement in Adelaide who would later become principal at the South Australian School of Art (SASA) – satirised the prosecution of Harris in a renowned series of drawings and a painting, *The Tribunal* (see opposite). <sup>10</sup>

The fortunes of the CAS of South Australia fluctuated over the following years, depending on the voluntary capacities and engagement of its members. Certainly, the CAS provided important opportunities to several postwar immigrant artists from Europe, including Stan Ostoja-Kotkowski (1922–94), who became a national leader in experimental electronic, light and sound work. Abstract expressionists Stanislaus Rapotec (1913–97) and the Dutkiewicz brothers, Wladyslaw (1918–99) and Ludwik (1921–2008), also found audiences and a supportive discourse for their art through the organisation.

However, Dušan Marek (1926–93), though welcomed into the CAS by Ivor Francis

and Douglas Roberts in 1949, fared less well in conservative Adelaide. Dušan and his older artist brother, Voitre (1919–99), had fled Czechoslovakia when it was invaded by Communist Russia in 1948. En route to Australia by ship, they made works of art from scavenged materials, one of which, *Equator*, by Dušan, celebrated their crossing into the Southern Hemisphere on October 12, 1948. Having selected Adelaide as their future home (believing it might resemble Prague), the Marek brothers discovered that, in fact, Adelaide was 'insular and parochial'. <sup>14</sup> The CAS committee refused to exhibit *Equator* and another work by Dušan, who instead exhibited them at the newly formed Adelaide Independent Group, at the Laubman & Pank Gallery. <sup>15</sup> Dušan and his wife, Helena, left Adelaide for a time in 1951, disillusioned; although they did eventually return.

# Dušan MAREK (1926-93) Equator, 1948 oil on board 121.7 x 91.2 cm (47% x 35% in) South Australian Government Grant 1972 Art Gallery of South Australia,



Anne and Gordon Samstag had come to South Australia at a culturally progressive time for the state. An ambitious biennial international arts festival had been established in 1960 that would quickly become 'the most important cultural event in Australia'. <sup>16</sup> The Adelaide Festival of Arts had put South Australia on the map and also made Adelaide a destination at festival time for touring exhibitions of significance. One of these, an ambitious 150-year



William DOBELL (1899–1970)
The Boy at the Basin, 1932
oil on wood panel
41.0 x 33.2 cm (161/8 x 131/8 in)
Art Gallery of New South Wales,
Sydney
© William Dobell Art
Foundation/Licensed by
Viscopy, 2016

Gordon Samstag would have seen Dobell's work, and that of many leading Australian artists, in an exhibition that had been prepared for touring to the Tate Gallery, London, but first shown at the Art Gallery of South Australia in 1962.



survey titled *Australian Painting: Colonial, Impressionist, Contemporary*, prepared for the Tate Gallery, London, was previewed at the National Gallery of South Australia <sup>17</sup> during the 1962 Adelaide Festival in March, and effectively coincided with the Samstags' arrival in Adelaide. The exhibition would have provided Gordon with a significant early opportunity to acquaint himself with Australian art.

In 1961 – before the Samstags left America – there were limited sources overseas for gaining information on Australian art; certainly, art-historical scholarship was relatively new everywhere and no American art museum was much interested in collecting or researching Australian art. Had Gordon wanted a fast lesson in the history of Australian art and evidence of its vibrancy, richness and sophistication, then *Antipodean Vision* (the title of the book that accompanied a revised form of the exhibition when finally presented at the Tate) was ready-made. An initiative of Australia's federal government, it was designed to internationally

showcase the very best of the country's visual art.<sup>19</sup> Intended as a proud demonstration (to the old colonial masters) of Australia's cultural maturity, it featured over 200 works.<sup>20</sup>

The official opening, in the National Gallery of South Australia's just-completed, state-of-the-art exhibition wing, was a prestige event. Assuming that Anne and Gordon attended (as seems likely), they would have found themselves in company with Australia's conservative, anglophile Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Robert G. Menzies, who had been a driver of the project and was there to officially open the exhibition. Hearing American accents, might Menzies have stopped to chat? <sup>21</sup>

# SAMSTAG AS AUSTRALIAN MODERNIST

Gordon Samstag had been experimenting with abstraction well before coming to Australia; for example, his exhibition at New York's Janet Nessler Gallery in December 1960 (comprising 'work of the last three years') had featured semi-abstract paintings and gouaches. In an artist's statement for the show, Samstag had described his works as 'removing the insistent realism and reassembling the elements ... into appropriate colors and forms'. <sup>22</sup> (For more on this exhibition, including the critical response, see page 138.)

The radical shift from his once-orthodox practice to abstraction had come on the back of his postwar work as an illustrator for American popular magazines *Woman's Day* and *Gourmet*, and the pulp-fiction titles *Speed Detective* and *Adventure*. If there was a link of any kind between these incongruous practices it was most likely Gordon's pragmatism, his simple desire to stay in the game at a time of volatile change. In that regard, while it was his illustration portfolio that had secured him the lecturing position at RMIT in Melbourne, then he had most probably sold himself to the South Australian School of Art (SASA) differently – as an avant-garde, fine-art abstractionist (and a New York savvy one, at that). After all, that was the profile ideally required of the school's newly created position of Senior Lecturer in Fine Art; they wanted a cutting-edge 'modern', an artistically credible individual of authority who would help lead the school confidently into its brave new world of the 1960s. Presuming that he had indeed promoted himself this way to secure the SASA position, then Samstag had given emphasis to his weakest suit. And once he'd made that play, he had to stick with it.

Well before arriving in Adelaide, he would also have understood his need to establish artistic credentials locally and, if he were to be viable at the SASA, secure peer respect as an artist committed to 'new art'. The reality of meeting his new colleagues would have focused things sharply; he would soon enough have to provide some evidence of his practice – a shingle – a sign of his artistic identity and intent. And, although Samstag could not have been expected to demonstrate knowledge of Australian art, clearly it was smart to show interest. It was no longer a working holiday; he would need to hit the ground running.

Throughout his time in South Australia, Gordon Samstag made works of art with considerable industry. Produced from his studio at home, they probably numbered in the hundreds. He would soon come to describe his works as 'collages', whether they were texture-paintings, works on paper, constructions or sculptures. In fact, most were eclectic assemblages made from such things as 'hemp, wood, plaster and stencil(s) of wire-netting', <sup>23</sup> and apparently whatever else was to hand, including string, newspaper clippings and hessian. Later on, he also made 'copper collages', small, but distinctive-looking works that were rendered on circular supports made of flat copper. At first glance they had the appearance of expressionist paintings, but – in a somewhat controlled, Tachist manner – fused an unlikely amalgam of chemical and three-dimensional media onto the immaculate copper surface. For example, scattered pieces



Gordon SAMSTAG

Red Hot Murder, colour illustration, cover of Speed Detective,
vol. 4, no. 2, Trojan Publishing
Corporation, Springfield,
Massachusetts, USA, August 1945

of broken quartz and coloured pebbles were secured with glue.<sup>24</sup> The most consistent principle driving Samstag's eclectic approach to his Australian art appears to have been a preoccupation with the experimental use of materials, and – judging from the anarchic and often eccentric results – a pleasure in the process.<sup>25</sup>

His first solo exhibition in Adelaide, presented in relatively short time at the RSASA in June 1963, comprised a surprisingly ample sixty-three works - most of them paintings - a small number of which he'd brought with him from America.<sup>26</sup> An inclination to romantic titling of his works - suggesting travel and adventure - had been evident from early in Samstag's career.<sup>27</sup> Now he imbued his new Australian works with titles that reflected his changed geography 'down-under'. Certainly, there was a romantic seafaring and antipodean character about such titles as Southern Continent, Antarctica, Flying Dutchman, Seahorse, Peninsula, The Islands, Archipelago and Atoll. Notices of the exhibition gave emphasis to the appearance of distinguished ladies at the opening: 'Velvets and furs were fashion favourites among women viewers at the Gordon Samstag exhibition of paintings last night', The Advertiser reported, while also noting 'Mrs Samstag's ... cream embroidered woollen dress [that she contrasted] with black jewellery'. 28 A small, anonymous review

in the *Sunday Mail* later that week, was glowing, describing the exhibition as 'quite a show of competence ... in an evocative, expressionist style'. The writer went on:

Samstag's acute colour sensibility is pitched to a lyrical mood which is the immediate attraction of his work. One could say that he expresses himself in pure colour which he applies with great tenderness. He also reveals a fine intuitive flair for composition which he exploits with courage in works of difficult proportions. The gouache series are very decorative and charming little essays, but the larger works are the more impressive.<sup>29</sup>

It was a good start to Samstag's Australian career.

One of the works in the RSASA exhibition, *Wedding Preparation* – a painting that Samstag had exhibited in 1960 as *Preparation for the Wedding*, at the Nessler Gallery in New York – would be sent back to America in 1965 to formalise his election to full membership of the National Academy of Design, the institution from which he had graduated with distinction in the late 1920s (see page 30). It's likely that Samstag was prompted to seek full membership of the Academy in order to assert his credentials to the RSASA. Samstag had quickly involved himself in the RSASA culture on arriving in Adelaide, becoming a 'Lay Member' in 1962 and an 'Associate' the following year. But the RSASA had inexplicably delayed awarding full membership as a 'Fellow'. That omission had the appearance of discrimination against outsiders, not only given Samstag's willingness to voluntarily support the RSASA's tutorial programs, but also in comparison with the more elevated status of other art school colleagues of Samstag's similarly involved with the RSASA. Nevertheless, he would have to wait another two years to be elected a Fellow of the RSASA.

In April 1964, the CAS purchased a property in Adelaide's suburban Parkside, which was modestly adapted to create a gallery for members. In October, Samstag was invited to



Gordon SAMSTAG

Three and a Horse, 1963
gouache on card
25.0 x 25.0 cm (9% x 9% in)
University of South Australia
Art Collection

present the first solo exhibition at the venue. Elizabeth Young, the influential senior art critic for *The Advertiser*, gave Samstag's show a favourable review, referring to his works as 'keenly understood compositional structure(s)', displaying 'unusual tonal subtleties and gracious rhythmic flow', and an 'ingenuity in textural treatment'.<sup>31</sup>

Samstag's practice of imaginative naming of works was highlighted again in 1965 by a work he presented in his solo show in Melbourne at the Leveson Street Gallery. *Land of Beulah* clearly referenced the Old Testament story that celebrated the return of the Hebrews to Jerusalem from their long exile in Babylon. Although unfortunately the work itself has been lost, it's not fanciful to imagine Samstag's invocation of the *Land of Beulah* as suggesting – perhaps ironically – that he saw his own situation in Adelaide (where he lived only a short distance from the suburb of Beulah Park) as benignly similar to the biblical vision: that for Samstag, Adelaide had become Jerusalem, the long-desired homeland.<sup>32</sup>

Later, Samstag's titles would change radically. By the time of his March 1969 exhibition at the Robert Bolton Gallery in Adelaide, in what would prove his final solo exhibition in Australia, the names of the works had become Surrealist, and laden with absurd, sardonic humour. Examples included the creatively opulent *Descending Egg Arrested* and *Tattered*, *Barely Recognizable*, *Mostly Dismembered Dancer*, along with the rambling and nonsensical *Suddenly*, *Through an Optimistic Environment*, a *Directional Sign Indicates That Fertility Should Not Be Underrated* and the intriguingly conceptual *Transparent Elliptical Enclosure of a Significant Void*. One rather alluring title, *From Within a Hole in a Mysterious Mannequin*, *Eros Peers Suspiciously*,



Art and Australia, vol. 1, no. 4, February 1964 conveyed the suggestion of an anus, an impression reinforced by the large abstract painting *The End of Galatia*, clearly intended to direct the viewer's reading of the work as scatological (which, indeed, it seemed to be), and thus objectionable. Were it not for that peculiarity, *The End of Galatia* would on first viewing appear simply to be a conventional abstract painting, its compositional structure delineated by hard-edged contours, patterns and colours.<sup>33</sup> After several years of working in Adelaide, Samstag's attitude to practice appeared to have become controversialist, if not cynical.

Only a few months later, in October 1969, a new, wholly different form of the international avant-garde arrived in Australia, when the Sydney art patron, John Kaldor, commissioned the artist Christo and his collaborator, Jeanne-Claude, to 'wrap' a mile-long part of Sydney's rocky coastline in fabric (see opposite). It was probably the largest work of contemporary art hitherto presented anywhere in the world, and Christo's astonishing originality, and, moreover, his capacity to realise his ambitious

vision, was a dramatic illustration of tectonic change in the visual arts.<sup>34</sup> It was also a far cry from the sedate world and concerns of the 1960s art world in Adelaide.

#### A LIGHT FALL OF SNOW

Whether or not the content of Gordon Samstag's Australian works actually had any meaningful, objective link to the themes and ideas suggested by their titles (notwithstanding the allegorical promise of the lost *Land of Beulah* and the explicit scatological innuendo in *The End of Galatia*) will most likely remain academic. With few exceptions, almost all of Samstag's works of art produced during his time in Australia have been lost or destroyed, and there is an insufficient remaining oeuvre to enable informed critical appraisal.

It may not be such a bad thing. From what does remain of Samstag's works, viewed fifty years later, it is difficult to find convincing merit in them, or purpose. The evidence from those works that *have* survived points to an inconsistent artist, more concerned with playful indulgence than with serious enquiry or the uncovering of a personal authorial voice. And despite the energy of Samstag's Australian work (and, yes, its mixed-media experimental commitment), the fact that so much of it seems arbitrary in conception diminishes belief in his seriousness. Disappointingly, it's as if he had no other aspiration than to do the work and have some fun with it, without concern for its reputation, success or fate. In hindsight, Samstag's project appears quixotic, his motivation obscure. He is an enigma.

But while Samstag's attitude to making art was inscrutable, there could be no doubting his ambition (at least for a time) to achieve personal visibility in the Australian art world. Between 1963 and 1970, he participated in no fewer than thirty-three Australian exhibitions, including both group and one-person shows.<sup>35</sup> Some of these were at prominent dealer galleries interstate, in Sydney and Melbourne. In July 1964, for example, he presented a one-person exhibition at the Dominion Art Galleries in Sydney, a commercial venue with a respectable stable of leading artists.<sup>36</sup> The following year, in February, he participated in a 'season-opening' group show at the Leveson Street Gallery, Melbourne, and then returned in April to present a solo show (of twenty-six paintings and two drawings, opened by the US Consul, John A. Linehan Jr).<sup>37</sup> Neither gallery, however, seems subsequently to have invited him back.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, if there was one thing he'd learned from his advertising executive brother Nicholas, it was the importance of self-promotion and persistence. And Samstag was persistent.



He probably studied the gallery advertisements and exhibition listings in the country's only art periodical, *Art and Australia*, with close attention. Under the inspired editorship of Mervyn Horton, this high-quality, nationally distributed magazine had deservedly become the pre-eminent source for information about art in Australia.<sup>39</sup> Even a casual flick through its pages would have alerted Samstag to the scale of opportunity for artists that existed outside Adelaide, in Sydney and Melbourne. He must have realised that if he could secure representation for his work interstate, it would significantly elevate his profile and credibility, nationally.<sup>40</sup>

Samstag next approached the Barry Stern Galleries in Sydney, which at that time was associated with a number of cutting-edge artists. Two of Samstag's works were included in Stern's September 1966 group show of fifty-nine artists. It was a low-level (\$50 and under) event, but it placed him in the company of leading artists, such as Fred Williams, Donald Friend, Peter Upward and Elwyn Lynn (1917–97). He was quickly invited back for another group show, Texture Survey 66, which opened on January 25, 1967, to which he again contributed two works (*Fear Shapes and Permanence Colours* and *Curving Samstag Effect*, priced at \$160 and \$45 respectively). There were twenty-one artists, although with the exception of Lynn and Ron Lambert, the line-up was undistinguished.

It's possible that Samstag was introduced to Barry Stern by Elwyn Lynn, a well-connected artist, writer and curator who had met Samstag at the 1966 Adelaide Festival and

Christo (b. 1935) and Jeanne-Claude (1935–2009) Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia, 1968–69 Photograph by Harry Shunk © 1969 Christo



Gordon SAMSTAG

Archipelago, 1963
oil on board
58.5 x 135 cm (23 x 53% in)
Photograph by Christian Capurro
Collection David Andrew,
Melbourne

subsequently reviewed his solo exhibition at the Don Pedro Art Gallery in Stirling, describing Samstag's work rather ebulliently (in *The Australian*, March 19, 1966) as 'white collages of jarrah slabs, blocks and paper, done with sensitivity and the transience of a light fall of snow'. Perhaps drawn to Samstag because of similarities in their work, Lynn might also have considered the American a useful source for contacts in the United States. <sup>42</sup>

There was to be one more invitation from the Barry Stern Galleries, this time for a solo show in April 1967 – an important opportunity. The resulting exhibition, *Collages and Constructions* by Gordon Samstag, included fourteen works, one of which, a painting, *Bull's Eye* (see page 248), is of interest. Priced at \$100, the work apparently found a buyer and a colour photograph of it appeared four years later in an interior-design publication, *Australian Décor*. <sup>43</sup> Displayed in situ in the owner's residence – set above an 'ebonized and gilt Regency table' laden with tasteful objects, and partly obscured by the shadows cast from a nearby leafy plant – *Bull's Eye* seems a straightforward Abstract Expressionist work, presenting as a dark, painterly shape within a circular field, contained within a square format approximately 1 metre by 1 metre (3 feet by 3 feet).

Bull's Eye also has the appearance of a crudely hewn 'yin–yang'. What distinguishes it, however, is the ovoid at its centre, which – given the work's title – effectively suggests an objective reading – that it's the bull's eye of a conventional target. <sup>44</sup> Viewed another way, Bull's Eye can also be seen as presaging the scatological theme in certain of Samstag's later works, specifically, The End of Galatia, whose title also clearly alludes to the classical sea nymph, 'Galatea', and the statue brought to life by Pygmalion. It remains open to conjecture, then, as to whether the ambiguity of meaning that Samstag created through the titling of his works, exemplified in Bull's Eye and The End of Galatia, was a calculated and (perhaps) capricious strategy of obfuscation, or simply indicative of a vacillation about abstraction – a sign that the pull of the real remained too strong to resist.

In any event – for whatever reason – his April 1967 exhibition at Barry Stern Galleries in Sydney was, unfortunately, the end of his interstate run. 45 Samstag's failure to secure ongoing representation outside South Australia may not entirely have come down to a negative judgment about his work. There might, for example, simply have been an insufficient number of sales to convince the galleries (hungry for revenue) to stick with him. Not many private



Gordon SAMSTAG

The End of Galatia, 1969
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
183.7 x 153.2 cm (72% x 60¼ in)
Photograph by Michael Kluvanek
University of South Australia
Art Collection

gallerists at that time were willing (or financially able) to commit to an artist long term, regardless of sales.

Perhaps, however, it was more to do with the fact that in 1967 Samstag would turn sixty-one, an age by which – from a conventional perspective, at least – he should have already made his mark. Despite his impressive-seeming biography of American prizes and exhibitions, he was an expatriate and fundamentally unknown in Australia, not exactly a migrating Robert Rauschenberg with star provenance. Most likely, he was considered just too old for the risk and ultimately too marginal for a significant commitment. For Samstag, it was a reality check. He'd have to reconcile himself to the unpalatable truth: essentially, his brand didn't have legs.

# THE CECIL B. DEMILLE OF BOWDEN

There was one further, significant exhibiting opportunity close to home, in Adelaide, that – had it only been available to him – would have enhanced Samstag's artistic profile in Australia and his career potential. However, it was an opportunity that remained out of reach.

In March 1961 – a few months before the Samstags arrived in Melbourne – an Adelaide-based businessman and entrepreneur, Kym Bonython, who had developed an interest



Gordon Samstag's painting Bull's Eye (1967) pictured in Australian Décor, published by Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1971. Photograph by David Beal National Library of Australia, Canberra Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Courtesy Wendy Walker in collecting modern art, opened a commercial gallery in Adelaide. Born to a distinguished South Australian family, Bonython (1920–2011) eventually had a remarkable career that – besides wartime service as a decorated Royal Australian Air Force pilot – encompassed radio broadcasting, jazz promotion, speedway motorbike racing, and art collecting and dealing. Tours he organised by jazz greats, such as Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie and Dave Brubeck, singled him out as an entrepreneur of vision. 46

The eponymous gallery was famously at 88 Jerningham Street, North Adelaide, just around the corner from where the new art school would soon be built. The hospitable Bonython Art Gallery became a mecca for SASA students and staff, who would regularly drop by the gallery at lunchtime to see the latest art, which included frequent presentations by leading east-coast and international artists.

Bonython was a bold and forward-looking man; his friend and occasional adviser,

Max Harris, described him as 'the Cecil B. DeMille of Bowden'. <sup>47</sup> He would later ambitiously extend his gallery business to Sydney, first by taking over the iconic Hungry Horse Gallery in 1965 and then – having found his feet – by purchasing a semi-industrial site in the gallery heartland of Sydney's Paddington and building an entirely new, museum-sized Bonython Art Gallery, which opened in November 1967. <sup>48</sup> The scale of Bonython's push into the east-coast market caught everyone by surprise; for a time he exercised tremendous national influence, and the artists he exhibited enjoyed the greatest exposure possible. They were dynamic days. <sup>49</sup>

Bonython actively supported local art practice in Adelaide, giving significant numbers of South Australian artists their first professional opportunities and kickstarting many worthwhile and even prominent careers. Some also were invited to present their work at the higher-profile Bonython Gallery in Sydney. To Gordon Samstag, however, the door remained firmly closed. Years later, in 2009, when invited by this author to talk about Gordon Samstag, Bonython firmly declined the opportunity, saying that he 'didn't wish to speak ill of the dead'. And when researcher Wendy Walker had similarly approached Bonython in 2007, he had replied that he 'hadn't warmed to him'. <sup>50</sup>

One South Australian artist to whom Bonython did warm, however, was Sydney Ball, a mature-aged graduate of the SASA with a background in architecture. At the age of thirty, in 1963, Ball had travelled to New York (by sea, for thrift) and enrolled at Samstag's old alma mater, the Art Students League, where he studied with Theodoros Stamos. Through Stamos, he met artists of the calibre of Robert Motherwell, Willem de Kooning and Lee Krasner. Ball also became close to Mark Rothko, for whom he acted as a studio assistant; Rothko even invited Ball to his home for a Thanksgiving dinner. (During a second visit to New York, Ball would be asked by Stamos to assist with cleaning up Rothko's studio after the artist's suicide, in 1970, and hanging works to be photographed.)<sup>51</sup> Inspired by the New York scene and the

art he encountered firsthand, Ball turned fully to abstraction and, crucially, to colour.

When Ball returned home to Adelaide in 1965, he was unusually experienced and justifiably confident. He had already exhibited his new Band paintings in a successful oneperson show at Manhattan's Westerly Gallery and commenced work on The Cantos, a series of circular geometric colour-field paintings immaculately produced – that would confirm his place as a leader of new abstraction in Australia.<sup>52</sup> Ball's first exhibitions on returning to Australia were met with predictable critical hostility, but after he won an important prize in Sydney (the Mirror-Waratah Invitation Art Prize), and then in 1965 took up a lecturing position at the SASA, Kym Bonython presented his Canto series at his North Adelaide gallery. The show received a favourable critical response and led to sales.<sup>53</sup>

Ball spent four years at the SASA as a lecturer in painting, his tenure influencing not only students, but also staff. Geoff Wilson, a teaching colleague of Ball's at the SASA, commented that Ball had a very forceful

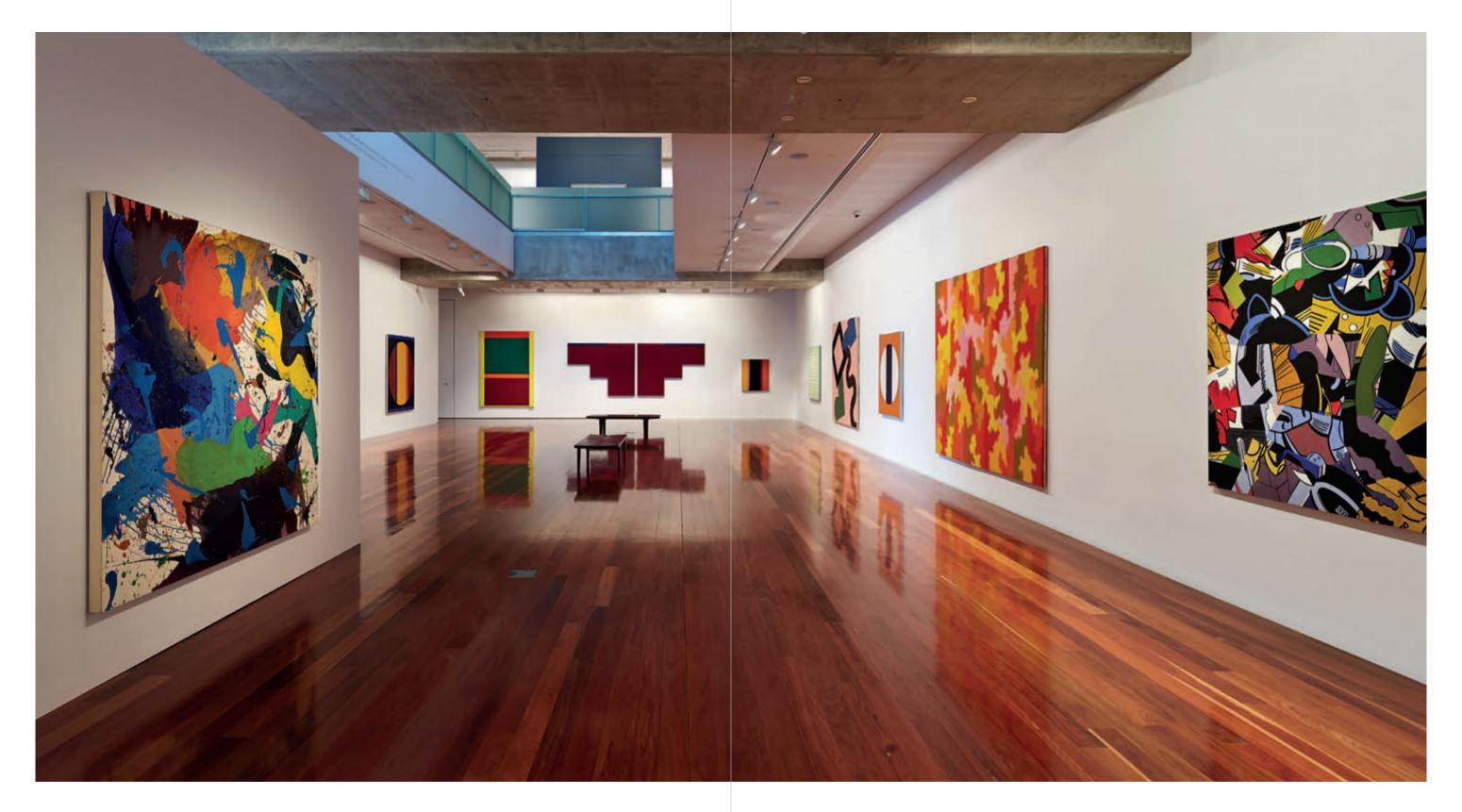
personality and that he convinced not only a number of students, but also staff, of the merits of the new, hard-edge colour-field abstraction. Despite Ball and Samstag's shared experience of New York and the Art Students League (albeit forty years apart), the two had little to do with each other. Nor, it seems, any rapport. Certainly, Samstag never revealed to Ball that he, himself, had studied and taught at the Art Students League. In fact, Ball quickly became aware of tension in their relationship, which he put down to the success he was beginning to enjoy in Australia and the exhibition opportunities that were opening for him, including at the Bonython Gallery. Soon enough, Ball was removed from the Fine Art course where he'd been teaching Methods and Materials and (of all things) portrait painting to fourth-year students, and was relegated instead to instructing the trainee teachers. There was no doubt in Ball's mind that this was as a result of Gordon's intervention. It made no difference to Ball; he enjoyed it, and made a success of it. So

Samstag did subsequently make an effort to mend fences, inviting Ball to Beaumont for a barbecue lunch; another American SASA teacher, Tom Valentine, was also invited. Ball thought Anne 'charming', and sensed that Gordon wished to impress him with a show of his culture and lifestyle. True enough, the house and surrounds, the swimming pool and garden, and the large collection of classical records, did reveal Gordon and Anne as cultured people. Unfortunately, however, the conversation over lunch was directed mostly to Tom Valentine, and Ball felt 'left out'. He remembered that Charles Reddington had once confided to him that what particularly riled him about Samstag was his suggestion (to Reddington), 'that we Americans should stick together'. <sup>56</sup>



John BRACK (1920–99)

Portrait of Kym Bonython, 1963–66
oil on canvas
92.0 x 81.6 cm (36¼ x 32½ in)
National Portrait Gallery,
Canberra
Gift of Kym Bonython AC, DFC
AFC 2007
© Helen Brack



Birth of the Cool, exhibition installation at Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, UniSA, 2015

Sydney BALL (b. 1933)

Canto XXXXI, 1966

acrylic on canvas

175.0 x 183.0 cm (68% x 72 in)

Courtesy Christie's, Sydney

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It mattered not. Ball's career continued to progress, its momentum maintained by Bonython and the growing professional awareness of his work. This led to his inclusion, in 1968, in *The Field*, a major national survey of hard-edged abstraction and colour-field painting held to celebrate the opening of Melbourne's newly built NGV. It was the first big national show to examine the new reductive tendency in Australian art.<sup>57</sup> The late John Stringer – with Brian Finemore a co-curator of the exhibition – gave credit to Ball for the inclusion of South Australian artists Tony Bishop and Nigel Lendon (along with Ball himself) in the legendary 1968 exhibition.<sup>58</sup> In time, Ball would become one of Australia's most fêted artists among those who emerged from the 1960s, his noted career illustrating the merits of escaping a limiting provincial environment to pursue experience on a wider stage.<sup>59</sup>

Kym Bonython had also ensured that Sydney Ball was among the many Australian artists whose work was acquired by the American millionaire collector Harold E. Mertz, who had engaged Bonython in 1964 as an adviser, to help him develop a major collection of Australian contemporary paintings. <sup>60</sup> When in 1966 it was complete, the collection of 153 works by some eighty artists ('all the names that mattered') was presented at the 1966 Adelaide Festival, before travelling to Washington's Corcoran Gallery of Art and several other American museums.

Mertz had invested around AU\$500,000 in his Australian collection, an enormous sum at the time.<sup>61</sup> All the artists benefitting from Mertz's patronage had good reason to thank Kym Bonython. But not Gordon Samstag. Despite Mertz's generous and eclectic sweep of purchases, Samstag's work was ignored. Had the reason been that Samstag was an American citizen, and

not actually Australian, the exclusion would have been understandable. However, it transpired that Mertz had acquired two works by another American expatriate – in fact, a regular from the Bonython stable who had only recently moved from Adelaide to Sydney. It was Samstag's old sparring partner from the SASA, Charles Reddington. <sup>62</sup> The snub must have hurt. <sup>63</sup>

#### IN DISTINGUISHED COMPANY

The cause of Bonython's animus towards Samstag will probably remain unknown; however, a simple clash of egos appears likely. Yet, despite the apparent enmity, there was a hidden link of sorts between them that revealed itself through the 1970 Adelaide Festival of Arts. It concerned Samstag's work *The End of Galatia*, and a South Australian grazier and collector of contemporary art, Elliot Aldridge.

In addition to participating in an Adelaide Festival group show that year at the CAS's Parkside gallery, Samstag had acted as organising curator for an ambitious exhibition at the SASA's Stanley Street School of Art gallery. The 'Elliot Aldridge Collection Post War Paintings' comprised almost fifty works by thirty-nine Australian artists, the majority of whom were recognised names – leaders such as Arthur Boyd, Sidney Nolan, John

There was a clear incentive for Samstag to take on the considerable task of organising the Aldridge show, as it also included *The End of Galatia*, which had apparently been purchased by Aldridge after its appearance the previous year at the Robert Bolton Gallery. The show placed him in distinguished company with some of Australia's biggest artistic names. Samstag wrote the foreword to a handsome, illustrated catalogue (see page 254; also designed by Samstag), taking care to mention Aldridge's 'discernment and instinct'. The catalogue also featured colour reproductions of works by Arthur Boyd and Sydney Ball, and a statement by Elliot Aldridge explaining his motivations as a collector. As a young pastoralist, Aldridge had fallen in love with collecting, even though he had little knowledge or guidance. After moving to 'Shurdington', a rambling house at Mount Lofty in the Adelaide Hills, his interests shifted to contemporary art, after which his purchases were made principally through the Bonython Art Gallery, in North Adelaide. 64

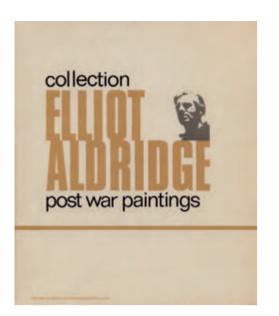
Perceval, Albert Tucker and Ian Fairweather. Several works were of a particularly high standard.

Samstag personally knew several of the Aldridge exhibition artists, including Elwyn Lynn, by then curator of the Power Gallery of Contemporary Art at the University of Sydney and one of Australia's most influential visual arts professionals. A 1968 mixed-media work by Lynn, *Riverina Drought*, from Aldridge's collection, was included in the exhibition. A few years before, Lynn had written kindly about Samstag's exhibition at the Don Pedro Art Gallery in Stirling. Certainly, they had a cordial relationship, and Lynn was commissioned to open the exhibition at the Stanley Street School of Art gallery.<sup>65</sup>

What was unknown at the time, however, was that Aldridge planned to sell his collection, which he did the following year at a Christie's auction, Australian Paintings, in Melbourne. Sydney Ball recalled that he had heard (albeit informally at the time) that Aldridge had developed such an obsession for buying art that he'd begun selling up family assets, and that the auction was needed to save the Aldridge properties. <sup>66</sup> The auction was successful: three works by Arthur Boyd fetched \$29,000, and Ball's *Canto XXXXI* (see opposite; inscribed on the reverse as 'Ahab For Mosi') sold for \$1400.67



Sydney BALL (b. 1933)
Exhibition poster for *The Field, National Gallery of Victoria*, 1968 screenprint, printed in colour inks, from multiple stencils
64.8 x 47.3 cm (25½ x 185% in)
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Gift of Darryl Collins 1988



Elliot Aldridge Collection Post War Paintings, catalogue designed by Gordon Samstag, South Australian School of Art & Adelaide Festival of Arts. 1970. An unknown collector named Henderson purchased *The End of Galatia* for \$180. It is something of a mystery, therefore, how it in due course apparently came to be owned by Kym Bonython. In fact, three years after the auction, Bonython approached Adelaide's Flinders University Art Museum, offering *Galatia* on permanent loan; it remained at Flinders for over three decades until formally gifted by Bonython in 2007. The University of South Australia acquired *The End of Galatia* from Flinders University in March 2008.<sup>68</sup>

#### TOYING WITH THE TRIVIAL

Despite the fact that Samstag lived in South Australia for several years, teaching and working professionally as an artist, his Australian art-historical record is so spare as to almost not exist. As far as can be determined, none of his works are held in any Australian public art collection other than that of the University of South Australia. He is notably absent from the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA), where works by most of his

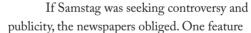
contemporaries from 1960s Adelaide were collected with frequency and relative abundance.<sup>69</sup> Nor is there evidence in the Australian secondary-market auction records of a single Samstag sale, other than that of *Galatia* at Christie's. And apart from the often-pedestrian Adelaide newspaper reviews of art exhibitions, there are no published critical commentaries on Samstag's work that can be found, including in journals. Robert Hughes, for example, makes no reference to him in his valuable 1966 history of Australian art, despite Hughes's enthusiasm for Samstag's colleague Charles Reddington, whom he described as 'one of the few painters in Australia at home in the grand manner of abstract expressionism'.<sup>70</sup>

Among all the many probable causes for this neglect was Samstag's tendency to offend influential individuals who might otherwise have provided him with opportunities. In 1967, for example, he invited the newly appointed Keeper of Paintings at the (recently renamed) AGSA, Lou Klepac, to morning tea at Beaumont, only to then badger him undiplomatically about his curatorial role, lecturing him unrealistically that 'his sole focus exclusively should be contemporary painting'. It may be that Samstag was putting himself on the front foot against Klepac, who besides working at the AGSA (1966–70), was for a time (1967–70) also art reviewer for Adelaide's daily afternoon newspaper, *The News*. All the same, Klepac and Samstag remained on good terms publicly, and often encountered each other socially. Klepac, in fact, thought Samstag 'an interesting fellow'. 72

Yet, in one of the signature moments of his professional life in Australia, Samstag used the catalogue of his last solo exhibition in the country – in March 1969, at the Robert Bolton Gallery in Adelaide – to launch a carefully planned, lampooning attack against Klepac and two other Adelaide newspaper art reviewers, *The Advertiser* critic Elizabeth Young and the *Sunday Mail*'s Ivor Francis. Professing to being 'not satisfied with the often poorly expressed and sometimes misinformed views of the three critics of South Australia's capital city', he suggested that his comments 'might serve as a precedent for other artists to express their views ... and review the reviewers in their exhibition catalogues'. It seems that Samstag harboured a resentment of critics, especially younger ones such as Klepac, but even those who over the years had afforded him many favourable reviews of his work, as had Young and Francis.

The exhibition catalogue was bizarre. It comprised a text (written by Samstag), presented as a conversation between 'hypothetical characters' who first discussed the experimental merits of

Samstag's work and its value as an investment, then proceeded to consider the (to them, dubious) qualities of the three critics. The conversationalists included one AGV ('average gallery visitor'), an SDA ('slightly defensive artist') and also, oddly, a walrus, which quoted Lewis Carroll (and then immediately exited 'down Melbourne Street', North Adelaide). In the conversation, the SDA (obviously Samstag) opines – in a harmless enough tease - that Elizabeth Young is 'safe, sometimes accurate, non-dynamic [and] uninspired', whereas Ivor Francis is 'a valuable stalwart of Adelaide art, never at a loss for adjectives [who] frequently gushes and indulges in extravagance'. Klepac, however, is treated more acerbically. The SDA describes him as 'the youngest of the three [and] still unproven' and says that he 'does not appear to possess the rare combination of literary ability and art understanding that makes the good critic'. It was calculated to wound. At the same time, Samstag took the opportunity to compare himself favourably with Picasso, as typical of the artists who 'change and experiment restlessly, not being temperamentally geared to style repetition'.73



reported the exhibition as an 'Attack on Critics', declaring that Samstag was 'certainly giving the critics a run for their money'; it also noted that the opening included folksinger Patsy Biscoe singing 'The Times They Are a-Changing'. <sup>74</sup> Klepac retaliated, his displeasure clear. In a review of the Robert Bolton exhibition, entitled 'Toying with the Trivial', he described Samstag as having 'foolishly ignored the grey hairs on his head'; instead, he'd 'chosen to be a rebel, and to lead the perennial student revolution ... sitting in the trenches of the way out'. Klepac compared Samstag unfavourably with 'good painters' who (he suggested) more appropriately stay back 'to wrestle with the more difficult problems of art, which the avant-garde always leave behind'. Clearly unconvinced by Samstag's work, Klepac described it as 'bubbling whimsy ... toying with triviality ... cynical and ironical, instead of committed and deadly serious'. <sup>75</sup>

Samstag's combativeness didn't serve him well. Sadly, it contributed to him remaining artistically unacknowledged and overlooked, a fleeting will-o'-the-wisp largely absent from historical accounts of the day. Were it not for the respected historian Bernard Smith (1916–2011), the name 'Samstag' effectively would have vanished from the record. Smith met Samstag when opening the CAS's group exhibition during the 1970 Adelaide Festival of Art, to which Samstag had contributed a work, *Tattooed Nood*. The show coincided with the Elliot Aldridge exhibition organised by Samstag. (These, in fact, would be Samstag's final exhibitions in South Australia.) In a letter to Wendy Walker almost forty years later, Smith generously recalled, 'I was impressed by [Samstag's] work and particularly his impact upon local artists.' The result, was that in the expanded 1971 edition of his influential history, *Australian Painting*, 1788–1970,

Brett WHITELEY (1939–92)
White Sacred Baboon, 1964–1965
oil, tempera and collage on canvas
on composition board
188.0 x 152.4 cm (74 x 60 in)
Courtesy Sotheby's Australia
Reproduced with permission from
Wendy Whiteley OAM

Brett Whiteley's work was one of several from the Elliot Aldridge collection, including Gordon Samstag's, which were sold at a 1971 Christie's auction in Melbourne. Kym Bonython purchased *White Sacred Baboon* and later sold it to American collectors, Mr and Mrs John D. Murchison, from Texas.



Attack on Critics, news clipping relating to Gordon Samstag's exhibition at the Robert Bolton Gallery, Adelaide, opening March 4, 1969. source unknown

Bernard Smith included reference to Samstag (in the context of 'the art scene of the 1960s'), noting his role as a teacher, and describing him as 'an able exponent of texture painting and collage'.<sup>77</sup> It was the sole, historically creditable acknowledgment of Samstag's Australian career.

Like Marco Polo chancing upon exotic Xanadu, far from home, Gordon Samstag's absorption in the lotus land of South Australian life may have seemed, to him, a pleasurable dream he was at liberty to indulge. And why not: after all, he had been to the mountain and surely could rest on his laurels? Long before moving to Beaumont in the slumberous Adelaide Hills, he'd liberated himself from the shadow of his former professional identity in America. Really, he could do whatever he liked, free and untroubled by scrutiny, scorn or consequence.

Under the cloak of suburban anonymity he'd even become closely involved with a local community arts society – just a short distance from St Georges – taking on the role of founding president for the Burnside Painting Group, an enthusiastic ensemble of suburban amateur painters. Perhaps he was channelling his pioneering mentor, Charles Hawthorne, who in 1899 had established

the Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, leading to the formation of a revered artists' colony. Gordon had spent the summer at Provincetown all those years ago as a student, before heading off to Paris in triumph, a Pulitzer prize-winner. Now he was offering *his* leadership and experience to the Burnside amateurs.

It was a worthy gesture in principle, even generous; but it had the look of misjudgment, of vanity. As a statement of personal professional priorities, it surely diminished him. It suggested he had quite abandoned the idea of himself as a vanguard artistic player with the ambition of national relevance, that art now was more pastime than vocation and such objectives no longer mattered. It appeared he had comfortably settled down among the pastures and the sheep. His assimilation into provincial Australian culture was almost complete.<sup>78</sup> Of course, it wasn't a crime. But it was, indeed, a long way from Manhattan.

#### TROUBLE AT THE CAS

On June 22, 1970, Gordon Samstag wrote to the SASA principal, Douglas Roberts, submitting his resignation from the SASA. Difficult to the end, he advised Roberts that he wished to finish up on September 4 that year, several months ahead of his sixty-fifth birthday, the preferred retirement date prescribed by the South Australian Government's standard conditions of employment.

He cited extenuating circumstances. There were apparently some 'after-effects' from a leg injury he had suffered the previous year and he argued, as well, that the needs of the school year and student assessments would by then be resolved – that it was the best date for everyone. Of greater interest was the acknowledgment of his flawed relationship with Roberts: high among his reasons for moving on was 'the desirability of new and improved liaison between the Fine Art Painting department and administration'.<sup>79</sup>

The bureaucrats, however, were not about to afford Samstag the choice of retirement date so easily, and required that he justify the 'irregular date of resignation'. So three days later

he wrote again, now claiming (somewhat surprisingly, perhaps meaning to imply unavoidable travel), 'This resignation date cannot be advanced ... because arrangements have been made for social security benefits from the US.'80 (In fact, Samstag had been all along receiving American Social Security payments, but the Social Security Administration had curtailed these in the mistaken belief that he'd become an Australian citizen. It took until the following year for the payments to be reinstated and a refund issued for the withheld amount, following representations on Samstag's behalf by the Boston law firm Hale and Dorr. 81)

In the end, it was clear that there was no good reason to oppose Samstag's wishes. And therefore in September 1970, just one year short of a decade as a senior lecturer in fine art, Samstag retired from the SASA. It was on his terms. He had concluded his resignation letter to Roberts politely, declaring 'there have been many pleasant periods in my association with the School and I have high hopes for future achievements of the Fine Art Painting students'.82

The following year, on January 28, 1971, Samstag resigned another key

Adelaide role, that of president of the South Australian CAS, a position he'd held since 1969. This resignation was surrounded by controversy. Since its founding in 1942, the CAS had served generations of South Australian artists in different ways. At times it teetered on the brink of irrelevance and extinction, but it was sustained by its value as a collegial forum for its members and as the organising vehicle for occasional member exhibitions. When, in April 1964, the CAS purchased an \$8000 building in suburban Parkside for use principally as a gallery, the organisation's character and politic changed. There were suddenly new possibilities empowering the CAS leadership, not least to correct what some saw as the neglect of local art practice by many galleries in Adelaide. A number of art teachers from the SASA, especially, became more closely involved, recognising an opportunity to influence exhibitions programming for the CAS gallery. A significant further change was the increasing participation of recent SASA graduates and students in the exhibitions. Franz Kempf guided much of the SASA involvement, serving four consecutive terms as CAS president from 1965.

Samstag, who had been a member of the CAS Council since 1965 and a strong advocate for student involvement, succeeded Kempf as president in 1969. It started well, and was for a time dynamic, Samstag even attracting interest and praise from Adelaide's ambivalent art media. Interviewed by *The Advertiser* critic John Miles in an extensive article soon after his election, the 'enthusiastic' Samstag described the CAS, in a rather mock-militant way, as 'redecorated, restaffed, and resolved to revive its old battles against new opponents'. He went on (with a 'gay smile') to declare:



Pablo PICASSO (1881–1973)
Seated Bather, 1930
oil on canvas
163.2 x 129.5 cm (64¼ x 51 in)
Mrs Simon Guggenheim Fund
82.1950
© 2016 The Museum of Modern
Art, New York/Scala, Florence
© Photograph SCALA, Florence

The battle is on to break down prejudice against the novel, simply because it is so new that nothing is available to measure it. This society stands for freedom and the avant-garde position [and] for the tolerance of the right of each artist to exhibit freely and to think freely.<sup>84</sup>

The senior art critic of *The Advertiser*, Elizabeth Young, had over the years given Samstag many considerate reviews; now, only six months after Gordon's unflattering description of her in his Robert Bolton exhibition catalogue, she lauded him again with surprising generosity, as 'the new president, whose drive and initiative are chiefly responsible for the recent revitalization of the CAS – the sprucing up and maintaining of the gallery, increased exhibitions and functions, [and] publication of a lively little house periodical'.<sup>85</sup>

Samstag had got to work quickly. At the beginning of that year, Ron Hawke (1933–2001) – who had only just arrived in Adelaide to teach at the SASA, and who'd been invited by Samstag to exhibit at the CAS – had found the Parkside site 'a run down cottage; the guttering was rusty, the fence was falling down and the grass needed cutting'. He recalled, however, that even then, at the very start of his tenure as president, 'Samstag thought they should sell the premises and use the money to put on a big whiz-bang exhibition.' 86

But soon the involvement of Samstag's colleagues in the CAS Council evaporated. The cause was his determination to have his way. According to Elsie Peacock – then secretary-treasurer of the CAS – the council by late in 1970 comprised only Samstag and herself: 'the rest had left'.87 Interviewed by Betty Snowden in 1993, Peacock recalled, 'Samstag was a very difficult person to work with and during his years as Member and President of Council [he] gradually alienated the whole Council. Every single Member [except me] left in protest at Samstag's dictatorial manner and inability to communicate.'88

Peacock confirmed that Samstag had many grand ideas for the CAS, but that there was no money to fund them. 'He was continually frustrated by this,' she said, 'and eventually had a contract drawn up to sell the building. With the money from the sale, he planned to take a huge exhibition of Australian works overseas.' With Peacock's signature on the documents the building would have been lost. However, she resisted his cajoling, and his plans to sell were thwarted. <sup>89</sup> 'I carried a letter for several weeks from the lecturers of the art school, asking for the resignation of the President,' she wrote. 'He did everything he could to get my consent to sell [the CAS premises]. I had the letter in my purse but was too chicken to ask him to resign. Eventually he heard that we had the letter and did resign.' <sup>90</sup>

But there was more to Samstag's purpose, which Peacock generously acknowledged. She said that Samstag was 'an innovator who took a genuine interest in young people', and that he 'really did have the welfare of the young artists at heart; he encouraged their efforts, and helped them to stand on their own feet'.<sup>91</sup>

For the local artists who were CAS stakeholders, Samstag's radical proposal may have been a potentially catastrophic idea, but it had the merit of precipitating a constructive response. The 'personable and generous' Geoff Brown and his wife, Jenny, as president and secretary respectively, filled the void created by Samstag's departure. Both long-time, respected stalwarts of the Adelaide artistic community and committed CAS supporters, the Browns provided leadership that helped guide the CAS into a successful new phase of its life. 92

Despite the furore it caused, Gordon Samstag's assault on the CAS may not have been so reckless or ill-conceived as it seemed. In fact, the talk about selling the CAS's 'goldmine' property in Parkside – and using the funds for different purposes – was not limited to Samstag and persisted long after he had left the scene. In 1986, for example, Ivor Francis – one of the original 'rebels' behind the organisation's creation in 1942 – wrote critically of what he saw

as the changed culture of the CAS, which he felt had 'become an institution – a mausoleum to house a memory' and 'ceased to be an exciting, young adventure', as it once had been. He believed that if suggestions freshly circulating at the time to sell the CAS eventuated, then he 'would like to see its assets transferred to the AGSA in the form of a bequest for the acquisition of original, creative, contemporary works of art'. 93

While Gordon may have been thwarted, it's unlikely he was hurt; he'd given it his best shot. And behind his daring scheme to sell off a treasured Adelaide cultural asset to fund a grand exhibition, lay an embryonic idea that would before long evolve as a tangible element in his eventual benefaction. Indeed, he could wait; he had a plan and, crucially, Anne was in agreement. Unknown to all but a few, the Samstags had been making preparations for another step in their great Australian adventure. They were selling up in Adelaide and would soon be moving north. A very long way north.

# THE NAOMI L. DAVIS TRUST

Towards the end of 1971, Anne Samstag began discussions with her surviving three sisters, Patt, Frances and Priscilla, regarding the imminent termination of their longstanding family trust. Established many years before by their grandfather Henry Corbit Davis (1839–1901), the Naomi L. Davis Trust – named after Henry Corbit's second wife Naomi Lawton, their father Charles's stepmother – had been maintained by Charles after his father's death, as the repository for the family wealth. The trust's largest asset comprised the extremely valuable shareholding in the Kentenia Mining Corporation (see pages 195–7).

When Charles died in 1951, he left a will that named his third wife, Alice (Bancroft) Davis, as principal beneficiary; among other assets she received Charles's 'elegant' Manhattan house at 117 East Thirty-first Street, off Park Avenue. His June 28, 1946 will, expressed 'full confidence in my wife, Alice Bancroft Davis, knowing that the welfare of my children ... can be safely entrusted to her'. <sup>94</sup> While that non-binding clause placed no formal obligation on Alice, it was practical and adequate because Charles's daughters had already been made principal beneficiaries of the family's ongoing N.L. Davis Trust. Interestingly, Charles had sufficient confidence in Alice (who was his second cousin) to also appoint her trustee of the N.L. Davis Trust on his death. He

further nominated that, should Alice pre-decease him, 'then I bequeath all the property which I may receive from the estate of my said wife, Alice ... to my wife's brother, Wilfred Bancroft, and to his heirs'. 95 Alice, in turn, appointed Remsen M. Kinne III and Richard Dorr at Hale and Dorr to become trustees of the N.L. Davis Trust on her death, which occurred around 1969. When Dorr died in February 1971, he was replaced by John H. Morton; however, Remsen ('Rem') Kinne would play the principal role in liaising with the Davis sisters.

The N.L. Davis Trust served Anne and her sisters well over many years, providing significant financial security, although the annual dividends from income fluctuated depending on the price of coal, and were often modest. However, under its terms, the trust was deemed to terminate on the twenty-first anniversary of Charles Henry Davis's death: June 3, 1972. By then, Anne would be almost sixty-four. Remsen Kinne therefore advised Anne and her sisters to establish their own, independent family trusts, 'containing your individual entitlements to the property of the Davis Trust'. The complex legal instruments required to achieve this were facilitated by Jacob F. Gottesman, Esq., a New York City, Madison Avenue law firm.



Portrait of Charles Henry Davis (1865–1951) photographer unknown date unknown Courtesy Historical Society of Old Yarmouth, Massachusetts, USA

Anne's arrangements were different from those of her sisters, as she wished for her new trust to be shared jointly and equally with Gordon. By March 1972, Anne had engaged an Adelaide law firm, Treloar & Treloar, Barristers and Solicitors, to act for her, liaising between Gottesman, and Hale and Dorr.

Significantly, Anne's new trust – the 'Anne and Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust' – to be administered by Hale and Dorr as trustees, would make provision, following Anne's and Gordon's deaths, for a sizeable proportion of the final assets to be disbursed to the National Academy of Design, in New York – should it agree – for the Academy to undertake 'an international art prize exhibition', which would include a prize to be known as the 'Anne and Gordon Samstag Prize' (see page 276).

The formal document establishing Anne Samstag's new trust was signed by her and witnessed in Cairns, Queensland, on May 11, 1972. In June 1972, the N.L. Davis Trust was dissolved, and its assets disbursed to the new, separate and independent trusts of the four Davis sisters. The N.L. Davis Trust had held 65,900 shares of the total 72,600 outstanding shares in the Kentenia Mining Corporation. 98

#### TRAVELLING NORTH

On his slow journey of exploration up the eastern coastline of Terra Australis in June 1770, Lieutenant James Cook's ship, the *Endeavour*, hit a reef and seriously damaged its hull a few hundred kilometres north of what is now the city of Cairns. Sailing on his wits, Cook found a nearby river inlet and beached the ship to undertake repairs on the shore, which took seven weeks. It was no small task 13,000 nautical miles (24,000 kilometres) from home, with no hope of rescue. <sup>99</sup> The practical Cook and his adventurous botanist colleague, Joseph Banks, met several Aboriginal men – Guugu Yimithirr people – who introduced them to their word 'gangurru'. They took the skin of a kangaroo with them back to London, where the artist George Stubbs imagined an improbable animal and made a famous painting.

In April 1972, Anne and Gordon Samstag began their own long journey to the remote, far northeastern corner of Australia, when they departed Adelaide permanently for Queensland. It was early autumn in Australia. Their destination was Cairns, a small coastal city at the beginning of Cape York Peninsula in the tropical far north of Queensland and the heart of the Great Barrier Reef. The Samstags were travelling by road in their Statesman car, towing a small caravan. <sup>100</sup> It was rather a long way from Adelaide. <sup>101</sup> In a letter to her trustee in Boston that year in January, advising him of their plans, Anne had anticipated the overland journey of some 3000 kilometres (1860 miles) would take four to six weeks. <sup>102</sup> The Samstags, in fact, had been in Cairns only the month before, in December 1971, reconnoitring, registering a post-office box, and securing a temporary residence as an advance base for the move. <sup>103</sup> It's likely that on that occasion they had travelled by air.

Cairns is in crocodile country. Sitting south of historic Cooktown and the Daintree Rainforest, really more town than city, it had begun as a late nineteenth–century goldfields port but had lapsed into decline when the gold ran out and the miners moved on. During World War II it had been strategically important as a base for marshalling troops and supplies; American servicemen were then thick on the ground. Now, in 1972, it was a burgeoning, but still-fledgling tourist destination, attractive to adventure-seekers, entrepreneurs and tropics-mad southerners. Surrounded by ocean-fronted mangroves, its port lively with deep-sea fishing boats (for the celebrity fishermen attracted to hunting giant marlin off the coast), <sup>104</sup> Cairns offered an atmosphere of pleasurable somnolence and a vista of pioneering, colonial-style buildings and



George STUBBS (1724–1806)

The Kongouro from New Holland
(Kangaroo), 1772
oil on panel
60.5 x 71.5 cm (23% x 281/8 in)
© National Maritime Museum,
Greenwich, London

wide streets. Its climate was humid and enervating in summer, and the most comfortable times of year were the southern winter and spring.

It can be reasonably assumed that, with ample time on their hands during the peculiarly generous summer holidays enjoyed by Australian art-school academics, the Samstags had already explored Australia's remote north more than a few times, and it was easily done by air. A painting by Samstag, *Proserpine* – presented in his April 1965 show at Melbourne's Leveson Street Gallery<sup>105</sup> – surely referenced the ancient Roman goddess. But it was also the name of a small coastal town in North Queensland.<sup>106</sup> Proserpine's airport provides the key entry point to a cluster of beautiful Great Barrier Reef islands around the Whitsunday Passage. If Anne and Gordon *had* gone to Proserpine in around 1964–65, then it seems likely they would at some point also have gone to Cairns, 600 kilometres (370 miles) further north. Now, the seductive indolence, the boats and the delicious heat – the magical calm of it all – were drawing them back. In hindsight, it seems obvious that the spirited, ocean-loving Samstags, would be lured to Australia's coastal, tropical north, with its pristine coral atolls and sparkling, clear-water reefs. Located 17 degrees south of the equator, Cairns is roughly equivalent in latitude to the Northern Hemisphere's Caribbean Sea, where Anne and Gordon reportedly had spent time sailing in the 1950s, before coming to Australia.

It did not take long for Anne and Gordon to purchase a choice plot of land in Cairns. As they had done in Adelaide, they chose well. The substantial block at 10 Woodlands Avenue, Edge Hill, was in an elevated position with views. Like Beaumont, it was in a cul-de-sac butting up against a conservation park (in this case Mount Whitfield), and just a stone's throw from the exceptional 'tropical paradise' of the Cairns Botanic Gardens. By April 1974, exactly two years after they had arrived, the Samstags had built a large house and moved in.



Anne and Gordon teaching an art class at 10 Woodlands Avenue. Edge Hill, Cairns, c. 1975. Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Photograph gift of Sylvia Ditchburn

It had all cost around AU\$70,000, a considerable sum at the time, although not overly extravagant. <sup>107</sup> It appeared they intended to stay.

Earlier, in September 1973, Anne had written to her friend Angus Cameron, the Samstags' old editor at Alfred A. Knopf Inc., in New York City. During all this time in Australia, Anne had maintained a cordial business correspondence with Cameron, proposing new concepts for dog-related books to Knopf, albeit unsuccessfully. Anne suggested to Cameron, an ardent fisherman, that he 'had better come to Cairns, so we can see you!'. She also took the opportunity to propose that she might 'cut back' a previous manuscript submitted unsuccessfully to Knopf (for another book on training dogs), and instead sell it as a magazine article. She told him that Queensland had 'a beautiful climate, and open spaces'. De Cameron wrote back, noting that the Samstags' 1961 book was still in print and that although 'it doesn't sell a lot each year ... it has the vitality to stay in print and that is something'. He also wrote, 'I gathered that

you and Gordon have enjoyed Australia and have made that immigration stick. Sometimes in the light of life and times here, I wonder if I shouldn't immigrate [sic] to a simpler and more open world. Please give Gordon my best regards, and the best to you.' 110

Anne also had written to Florence (Robbie) McBryde, her best friend in Adelaide, telling her the sad news that their beloved (egg-loving) pug, Donna, had died, and that 'God is giving her hard-boiled eggs.' <sup>111</sup>

# THE MAN WITH THE MAGIC PAINTBRUSH

Sylvia Ditchburn met Gordon Samstag in 1974 when she participated in an art workshop he gave in Innisfail, about a one-hour drive south of Cairns. A number of the Innisfail participants subsequently persuaded him to give art classes and Ditchburn became one of his students. The classes were held at the Samstags' residence in Edge Hill. Ditchburn recalled later, 'It was a beautiful home with a tremendous view and large swimming pool. The house was open-plan, a very austere, minimalist design with contemporary furnishings. It had large windows but no drapes or blinds; the space where we worked was very large and open.' 112 She also remembered that 'green frogs came in the house'.

Formerly a music student, Ditchburn had taken painting classes in 1973 with Queensland's so-called Flying Art School, under Mervyn Moriarty, Roy Churcher and Bela Ivanyi. She later said of Samstag: 'We were a bit scared of him. He had an aura of vast knowledge. He was a quiet man – not bubbly. A dry sense of humour, reserved. Such a different person, [you] didn't know how to take him ... [He had] a *sly* sense of humour!' Ditchburn also recalled that 'Anne would ring a bell when tea was made.' 113

Samstag's art classes were professional and encompassed art theory and practice, the Greek myths, and history. Ditchburn attended two sessions between February and November in 1975, each of twelve weeks. Samstag's energy and commitment for the process were impressive, and his preparations for the study program meticulous: written instructions to the students were precise and detailed. He was also innovative; for example, he commissioned a local Cairns potter, Ray Harrison, to make pots for the class in a Grecian style. They were elegant.

'We were to paint our interpretation of the Greek myths on the side of the pot,' Ditchburn recalled. 114 He charged his students for the materials, including four dollars each for the pot. Following the first session, Samstag advised Ditchburn formally, in writing, that she had achieved the top score and (as a reward) gave her the choice either of a testimonial letter or 'the magic paintbrush'. 115 She chose the magic paintbrush!

Ditchburn also recalled that Samstag 'loved Claude Debussy's music and requested that the "Golliwog's Cakewalk" be played at a presentation he gave to the Cairns Art Society members about his work'. She credited Samstag with inspiring her to go further and pursue formal studies, leading eventually to doctoral qualifications in art from James Cook University, Townsville. 'We were all amateurs,' she said, 'but Gordon introduced us to art history, art movements and the major artists involved.' 116

Later, in 1977, before Gordon left Cairns to return to America, he would host a farewell party at his house in Edge Hill, at which he would give all his students and friends a gift. Gordon gave Sylvia his Grumbacher pastels, 'a three-layer set in a wooden box; not a small box either'. They were ones that Gordon himself had used. 'I felt extremely honoured to receive

them and I still have them,' she wrote.  $^{\circ}$ I know he also gave a couple of his paintings away to friends, including to Bela Ivanyi. $^{\circ}$ 117

An experienced painter and teacher, Bela Ivanyi became Samstag's best friend in Cairns. 118 Thirty-six-year-old Bela and his wife, Margaret, had moved to Cairns from Sydney in November 1972, and built a house at Clifton Beach, a twenty-minute drive north of Cairns, where they 'planned to drop out'. The enterprising Ivanyi had quickly begun offering art lessons, although when Gordon also started giving classes, Ivanyi recalled later, 'he charged three times my fees!' Ivanyi described himself and the much older Samstag – his senior by thirty years – as 'the only contemporary artists in Cairns'. 119 That claim perhaps failed to acknowledge the nationally revered artist Ian Fairweather (1891–1974), a famously much-travelled and monkish recluse who had in past years spent considerable time in North Queensland, including Cairns, and had lived on Queensland's Bribie Island since 1965. 120 Ray Crooke (1922–2015) was another important artist, long a resident in the area, and at that time well recognised nationally for his distinctive 'Gauguin-like portrayals of tropical island life'. 121 Crooke, who'd exhibited with Kym Bonython in Adelaide, won the Archibald Prize in 1969 for his painting of the writer George Johnston.

On learning that Ivanyi had only recently exhibited professionally in Sydney, Samstag asked him if he would approach a leading gallerist there on his behalf – Gisela Scheinberg from Holdsworth Galleries in Woollahra – to propose an exhibition. Although Scheinberg agreed, nothing came of it. 122 'Gordon was very conservative about politics, but nothing else', Ivanyi claimed. 'But he was concerned about his money'. Gordon had met Gough Whitlam (the leftist Australian prime minister) when Whitlam was campaigning for re-election in 1974, and wondered, should Labor be re-elected, if 'they might confiscate a foreigner's money'. 123 The controversial but progressive Whitlam had in 1973 famously approved the National Gallery of Australia's purchase of Jackson Pollock's 1952 painting *Blue Poles* for the (then) unheard of



Ray CROOKE (1922–2015)

Vanua Levu, Waterfall at Namale

Plantation, 1991

oil on canvas

151.0 x 119.0 cm (59½ x 46% in)

Collection Philip Bacon

Galleries, Brisbane

Reproduced by permission of the

Estate of Ray Crooke

Ian FAIRWEATHER
(1891–1974)
Monastery, 1961
synthetic polymer paint and
gouache on cardboard mounted
on composition board
144.5 x 185.5 cm (56% x 73 in)
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Purchased 1976
© Ian Fairweather/DACS.
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sum of AU\$1.3 million. $^{124}$  It was a brave call in conservative Australia, and unleashed a ferocious media storm. Nevertheless, the Whitlam government was re-elected, and Pollock's *Blue Poles* became a treasured symbol of Australian cultural sophistication.

Bela Ivanyi considered Samstag 'a very inventive chap, art-wise, able to rejuvenate. He had a fresh mind and a wry sense of humour.'They exchanged works, Ivanyi receiving a sculptured block with interlocking inside and outside spaces. Gordon had told Ivanyi that they (the Samstags) 'would go back to the United States if the Ivanyis ever left Cairns'. Bela and Margaret did end up leaving Cairns, and in advance of the Samstags.

Some time after settling into Edge Hill, the Samstags had written to their old friends and next-door neighbours from Beaumont, Adelaide, Jock and Dora (Dulcie) Wilson, inviting them to visit. The Wilsons did, in fact, drive the enormous distance to Cairns, but only stayed one day. 'We did have a very nice day with them, but it was to be the last time I saw them,' wrote Dulcie in 1999 (by which time she was ninety years of age). <sup>126</sup> Anne had once told Dulcie, while the Samstags were still living in Adelaide, that 'when I leave this house you will know it was the ants that drove us out'. Many years later in a letter to the author, Wilson confirmed that, indeed, 'there were a lot of ants there'. She also wrote that when the Samstags eventually left Queensland to return to America, Anne had said to Dulcie, 'this time, it was the frogs!'. <sup>127</sup>

Early in 1977, five years after moving to Cairns, the Samstags decided to leave Australia and return permanently to the United States. It was rumoured that Anne was unwell. <sup>128</sup> In February, Anne wrote to Remsen M. Kinne III, advising him of their plans for a preliminary trip to prepare for the move. The Samstags would fly from Sydney to London on May 1, spending three weeks in London (at the Hotel Vanderbilt in South Kensington) before flying on to New York City. They intended returning to Australia via Los Angeles sometime in July.



They would try and get to Boston, she said.  $^{129}$  Kinne wrote back, encouraging the Samstags to get to Boston. It would be good to meet and talk, he wrote.  $^{130}$ 

In September 1977, after returning to Australia, Anne advised Kinne that they had sold their house in Cairns and that the settlement was to be made on October 18. They intended to then head off 'as soon as we are able to get away', first to Hawaii then San Diego for a few weeks, and thence to Florida. She asked Kinne 'to open a savings account for us (jointly G. & A. Samstag) in a good bank in San Diego, with as high an interest as you can get. However it must not be tied up in case we need to withdraw some.' She reminded Kinne that 'When referring to our Trust it should be called by its proper name: The Anne and Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust.' <sup>131</sup>

In fact, following the settlement of their house in Edge Hill, the Samstags left Cairns for the United States almost immediately. Sylvia Ditchburn recalled that at their farewell party Gordon told her 'that he'd had a big bonfire of his work'. Clearly he didn't want to take any of it with him, back to America. 132 It seemed that he was firmly closing the account, artistically, on his time in Australia.

The Samstags left Australia on October 19, 1977.<sup>133</sup> They had been 'down-under' for over sixteen years. There was still time for more. Gordon, after all, was only seventy-one; Anne would soon turn sixty-nine. And although the Samstags' antipodean adventure was finished, their relationship with Australia wasn't over.

#### TWILIGHT IN NAPLES

When the Samstags' best friends in Adelaide, Robbie and Lucas McBryde, visited them in Queensland, Anne had expressed relief that 'Cairns was the first place [I've found], where I don't have to wear a cardigan!' The experience of a climate that was enjoyably hot all year round no doubt influenced their plans on returning to the United States.

By 1978, the Samstags were living in Naples, southwest Florida. Just before that they had been renting in Fort Lauderdale, and had lost a boat in a hurricane. A tranquil and unhurried small city with an airport, Naples was way down on the Gulf Coast, about a three-hour drive from Tampa, and a similar distance across Everglades Parkway (Route 75) from Miami.

Jackson POLLOCK (1912–1956)

Blue Poles, 1952
oil, enamel, aluminium paint,
glass on canvas
212.1 x 488.9 cm (83½ x 192½ in)
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Purchased 1973
© Pollock-Krasner Foundation/
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Gordon Samstag and Howard Wilcox out sailing in a Naples canal, Florida, c. 1979. Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Photograph gift of Jean Wilcox

It was closer to Havana than to New Orleans; presumably, after all these years since migrating to Australia, the Samstags were no longer worried about nuclear war.

The Samstags purchased an attractive bungalow at 2058 Snook Drive, Royal Harbor, a prestigious section of Naples comprising residential developments set upon a dense network of fabricated canals. Snook Drive sat directly on one of these waterways that fed into enclosed and sheltered Naples Bay, from which you could (if you wished) sail out into the Gulf of Mexico. Gordon bought a small sailboat and he became fond of sailing down the canal and across the bay to the Yacht Club for lunch with Anne. The invitation to travel to lunch in this manner was one he also enjoyed extending to visiting friends, although on those occasions, Anne would travel to the club separately. When Jean and Howard Wilcox old friends of the Samstags from Adelaide - visited them in Naples soon after they'd settled, Howard was quickly whisked off for a sail. 'Their home was very nice, but not exceptional, Jean Wilcox later recalled in conversation with the author. It had an extra room and ensuite for visitors, but was nothing special.' However, despite having invited them to visit, Anne then encouraged the Wilcoxes to stay at a motel, saying they would be more comfortable. 'We went to lunch at a marina overlooking the boats,' recalled Jean.

The Samstags had never talked about their backgrounds with Howard and Jean, who had 'not for

a moment ever thought (they) were wealthy'. Indeed, 'they never put on any style,' Jean declared. 'Anne was nicely dressed,' she said, 'but not flamboyant like a lot of American women'. And 'if he had any money you'd have thought Gordon would have had a better boat,' a bemused Mrs Wilcox observed. 'It was only a tiddly boat.' 136

Had Gordon on any day felt sufficiently adventurous to sail his tiddly boat a few kilometres south on Naples Bay and out into the Gulf (through 'Gordon Pass'), he would have encountered a 16-kilometre (10-mile) coastal beachfront of pristine white sand. It was a pleasure ground for water lovers, especially in winter. There was a historic pier jutting some distance out from the Naples municipal beach, popular with fishermen and tourists. Abundant golf courses, quality designer shopping and a variety of civic amenities added to Naples' appeal as a place to live in comfortable – even sociable – retirement.

Not in the least similar to Miami and far smaller than Cairns, Naples was largely a residential and holiday enclave for the rich and, in some cases, the unusually rich – it boasted the second highest proportion of millionaires per capita in the United States. <sup>137</sup> Accordingly, a number of specialist banks vied to provide the best financial management services to the large cohort of wealthy clients. Law firms that were at call, expeditiously facilitating the particular needs of the demanding Naples demographic, provided a reassuring presence. In these respects, Naples was different. The Samstags – with growing self-confidence in their acumen as realtors – had as usual chosen their new habitat well. And now they were about to become rich.

# REMSEN M. KINNE III

In 1979, the Kentenia Mining Corporation sold its assets to the Pocahontas Development Corporation, a subsidiary of the Norfolk & Western Railroad (now Norfolk-Southern Corporation) for twenty million dollars, filed its last annual report – only one page long – and on August 25, 1980, voluntarily dissolved. When the proceeds of the Kentenia sale were ready to be disbursed early in 1980, it was calculated that each of the four Davis sisters would receive almost \$4.5 million. However, they would have to pay tax, at 28 per cent. 138

Since the beginning of 1970, the trustee for the Davis sisters' respective trusts, Remsen M. Kinne III, had also been the President of Kentenia Corporation. Anne and Gordon had

long maintained cordial relations with Kinne, who would from time to time visit his mother on Sanibel Island, off the Gulf Coast near Fort Myers. Afterwards, 'Rem' would go down to Naples to see the Samstags, meeting them at Snook Drive; he and Gordon would then sail down the canal to the sailing club, where Anne would join them for lunch. On one occasion however, they were becalmed windless in the canal, and in advance of his next visit Kinne wrote with dry humour, 'It will be nice to have the assurance that a boat ride will



successfully reach its objective, but I had not had any doubt about that previously.  $^{139}$  Gordon subsequently added a motor. After his next visit, Kinne wrote back saying,  $^{\circ}$ I greatly enjoyed the return trip by water, and the lunch was, as always, very pleasant  $^{\circ}$ .  $^{140}$ 

The gentlemanly Kinne was conscientious, attentive and ethical; his management of the Davis sisters' affairs was exemplary. He had maintained similarly good relations with Anne's sisters, travelling as well to the West Coast, for example, to see Patt and Priscilla (Prill). His conduct of these relationships was as much pastoral as professional, and Kinne showed a genuine and sometimes sympathetic concern for all the Davis sisters and their families. In the case of Priscilla, who had poor health, he'd make sure also to liaise with her son, Charles D. Matteson. He would often urge Anne and Gordon to come to Boston, if they could, so as to have lunch with him and Anne's sister, Frances.

In March 1980, the Samstags wrote to Kinne at Hale and Dorr, requesting that the bulk of Anne's share of the Kentenia sale be forwarded to their joint savings account, at that time in Barnett Bank, Naples. They wished to reinvest most of it themselves, independently of their Anne and Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust. However, they also wished to retain a sufficient residue of capital in the trust to maintain a stream of income for living purposes. At that time the distribution to Anne was set at US\$1600 per month. If necessary, Gordon suggested, the Samstags would return some funds to the trust to facilitate this. 141

Anne and Gordon Samstag's home in Naples, Florida, c. 1979. Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Photograph gift of Jean Wilcox

The net result was that \$3,050,000 was transmitted to the Samstags' account at Barnett Bank, Naples, and \$1,542,352 – an amount that included their as yet unpaid tax obligation – was retained in the Samstag trust at Hale and Dorr. The tax calculations would prove complex, but Hale and Dorr, and Kinne, were specialists.

In the following years, it became clear that Gordon was now the principal point of liaison on most matters concerning the Anne and Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust, and especially on those relating to tax and investments; it was also apparent that the Samstags were beginning to challenge and somewhat drift away from the Hale and Dorr relationship. But although Gordon's interrogation of the trust's finances was at times intense and demanding, Kinne's disciplined patience and courtesy remained exemplary. In October 1983, Kinne travelled to Solvang, California, to attend the funeral of Anne's sister, Patt. He later wrote to Anne, advising that Patt's gravesite 'in a rural location, is most attractive and appropriate'. The site, he explained, 'was of course planned by Patt and her husband as their final resting place and I was deeply moved while I was there'. He enclosed a photograph that he'd commissioned of Patt's gravesite, which he thought Anne would like to have. <sup>143</sup>

#### RETURN TO MAMARONECK

During their five years in Queensland, Anne and Gordon had learned something about living with tropical heat and humidity. Naples, further away from the equator than Cairns and more temperate, was still hot enough in summer to cause discomfort. So the Samstags began spending time up in their old haunt of Mamaroneck, in New York State (see page 142), during the summer months. 144 In 1984, for example, they rented an unusual, Art Deco–style residence at 1025 The Parkway, in Mamaroneck's Shore Acres community estate. That year, Gordon used the Parkway address on a promotional flyer he'd made advertising himself as an artist, in an attempt to solicit interest in his work from local galleries. It declared:

This artist, with years behind him of painting exhibitions both in America and Australia, is a native New Yorker who learned in Paris his technique of beauty ... imaginative, and at times erotic. He would love to exhibit 15 to 20 contemporary pictures during the winter of '84'. What are your terms? Prices range from \$500 to \$2,000. 145

A persistent man, he was not giving up.

Around the same time that Anne and Gordon moved to Naples, their old friends Howard P. Barker and his wife, Caroline, purchased a condominium in Sarasota, about 160 kilometres (100 miles) north of Naples on the Gulf Coast. The Barkers also had a place in the North Carolina Mountains, to which they retreated in summer. <sup>146</sup> In fact, it was a common practice for people who lived in southern Florida, and could afford it, to maintain a residence further north as an alternative summer residence.

Howard was one of Gordon's oldest friends; he'd known him since 1948 when Barker enrolled in Gordon's summer landscape painting class at the Art Students League. Howard and Caroline had subsequently reconnected with Gordon, and met Anne, when the Barkers moved to Mamaroneck in 1956. They'd played bridge together and shared a close social life. Over the years the Barkers had kept in touch and they were pleased that the Samstags had returned from Australia. In fact, Howard claimed he had provided Gordon with the real estate contacts that helped them find their place in Naples. Now they could see a bit of each other from time to time, although the distance was challenging. Nevertheless, there were dinners,

reciprocal visits, and lunches at their respective clubs in Sarasota and Naples. There was an important art museum in Sarasota – the Ringling Museum of Art – which gave the Samstags additional reasons to visit. The Barkers also caught up with Anne and Gordon in New Rochelle, just down from Mamaroneck, when they were looking for a place to buy. 147

In September 1985, the Samstags purchased a home in Mamaroneck, at 585 Lawn Terrace. Built in 1960, it was a sizeable place (of four bedrooms and three bathrooms) located directly on a waterfront inlet off East Basin, with its own pier for mooring a boat. The inlet was just across from their previously rented holiday digs at Shore Acres. 'We finally bought our house in Mamaroneck,' Anne wrote to Rem Kinne, in a scribbled handwritten note from the Sheraton Plaza Inn, in New Rochelle. 'It's very nice. We still would like all mail to Naples.' 148

The Lawn Terrace house was much closer to Mamaroneck Harbor and the boats than their old 1950s place on Fenimore Road. Writing in 1993, Howard Barker recalled: 'It was a lovely home, and had been redone before they purchased it'. He remembered 'a house sitting back from the Boston Post Road. Anne and Gordon had made some changes and put in a lovely, large fieldstone patio that could easily handle 100 guests.' It was also close to the famous Mamaroneck Beach and Yacht Club, designed in 1885 by Stanford White, where the Samstags were members and hosted the Barkers to lunch. Howard wrote:

We played bridge, and were interested in hearing Gordon and Anne talk about playing duplicate bridge in Naples and how strict and serious it could be ... I remember Gordon liked to serve sherry, and both Caroline and I were fond of it. They also enjoyed having one Manhattan before the favorite roast beef sandwich for lunch. Gordon was taking drops for his glaucoma.<sup>149</sup>

Yet, despite the nostalgic pleasure of revisiting old tracks around Mamaroneck during summer, Naples remained the heart of the Samstags' world.

Gordon was fortunate to have an activity (his art) that occupied and sustained him, and he continued to experiment and paint, both in Naples and Mamaroneck. However, his drift into artistic anarchy – so pronounced in Australia – became routine, his method and choice of subjects skittish and arbitrary. All the same, it gave him reason to potter idly in his studio. Depending on his mood, he produced a capricious flow of abstract collages, painted self-portraits and half-finished studies of friends and Anne. Occasionally he was moved to contrive an autobiographical joke; for example, one work portrayed him and Anne playing cards with friends, all of them nude. Another – more a titillating sketch than a painting – showed Samstag sheltering in the rafters of a house under construction, vigorously pursued by several naked women. He sent photos back to Bela Ivanyi in Australia, who thought that some of it was 'voyeuristic' and that Gordon had gone back to 'human interest, with a satirical touch of Daumier'. 150

In January 1985, Robbie McBryde and other friends in Australia received an invitation from Gordon to an exhibition of his work at Valand Art Gallery in Naples. The exhibition was to open Sunday, January 13, 1985. <sup>151</sup> A *Gallery News* blurb promoting his show described Samstag as a 'Peripatetic Neapolitan', resident in Naples for six years, whose 'collection at the Valand Art Gallery consists chiefly of abstract collages and acrylic paintings' and that Samstag 'enjoys the innovative in art and constantly tries to express the trends of the times. His paintings are often satirical ... depicting ugly people in intimate poses, yet always in a kind and virtuous way'. It went on to say that 'the use of expressive color in his works ... gives further strength to his free and expressive style of painting'. There was additionally a detailed summary of Samstag's career and achievements, encompassing two continents: the honours and awards;

the Pulitzer and Paris; the public collections; the teaching. Of course, Gordon had written the promotional text himself. 152

Howard Barker was an obliging friend. In his affectionate account of the Samstags, written to the author in 1993, he said:

Gordon had done a good sized painting and asked me if I would be able to get it [from Mamaroneck] to New York City for a show, because he and Anne would be south for the winter. As I recall, this was a school, or club Gordon belonged to. I asked a friend if he could use his station wagon to drive me to NYC. We went to Gordon's house, got the painting and took it to New York. As I recall, there was quite a bit of snow on the ground. Unfortunately, I learned from Gordon later that the painting had not been accepted. 153

#### THE DEATH OF ANNE

Anne and Gordon travelled overseas together a number of times after returning to America in 1977, including to Australia (and Adelaide in particular), to catch up with old friends. One of those trips was in 1980, soon after the Samstags' windfall from the sale of the Kentenia Mining Corporation. On that occasion they'd travelled first to Europe, arriving in Australia for a six-week visit late in November 1980, going initially to Cairns and then on to Adelaide from the beginning of December. Before leaving Naples, they'd sought advice from Hale and Dorr (through their Naples accountant) about the tax-deductibility of their proposed travels, which included a visit to Normandy, France, to see the Bayeux Tapestry. 155

Robbie McBryde recalled a Samstag visit around 1982, when she and Lucas lunched with them at Riley's, a restaurant on King William Road in the comfortable Adelaide suburb of Hyde Park. On that occasion, according to Mrs McBryde, the Samstags had come to Australia via the Seychelles and other ports, and were staying at the Hilton Hotel (in the city) – it was Adelaide's best hotel, with grand views across the parklands and the Torrens. Robbie said that the Samstags 'returned several times to Adelaide'. <sup>156</sup>

Over the next few years, Gordon would continue to return to Adelaide but latterly not with Anne. Late in 1986, she was diagnosed with gastric cancer; she died the following year on June 7, in Naples. She was seventy-eight; it was two weeks short of Gordon's eighty-first birthday. They had been together for over fifty-five years and married since 1933. Gordon was distraught; he withdrew.

Remsen Kinne learned of Anne's death only belatedly – some six weeks later – through Gordon's attorney in Naples, David Sexton, of Bond, Schoeneck & King. He immediately wrote to Gordon:

On my return to the office yesterday, I was shocked to have Mr Sexton's letter describing Anne's death on June 7. As you already know, you have my deep sympathy. As Mr Sexton requested, I have forwarded a portfolio statement for the trust to him. Please let me know if I can be of assistance to you during this difficult time. 157

Kinne was indeed shocked; but he clearly also was hurt by Gordon's failure to advise him personally. The same day he wrote to Charles D. Matteson, the son of Anne's sister Prill:

On my return to the office yesterday, I had a letter from a Florida attorney dated July 17, which told me of Anne Samstag's death on June 7.

I have had no communication at all from Gordon about this, which I think is strange, nor had either he nor [sic] Anne told me that she was in a difficult health condition. The certificate of her death, which the lawyer enclosed, recites that the cause of death was gastric cancer which began in 1986.

Because Gordon had not communicated anything to me, although I have a trust portfolio here for the Samstags from which monthly distributions have been made for many years, I expect that he may well not have communicated with Prill or with any others in the family.

I am sending this to you rather than to Prill, in view of her health, with the knowledge that you will be sensitive respecting when and how Prill should be told. If you prefer that I tell her, I will do so after I have talked with you when I reach Santa Barbara. 158

Gradually, friends received letters and cards from Gordon, advising them of Anne's death. Robbie and Lucas McBryde received a Christmas card in December 1987, lamenting: 'Alas, Anne died last June and I have been struggling to survive; very difficult'. <sup>159</sup> A letter to Jean Wilcox said 'he was crying while he wrote'. <sup>160</sup>

Later that year, Gordon sold the Mamaroneck residence at Lawn Terrace. <sup>161</sup> In December, Gordon Samstag's net worth was estimated by Beatrice (Bea) Sanford, at the Citizens and Southern Trust Company in Naples, which managed those of his investments that lay outside the Samstag Trust, at approximately four million dollars. In March 1988, Kinne wrote to Gordon, observing that the Samstag Revocable Trust continued to enjoy modest income accumulations; he suggested that the monthly distribution to him from the trust be increased to \$2100. <sup>162</sup> Gordon returned the letter to Kinne, inscribed with a handwritten message, saying, 'Thanks, a welcome addition! Best regards back. I may marry again in April.'

On April 10, 1988, Gordon Samstag married Myrna Hayes, a local Neapolitan, whom it's believed he'd met during Anne's hospitalisation. Friends received postcards from him when he was honeymooning on the *Queen Elizabeth 2*. A *QE2* postcard to Peter McWilliams, one of his favoured old students, reported: 'Pleasant voyage on this incredible hotel ship. Food coming out every door. Good too. Liquor flowing. Everyone lost, unable to find their staterooms. Ship so big. Probably call you near Xmas. Myrna sends regards.'

On September 14, 1988, Gordon established a new, personal trust, with the Citizens and Southern Trust Company (Florida), National Association (NA), as trustee. He then, in December, advised Kinne that he wished to revoke the (newly named) Hale and Dorr 'Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust' and to 'consolidate my financial affairs and utilize a Naples financial institution as my fiduciary'. He requested that Kinne arrange 'the transfer of assets, funds, etc, and close the trust'. He added:

I am pleased to tell you that this revocation does not arise from any dissatisfaction with your services on my part, past or present, and the change is strictly a result of my personal decision to combine the majority of my assets with a local corporate trustee. I genuinely thank you for your past professional assistance. <sup>163</sup>

# Kinne wrote back promptly:

I appreciate your kind words respecting the services which we have performed. For my part, I have greatly enjoyed working with you, and with Anne until her death, over a good many years, and I hope that you will have good health and much enjoyment in the future. Best wishes for the holiday season.  $^{164}$ 

At the end of December 1987, the Samstag Revocable Trust at Hale and Dorr had held \$440,000; <sup>165</sup> however, over the coming months the assets would be progressively transferred to Gordon's Florida bank. The final monthly trust payment to Gordon (of \$2100) was made on January 25, 1989. On February 22, 1989, Kinne forwarded a cheque for \$5099.95 to Citizens and Southern Trust Bank in Florida and terminated the Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust.

So ended Gordon Samstag's relationship with Hale and Dorr, a relationship that – for him – had begun in 1972, when Anne established her new trust, in a form that ultimately empowered Gordon. The winding up of the trust also marked the termination of one branch of the dynastic Davis family empire that had originated in the nineteenth century, when, in 1870, Anne's enterprising and forward-thinking great-grandfather, Edward Morris Davis had speculatively acquired the 86,000-acre (35,000-hectare) Ledford-Skidmore-Smith-Farmer mining patent. Ultimately his wealth, through the Davis family's N.L. Davis Trust, would become the source of much cultural beneficence.

# FINAL GATHERINGS

In 1988 Gordon sent Sylvia Ditchburn a Christmas card, saying he was coming to visit Cairns in January. He didn't turn up, and she didn't see or hear from him again. But Gordon did return once more to Adelaide, in January 1989, accompanied by a friend and professional nurse, Georgina Lander, who was tending to his needs. As he had done before, he asked Virginia Jay to organise for a cohort of his favourite students from the SASA days to come and see him at the Hyatt, to remember and once again celebrate their shared golden years. It was to be the last such occasion.

Gordon and Myrna Hayes were divorced on June 22, 1989, on the grounds, formally recorded at a court hearing, that the marriage was 'irretrievably broken'. Gordon Samstag was cited as the petitioner. Prudently, he had entered a pre-nuptial arrangement with Hayes, formalised on April 7, 1988. That fact would be reiterated in his will.

In January 1990, Gordon sent Peter McWilliams another postcard, this one picked up in London and illustrated with a Union Jack flag. It was postmarked Fort Myers, Florida, and said, 'Thanks for your elegant card. I may visit Australia again soon – maybe – maybe not.'

Gordon Samstag died at Naples Community Hospital on March 11, 1990. It was heart failure; he had long suffered atherosclerosis vascular disease and his death was attributed to mesentric artery occlusion, accompanied by septic shock. The 'informant' to the official certificate of death was Bea Sanford, his funds manager at the Citizens and Southern Trust Company, Naples. It had been almost three years since Anne had passed away, in June 1987, and he was just a few months short of his eighty-fourth birthday. His death certificate described him as an artist, whose business was painting. Like Anne, he was cremated at the Johnson Funeral Home's Southeastern Crematorium in Naples.

A locally published obituary described Gordon Samstag as having lived in Naples for the past twelve years 'coming from Cairns, Australia', and that 'he was a well known artist throughout the entire world'. It listed all his career accomplishments, including those from Australia. The memorial services were to be held on March 17 in the Unity Church of Naples, 'with the Reverend Jack Kern officiating'. It was suggested that memorial contributions be directed to the Naples Art Association. <sup>166</sup> The Jewish-born – though now clearly secular – Samstag, had become friendly with Kern, to the extent that he would remember him in his will with a generous financial gesture, along with fourteen other individuals.



Gordon Samstag at a reunion with past student group in Adelaide, c. 1989. (Back row from left: Rosslyn Anderson, Bridgitte Jolly, Ross Anderson, Loene Furler, Peter McWilliams, Rosslyn Barker, Caroline Di Fazio. Front row from left: Gordon Samstag's carer, Georgina Lander, Virginia Jay, Gordon Samstag, Winnie May.) Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Photograph gift of Peter McWilliams

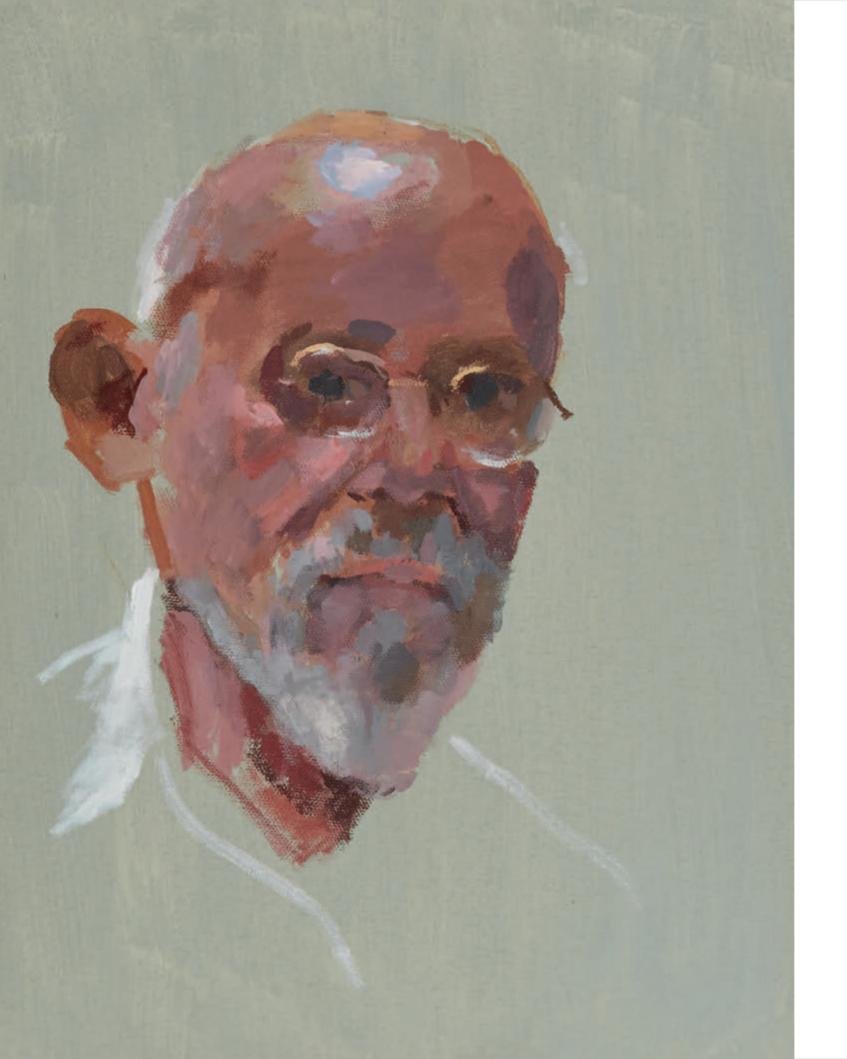
Some while later, a memorial luncheon of Anne and Gordon's friends from the Mamaroneck area was held at New Rochelle. One of the attendees, Howard P. Barker, later recalled:

We corresponded, but only at Christmas. A few years back, when we'd not received a card, Gordon sent a note that Anne had passed away. I do recall learning that Gordon had married, but my recollection is vague. We remember both the Samstags with great affection. They were dignified, soft spoken and a charming couple. I believe one of the highest compliments I could pay the Samstags is: they were from the Old School! 168

Gordon's long journey was finished. But even if, as is said, death ends all things, there would be much excitement and disbelief yet to follow. He and Anne had made careful plans; there was to be a legacy.

On that final visit to Adelaide in January 1989, Gordon had requested an inspection of the SASA at its location in Underdale, the forbidding suburb where it had been held in a cultural purgatory since 1979. Never popular with the school's academic staff, the architecturally brutalist Underdale campus was several kilometres from the city's urban heart. <sup>169</sup> Seeing it these many years later would have rekindled Gordon's sense of the limiting isolation suffered by artists in Australia, especially those starting out. He'd understood that fact acutely on his arrival in Adelaide, fresh from America in 1961, and it was no different now almost three decades on.

Effectively closed for the summer break, the school was quiet as the grave; the studios empty of students and staff alike. It fell to Tony Bishop, who at that time was acting head of the SASA and an old colleague of Samstag's from the golden days of Stanley Street, to show him around. <sup>170</sup> Interviewed sixteen years later, he remembered: 'Gordon was wearing shorts and looked in good health. But he was melancholic.' Nevertheless, after the tour, Samstag confided to Bishop: 'I had the happiest times of my life at the South Australian School of Art'. <sup>171</sup>



# ON THE FORMATION OF AN ARTIST'S BEQUEST

Sometimes good ideas come in a rush, at other times whispering, on the breeze. Gordon Samstag had many good ideas and was inclined to act upon them. One such was to migrate to Australia with Anne, in 1961, even though it seemed they had few prospects there. The Samstags were chancing their arms and trusting to luck; it had the look of adventure.

Fortunately, luck *was* on their side, opportunity unexpectedly taking them to Adelaide and nearly a decade of professional life working at the South Australian School of Art (SASA). It delivered them enduring friendships and, apparently, happiness. Long after returning to America – to the very end, in fact – the Samstags' links to Australia (and Adelaide in particular) remained not only important to them, but, for Gordon, especially, vital. In turn, the Samstags' affection for Australia would be expressed in the form of Gordon's magnificent bequest, the Fine Arts Trust, a benefaction of great generosity dedicated wholly to Australian artists. However, there would first be some detours along the way.

# A VISION

Gordon never quite gave up his marvellous idea – promoted when he was chairman of South Australia's Contemporary Art Society (CAS) – of sponsoring a grand international exhibition. The members of the CAS had been outraged by his proposal to fund the scheme by selling the society's valuable building in Parkside, Adelaide, and, predictably, thwarted his plan. However, it remained an *idée fixe* and continued to occupy his imagination right up until his death, almost two decades later, in Naples, Florida.

Just two years after the CAS debacle, when the Samstags were living in Cairns, in northeastern Australia, and Anne had established a new trust fund for herself and Gordon – the Anne and Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust – the Samstags made a number of provisions for the distribution of Anne's estate on her and Gordon's deaths. One of these was the establishment of an 'Art Exhibition Fund', through which the National Academy of Design in New York City (Gordon's old alma mater, where in 1928 he had secured his Pulitzer Prize), would be invited to create an ambitious international exhibition and award several 'Anne and Gordon Samstag Prizes' to the best of the participating artists.

Gordon SAMSTAG Self-portrait, c. 1986 oil on canvas  $34.5 \times 27.0 \text{ cm} (13\% \times 10\% \text{ in})$  University of South Australia Art Collection

The complex scheme outlined in the trust document also required the participation of the directors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art and the National Academy of Design as selectors and judges, and that the exhibition include at least three works by artists from each of 'England, France, Italy, Spain, Russia, The USA, Australia, Israel, China and Germany'. In coming years, the provision in the Samstags' trust for an international exhibition and an 'Anne and Gordon Samstag Prize' would be modified, with changed conditions, ultimately rendering it impractical. But it was to constitute the founding vision for their eventually larger scheme of benefaction, directed to the great benefit of Australian artists through their historic Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships.

#### THE SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME

Late in 1977, the Samstags left Cairns and returned to live in America, where they settled in Naples, Florida. Before long they were contemplating the extraordinary, multi-million dollar windfall they received after the Kentenia Mining Corporation was sold in 1979 for twenty million dollars.<sup>2</sup> The Samstags now were comfortably rich. Inspired, Gordon promptly set about developing a new plan, for 'a reciprocal scholarship arrangement'.

When, towards the end of 1980, Anne and Gordon were making arrangements to travel to Australia, Gordon wrote to Harold Allison, the South Australian Minister of Education, seeking 'advice and help in implementing a bequest or charitable trust for young Australian artists'. He asked the minister to assist in arranging meetings with 'a few key people' at the SASA, which, he said, would be 'the source from which a number of talented students will be recruited for study in the New York City area'. He explained that the trust – 'in the seven digit area' – would provide funds 'so that a number of students can be permitted comfortable air travel, living and tuition expenses as well as return fare. At the other end, New York students will be provided with the same facilities in Australia.'

#### He further explained:

My knowledge of the Adelaide School was gained by a tenure there as Senior Lecturer in Fine Art from 1961 to 1972 [sic] and although my experiences were varied I look back on those years with some pleasure and my wife and I have decided to help some of the talented students who often arrive at a dead end after the most promising school years.

Of course we would be most honored if we could have a brief meeting with you personally but we would understand that the exigencies of your office might not make this possible.<sup>3</sup>

The Samstags' shared commitment to cultural philanthropy, originally conceived as the 'Anne and Gordon Samstag Prize' in their 1972 'Anne and Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust', was now manifest in a new form. Although not yet resolved in concept, the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships were effectively born.<sup>4</sup>

The South Australian Minister of Education referred Samstag's letter to Dr Gregor Ramsey, director of the Adelaide College of the Arts and Education, a newly established umbrella institution in which the SASA was now one of three schools within its Faculty of the Arts, which was headed by an English industrial designer, Ben Cooke.<sup>5</sup> The SASA had only the year before completed its painstaking, six-year shift from Stanley Street in North Adelaide to the suburb of Underdale, under the command of the Torrens College of Advanced Education.

Samstag's letter to the minister found its way, in turn, to the recently appointed head of the SASA, Cecil (Ces) Hardy, an old colleague of Gordon's from the Stanley Street days.<sup>6</sup> Hardy wrote back to Samstag, noting, 'The last news that the [SASA] staff had of you and your wife was that you were still living in Queensland.' He also mentioned that he'd 'often wondered how you recovered from the nasty fall that you had, just before you retired'. In a long letter, Hardy carefully explained the new structural arrangements at the SASA, reporting as well on the activities of former colleagues and several old painting students of Samstag's who were now members of the staff. He additionally mentioned, 'We also have a fine gallery which will eventually become very important in the city.'

Hardy expressed enthusiasm for Gordon's student-exchange proposal, declaring it had 'brought delight to the staff of the South Australian School of Art', and that 'everyone thinks it a splendid and very generous idea. You may count on us to give whatever assistance may be required to set up and support such a trust.'

Once in Australia, just before Christmas, on December 20, 1980, Samstag sent a handwritten note to Hardy from the Wentworth Hotel in Sydney, confirming that he and Anne would be 'at the Gateway Hotel [in Adelaide] for a few days from Tuesday, 23'. As it turned out, Hardy couldn't join them on the day, but Samstag did meet with Tony Bishop, Max Lyle, Geoff Wilson and the faculty dean, Ben Cooke. In another quick note to Hardy in February 1981, after he'd returned to Naples, Samstag acknowledged their help in providing 'a fairly clear picture of the new conditions' and that 'we were most admiring and nostalgic with Adelaide'. He explained that he and Anne intended going to New York in the spring to 'try and sort out some of the American details', although it was already apparent, he revealed, that 'the Chairman of the Contemporary Art section of the Met doesn't want to tie up his office with our project'. <sup>8</sup>

One year later, in March, Samstag wrote again to Hardy, explaining that, 'My wife and I have run into delays in choosing a suitable American School, but the choice has now narrowed down to the Art Students League and Cooper Union, both in New York City.' He attached a two-page, typewritten document, which for the first time explained in detail the principles that would govern (what he now called) 'The Gordon & Anne Samstag Fine Art Exchange Grants'. He requested that Hardy discuss this with his colleagues and get back to him with comments. He also requested 'any gossip about the chaps and ladies I used to know'. <sup>9</sup>

It turned out that Ces Hardy was away on leave and, in fact, would not be returning to the SASA as head of school. Instead, the head of sculpture, Max Lyle, had stepped up as the new SASA head, at least for 1982. Lyle had read the Samstag correspondence closely, and had a number of important suggestions to make. Significantly, he'd noticed that although Samstag (in his original 1980 submission to the Minister of Education) had referred specifically to 'South Australian artists' as the potential beneficiaries of the exchange, this reference had subsequently been 'dropped' in the new draft conditions sent to Hardy. Lyle made a good (and crucial) suggestion to Samstag, that he might add to his guidelines that 'if there is more than one grantee in any year of the award, at least one grantee [must] be a resident of South Australia ... and have studied at a tertiary level art school in South Australia for at least two years'. Lyle also made some practical suggestions about the procedures for the selection of candidates, and suggested that Samstag think about appointing an Australian 'agent', for the purpose of the accountable disbursal of any funds. 10 Samstag liked the suggestions and adopted them outright, promptly making a 'First Codicil' to the will that he'd written on April 12, 1982; it repeated Lyle's wording almost verbatim. He sent Lyle a copy attached to a handwritten note, and wrote across it, 'Max, good suggestions. Thanks, regards, G.S.'11

Enthused, Lyle wrote again, promoting a positive vision to Samstag of the SASA and its need to 'emerge from the College presence' and extract 'what little there is from the system to the advantage of the School, and rebuild it into something worthwhile'. He hoped that the position of a director for the school gallery could be created that year. Meanwhile, he had 'been trying to instill some optimism within the school and I think it is starting to have an effect on the morale of staff and students'. <sup>12</sup>

# INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

In July 1982, Ben Cooke wrote to Samstag on the letterhead of a new institution, the similarly named (but different) South Australian College of Advanced Education (SACAE). There had been yet another structural change affecting the SASA. Cooke was enthusiastic, proclaiming we are 'the only College of Advanced Education to offer courses in art ... and we have been successful in retaining the South Australian School of Art in its entirety within the new College'. 13

Gordon Samstag was known to be wary of the unending institutional changes that had for many years buffeted the SASA. For all its outward appearance of independence, the SASA had remained subordinate to larger and more powerful institutional entities; it had always been thus. Samstag had confided to colleagues that he was cautious about leaving money directly to an amalgamated institution that might not, in the long term, honour his vision with integrity, and concerned that any bequest of his and Anne's – if it were left to an institution that might at any time cease to exist – could ultimately be subsumed for other purposes and compromised.

In fact, a lecturer at the school and former Samstag student, Virginia Jay, recalled from conversations with Samstag that he had been 'deeply suspicious' of the SASA being incorporated with the Torrens College of Advanced Education: 'He had felt the art school would lose its independence and identity.' It was a view also shared by many of the SASA teaching staff. Said Jay, 'He was taking steps to ensure that, should he leave money to the school, it could not be annexed into general College revenue.' 14

Indeed, in a letter to Max Lyle in October 1982, Samstag referred disparagingly to 'that "great big ole" college ... spreading gloom over the "li'l ole" art school'. <sup>15</sup> But he also had important news, writing:

My news is that we have become dissatisfied with the New York schools and have changed our wills to leave our money to Australian students only, with the provision you suggested for South Australian tertiary students. I have also written to the Minister requesting an officer to receive grant monies.

#### He went on:

A gallery director sounds impressive and necessary. You appear to need a public relations officer or a livewire publicity director or directress.

From this distance I can only wish you and the school the best, but let me know if there is something we can do for you other than dying to expedite our grants.

However, in case we (Anne and I) survive till '84 and are still healthy, we plan to spend a few days in Adelaide probably in February. That's a long way off but it will give you time to set up one of those pleasant Festivals you used to have in Adelaide.

It was another year before he wrote again, once more to Max Lyle. This time it was in preparation for his forthcoming visit to Adelaide with Anne, early in 1984. They would be coming to Adelaide after first passing through Brazil, stopping in Johannesburg and spending a week in the Seychelles. He wrote:

We've reserved a room at the Hilton <sup>16</sup> for a week from March 5, and I'd enjoy buying a drink for you and some of the lecturers at a pleasant pub.

Last time we were in Adelaide, Virginia Jay worked out a last-minute party for some of the people I worked with years ago. I've written asking her help in setting up another one (at our expense of course) and if something comes of it, we hope you and your wife will come.

Drop me a line if you can find time, and let me know of any new or old school problems. 17

Later in 1984, the SASA appointed a new head of school, a New Zealander, Ian North (b. 1945). He had come to the SASA from the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, where he'd been curator of photography since 1980; before that he had been a curator at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Following his appointment to SASA, North had spent a large part of 1985 in the United States undertaking postgraduate studies at the University of Mexico, in Albuquerque; Virginia Jay had been acting head of SASA during this time. On his return to Adelaide in 1986, and at Max Lyle's urging, North wrote to Samstag introducing himself and to register his understanding of Samstag's intentions towards the school. 19

#### NO NEED TO RUSH

Following Anne's death, on June 7, 1987, Gordon married Myrna Hayes, on April 10, 1988 (see page 271). But only a few months later he found himself in discussion with his lawyers about the financial implications of a divorce. By December 1988, dissolution proceedings had commenced and a settlement had been paid to Myrna. The formal divorce was recorded at a court hearing on June 22, 1989, citing Gordon Samstag as petitioner on the grounds that the marriage was 'irretrievably broken'.

When Gordon next returned to Adelaide, in January 1989, in the company of a friend, Georgina Lander – who was there to care for him – he was very frail. Nevertheless, he had a long meeting with the new principal of the SACAE, Robert Segall, who made a file note recording their conversation. Samstag had been keen to discuss with Segall the importance he placed on the selection process for awarding his scholarships, and his strong expectation that a scholarship 'go to a graduate of the South Australian School of Art'. They talked about money and investments, and how Samstag placed great trust in Beatrice (Bea) Sanford, the administrator at the Citizens and Southern Trust Corporation in Florida who handled his affairs. He revealed that he'd sought advice from his old friend, the influential Australian artist Elwyn Lynn, who'd warned Samstag of the risk that 'other people would be attempting to "move in" on the bequest'. Samstag suggested to Segall that he ring Bea Sanford in Naples 'to make clear that I was the responsible person in the College'. <sup>20</sup>

Segall did subsequently telephone Bea Sanford to report on the meeting. He also wrote to her, confirming the matters discussed. Segall clearly saw that Gordon was ailing; he ended his letter saying 'we can only hope that Gordon continues to enjoy the best possible health and that the bequest is a long way into the future'.<sup>21</sup>

Undated letter from Gordon Samstag to Robert Segall, received December 20, 1989. Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA

#### GDRDON SAMSTAG

#### CHRISTMAS APPROACHING

Mr. Robert Segall Principal 46 Kintore Avenue Adelaide South Australia 5000

Dear Robert:

Thanks for your letter which was welcome but puzzling. Several of my previous letters must have disappeared from your files. Most of your questions are answered in them.

However, in brief, at my death my present will provides a seven digit figure for scholar-ships for travel, further study and encouragement for gifted students to be chosen by yourself as President, the senior lecturer in F.A. and a highly regarded Australian artist from outside the school.

The funds will come from the C & S Bank in Naples and will be available at my death.

Please tell my friends and acquaintances not to rush me. I'm dying as quickly as possible.

A return visit to Adelaide sounds tempting but hazardous.

All the best to you and my friends,

Gordon

Later that year, ostensibly in the spirit of keeping in touch, Segall wrote to Samstag, extending Christmas greetings and wishing him well. In fact, Samstag's old painting student Peter McWilliams – an advocate of Samstag's and now a lecturer at the SASA – had persuaded Segall to write, believing Samstag's scholarship plans might 'fizzle out' unless they were 'followed up'. McWilliams drafted a suggested form of words, which Segall added to his letter:

A number of people have been asking questions about your proposal. If it does not seem intrusive or ill mannered in any way, I would like to know more about your proposals so that I may pass on a little more information to the interested and enthusiastic requests that I have received from both art students and art staff from the School of Arts.  $^{22}$ 

It was the wrong approach, although, fortunately, there was no damage done. Samstag wrote back with humour. Under a letterhead styled 'Gordon Samstag: Christmas Approaching', he wrote:

Thanks for your letter, which was welcome, but puzzling. Several of my previous letters must have disappeared from your files. Most of your questions are answered in them.

However, in brief, at my death my present Will provides a seven digit figure for scholarships for travel, further study and encouragement for gifted students to be chosen by yourself as [College] President, the senior lecturer in F.A. and a highly regarded Australian artist from outside the school.

The funds will come from the C&S Bank in Naples and will be available at my death.

Please tell my friends and acquaintances not to rush me. I'm dying as quickly as possible.

A return visit to Adelaide sounds tempting but hazardous.

All the best to you and my friends ... 23

## Segall responded politely:

Thank you very much for your pre Christmas letter. I think I can say that your friends here are definitely not trying to rush you and enjoyed your characteristically wry response.

The College and I have been somewhat obsessively involved in seemingly endless negotiations about a hypothetical merger and perhaps that accounts for the lack of clarity in my letter to you.

Your various friends here send their best wishes and if you can be tempted into a hazardous visit to Adelaide it would, of course, be extremely welcome.

Belated best wishes for the New Year. <sup>24</sup>

#### A SUBSTANTIAL TRUST

A few weeks after Gordon Samstag died on March 11, 1990, in Naples, Florida (see page 272), a formal, registered letter from his attorneys, Bond, Schoeneck & King, in Naples, dated April 2, 1990, was received by the SACAE. It had been written by D. Fred Garner and was addressed to 'Robert Segall, Office of the Principle Art School [sic]' and read in part:

We are attorneys for the estate of Mr Gordon Samstag who died domiciled in Naples, Florida on March 11, 1990. His will was admitted to probate on March 21, 1990 and Citizens and Southern Trust Company has been appointed personal representative under the will.

Under Article FIFTH, Paragraph Q (of his May 31, 1989 will) Mr Samstag left his entire residuary estate to be held in a perpetual trust known as 'Fine Arts Trust'. Subparagraph 3 designates the head of your art school as a member of the jury to be established for the screening and selection of art students for the scholarship program.

Although at this time we do not know the exact size of this trust, please be advised that it will be very substantial. The Fine Arts Trust is estimated to exceed five million dollars (U.S.) in value.

You will want to carefully review the criteria for awarding grants under this trust and the criteria for your organization to remain qualified to administer the income from the Fine Arts Grant Fund.

I am sure that you will want to correspond with us promptly.

We anticipate that in September of this year a representative from our office, and possibly a representative of the personal representative of the estate, will come to Australia and meet with you concerning the proper implementation and administration of the Fine Arts Grant Fund. Also, let me please inform you of the names and addresses of the individuals that will be involved in the administration of the estate and the trust. I will be the attorney in our office responsible for the overall administration of the estate. My law partner, David N. Sexton, knew Mr Samstag well and handled his legal affairs for many years prior to his death. Mr Sexton, the managing partner of our office here, will be coming to Australia (assuming convenient also to you) between September 15 and September 30. We have selected this time period to coincide with certain court requirements necessary here.

The corporation selected by Mr Samstag to administer this trust is Citizens and Southern Trust Company (Florida), a large and respected trust company. Mr Jonathan G. Granger, Vice President, will have responsibility for the administration of the estate for the trust company as personal representative. Mr Timothy K. Walsh, Senior Vice President, will also be involved as the manager of the trust company here in Naples, Florida, and as its senior investment officer.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

#### REMEMBERING FRIENDS

After attending to the preliminary matters of debts and medical expenses (and noting the earlier pre-nuptial agreement with his second wife, Myrna Hayes), Gordon Samstag's final will, written the year before he died, made fifteen personal bequests, amounting to US\$205,000. The gestures – some more generous than others – were in the main to friends, people whom, clearly, he especially valued. One, for \$10,000, was to Josephine Ognibene, the widow of his lifelong friend Bernard Ognibene, who'd been the subject of Samstag's iconic 1930 painting, *Young Man Desires Position*. Three gifts were to Australians: Florence (Robbie) and Lucas McBryde, Bela and Margaret Ivanyi, and Virginia Jay. The most generous of the bequests – an amount of \$100,000 – was to Anne's sister, Priscilla Matteson.

A second, significant instruction in Samstag's will was that \$250,000 be set aside as an 'Art Exhibition Fund' for the conduct and administration of an international exhibition. The scheme was much the same as that originally outlined in the 1972 'Anne & Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust', including the awarding of several 'Anne and Gordon Samstag Prizes'. Although now somewhat altered in design, it nonetheless remained impractical. Four major New York institutions (the National Academy of Design, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art) were to be approached, in order, and invited to undertake the exhibition project on Samstag's specific terms, as outlined in the will. If all declined, or failed to respond within six months of being approached, the Art Exhibition Fund would be distributed without further obligation to the National Academy of Design.

And so it was; the scheme was untenable. The President of the National Academy, Richard McDermott Miller, regretfully declined Samstag's proposal, citing that, 'After careful study of [Samstag's] plan for an international exhibition at the Academy ... we do not believe we can mount such a show without introducing supplementary funding. I wish it were not so, since Gordon Samstag's impulse was a good one.'25

There followed a section in the will ('Q: Fine Arts Grant Fund') that specified the arrangements by which the balance of Samstag's estate be held in a perpetual trust, the 'Fine

Arts Trust', for charitable and educational purposes. The objectives of the trust were outlined in eleven detailed clauses, commencing as follows:

1. It is my intent that the income of the Fine Arts Trust shall be made available to fine arts students from Australia so that they may study and develop their artistic capacities, skills and talents in New York, New York and its vicinity, or elsewhere outside of Australia. Accordingly, my Trustee shall pay the net income of the Fine Arts Trust to or for the benefit of art students from Australia for the purpose of study and development of their artistic capacities in New York, New York and its vicinity, or elsewhere outside of Australia.

Subsequent clauses provided instructions on the tenure and scope of what Samstag called the 'scholarships', and stipulated that the financial support should be a staged monetary grant 'for a one-year term sufficient ... to study in a foreign school of fine art'. The grant would cover 'all reasonable and modest travel and living expenses of a student, as well as his or her art equipment, materials and supplies and the expense of any lessons, courses or programs of study in which the student may enroll'. Samstag decreed 'that the students travel and work under comfortable, but not extravagant conditions'.

A 'jury of three persons' – to screen and select the applicants – would comprise the 'Head of the Art School (of the SACAE); the Senior Lecturer in Fine Arts; and an outside artist of outstanding accomplishment'. Other details concerned financial support for 'publicity to make the existence and availability of the scholarship program known throughout Australia', and general arrangements at the SACAE for managing the distribution of funds.

Consistent with Max Lyle's suggestion in 1982, Samstag's will instructed that, 'If there is more than one grantee in any year of award, at least one grantee shall be a resident of South Australia ... and shall have studied Fine Art at a tertiary level art school in South Australia for at least two years.'

Finally, there was a cautionary clause reflecting Gordon's reported anxiety about institutional change, proposing an alternative application for the Fine Arts Trust income 'in the event that the South Australian College of Advanced Education abolishes the art school'.

#### A PHILANTHROPIC TRADITION

Before their 1979 Kentenia windfall, the Samstags seem not to have understood the extent of their potential wealth and lived relatively frugally, reliant on American Social Security payments and spare reserves of personal funds. In 1974, for example, after they'd moved to Cairns and into their newly built but still-incomplete home, Anne Samstag wrote to her trustee, Remsen M. Kinne III at Hale and Dorr, pleading for financial help:

We have just received word from Mr Morton of a very large increase in our taxes. This was most unexpected and comes at a bad time for us.

We have just moved into our new house but it is still not complete. We are committed for \$6,000 (Australian dollars) more for completion. The house is an excellent investment and we have planned that it should be paid in full. The approximate value is about \$70,000.00 Australian dollars.

We will take our last savings from the USA to Australia in July and according to our calculations (before this large tax) we should be left with funds here in Australia of four or five thousand dollars for emergencies. We also have 100 shares of General Motors which came from my husband's estate.

As you know we only get a little over 60 cents Australian on the American dollar and we can just manage to get through the month on our income from the Trust, plus our Social Security of \$220 US.

We do not at this time wish to be forced to sell the house before completion or to mortgage it and we are happy here and hope to stay. I do hope the Trust can afford [to pay us an] extra amount of \$2,000 as I believe we then can carry on with our budget if inflation does not go higher. With the coming Australian election we are hoping the exchange of our USA dollar could improve.

Please let me hear from you soon and trusting you are well. <sup>26</sup>

It was perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that a number of Gordon Samstag's old colleagues at the SASA were unconvinced by his promises – made once he began revisiting Adelaide from America, after 1980 – that he intended to leave money to the school. Some thought it typically a game, intended to keep everyone on the back foot and guessing. After all, the Samstags had never shown any great sign of wealth during their years in Adelaide; there was no good reason therefore to believe Gordon's oft-mentioned claim of having established a trust for Australian artists 'in the seven-digit area'. Surely it was just a tease?

In fact, they'd not had his measure. When it came, the revelation of Samstag's bequest was explosive; such major cultural philanthropy involving a contemporary South Australian educational institution was unprecedented. Indeed, the incidence of significant philanthropy towards the arts anywhere in Australia was comparatively low, unlike the robust tradition of giving so prevalent in America. Anne and Gordon's forebears belonged to that tradition; it was an instinct.

More particularly, to anyone's recall, Samstag's exceptional gift to Australian artists was without peer, excepting perhaps John Wardell Power's substantial 1962 bequest to the University of Sydney, at the time a media sensation. With its strong international focus and its desire to 'bring the people of Australia in more direct touch with the latest art developments in other countries', Power's bequest had clear resonance with Samstag's (if not equivalence). It had led to the creation of the Department of Art History at Sydney University and of Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art.<sup>27</sup> There was also of course, not to be overlooked, Alfred Felton's enormous charitable bequest in 1904, that had given Melbourne's National Gallery of Victoria (see page 206) means to build a collection with international credentials.

However, Gordon Samstag's vision was different. Besides its beneficent amplitude, *his* gift had the objective of providing direct financial assistance to Australian artists, and in a form that very generously supported their personal artistic development through study and research overseas. It was unique and inspired; he'd seen a need, and acted.

At the SACAE, there was little experience in how to respond. First of all, Robert Segall replied to the letter from Fred Garner at Bond, Schoeneck & King:

Thank you very much for your letter of April 2, 1990. We were, of course, sorry to hear of the death of Mr Samstag. The College is pleased to have the opportunity of commemorating his life through his generosity in setting up the travelling fellowship, which will be of immense importance to Australian art.

I will be in touch with you as soon as possible about the formal matters raised in your letter. <sup>28</sup>

To complicate things, it transpired that the SACAE was in the final stage of a negotiation to merge with another South Australian educational institution – the restructuring of the state's educational institutions appeared never-ending. Although not yet made public, a 'Merger

Agreement' had already been approved and imminently would result in the establishment of the University of South Australia (UniSA). Given the terms of Gordon Samstag's will relating specifically to the SASA, Segall was rightly concerned that the status of the school be secured – that is, that the merger not be seen to affect the continued existence of the SASA.

Segall met with Richard Pash, an expert in bequests from the Adelaide law firm Baker O'Loughlin, which was promptly commissioned to act for the SACAE to 'advise of steps we may need to take in the merger context to preserve the [Samstag] entitlement'. Baker O'Loughlin were also to 'make immediate response and enquiries' concerning the representations from Gordon Samstag's attorneys, Bond, Schoeneck & King, and 'a proposal for the administrative carriage of the bequest'.<sup>29</sup>

Responsibility for overseeing the process of securing advice and negotiating 'in the matter of the bequest' now shifted to the SACAE's director of resources, Ian Allen. He in turn delegated the role of liaison to John Lockwood, a senior administrator at the college who was an experienced and capable facilitator and who, despite his other, growing responsibilities, would remain the key link and coordinator in the bequest process.<sup>30</sup>

#### A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

In August 1990, Fred Garner wrote to Robert Segall and Richard Pash advising:

As the period has expired both for filing claims and making objections to the will, your residuary gift is vested subject to proper compliance with the provisions of the will. As also indicated previously, we are projecting a trust of the approximate value of (US) \$5,500,000 with an income, considering the need for equity investments as well as fixed income investments, of approximately \$300,000. It is our general plan for income to be available to you beginning the first part of 1991.

Garner further confirmed the attendance of trustee representatives at a proposed meeting with the SACAE, in Adelaide, on September 25 and 26, 1990. They would include David N. Sexton – the attorney representing the estate of Gordon Samstag at Bond, Schoeneck & King – and two senior executives from the Citizens & Southern Trust Company, Jonathan G. Granger, Vice President, Administration, and Timothy K. Walsh, Senior Vice President.<sup>31</sup>

Garner followed up with a suggested agenda. Effectively, the plan was to discuss, point by point, the clauses and details of Samstag's will, reviewing all of its particular requirements and their complex implications for the conduct of the relationship and for administering the scholarships program. There was a lot to work through; the very first item for discussion would be 'the net income (after expense) of trust funds available for students from Australia'. Garner also proposed a follow-up meeting in Naples and, perhaps also in years to come, a regular, annual meeting, alternating between Australia and Florida. The spirit of Garner's approach was one of helpful transparency and cooperation.<sup>32</sup>

John Lockwood wrote back, informing Garner that Robert Segall had resigned from the SACAE and been replaced as principal by Denise Bradley. He advised his role as the coordinator of arrangements, and accepted the proposed agenda suggestions.<sup>33</sup>

And so it went. A SACAE committee was formed to make preparations. Convened by Lockwood, the committee included Richard Pash and every individual at SACAE with a key role and stake in the bequest process. <sup>34</sup> An internal briefing paper, prepared by Lockwood, provided an analysis and talking points for the SACAE in relation to the range of issues anticipated at the forthcoming trustee meeting. It was thorough, and included estimates of the

cost (to SACAE) of administering the scholarships program. It was expected that an eventual policy document would need to be approved by the soon-to-be established UniSA Council. A schedule for the two-day meeting with the trustee (September 25 and 26) proposed a morning meeting on the first day with the SACAE's senior administrators, including Bradley; a full afternoon with Richard Pash; and, on the second day, a tour of the art school at the Underdale campus, led by John Chalklen and Ian North. There would then be a final meeting in the city with the SACAE administrators, and a dinner, at Duthy's restaurant.<sup>35</sup>

The meetings went well; Ian Allen was pleased. The trustee representatives had no sooner left than he wrote to Lockwood: 'Thanks for the excellent protocol for our American visitors. The conduct of the visit went extremely well and I believe our hospitality was well received. The kudos for the success of the visit is entirely yours and I know that my senior colleagues share this sentiment.'

More importantly, the trustee, too, was pleased. Jonathan Granger, vice president (administration) at Citizens and Southern Trust Company, also contacted Lockwood, thanking him 'for a most enjoyable two days in Adelaide':

I believe all our concerns were addressed. None of them appeared to present obstacles. Those few issues where we had no specific conclusions will be addressed by our people and I am sure you will do the same. We will get back to you with our discussions as you will and, hopefully further discussions can permit you to make your December target for a preliminary plan of action.

Your program of having Dave and I meet with different members of your school gave us a more complete view of the school and your thoughts. I particularly enjoyed the tour of the Art School facility and was impressed with the breadth and range of the programs available.

Again, my thanks to you and your colleagues for an excellent presentation and fine hospitality.<sup>36</sup>

# THE DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

At first glance, Gordon Samstag's proposed arrangements for sending Australian artists overseas for lengthy periods of study seemed straightforward, simple even. His American trustee – Citizens and Southern Trust Company – would have overall authority and manage his Fine Arts Trust ('the money'), and an Australian educational institution would award and facilitate his study grants (making 'the judgements about art').

However, things did not turn out to be so simple. The Samstag will was more a set of inviolable principles than a detailed map and method for delivering practical outcomes. For a start, the shared institutional responsibility underpinning Gordon's scholarship scheme required that two parties from opposite sides of the planet – each inherently different in purpose – find common ground as partners of goodwill. In practice, it created a potentially difficult, binding nexus. Moreover, there was a great deal of money involved; most of the outgoings each year (to recipients and overseas fine art schools) would be paid from Australia. Obviously, before anything could happen there was a need for a plan – a policy blueprint – to provide clear, mutually agreed guidelines for the conduct of the relationship between trustee and institution.

There was also something about the broad-brush language of Gordon's core objective (of getting Australian students off to foreign schools of fine art) that left considerable room for interpretation: it needed further unwrapping and refinement. Indeed, how was Gordon's vision to be made workable?

Certainly, in clause after clause of the will, he'd been clear enough as to what he wanted, even forensically so. His detailed procedures for the selection of recipients, for example, suggested that he'd thought carefully about the process, as if he'd imagined himself sitting there on the committee, participating (he would surely forever preside in spirit; there was a position on the committee prescribed for the senior lecturer in Fine Arts, his old role at the SASA). And his idea of scheduling payments to recipients (rather than handing over a single bundle of cash, all at once, to be wastefully spent too soon) was sensible. Similarly thoughtful was the emphasis on applicants' tertiary qualifications, which ensured that the field would be limited to professionally trained artists (and thus preclude an avalanche of applications from amateurs), as was the proposed one-year tenure at a foreign school of fine art (ultimately a latitude to study anywhere in the world, notwithstanding his nod to 'New York, New York').

The considerate generosity of the man was also evident in his instruction that recipients 'travel and work under comfortable, but not extravagant conditions' (he was no doubt thinking of the challenge of Manhattan: the shock of arriving, the search for accommodation). Crucially, as well, he'd kept faith with the suggestion, made some years before, that one grantee at least be South Australian (in any year when two or more awards are given).

All of this needed to be wrestled into a set of formal public guidelines for the artists who'd be applying for the Samstag Scholarships. An application form would be required as well. But of greater immediate importance was John Lockwood's undertaking to get back to the trustee before Christmas with a plan of action. Accordingly, a quickly developed 'draft policy statement' for the administration of the bequest by the SACAE was presented to (what would be) the final-ever meeting of the SACAE Academic Committee on December 17, 1990.<sup>37</sup>

Lockwood then wrote to Garner at Bond, Schoeneck & King, requesting their comments on the draft policy, following which (he advised) 'detailed procedures' would be developed and 'the first recipients of grants [would be selected] in time for the 1991 northern hemisphere academic year, beginning in June 1991'. He added, 'The College is currently making arrangements to employ staff to administer the activities associated with the bequest.' It was optimistic: there would be no staff, nor scholarships, until the following year.

Lockwood also reported:

The legislation to establish the University of South Australia has been passed. This means that the South Australian College of Advanced Education will not exist after 1 January 1991. The legislation specifically mentions the South Australian School of Art and its existence as a component of the University is assured.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, in September 1990, the Citizens and Southern Trust Company had merged with the Sovran Financial Corporation to become the C&S/Sovran Trust Company (Florida), National Association (NA), with an office in Naples, Florida. At that point it became America's twelfth-largest bank.<sup>39</sup>

A UniSA media announcement went out through Marlow O'Reilly, Public Relations & Communications, for release on Thursday, December 20, 1990. It said, in part:

## \$5m Art Bequest for University of SA

A millionaire American artist and investor has astounded the Australian art world with a \$5 million bequest for the University of South Australia.

The 'gift from the grave' has created Australia's most valuable scholarship for student artists.

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A former senior lecturer in Fine Art-Painting, Mr Gordon Samstag, who taught at the South Australian School of Art from 1961 to 1972 [sic], died aged 83 earlier this year in Florida, leaving instructions for the gift.

The national 'Anne and Gordon Samstag Travelling Scholarship Scheme' was announced today by the Head of the South Australian School of Art at Underdale Campus, Mr Ian North.

Among several enthusiastic media responses, Adelaide's local daily, *The Advertiser*, gave the story front-page prominence and featured an octogenarian Samstag standing in quiet pleasure before one of his Scarsdale post office murals, *Caleb Heathcote Buys the Richbell Farm.* <sup>40</sup> The photograph had been borrowed from a profile piece on Samstag published four years earlier in the *White Plains Reporter Dispatch*, after he and Anne had visited Scarsdale ('I was never a man of leisure,' Gordon had declared, 'painting's in my blood'). <sup>41</sup>

#### A SERIES OF DELAYS

Garner wrote back to Lockwood in January 1991, advising that the draft policy was 'generally' acceptable, and outlined a range of small things for which he requested amendments; precision of language was essential. But larger sticking points were emerging. In response to Lockwood's suggestion that scholarship recipients be eligible for a second, full year of funding (and that this be incorporated into the scholarship guidelines to accommodate the likely demand for two-year graduate-study programs), Garner advised that this could not be done without going to the American courts. They were reluctant to do it. He was even more concerned that unless the trust began spending money soon it would run the risk of incurring substantial excise taxes under US federal tax laws. He asked Lockwood to submit a budget estimate for the administrative costs of managing the scholarships. <sup>42</sup> The trustee was becoming impatient for an agreement to be reached, and for things to move along.

John Lockwood enjoyed the confidence of those to whom he reported at the new UniSA. In February 1991, his role in providing continuing 'guidance of the Samstag project' was endorsed by the university's senior management.<sup>43</sup> Lockwood had estimated the need for another three months of his time to be devoted to the Samstag bequest before he could withdraw and return to his substantive work.<sup>44</sup>

However, a cycle of delays began. Months went by, the process bogged down in exchanges about administrative costs, staffing and the precise requirements and language of a formal agreement. Some financial claims made by Lockwood's team for administration costs were so inappropriate that they affected the trustee's confidence (for example, a proposal that the trustee provide funds to install air-conditioning in the old SASA College Gallery, newly named the University Art Museum). Letters went back and forth, but by mid-year no resolution was in sight; the prospect of awarding the first round of Samstag Scholarships in 1991 had slipped away.

That was of growing concern to Garner. In March he'd reminded Lockwood that the trust did not want to 'run afoul of American tax laws concerning distributions of the income of the trust'. He asked if another face-to-face meeting would make sense, and made a point of copying his letter to Richard Pash, the SACAE's legal adviser at Baker O'Loughlin. When by May he'd not heard back from Lockwood, he wrote again, this time to both Lockwood and Pash, requesting a meeting, either in Naples or Australia.

After formally advising the SACAE, in 1990, on the implications of the SASA's status in the proposed UniSA legislation, Richard Pash had largely stepped back from close involvement in the Samstag bequest negotiations. So much so that when Lockwood wrote to Timothy Walsh at the Citizens and Southern Trust Company in June 1991, enclosing a revised policy document and budget proposal, he did not copy the letter to Pash.<sup>47</sup>

Unknown to Lockwood, however (or to anyone at the university), Fred Garner telephoned Pash in August, expressing concern about the progress of negotiations at the university. He encouraged Pash to become involved; in fact, he wanted Pash to lead a university delegation to Naples as soon as possible. He was looking to him to bring things to resolution. In a follow-up letter confirming their conversation, Garner wrote, 'I do not believe there are issues outstanding that cannot be properly resolved while you are here.'

The next day, on August 6, Richard Pash sought a meeting with the university's business director, Ian Allen, at which he briefed him on his conversation with Fred Garner. He reported that both the trustee and the trustee's attorney 'felt the administrative loop was not closing fast enough'; that Garner had 'expressed a strong desire that the parties' lawyers be the point-to-point contact on matters associated with the will and the ongoing deliberations about the scholarships, and associated policy and procedural implications'; and that there were 'reservations about the proposed budget ... and the air-conditioning of the gallery'. Ominously, Pash had also gleaned from Garner that unless things were settled soon – preferably at a meeting in Florida – then the Samstag bequest to Australian artists might be at risk.

Alarmed, Allen immediately scheduled a meeting with Lockwood and Ian North (whom he described as 'the university's two principal officers dealing with this matter'), appraising them of the trustee's concerns and evident loss of confidence. He also recorded the details of his conversation with Pash.<sup>50</sup> Although unhappy that the lawyers were now to control the negotiating process, Lockwood acknowledged that 'progress has been slower than Ian North and I would have preferred ... [however] our work has, in part, been hindered by the constraints of the will'.<sup>51</sup>

Ultimately, it was agreed that Pash and North would travel as soon as possible to Florida.<sup>52</sup> Allen wrote to Pash, commissioning him to 'move with the utmost celerity', to achieve 'closure'; Pash was to make the arrangements for the meeting with Garner.<sup>53</sup>

Things now moved quickly. By mid-October, Pash had revised the draft policy document originally submitted to the SACAE Academic Committee in December 1990, and refashioned it as a detailed 'Statement of Policy'. It now more effectively addressed the various accumulated issues raised by the trustee and their legal advisers. He similarly produced a 'draft Application Form incorporating Guidelines for Applicants'. <sup>54</sup> On October 21, 1991, armed with these updated documents and briefing notes to guide the negotiations (including rehearsed fallback positions), Pash and North arrived in Naples, Florida, to meet the trustee representatives. <sup>55</sup> There was a lot to discuss.

### THE SAMSTAG PROGRAM

The Florida meeting went well. There was bonhomie; the negotiation was back on track. On his return to Australia, Pash provided an in-depth report to Allen on the two-day, October meetings. Among the myriad resolutions, it had been agreed to formally adopt a new name for Gordon's travelling scholarships: they would henceforth be known as the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships. Principles for an administration budget also

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2001 Samstag Scholarships promotional poster, designed by Zhu Design. Poster image: *Young Man Desires Position*, 1930 by Gordon Samstag were established, including the requirements for the scholarship program's effective staffing. However, although the trustee's representatives had 'requested little in the way of substantial amendment to the university's draft policy', the university would have to accept that some of its positions could not be accommodated by the trustee, and would be deferred to a future time, when they might be revisited.  $^{56}$ 

By December, the Statement of Policy for the administration of the scholarship program had been finalised and made ready for the parties to sign. The statement provided 'for the faithful carrying out of Gordon Samstag's wishes in an efficient and workable manner', and 'sets forth the relationship between [the trustee] ... and the University of South Australia'.

On December 30, 1991, Theodore H. Saari, Jr, vice president of C&S/Sovran Trust Company, as trustee of the Fine Arts Trust under the will of Gordon Samstag, signed the Statement of Policy for the 'Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships Program'. Five weeks later, on February 4, 1992, the policy document was in turn countersigned by the University of South Australia vice chancellor, Professor David Robinson, and the chancellor, John McDonald, and the University Common Seal was then affixed. The relationship was now formal; the blueprint was in place. Implementation could begin.

Art Bongiovanni, the senior lawyer at Bond, Schoeneck & King, who was by now principally responsible for advising the trustee with respect to the Samstag bequest, wrote to Pash:

With this being signed, the University can go forward in earnest to start the process of seeking applicants and picking the recipients. It should be the beginning of a relationship that will extend well beyond our lifetimes. From here and there, let us all raise our glasses to a long and fruitful and pleasant undertaking and relationship.<sup>57</sup>

#### Pash responded:

I have enjoyed this assignment immensely, and look forward to our firm's future association with it, and with you and your firm. I agree the time has now come when, depending upon our client's requirements in each case, we can now step back and allow them to deal with each other directly. Would you or your client have any objection if I suggested that the appropriate University officers now make contact with Ted Saari? <sup>58</sup>

Perhaps inevitably, and despite all the seeming resolution and goodwill, the delays in implementation at the university continued well into 1992. Although advertisements for staff to administer 'the Samstag Program', as it would become known, had been published nationally in January, for example, there would be no appointment made to the crucial leadership position for some time yet. <sup>59</sup> And to compound the administrative pressures at the university, advertisements promoting the Samstag Scholarships, and inviting applications by artists, had now begun appearing nationally.

Eventually, late in 1992, it was announced that this author, Ross Wolfe, had been appointed the inaugural director of the Samstag Program (at the University of South Australia), to 'develop and implement the Samstag scheme', commencing in August. At the time I was deputy director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, and I also had relevant experience from prior, influential roles in Australian visual arts administration.

Certainly, the opportunity to play a lead role in such a historic, once-in-a-lifetime event was compelling. Gordon Samstag's vision was different; the scholarships program was without compare in Australian visual arts. Moreover, it was an exciting creative challenge; there would be opportunities. The administrative arrangements also had considerable appeal. The Samstag Program would be externally funded entirely by an American trustee, and while the program's operation was a function of the university (and I would be the university's employee), it would sit apart, a unique 'satellite' of sorts. In fact, it was a perfect arrangement: within the parameters of the university—trustee agreement, I would have a relatively free hand to shape and develop things.

Meanwhile, applications for the inaugural Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships were rolling in: over one thousand application forms had been mailed out in response to enquiries, and by the closing date of June 30 a great bundle of applications from hopeful Australian artists had been received. If the historic first class of Samstag Scholars was to secure entry to foreign schools of fine art in time for the 1993 Northern-Hemisphere academic year – and be set upon their pioneering paths overseas – then the committee to assess and award them would need to convene immediately. There were things to be done; there was no time to waste!

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# THE SAMSTAG LEGACY

By the middle of 2016, the twenty-fifth year of the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships program, no fewer than 136 scholarships had been awarded.<sup>1</sup> Their total value exceeded ten million American dollars.

Over the years, many of the scholars have gone to New York to study, just as Gordon Samstag had wished (although not prescribed). But while the regime of art-school enrolment has been an important means of ensuring seriousness of intent on the part of the scholarship recipients (and a disciplined approach to work and study), formal institutional study was not the sole objective for Samstag. Certainly, the scholarships were *not* to be misused as a mere travelling junket; committing to a serious program of visual arts research would provide context, a secure environment, the prospect of distinguished qualifications and the incidental bonus of networking with influential visual arts professionals. There was also the probable reward of gaining enduring artistic friendships.

Gordon's vision, however, went further: it was at heart about vocation, and about what could come from living life for an extended time on foreign streets of culture. Above all, he had wanted his Australian scholarship recipients to enjoy the kind of rounded experience that would lay the foundations for an inspired life in art. That would include discovering great art museums, such as those in his home town: the Museum of Modern Art, the Met, the Guggenheim, the Whitney and – not to be overlooked – the excellent Frick. (Perhaps he'd also imagined they might explore some of his old haunts and drop by at the Art Students League or the National Academy.) Whatever they chose to do, a year in Manhattan, or any other major centre of art, experienced in this way, would surely seed a lifetime.

Not all of the scholars felt the magical pull of New York City. While New York had once been the epicentre of world contemporary visual arts, the focus had more recently shifted, to Europe in particular. Consequently, many recipients of Samstag Scholarships have chosen to study with leading art professors in Berlin, London, Copenhagen, Utrecht and Lisbon, for example, or, in North America, at distinguished art schools in Chicago or Los Angeles. The world of international art education is large, diverse and volatile, and the philosophies of art education and the methods of their delivery are legion. Wisely, Gordon had placed no restrictions on where his scholars might go – they had choice. And so, naturally, they have gone where they wished.

Anne and Gordon Samstag, Mamaroneck, NY, USA, 1986. Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA Photograph gift of Mrs Robbie McBryde

Timothy HORN (b. 1964)
Glass Slipper (Ugly Blister), 2001
lead crystal, nickel-plated bronze,
Easter egg foil, silicon
51.0 x 72.0 x 33.0 cm
(201/s x 283/s x 13 in)
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Purchased 2002



Each year around October, a new generation of Samstag Scholars is announced to the world, always an elite and privileged group, who have been carefully sifted and sorted from the ruck of worthy triers. They typically respond with excitement, pleasure and, sometimes, disbelief at the news of their good fortune. But this of course is only the beginning, and much work remains to be done: it's months yet before the scholars will head out, study destinations resolved, the adventure underway.

The goals of the scholars are varied. Many see benefit in gaining formal graduate qualifications from reputable schools of art; and indeed, an internationally secured Masters in Art will underwrite the practice of art back in Australia, strengthening one's curriculum vitae and opening doors to teaching, a time-honoured way of staying in the game. Others, already advanced in their artistic careers and more focused on enhancing particular skills, track down institutions that offer specialist facilities and concentrated research programs through which new, mature bodies of work can be developed. And we must not overlook that a vital ingredient in the making of art is the dreaming of it (just as Einstein famously 'lived his daydreams in music'). In a great many cases, the worthy goal of Samstag Scholars has been simply to embrace the rare, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of being given time – well-funded, untroubled, quality time – to think, study, explore and be imaginatively inspired. This is perhaps the pre-eminent Samstag gift.

Some of the scholars' choices have been surprising. Archie Moore, for example, an Indigenous Australian artist from rural Queensland – whose challenged childhood of racist schoolyard taunts gifted him a reflective, highly individual nature and a sophisticated interest in language and its meanings – decided in 2001 that the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague would best suit his needs. An imaginative artist of deceptively gentle method, he has gone on, in his recent work, to devise a highly original way to explore themes of Aboriginal dispossession and the colonial past. Working with a master perfumer, he created *Les Eaux d'Amoore*, a selection of beautifully presented 'perfume portraits' that evoke the artist's recollection of the diverse



smells of his childhood in southeast Queensland. For example, 'Presage' is the aroma of graphite pencils and paper, remembered from his first day of school in an inhospitable, white-dominated society; 'Sapphistication', a combination of Brut 33 and rum, is the smell of his sophisticated aunties.<sup>2</sup>

One 1999 scholar, Hanh Ngo, having grown up in Australia as the daughter of Vietnamese immigrants, returned to her country of origin to learn arcane lacquering skills from traditional Vietnamese artisans, at the Hanoi Institute of Fine Arts, thereby becoming an English-speaking outsider 'caught in a complex warp of past and present'.<sup>3</sup>

Several have so excelled during their Samstag Scholarship – gaining traction, connection, recognition, opportunity and confidence – that they've successfully remained overseas at the end of their studies (or, after returning to Australia, have secured new overseas opportunities). As a result, they've become international artists. Timothy Horn, for example (Samstag Class of 2002), now conducts a successful international career from his home and studio in the rolling hills of the Champlain Valley, in America's Charlotte, Vermont, where he crafts remarkably eloquent sculptures that sit ambiguously between the natural and constructed worlds. Nike Savvas (Samstag Class of 1996) commutes regularly between Australia and London, producing commissioned installations that are both physically immersive and optically dazzling. Many of the Samstag artists now work in this way. Theirs is the ultimate adventure: daring to ride the tiger's tail as participants in transcontinental arts culture, and enjoying a global reach not commonly available to Australian artists.

Samstag Scholars twice, in 2007 and 2009, have been selected as official Australian representatives at the international art world's most prestigious recurrent event, the Venice Biennale. Exhibiting here is a pinnacle of professional achievement for any artist. The specially commissioned solo projects of Callum Morton (Samstag Class of 2003) and Shaun Gladwell (Samstag Class of 2001) – displayed in and around Australia's beautifully located Pavilion on the Canale di Sant Elena, in the Giardini della Biennale in Venice <sup>4</sup> – heralded brilliant careers. <sup>5</sup>

John GOLLINGS (b. 1944) Denton Corker Marshall's Australian Pavilion in Venice, 2015 © 2011–16 John Gollings Photography

Shaun GLADWELL (b. 1972)
Portrait of Mark Donaldson VC
(video still), edition 1/1, 2011
HD video, 16:9, 21 minutes
23 seconds
Commissioned 2011
Australian War Memorial,
Canberra

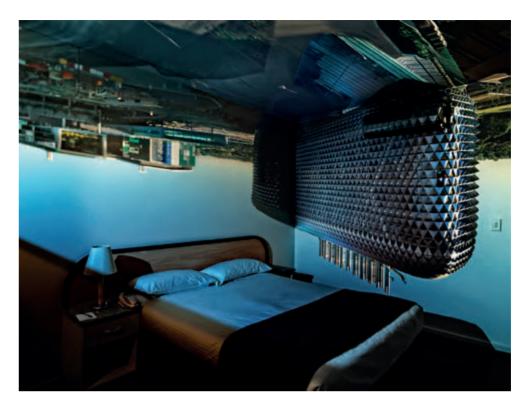


These artists exemplify the numerous 'Samstagers' now regularly curated into significant exhibitions, and whose work is not only collected in Australia, but internationally. Kristian Burford, for example, a graduate of the South Australian School of Art (Samstag Class of 1999) remained in Los Angeles after completing a master's degree at the distinguished ArtCenter College of Design in 2003. Following regular exhibiting in America, and years of hard-working persistence, Burford caught the eye of François Pinault, one of the world's most influential collectors of contemporary art, who acquired two of Burford's distinctively powerful sculptural installations for his famous collection.<sup>6</sup>

Would Gordon Samstag have imagined such success for his scholars? Perhaps not; it's impossible to say. But he surely wanted it; his instruction that the Samstag opportunity (and implicitly the scholars, too) be well promoted, suggests ambition for his scholarships. The result, many years on, has been widespread recognition of the Samstag name, and enviable visibility for the scholars.

But while international recognition is a convincing indicator of professional accomplishment for artists, it is only one criterion of success. Another significant measure of the Samstag bequest's outcomes (and its legacy) is what the Samstag Scholars bring home with them and (regardless of where they live) what they continue to contribute to Australian culture as knowledgeable, networked and engaged professionals.

Based these days largely in London and best known for his meditative, slow-motion videos of skateboarding, Shaun Gladwell became the first artist working with digital media (and the first Samstag alumnus) to travel as an official war artist for the Australian War Memorial, following his appointment in 2009. Over the course of his deployment, attached to the Australian Defence Force, Gladwell travelled through Afghanistan and to various bases in the Middle East to record and interpret the Australian experience of war. The resulting body of work – comprising videos and suites of photographs – is a unique and compelling document of military life at the front line of conflict, and is now part of the Australian War Memorial Collection. Gladwell was again commissioned by the War Memorial, in 2011, to produce a video, *Portrait of Mark Donaldson VC*. Donaldson had been awarded the Victoria Cross (the highest Australian military award for courage) for his exceptional bravery when his convoy was ambushed in Afghanistan's Uruzgan Province, in September 2008. Reflecting on Donaldson's



Robyn STACEY (b. 1952)

Comfort Inn Riviera, SAMHRI,
2015

Type C print
110.0 x 146.7 cm (43½ x 57¾ in)
edition of 5, from Ray of Light
(2016 Adelaide Biennial of
Australian Art)

© Robyn Stacey

Courtesy the artist and
STILLS Gallery, Sydney,
and Jan Manton Art, Brisbane

achievements, Gladwell has said: I am interested in this idea that he is a part of the Special Air Service Regiment, and they're trained to kill, and they are very good at what they do, but he is known for saving a life. There is this beautiful contradiction in that.'<sup>7</sup>

More than half of the Samstag Scholars have been women, not as a result of any planned strategy of gender equity, but simply by virtue of their compelling strengths as artists. As an example, the intriguing photographic work of Robyn Stacey (Samstag Class of 1994) speaks of science, observation and invention. In particular, she cleverly reprises the ancient craft of camera obscura for a modern world, recreating the same visual mystery that fascinated Aristotle, Leonardo da Vinci and Isaac Newton alike. But in Stacey's hands the camera obscura also delivers a spellbinding contemporary experience of colour and discovery in darkened rooms, to hushed audiences. Stacey comfortably occupies other places artistically, as well, contemplating as she regularly does, through her other, conventional camera, the beauty inherent in floral still life. She is an example of illuminated originality and she typifies the successful Samstag artist: always experimenting, always investigating, curious and accomplished.<sup>8</sup>

The Samstag experience is transformative. Enriched by the alchemy of time spent overseas, the Samstag Scholars emerge changed, both as artists and as people. Inevitably, the experience makes them deeper, more skilled, street-wise and knowledgeable, in a process of accelerated professional development that's been called 'the Samstag effect'.

When given the news that they are to receive the gift of Gordon Samstag's remarkable, life-changing largesse, the successful recipients of Samstag Scholarships are right to be pleased and excited. Quite apart from the thrilling prospect of navigating alien ports in a secure manner, to be named a Samstag Scholar is to enjoy immediate status, prestige and visibility in one of the arts' most competitive and challenging fields of endeavour. It's for good reason that the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships have become known in Australia as 'golden passports to rapid success in the professional visual arts'. 10

The Samstag Scholars are already a large, high-achieving cohort. As they continue to mature and progress as artists and as their numbers grow, their collective impact on Australian culture will be inestimable. In the meantime, a small selection of their work is presented in this book, to illustrate the rich values embodied in Samstag's progressive scholarship culture, and the wonderful diversity of practices and concerns of the exceptional Australian artists it rewards. Looking at these works after a quarter of a century of successful, celebrated Samstag benefaction, it seems safe to assume, surely, that both Anne and Gordon Samstag would be pleased, if not delighted. 11

### THE ANNE & GORDON SAMSTAG MUSEUM OF ART

Early in 2005, the University of South Australia (UniSA) commenced demolition of an old warehouse complex at its city campus in the west end of Adelaide. It was prime land facing Adelaide's premier cultural boulevard, North Terrace. The plan was to build a distinguished chancellery and head office for South Australia's newest university, which had, coincidentally, been established in 1991 at the same time as the Samstag bequest was announced. Significantly, the UniSA's City West campus was but a walk from a row of grand, colonial-era heritage institutions, including Government House and the Art Gallery of South Australia.

The UniSA's Hawke Building, as it would be called (after former Australian Prime Minister Robert J.L. [Bob] Hawke, whose Prime Ministerial Library was endowed to the university) was a substantial and visionary project. The 'landmark' building – promoted as a 'public education facility' – would not only house the chancellery and its attendant senior managers and administrative staff, but also a major 450-seat public auditorium and facilities for corporate hospitality and events. Additionally, the Hawke Building would feature an ambitiously conceived gallery for the visual arts.

The university vice chancellor at the time, Professor Denise Bradley, <sup>12</sup> had a belief that the fledgling university should host a world-class art museum. Bradley, who'd successfully steered the UniSA through its considerable early challenges of establishment, had observed with interest the achievements of the UniSA's Art Museum, which for several years had occupied one of the old warehouses now being demolished. Back in 1997, the director of that museum, Erica Green, had somehow found the funds to refurbish the decrepit 'Tiles of Distinction' warehouse (as it once had been called) and convert it into a rudimentary but effective venue for the Art Museum, which had previously been housed in limiting isolation at the old Underdale campus in the suburbs, where it co-existed with the South Australian School of Art (SASA). <sup>13</sup> This initiative, supported approvingly by Bradley, would breathe new life into the museum's programs for the next seven years, bringing new audiences to its door and a new concept of community engagement to the UniSA. The Art Museum's very first project in the refurbished city building was suitably ambitious: *Lustmord*, an exhibition by the prominent international artist Jenny Holzer, was the 1998 Adelaide Festival of Art's standout visual arts initiative. More followed. <sup>14</sup>

Professor Bradley's interest in the Art Museum reflected her appreciation that a 'great' university (as she hoped the UniSA could become) would not be defined only by its key academic disciplines, but have a true diversity of attributes, including cultural ones, thereby connecting the institution to a range of communities beyond the cohort of its given roles. Already publicly visible in South Australia and of proven reputation, the Art Museum would satisfy that objective. However, Professor Bradley was also conscious that, alone among South Australia's three universities, the UniSA boasted an operating art school; indeed, a distinguished



art school with history – some said it was the oldest in the country. Furthermore, the institution was host to the prestigious Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships. It was a strategic critical mass; all in all, the university was patron to a cluster of high-quality cultural assets, unique in Australia.

The Melbourne architectural firm that the UniSA had appointed as architects for the Hawke Building – John Wardle Architects, in association with Hassell – had earlier also been commissioned to design a new complex at the City West campus to house the SASA. That construction was nearing completion just as the Hawke Building project was getting underway. Indeed, in 2005, after more than forty years in the Adelaide suburbs, the SASA finally returned to the city, to new purpose-built premises in the Kaurna Building at the City West campus. It was just a little further down the street on North Terrace from where the school had commenced life in 1861.

A consultative architect, John Wardle was open to ideas. He sought out Erica Green to shape the brief for a state-of-the-art university art museum that might take full advantage of international best practice in museum design. Fortuitously, the state government ensured the project's ambitious scope when, unexpectedly, it instructed that its three-million-dollar contribution to the Hawke Building's capital cost be directed exclusively to the art museum component. It was a windfall for the visual arts. Ultimately, the intensively collaborative design process – involving Wardle, Green and Wardle's colleague and principal managing architect, Meaghan Dwyer – resulted in a finely considered, two-level space of elegant proportions, with advanced technical amenities for the display of art. The new art museum comprised three distinct galleries of architectural distinction and became the second-largest public art gallery in the state, after the Art Gallery of South Australia.

In 2005, as Samstag director, I wrote to the Samstag trustee advising that the UniSA was seeking sponsorships in exchange for 'naming rights' to various public spaces within the new Hawke Building. I outlined a proposal by which the trustee, in its role on behalf of Gordon Samstag's 'Fine Arts Trust', might formally offer to sponsor naming rights for the university's new Art Museum gallery. I held a firm belief that the naming rights opportunity was one that (as I wrote at the time) 'promised significant long-term benefits for the identity

Representatives of Mr Samstag's Trustee - Bank of America, Florida, USA were honoured guests at the official launch of the University of South Australia's new Hawke Building, on Thursday, October 11, 2007. Named after South Australia's only Prime Minister, the building houses the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre and the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art. Pictured from left: Mr Dennis C. Brown. Esq (Attorney, Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC, Naples, Florida, USA); Mrs Linda Brown; Professor Michael Rowan, Pro Vice Chancellor, Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, UniSA; The Hon RJL (Bob) Hawke AC; Mrs Kathy Silvestri; and Mr Errol T. Silvestri (Senior Vice President, Bank of America, Naples, Florida, USA). Photograph by Sam Noonan Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA



Wonderful World, exhibition installation at Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, UniSA, 2007. Photograph by Trevor Mein

and reputation of Mr Samstag's bequest in Australia and would deeply strengthen the already excellent University and Trustee relationship in an enduring manner'. I also believed that the UniSA would benefit uniquely: the Samstag name would add considerable prestige and national recognition to the identity of the Art Museum. As I noted in my letter, 'by publicly celebrating its pre-eminent association with the Samstag benefaction, the proposed naming rights [present] the university with a very special opportunity'. <sup>17</sup>

The trustee endorsed the proposal, so enabling its presentation to the UniSA, which in turn expressed strong interest. However, the trustee advised that, to become formal, the scheme – for in-perpetuity naming rights to the new Art Museum and involving an agreed payment to the UniSA of AU\$150,000,<sup>18</sup> to be drawn from the Samstag Scholarship Program's annual promotional budget incrementally over a period of several years – would first require approval by the Circuit Court of Collier County, through the Florida State Attorney's office. That procedure would be a final, challenging task for Arthur E. Bongiovanni, the trustee's attorney at Bond, Schoeneck & King, in Naples, Florida, before his long-deferred retirement.

In April 2006, with court approval subsequently gained, Errol T. Silvestri, Senior Vice President at the Bank of America in Florida, representing the Samstag trustee, made a formal presentation to the university outlining its naming rights proposal. On May 2, 2006, Professor Bradley responded:

Thank you for your letter dated April 7, 2006 regarding the proposal to name our new art museum the Anne and Gordon Samstag Museum of Art: University of South Australia.

I agree that a closer connection with the Fine Arts Trust of Gordon Samstag through this naming opportunity will strengthen our existing excellent relationship and add significant standing to the museum.



Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, UniSA. Photograph by Trevor Mein

The University is honoured by this offer and I agree with the conditions outlined in your letter. I look forward to the opportunities afforded by our continued partnership.

And so the former University of South Australia Art Museum became the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art. The renamed museum opened to the public in October 2007, as part of the overall celebrations that launched the Hawke Building. In attendance to witness and experience the historic activities and to rub shoulders with dignitaries, including Bob Hawke, were Errol T. Silvestri, representing the trustee, and his colleague Dennis Brown, the new attorney at Bond, Schoeneck & King, along with their respective spouses.

There had been growing anticipation in South Australia for the Samstag Museum of Art's opening, and close interest within the national university art-museum community. It seemed that most of Adelaide turned out for the inaugural occasion, the event anchored by a grand, multimedia exhibition, Wonderful World, curated by the museum's director, Erica Green.

The establishment of the Samstag Museum of Art was not simply a demonstration of institutional confidence by the UniSA in its art museum, and in its future ambition and role. Rather, for those who gave the moment deeper thought, it spoke to the historical idea of culture, as an indispensable civilising influence in society, bolstering the university's claim to institutional vision as it entered the twenty-first century.

There was a further, elegant bonus in it all – a deliciously ironic one – especially for those who personally remembered Gordon Samstag and his inscrutable, sometimes frustrating ways, and his barely believable ambitions. It was that the circle now was complete: Gordon's cherished dream of a grand exhibition had been delivered in spades. He and Anne were home.

# NOTES FOR THE SIREN CALL OF THE SOUTHERN SEA

#### PRELUDE TO A JOURNEY

- 1 Howard P. Barker, Sarasota, Florida, letter to author, November 12, 1993. Samstag had on one occasion invited Barker to 'crew' with him in a race, although Barker was inexperienced at sailing: they came in second. Barker thought Gordon had been 'very patient with me'.
- 2 The Samstags arrived first in Sydney, Australia, on 31 May, 1961, most likely flying on a Lockheed Electra airliner, having secured a three-year business visa in March that year. See Australian National Archives, entry D4878.
- 3 'After some correspondence in 1960 between GS and Mr Victor Greenhalgh (Head, School of Art, RMIT), Gordon was invited to teach approximately twenty hours per week on subjects which included illustration, figure and portrait drawing. He accepted the offer and commenced a temporary appointment as Instructor in Art on June 5, 1961. There is no record of Anne Samstag working at RMIT.'Tracey Paterson, Senior Employee Adviser, People Services, RMIT, email to Daniel Thomas, January 17, 2005. The author thanks Daniel Thomas for generously sharing his research notes, gathered between December 2004 and January 2005 for his article 'Meet the Samstags', which was published in June 2005 in Art & Australia.
- 4 Ray Spilman and his wife, Mary, knew the Samstags when they lived in adjoining apartment buildings in Fleetwood, Bronxville, during World War II. Ray believed that Gordon had previously been to Australia, although he 'couldn't say for sure' (Ray and Mary Spilman, interview with author, Darien, Connecticut, May, 1996). Ray Spilman (1911–2000) was an American industrial designer and President of the American Society of Industrial Designers; see Syracuse University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center.
- 5 Elizabeth M. Doyle, Burnside, Adelaide, letter to author, November 27, 1998. The Samstags lived at 25 Sunnyside Road, St Georges, Adelaide, from 1962 to 1967, before buying land at 14 Bayview Crescent, Beaumont, and building their own, architect-designed house. Doyle described the Samstags' Sunnyside Road property as an 'English cottage on a deep, sloping block, with magnificent views over the city of Adelaide, and down to the beaches.'
- 6 Ihio
- 7 See Anne Samstag, letter to Angus Cameron, Editor, Alfred A. Knopf, May 2, 1961, in the Samstag correspondence, Alfred A. Knopf archive, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin. Dog obedience was especially popular among the rich in Manhattan, where competitions would often be held at the Rockefeller Center. The 'sport' had its start in America in the 1930s, largely through a collaboration between Helene Whitehouse Walker (charter member of the Poodle Club of America) and the legendary dog trainer Blanche Saunders, who together travelled across the United States with their poodles in 1937, promoting and giving dog obedience demonstrations. See Catherine C. Reiley, 'Poodles in obedience', in Mackey J. Irick, The New Poodle, Howell Book House, 1986, Chapter 52.

- 8 Manufacturers like Kimball advertised a 'handkerchief of the month' in *Vogue* magazine. See the Handkerchief Heroes website: http://handkerchiefheroes.com/home/.
- 9 Khrushchev later claimed to have been misquoted, suggesting he actually had been referring to the Marxist principle expressed in the 'Communist Manifesto' (Chapter 1), that 'the bourgeoisie produces its own grave-diggers' (in other words, literally, 'your own working class will bury you').
- 10 Although ultimately of course the United States claimed victory in its technological competition with the Soviet Union, when it landed the first humans on the moon with *Apollo 11*, on July 20, 1969, the Soviets had dramatically led the United States into space with the first satellite launch of *Sputnik 1*, on October 4, 1957, and then with the first human in space, Yuri Gagarin, on April 12, 1961, just a few days before the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion.
- 11 Peter Ognibene, 'Memoire of Anne and Gordon Samstag', via email to Lea Rosson DeLong, August 17, 2012. Richard Hayley Lever (1876–1958) was born in South Australia and moved to the United States in 1912, where he became known for his paintings, etchings and other works depicting East-Coast landscapes and seascapes. He taught from 1919 to 1931 at the Art Students League and also spent a good deal of time in the Cape Cod area. Peter Ognibene recalled that Hayley Lever may have been at Provincetown in 1929 at the same time as his parents 'Gus' and Jo Ognibene and Samstag. The author thanks Lea Rosson DeLong for generously sharing her research into Anne and Gordon Samstag.
- 12 The film was based on the 1957 novel of the same name, written by British-Australian author Nevil Shute, after he had emigrated to Australia.
- 13 By some reports, the quote may be apocryphal, a manipulation by the Australian media which hounded the Hollywood star during her time in Melbourne. A good account of the film's production can be found on the online 'Turner Classic Movies' (TCM) site in which the Ava Garner quote is reported somewhat differently as, Tm here to make a picture about the end of the world, and this sure is the place for it!' www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/17688/On-the-Beach/articles.htm
- 14 Mentioned by Susan Spilman in an undated letter to author, June 2000, in which she also advised the recent deaths of her parents (and Gordon and Anne's close friends), Ray and Mary Spilman in South Yarmouth, Cape Cod, where they had retired. Anne Samstag was particularly fond of Susan, and gifted her a small drawing of playful kittens. In a subsequent email to author (March 8, 2015), Susan Spilman confirmed her understanding that the Samstags had indeed been sailing their own yacht, and not only to the Caribbean, but to 'many parts of the world'.
- 15 The Samstags' relationship with Knopf editor Angus Cameron eventually was as much friendship as business and lasted the entire period of their time in Australia. During its life, after a slow start, Training Your Own Dog averaged modest sales of around five hundred copies a year, and a Spanish language edition was also published for the South American market. The extensive business correspondence between Knopf and Anne and Gordon Samstag is

- documented in the Alfred A. Knopf archive, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.
- 16 A compelling and informative account of the American Marines who came to Melbourne from the Guadalcanal campaign was presented as an exhibition and publication titled Over-Paid, Over-Sexed and Over-Here? U.S. Marines in Wartime Melbourne 1943, held at the City Gallery, Melbourne Town Hall, in 2010. An online downloadable catalogue is available at: www.history.unimelb.edu.au/ overhere/indexmain.html
- 17 In Samstag's 'Application for Permission to Enter Australia' on a 'Business Visit', approved on March 7, 1961, he cites his birth address as 316 West Ninety-seventh St. However, his birth certificate (#29760) shows it to be 307 West Ninety-seventh St. On the birth certificate, Gordon's father is entered as 'Sol' M. Samstag, aged thirty-five, a 'merchant' born in Washington, DC, while his mother, Evelyn Scharff Samstag, is recorded as aged twenty-four, born in St Louis, Missouri
- 18 The author gratefully acknowledges the extensive research into the family histories of both Gordon Samstag and Anne (Davis) Samstag, undertaken for the Samstag Museum of Art by Judith Green.
- 19 S. Bernheimer and Sons (Port Gibson, Mississippi) Mercantile Records, 1891–1904, A 2044.000, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, available online at mdah.state.ms.us/manuscripts/z2033.html, accessed December 30, 2013.
- 20 See 'Hebrew Charity: The Best System of Relief Ever Devised', St Louis Globe Democrat, October 16, 1887.
- 21 Samuel Bernheimer's house in Port Gibson did burn down, but in 1900, and was immediately rebuilt. See Leo E. Turitz and Evelyn Turitz, Jews in Early Mississippi, University Press of Mississippi, 1983, p. 36, and the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities Port Gibson, Mississippi, Goldring/ Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, available online at www.isjl.org/mississippi-port-gibson-encyclopedia. html
- 22 See 'Nicholas Scharff' in John W. Leonard (ed.), The Book of St Louisans: A biographical dictionary of leading living men of the city of St Louis, St Louis Republic, St Louis, p. 508 (1906 edition) or pp. 524–25 (1912 edition). This source also has entries on Scharff's brothers Adolph and Lazarus, and on Nicholas's son, Edward E. Scharff. A fourth Scharff brother was Moses, who was also in business in St Louis.
- 23 'Contest \$1,000,000 Will; Mississippi Heirs Say Jacob Bernheimer Acted Under Undue Influence', New York Times, September 24, 1911, and 'Bernheimer Will Upheld. New York Man and His Sister Will Receive About \$1,000,000 Apiece', New York Times, November 12, 1912.
- 24 Samuel Samstag was included several times in an 1860 directory of Washington, DC, which also featured his advertisement identifying himself as an 'Auctioneer and Merchant' at 512 Seventh St West, offering jewellery, watches and 'fancy goods and notions': William H. Boyd, (ed.), Boyd's Washington and Georgetown Directory, Taylor and Maury, Washington, DC, 1860, p. 34; the Samstag business is also cited on pages 132 and 178. Samuel Samstag is listed as a milliner in 'Jewish Residents of Washington, DC', a

- directory included in 'Jewish Life in Mr Lincoln's City', Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington; exhibition catalogue available online at www.jhsgw.org/exhibitions/online/lincolns-city/collections/show/3, accessed August 4, 2012. A notice of the death of Samuel's wife, Augusta Pribham Samstag, in 1913 appeared in the *New York Times*: 'Samstag On May 17, at her residence, Augusta, widow of the late Samuel Samstag, in the 74th year of her age', in 'Died', *New York Times*, May 18, 1913.
- 25 The author gratefully acknowledges the late Ned Lewison (1911–2005), a distant relative of Gordon's who assisted with research into the Samstag family tree. Lewison's greatgreat-grandmother was the sister of Gordon's grandfather, Samuel Samstag.
- 26 See 'Baruch–Samstag Engagement', Herald-Journal,
  December 30, 1934. Also 'Memorials', Princeton Alumni
  Weekly, vol. 85, issue 1, September 12, 1984, p. 37.
- 27 'L. Albert Samstag, Realty Executive; Costume Jewelry Manufacturer 40 Years, Until 1931 – Dies Here of Heart Attack', New York Times, June 11, 1937.
- 28 Sidney James Bernheimer was the senior partner in Sidney Bernheimer and Company and on the Board of Directors of the Northern National Bank, both in New York, 'Northern National Bank', New York Times, May 15, 1902.
- 29 See The St Louis Republic (St Louis, Missouri), November 13, 1902, in Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress (http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020274/1902-11-13/ed-1/seq-7/)
- 30 The business was located at 717 Fifth Ave, opposite the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Nicholas remained a consultant to *Time* until June 1961, the same month Anne and Gordon Samstag arrived in Australia.
- 31 'New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Books of the Year, 1952–2002', *New York Times*, November 17, 2002.
- 32 Published by Ivan Obolensky, Inc., New York, 1962.
- 33 Lee Wright to Henry Robbins, internal Knopf memorandum, June 7, 1962.
- 34 The influential critic George Oppenheimer wrote a favourable review of the novel, applauding Nicholas Samstag for having 'milked dry the sacred cows of the advertising business and exposed its inhabitants'. He thought that Samstag's portrayal of the advertising 'tycoons and their would-be-tycoon toadies' had a 'loud, insistent ring of truth'. Oppenheimer also approved of the book's main character, Richard Altman (son of a German-Jewish family) as a non-conforming 'mugwamp', though ultimately unlikeable for his cavalier treatment of women, George Oppenheimer, 'Maverick on Madison Avenue', *The Saturday Review*, April 2, 1966, p. 40.
- 35 Harold Christopher (1935–86), Anthony (1941–2011) and Nicholas George John Frederick (b. 1954).
- 36 The building also had been used as the protagonists' residence in Roman Polanski's legendary horror film, 'Rosemary's Baby', released just three months after Nicholas's death.
- 37 New York Times, March 28, 1968.
- 38 See www8.gsb.columbia.edu

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- 39 Evelyn was the sixth of eight children, seven of whom were extant at their father Nicholas's death in 1924 (Albert had died at five, in 1882). Gordon's three maternal uncles and four aunts were: Edward (1871–1951), Blanche (1873–1958, m. Skrainka), Sidney (1874–1968), Albert (1877–82), Maud (1881–1967, m. Barkhouse), Cora Helen (1884–1948, m. Sundheim) and Aurelia (1887–1964, m. Baumann).
- 40 Henry and Renee Samstag had no children and donated millions to medical research.
- 41 New York Times obituary, April 24, 1984.
- 42 See Alice Gilborn, The Walter Hochschild Camp at Eagle Nest, Adirondack Museum: The Adirondack Historical Association, Blue Mountain Lake, New York, 1975.
- 43 When interviewed by Baltimore-based genealogist Ned Lewison (see note 25) in 'around 1982', Gordon's cousin Louis Albert Samstag Jr reported being aware (although erroneously) that Gordon had been the recipient of 'two' Pulitzer prizes, secured the same year, suggesting his relationship with Gordon was distant. Ned Lewison, email to Jim Cowley, August 6, 2001. The author acknowledges with appreciation the valuable research undertaken by the late Jim Cowley, undertaken as part of an unfinished PhD, sponsored by the Samstag Program, UniSA, through the SASA (with additional funding through a federal government ARC, SPIRT program) on the subject of 'Gordon Samstag in Australia'.
- 44 Not to be confused with Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's progressive artist centre, the 'Whitney' Studio Club (the embryonic Whitney Museum at 10 West Eighth St), the 'Studio Club of New York' was established in 1906 'to serve as a home and club center for art students', and operated from 1911. The Studio Club was in a handsome building bounded on the east by the Colony Club, and on the west by the Knickerbocker Club. See Mrs Stephen Baker, President of the Studio Club of New York, in 'What They Do At the Studio Club of New York', New York Times, January 18, 1913.
- 45 Marriage licence no. 22795, dated November 1, 1933 (though the actual marriage took place on November 3), lists Samstag's address as 49 West Twelfth St and Anne's as 117 East Thirty-first St, which was her father's home in New York City.
- 46 Among the many genealogical lines in Anne Samstag's ancestry, the Mott family is exemplary of its depth and influence. For a forensic account, see Thomas C. Cornell, Adam and Anne Mott: Their Ancestors and Their Descendants, Poughkeepsie, New York, 1890.
- 47 The six sisters were: Helen Maria Davis (1904–49), Martha Mott ('Patt') Davis (1905–83), Priscilla ('Prill') Davis (1907–90), Anna Lawton Davis (1908–87), and Frances ('Frin') Bigelow Davis (1911–84). The youngest, Lucretia Mott Davis, died in her first year, in 1912.
- 48 On May 7, 1915, only a few months after Charles and Grace travelled on the ship, the *Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German submarine as it sailed from Liverpool to New York; it sank in 18 minutes, with the loss of 1198 lives. The incident contributed to America's entry into World War I.

- 49 The records list several trips made by the Davis family, led by Grace, to and from Europe between 1922 and 1931. For example, in May 1922, aged thirteen, Anne with her mother Grace, and sisters Priscilla and Frances travelled to Italy and Switzerland on the *Patria*, returning to New York one year later from Cherbourg, France, June 4, 1923, on the *President Harding*. Anne made other trips in 1925, 1928 and 1930. Her final trip most probably was in 1931 when, on August 22, aged twenty-two, she returned alone with her mother from Europe on the *Britannic*. See 'New York, Passenger Lists, 1820–1957', an online database of Ancestry. com Operations, Inc, 2010, www.ancestry.com
- 50 For an informative and warm-hearted account of the Davis family's life, see the online publication written in 1962 by Patt (Martha Mott) Brand-Erichsen, and published on the website of the Elverhøj Museum, "The Four-Leafed Clover: A Biography of Viggo Brandt-Erichsen (1896–1955)".
- 1 Ibid
- 52 Presumably, Charles Davis had rented the home from Lowell's heirs, who later, in 1925, sold the property to a Harvard professor of medieval art, Arthur Kingsley Porter, who in turn bequeathed it to Harvard. For an entertaining account of Elmwood's eventual transfer to Harvard, in 1962, see Andrew T. Weil, 'Fords Occupy Restored Elmwood', *The Harvard Crimson*, September 23, 1963.
- 53 Started in 1886 and named after its founder, Mary Pickard Winsor, since 1910 it has simply been called The Winsor School. In 2007 it was judged by the Wall Street Journal as 'one of the world's top 50 schools for preparing students to enter American universities' ('How the schools stack up', Wall Street Journal, December 12, 2007).
- 54 Quoted in Susan Jacoby, Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2005. Among the considerable literature on Mott, see also Margaret Hope Bacon, Valiant Friend: The Life of Lucretia Mott, Walker and Company, New York, 1980.
- 55 The first of the Winthrop Fleet ships sailed from Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, England, in April 1630. Although the historical passenger lists are incomplete, John Bigelow is widely assumed to have been part of the original flotilla of eleven ships, along with his sister Elizabeth, on account of other proven Winthrop Fleet families that are known to have come from the same area as where Bigelow had been baptised, in Wrentham, Norfolk. A good account of the Winthrop Fleet and the Bigelow link can be found on the websites of the Bigelow Society at www.bigelowsociety.com and the Winthrop Society: www.winthropsociety.com
- 56 For example, Marshall T. Bigelow's book, Mistakes in Writing English and How to Avoid Them, copyrighted by him in 1896 and published in 1898 (Lee and Shepard Publishers, Boston), had its copyright re-assigned to her. See 'Grace Bigelow Davis ... as child of the deceased author, in renewal for 28 years', renewal #5209, February 14, 1914; original entry, October 11, 1886, no. 22837, in 'Bigelow, Marshall T.', Catalogue of Copyright Entries, part 1, group 1, books, New Series, vol. 6, group 1, no. 15, April 15, 1909, Washington, Government Printing Office Library Division, 1909.
- 57 Warland was also the editor of the Boston Atlas and, for several years from 1834, the *National Eagle*, in Claremont, New Hampshire. He covered the Mexican War for the

- American Star while serving as a quartermaster sergeant in the Ninth Infantry (Karl Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 1846–1848, Macmillan, New York, 1974, p. 324). Warland's *The Plume: A tuft of literary feathers* was published by Benjamin B. Mussey in Boston in 1847.
- 58 Radcliffe College had until 1894 been merely an informal 'annexe' of the all-male Harvard University.
- 59 Brand-Erichsen, p. 71.
- 60 The 1930 census, the year before, showed that Alice Bancroft was living with Charles at 117 East Thirty-first St, New York (though they then were not yet married), as was also Charles's half-sister, Martha Davis.
- 61 Grace's much older brother, Charles Warland Bigelow (1853-94) drowned when he was forty-one.
- 62 Published by Macmillan, New York, 1917.
- 63 They were married on September 2, 1903 at Harvard Square, Cambridge.
- 64 Grace had applied for a passport for overseas travel on October 6, 1890 (she was twenty-three), and she is shown returning to America (New York) on April 30, 1891, on the SS *Lahn*, sailing first class from Bremen, Germany, via Southampton, England. See 'New York, Passenger Lists, 1820–1957' (online database), Ancestry.com Operations, Inc. 2010
- 65 Alice Hinds had studied in Paris under the painter Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret; she and William Stone married in 1887 and maintained a Boston studio. See the biography 'William Stone' at www.bellusfineart.com
- 66 For an excellent account of the history of Yarmouth and its settlement and historic sites, see the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth website, http://www.hsoy.org
- 67 In 1918, Lucy Davis became a mature-age graduate of the renowned women's-only Vassar College, in Poughkeepsie, New York.
- 68 In her 1962 autobiography, Martha Mott (Patt) Brand-Erichsen reports that Alice was experienced in taking students on tours of Europe, and that in around 1925 at the same time that her younger sisters Anne and Priscilla were enrolled at a Swiss school in Lausanne she (Patt) had instead travelled with her 'Aunt' Alice Stone to Spain, where they 'visited museums and painted in the Alhambra, and explored together'.
- 69 Similarly, Patt Mott Brand-Erichsen confirms, in her autobiography, that she had studied for three years at 'the Museum School'.
- 70 Davis started a Mining Engineering degree at Columbia's School of Mines in 1882, later deferring, and then switching to Civil Engineering. For a detailed account of Davis's achievements, see the biographical profile in Horace W. Merwin (ed.), 'National News Service: Advance Biographical Bulletin', 1776 Broadway, New York, May 1946. This extensive biography, dense with minutiae, has a semi-promotional tone and appears to have been ghostwritten by Davis himself; the black-and-white cover features a portrait of Davis painted by Gordon Samstag (see page 78).
- 71 Merwin, 'National News Service'.

- 72 From an interview with R. Mott Davis by R.J. Chorley, September 7, 1962, in Richard J. Chorley et al., The History of the Study of Landforms, or the Development of Geomorphology, Volume two: the Life and Work of William Morris Davis, Methuen & Co Ltd, London, 1973, p. 285. Charles offered his aunt, Anna Hallowell, and uncle, William Morris Davis, \$75,000 apiece, but they felt \$100,000 each would be more appropriate. Ultimately, William accepted a lesser amount of \$50,000, so that his sister Anna and her family could have \$100,000.
- 73 See Richard F. Weingroff, 'Good Roads Everywhere: Charles Henry Davis and the National Highways Association', Federal Highway Administration, USA Department of Transportation, available at www.fhwa.dot. gov/infrastructure/davis.htm
- 74 His 1889 passport application, when he was twenty-four, shows that his height was 5 feet 10¾ inches (180 centimetres).
- 75 Brand-Erichsen, p. 71.
- 76 Weingroff, 'Good Roads Everywhere'. Eventually, Davis's influence as an advocate was neutralised by President Harding's establishment of the *Federal Aid Highway Act* of 1921.
- 77 Among several comprehensive portraits of Charles Henry Davis and his life and achievements, see Ted Frothingham, 'Charles Henry Davis: Amazing Millionaire', published as a series of thirteen essays in the *Yarmouth Register* between June and September, 1972. Frothingham's informative account of '(Uncle Carl') Davis is written with transparent admiration and affection: his father, Theodore Frothingham, a Harvard graduate with a law office in New York, was a close legal adviser, friend and associate of Davis, and purchased seven acres of Cape Cod land from him on which he built a family home. The essays are available as a downloadable PDF on the Elverhøj Museum website: http://www.elverhoj.org/archives/davis.html
- 78 For a good account of the *Ildico* rescue, see Ted Frothingham, 'Charles Henry Davis: Amazing Millionaire', *Yarmouth Register*, Chapter III, June 29, 1972.
- 79 For details of the New York Yacht Club's (NYYC) membership in the era of Charles Davis, including the club's rules and the names of members' vessels, see *New York Yacht Club 1906*, Knickerbocker Press, New York, 1906 (published annually for the NYYC). The NYYC was also home to the legendary America's Cup, which the club retained year after year from 1857 until the Royal Yacht Club of Perth, Western Australia, famously won it with its challenger *Australia II* in 1983.
- 80 See Duncan Oliver, 'The Great Highs and Sometimes Tragic Lows of Cape Cod's Aeronautical History', in *Cape Cod Life*, November 10, 2008.
- 81 David Lardner, 'Candidate', *The New Yorker*, June 24, 1944, p. 17.
- 82 See the *Time* magazine report 'A Little Modest', December 30, 1946.
- 83 John W. Hevener, Which Side Are You On: The Harlan County coal miners, 1931–39, University of Illinois Press, Champaign, Illinois, 2002.

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- 84 Quoted in John Egerton, Generations: An American Family, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1986, p. 100.
- 85 The Kentenia Corp syndicate was comprised principally of Charles Henry Davis and Delano; however, it also included a consortium of smaller shareholders, including local lawyers, merchants and politicians, and other members of the Roosevelt family. Capitalised at \$10 million, Delano and Davis shared \$4.25 million, and Charles additionally had a further \$2 million stake, alone. See Harry M. Caudill, Theirs Be the Power: the moguls of eastern Kentucky, University of Illinois Press, Champaign, Illinois, 1983, p. 87.
- 86 Egerton, p. 99.
- 87 Hevener, p. 3.
- 88 The mine operators sought to recover their costs through imposing lowered wages on their effectively captive miners.
- 89 The Harlan County War is remembered in a famous song 
  'Which Side Are You On?' written in 1931 by Florence Reece, the wife of a union organiser, for the United Mine Workers in Harlan County, and subsequently performed memorably by a number of renowned musicians, notably Pete Seeger and the Almanac Singers. A television film, 
  Harlan County War (2000), was made about the coalminers' 
  struggle; directed by Tony Bill and written by Peter 
  Silverman, the film starred Holly Hunter, Stellan Skarsgård 
  and Ted Levine.
- 90 John W. Hevener's Which Side Are You On provides one of the most widely referenced recent accounts of the Harlan County Wars.
- 91 Cauhill, p. 129.
- 92 Egerton, p. 100.
- 93 Robert D. Temple, Edge Effects: The border-name places, iUniverse, Bloomington, Indiana, 2008, p. 165. The sale in fact was to the Pocahontas Development Corporation, a subsidiary of the Norfolk & Western Railroad.
- 94 Charles Davis formed a committed relationship with Adler, endowing a professorial chair of medical psychology for him at the Long Island College of Medicine in Brooklyn, in 1931, and guaranteeing payment of an annual professorial salary of \$8500 for five years, on condition that Dr Adler be given the appointment. For an extensive discussion of Davis's relationship with Adler, see Edward Hoffman, The Drive for Self: Alfred Adler and the founding of individual psychology, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, Massachusetts, 1994, pages 217–309.
- 95 Leigh Matteson had a moment of tenuous fame, as a reporter investigating the sensational 1932 kidnapping and murder of the aviator Charles Lindbergh's twenty-monthold son. Early in the investigation, he correctly intuited that the kidnapper was a recent immigrant, 'born and raised in rural Germany'. Matteson confided his theory to a New Jersey policeman working on the case (a Lieutenant Parker) that the unusual handwritten 'X' in the ransom note was typical of a style taught in some rural German schools. The kidnapper was believed to be a resident of the Bronx, and Matteson suggested that the police trawl the (handwritten) applications for Bronx borough automobile licences, to identify any that matched the distinctive ransom-note 'X'. He was ignored, and soon after resigned the news service and moved full-time to Bass River. It took the police two more years to track down and charge Bruno Hauptmann

- with the kidnapping and murder; later tried and executed, he was a German immigrant living in the Bronx. See Leigh Matteson, 'I Could Have Broken the Lindbergh Case Two Years Ago', *Columbia Spectator*, October 29, 1934, vol. lviii, and Walter Brooks, 'Crime of the Century and Its Cape Cod Connection', *capecodtoday*, March 4, 2015.
- 96 Priscilla was awarded \$100,000 in Gordon's will, presumably an expression of Anne's affection for her last remaining extant sister, but also suggesting that Anne and Gordon believed she had financial need.
- 97 Jean (Brandt-Erichsen) Nandi, Unconventional Wisdom A Memoir, 2000; available as a downloadable PDF from the Elverhøj Museum website: www.elverhoj.org/archives/ nandi.html
- 98 Brandt-Erichsen, pp. 82-86.
- 99 Hovhaness was born Chakmakjian but subsequently adopted his mother's maiden name.
- 100 See the museum website: www.elverhoj.org/index.html
- 101 Nandi, Unconventional Wisdom. Jean would return to Berkeley, secure her PhD in Zoology and go on to achieve a professional life of distinction, teaching and researching in endocrinology. At Berkeley she also met and married an East Indian biologist, Satyabrata Nandi, and she was happily reunited with her father, learning and mastering the harpsichord and performing with him in a public concert at Berkeley in 1978. Later, Jean became a celebrated advocate for the disabled. She suffered from a progressive form of muscular dystrophy, which from the 1980s confined her to a wheelchair and, later, her bed; nevertheless she continued to lead an active intellectual life and to, for example, study music.
- 102 David Brandt-Erichsen, email to author, January 27, 2009. The author thanks Mr Brandt-Erichsen for his generous and illuminating correspondence concerning his family's relationship with Anne and Gordon Samstag.
- 103 Jean Nandi, email to author, forwarded by David Brandt-Erichsen, January 29, 2009.

#### STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

- 1 The literature on Cook's three voyages of exploration is vast; however, the most rewarding for students of the visual arts is Rüdiger Joppein and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, vols 1, 2 and 3, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art/Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1985.
- 2 Robert Hughes wrote that the penal colony was established 'to swallow a whole class of English society (the criminal class)'. See Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, Collins Harvill, London, 1987, p. 2.
- 3 Among the extensive literature documenting Australian colonial art and artists, an excellent and scholarly compendium is the exhibition catalogue, Daniel Thomas (ed.), Creating Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1988.
- 4 Australia became the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, a constitutional federation of six states, although (like Canada for example) it remained a member of the postcolonial British 'Commonwealth of Nations'.

- 5 The best primary source among many books relating to Australia's Aboriginal peoples, their culture, history and contemporary Indigenous activism is David Horton (ed.), The Encyclopeadia of Aboriginal Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, Aboriginal Studies Press/Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, 1994.
- 6 In Sydney, for example, the Royal George Hotel in the sailors' district off Darling Harbour in King Street, was a city refuge for the intelligentsia, renowned for the hard-drinking wildness of its libertarian patrons, known collectively as 'the Push' (university intellectuals in the main). The Newcastle Hotel, on lower George Street, was in a city district housing many artists' studios, and the Italian-owned and egalitarian Lorenzini's wine bar on Elizabeth Street (serving pasta, rough red wine and real espresso coffee) provided familial sanctuary to many immigrant artists, including refugees from the failed Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Melbourne, in its unique way, had the same, not least Jimmy Watson's Wine Bar in Carlton.
- 7 Originally a temporary World War I austerity and temperance measure that governments subsequently found expedient and were reluctant to change, the early 6 pm closing time of public bars around Australia was eventually phased out under social pressure for change, and partly due to the unintended consequence of the 'six o'clock swill', in which men drank excessively in the limited time available after they'd finished work for the day. The legal opening hours for public bars were extended to 10 pm in New South Wales from 1954, following a state referendum, and from 1966 and 1967 respectively in Victoria and South Australia.
- 8 Nevertheless, adventurous Australians with an appetite for live entertainments were well served by theatre entrepreneurs such as J.C. Williamson Ltd at one time the largest theatre company in the world whose national Tivoli circuit featured 'scantily clad' chorus girls.
- 9 Television arrived first in Sydney and Melbourne in 1956, but did not reach other parts of Australia until later (for example 1959 in Adelaide).
- Most notably by the Sydney Modernist Grace Cossington Smith. Martin Terry refers to the Sydney Harbour Bridge as 'emblematic of the city as a modernist destination', in an informative essay that charts the massive physical disruptions and cultural changes that occurred in Sydney as a result of the bridge's construction. See 'Modern Destinations', in Deborah Edwards and Denise Mimmocchi (eds), Sydney Moderns: Art for a new world (exhibition catalogue), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2013, p. 132.
- 11 That change a generational backlash against Australia's entrenched political old guard – would be driven by the Vietnam War and the bitter divisions of conscription.
- 12 From Federation, Australian governments had been committed to immigration policies that favoured British migrants, so as to sustain the country's white, Anglo-Saxon demography: to this extent, a 'White Australia Policy' also rigidly discriminated against Asian migration. Nonetheless, from the period of the nineteenth-century gold rush there

- had been significant numbers of Chinese people in Australia, and ubiquitous Chinese restaurants were very popular in the community. From 1949, Australian governments driven by a policy of 'populate or perish' had actively encouraged wider European migration to feed the growing labour needs of industry, with travel subsidies offered as incentives, especially for English-speaking, Anglo-Irish families. The Whitlam Government's 1975 *Racial Discrimination Act*, made racially based migration unlawful.
- 13 Attributed to J.S. MacDonald, then director (1936–41) of the National Gallery of Victoria. See Eileen Chanin and Steven Miller, *Degenerates and Perverts: The 1939 Herald exhibition of French and British contemporary art*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2005.
- 14 The Macquarie Galleries, initially located in Bligh Street, were in Sydney's business precinct. Bligh Street was also home to the progressive Savoy Theatre (in the building owned by the Theosophical Society), which in the 1960s was first to feature the new adult European cinema.
- 15 The exhibition included major works by Cézanne, Gauguin, Seurat, Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Bonnard and Modigliani, and also works representative of the Surrealists and the School of Paris. The reactionary National Gallery of Victoria director, J.S. MacDonald (see note 13), declined to present the exhibition, even though Sir Keith Murdoch was president of the gallery's Board of Trustees. Two-thirds of the works in the exhibition were available for purchase by Australian art museums, including, for example, significant works by Matisse and Picasso (for £500 and £600 respectively), but these and most others, including the best of them, were eventually returned to Europe after the war, unsold. As a result, the exhibition came to be seen as 'the greatest of Australia's missed opportunities to purchase fine examples of modern European art for reasonable prices'. See Chanin and Miller, p. 222.
- 16 From the early 1920s, exhibitions of Modernist work had been supported by private galleries, such as the Macquarie Galleries in Sydney, which, besides sponsoring Australian artists, showed as many as five shows of European art each year. Modernism also was celebrated in other art forms; most notably, the popular Russian Ballet, the 'Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo' (reformed from Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes by the entrepreneur Colonel de Basil, with the original costumes and dancers, and sets by Picasso, Mirò, Gris, Rouault, De Chirico and Bakst, and music by Stravinsky), toured to Australia three times between 1936 and 1940. For an informative account of the influence on Australian artists of the visiting Russian Ballet, see 'International Modernism in Australia', in Sasha Grishin, Australian Art: A history, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2013, pp. 256-57.
- 17 Facing financial ruin as a result of a failed investment, Mark Twain (real name Samuel Langhorne Clemens) travelled to Australia in 1895 as part of a worldwide, money-raising lecture tour; his account of his travels was subsequently published in 1897 as Following the Equator. For an edited selection of his writings on Australia, see Mark Twain, the Wayward Tourist: Mark Twain's adventures in Australia, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2006.

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- 18 Had the NGV not turned its back on twentieth-century European Modernist art in the period leading up to and during World War II (when the well-endowed institution had opportunities aplenty to acquire masterpieces inexpensively), it could have had one of the world's best collections. The will of Andrew Felton (1831–1904) stipulated that a European adviser be employed to recommend suitable works for purchase in the international art market. Most purchasing was done on the London art market and the value of works contributed over the bequest's life has been estimated at more than AU\$2 billion in current values. See J.R. Poynter, Mr Felton's Bequests, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2003.
- 19 Trained at the Kunstakadamie in Dusseldorf, von Guérard was appointed master of the (newly formed) painting school and curator of pictures at the NGV in 1870. After an unsuccessful sixteen months searching for gold in Ballarat, he had returned to making art, undertaking extensive field trips in search of subjects beyond Victoria, for example to Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales and, later, New Zealand. See Candice Bruce, Eugene von Guérard, Australian Gallery Directors Council in conjunction with the Australian National Gallery, Canberra, 1980.
- 20 Other expatriate Australian artists in France at that time were Rupert Bunny and John Peter Russell, whom Phillips Fox befriended. In 1901, close friends George W. Lambert (from Sydney) and Hugh Ramsay both enrolled at the Académie Colarossi in Paris, where Gordon Samstag would later study in 1928. At Colarossi, Ramsay was judged the 'most capable' student; this was considered 'a great tribute to the technical soundness of the instruction procurable at the Melbourne art school', where he had first studied. See Grishin, chs 16 and 17, and Ann Galbally, 'Australian Artists Abroad 1880–1914', in Ann Galbally and Margaret Plant (eds), Studies in Australian Art, Melbourne, Department of Fine Arts, University of Melbourne, 1978, pp. 57–66.
- 21 See RMIT University, 'Our Heritage: History of RMIT', www.rmit.edu.au/about/heritage/
- 22 After the war, Harold Freedman (1915–99) was commissioned by the Australian War Memorial to produce a major mural marking the Royal Australian Air Force's fiftieth anniversary. He also later became the State Artist of Victoria. A mosaic mural by him, *The Regional History of Geelong*, is in the collection of the Geelong Gallery in Geelong, Victoria. See 'Harold Freedman, State Artist of Victoria', Walking Melbourne website: www. walkingmelbourne.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=412
- 23 A painter, Rod Clarke was an RMIT lecturer from 1960 to 1979, then head of its art school and finally dean, Faculty of Art from 1981 to 1991.
- 24 Rod Clarke, interview with Daniel Thomas, January 12–13, 2005. The author thanks Daniel Thomas for generously sharing his research notes, gathered during December 2004 to January 2005 for his article 'Meet the Samstags', published in June 2005 in *Art & Australia*.
- 25 Born in Melbourne in 1926, Kempf was a graduate of the National Gallery School in Victoria. In 1962 he would take a position at the South Australian School of Art, and later

- be appointed Head of Printmaking there in 1969, after Brian Seidel.
- 26 Ibia
- 27 Franz Kempf, interview with Daniel Thomas, January 16, 2005
- 28 Betty Snowden, biographical notes on Gordon Samstag in letter to author, January 25, 1993. Snowden was the first person commissioned by the Samstag Program, at the University of South Australia, to undertake research into Anne and Gordon Samstag, with the objective of creating a biographical database and Samstag archive.
- 29 Adelaide had the benefit of being established as a planned city, in 1836, and a surveyor – the city's principal founder, Colonel William Light – laid out its metropolitan streets.
- 30 Clarke, interview with Thomas.
- 31 London-trained, Grey had been in South Australia since 1923 and had graduated to the role of principal after being director of the privately run School of Fine Arts in North Adelaide. He remained as the SASA principal until 1956.
- 32 Goodchild had the distinction of being present at, and apparently filming, the formal surrender of the Japanese aboard the USS *Missouri* on September 2, 1945. See Neville Edward Weston, 'The Professional Training of Artists in Australia, 1861–1963, with Special Reference to the South Australian Model', an unpublished thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Education, University of Adelaide, December 1991, p. 382. For a well-illustrated online account of Goodchild's role as a war artist, see 'Artist John C. Goodchild, World War 2' on the South Australian Medical Heritage Society Inc. website: http://samhs.org.au/Virtual%20Museum/Notable-individuals/Goodchild\_John\_WW2/Goodchild\_John\_WW2.htm
- 33 Douglas Roberts (1919-76) was acting principal (1957-58) and later principal of the SASA from 1964 to 1976, substantially overlapping the period of Samstag's tenure.
- 34  $\,$  See Weston, 'The Professional Training of Artists'.
- 35 Born in England and educated principally at London's
  Central School of Arts and Crafts, Beadle had come
  to Australia during the war in 1944 as a Royal Navy
  submariner on tour in the Pacific, and afterwards remained
  in Australia to teach art. During Beadle's time in Australia
  he had been a force for progressive change in a number of
  art educational and community civic roles: before the SASA
  he had taught at Sydney's respected National Art School
  for several years, and he was later head of the School of Art
  at the Newcastle Technical College, during which time, in
  1957, he also was appointed inaugural (honorary) director of
  the newly established Newcastle Regional Gallery.
- 36 Named the South Australian School of Art (SASA) in 1958, the SASA has a complex history of antecedents, name changes and structural arrangements. Originally the School of Design in its fledgling 1861 form (through the South Australian Society of Arts and located at the South Australian Institute), the school was later, in 1881, formed into two separate schools (of Design and Painting) and from 1891 was located at the Exhibition Building on North Terrace. In 1892 it was established as a single School of Design and Painting, and from 1894 was the

- School of Design, Painting and Technical Arts. In 1909 the South Australian Government's Education Department was made responsible for the school, at which time it was renamed the Adelaide School of Art and, from 1916, the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts, until in 1958 it became the South Australian School of Art (SASA) later moving to Stanley Street, North Adelaide, in 1963. In all its incarnations from 1909, however, the school would remain a part of the Education Department, until in 1971 (still as the South Australian School of Art) it was joined with the newly created Torrens College of Advanced Education. Commencing in 1973 the SASA was progressively moved from Stanley Street, North Adelaide, to a new campus in Adelaide's suburban Underdale, as part of the larger, multifunction Torrens College of Advanced Education umbrella. The gradual move - not completed until 1979 - was never popular with the school's academic staff, engendering an ongoing campaign for the school to be returned to city premises. In 1979, Torrens amalgamated with the Adelaide College of Advanced Education to form the Adelaide College of the Arts and Education in which the SASA was one of three schools within a Faculty of the Arts (the SASA; the School of Design, incorporating the departments of Ceramics, Graphic Design, and Industrial Design; and the School of Performing Arts). Subsequently, in 1982, the Adelaide College of the Arts and Education would be subsumed within the South Australian College of Advanced Education (SACAE). Later still, in 1991, parts of the SACAE - including the SASA - were absorbed by the newly created University of South Australia (UniSA). SASA was finally relocated back to the city proper in 2005, to new premises at UniSA's City West campus.
- 37 H.P. Gill (1855–1916) brought a particular method of art education to South Australia that was orthodoxy in England the South Kensington system a tediously rigid 'copyist' form of drawing that eschewed a broader approach to fine arts education. As an English-educated disciplinarian who commanded respect in the provincial Adelaide community, Gill quickly accrued authority in his role (Weston refers to him as an 'art supremo'), and when art teaching became the Education Department's responsibility in 1909, he was appointed the new school's principal. See Weston, pp. 450–54, and G.L. Fischer, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1983.
- 38 The records relating to Gordon Samstag's appointment to the SASA in 1961 have been lost, presumably due to institutional changes in the subsequent period. However, it would appear that Samstag was appointed by Allan Sierp (1905–82; SASA principal from July 1961 to 1963) in late 1961, though he may not actually have commenced work until the beginning of the academic year in 1962.
- 39 The Minister of Education's annual report for the year 1957 both announced the proposal to change the name of the school (to the SASA) and declared 'the School is now becoming more of an institution for higher studies'. See South Australian Parliamentary Papers (SAPP), no. 44, 1958, as cited by Weston, p. 410.
- 40 Nevertheless, the structural reform was only partial, with teaching staff still spread across all three award courses.

- A teaching staff dedicated solely to Fine Art students would not exist until 1970, the year that Samstag retired from the SASA. By 1963, when the new Stanley Street campus opened, the SASA had twenty-one full-time teaching staff and fifteen visiting lecturers. There were 236 students taking the four-year diploma course, although the vast majority of these were art-teaching students, with perhaps only thirty fine art students (though by 1967 this had grown to fifty). See Weston, pp. 410–20.
- 41 The grand old Jubilee Exhibition Building had been built in 1887 to celebrate the South Australian colony's fiftieth anniversary year. After moving from the South Australian Institute Building, the art school had occupied the building continuously since 1891, except during the 1940s war years, when it was requisitioned by the military.
- 42 Weston, p. 404.
- 43 Weston, pp. 387-89.
- 44 Bernard Smith, *Australian Paintings 1788–1960*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1962, p. 115.
- 45 Heysen was, moreover, a more progressive artist in spirit than was generally understood. For example, Neville Weston has noted that Heysen was not entirely opposed to Modernism (as many wrongly assumed) and had visited the 'salons' of Gertrude Stein in Paris with his wife and met Matisse, of whom he expressed a favourable opinion (Weston, p. 338).
- 46 Patrick McCaughey, Fred Williams: 1927–1982, Bay Books, Sydney, 1987, p. 30.
- 47 Ivor Francis, Ivor's Art Review: An Adelaide commentary on contemporary art affairs, vol. 1, no. 4, February 1957, p. 1.

  Francis proposed instead, that 'with the right man in charge (of the art school) this school could attain a very high standing among artists, even if the Education Department did nothing to give it higher status'. He complained, as well, that the school 'has been suffering strangulation by too much narrow administration and departmental regulation'.
- 48 Lamacraft resigned on April, 23 1957, to take up the position of Chief of the Division of Technical Education in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. See Weston, p. 410.
- 49 Born in Adelaide, Tuck studied art with James Ashton (1859–1935) at his private Adelaide school (the Norwood Art School), and spent several years from 1906 working and studying in Paris and Brittany, until World War I forced her home to Adelaide. See entry on Tuck by Ruth Tuck in the online version of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, Canberra, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/tuck-marie-anne-8866/text15567, accessed May 26, 2015.
- 50 A brilliant draftsman and accomplished portrait painter with an academic training gained in Paris and Munich, Ivor Hele (1912–1993) became the first Australian appointed as a war artist (by the Australian War Memorial) during World War II, and ultimately the longest serving of Australia's war artists, in which role he produced a magnificent legacy of almost 500 paintings, drawings and sketchbooks. See Lola Wilkins, The Heroic Figure, Australian War Memorial, Canberra. 1997.

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- 51 Curator Barry Pearce credits the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts with having provided Adelaide-born painter Jeffrey Smart a 'thorough grounding in painting methodology' in the early 1940s. See Barry Pearce, 'Search for the Timeless', in *Master of Stillness: Jeffrey Smart paintings 1940–2011*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2012, pp. 8–10, published to coincide with the exhibition of the same name; a major retrospective of Smart's life work, curated by Barry Pearce and presented by the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, Adelaide, and Carrick Hill, Springfield, Adelaide.
- 52 Jane Hylton, 'Adelaide Angries: South Australian painting of the 1940s', in Jane Hylton (ed.) Adelaide Angries: South Australian painting of the 1940s, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1989, p. 14.
- 53 Max Harris, in his introduction to Hylton, Adelaide Angries.
- 54 The exhibition, at the Australian Art Gallery, 97 Rundle Street, Adelaide, was previewed as being 'Adelaide's first taste of modern art, and the artists were among those who were later to found the CAS in Adelaide.' (Hylton, p. 14).
- 55 Sydney artists Grace Crowley and Anne Dangar were particularly close friends who had travelled to France together in 1926. Not long before Samstag's arrival in Paris they had spent time at the Académie Colarossi, though without a teacher. They enrolled at André Lhote's Académie in 1927.
- 56 There is a growing literature on Dorrit Black, most recently an essay by Tracey Lock-Weir in *Dorrit Black: Unseen Forces* (exhibition catalogue), Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2014. Key essays on Black and her friends Grace Crowley and Anne Dangar, respectively by Tracey Lock-Weir, Sarah Thomas and Bruce Adams, are published in Deborah Edwards and Denise Mimmocchi (eds), *Sydney Moderns: Art for a new world* (exhibition catalogue), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2013. For the earliest, complete account of Dorrit Black's life, career and influences, see Ian North, *The Art of Dorrit Black*, Art Gallery of South Australia/Macmillan, South Melbourne, Victoria, 1975.
- 57 The high-achieving and nationally important artist Margaret Preston (1875–1963) must similarly be acknowledged here; however, Preston, who studied with H.P. Gill for a time at the earlier School of Design, Painting and Technical Arts, from 1898, left Adelaide in 1904 and her impressive career developed elsewhere. There is a substantial literature on Preston; a useful preliminary source is Isobel Seivl, in the online *Australian Dictionary of Biography*: http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/preston-margaretrose-8106/text14151
- 58 In 2015, the University of South Australia named its major new City West campus library and student education complex The Jeffrey Smart Learning Centre, in honour of the late artist.
- 59 Jeffrey Smart, *Not Quite Straight: A memoir*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1996, p. 57.
- 60 Weston, p. 453.
- 61 The career of Jeffrey Smart is exemplary of this progression from high-school art teaching, to full-time professional art practice. From 1942 a secondary-school art teacher

- at Goodwood Boys Technical School in Adelaide for four years, Smart also taught for two days a week at the art school (privileged by the supportive principal John Goodchild), and he subsequently worked as a national radio broadcaster ('Phidias' on the Australian Broadcasting Commission's popular children's program, The Argonauts Club). After moving to Sydney, he successfully pursued opportunities overseas on the strength of experience and confidence gained. Smart's life and career have been well documented in a number of publications, but most recently in Barry Pearce's essay, 'Search for the Timeless', in Master of Stillness: Jeffrey Smart paintings 1940-2011 (exhibition catalogue), Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2012, pp. 8-10, published to coincide with the exhibition of the same name, a major retrospective of Smart's life work, curated by Pearce and presented by the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, Adelaide, and Carrick Hill, Springfield, Adelaide.
- 62 Quoted in Weston, pp. 413-17.
- 63 Charles Reddington (b. 1929) had married a young Australian he met when she visited Chicago with the Katherine Dunham Dance Company. See 'Guy Warren interviews Charles Reddington', August 23, 2014, in 'Cultural Conversations', an online archive 'of the compelling stories of creative people': www.cultconv.com. html
- 64 *Ibid*.
- 65 Ball also appreciated Reddington's advice as to where he should study in America (Syd Ball, email correspondence with author, November 13, 2015).
- 66 Beadle left the SASA to take up the inaugural position of dean at New Zealand's Elam School of Art, Auckland University. A respected and 'quirky' sculptor, he later crafted the impressive, eleven-metre (thirty-six-foot) bronze sphere and American eagle that sit atop the imposing Australian-American Memorial in Canberra. Designed by Richard M. Ure, the huge memorial, unveiled in 1954, is an expression of Australian gratitude for the US support during World War II (see Michael Dunn, New Zealand Sculpture: A History, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2002).
- 67 Syd Ball, email correspondence with author, November 13, 2015. Ball claimed that Reddington 'couldn't stand Samstag', and that 'what riled him' was Samstag's suggestion (to Reddington) 'that we Americans should stick together'.
- 68 Charles Reddington, interview with Guy Warren, August 23, 2014, 'Cultural Conversations' online archive.
- 69 Ibid. After almost four years in Sydney, Reddington had returned to the United States where, following further study, he was appointed a professor at Indiana State University. After some twenty years there, he returned to live and work in Australia in 1996, but apparently later moved to Ecuador, South America. Reddington's work is represented in several Australian public and private collections, and in the United States.
- 70 That is, with the exception of the principal Allan Sierp, who was one year older than Samstag.
- 71 Peter McWilliams, 'Gordon Samstag: Quips, quotes, statements (1964)', a collection of notes dated November 12, 2014, and subsequently presented to author. McWilliams was later also a lecturer at the SASA (1974–2004).

- 72 Born in Washington, USA, Caddy's move to South Australia was artistically fruitful; for example, in 1967 she won a distinguished national prize for Australian female portrait painters the Portia Geach Memorial Award (with a portrait of South Australian artist Lawrence Daws). Caddy left the SASA in 1964 but remained in South Australia in a variety of educational roles, also later travelling to Glasgow as a visiting lecturer in painting, perhaps to be with Alex Leckie. A biography of Caddy is available online at 'Design & Art Australia Online', www. daao.org.au/bio/jo-caddy/
- 73 Damon Moon, 'Alexander Leckie', in 'Obituaries Australia', Australian Dictionary of Biography, online: http://oa.anu.edu. au/obituary/leckie-alexander-alex-1588
- 74 Jimmie Macgregor, 'Appreciation: Alex Leckie', *The Scotsman*, February 11, 2010.
- 75 Though acknowledging that he gave the Education Department cause, Leckie claimed the real reason for his dismissal was 'his criticism of educational policies and working conditions at the art school' and that his 'little episode of swimming in the River Torrens nude ... was the ideal opportunity for the Department to get rid of a very bad influence' (Weston, pp. 426–27).
- 76 McWilliams, 'Quips, quotes, statements'. As a student, McWilliams had been aware that Caddy had 'campaigned hard for Leckie's reinstatement'. McWilliams believed Caddy thought Samstag had benefited from Leckie's dismissal, and resented him for it. He claimed that Caddy 'stirred hostility to Samstag with students and staff alike' and 'spitefully incited students to various acts (involving) nasty notes and drawings on walls', which 'caused Gordon a lot of harm', damaging him especially in the minds of his colleagues in a way that persisted for many years.
- 77 There was, however, another side to Caddy, who made a historic, but little-known contribution to the then tenuous resurgence of Australian Indigenous culture. Appointed to judge the 1971 Caltex/Northern Territory Art Award in Alice Springs ('typically a display of conservative, white, Territorian art'), Caddy gave the award to an unknown Indigenous man, Kaapa Mbitjana Tjampitjinpa (c. 1920-89), a 'roguish troublemaker from Papunya' who would go on to become a celebrated and pivotal cultural leader. Caddy's decision was a 'triumph' for Indigenous art, and the first public recognition of a fledgling movement that would, decades later grow into a worldwide phenomenon. Although Caddy confessed her inability to pronounce the prize-winner's name when presenting the award, she memorably declared, 'This old man is a true artist. He took what he found, an old piece of waste lumber he located in a rubbish tip and the dregs of some paint he found lying around the settlement and made art out of it.' See Vivien Johnson, Once Upon a Time in Papunya, University of New South Wales Press, 2010, p. 12.
- 78 McWilliams, 'Quips, quotes, statements'.
- 79 As a young artist, Roberts had played a lead role in the formation of the (South Australian) CAS in 1942. He has been described by curator Jane Hylton as 'in many ways the most outspoken and volatile of the (CAS) rebels and his art the most forceful'. His early work frequently dwelt on sexuality. See Hylton, p. 14.

- 80 A 'very personable and generous man', Geoff Brown was a leading light at the SASA for twenty-five years, commencing in 1963 as a lecturer in painting and drawing but later working in (and heading) the printmaking department; he retired in 1988. Brown sustained an energetic printmaking practice, and was later considered to have 'rescued' the CAS's premises in Parkside (and thus, the organisation's future) when he became the CAS president (and his wife Jenny Brown, the Secretary) immediately following Samstag's controversial tenure there and his resignation in 1971 (see page 257).
- 81 Max Lyle, interview with Jim Cowley, August 10, 2001. The author acknowledges with appreciation the valuable research undertaken by the late Jim Cowley, in the form of interviews he made with former students and colleagues of Gordon Samstag at the South Australian School of Art. The interviews were part of Mr Cowley's research towards an unfinished PhD, sponsored by the Samstag Program, UniSA, through the SASA (with additional funding through a federal government ARC, SPIRT program) on the subject of 'Gordon Samstag in Australia'.
- 82 A Sydney-born-and-trained artist, Hawke moved to the SASA late in 1969 from teaching at the Newcastle Technical College art school (1967–69), where Paul Beadle had been principal before moving to the SASA in 1958.
- 83 Ron Hawke, quoted in Betty Snowden, letter to author, January 25, 1993.
- 84 From a conversation between Bill Clements, Erica Green and Susan Jenkins, Samstag Museum of Art, September 4, 2015. The Australian government had allowed the British government to conduct a number of nuclear tests on the traditional lands of the Indigenous Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Tjarutja people, relatively close to Adelaide, between 1956 and 1963. Seven nuclear tests were conducted in great secrecy. The Australian government's complicity in the process and the impact of the tests on the health of local people remain controversial to this day. See, for example, Richard Broinowski, Fact or Fission: The truth about Australia's nuclear ambitions, Scribe Publications, Victoria, 2003.
- 85 Douglas Roberts later formalised these staff meetings, leading to the formation of an advisory Board of Fine Art. Samstag would continue to take a keen interest.
- 86 Lyle, interview with Cowley.
- 87 Samstag, letter to Roberts, July 18, 1966. The letter, copied to lecturer Barrie Goddard, also suggested that 'Mr Goddard must make this (Materials & Methods) class technical rather than creative for the harmony of the Diploma course as a whole.'
- 88 Albert (Alb) Smith, interview with Jim Cowley, October 24, 2000.
- 89 Lyle, interview with Cowley.
- 90 Milton Moon, from written notes provided to Erica Green, November 23, 2015.
- 91 A teaching staff dedicated solely to fine art students would not exist until 1970, the year that Samstag retired from the SASA. By 1963, when the new Stanley Street campus opened, the SASA had twenty-one full-time teaching staff and fifteen visiting lecturers. There were 236 students taking

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- the four-year Diploma course, although the vast majority of these were art-teaching students, with perhaps only thirty fine art students, though by 1967 this had grown to fifty. (Weston, pp. 410–20).
- 92 Jim Moss, telephone interview with Daniel Thomas, January 15, 2005.
- 93 Smith, interview with Cowley. Smith referred to his daughter, then forty years of age, as being in institutional care 'and likely to be there until she dies'.
- 94 Ibid
- 95 One of the works, Ethiopia, would find its way into the Elliot Aldridge Collection, for which a work by Samstag, The End of Galatia, was also later acquired by Aldridge from the Robert Bolton Gallery, Adelaide, in 1969. Nolan had a long and close relationship with Bonython, well documented in Bonython's memoir, Ladies' Legs and Lemonade, Rigby, Adelaide, 1979.
- 96 Smith, interview with Cowley. Smith thought Nolan 'a gentle person; and a very nice man'.
- 97 The 1960s are recognised as a dynamic period for printmaking in Australia, and the SASA printmaking department played a key role. Seidel was followed as head of printmaking by Franz Kempf, and later Geoff Brown, both widely respected artists. Seidel and Kempf each published seminal texts on Australian printmaking: Brian Seidel, *The Arts in Australia: Printmaking*, Longman, Melbourne, 1965; and Franz Kempf, *Contemporary Australian Printmakers*, Lansdowne, Melbourne, 1976.
- 98 Brian Seidel, interview with author, Adelaide, July 17, 2015. Before returning to Australia, Seidel had also studied lithography and etching at The Slade School of Art (University College) in London, with Stanley Jones. For a good account of Seidel's career, see Peter Quartermaine, Brian Seidel: Landscapes and interiors, The Beagle Press, Sydney, 1993.
- 99 Seidel, letter to author, November 6, 2015.
- 100 McWilliams, 'Quips, Quotes, Statements'.
- 101 Ross Anderson, undated, tape-recorded interview with Jim Cowley, c. 2000.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Furler, interview with Daniel Thomas, January 15, 2005.
- 104 Jim Moss, telephone interview with Daniel Thomas, January 15, 2005.
- 105 Helen James, undated, tape-recorded interview with Jim Cowley, c. 2000.
- 106 *Ibid*.
- 107 Interestingly, the published 'Programme' for the event shows that the 'Presentation of Diplomas and Prizes', was made by the 'Consul of the USA', Mr John A. Linehan. Apparently a friend of the artist, Linehan would later open a number of Samstag's exhibitions (see page 244).
- 108 The typewritten (carbon) copy of Samstag's 1964 lecture is possibly the only document we have in which Samstag expresses opinions about making art, and the associated challenges, and it also includes his thoughts on the role of prizes in the careers of young artists. For the full text, see page 376.

- 109 Ray Spilman, tape-recorded memoir sent to author, March 29, 1995.
- 110 In fact, whatever correspondence the Samstags had with their friends in America during their time in Australia is unknown, other than, for example, the cordial business correspondence they maintained with Angus Cameron, their old editor at Alfred A. Knopf Inc., in New York City. Knopf had published their book, *Training Your Own Dog* (written by Anne and illustrated by Gordon, and published in 1961, just before they came to Australia; see p. 181). The extensive and sometimes particular business correspondence between the publisher, Knopf, and Anne and Gordon Samstag, is documented in the Alfred A. Knopf archive, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.
- 111 According to the Samstags' immediate neighbour in Bayview Crescent, Mrs Dora (Dulcie) Wilson, the construction was completed by September 1966. The Samstags' house was subsequently featured as the 'low up-keep house', in the June 1967 edition of *Australian House and Garden* (Dulcie Wilson, letter to author, November 22, 1999).
- 112 Florence (Robbie) McBryde, telephone interview with author, May 10, 1993.
- 113 Kate McCarthy and Betty Welch, interviews with Wendy Walker, 2006. The author acknowledges with appreciation the valuable research undertaken by Wendy Walker on the subject of 'Gordon Samstag in Australia', which has assisted the development of his own text. Ms Walker's research was commissioned by the Samstag Program, UniSA, initially through an innovative 'Writer in Residence' program at the South Australian School of Art, funded by the Samstag Program in 2005.
- $114\ McBryde$ , telephone interview with author, May 10,1993.
- 115 Wilson, telephone interview with author, May 25, 1993.
- 116 Wilson, letter to author, November 22, 1999.
- 117 Thid
- 118 Kempf, interview with Daniel Thomas, research notes, January 16, 2005. Kempf thought Anne's fashionable appearance was 'more like Georges [Melbourne's most upmarket fashion store] than the mid-market Myers'.
- 119 John Edmund established Theatre 62 with an associate,
  Don Gray. It was a 'theatre-in-the-round', and Edmund's
  first production there was an adaptation of Dickens's *Great*Expectations; later he presented new Australian works and
  eclectic British and European repertoire. Theatre 62 survived
  as a venue until at least 1998, although Edmund had moved
  on many years before. See Geoffrey Milne, Theatre Australia
  Unlimited: Australian theatre since the 1950s, Editions
  Rodopi BV, Amsterdam-New York, New York, 2004.
- 120 'Founded by Raymond Moore The Cape Playhouse' remains a professional theatre of cultural importance in America and continues to operate to this day. See http://capeplayhouse.com/about-us/
- 121 'The Archibald', a prize for portraits of distinguished
  Australians sponsored through a bequest by J.F. Archibald,
  the wealthy editor of the Sydney magazine *The Bulletin* –

- was at that time Australia's most renowned art 'event' of any kind. Most often, the winning works were fundamentally conservative and artistically bland, but on occasion the prize (first awarded in 1921) was awarded to a portrait that broke the bounds of convention, raising much controversy.
- 122 John Edmund, tape-recorded interview with Jim Cowley, January 18, 2000.
- 123 In his lecture, 'The Work of Fine Art Students at the SA School of Art', given as one of four lectures by senior staff for the 'Presentation of Diplomas and Prizes' ceremony at the SASA in May 1964, Samstag discussed the importance of activities (for final year students) that 'bridge' the transition to life as a practising artist, and he referred to a number of projects underway in the school's fine art course, including 'stage sets for a forthcoming Shakespearian production in Adelaide'.
- 124 Edmund, interview with Cowley. Once, when Edmund announced he was going to America for business, the Samstags gave him the names and details of a number of wealthy people in Boston and suggested he look them up. However, as Edmund later acknowledged apologetically, he did not contact any of them.
- 125 The exhibition included the winning 1963 work, a fairly pedestrian portrait by Jack Carington Smith, of Professor James McAuley, an anti-Modernist Australian poet who was one of the co-authors of the famous 'Ern Malley' hoax (see page 238).
- 126 An artist awarded the Archibald Prize was implicitly deemed credible and accomplished. Samstag's SASA colleague, the 'portraitist' Jo Caddy, may have encouraged him to take a competitive interest. She became a regular entrant to the Archibald Prize and, unlike Samstag, had a work accepted to the exhibition short-list on at least two occasions. In 1967 she also won a distinguished national prize for Australian female portrait painters, the Portia Geach Memorial Award.
- 127 The AGNSW provides an online list of all artists whose works have been accepted for the Archibald Prize, in each year commencing from 1921. See http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/1921/
- 128 For example, in 1963 Samstag gave a painting as a wedding gift to Angela Jellett, née Banks, whose parents lived next door to the Samstags in Sunnyside Rd, St Georges. Jellett described the Samstags as 'a lovely couple ... the gentlest of people and unassuming' and said Gordon was 'a lovely man' (Jellett, telephone conversation with author, March 10, 1999).
- 129 Milton Moon, written notes provided to Erica Green,
  November 23, 2015. Moon eventually gave the work to 'an
  ex-sculptor student who was a friend', after shifting house
  'from the city to the near country'. Subsequently, the student
  reported that a girlfriend of the day 'had taken it (and) it is
  probably in Malaysia'.
- 130 James, interview with Cowley.
- 131 Ibid. In her final-year exhibition, Helen James made a number of sales, including to Adelaide's leading gallerist, Kym Bonython.
- 132 Ibid.

133 Helen James would subsequently emulate the spirit of the Samstags' philanthropy, becoming another major benefactor to Australian culture, following her untimely death in 2011. The Jim Bettison and Helen James Foundation was established by combining her estate with that of her partner, the late Jim Bettison, to provide generous financial awards 'in recognition of an individual's lifetime work of significant benefit to the community', and to provide the recipient time for further, similar activity. Among a number of substantial cultural grants, it has endowed the 'James and Bettison Treasures Curatorship' at the National Library of Australia, and the 'Jim Bettison and Helen James Award' through the Adelaide Film Festival. The foundation is administered by Perpetual Ltd, as trustee; see: http://bettisonandjamesfoundation.com

#### ADVANCE AND RETREAT

- 1 The works were selected by MOMA International's Waldo Rasmussen. The initiative for the exhibition is credited to two Australian curators, John Stringer (then an exhibitions officer at the NGV and later, assistant director of MOMA International) and Daniel Thomas (then a curator at the AGNSW and later Senior Curator of Australian art at the Australian National Gallery and director of the Art Gallery of South Australia). The catalogue featured essays by Lucy Lippard and Irving Sandler. For an informative discussion of the exhibition's importance in Australia, see the online essay by Charles Green and Heather Barker, 'The Watershed: Two decades of American painting at the National Gallery of Victoria', www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/the-watershed-two-decades-of-american-painting-at-the-national-gallery-of-victoria/
- Wendy Walker noted that the Samstags' veterinary friend, Kate McCarthy – who regularly minded their dog Donna when they travelled – recalled that the trip to Melbourne (in June, 1967) was intended as a four-day visit; however, the Samstags unexpectedly returned to Adelaide after the first day. When asked by Kate about the exhibition, Anne had responded, 'There was a lot of white on white, and black on black!' McCarthy, interview with Walker.
- A 1964 Adelaide Festival exhibition of contemporary
  American paintings, touring from the James A. Michener
  Foundation Collection (Allentown Art Museum,
  Pennsylvania), though welcomed by critics, was considered
  disappointing due to the absence of works by leading artists
  (not then yet seen in Australia), such as Rauschenberg,
  Johns, Warhol, Lichtenstein, Oldenberg, Rosenquist and
  Wesselmann. For a good account of the exhibition and its
  shortfalls, see the review by Elwyn Lynn, 'The Travelling
  Exhibition of Selected Paintings from the James A.
  Michener Foundation Collection', in *Art and Australia*,
  December 1964, pp. 204–09.
- A number of works from Two Decades of American Painting were for sale and several were acquired by the NGV and the AGNSW; for example, Frankenthaler's *Cape (Provincetown)* was bought by the NGV. However, opportunities to buy more adventurous works at modest prices were passed up; for example Warhol's *Electric Chairs* (1964), priced then at US\$6065, and Ellsworth Kelly's *Orange Blue 1* (1965), at US\$3200.

- 5 The challenge of distance between cities within Australia should not be underestimated. Adelaide was sufficiently far from the east-coast centres of Australian culture that during World War II, for example, the artist Jeffrey Smart was obliged to go to Sydney by sea because it was the only way to cover such a distance at that time without a travel permit. Jeffrey Smart, Not Quite Straight: A memoir, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1996, pp. 62–64.
- 6 Originally the South Australian Society of Arts established in 1856 as one of the founding institutions for visual arts in colonial South Australia it became the Royal South Australian Society of Arts (RSASA) in 1936. The society played an invaluable role for most of its life; however, by the early 1940s, its role as a facilitator of opportunities for artists and arbiter of standards had become a brake on the ambitions of a new generation of Adelaide's more progressive artists. Nevertheless, the RSASA continued to play a role of influence, including during the 1960s.
- 7 For an insider's observations of the origins of the Contemporary Art Society (CAS) in South Australia, see Max Harris, in his introduction to Jane Hylton (ed.) Adelaide Angries: South Australian painting of the 1940s, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1989.
- 8 Adelaide newspapers turned the exhibition, and the conflict between the artists and the RSASA, into controversy, leading to a member of the South Australian Parliament in the House of Assembly (a Mr Abbott, speaking on behalf of 'frightened parents') asking the Minister of Education, Mr Shirley Jeffries, if he had read an *Advertiser* newspaper article that 'persons who perpetrated those paintings are teachers of art in the Education Department', and whether 'some qualification should be imposed as to the standard of art required of teachers .... before they are allowed to teach art?' See SA Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, July 15, 1942, as reported in Weston, p. 372.
- 9 Ern Malley has subsequently been elevated to cultural mythology, vindicating Harris's reputation for literary judgment. For a recent, comprehensive biography of Max Harris, see Betty Snowden, Max Harris: Without reason, without rhyme, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2015.
- 10 Barbara Hanrahan (1939–91), a student of Roberts's in the late 1950s and early 1960s and, in due course, herself a renowned South Australian artist and prolific writer, would lament the decline in Roberts's artistic career as a consequence of his shift into professional education. In her posthumously published diaries she recounted being upset on seeing Roberts's early work at a Niagara Galleries exhibition in Melbourne in July 1988 (many years after Roberts's death in 1976). 'The work is so strong,' she wrote, 'and all done when he was young. That when I knew him as the art school lecturer and principal he was trapped like a caged bull, [all his] strength sheathed by the teacher's suit and married life; suburban Adelaide life.' See Elaine Lindsay (ed.) The Diaries of Barbara Hanrahan, University of Queensland Press, 1998, p. 287.
- 11 See 'Ostoja-Kotkowski, Joseph Stanislaus' in Susan McCulloch (ed.), McCulloch's Encyclopedia of Australian Art, fourth edition, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006, p. 750.

- 12 See 'Rapotec, Stanislaus' in McCulloch, p. 750.
- 13 See Adam Dutkiewicz, A Matter of Mind: An introduction to the art of Wladyslaw Dutkiewicz (1918–1999), Moon Arrow Press, Adelaide, 2006; and Adam Dutkiewicz, Ludwik Dutkiewicz: Adventures in art, Moon Arrow Press, Adelaide, 2009.
- 14 In an essay on the Mareks for a 2015 NGV exhibition,
  Alisa Bunbury wrote, "The burst of progressive art that
  had been displayed in the early 1940s by members of the
  South Australian branch of the Contemporary Art Society
  was short-lived ... When Dušan and Voitre exhibited
  their challenging Czech-Surrealist art in 1949, it was met
  with puzzlement, criticism and even censorship Equator
  was one of two works declared to be obscene.' See Alison
  Bunbury, 'The Unbroken Line: Marek and Marek', in Simon
  Maidment and Elena Taylor (eds), Lurid Beauty: Australian
  Surrealism and its Echoes (exhibition catalogue), National
  Gallery of Victoria (NGV), Melbourne, 2015.
- 15 Dean Bruton (ed.), *The Contemporary Art Society of SA*, 1942–86: Recollections, CAS, Adelaide, 1986, p. 17.
- 16 Editorial, Art and Australia, May 1964, p. 43. The inaugural Adelaide Festival of Arts was held over two weeks in early autumn, March 12–26, 1960.
- 17 Established in 1881 as the National Gallery of South Australia, and subsequently renamed the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) in 1967, this is South Australia's pre-eminent art museum and houses a major collection of Australian art. The Exhibition Wing added to the Victorian-era gallery in 1962 had been designed especially to receive international exhibitions. Subsequent extensions completed in 1996 expanded the gallery's temporary exhibitions capacity and, although modest in scale, have contributed to making the AGSA one of the country's most lively and physically attractive art museums.
- 18 In Australia, other than for a conscientious early history in monographic form by William Moore (The Story of Australian Art, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1934), there would be no significant published scholarship on the subject of Australian art until Bernard Smith's two groundbreaking studies, firstly Place, Taste and Tradition: A study of Australian art since 1788 (Ure Smith, Sydney, 1945), and then the more comprehensive Australian Painting, 1788-1960 (Oxford University Press, 1962, expanded in 1971, 1991 and 2001 to cover 1788-2000). The renowned quarterly art periodical Art & Australia – edited to a high standard by Mervyn Horton - only appeared in 1963 (published by Sam Ure Smith and reprising the long-running Art in Australia that had been founded by his father Sydney Ure Smith in 1916 and ceased in 1942). It should also be noted that the 'shrewdly eccentric' Englishman, (Sir) Joseph Burke (1913-92), was seminal to the development of art scholarship and the discipline of art history in Australia, in his role as inaugural Herald Chair of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne (1946-78).
- 19 The Antipodean Vision catalogue, published in 1962, by F.W. Cheshire, Canberra, included essays by Clive Turnbull, Elizabeth Young and Daniel Thomas, and a foreword by Prime Minister Robert G. Menzies. After the Tate, the exhibition travelled to the National Gallery in Ottawa and

- Vancouver, Canada. The works had been selected by the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board, a precursor to the Australia Council.
- 20 The background to the exhibition's development was controversial, particularly given the close involvement of the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, in seeking to influence the selection of artists (for example, critics argued that the selection neglected a number of deserving contemporary artists while marginalising female and Aboriginal artists). For an informative critical discussion of the exhibition and its context and reception, see Simon Pierse, Australian Art and Artists in London 1950–1965: An Antipodean Summer, Ashgate, 2012. Also, Sarah Scott, in her online essay 'A Colonial Legacy: Australian painting at the Tate Gallery', London, 1963, at http://books.publishing.monash.edu/apps/bookworm/view/SEIZE+THE+DAY/123/xhtml/chapter19.html
- 21 Eventually Australia's longest-serving prime minister, Robert Menzies was a cultural interventionist with a strong conservative bias. While serving as the Attorney-General of Victoria before entering the federal parliament, he had sought to establish an Australian Royal Academy of Art dedicated to traditional principles, effectively as a barricade against Modernism. From 1935, after he became the federal Attorney-General, Menzies pushed to secure a Royal Charter for such an academy. Initial support for the idea from some sections of the art world later changed to opposition, largely due to Menzies's public posturing about the values an academy should support (and also those it would oppose, such as Modernism). As art historian Richard Haese noted: 'The response of opponents was the immediate stimulus for the formation in 1938 of the Contemporary Art Society in Melbourne', Richard Haese, Rebels and Precursors: The revolutionary years of Australian art, Allen Lane (Penguin Books), Ringwood, Victoria, 1981, p. 43.
- 22 Recent Paintings by Gordon Samstag (exhibition brochure), Janet Nessler Gallery, New York, 1960.
- 23 Ivor Francis, 'Current Styles', in 'Art ... By Ivor Francis', Sunday Mail, December 11, 1965, p. 89. Francis was referring to Samstag's work Proserpine, presented in the CAS's December 1965 group exhibition; he also described it as a 'collage in the pop spirit'.
- 24 For his March 1969 exhibition at the Robert Bolton Gallery, North Adelaide, Samstag described them as 'copper collages ... using chemical patinations and oxidations'.
- 25 Peter McWilliams thought his work was driven by 'learning, self-discovery and imagination', rather than, for example, colour theory or prescription. He considered Samstag's work not unlike that of the English artist William Scott (1913–89). Peter McWilliams, 'Gordon Samstag: Quips, Quotes, Statements (1964)', November, 12 2014.
- 26 Exhibition of Paintings by Gordon Samstag was presented at the RSASA gallery from June 18, 1963, and was opened by the state Director of Education, E. Mander-Jones. Of the sixty-three works, there were fourteen gouaches, three drawings and six 'ovals'; the rest were paintings. The prices ranged between twelve and one hundred and fifty guineas. Samstag's short brochure statement declared: 'Most of the

- paintings were done in Adelaide. The group on the west wall are earlier studies brought from the United States.'
- 27 For example, he named a 1936 work Balinese Archer (shown at the Montross Gallery, New York, a 1938 work Atlas (exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago) and a 1943 painting Beach Comber (exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC).
- 28 The Advertiser, June 19, 1963. Guests identified at the opening included the McBrydes and the Wilcoxes, who would prove enduring friends of the Samstags.
- 29 Sunday Mail, June 23, 1963.
- 30 As soon as he had been informally advised, early in 1965, that he had been granted full membership of the National Academy a far more prestigious institution than the RSASA Samstag went out of his way to draw attention to his new status. For example, when interviewed for an Adelaide newspaper article promoting his April 1965 exhibition at the Leveson Street Gallery in Melbourne, he pointedly mentioned his 'recent honour (of) being elected a National Academician'. See 'Consul to open President's Art Exhibition', *The Advertiser*, c. April 1965. In 1968, Samstag was elected to the RSASA's Council as a 'Fellows' Representative'. By 1971, however, he was no longer listed in the RSASA's annual reports, suggesting that he'd walked away (see Annual Reports of the RSASA, 1962–72).
- 31 Elizabeth Young, 'Artist Shows Development', *The Advertiser*, October 7, 1964. Despite her local influence as a critic, Young revealed questionable artistic judgment when she gave a disparaging review to the work of a young and little-known artist, Fred Williams (1927–1982), exhibited at Bonython Art Gallery, Adelaide, in 1961. The review caused the cancellation of several promised sales. Williams would go on to become one of Australia's most esteemed and celebrated artists. See Joan Kypridakis, 'A Director's View', in Bruton, p. 37.
- 32 The legend of 'Beulah Land' also enjoyed contemporary fame in the gospel hymn by Edgar Stites (1836–1921) who, interestingly, traced his ancestors to the *Mayflower*, placing him in genealogical company with Anne Samstag's forebears. The hymn is drawn from the Old Testament's Isaiah (62.4), and 'Beulah' refers to Jerusalem.
- 33 Although the word is more conventionally spelled 'Galatea', Samstag himself prescribed the name as 'Galatia', both on the verso of the painting and in the exhibition catalogue. Any meaning intended by his obscure invocation of the mythological story of Pygmalion remains unclear.
- 34 Christo's extraordinary Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, was approximately 2.5 kilometres (1.5 miles) long; 90,000 square metres (1 million square feet) of synthetic woven fibre were used for the wrapping, and 56.3 kilometres of polypropylene rope tied the fabric to the rocks. It would long remain 'the best known work of art, old master or avant-garde, among the mass public of Australia [and] went beyond the art world and became folklore'. See Daniel Thomas (ed.), An Australian Accent: Three Artists (exhibition catalogue), John Kaldor Art Project 7, PS1, New York, 1984.

- 35 There were seven single-person and twenty-six group exhibitions. However, he frequently recycled (unsold) works from one exhibition to the next. For example, one work, *Archipelago*, shown in his inaugural Adelaide exhibition at the RSASA in June 1963, was presented there again in April 1965, and subsequently in other exhibitions. Details of exhibitions presented by Gordon Samstag in Australia, all of which were undertaken while he lived in South Australia, are provided on page 364.
- 36 Samstag presented twenty-five 'oils and collages', and fifteen drawings and gouaches. Several works were recycled from his RSASA exhibition of the previous year. Along with Samstag, an architect-artist, Henry Kurzer, also presented 'copper and aluminium reliefs', and it's possible these may have inspired Samstag's subsequent interest in copper as a medium. An advertisement for the Dominion Art Galleries' 1964 exhibitions program (May-October), in the leading periodical Art and Australia (August 1964, p. 137), shows Gordon Samstag as the scheduled solo artist, from July 21 to August 7 (in fact, the exhibition ran until July 31). He was apparently replacing the 'cancelled' artist Godfrey Miller, one of Sydney's most highly regarded artists. Others in the Dominion advertisement included Robert Dickerson, Francis Lymburner, Charles Blackman and Michael Shaw, all prominent artists.
- 37 Apparently a friend of the artist, Linehan opened other Samstag exhibitions, including his 1966 Adelaide Festival exhibition in the Adelaide Hills, at the Don Pedro Art Gallery, in Stirling.
- 38 For example, there is no mention of Samstag in a full-page advertisement promoting Dominion's stable of artists in *Art and Australia*, March 1965, p. 239.
- 39 The SASA library at Stanley Street was known to have a good collection of art publications. According to a student of Samstag's, Rosemary Frood (Turner), Samstag had a good relationship with the SASA librarian, Doug Hardie, and they were often seen in conversation together. She commented that the librarian 'was a good source of news and gossip about things at the school' (Frood, interview with Jim Cowley, January 9, 2001).
- 40 Samstag would also have noticed that his old SASA competitor Charles Reddington (who'd been living in Sydney since 1963) was prominent in a number of gallery advertisements
- 41 Not all the participating artists would necessarily have been formally part of the Barry Stern Galleries stable, and the modest ceiling price of \$50 suggests that most works were on paper, perhaps prints. All the same, the list of participants included a generous cohort of distinguished artists.
- 42 Elwyn Lynn was a professional ahead of his time. Besides maintaining a lifelong practice as an artist, he developed a knowledgeable interest in international art, travelling widely in Europe from 1958. He was curator of the Power Gallery of Contemporary Art (University of Sydney) from 1969 to 1983 and, among many roles in visual arts publications, was advisory editor of *Art International* from 1971. For a good profile of Lynn, see Ashley Crawford, 'Elwyn Lynn: Abstract Renown', *Australian Art Collector*, issue 30, October December 2004.

- 43 Australian Décor was a substantial hardcover book showcasing the design work of Warren Harding and David Lorimer. See Australian Décor, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Limited, Melbourne, 1971.
- 44 Of course, the name also referenced Samstag's old 16-foot Cape Cod Bullseye yacht, the *Admiral Anne*, which he sailed on Long Island Sound, Westchester County, New York State, before coming to Australia (see page 142).
- 45 That is, with the exception of a work (*Red, Hinting*) that was accepted for the 'NBN Channel 3 Art Prize', conducted by the Newcastle City Art Gallery in New South Wales, in August 1969. Judged by Laurie Thomas, a close colleague of Adelaide gallerist Kym Bonython, and arts editor for *The Australian* newspaper, the \$2000 acquisitive prize was valuable, and the forty-five short-listed artists (selected from three hundred entrants) included a number of heavy hitters, along with Samstag's SASA colleague, Barrie Goddard. The prize was awarded to Victorian artist Jan Senbergs.
- 46 See his memoir, Kym Bonython, Ladies' Legs and Lemonade, Rigby, Adelaide, 1979, especially ch. 16, '88 Jerningham Street'.
- 47 Ibid., p. 145. Bowden was a small inner-city suburb in Adelaide.
- 48 Bonython later sold the Adelaide gallery to Richard
  Llewellyn. He was eventually forced to close the Sydney
  gallery in 1976, as a result of a recession. Bonython then
  returned to Adelaide, where by chance his old Jerningham
  Street premises were for sale; he purchased them and
  operated another gallery there from 1976 to 1983.
- 49 Such was Bonython's enthusiasm that even before launching his Adelaide gallery venture, he'd published an ambitious book on Australian contemporary art, Modern Australian Painting and Sculpture: A survey of Australian art 1950-60 (Griffin Press, Adelaide, 1960). However, recognising his limited knowledge at that time, Bonython enlisted the aid of his friend Laurie Thomas (a retired senior gallery director and art critic) to decide the selection of artists. In his memoir, Bonython cited the negligible publishing about contemporary Australian art since the death of Sydney Ure Smith in 1949 as the inspiration for his book. It was essentially a picture book in style, with a foreword by the respected academic Professor Joseph Burke and an introduction by Thomas. Bonython subsequently produced four updated editions, the last of which was Modern Australian Painting: 1950-1975 (Rigby, Adelaide, 1976).
- 50 Wendy Walker, email to author, November 2, 2007.
- 51 For an informative account of Ball's experiences in America and subsequent artistic development, see Anne Loxley and Wendy Walker, Sydney Ball: The colour paintings 1963–2007 (exhibition catalogue), Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest, Sydney, 2008.
- 52 The respected Australian curator Terence Maloon has suggested there was a single archetype hovering behind the paintings of Ball and his contemporary Dick Watkins, and that their formats 'recall the American painter Barnett Newman, who was an antecedent for so much hard-edge, minimalist and colour-field painting during the 1960s'. See Terence Maloon, 'Birth of the Cool', in the exhibition catalogue *Birth of the Cool*, Samstag Museum of Art,

- University of South Australia, Adelaide, 2015, in association with the Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, Canberra, originally published digitally as an online publication for the exhibition of the same name, curated by Terence Maloon. The exhibition was shown in July–September in Adelaide and November–December 2015 in Canberra.
- 53 Loxley and Walker, p. 75.
- 54 Geoff Wilson, conversation with author, September 2015. Wilson himself, however, remained a curious observer and would continue on his own artistic path, independently.
- 55 Ball wrote that an end of year show by his teacher-training students attracted praise from the state government's director of education. He also said that he would sometimes be called to the office of the principal, Douglas Roberts, to explain himself as a result of a complaint from Samstag about his conduct of a Methods and Materials class, where he'd sometimes play John Cage records to the students. The instruction (to attend Roberts's office) would be relayed over the school intercom system, causing general laughter and heckling among the students, which in turn would aggravate Samstag (Sydney Ball, email correspondence with author, November 13, 2015).
- 56 Ball, email correspondence with author.
- 57 The Field comprised seventy-four paintings, sculptures and conceptual works by forty artists. For an excellent summary of the exhibition and its context and critical reception, see Natalie Wilson, 'Tackling The Field', an online essay for the catalogue and exhibition of the same name held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, September 5–November 29, 2009, at www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/education/online-catalogues/tackling-field/
- 58 Writing almost thirty years later, Stringer, by then curator of the private Kerry Stokes Collection in Perth, Australia, recalled that the three South Australian artists' shared emphasis on flat surfaces, bright colour and bold simple form identified a school of painting and sculpture in Adelaide with an unusual understanding of the new aesthetic', adding 'this was no doubt due in large part to the influence of Ball, who had actually lived and studied in New York for several years'. See John Stringer, 'Solar Wind', in Barrie Goddard: Paintings 1970–1995 (exhibition catalogue), University of South Australia Art Museum, Adelaide, March, 1995, published for the exhibition of the same name, curated by Erica Green.
- 59 In 2013 the University of South Australia accepted a major gift from Sydney Ball, of over thirty important works of art by the artist. It was by far the most valuable gift of Australian art ever made to the university. 'The Sydney Ball Gift', installed in the Sir Eric Neal Library, celebrates the artist's long and impressive career, his impact on Australian art and his honoured place in the University of South Australia.
- 60 The Sydney Ball work acquired for the Harold E. Mertz Collection was *Canto (Diagonal #1)*, (1965).
- 61 Mertz died in 1983 having donated the collection to the Jack S. Blanton Museum at the University of Texas at Austin, in 1972. The collection was never properly displayed at the University of Texas and eventually

- returned to Australia, where at a Christie's (Melbourne) auction on June 28, 2000, the 153 lots realised approximately AU\$16 million. The Mertz Collection is documented in two publications: firstly, a catalogue produced by Mertz himself for the Corcoran Gallery exhibition, March 10-April 16, 1967, which features a key text by Bonython's friend and collaborator Ross K. Luck, 'The Australian Painters 1964-1966' (The Griffin Press, Adelaide, 1967); and, secondly, a high-quality (Australian) Christie's auction catalogue featuring essays by Patricia Anderson and Kym Bonython, The Harold E. Mertz Collection of Australian Art: Melbourne, 28 June 2000, South Yarra, Victoria: Christie's Australia, 2000. For an informative critical evaluation of the Harold E. Mertz Collection's auction, and its implications for the Australian artists, art market and other stakeholders, see Shireen Amber Huda, 'Pedigree and Panache: A history of the art auction in Australia', ANU E Press, Canberra, 2008.
- 62 Reddington, who had moved to Sydney in 1963, had presented a solo exhibition at Bonython Art Gallery, North Adelaide, from June 26 to July 3, 1964. The two works acquired by Mertz were Season in Hell (1964) and Skies in My Eyes (1962), both oil-on-canvas paintings typical of the lively abstraction that had garnered Reddington a considerable reputation. Thirty-five years later, at the Christie's auction of the Mertz Collection (Melbourne June 2000), the works realised \$10,000 and \$11,000 respectively.
- 63 Samstag wasn't the only South Australian artist whose work would be overlooked for the Mertz collection. His SASA colleague Franz Kempf was another omission, despite having exhibited 'paintings and prints' at Bonython's Hungry Horse Gallery in Sydney in 1965.
- 64 For an informative and well-illustrated outline of the Elliot Aldridge Collection, written by the artist Michael Shannon (whose work, *The Arrival*, was in the collection), see 'The Art Collectors 6', in *Art and Australia*, vol. 5, no. 3, December 1967, pp. 510–17.
- 65 The exhibition opening was on March 9, 1970. Speech notes prepared by school principal Douglas Roberts referred to the 'valuable work done by Gordon Samstag [who] has helped to plan the exhibition with Mr Aldridge [and] been responsible for gathering the information for the catalogue'.
- 66 Ball, email to author, November 24, 2015.
- 67 Presumably, the discreet purpose of the exhibition (at the SASA) was to enhance the provenance of the works; the Christie's auction, held on March 11, 1971, appears to have offered the majority of Aldridge's collection for sale. The three works by Boyd were Nude and Brown Dog By a Black Pool (1961) and Half-caste Wedding (1955), each of which fetched \$8000, and The Baptism (1946-47), sold for \$13,000. Following auction, some works subsequently had interesting lives. For example, the Fairweather work, later named Forest (1959), in due course found its way into the National Gallery of Australia collection, while a Brett Whiteley painting, White Sacred Baboon (1964) - sold for \$3500 to Kym Bonython – was then on-sold by him to collectors from Texas, Mr and Mrs John D. Murchison. Some years later, the Whiteley work found its way back to Australia via a Sotheby's Australia auction, held on May 14, 2013, where it realised AU\$439,200 (with buyer's premium).

- 68 Kym Bonython, AC, was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of South Australia in 2000.
- 69 Nevertheless, while the list of AGSA acquisitions appears generously inclusive towards many South Australian artists who were active during the 1960s, it is not comprehensive. One artist contemporaneous with Samstag, for example, whose work was clearly neglected by the AGSA (though it has since, belatedly, been recognised), was the accomplished landscape painter Geoff Wilson. His artistic worth was well demonstrated in the retrospective exhibition (and accompanying catalogue) Geoff Wilson: Interrogated Landscape, presented in 2015 by the Samstag Museum of Art, University of South Australia, and curated by Barry Pearce.
- 70 Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia*, Penguin Books Australia, Victoria, 1966, pp. 298–99.
- 71 Lou Klepac, telephone interview with Wendy Walker, March 28, 2010. Klepac also commented to Walker that 'Samstag had no patience or respect for what I was doing at the Art Gallery of South Australia'. Samstag's suggestion was utopian: the gallery was at that time far too small in scale and resources to justify a curatorial position devoted solely to contemporary art. Klepac would go on to become a respected art historian and found The Beagle Press, a publishing house for fine art books.
- 72 Lou Klepac, conversation with the author, November 4, 2015.
- 73 Samstag (exhibition catalogue), Robert Bolton Gallery, North Adelaide, March 4–16, 1969.
- 74 Newspaper source unknown, but possibly *The Advertiser*, c. March 1969.
- 75 Klepac, 'Toying with the Trivial', The News, March 12, 1969. Elizabeth Young also responded negatively. In her newspaper review of the exhibition, she wrote that the works are 'cooly considered and ingeniously contrived'. But she then declared, 'Samstag's pursuit of the young trends of the sixties is determined, down to the obscurantist cross-quiz-clue titles', and that 'while these changing fashions intrigue for the moment like the topless it is on fundamental aesthetic content, however achieved, that a true work of art depends for its lasting quality' (Young, 'New Fields in Canvas, Copper', The Advertiser, March 7, 1969).
- 76 Smith, letter to Wendy Walker, September 25, 2007.
- 77 Smith, Australian Painting, 1788–1970, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1971, p. 338.
- 78 In the catalogue for his March 1969 exhibition at Adelaide's Robert Bolton Gallery, Samstag described himself as having 'a growing ear for "strine" [that] has made old Samstag almost indistinguishable from the hoi polloi of Adelaide'.
- 79 Samstag, letter to Roberts, June 22, 1970.
- 80 Samstag, memorandum to Roberts, June 25, 1970.
- 81 Remsen M. Kinne III, Hale and Dorr, letter to Samstag, August 30, 1971. In 1974, a letter by Samstag to Kinne (April 25, 1974) referred to his then Social Security payments of US\$220 per month.

- 82 This letter and other correspondence relating to Gordon Samstag are held in the Samstag Legacy Archive.
- 83 The CAS premises were at 14 Porter St, Parkside. The purchase, of what previously had been a domestic residence, was made possible due to the fundraising efforts of a past president, Joseph Choate, which enabled the society to place a deposit of \$4000 at purchase and obtain a \$4000 mortgage. See Jenny Brown, 'The purchase of C.A.S. Porter Street Premises', in Bruton, p. 28.
- 84 John Miles, 'Ground Floor Art', *The Advertiser*, September 4, 1969.
- 85 Young, in her review of the November 1969 CAS All Members' Exhibition, in 'Art on Many Levels', The Advertiser, November 7, 1969.
- 86 Ron Hawke, 'Offering an Alternative', in Bruton, p. 41.
- 87 Elsie Peacock, 'The Crisis of the 60s', in Bruton, p. 30.
- 88 Peacock, quoted in Betty Snowden, letter to author, January 25, 1993.
- 89 *Ibid*.
- 90 Peacock, 'Crisis', p. 30. Despite the boycott of Samstag at the council level, the CAS meeting on January 28, 1971, was attended by over twenty members. The minutes of the meeting show that Samstag's 'eloquent and professionally worded plea', made in a written submission to the 'Council for the Arts' for financial assistance to the CAS, had been unsuccessful. Samstag had then presented the meeting a report on the poor financial state of the CAS and suggested the building be sold, following which the minutes record that 'Gordon Samstag, President, resigned'.
- 91 Peacock, in Snowden.
- 92 Following Samstag's resignation, Brown became president from 1971 to 1976, and again from 1982 to 1986. He had been a member of the CAS from 1954. Jenny Brown, as well, played a significant voluntary role over many years as secretary, particularly in her financial management of the organisation.
- 93 Ivor Francis, 'The Role of the CAS in Prospect', in Bruton, p. 50. An alternative perspective on the CAS was provided by the art theorist Donald Brook. A prime force in the creation of Adelaide's Experimental Art Foundation in 1974 ('to both encourage new approaches to the visual arts and to promote the idea of art as 'radical and only incidentally aesthetic'), Brook saw the CAS 'as a kind of club', providing a forum, rather than a doctrine, and 'serving all the interests of all its members'. He especially warned that such an organisation 'should not fall into the hands of a clique or a special interest subset' and that 'as a matter of course, senior office bearers in the organisation should not continue in office longer than two terms at the most'. See Donald Brook, 'The Role of the CAS in Prospect', in Bruton, p. 51.
- 94 Charles Henry Davis, Last Will and Testament, Bass River, Town of Yarmouth, Barnstable County, Sate of Massachusetts, June 28, 1946.
- 95 Ibia
- 96 For example, the annual dividend paid by Kentenia in (May) 1972, was thirty cents per share, which for Anne represented US\$4900. However, in 1975, the dividend rose significantly to over \$41,000, due to the strengthening market for coal in

- the preceding years (Remsen M. Kinne III, letter to Anne Samstag, December 30, 1975).
- 97 Remsen M. Kinne III, letter to Anne Samstag, November 4, 1971.
- 98 The other 6700 Kentenia shares were held beneficially by approximately 40 other stockholders, including individuals and institutional trustees (John H. Morton, Hale and Dorr, letter to Anne Samstag, Cairns, November 7, 1972).
- 99 One hundred years later, in the midst of a gold rush, the site on the Endeavour River became a busy port, Cooktown.
- 100 During all his time in Adelaide, Gordon drove an Australian-made car, a Holden, which he occasionally upgraded when new models were released. Manufactured in Australia by General Motors Holden, Gordon's car would most likely have been the top-of-the-range 'Kingswood'. He enjoyed good cars; before coming to Australia he'd owned a Studebaker Champion coupe. From 1971 he switched to the bigger, more luxurious Holden model newly released that year, the Statesman. It was a quality vehicle with power, much like a Chevrolet Bel Air in size. Later, after returning to the United States, he would own a large Cadillac. Bela Ivanyi, a close friend of the Samstags in Cairns, confirmed they 'had a big car, a Holden Statesman' (Bela Ivanyi, telephone interview with Daniel Thomas, January 13, 2005).
- 101 The Samstags issued a 'Notice of change of address, to PO Box 641, Cairns, North Queensland, 4870, effective 12 April 1972', a copy of which was acknowledged by Hale and Dorr.
- 102 Anne Samstag, letter to Remsen M. Kinne III, January 8, 1972.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Cairns had become 'the Black Marlin Capital of the World', when a 450-kilogram (1000-pound) black marlin was caught off Cairns by Richard Obach on September 25, 1966.
- 105 Samstag presented Proserpine again later that year, in a group exhibition at the CAS gallery in December 1965. Reviewing it favourably in the Sunday Mail, Ivor Francis declared that 'Gordon Samstag, with the surety of long experience, demonstrates collage in the pop spirit, artfully building up his "Proserpine" with pieces of hemp, wood, plaster and stencil of wirenetting' (Ivor Francis, 'Current Styles', Sunday Mail, December 11, 1965).
- 106 Proserpine would have resonated with Samstag, who was fond of referencing mythologies in his titles. The name 'Proserpine' derives from the Greek 'Persephone', daughter of Zeus and princess of the underworld.
- 107 Anne Samstag, letter to Kinne, April 25, 1974.
- 108 The Samstags had recently hosted Cameron's artist niece, Marilyn Jensen, and her husband, David, when they visited Cairns in 1973, where (unusually) Marilyn shared a sculpture prize at the Cairns Art Society's annual exhibition, for a hanging macramé work, *Ramayana*.
- 109 Anne Samstag to Angus Cameron, September 25, 1973.
- 110 Cameron to Anne Samstag, October 15, 1973.
- 111 Florence (Robbie) McBryde, telephone interview with author, May 10, 1993.

- 112 Sylvia Ditchburn, email to author, January 8, 2004.
- 113 Ditchburn, telephone interview with Daniel Thomas, January 13, 2005.
- 114 *Ibid.* The classes attended by Ditchburn took place from February 20 to May 8, 1975, and September 4 to November 27, 1975.
- 115 Gordon Samstag to Ditchburn, May 14, 1975.
- 116 Ditchburn, email to author, November 27, 2015.
- 117 Ibid
- 118 Bela Ivanyi and his wife, Margaret, received one of only three personal bequests made to Australians in Gordon Samstag's May 1989 will, in their case, an amount of US\$5000.
- 119 Ivanyi, telephone interview with Thomas, January 13, 2005.
- 120 Samstag would have seen Fairweather's work in the Antipodean Vision exhibition at the National Gallery of South Australia in 1962, which effectively coincided with the Samstags' arrival in Adelaide. For the best account of Fairweather's life and work, see Murray Bail, Fairweather, Murdoch Books, Sydney, 2nd edn, 2008.
- 121 See 'Crooke, Ray Austin', in McCulloch, p. 356.
- 122 Ivanyi, telephone interview with Thomas.
- 123 *Ibid*.
- 124 The gallery was established by the federal government in 1967 and originally named the Australian National Gallery, but it did not occupy premises until the National Gallery building in Canberra opened in 1982.
- 125 Ivanyi, telephone interview with Thomas.
- 126 Dulcie Wilson, letter to author, November 22, 1999.
- 127 Ihid
- 128 Elizabeth M. Doyle, letter to author, November 27, 1998.
- 129 Anne Samstag, letter to Kinne, February 4, 1977.
- $130\,$  Kinne, letter to Anne Samstag, March 28, 1977.
- 131 Anne Samstag, letter to Kinne, September 10, 1977.
- 132 Ditchburn, email to Wendy Walker, April 17, 2007.
- 133 Gordon and Anne Samstag, Western Union telegram to A. Garcia at Hale and Dorr, October 3, 1977, advising of their plans and requesting that a further savings bank account be opened for them in Miami.
- 134 McBryde, telephone interview with author, May 10, 1993.
- 135 Dulcie Wilson, letter to author, November 22, 1999.

  The next letter Wilson received was from Naples:

  'They asked Jack and I to come over for a couple of weeks.

  We did think about it, but did not go. I do wish I had kept the letters, but it was all so long ago.'
- 136 Jean (Lillian) Wilcox, interview with author, May 11, 1993.
- 137 Andre Senior, 'Naples Packed with High Concentration of Millionaires', Fox 4, WFTX,-TV, November 5, 2011.
- 138 The Davis sisters' trusts continued to have rights in a
  Kentenia oil and gas lease still operating at the time of the
  sale, shared between Kentenia and Kentucky West Virginia
  Gas Company, for which the stockholders (principally the
  Davis sisters) were entitled to half the lessee payments.
  Pocahontas was responsible for collecting and dispersing

- these payments, which for Anne and Gordon's Trust had amounted to \$818.18 each quarter from its establishment (Kinne, letter to Bea Sanford, Citizens and Southern Trust Bank, December 20, 1988).
- 139 Kinne, letter to Anne and Gordon Samstag, October 9, 1985.
- 140 Kinne, letter to Anne and Gordon Samstag, November 20,
- 141 Anne and Gordon Samstag to Kinne, March 12, 1980.
- 142 Kinne, letter to Anne and Gordon Samstag, June 18, 1980.
- 143 Kinne III to Anne and Gordon Samstag, January 31, 1984.
- 144 The Samstags rented summer premises in Mamaroneck for several years after returning to America, most probably always at the Shore Acres community estate. Whether or not they stayed at the same residence each year is unknown.
- 145 The flyer, now retained in the Samstag archive, suggests contact dates of between July and September (1984), and carries the address 1025 The Parkway, Mamaroneck, NY.
- 146 Barker, letter to author, April 21, 1996. The Barkers' residences, in 1996, were at 6876 Approach Road, Sarasota, Florida, and 212/B Woodbridge Drive, Hendersonville, North Carolina.
- 147 Barker, letter to author, November 12, 1993.
- 148 Anne Samstag to Kinne, September 6, 1985.
- 149 Barker, letter to author, November 12, 1993.
- 150 Ivanyi, telephone interview with Thomas.
- 151 Valand Art Gallery was at 363 Twelfth Avenue South, Olde Naples.
- 152 'Samstag's Works Displayed', *Gallery News*, undated Naples newspaper clipping, Samstag Legacy Archive.
- 153 Barker, letter to author, November 12, 1993.
- 154 The Hale and Dorr record also includes advice from Anne, to Kinne, of a proposed 'trip to Australia, February 10, 1984, traveling there and back (with slow stops) returning to Naples in approximately forty days' (Anne Samstag, letter to Kinne, November 25, 1983).
- 155 Kinne to Robert B. Thurston, PA, October 24, 1980. Kinne's letter dealt principally with taxation issues relating to the Kentenia sale. He separately advised the Samstags that their visit to see the Bayeux Tapestry would be an approved tax deduction, but not the Adelaide visit, as 'the Australian Charitable Trust is not valid at this time'.
- 156 McBryde, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 1993. (The mentioned visit in 1982 was in fact most probably in 1984.)
- 157 Kinne to Samstag, July 23, 1987.
- 158 Kinne to Charles D. Matteson, July 23, 1987.
- 159 McBryde, telephone interview with author, May 10, 1993.
- 160 Wilcox, interview with author, May 11, 1993.
- 161 David N. Sexton, Bond, Schoeneck & King, PA, letter to author, July 11, 2000.
- 162 Kinne to Samstag, March 10, 1988.
- 163 Samstag to Kinne, December 6, 1988.

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164 Kinne to Samstag, December 12, 1988.

- 165 Kinne to Samstag, February 18, 1988.
- 166 'Gordon Samstag', uncredited Naples newspaper obituary, forwarded to author by David N. Sexton, July 11, 2000.
- 167 Ray and Mary Spilman, interview with author, Darien, Connecticut, May 18, 1996.
- 168 Barker, letter to author, November 12, 1993.
- 169 Joined with the multifunction Torrens College of Advanced Education in 1971, the SASA was forced to move, gradually, from Stanley Street to Underdale beginning in 1973; the move was not completed until 1979. In 1982, the SASA was subsumed within a new, larger institutional entity, the South Australian College of Advanced Education (SACAE), and in 1991 parts of the SACAE including the SASA were absorbed by the newly created University of South Australia (UniSA). In 2005 the SASA was finally relocated back to the city proper, to new, state-of-the-art premises in the Kaurna Building at UniSA's City West campus. It was just a little further down the street, on Adelaide's heritage North Terrace cultural boulevard, from where the SASA had commenced life in 1861.
- 170 Bishop, a sculptor, had joined the SASA staff in 1964, three years after Samstag.
- 171 Tony Bishop, interview with Daniel Thomas, January 15, 2005.

# ON THE FORMATION OF AN ARTIST'S BEQUEST

All of the correspondence referenced in this chapter is held in the Samstag Legacy Archive, currently managed by the Samstag Museum of Art on behalf of the University of South Australia.

- 1 Anne & Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust, 11 May, 1972.
- 2 Anne's share of the Kentenia sale, initially paid into the Anne & Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust early in 1980, was almost US\$4.5 million, although tax of 28 per cent applied.
- 3 Gordon Samstag to Harold Allison, August 21, 1980.
- 4 The Samstags later wrote to their Hale and Dorr trustee, Remsen M. Kinne III, reporting on their 'enjoyable' Adelaide visit, where they'd 'met with the Dean and staff of the art school ... at which [Gordon] worked for some years ... now part of the College of Art and Advanced Education [sic]' (Gordon and Anne Samstag, letter to Remsen M. Kinne III, Hale and Dorr, January 8, 1981).
- 5 The three schools in the faculty were the SASA; the School of Design (incorporating the departments of Ceramics, Graphic Design, and Industrial Design); and the School of Performing Arts. The Adelaide College of the Arts and Education had been formed in 1979 from an amalgamation of the Torrens College of Advanced Education (previously responsible for the SASA since 1971) and the Adelaide College of Advanced Education.
- 6 A painter and printmaker originally from Victoria, Cecil Hardy (b. 1929) worked at the SASA from 1966, during which time he became Principal Lecturer in Fine Art, and later, for a short period from 1980, head of the SASA.
- 7 Cecil Hardy to Gordon Samstag, October 1, 1980.

- 8 Samstag to Hardy, February 10, 1981.
- 9 Samstag to Hardy, March 4, 1982.
- 10 Max Lyle, letter to Samstag, May 18, 1982.
- 11 Samstag to Lyle, June 3, 1982.
- 12 Lyle to Samstag, June 16, 1982.
- 13 Ben Cooke, letter to Samstag, July 21, 1982.
- 14 Virginia Jay, interview with Jim Cowley, January 20, 2001.
- 15 Samstag to Lyle, October 6, 1982.
- 16 It seems that the Samstags may in fact have stayed at The Hyatt.
- 17 Samstag to Lyle, November 30, 1983.
- 18 A photographer and noted writer on the visual arts, North was later appointed a professor at SASA, standing down from the Head of School role in 1993.
- 19 Ian North to Samstag, January 30, 1986.
- 20 Robert Segall, file note, January 19, 1989.
- 21 Segall to Bea Sanford, January 26, 1989.
- 22 Segall to Samstag, November 28, 1989.
- 23 Samstag, undated letter to Segall, received December 20, 1989
- 24 Segall to Samstag, January 26, 1990.
- 25 Richard McDermott Miller, letter to D. Fred Garner, Bond, Schoeneck & King, August 18, 1990.
- 26 Anne Samstag, letter to Kinne, April 25, 1974.
- 27 A medical graduate of the University of Sydney (1904), John Joseph Wardell Power (1881-1943) continued his studies in Europe and after World War I abandoned medicine to practise as an artist, ultimately moving to Paris, where, from the 1920s, he actively associated as a peer with many Parisian-based artists of the international avantgarde. Although he died in 1943 in Jersey, in the Channel Islands, it was not until his wife Edith's death in 1961 that his 1939 will and bequest was revealed: to 'make available to the people of Australia the latest ideas and theories in plastic arts by means of lectures and teaching and by the purchase of the most recent contemporary art of the world ... so as to bring the people of Australia in more direct touch with the latest art developments in other countries'. In a complex and often fraught and contested process, Power's bequest ultimately led to the establishment of the Power Institute of Fine Art (at the University of Sydney), the Power Collection, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Power Studio at the Cité International des Arts in Paris. For a good account of the bequest, including a profile on John Power the artist, see Bernice Murphy, Museum of Contemporary Art: Vision & Context, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1993. For more recent research on John Power's activities as an artist, published in an exhibition book, see A.D.S Donaldson and Ann Stephen, J.W. Power: Abstraction-Création, Paris 1934 Power Publications, in conjunction with the University Art Gallery, University of Sydney, 2012.
- 28 Segall to Garner, April 17, 1990.
- 29 Segall, file note, 'Samstag Bequest', May 2, 1990.
- 30 Allen, letter to Richard Pash, May 14, 1990.

- 31 Garner to Segall and Pash, August 10, 1990.
- 32 Garner to Segall and Pash, August 24, 1990.
- 33 Lockwood to Garner, September 10, 1990. Denise Bradley would become a future leader of the University of South Australia. Appointed the second UniSA vice chancellor in 1997, she retired in 2007.
- 34 Ultimately reporting to the SACAE principal, Denise Bradley, the initial Samstag Bequest committee included John Lockwood (Convenor); Ian Allen (Director: Resources); Dr A.J.H. Gaite (Director: Academic); Chris Jolly (Special Projects Officer: Finance); John Chalklen (Dean: Underdale Campus); Ian North (Head of the SASA); and Richard Pash (Baker O'Loughlin law firm).
- 35 Lockwood, memo to Bradley et al, September 24, 1990, 'Samstag Estate Visit: briefing notes and timetable for the visit of Mr David Sexton to the College on 25, 26 September 1990'.
- 36 Jonathan G. Granger, letter to Lockwood, October 9, 1990.
- 37 Minutes of the SACAE Academic Committee meeting, December 17, 1990, item 5.2; Agenda Paper AC90.10.19. The principal (Denise Bradley) 'commended Mr John Lockwood, Mr Ian Allen, Mr Ian North and Ms Denise Rice for their work in drafting policy and procedures'. The draft policy was subsequently endorsed by the outgoing SACAE Council.
- 38 Lockwood to Garner, December 18, 1990.
- 39 In turn, on January 1, 1992, following a further merger, C&S/Sovran Trust Company (Florida), NA, would become NationsBank Trust Company (Florida), NA.
- 40 Brian Donaghy and Jenny Brinkworth, 'US artist leaves \$5m to SA school', The Advertiser, December 20, 1990.
- 41 Kelly B. Seymore, 'Artist Hopes to Shed More Light on Scarsdale Post Office Murals', *White Plains Reporter Dispatch*, Gannett Westchester Newspapers.
- 42 Garner to Lockwood, January 15, 1991.
- 43 Memorandum from Professor R.W. Smyth, Deputy Vice Chancellor, to Lockwood, February 26, 1991.
- 44 Memorandum from Lockwood to Professor Smyth, February 7, 1991.
- 45 Garner to Lockwood, March 28, 1991.
- 46 Garner to Lockwood and Pash, May 17, 1991. Garner also advised that Vice President Theodore H. Saari, Jr, had replaced Jonathan Granger as the administrative officer responsible at the bank for the Fine Arts Trust.
- 47 Lockwood letter to Timothy K. Walsh, Citizens and Southern Trust Company, June 12, 1991.
- 48 Garner to Pash, August 5, 1991.
- 49 Noted by Allen in a memorandum to Lockwood, North and Bradley, August 16, 1991.
- 50 *Ibid*.
- 51 Lockwood, memorandum to Allen, August 8, 1991.
- 52 Lockwood, memorandum to Allen, August 29, 1991.
- 53 Allen to Pash, September 5, 1991.
- 54 Pash to Allen, October 16, 1991.

- 55 The trustee representatives at the meeting were Timothy Walsh (Senior Vice President and City Manager) and Theodore (Ted) H. Saari (Vice President) from C&S/ Sovran Trust Company, and Fred Garner and Art Bongiovanni from Bond, Schoeneck & King.
- 56 Pash, 'Report on Visit by University Representatives to Estate Trustee in Florida, USA, October 18–23, 1991', provided under letter to Ian Allen, November 14, 1991. The actual meetings in Naples, Florida, were conducted over two days, on October 21 and 22.
- 57 Art Bongiovanni to Pash, January 10, 1992.
- 58 Pash to Bongiovanni, February 11, 1992.
- 59 A clerical officer already employed at the university, Barbara Rix, was appointed to the Samstag Program in April 1992 and tasked with managing responses to the initial scholarship advertisements.
- 60 The inaugural Samstag Selection committee met in September 1992. It comprised Professor Ian North (head of the SASA), Barrie Goddard (a senior lecturer at the SASA) and Mandy Martin (the external artist of standing, independent of the SASA). Ten Samstag Scholarships were awarded, which was a larger number of scholarships than would subsequently be awarded each year. This was because substantial funds had accrued in the Fine Arts Trust in the period following Samstag's death, and needed to be spent to satisfy the expenditure requirements of the American taxation rules relating to charitable trusts.

#### THE SAMSTAG LEGACY

- Besides 128 classic Samstag Scholarships, this figure includes six recipients of 'Australia Council for the Arts and Anne & Gordon Samstag: ISCP International Residencies (New York City)', which were co-funded by the Samstag Program and the Australia Council for the Arts in a threeyear experimental collaboration that began in 2010. See www.unisa.edu.au/Business-community/Samstag-Museum/ Samstag-Scholarships/News/Australia-Council--Samstagpartnership-announced/
- 2 Archie Moore: Les Eaux d'Amoore was presented at the Samstag Museum of Art, October 9-December 4, 2015.
- 3 M.A. Greenstein, 'Back to the Future From Wry to Rave', in Samstag: The 1999 Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships, Samstag Program, University of South Australia, Adelaide, 1999.
- 4 In 1985, the Australia Council for the Arts successfully negotiated with the Venice Commune to construct a national Australian pavilion in the Venice Giardini. A temporary pavilion was built in 1988 on probably the last available site, and a new, more architecturally sophisticated pavilion was opened there in 2014, following a government-led initiative and significant private-sector funding contributions. The new pavilion was designed by Australian architects Denton Corker Marshall.
- 5 In 2007 Callum Morton presented his project Valhalla, as Australia's representative artist at the 52nd Venice Biennale; he is now Professor and Head of Department (Art) at Monash University's MADA (Monash Art Design

- and Architecture), in Melbourne. Shaun Gladwell was the featured Australian artist at the 2009 Venice Biennale, consolidating his international standing as one of Australia's leading contemporary artists.
- 6 François Pinault was selected by the City of Venice (in June 2007) to undertake the transformation of the heritage Punta della Dogana, the old customs house building, into a new centre for contemporary art. It now regularly exhibits selections of work from the Pinault Collection. In October 2006, Pinault was named in ArtReview magazine as 'the most influential person in the world of contemporary art'. See also Esther Addley, 'French tycoon heads power list', The Guardian, October 14, 2006.
- 7 During the heavy fighting, Donaldson continually engaged the enemy, drawing their fire away from the wounded, and ran 80 metres across exposed ground to rescue a wounded interpreter. Gladwell's 'war art' was widely exhibited in a celebrated national tour, between June 2012 and September 2014. See, *Shaun Gladwell Afghanistan*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, and www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/gladwell/video/
- 8 For a discussion of Robyn Stacey's camera obscura, see Craig Judd, 'This thing ...', in Lisa Slade, Magic Object: 2016 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art (exhibition catalogue), Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2016, pp. 132–34.
- 9 See Ross Wolfe, KINDLE & SWAG: The Samstag Effect (exhibition catalogue), University of South Australia Art Museum, Adelaide, 2005.
- 10 See, for example, the Class of 2006 Samstag Scholarships media release: 'Now in their fourteenth award year, the Samstag Scholarships have become a byword for rapid, professional success and visibility. In an art world voracious for new stars, the Samstag name is renowned for identifying artists of genuine talent and exciting promise. Samstag Scholarship recipients are elevated in opportunity immediately their names are announced, and sought by dealers, collectors, curators and art magazines alike.' (quoted in News, University of South Australia, October 20, 2005; see www.unisa.edu.au/Business-community/Samstag-Museum/Samstag-Scholarships/News/Class-of-2006-Samstag-Scholarships/).
- 11 The Samstag Program existed as a separate administrative unit at the University of South Australia until Ross Wolfe retired, as director, in 2009. Subsequently, the functions of managing the scholarships program became the responsibility of the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art.
- 12 Professor Denise Bradley AC, was appointed Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of South Australia in 1997, having been Deputy Vice Chancellor since UniSA's establishment, and extensively involved in national education policy. She retired from UniSA in 2007. In 2008, she chaired the Expert Panel that undertook the National Review of Higher Education, and on Australia Day 2008 she was made a Companion of the Order of Australia, Australia's highest honour, in recognition of her service to higher education.

- 13 The University of South Australia Art Museum had started life in 1982 as the College Gallery, at the old South Australian College of Advanced Education (SACAE). When that institution was absorbed into the UniSA in 1991, the College Gallery was renamed the University of South Australia Art Museum.
- 14 The final exhibition at the University of South Australia Art Museum before it closed for reconstruction was KINDLE & SWAG: The Samstag Effect, curated by Ross Wolfe. The exhibition, which ran from November 4 to December 11, 2004 (and toured to Queensland University of Technology Art Museum in 2005), featured seven high-achieving Samstag Scholars.
- 15 Professor Bradley, Emeritus Vice Chancellor, UniSA, in conversation with Erica Green, as guests at a UniSA gathering in McLaren Vale to celebrate the 'Santos Tour Down Under' event, a cycling race in and around Adelaide, sponsored by UniSA, in February 2016.
- 16 The following year, the Kaurna Building received the 2006 RAIA Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Buildings, a national award for architectural excellence.
- 17 Ross Wolfe, letter to Errol T. Silvestri, Senior Vice President, Bank of America, Florida, August 30, 2005.
- 18 Although the proposed payment of AU\$150,000 was agreed as sufficiently generous, it was also 'symbolic', reflecting the mutual interest involved.

322 NOTES FOR THE SIREN CALL OF THE SOUTHERN SEA



# THE SAMSTAG ALUMNI

To celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships, the following gallery showcases work by twenty-five Samstag alumni, who exemplify the high artistic standard and outstanding career achievement, typical of the nownumerous Australian artists who have been beneficiaries of a visionary, philanthropic scheme.

The Samstag Scholarships were established in 1991 through the generous bequest of the late Gordon Samstag, an American artist who worked from 1961 to 1970 at the South Australian School of Art, now the School of Art, Architecture and Design, a part of the University of South Australia (UniSA).

Samstag Scholarships are awarded by the UniSA on behalf of Mr Samstag's trustee: Bank of America, Naples, Florida, USA. The Samstag Program is administered through UniSA's Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art.

The first Samstag Scholarships were awarded in 1992; they were for study commencing in 1993. That original cohort of scholars was called the Samstag Class of 1993. By the end of 2015, and the announcement of the Class of 2016, the number of Samstag alumni had grown to 136, which included six recipients of Australia Council for the Arts and Anne & Gordon Samstag ISCP Residencies, an experimental three-year funding partnership established in 2009 between Australia's national arts funding agency and the Samstag Program.

Comprehensive information on all the Samstag alumni – and an archive on the activities of the Samstag Program since its establishment, including publications – is available on the Samstag Museum of Art website.

Anne and Gordon Samstag's remarkable gift ranks as one of the very great bequests to visual arts education in Australia.

Shaun GLADWELL (b. 1972)

Kickflipping Flåneur Reconstruction,
2015 (detail)
giclée print on archival paper
40.0 x 60.0 cm (15¾ x 23¾ in)
Camera by Dean Tirkot
Commissioned for the University
of South Australia, 25th birthday

# SAMSTAG ALUMNI 1993-2016

- 1993 Shane Carn, Robert Cleworth, Sally Cox, Mark Hislop, Jacqueline Hocking, Nigel Jamieson, Ruth McDougall, Sally Mannall, Ruth Marshall, Roger Noakes
- 1994 Lynne Barwick, Michele Beevors, Matthew Calvert, A.D.S. Donaldson, Sarah Lindner, Anne Ooms, Robyn Stacey, Carl Sutherland, Paul Uhlmann, Anne Wallace
- 1995 Mehmet Adil, Marika Borlase, Catherine Brennan, Kate Daw, Ruth Fazakerley, Susan Fereday, Matthÿs Gerber, Marcia Lochhead, Sue Saxon, Lucy Turner, Megan Walch
- 1996 John Kelly, John R. Neeson, Nike Savvas, Kathy Temin, Angela Valamanesh
- 1997 Zhong Chen, Rozalind Drummond, Julie Gough, Steven Holland, Lyndal Jefferies
- 1998 Craige Andrae, John Derrick, Christopher Howlett, Shaun Kirby, Anne Walton
- 1999 Peter Alwast, Stephen Bram, Kristian Burford, Nicholas Folland, Paul Hoban, Hanh Ngo, Deborah Paauwe, Matthew Warren
- 2000 John Harris, Károly Keserü, Marco Masci, David Ralph, Elvis Richardson, Sally-Ann Rowland, Troy Ruffels, Paula Wong
- 2001 Christine Collins, Shaun Gladwell, Glenys Hodgeman, Anne Kay, Fassih Keiso, Linda Marrinon, Archie Moore, r e a, John Spiteri, Paul White
- 2002 Renato Colangelo, Sarah Elson, Mathieu Gallois, Annie Hogan, Timothy Horn, Astra Howard, Darren Siwes, Daniel von Sturmer
- 2003 Rebecca Ann Hobbs, Anke Kindle, Maria Kontis, John Meade, Callum Morton, Simon Pericich, Samantha Small
- 2004 Guy Benfield, Louisa Bufardeci, Julie Henderson, TV Moore, Simone Slee, Tim Sterling
- 2005 Mikala Dwyer, Michael Graeve, Michael Kutschbach, Viveka Marksjo, Edward Wright, Jemima Wyman
- 2006 Christine Aerfeldt, Andrew Best, Pia Borg, Claudia Chaseling, Sean Cordeiro, Claire Healy
- 2007 Anthea Behm, Sarah crowEST, Kirra Jamison, Paul Knight, Jess MacNeil, Nick Mangan
- 2008 Tracy Cornish, Hayden Fowler, Giles Ryder, Simon Terrill, Joshua Webb
- 2009 No scholarship awarded
- 2010 Alex Lawler, Michelle Nikou
- 2011 Benjamin Armstrong, Christian Capurro, Bridget Currie, Alex Kershaw
- 2012 Marco Fusinato, Monte Masi, James Newitt, Jackson Slattery
- 2013 Christian Lock, Ms&Mr, Alex Martinis Roe, Soda\_Jerk
- 2014 Madison Bycroft, Linda Tegg
- 2015 James L. Marshall, Hong An James Nguyen
- 2016 Sarah Duyshart, Derek Sargent



Anthea BEHM (b. 1977)

The Airhostess, from

The Chrissy Diaries, 2005

DVD still from synchronised four-channel video installation

Class of 2007 School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, USA



#### Kristian BURFORD (b. 1974)

Kathryn is staying at her grandparents' house. It is nine o'clock on a November evening. She has escaped the company of her grandparents to play with her grandmother's cat, a queen named Lucy, by moving into the sunroom of the house. After some minutes of happily petting the cat it has turned on Kathryn, penetrating the skin of her left index finger with its fangs and raising three lines of skin on her left wrist with the claws of its left paw. In response to Lucy's attack, Kathryn has grabbed at the cat in an effort to disentangle herself from it. She has been fortunate enough to find the cat's collar with three fingers of her right hand. This has allowed her sufficient purchase on Lucy's slippery form to remove the cat to the carpeted floor of the sunroom. Kathryn has placed her injured finger in her mouth so as to contain the pain and her blood. She has then recognised that she has wet herself, and has, simultaneously, taken the finger from her mouth, 2001 (detail)

sculptural installation of diverse materials, including fibreglass-reinforced polyester resin, polyurethane foam, oil-based pigment and synthetic hair wig installation 312.42 x 515.62 x 312.42 cm (123 x 203 x 123 in)

Type C print, from a series of five views of *Kathryn*, each 50 x 60 cm (19¾ x 23¾ in)

University of South Australia Art Collection

Class of 1999 ArtCenter College of Design, Los Angeles, USA



Sean CORDEIRO (b. 1974) and Claire HEALY (b. 1971) Deceased Estate, 2004 collaborative installation of warehouse detritus 400.0 x 500.0 x 500.0 cm (157½ x 196% x 196% in)

Class of 2006 Universität der Künste Berlin (UdK), Berlin, Germany



Mikala DWYER (b. 1959)

The Hollows, 2014 (detail)
plastic and air
dimensions variable
Installation created for the 19th Biennale
of Sydney (2014) at Cockatoo Island, Sydney
Photograph by Jessica Maurer
Courtesy the artist; Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery,
Sydney; and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

Class of 2005 Universität der Künste Berlin (UdK), Berlin, Germany



Susan FEREDAY (b. 1959)

Not for Reproduction, 2008–2013
from the series Patrimony, 2007–2013
giclée print on Canson Baryta paper
50.0 x 50.0 cm (19% x 19% in)
Courtesy Susan Fereday

Class of 1995 Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France



Nicholas FOLLAND (b. 1967)

Untitled (Jump-up), 2012

domestic crystal glassware, woven nylon thread dimensions variable

Installation created for the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art (2012) at the

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Courtesy the artist and Tolarno Galleries,

Melbourne

Class of 1999 Piet Zwart Institute, Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam, The Netherlands



Hayden FOWLER (b. 1973)

Second Nature v, 2008

chromogenic photograph

on Fujiflex

105.0 x 130.0 cm (41% x 51% in)

Photograph by Joy Lai

University of South Australia

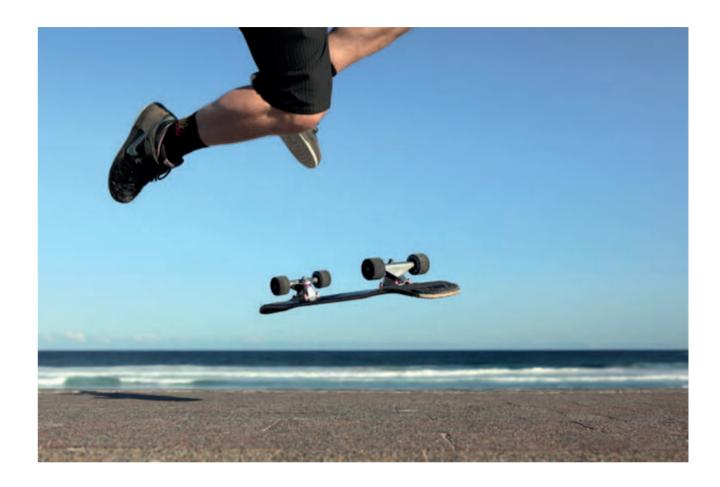
Art Collection

Class of 2008 Weissensee Kunsthochschule Berlin, Berlin, Germany



Matthÿs GERBER (b. 1956) L'Origine du Monde #1, 1992 oil on canvas 197.8 x 304.2 cm (77% x 119¾ in) Courtesy Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney

Class of 1995 Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, Utrecht, The Netherlands



Shaun GLADWELL (b. 1972)

Kickflipping Flâneur Reconstruction, 2015
giclée print on archival paper
40.0 x 60.0 cm (15¾ x 23¾ in)

Camera by Dean Tirkot

Commissioned for the University
of South Australia, 25th birthday

Class of 2001 Goldsmiths College, London, UK



Rebecca Ann HOBBS (b. 1976) Complex Social Groups, 2001 digital inkjet print 50.0 x 50.0 cm (19¾ x 19¾ in)

Class of 2003 California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles, USA



Timothy HORN (b. 1964)

Discomedusae, 2004

synair polyurethane rubber

and light globes

150.0 x 190.0 x 190.0 cm

(59 x 74¼ x 74¼ in)

Photograph by Grant Hancock

University of South Australia

Art Collection

Class of 2002 Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, USA



Kirra JAMISON (b. 1982)

Deer and Me, 2006

acrylic on poly cotton

120.0 x 100.0 cm (47¼ x 39¾ in)

Photograph by Mick Bradley

University of South Australia

Art Collection

Class of 2007 California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles, USA



Christian LOCK (b. 1969)

Taste the Space Candy, 2011
synthetic polymer paint and
oil on canvas

183.0 x 183.0 cm (72 x 72 in)

Courtesy the artist and
GAGPROJECTS | Greenaway Art Gallery,
Adelaide

Class of 2013 The New School, Parsons School of Design, New York, USA



Archie MOORE (b. 1970)

A Home Away from Home (Bennelong/Vera's Hut), 2016
mixed-media installation
433.2 x 345.0 x 258.4 cm
(170½ x 135% x 101¾ in)
Installation created for the 20th Biennale of Sydney
(2016) at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney
Photograph by Wendell Teodoro
Courtesy the artist and
The Commercial Gallery, Sydney

Class of 2001 Academy of Fine Arts, Prague, Czech Republic

Archie Moore's A Home Away from Home (Bennelong/Vera's Hut), 2016, provides a touching response to Australia's colonial history. Encountered in a secluded corner of the Royal Botanic Gardens, the work is bordered by the sails of the Sydney Opera House and the Gothic Revival pile of Government House. Here Moore installed a one-to-one-scale replica of a brick hut built for Woollarawarre Bennelong in 1790 by order of Arthur Phillip, governor of the new British colony. A member of the Wangal clan, Bennelong was captured by the invaders but subsequently formed a friendship with Phillip, becoming an interlocutor between local Indigenous and settler cultures; he is often taken to symbolise the tension between collaboration and reconciliation.

Toni Ross

From her review, '20th Biennale of Sydney', in Artforum magazine, summer, 2016



TV MOORE (b. 1974)

The Dead Zone: Part 2 (back view), 2003 still from video, installation of two videos

Courtesy Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Class of 2004 California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles, USA



Callum MORTON (b. 1965) *Toys 'R' Us, Utrecht*, 2001 digital print 59.4 x 82.0 cm (23% x 32¼ in)

Class of 2003 ArtCenter College of Design, Los Angeles, USA



Michelle NIKOU (b. 1967)

No Vacancy, 2010

powder-coated ceramic, Parker
table, neon

73.0 x 153.0 x 100.0 cm

(28¾ x 60¼ x 39¾ in)

Installation view, Heide Museum
of Modern Art, Melbourne 2016

Photograph by Christian Capurro
Cruthers Collection of Women's Art,
University of Western Australia

Class of 2010 Braunschweig University of Art, Braunschweig, Germany



Deborah PAAUWE (b. 1972)

The Tie That Binds, 1999

Type C print

75.0 x 75.0 cm or 120.0 x 120.0 cm

(29½ x 29½ or 47¼ x 47¼ in)

Courtesy the artist and

GAGPROJECTS | Greenaway Art Gallery,

Adelaide, and Michael Reid, Sydney

Class of 1999 Chelsea School of Art, The London Institute, UK



Nike SAVVAS (b. 1964)

Zero to Infinity, 2003

ensemble of hand-blown glass
dimensions variable

Photograph by Grant Hancock

Class of 1996 Goldsmiths College, London, UK



Robyn STACEY (b. 1952)

The Brendels, 2005

Series: Supermodels

Type C print

110.0 x 146.0 cm (431/3 x 571/2 in)

Courtesy the artist and

STILLS Gallery

University of South Australia

Art Collection

Class of 1994 School of Visual Arts, New York, USA



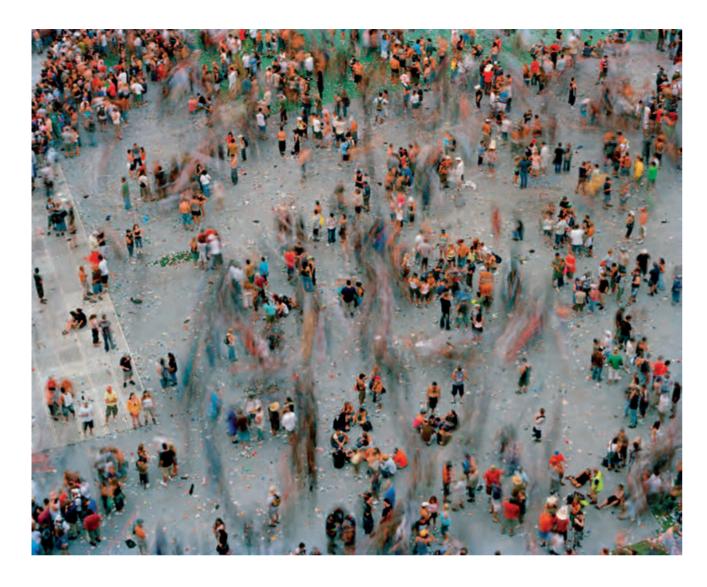
Linda TEGG (b. 1979)

Tortoise (Adelaide), 2016

still from HD video, 11:00 minutes

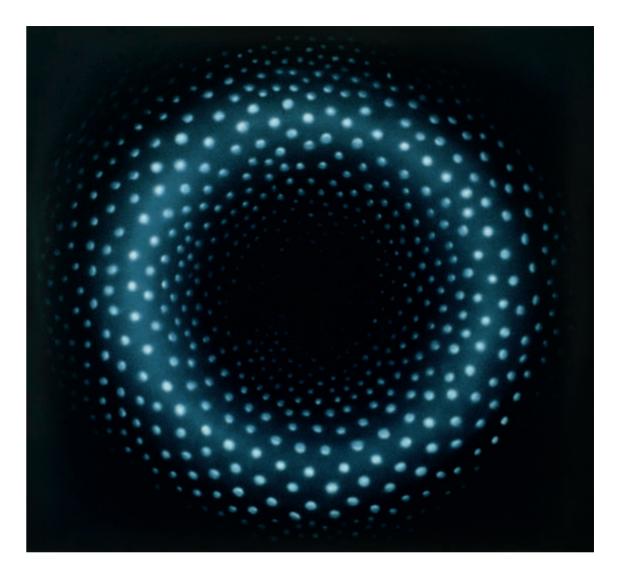
Courtesy the artist

Class of 2014 School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, USA



Simon TERRILL (b. 1969)
Swarm, 2005
Type C print
180.0 x 220.0 cm (70% x 86% in)
University of South Australia
Art Collection

Class of 2008 Slade School of Fine Art, London, UK



Megan WALCH (b. 1967) Alias 2, 1998–99 oil on canvas 128.0 x 140.0 cm (50% x 55 1/8 in) University of South Australia Art Collection

Class of 1995 San Francisco Art Institute, California, USA



Anne WALLACE (b. 1970)
Writer's Block, 2000
oil on canvas
111.5 x 136.5 cm (43% x 53¾ in)
Courtesy the artist and
Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney
University of South Australia
Art Collection

Class of 1994 Slade School of Fine Art, London, UK



Jemima WYMAN (b. 1977)

Polly Boxing, 2006
digital still of performance
Courtesy Milani Gallery, Brisbane

Class of 2005
California Institute of the Arts,
Los Angeles, USA



# CHRONOLOGY: GORDON AND ANNE SAMSTAG

- 1902 In November, in St Louis, Gordon Samstag's parents marry: Evelyn Maude Scharff (1881–1957), born in St Louis, and Solomon Monroe Samstag (1869–1931), merchant, born in Washington, DC.
- 1903 In September, in Cambridge, Anne Samstag's parents marry: Grace Bigelow (1867–1933), born in Massachusetts, and Charles Henry Davis (1865–1951), born in Pennsylvania.
- 1906 Gordon Samstag (d. 1990) is born on June 21 in New York City at his family home, 307 West Ninety-seventh Street, second son of Solomon and Evelyn; his elder brother is Nicholas (1903–68). At birth, Gordon's name is registered as Samuel Gordon Samstag, but he later drops 'Samuel'. He is descended from a distinguished line of high-achieving European Jewish migrants.
- 1907 Anne's father, Charles Henry Davis, forms the Kentenia Mining Corporation as a holding company by which to exploit the mining rights potential of inherited coal-rich land in Harlan County, Kentucky.
- 1908 Anna (later Anne) Lawton Davis (d. 1987) is born on December 12 at her family home, 'The House of Seven Chimneys', on Bass River, South Yarmouth, Cape Cod, Massachusetts.
  - Anna, who is known in the family as 'Bay' and will later change her name to Anne, is named after Charles's aunt, Anna (Coffin Davis) Hallowell (1838–1913), is the fourth of six sisters: Helen Maria Davis (1904–49), Martha Mott ('Patt') Davis (1905–83), Priscilla ('Prill') Davis (1907–90); Frances ('Frin') Bigelow Davis (1911–84) and Lucretia Mott Davis (1912).
- 1910 In December, Anne (with her sisters Helen Maria, Patt and Prill) travels to England by sea with her parents, where she stays for three months in London.
- 1911 The extension of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad to Harlan County boosts the prospects of the Kentenia Mining Corporation, which begins leasing mining rights to other companies in exchange for royalties. The Davis family begin living most of the year in Reservoir Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the stately eighteenth-century Georgian residence 'Elmwood'
- 1912 Anne's youngest sister, Lucretia Mott Davis, dies in her first year.
- c.1919 Gordon attends high school, presumably DeWitt Clinton High School in New York, where his brother, Nicholas, was a student.

- 1920s Gordon's parents divorce. His father largely disappears from his life after this, and Gordon lives mainly with his mother.
- 1922 In April, Anne, aged thirteen, travels with her mother and sisters to stay in Italy and Switzerland for a year. Patt, Prill and Frin attend the Institut des Essarts international school on Lake Geneva, while older sister Helen Maria is enrolled at the University of Geneva. It is the first of several extended trips to Europe. By now, Anne's parents are divorced.
- 1923 In summer, Gordon begins classes at the Art Students League in New York. His address is 535 West 111th Street. In autumn, he moves to St Louis, living with his maternal grandfather, Nicholas Scharff, at 5 225 Lindell Boulevard while attending a life drawing class in the Fine Arts School at Washington University.
- 1924 In spring, Gordon attends a class in commercial design at the Fine Arts School; he also works intermittently as a 'candy butcher' on trains and as a soda dispenser. In June, his grandfather dies and his mother receives a modest inheritance.
  - In autumn, Gordon enrols at the National Academy of Design in New York to study under Charles Hawthorne. He is living at 521 West 112th Street with his mother.
- 1925 Aged sixteen, Anne, with sister Prill, attends a school in Lausanne, Switzerland. Soon after her return, Anne attends the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
  - During the summer, Gordon attends a life drawing class with George Bridgman at the Art Students League in New York. He continues his studies there in the autumn while also attending the National Academy of Design, where he again studies under Charles Hawthorne.

Anne SAMSTAG, Hourglass handkerchief (detail), 1950s printed hand-rolled linen 38.0 x 38.0 cm (15 x 15 in) Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA

- 1926 Through spring, Gordon continues his studies at the Art Students League and the National Academy, where he wins a 'special commendation' for his portrait drawings. He applies for and receives financial assistance from the Leopold Schepp Foundation in New York for the coming academic year. After early-summer study at the Art Students League, he spends August and September at Hawthorne's Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, Massachusetts, possibly encountering Anne, whose family have a home in the area. In autumn, Gordon begins a third season at the National Academy, studying under Ivan Olinsky and Francis C. Jones.
- 1927 Anne and her sisters Prill and Patt stay at the 'Studio Club' at 35 East Sixty-second Street, New York, while Prill is enrolled in a sculpture class at the Art Students League; Gordon is studying there too, and this may be the context where he and Anne meet.

  Gordon receives continued financial support from the Schepp Foundation. In spring he is awarded two Suydam silver medals for drawing and for the best work in the men's class at the National Academy. He attends a June painting class with Homer Boss and is then awarded a two-month fellowship by the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation to work at its studios at Oyster Bay on Long Island. In the autumn, Gordon begins his fourth season at the National Academy, studying under Raymond P.R. Neilson.
- 1928 At the National Academy, Gordon is awarded the School Prize for still life painting (\$20), the Cannon Prize for painting from the nude (\$100) and the Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship for Study Abroad (\$1500). He requests and receives continued support from the Tiffany Foundation to allow him to work full time on his art until he departs for Europe.

  Anne, aged nineteen, travels to Europe with her mother Grace and sisters Helen Maria and Frin, returning to Boston just as Gordon is about to leave for Paris. It is not known whether at this point Anne and Gordon have already met.
  - On September 27, Gordon sails for Europe, where he studies in Paris at the Académie Colarossi. In autumn his work appears in the Tiffany Foundation Exhibition at the Anderson Galleries in New York (November 6–24), and his painting *Still Life* is shown at the Eleventh Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (October 28–December 9). Charles Davis's fifty-nine leased Kentenia mines in Harlan County are by now producing vast amounts of coal, making him extremely wealthy.
- 1929 Gordon continues his studies in Paris, renting a studio in the Rue Vercingétorix, and apparently travels to Spain. He returns to New York on June 5, 1929, and takes up residence at 521 West 112th Street. In October, the Stock Market Crash begins the Great Depression.

- 1930 Gordon is listed as a member of the faculty at the National Academy.
  - Anne travels to Europe with her mother, returning in September on the *Britannic*.
- 1931 Gordon's address is now 203 West Eighty-first Street, New York.
  - At the National Academy 106th Annual Exhibition (March 15-April 15), Gordon wins the Thomas B. Clarke Prize of \$300, for the best figure composition by an American citizen, for his work *Young Man Desires Position*. The work appears on the cover of the April edition of *The Art Digest*.
  - Anne's father, Charles Henry Davis, marries his former secretary, Alice Bancroft, in New York, on May 4. Anne travels overseas with her mother, returning in August.
- 1932 In January, Gordon is elected to Allied Artists of America. His address is 49 West Twelfth Street, New York.
- 1933 Anne's mother, Grace, and her uncle, Francis, both pass away early in the year. Anne and her sisters most likely receive a modest inheritance.
  - In September, at the National Academy of Design, Gordon is appointed assistant instructor to George Laurence Nelson in the Antique class for the autumn semester
  - Anne and Gordon are married at the Municipal Court of New York City on November 3. The marriage licence lists Gordon's profession as 'artist' and Anne's as 'designer'. The marriage is witnessed by Gordon's mother, Evelyn, and Anne's father, Charles.
- 1934 Gordon has his first one-man exhibition, Paintings by Gordon Samstag, at the Montross Gallery in New York (October 22-November 3).
- 1935 Gordon continues to work as assistant instructor to George Laurence Nelson in the Antique class at the National Academy. He exhibits his work *Proletarian* at the Twenty-fifth Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings and Sculpture at the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts (March 16–April 7) and at the Twenty-second Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by Contemporary American Artists at the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio (June 2–August 25). In June, the Toledo Museum of Art purchases *Proletarian*.

  Gordon holds his second solo exhibition of oils and lithographs at the Gimbel Galleries of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia (opened May 22).
- 1936 The Samstags' address is 27 West Tenth Street, New York.
  - At the 131st Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (January 26–March 1), Gordon wins the Lippincott Prize for his painting *Nurses*. The painting appears on the cover of the February edition of *The Art Digest*.

At the Twenty-sixth Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings and Sculpture at the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts (March 7–29), Gordon wins the Alice Collins Dunham Prize (worth \$25), for the best portrait, for *Anne and Fidelma*. In April he has his third solo exhibition, at the Montross Gallery (April 13–25), displaying twenty-seven works, including *Nurses*, *Proletarian* and *Domestic*.

In autumn, Gordon participates in the Allied Artists of America exhibition and has his painting *Nurses* accepted for the Art Institute of Chicago's Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture (October 22–December 6). Even more significantly, his work *Proletarian* is accepted for the Carnegie Institute's highly prestigious International Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture (October 15–December 6).

1937 The Samstags are now living at 215 West Thirteenth Street. New York.

Gordon exhibits works at the annual Pennsylvania Academy, National Academy and Corcoran Biennial shows. In July, he is invited by the US Government's Treasury Section of Painting and Sculpture to submit sketches for a mural for the post office at Reidsville, North Carolina, as part of a New Deal art project. He visits the post office in August and after further discussion is awarded a contract for the mural.

Late in the year, Gordon's work *White Horse, Pound Ridge* is shown at the Carnegie Institute's International Exhibition of Paintings (October 14–December 5).

1938 The Samstags' address is now 39 West Twenty-seventh Street, New York.

Gordon completes his mural for the Reidsville post office and it is installed in May. At the Allied Artists Twenty-fifth Annual Exhibition (October 15–31), Gordon exhibits a portrait of his father-in-law, Charles Henry Davis.

Gordon attends the Byrdcliff artists' colony at Woodstock, New York.

Gordon holds his fourth solo show, at the Montross Gallery, Recent Paintings and Sketches by Gordon Samstag (October 17–29).

1939 The Samstags are living at 332 West Twenty-eighth Street, New York.

In January, the Treasury Section of Painting and Sculpture invites Gordon to submit sketches for two murals for the Scarsdale Post Office, New York. In March, Gordon is elected an Associate of the National Academy of Design (ANA). In the following month he is awarded a contract for the post office murals at Scarsdale.

In June, Gordon again attends the Byrdcliff artists' colony in Woodstock, New York. In November, he exhibits with the Allied Artists of America and is elected to its 'board of control'. He also joins the Salmagundi Art Club of New York.

- 1940 In February, Gordon's New Deal murals *Caleb Heathcote Buys the Richbell Farm* and *Law and Order in Old Scarsdale Manor* are installed in the post office at Scarsdale, New York. Following summer teaching at the Art Students League, Gordon begins working as a staff artist at Jordanoff Aviation.
- 1941 Gordon continues to work at Jordanoff while also teaching at the Art Students League in the summer.
- 1942 Gordon exhibits at the Salmagundi Club (January), the National Academy's 116th Annual Exhibition (April) and the Allied Artists' Twenty-ninth Annual Exhibition (November). He continues to work at Jordanoff and again teaches a summer course at the Art Students League.
- 1943 Still employed by Jordanoff, Gordon exhibits at the National Academy (February 17–March 9) and the Corcoran Biennial (March).
- 1944 Gordon exhibits at the 118th National Academy
  Exhibition, and sells *Young Man Desires Position* to
  the Sheldon Swope Art Gallery, Terre Haute, Indiana.
  He ends his employment with Jordanoff Aviation.
- 1945 The Samstags move from Manhattan to 806 Bronx River Road, Bronxville, Westchester County. In summer, Gordon teaches at the Art Students League.
- 1946 Gordon continues teaching at the Art Students
  League. He is also employed as an illustrator by
  Macfadden Publications. His painting *Beach Comber*is shown at the Carnegie Institute's Painting in the
  United States show.
- 1947 On January 6, the American Art School opens at 3410 Broadway with three instructors: Robert Brackman, William Gropper and Gordon Samstag. Samstag and Henry S. Maurer are the co-directors of the school.
  - Gordon exhibits at the National Academy and Carnegie annual exhibitions. He is elected to the Audubon Artists.
- 1948 The American Art School adds Leon Friend and Raphael Soyer to its staff.
- 1949 Max Beckmann joins the faculty at the American
- 1950 Gordon holds his fifth solo exhibition, at the Milch Galleries in New York (January 9–28), showing twenty works.

Around this time Anne is working as a dog obedience trainer; she is associated with the Obedience Training Club of Greater New York, and is a member of the American Kennel Club. She is also working as an illustrator and textile designer, specialising in linen handkerchiefs for the prestige retail market.

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Photographs of Gordon and Anne Samstag, featured on the back of their book, *Training Your Own Dog*, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., New York, 1961

- 1951 The American Art School moves to 145 West Fiftysixth Street, probably in January. Gordon exhibits his work *Gossips* at the annual National Academy show (March 23–April 8).
  - Death of Anne's father, Charles Henry Davis, on June 3. His will names his third wife, Alice (Bancroft) Davis, as principal beneficiary.
- 1954 The Samstags are still living at 806 Bronx River Road, Bronxville. In summer, they holiday in Bermuda, returning to New York in September.
- 1956 Samstag is on the jury of selection for oil paintings at the Audubon Artists' Fourteenth Annual Exhibition.
- 1957 Death of Gordon's mother, Evelyn Scharff Samstag, on September 5. Gordon and his brother, Nicholas, named in their mother's will. In November Anne and Gordon move to 111 Fenimore Road, Mamaroneck, New York State, where they indulge their hobby of sailing their Cape Cod Bullseye Class yacht.
- 1958 Gordon is still director and chief instructor at the American Art School. For the Audubon Artists' Sixteenth Annual Exhibition, he is on the jury of awards for oil painting. In February he takes part in a demonstration at the Mamaroneck Art Barn by members of the Mamaroneck Artists Guild.
- 1959 Anne approaches book publisher Alfred A. Knopf with her manuscript for a book about dog training. Knopf editor Angus Cameron becomes responsible for the publication's development, in the process forming an enduring and cordial business relationship with the Samstags.
- 1960 After working in advertising with great success, Gordon's brother, Nicholas, sets up his own public relations company – Nicholas Samstag Inc. – at Fifth Avenue.
  - Gordon and Anne take a vacation cruising the Caribbean on a yacht, just before their move to Australia.
  - In December, Gordon has his sixth solo show at the Janet Nessler Gallery in New York, featuring seventeen paintings and an unspecified number of gouaches.
- 1961 Gordon and Anne's passports are issued on February 10.
  - Anne's book, *Training Your Own Dog*, is published in New York by Alfred A. Knopf, with illustrations by Gordon. The book will remain in print for over a decade and go on to sell around 500 copies a year and a Spanish-language edition will be published.
  - Gordon and Anne both submit an 'Application for Registration by Alien Entering Australia' on May 31, in New York. Gordon's occupation is noted as 'art instructor, artist', while Anne's is 'artist, designer'.

In May, Anne and Gordon move to Australia, first arriving in Sydney, New South Wales, on May 31, on a Tasman Empire Airways flight from Auckland. In June, they travel to Melbourne, where Gordon has taken a temporary, part-time role at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, teaching illustration, figure and portrait drawing. They live at 241 Brighton Road, Elwood.

In October, Gordon and Anne move to Adelaide, South Australia, where Gordon will take up the position of Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at the South Australian School of Art (SASA), initially in the Exhibition Building on North Terrace, Adelaide. The Samstags move into 25 Sunnyside Road, St Georges; Anne soon begins conducting dog obedience classes.

- 1962 Gordon begins working at the SASA.
- 1963 In 1963 the SASA moves to Stanley Street, North Adelaide.

In June, Gordon holds his first solo exhibition in Adelaide, Exhibition of Paintings by Gordon Samstag ANA, at the Royal South Australian Society of Arts Gallery. It comprises sixty-three works – most of them paintings – a small number of which he'd brought from America.

- 1964 In October, Gordon is given the honour of presenting the very first solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, in its new Porter Street, Parkside, premises.
  - Gordon exhibits *Contravention* in the Cornell Prize Exhibition (November 9–c. 23) at the Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, Parkside.
  - Gordon becomes president of the Burnside Painting Group.
- 1965 Gordon sends his painting Preparation for the Wedding (1959) back to America for the purpose of securing full membership of the National Academy of Design.
  - In April, Gordon has a solo show in Melbourne, at the Leveson Street Gallery, featuring twenty-six paintings and two drawings.
  - In October, Gordon is elected as a full Academician (NA) at the National Academy of Design in New York.
    Gordon becomes a Contemporary Art Society SA
    Council Member and continues in this role for the next three years.
- 1966 In September, two of Gordon's works are accepted for a group show at the Barry Stern Galleries in Sydney, featuring prominent artists such as Donald Friend and Fred Williams.
- 1967 The Samstags buy land at 14 Bayview Crescent, Beaumont, a suburb of Adelaide, and build their own, architect-designed house, completed in September.

- In April, Gordon holds a solo show, Collages and Constructions by Gordon Samstag, at the Barry Stern Galleries in Sydney, featuring fourteen works.
- 1968 Death of Gordon's brother, Nicholas, on March 26.
- 1969 In March, Gordon holds his final solo exhibition in Adelaide, at the Robert Bolton Gallery, North Adelaide.
  - Gordon is elected president of the Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, a role he will hold for the next two years.
- 1970 In June, Gordon submits his resignation letter to the SASA principal, Douglas Roberts, citing extenuating circumstances. In September he retires from the SASA, just one year short of a decade in his senior lecturer role.
- 1971 On January 28, Samstag resigns his role as president of the Contemporary Art Society of South Australia following controversy surrounding his leadership.
   Late in the year, Anne begins discussions, in
  - Late in the year, Anne begins discussions, in cooperation with her surviving sisters, regarding the imminent termination of their longstanding family trust, the Naomi L. Davis Trust, the largest component of which was the family's valuable shareholding in the Kentenia Mining Corporation.
  - To replace it, Anne and her sisters plan to establish their own individual, independent family trusts, containing separate entitlements to the property of the Davis Trust.
  - In December the Samstags travel to Cairns, Queensland, their intended new home, to secure a residence ahead of their move in the New Year.
- 1972 In April, Anne and Gordon depart Adelaide for Cairns, Queensland. Soon after their arrival, they begin looking for a block of land on which to build a house.
  - The formal 'instrument' for Anne Samstag's new trust, the Anne and Gordon Samstag Revocable Trust, is signed by her and witnessed in Cairns, Queensland, on May 11. In June, the Naomi L. Davis Trust is dissolved, and its assets are disbursed to the independent trusts of the four Davis sisters.
- 1973 The Samstags host Knopf editor Angus Cameron's artist niece, Marilyn Jensen, and her husband, David, when they visit Cairns, at which time Anne is still promoting concepts for new dog-related books to the publisher, albeit unsuccessfully.
- 1974 The Samstags purchase a block of land at 10 Woodlands Avenue, Edge Hill, in an elevated position with views, and build a large house on it.
  - At his home at Edge Hill, Gordon begins to teach art courses encompassing art theory and practice, the Greek myths and history.

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- 1977 Five years after moving to Cairns, the Samstags decide to leave Australia and return permanently to the United States. They take a preliminary trip to the USA between May and July to prepare for the move. On their return to Australia, they sell their house before departing again on October 19, intending to travel first to Hawaii, then San Diego for a few weeks, and then on to Florida. Once there, they rent a house in Fort Lauderdale and then move to Naples.
- 1978 The Samstags purchase an attractive bungalow in a prestigious part of Naples, at 2058 Snook Drive, Royal Harbor, amid a dense network of fabricated canals.
- 1980 The Kentenia Mining Corporation winds up its business and sells its assets, and on August 25 is voluntarily dissolved. When the proceeds of the business are distributed to the shareholders, each of the four Davis sisters receives approximately US\$4.5 million. Anne and Gordon are now comfortably rich.
  - Gordon and Anne begin spending the summer months in the district of their former home of Mamaroneck. New York State.
  - Gordon writes to the South Australian Minister of Education on August 21, seeking 'advice and help in implementing a bequest or charitable trust for young Australian artists'. In the following month, the Samstags travel to Australia via Europe. Close to Christmas, they meet with the SASA management to discuss the bequest further. Correspondence on the matter continues over the next few years.
- 1981 Gordon's work *Proletarian* is included in the exhibition The Neglected Generation of American Realist Painters: 1930–1948 (May 3–June 14) at Wichita Art Museum, Kansas.
- 1982 Gordon draws up a new will on April 12.
- 1983 Gordon's work is included in the exhibition Social Concern and Urban Realism: American Painting of the 1930s (April 1983–October 1984), at Boston University Art Gallery (*Proletarian*).
- 1984 Anne and Gordon visit Adelaide in March.
- An Exhibition of Paintings by Gordon Samstag begins on January 13 at the Valand Art Gallery in Florida.
   In September, the Samstags purchase a home in Mamaroneck, at 585 Lawn Terrace.
   Gordon's work Young Man Desires Position is included in the exhibition American Art of the Great Depression: Two Sides of the Coin (October 27-December 1) at Wichita Art Museum, Kansas.
- 1986 In September, Gordon visits his murals in the Scarsdale post office, New York.

- 1987 Anne dies of gastric cancer on June 7. Later that year, Gordon sells the couple's Mamaroneck residence at Lawn Terrace. In December, Gordon's net worth is estimated at approximately US\$4 million.
- 1988 Gordon marries Myrna Hayes on April 10; the couple honeymoon on the *Queen Elizabeth 2*. However, the marriage lasts only a few months and by December dissolution proceedings have commenced.
  - On September 14, Gordon establishes a new personal trust with the Citizens and Southern Trust Company in Florida.
- 1989 In January, in the midst of divorce proceedings, a frail Samstag visits Adelaide for the last time, meeting with former colleagues and students and taking a tour of the SASA at Underdale. He also meets with the new college principal, Robert Segall, to discuss the proposed scholarship program.

  In May, Gordon makes his final will, leaving bequests to friends but placing the bulk of his estate in a perpetual trust, the Fine Arts Trust, to be made
  - available to the proposed scholarship program.

    Gordon's divorce from Myrna Hayes becomes official on June 22.
- 1990 Gordon Samstag dies in Naples, Florida, on March 11, from cardiac arrest, aged eighty-three.
  - In April, Samstag's attorneys write to the South Australian College of Advanced Education (SACAE), a new institution of which the SASA is now a part, advising that Gordon Samstag has died and that his Fine Arts Trust is now available for the creation of the scholarship program. The trust is valued at approximately US\$5 million.
  - In September, trustee representatives meet with SACAE representatives in Adelaide to discuss the details of Gordon's will, its requirements and the administration of the scholarships program.

    In December, the newly established University of South Australia (UniSA), of which the SASA is now

a part, announces the Samstag bequest and the creation

of Australia's most valuable scholarships for artists.

- 1992 Advertisements appear promoting the 'Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships' and inviting applications by artists.

  The first scholarships are awarded, with the Inaugural Class of Samstag Scholars to take up their scholarships
- 2007 In October, the new Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art is opened at the UniSA.
- 2016 The UniSA celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships. By this time, 136 scholarships have been awarded, with a value exceeding AUD\$10 million.

# GORDON SAMSTAG: CHRONOLOGICAL EXHIBITION LIST

A complete list of all works by Gordon Samstag, by title, covering both his American and Australian careers, is held by the Samstag Legacy Archive at the University of South Australia.

#### UNITED STATES

All US exhibitions are in New York City unless otherwise stated.

#### 1928

Provincetown Art Association, Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of Painting, Drawing and Prints, July 29–September 8 (no. 26, *Still Life*)

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Eleventh Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, October 28–December 9 (no. 196, *Still Life*)

Anderson Galleries, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Ninth Exhibition, November 6-24

#### 1929

Anderson Galleries, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Tenth Exhibition, November 5–23

#### 193

National Academy of Design, 105th Annual Exhibition, March 20-April 6 (no. 78. *The Three Dragons*)

Anderson Galleries, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Eleventh Exhibition, November 5–22

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Twelfth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, November 30-January 11 (no. 363, Young Man Desires Position)

#### 193

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, 126th Annual Exhibition, January 25

National Academy of Design, 106th Annual Exhibition, March 15-April 15 (no. 90, *Young Man Desires Position*, which won the Thomas B. Clarke Prize) Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, Twenty-fifth Annual Exhibition of American Paintings, April 26–June 22 (no. 108, *Young Man Desires Position*)

Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, New York, Summer Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, July 1931 (Young Man Desires Position)

Anderson Galleries, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Twelfth Exhibition, November 5–25

#### 1932

Allied Artists of America, Nineteenth Annual Exhibition, January 27– February 11 (no. 184, *Bowl of White*; no. 290, *Brown and White*)

National Academy of Design, 107th Annual Exhibition, March 27–April 17 (no. 42, *Pink and Yellow*)

Midtown Galleries, Sixth Cooperative Exhibition, August 7–September 2 (*Hors d'Oeuvres*)

Towers Hotel, Brooklyn, Robert Ulrich Godsoe Exhibition, September 1-15

Midtown Galleries, Seventh Cooperative Exhibition, September (*Hors d'Oeuvres*); Samstag may also have participated in the Eighth Cooperative Exhibition, October 3–28, but this remains uncertain

National Academy of Design, Winter Exhibition, November 26–December 21 (no. 14, *Brown and White No. 4*)

#### 1933

National Academy of Design, 108th Annual Exhibition, March 25-April 18 (no. 271, *Brown and White No. 1*)

Hotel Roosevelt, Robert Ulrich Godsoe Exhibition: From Realism to Surrealism, April 17–30 (*Hors d'Oewvres*)

#### 107/

Brooklyn Museum, Allied Artists of America, Twenty-first Annual Exhibition, April 6-May 6 (no. 93, *Robert De Postels*)

The Forum, Rockefeller Center, Salons of America No-Jury Exhibition, April 9 – May 6

Provincetown Art Association, Twentieth Annual Exhibition, August 5-September 3 (no. 2, *Coal Shed*, *Dennis*; no. 56, *Bass River Station*)

Montross Gallery, Paintings by Gordon Samstag, October 22-November 3

New School for Social Research, First Exhibition by Art Instructors in New York, December 17, 1934–January 15, 1935

#### 1935

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 130th Annual Exhibition, January 27–March 3 (no. 189, *Proletarian*)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eighth Biennial Exhibition of Water Colors, Pastels and Drawings by American and Foreign Artists, February 1–28 (no. 312, Miner's Homes [sic])

Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, Hartford, Connecticut, Twenty-fifth Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings and Sculpture, March 16-April 7 (no. 11, *Proletarian*)

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Fourteenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, March 24– May 5 (no. 419, *Coal Shed, Bass River*)

New York Water-Color Club, Fortysixth Annual Exhibition, April 13–28 (*Thirty-eighth Floor*)

Cincinnati (Ohio) Art Museum, Forty-second Annual Exhibition of American Art, May 9-June 9 (no. 132, *The Shutters*)

360

Gimbel Galleries of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, solo exhibition of oils and lithographs, opened May 22

Toledo (Ohio) Museum of Art, Twenty-second Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by Contemporary American Artists, June 2-August 25 (no. 54, *Proletarian*)

Montross Gallery, group exhibition of thirty artists, August (*Coal Shed*)

Ferargil Galleries, group exhibition of American painters, November (*Flooded Lime Kiln*, *Cheese and Fruit*)

#### 1936

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 131st Annual Exhibition, January 26–March 1 (no. 210, *Domestic*; no. 224, *Nurses*, which won the Lippincott Prize)

Montross Gallery, Paintings by Twenty Americans, March 1–14

Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, Hartford, Connecticut, Twenty-sixth Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings and Sculpture, March 7–29 (no. 94, *Anne and Fidelma*, which won the Alice Collins Dunham Prize for the best portrait by a member of the Academy)

National Academy of Design, 111th Annual Exhibition, March 18–April 10 (no. 269, Coal Shed, Bass River)

Montross Gallery, Gordon Samstag: Exhibition of Recent Paintings, April 13–25 (27 paintings)

Allied Artists of America, Twenty-third Annual Exhibition, May 8–31 (no. 25, *Domestic*)

Montross Gallery, group exhibition, June 28–July 18 (*El Station*)

Silvermine Guild of Artists, Norwald, Connecticut, July

Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, The 1936 International Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture, October 15-December 6 (no. 62, *Proletarian*)

Art Institute of Chicago, Forty-seventh Annual Exhibition of American Paintings and Sculpture, October 22-December 6 (*Nurses*)

#### 1937

City Art Museum, St Louis, Thirtyfirst Annual Exhibition of Paintings by American Artists, January 2–February 15 (no. 34, *Cheese and Fruit*; no. 35, *Flooded Lime Kiln*)

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 132nd Annual Exhibition, January 21-February 28 (no. 172, White Horse, Pound Ridge)

Montross Gallery, Paintings by Young American Artists, group exhibition, February; Samstag may have also participated in Montross's Winter 1937 Exhibition, February 8–20

Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, Hartford, Twenty-seventh Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings, Sculpture, and Black and White, March 6–28 (no. 128, *Coal Shed, Bass River*)

National Academy of Design, 112th Annual Exhibition, March 13-April 13 (no. 27, White Horse in Harness)

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Fifteenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, March 28–May 29 (no. 340, *Domestic*)

Village Galleries, group exhibition, May (Sand and Gravel Pit)

Studio Gallery, Joint Distribution Committee Art Exhibition and Sale, May 2-9

Montross Gallery, Paintings by American Artists, June 16?–September 1 (*Sand and Gravel Pit*); Samstag may have also participated in Montross's Paintings by the American Group, April 19–May 1

Village Galleries, Contemporary Americans, October (*Barber Shop*)

Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, The 1937 International Exhibition of Paintings, October 14-December 5 (no. 82, *White Horse, Pound Ridge*)

#### 1938

National Academy of Design, 113th Annual Exhibition, March 16-April 13 (no. 180, Shipping Clerk)

Studio Gallery, Joint Distribution Committee Art Exhibition and Sale, April 25–May 9

Montross Gallery, group show, June

Allied Artists of America, Twenty-fifth Annual Exhibition, October 15–31 (no. 537, *Charles H. Davis*)

Montross Gallery, Recent Paintings and Sketches by Gordon Samstag, October 17–29 (22 paintings and an unspecified number of sketches)

Art Institute of Chicago, Forty-ninth Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture, October 20-December 4 (no. 190, *Atlas*)

#### 1939

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Sixteenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, March 26-May 7 (no. 297, *Nude*)

Ferargil Galleries, Twenty-fifth Annual Oil Exhibition, June 5–30 (no. 24, Paper Boats); Samstag may have also participated in Ferargil's Twenty-fifth Annual Watercolor Exhibition, July– September 1

Allied Artists of America, Twenty-sixth Annual Exhibition, November 11–26 (no. 286, *Painters*)

## 1940

Salmagundi Club, Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings, February 11–March 1 (no. 99, *Scrubwoman*)

National Academy of Design, 114th Annual Exhibition, March 14-April 11 (no. 8, *Anne and Sandra*)

Salmagundi Club, Exhibition of Water Colors and Sculpture, March 16–29 (no. 30, *The Dock*)

Salmagundi Club, Summer Exhibition of Pictures, May 10-September 27 (no. 38, *Coal Shed, Bass River*)

New York World's Fair, Joint Exhibition of the Allied Artists of America and the New York Water Color Club, June 1–19 Montross Gallery, Twenty-five American Artists, June 24–September 1 (no. 36, *Anne and Sandra*; no. 37, *Old White Horse*)

New York World's Fair, National Academy of Design exhibition: American Art Today, summer

Salmagundi Club, Annual Black and White Exhibition, October 11-25 (Office Building)

Allied Artists of America, Twentyseventh Annual Exhibition, October 30-November 12

#### 1941

Salmagundi Club, Annual Exhibition and Auction Sale of Pictures, January 12–24 (no. 56, *Demi-Tasse*)

Salmagundi Club, Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings, February 9–28 (no. 80, *Anne and Fidelma*)

Montross Gallery, Ten American Artists: Paintings and Drawings, February 17–28 (*Barges*)

Salmagundi Club, Exhibition of Water Colors and Sculpture, March 15–28 (no. 69, *The Shoppers*; no. 110, *Harwichport*)

Montross Gallery, group exhibition, June 8–30 (*Old White Horse*)

Art Students League, exhibition of instructors, July 15-August 1

Art Students League, exhibition of instructors, August 5–22

## 1942

Salmagundi Club, exhibition and auction of paintings to benefit British artists, January 10–30

Arnot Art Gallery (now Arnot Art Museum), Elmira, New York, Exhibition of Oil Paintings by Members of the Salmagundi Club of New York, February (no. 17, *Lime Depot*; no. 22, *East River Coal Sheds*)

Salmagundi Club, Sixty-fifth Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings, February 15–March 6 (no. 96, *Coal Barn, South Dennis*) National Academy of Design, 116th Annual Exhibition, April 8-May 16 (no. 71, Crepe Paper Lillies [sic])

Allied Artists of America, Twentyninth Annual Exhibition, October 31-November 29 (no. 136, *The Gray Barn*, which won an Honorable Mention)

Syracuse Museum (now Everson Museum of Art), Red Cross Poster Designs, touring exhibition, December (*Nurse*)

#### 1943

Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, New York, Red Cross Poster Designs, touring exhibition, opened January 4 (*Nurse*)

Salmagundi Club, Annual Exhibition and Auction Sale of Pictures, January 10–29 (no. 72, *Paper Boats*)

City Art Museum (now St Louis Art Museum), St Louis, Red Cross Poster Designs, touring exhibition, opened January 28 (*Nurse*)

Salmagundi Club Sixty-sixth Annual Exhibition of Oil Paintings, February 14-March 5 (no. 125, *Felicite*)

National Academy of Design, 117th Annual Exhibition, February 17–March 9 (no. 220, *Berry Picker*)

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Eighteenth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, March 21–May 2 (no. 246, *Beach Comber*)

#### 1944

Art Students League, fundraising exhibition for Veterans Scholarship Fund, opened March 11

National Academy of Design, 118th Annual Exhibition, March 29-April 25 (no. 188, *Flour Mill Hand*)

#### 1945

National Academy of Design, 120th Annual Exhibition (Winter, '1945-II'), December 4–21 (no. 183, *Beach Comber*)

# 1946

Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Painting in the United States, 1946, October 10-December 8 (no. 155, *Beach Comber*)

#### 194

National Academy of Design, 121st Annual Exhibition (Second Half), March 19-April 13 (no. 34, *The Old Wind Mill*)

Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Painting in the United States, 1947, October 9-December 7 (no. 275, *Alternative*)

Audubon Artists, galleries of the National Academy of Design, Sixth Annual Exhibition, December 11–29 (no. 3, *Leaves*)

#### 1948

National Academy of Design, 122nd Annual Exhibition, March 25–April 14 (no. 44, *Alternative*)

Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Painting in the United States, 1948, October 14-December 12 (no. 227, *Isolation*)

Audubon Artists, Seventh Annual Exhibition, December 2–15 (no. 86, *Mooring*)

#### 1949

National Academy of Design, 123rd Annual Exhibition (First Half), March 10–23 (no. 82, *Atropos*)

Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Painting in the United States, 1949, October 13-December 11 (no. 162. Frustration)

National Academy of Design, 124th Annual Exhibition, November 11-December 11 (no. 37, *Sorceress*; no. 104, *Ember*)

#### 1950

Milch Galleries, Paintings by Gordon Samstag, January 9–28 (20 works)

National Academy of Design, 125th Anniversary Exhibition, March 10-April 9 (no. 19, *Frustration*)

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#### 1951

National Academy of Design, 126th Annual Exhibition, March 23-April 8 (no. 75, *Gossips*)

#### 1953

Audubon Artists, Eleventh Annual Exhibition, January 22–February 8 (no. 8, *Tight-Rope Walkers*)

National Academy of Design, 128th Annual Exhibition, April 2–26 (no. 45, *Driftwood*)

#### 1954

Audubon Artists, Twelfth Annual Exhibition, January 21–February 7 (no. 19, Susanna and the Elders)

#### 1956

Audubon Artists, Fourteenth Annual Exhibition, January 19–February 5 (no. 59, *Seesaw*; Samstag on Jury of Selection for oil painting)

#### 1957

Audubon Artists, Fifteenth Annual Exhibition, January 17–February 3 (no. 49, *Still Life with Figures*)

#### 1958

Audubon Artists, Sixteenth Annual Exhibition, January 16-February 2 (no. 64, *Office*; Samstag on Jury of Awards for oil painting)

#### 1960

Audubon Artists, Eighteenth Annual Exhibition, January 21-February 7 (no. 60, *Anticipation*)

Janet Nessler Gallery, Recent Paintings by Gordon Samstag, December 19, 1960–January 7, 1961 (17 paintings and an unspecified number of gouaches)

#### 1961

Audubon Artists, Nineteenth Annual Exhibition, January 19-February 5 (no. 94, *The Rockers*)

#### 1981

The Neglected Generation of American Realist Painters: 1930–1948, Wichita Art Museum, Kansas, Wichita, May 2-June 14

#### 1983-84

Boston University Art Gallery, Social Concern and Urban Realism: American painting of the 1930s, April 1983–October 1984 (*Proletarian*)

#### 1985

Valand Art Gallery, Florida, An Exhibition of Paintings by Gordon Samstag, opened January 13

American Art of the Great Depression: Two Sides of the Coin, Wichita Art Museum, Kansas, Wichita, October 27-December 1

#### AUSTRALIA

#### 1963

The Restaurant Gallery, Adelaide, Exhibition of Australian Art (Adelaide Festival of Arts Exhibition), March 6–21 (no. 89, *Salome*; no. 90, *Citadel*; no. 91, *Red Structure*; no. 92, *Masonry*; no. 93, *Animal*)

Royal South Australian Society of Arts, Adelaide, Exhibition of Paintings by Gordon Samstag, opened June 18 (63 works, including paintings, 'ovals', gouaches and drawings)

#### 1964

Royal South Australian Society of Arts, Adelaide, Autumn Exhibition, May 26-June 5 (no. 36, *Glacial*); this was a 'secondary selection' from the work originally submitted for the Autumn Exhibition, held May 12-22

Dominion Art Galleries, Sydney, Gordon Samstag, July 21–31 (40 works: 25 'oils and collages' and 15 'drawings and gouaches')

Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, Parkside, SA, Exhibition of Paintings by Gordon Samstag A.N.A, October 4–16

Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, Parkside, SA, Cornell Prize Exhibition 1964, November 9 – c. 23 (no. 8, *Contravention*)

#### 1965

Leveson Street Gallery, North Melbourne, Season Opening Exhibition, February 28–March 11

Leveson Street Gallery, North Melbourne, Paintings by Gordon Samstag, April (26 paintings, including Salome and Glacial, and 2 drawings)

Royal South Australian Society of Arts, Adelaide, Autumn Exhibition, April 12–23 (no. 33, *Archipelago*)

Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, Parkside, SA, Cornell Prize Exhibition/Mixed Exhibition, December 16 (*Proserpine*)

#### 1966

Don Pedro Gallery, Stirling, SA, Collage Drawings by Gordon Samstag (unofficial Adelaide Festival of Arts Exhibition), March 10–26

Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, Parkside, SA, Autumn Exhibition, May (*Grit Gray*)

Royal South Australian Society of Arts, Adelaide, Maude Vizard-Wholohan Art Prize Exhibition, June 28–July 8 (no. 29, *Self Portrait*)

Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney, \$50.00 and Under', group exhibition,?— September 14 (two works)

Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, Parkside, SA, mixed show, November 20-December 4 (*Homage* to Picasso)

#### 1967

Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney, Texture Survey 66, opened January 25 (no. 9, Curving Samstag Effect; no. 21, Fear Shapes and Permanence Colours)

Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, Parkside, SA, general exhibition, March (no. 23, *Collage*)

Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney, Collages and Constructions by Gordon Samstag, opened April 19 (14 works, including no. 2, *Bull's Eye*)

#### 1968

Royal South Australian Society of Arts, Adelaide, Art Happening (Adelaide Festival of Arts Exhibition), March 6–23 (no. 35, *Bright Owl*)

Royal South Australian Society of Arts, Adelaide, Contemporary Art Society of South Australia group exhibition, June (*Godivan*)

Royal South Australian Society of Arts, Adelaide, Maude Vizard-Wholohan Art Prize Exhibition, July 16–26 (no. 20, *The Guitar Player*)

Royal South Australian Society of Arts, Adelaide, Fellows' Exhibition, November 12–22 (no. 30, *The Egg*)

#### 1969

Robert Bolton Gallery, North Adelaide, SA, Samstag, March 4–16 (canvas, sculptural and copper collages; musical performance provided by folk singer Patsy Biscoe)

Newcastle City Art Gallery, Newcastle, NSW, NBN Channel 3 Art Prize (aka: NBN Channel 3 Muswellbrook Art Prize), August 28–September 28 (*Red, Hinting*)

Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, Parkside, SA, All Members Exhibition, November

#### 1970

The Advertiser Sound Shell, Adelaide, SA, The Advertiser Open-air Art Exhibition, February 8–15 (no. 667, *Barely, Dancer*)

Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, Parkside, SA, Painting, Sculpture and Ceramics by South Australian Artists (Adelaide Festival of Arts Exhibition), March 8–28 (no. 12, *Tattooed Nood*)

South Australian School of Art, North Adelaide, Elliot Aldridge Collection Post War Paintings, opened March 9 (*The End of Galatia*; Samstag also designed the catalogue and contributed a catalogue essay)

GORDON SAMSTAG: CHRONOLOGICAL EXHIBITION LIST 365

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# PART 2: THE SIREN CALL OF THE SOUTHERN SEA: ANNE AND GORDON SAMSTAG IN AUSTRALIA. ROSS WOLFE

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# GORDON SAMSTAG ADDRESS TO STUDENTS

This address was given by Gordon Samstag to graduating students at the 'Presentation of Diplomas and Prizes' ceremony, in the Lecture Theatre of the South Australian School of Art, Stanley Street, North Adelaide, May 8, 1964.

#### THE WORK OF FINE ART STUDENTS AT THE S.A. SCHOOL OF ART.

In the past it was not uncommon for people to find out late in life that they had special aptitudes. By then it was no longer possible to make full use of their skills. Nowadays vocational guidance helps to find the aptitudes even though they may be hidden and undeveloped.

When the work and the individual are properly matched, long hours of concentration can go by unnoticed and without apparent fatigue. Sometimes at first a gift or talent is very marked in an art student and an untrained youngster may sketch or model with skill far beyond his fellow students. This talent can be the cause of a later let-down and is not always an asset. Conversely after months of dull uninspired work another young student who seemed completely lacking in aptitude and had only love for the work, will suddenly change and show unexpected depth and subtlety. Of course love of the work is the necessary key to all accomplishment but it is sometimes concealed and unrequited.

After the first year or two these apparent extremes of aptitude have levelled off and the students reach a rough inter-relationship of ability. Then we can begin to develop a quality that is perhaps the most important in contemporary art education, the quality of independent thinking.

The importance of this quality varies in different vocations and good work in many fields can be done with skill and discernment, but without independent thought. However a high value is now placed on originality in painting and sculpture, and independence can quickly fade away unless it is encouraged.

Young artists of the Renaissance had less need for independent thought since they had few problems of style compared to those of to-day. To follow the established manners of painting or sculpture was the accepted and reasonable thing to do. Only minor modifications were needed to qualify a style to fit a personal vision. Today the young artist feels the need to be unique and this increases the difficulties of his task. He must have a personal expression and this may not be a widely understood expression and therefore not always a popular one. In the words of Emil Nolde, one of the German Expressionist artists:

'The art of an artist must be his own art ... His Education is a continuous chain of little inventions, little technical discoveries of his own, in his relation to the tool, the material and the colors.'

Henry Moore is thought by most artists to be one of the world's greatest sculptors, but his work is sometimes difficult for the public to understand. More time must pass before many of his bold and original ideas will be accepted. One such idea is that material must be expressed in a suitable subject. Obvious enough if turned the other way, to read: 'the subject must be expressed in a suitable material' — but as his statement stands, it points to — the new importance placed on the work of art as distinct from its meaning.

Mr. Moore has evolved his 'continuous chain of little inventions' and in his 'Notes on Space and Form in Sculpture' he describes the controversial holes one sees in many of his creations as having been made for their own sake. 'Sometimes,' he maintains, 'the form is only a shell holding the hole.' He also feels that the painter and sculptor are equally concerned with space, and that form and space should be inseparable.

To understand these abstruse ideas, the art student, especially the Fine Art Student needs imagination and feeling along with independence of thought. As feeling deepens and imagination becomes stronger the student's work improves and to show recognition of this growth and improvement awards are made in the form of prizes.

However, competing for prizes is not entirely consistent with growing creative accomplishment. It often sets up a calculating approach to art and while it provides ready motivation, the motive is materialistic as well as aesthetic. In spite of these contradictions the prize concept has deep roots in Art History. Today as in the past, the public is impressed by the artist who has been singled out above his fellows. A prize has been the first step toward many a career.

In 18th Century Paris, a young artist (who was to become one of the great names of France) attended art school for eight years. During the last four he tried each

year for the Rome Prize and finally won it. The artist's name was Jacques Louis David and he became Artistic Director of France. After the French Revolution he abolished the Royal Academy School and set up a new and different kind of school and art concept. David's concept was called Neo-Classicism and having developed it during his art school days, he expanded it throughout his life.

Art schools foster and produce creative accomplishment in a variety of changing ways. Many other schools flourished and disappeared until four centuries later, a significant school was formed at Weimar, Germany which brought together many of the new trends — new ideas of the times with fewer ties to the past. This school, called The Bauhaus became world famous in its short life through the brilliant work of the artists and students connected with it.

At the new South Australian School of Art some technical ties to the past remain and many present day lectures and experiments are based on early methods of getting a thorough knowledge of skills and materials.

But emphasis is no longer on careful preparation and painstaking craftsmanship. It is on the individual.

To the students who receive diplomas tonight, the occasion must be a milestone in their careers, a stopping point before pursuing the 'art of the artist'. It is a time to look back with understanding at the years spent at the old school, at the difficult adjustments, the accomplishments and realization that the school years were generally easier than those that lie ahead. It is a time for courage and congratulations and praise not only for the student, whose work is worthy of the school's highest award (the diploma), but also for the parents and relatives who had vision and forbearance to accept the fact of an 'artist in the family'.

Art is a cultural symbol of its particular age. Ruskin felt that art is an expression of national integrity and morality. According to Sir Herbert Read 'Art is an ever living question asked of the visual world by the visual sense.' In any case education in the Fine Arts requires careful planning and a program geared to changing

The Fine Arts' program at the School of Art is basically a series of assignments that are evaluated each term at various group levels. These assignments are calculated to provide the student with experiences that meet the individual needs and relate to the finest contemporary world art.

But even though high standards of work have been achieved through this program, the graduate Fine Art student faces the question of how to earn a living in Art. No one can promise success but in spite of this, the artist follows the precarious path to art for Art's sake.

Adelaide is a city that is known to be friendly to art and can be counted on to give these young people a hand along the way. Another helping hand in the Fine Arts' program is the outside-of-school, applied subjects that are often recommended to the students as alternate or preferred work. Especially in the final year such alternates may include commissions, group and individual exhibits, both inside and outside the school and submission of work to local and interstate exhibits. Such activities help the student to an understanding of good public relations and helps bridge the difficult period of transition between the school environment and that of the practising artist. This year a number of such projects are underway in the Fine Arts' courses. They include stage sets for a forthcoming Shakespearian production in Adelaide and participation in four exhibits outside the school.

In a lecture at Harvard University, Mr. Ben Shahn expressed the thought that there are two basic and earthy problems that concern the young artist. These are:  $\frac{1}{2}$ 

1. - What shall I paint?

needs and times.

2. - How shall I paint?

His answer to the first question is to 'Paint what you are, what you believe, what you feel.' The second question to Mr. Shahn is: 'Style and the shape of one's specific meanings.' Both answers are parts of the development of the individual as a complete and feeling being, using schooled but independent reason and feeling.

In conclusion, on behalf of the lecturers who teach Fine Art Painting and Sculpture subjects, I would like to congratulate all the graduates and wish them every success in their careers.

To the prize winners, congratulations also, with the confident knowledge that still better work will come.

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#### UNCAPTIONED IMAGES

Young Man Desires Position, 1930 (detail) 127.6 x 120.0 cm (501/4 x 471/4 in) Swope Art Museum, Terre Haute,

Gordon Samstag at the South Australian School of Art, Stanley Street, North Adelaide, c. 1967. Courtesy Caroline Di Fazio and Wendy Walker Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA

Page 4: Anne SAMSTAG Leaves handkerchief, 1950s (detail) printed hand-rolled linen 38.0 x 38.0 cm (15 x 15 in) Samstag Legacy Archive, UniSA

Pages 16-17: Gordon SAMSTAG Water-Color, c. 1936 (detail) oil on board 23.5 x 56.0 cm (9¼ x 22 in) University of South Australia Art Collection Gift of Dr Walter L. Freedman, Englewood, Colorado, USA

Pages 170-1: David MOORE (1927-2003) Migrants Arriving in Sydney, 1966 (printed later) gelatin silver photograph 30.2 x 43.5 cm (11% x 17% in) image 35.7 x 47.0 cm (14 x 181/2 in) sheet Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney Gift of the artist 1997 © Lisa, Michael, Matthew and

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#### ANNE & GORDON SAMSTAG MUSEUM OF ART

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Gordon SAMSTAG

Untitled (Coal Shed Scene), c. 1934
(detail)
oil on linen
60.0 x 56.0 cm (23% x 22 in)
University of South Australia
Art Collection

#### LEA ROSSON DELONG

My search for Gordon Samstag began over fifteen years ago, when I joined Ross Wolfe, then director of the Samstag Program at the University of South Australia (UniSA), in his quest to learn more about this significant benefactor to Australian culture. At that time, only a very few dealers and collectors specialising in American art of the 1930s recognised his name – and even those knew him from a single painting, *Young Man Desires Position*. As for actual works of art, only five had been located in the United States. Since then, however, the amount of information available on Samstag has multiplied, and now, it has been possible to reconstruct his career in considerable detail. Unfortunately, these documentary sources remain almost the sole source of understanding him as an artist, since most of his work remains unlocated, impeding a thorough study of his career. One of the goals of this publication is to stir interest in Samstag and aid in the rediscovery of his art.

When Ross Wolfe retired in 2009, Erica Green – director of the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art at UniSA – inherited the role of conscientious keeper of the Samstag legacy. She has unfailingly supported my work. Most recently, Susan Jenkins – a curator at the Samstag Museum of Art and managing editor for this publication – has also made significant contributions to my work by her encouragement, her thoroughness, her assistance with research materials and by her tactful reminders to keep me on-task. I also thank Ashleigh Whatling for her research, her thoroughness and congeniality. All of my liaisons at the UniSA have worked with professionalism, dedication, cheerfulness and a remarkable sense of perspective and proportion.

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### THE AUTHORS

#### LEA ROSSON DELONG

Dr Lea Rosson DeLong is an art historian, curator and editor, working mainly in American art of the 1930s and contemporary art. Born in Louisiana, she grew up in Oklahoma and Nashville, Tennessee. Her BA is from the University of Oklahoma and her MA and PhD are both from the University of Kansas. She has curated exhibitions and been the author of books on Grant Wood, Georgia O'Keeffe and other American artists. A frequent guest curator for the University Museums of Iowa State University, she has also worked as a curator at the Des Moines Art Center and has taught at Drake University in Des Moines and Iowa State University in Ames.

#### **ROSS WOLFE**

Ross Wolfe is an artist, administrator and writer. He studied art at the National Art School, Sydney, from 1962, later completing a Diploma in Art at Alexander Mackie College, School of Art, Sydney (now University of New South Wales School of Art and Design) and, in 2003, a Master of Arts in Fine Art, at RMIT University, Melbourne. In 1979 he was founding editor and publisher of a seminal visual arts journal, *Art Network* magazine, and subsequently held influential roles in Australian arts administration. He was director of the Visual Arts Board, Australia Council from 1983, where he established the National Exhibitions Touring Support Program and secured formal government agreements for a permanent Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. He also initiated the Australia Council's very first Emeritus Awards program for artists. He was deputy director at the Art Gallery of South Australia from 1988 and, from 1992, inaugural director of the philanthropic Samstag Program at the University of South Australia, from which he is now retired.

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# THE SAMSTAG LEGACY: AN ARTIST'S BEQUEST

was first published in 2016 on the occasion of the University of South Australia's 25th birthday, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the commencement of the Samstag Scholarships and the exhibitions Meet the Samstags: Artists and Benefactors and Quicksilver: 25 Years of Samstag Scholarships at the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, University of South Australia, Adelaide October 14 – December 9, 2016.

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GPO Box 2471, Adelaide, SA 5001

T 08 8302 0870

E samstagmuseum@unisa.edu.au

W unisa.edu.au/samstagmuseum

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