

BOUND FOR POSTERITY

HENRY MARTIN GASSER (1909–1981)



November 10 – December 9, 2017

An Exhibition and Sale

BOUND FOR POSTERITY
HENRY MARTIN GASSER (1909–1981)

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COVER (DETAIL)
Highway Diner
Watercolor and gouache on paper
20 x 24⁵/₈ inches
Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*;
on verso: *HIGHWAY DINER*

BACK COVER
Jersey Central Station, Broad Street
Watercolor and gouache on paper
15³/₈ x 22³/₈ inches
Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*

ABOVE
Backyard Colony
Watercolor and gouache on paper
19 x 24 inches (sight size)
Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*

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Sincerely,



Louis M. Salerno

Owner, Questroyal Fine Art, LLC

Director, CaringKind—The Heart of Alzheimer’s Caregiving



BOUND FOR POSTERITY

Without the privilege of a legacy or the advantage of social entrée, an ordinary man from an ordinary American town created paintings that have continued, for more than half a century, to pique the interest of those searching for meaningful art. Gasser’s depictions of humble American scenery have earned him one hundred lifetime awards and inclusion in sixty museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. With all that Gasser has accomplished, he is somehow not quite famous yet, and, fortuitously, the value of his paintings has not kept pace with his escalating popularity.

Several years ago, I began to notice paintings by Henry Martin Gasser, an artist whom I knew little about. His work captured my attention, without any effort or provocation from outside sources. Often, we are drawn to the work of certain artists because of the acclaim they have garnered from museum curators and other scholars, as well as the press. We develop preconceived ideas about an artist’s ability long before we have seen any of his or her work. It is nearly impossible to formulate an opinion that has not been influenced by what we have read or heard. If our initial reaction is negative and contrary to popular opinion, we might doubt our own assessment—and we may never make an acquisition just because we want to. Nothing feels better than

having a passion for a painting simply because we do, and for that very reason, I acquired some of Gasser’s paintings and displayed them in the gallery alongside works by artists who have received far more recognition. This is when odd things began to happen.

A collector arrived one day searching for canvases by prominent Hudson River School masters—he left with a Gasser. Shortly thereafter, another client spent a great deal of time considering the work of a well-known modernist. He was unable to make a decision; however, as he was about to leave, he noticed a Gasser that he found irresistible. These collectors were not accustomed to acquiring work by an artist with whom they were unfamiliar. Such occurrences have become increasingly common, and I watch in awe as visitors with varying artistic preferences are similarly affected by Gasser’s work. The sense of discovery they experience, as well as the joy of acquiring a work based primarily upon a personal response to it, is an incredibly satisfying experience.

I regret that what I have written may influence your opinion. Do your best to dismiss all that you know and come to the exhibition determined to choose with your heart.

LOUIS M. SALERNO, *Owner*

Downtown Side Street (detail)

HENRY MARTIN GASSER (1909–1981)

Henry Martin Gasser was an American painter in every sense. From his working-class industrial town, he sought out the greatest artists in the area in order to study from them, and he found inspiration in his backyard. Through persistence and a spirit of originality, Gasser turned humble scenes of urban American life in the mid-twentieth century into extraordinary works of art that were widely praised by the art world. After achieving fame for his paintings, he extended his reach further by educating future artists and writing instructional books on his innovative techniques.

Gasser was born in Newark, New Jersey, where he lived for most of his life. He studied painting at the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Arts as well as at the Grand Central School of Art and the Art Students League in New York City. The well-known artist John R. Grabach (1886–1981), a fellow New Jersey native, privately tutored Gasser, and the two artists developed a close relationship.

Despite its highly individualistic style, Gasser's work still fits neatly into the tradition established by his American predecessors. In addition to exhibiting influence from Grabach, Gasser's realist depictions of everyday life continued the legacy of the Ashcan painters. The majority of Gasser's work portrays his native New Jersey. By the time he reached artistic maturity in the mid-twentieth century, Newark had become a major industrial center. Such cities, although the life force of American industry and ingenuity, were not known for their scenic qualities. Nonetheless, Gasser found beauty in his surroundings. His artworks

typically feature urban scenes, such as residential streets lined with houses, and blue-collar suburban communities. Along with painting in New Jersey and New York, he embarked on excursions with Grabach to New England to capture coastal views and winter scenery. During World War II, Gasser was stationed in South Carolina as a sergeant in a Visual Aid Unit of the army, where he painted the vibrant Southern culture surrounding him.

Although adept at painting with oils, he found his stride in watercolors. Paralleling his ability to transform unassuming subjects into captivating pictures, Gasser elevated watercolor—a medium that was more common at the time for preliminary sketches or commercial use—to a fine art.¹ He pushed the boundaries of the medium, using experimental techniques to create his vibrant, evocative paintings. His work is often filled with radiant blues, greens, and yellows, and even those paintings that utilize a range of muted grays are accented with unusual tertiary colors. Within his exceptionally large body of work, winter scenes figure prominently; the expanses of white provided the perfect arena for his inventiveness.

During his life, Gasser exhibited his paintings widely to remarkable critical acclaim. He was honored with several solo exhibitions in New York and New Jersey and was included in countless group exhibitions at the country's finest museums and galleries. Critics noted his extraordinary technical abilities and his penchant for picturesque compositions. Gasser won more than one hundred exhibition prizes



Henry Martin Gasser in his studio, ca. 1950–60.

nationally, including the prestigious Hallgarten Prize awarded by the National Academy of Design. Besides his numerous accolades, Gasser was actively engaged in the art community, belonging to more than twenty organizations, including the Allied Artists of America, the Art Students League, the National Arts Club, and the Salmagundi Club. He served as vice president of both the National Academy of Design and the American Watercolor Society, and designed the latter's certificate of membership. A contemporary writer referred to Gasser as “one of the most popular artists in the East,” and the noted art historian William Gerdtz Jr. proclaimed that among the finest watercolorists in New Jersey, Gasser stood at the vanguard.² Today, his work resides in more than sixty museums and college collections, including the

Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

In addition to Gasser's prolific career as a practicing artist, he dedicated much of his life to teaching and writing. He returned to his roots by serving as the director of the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Arts and teaching at the Art Students League. Gasser authored seven instructional books on the painting methods that he had become so celebrated for. Furthermore, he was a contributing editor of *American Artist* magazine and served as art director for the Prudential Insurance Company.

Gasser once said, “The search for a picturesque or readymade landscape, comprising ideal color, composition, and subject matter often actually results in an unexciting dull picture.”³ The validity of this precept is affirmed by Gasser's success. By scrutinizing the ordinary and questioning notions of appropriate subjects and materials, Gasser sowed the seeds of great American painting. The fruits he bore were honest, identifiable, and imperfect—true works of art.

¹ “Henry Gasser, Artist,” *Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences Museum Bulletin* 30 (January 1948): 27.

² Ibid.; William H. Gerdtz Jr., *Painting and Sculpture in New Jersey* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1964), 247.

³ Henry Martin Gasser, quoted in Gary T. Erbe, *Henry Gasser: Beyond City Limits* (Youngstown, OH: The Butler Institute of American Art, 2003), 8.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

SOLO EXHIBITIONS*		AWARDS*	
1940	Rabin and Kreuger Gallery, Newark, New Jersey, November 25–December 1	1940	Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey, <i>first-place award</i>
1942	New Jersey Gallery, Newark, New Jersey, January 26–February 7	1941	Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, <i>first-place award for watercolors</i>
1943	Macbeth Gallery, New York, New York, <i>Exhibition of Water Colors by Henry Gasser</i> , October 11–30		Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey, <i>first-place award</i>
1946	Newark Art Club, New Jersey, <i>Paintings of the South, Henry Gasser</i>	1942	Baltimore Watercolor Club, Maryland, <i>purchase prize</i>
1947	Macbeth Gallery, New York, New York, <i>Water Colors, Henry Gasser</i> , November 3–22	1943	Watercolor Society of Alabama, various cities, Alabama, <i>prize</i>
1949	Macbeth Gallery, New York, New York, <i>Exhibition of Water Colors by Henry Gasser</i> , November 1–19		American Watercolor Society, New York, New York, <i>George A. Zabriskie Prize</i>
	Grand Central Art Galleries, New York, New York, <i>Three Watercolorists: Gasser, Kautzky, Whitaker</i>		Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey, <i>prize</i>
1951	Grand Central Art Galleries, New York, New York, <i>Henry Gasser</i> , December 4–15		National Academy of Design, New York, New York, <i>Julius Hallgarten Prize</i>
1952	Vose Galleries, Boston, Massachusetts, <i>Henry Gasser</i> , November 24–December 13		Oakland Art Gallery, California, <i>prize</i>
1954	Grand Central Art Galleries, New York, New York, <i>Henry Gasser, Exhibition of Paintings</i> , April 26–May 8		Springfield Art League, Massachusetts, <i>Robert R. Steiger Award</i>
1956	Grand Central Art Galleries, New York, New York, <i>Exhibition of Recent Water Colors, Henry Gasser</i> , January 10–21	1944	American Watercolor Society, New York, New York, <i>William Church Osborne Prize</i>
1957	The Illinois State Museum, Springfield, <i>Henry Gasser: Casein Paintings</i> , through March 25		The Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina, <i>first-place award</i>
	Grand Central Art Galleries, New York, New York, <i>Watercolors and Drawings of France and Italy by H. Gasser</i> , March 5–16		Montclair Art Museum Annual, New Jersey, <i>first-place award</i>
1959	Grand Central Art Galleries, New York, New York, <i>Recent Watercolors of France and Italy, Henry Gasser</i> , December 8–19		New Haven Paint & Clay Club, Connecticut, <i>John I. H. Downs Prize</i>
1965	Grand Central Art Galleries, New York, New York, <i>Henry Gasser, Exhibition of Water Colors</i> , December 7–23	1945	Watercolor Society of Alabama, various cities, Alabama, <i>prize</i>
1966	The Prudential Insurance Company of America, Newark, New Jersey, <i>An Exhibition of Watercolors by Henry Gasser</i>		Delgado Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana, <i>Ellsworth Woodward Prize</i>
1969	Grand Central Art Galleries, New York, New York, <i>Henry Gasser</i> , December 9–20		New Orleans Art Association, Louisiana, <i>prize</i>
2003–4	Morris Museum, Morristown, New Jersey; The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio; Springfield Art Museum, Missouri; Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey; <i>Henry Gasser: Beyond City Limits</i> , July 1, 2003–March 7, 2004 (traveling)		Oakland Art Gallery, California, <i>prize</i>
			Philadelphia Water Color Club, Pennsylvania, <i>prize</i>
			Piedmont Art Fest, North Carolina, <i>prize</i>
			Springfield Art Museum, Missouri, <i>first-place award for watercolor</i>
			Washington Water Color Club, Washington, DC, <i>prize</i>
			Watercolor Society of Alabama, various cities, Alabama, <i>first-place award</i>
		1946	Watercolor Society of Alabama, various cities, Alabama, <i>prize</i>
			Indiana State Teachers College, Indiana, Pennsylvania, <i>prize</i>
			Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey, <i>first-place award</i>
			New Orleans Art Association, Louisiana, <i>prize</i>
			Southern States Art League, Charleston, South Carolina, <i>prize</i>
			Washington Water Color Club, Washington, DC, <i>first-place award</i>
1947	American Artists Professional League, New York, New York, <i>first-place award</i>		
	Chamber of Commerce, Santa Paula, California, <i>purchase prize</i>		
	Salmagundi Club, New York, New York, <i>Henry F. J. Knobloch Prize; popular prize; exhibition committee member</i>		
1948	American Watercolor Society, New York, New York, <i>Clara Obrig Prize</i>		
	California Water Color Society, Los Angeles, California, <i>Cowie Purchase Award</i>		
1949	American Veterans Society of Artists, New York, New York, <i>first-place award</i>		
	Brick Store Museum, Kennebunk, Maine, <i>Spaulding Memorial Prize</i>		
	Salmagundi Club, New York, New York, <i>Arthur Turnbull Hill Memorial Prize; club prize for watercolor; exhibition committee member</i>		
1950	Baltimore Watercolor Club, Maryland, <i>first-place award</i>		
1951	Oakland Art Gallery, Oakland, California, <i>silver medal</i>		
	Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey, <i>first-place award</i>		
	Salmagundi Club, New York, New York, <i>Misha Sevipert Memorial Purchase Prize</i>		
1952	Oakland Art Gallery, Oakland, California, <i>gold medal</i>		
	Audubon Artists, New York, New York, <i>first-place award</i>		
	Connecticut Academy of the Fine Arts, various cities, <i>first prize</i>		
	Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey, <i>first-place award</i>		
1953	American Artists Professional League, New York, New York, <i>grand national exhibition, honor roll prize</i>		
	Rockport Art Association, Massachusetts, <i>Hilliard Memorial Prize</i>		
1954	Allied Artists of America, New York, New York, <i>gold medal of honor</i>		
	The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, <i>purchase prize</i>		
	National Arts Club, New York, New York, <i>bronze medal</i>		
1955	National Arts Club, New York, New York, <i>bronze medal</i>		
	Palm Beach Art League, Florida, <i>first-place award</i>		
1956	New Haven Paint & Clay Club, Connecticut, <i>active members prize</i>		
	North Shore Arts Association, Gloucester, Massachusetts, <i>Wilhelm Prize</i>		
1958	St. Augustine Art Association, Florida, <i>first-place award</i>		
1959	National Arts Club, New York, New York, <i>Frank Vincent DuMond Award</i>		
1960	National Arts Club, New York, New York, <i>bronze medal</i>		
	New Jersey Water Color Society, various cities, <i>award</i>		
1961	Academic Artists Association, Harford, Connecticut, <i>Ward Memorial Award</i>		
	Springville Museum of Art, Utah, <i>purchase award</i>		
	Mississippi Art Association, Jackson, <i>purchase award</i>		
1962	Southern Vermont Arts Center, Manchester, Vermont, <i>award</i>		
1963	American Veterans Society of Artists, New York, New York, <i>Burr Medal</i>		
1964	Council of Art Societies, <i>bronze medal</i>		
	Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey, <i>first-place award</i>		
1965	Art Centre of the Oranges, East Orange, New Jersey, <i>New Jersey State Exhibition, first-place award</i>		
1969	American Watercolor Society, New York, New York, <i>award</i>		
COLLECTIONS*		MEMBERSHIPS*	
	Brigham Young University Museum of Art, Provo, Utah		Allied Artists of America
	The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio		The American Artists Professional League
	Chazen Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin		American Watercolor Society, 1944; second vice-president, 1955
	Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio		Art Students League, <i>life member</i>
	Dallas Museum of Art, Texas		Asbury Park Society of Fine Art
	Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine		Audubon Artists
	Figge Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa		Baltimore Watercolor Club
	Frye Art Museum, Seattle, Washington		Grand Central Art Galleries, <i>life member</i>
	Greenville County Museum of Art, South Carolina		Irvington Art and Museum Association
	Hickory Museum of Art, North Carolina		Mississippi Art Association
	The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, South Carolina		National Academy of Design, <i>academician 1950; vice president, 1953; recording secretary, 1960–67</i>
	Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Massachusetts		The National Arts Club, 1951, <i>life member</i>
	The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York		New Haven Paint & Clay Club
	Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey		New Jersey Art Association
			New Jersey Water Color Society
			North Shore Arts Association
			Philadelphia Watercolor Club
			Rockport Art Association
			Royal Society of Arts (London), 1957
			Salmagundi Club, 1946
			Springfield Art League
			Washington Water Color Club



The artist working in his home studio.

TITLES BY HENRY GASSER

Casein Painting: Methods and Demonstrations. Edited by Arthur L. Guptill. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1950.

Exploring Casein (film). New York: Grumbacher, 1952.

Oil Painting: Methods and Demonstrations. New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1953.

How to Draw and Paint. New York: Dell Publishing, 1955.

Techniques of Painting. New York, Reinhold Publishing, 1958.

Techniques of Painting the Waterfront. New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1959.

Techniques of Picture Making. New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1962.

Henry Gasser's Guide to Painting: The Techniques of Handling Oil, Watercolor and Casein. New York: Golden Press, 1964.

(Also contributing editor to *American Artist* magazine)

**While these lists are intended to be as comprehensive as possible, they are assumed to be incomplete for this prolific, active artist.*



Downtown Side Street

Watercolor and gouache on paper

15¹⁵/₁₆ x 23¹/₄ inches

Signed lower left: *H. GASSER* / *H. GASSER*; on verso:
DOWNTOWN SIDE STREET / *HENRY GASSER*



City Street with House

Watercolor and gouache on paper laid down on board

20¹/₁₆ x 25¹/₄ inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*



Winter Docks

Oil on canvas

25 x 30 inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*

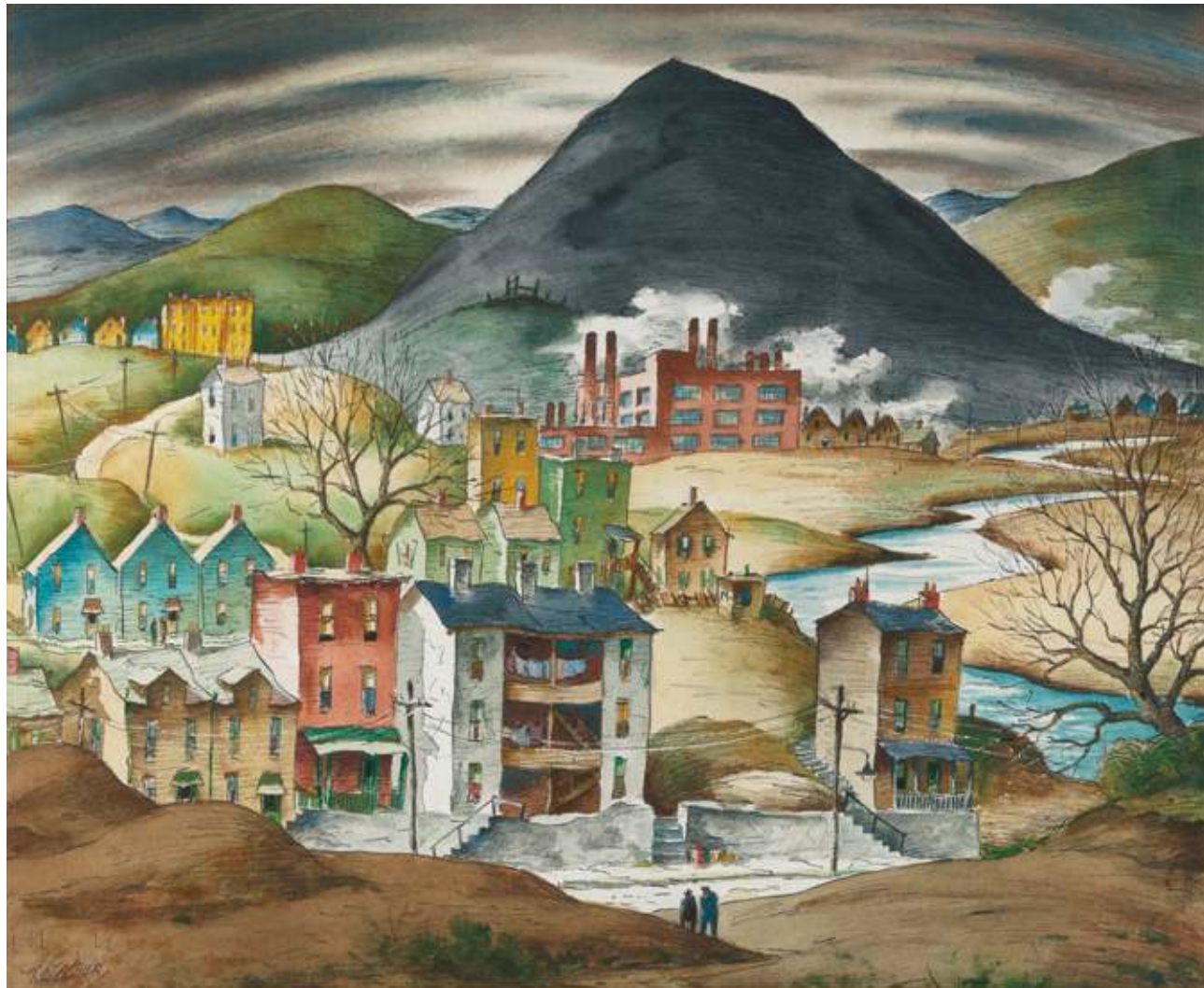


Highway Diner

Watercolor and gouache on paper

20 x 24⁵/₈ inches

Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*; on verso: *HIGHWAY DINER*



Industrial Town

Watercolor, gouache, and ink on paper

18¹/₁₆ x 21¹/₂ inches (sight size)

Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*



Winter Yard

Oil on board

9¹/₁₆ x 12¹/₈ inches

Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*; on verso:

WINTER YARD D67 / HENRY GASSER. N.A.

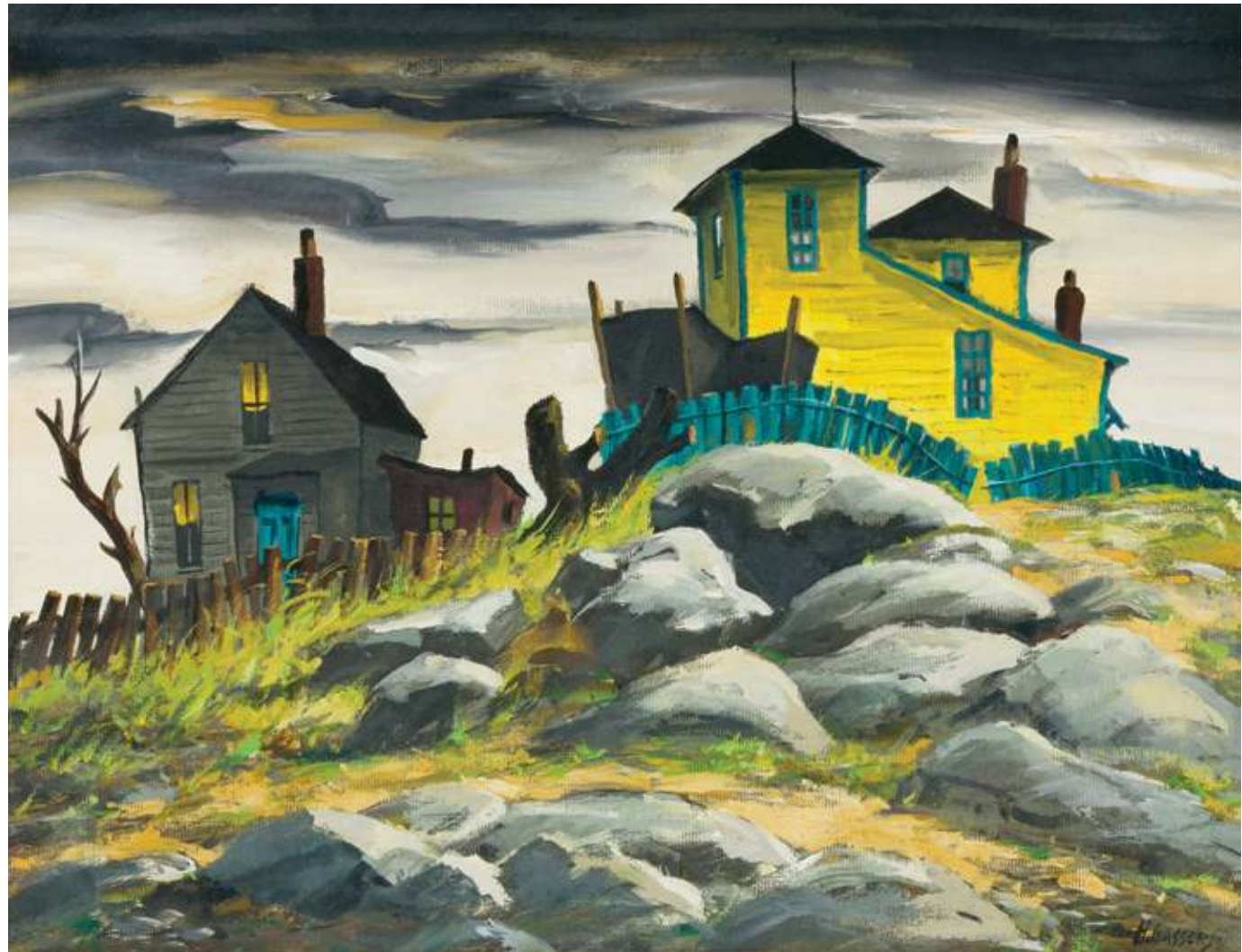


Blue Harbor Houses

Watercolor and gouache on paper

21¹/₈ x 29¹/₄ inches (sight size)

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*



The Blue Fence

Casein on paper laid down on board

15¹/₂ x 20 inches (approx.)

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*; on verso:

"THE BLUE FENCE" / HENRY GASSER / N.A.

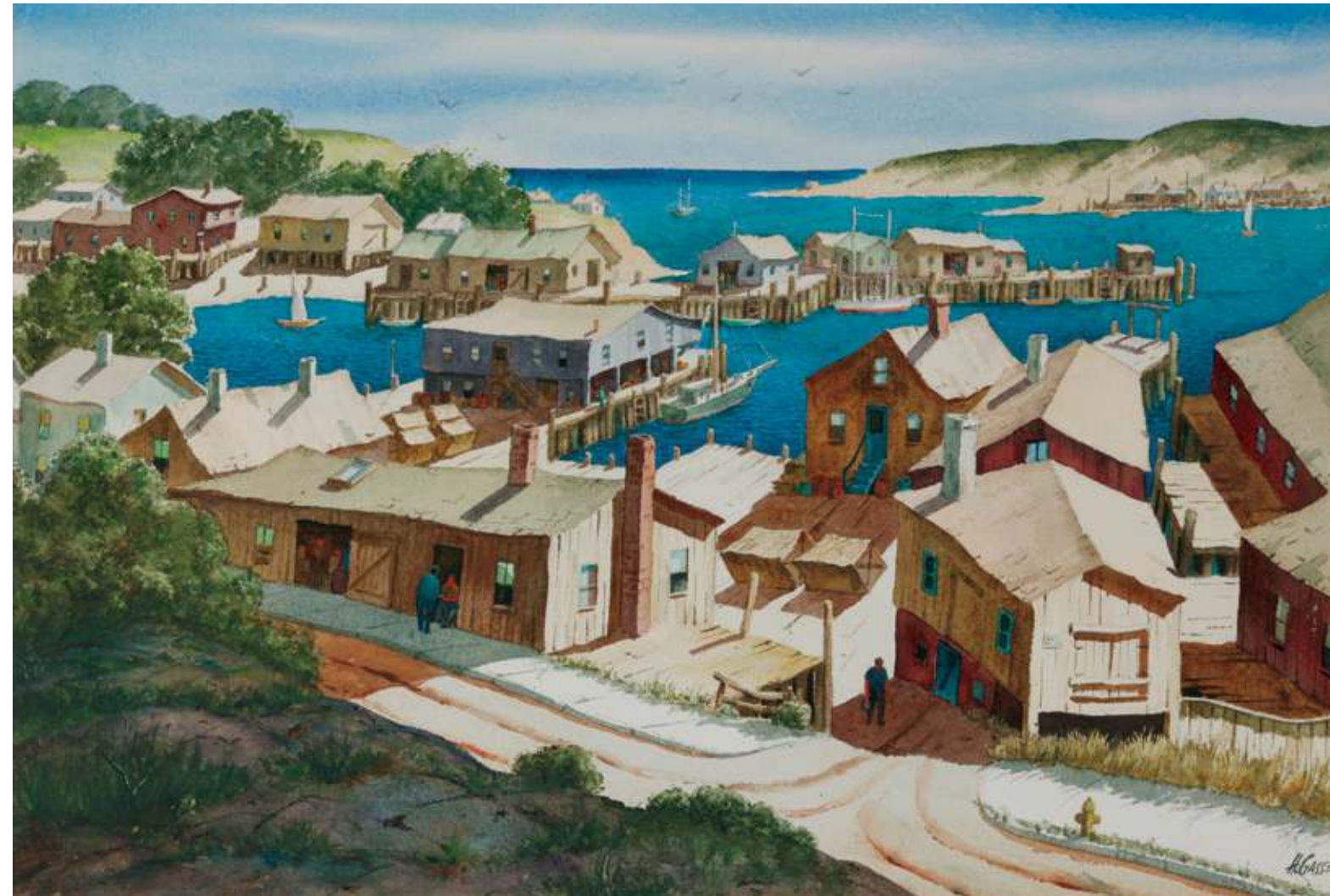


Blue Harbor

Oil on canvas

24¹/₈ x 29⁷/₈ inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*; on verso:
"BLUE HARBOR" / HENRY GASSER / N.A.



Gloucester Vista

Watercolor and gouache on paper

15³/₈ x 22¹⁵/₁₆ inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*; on verso:
"Gloucester Vista" / HENRY GASSER / N.A.



Neutrality

Watercolor and gouache on paper

10³/₄ x 14⁵/₈ inches (sight size)

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*; on verso:
"NEUTRALITY" / HENRY GASSER / N.A

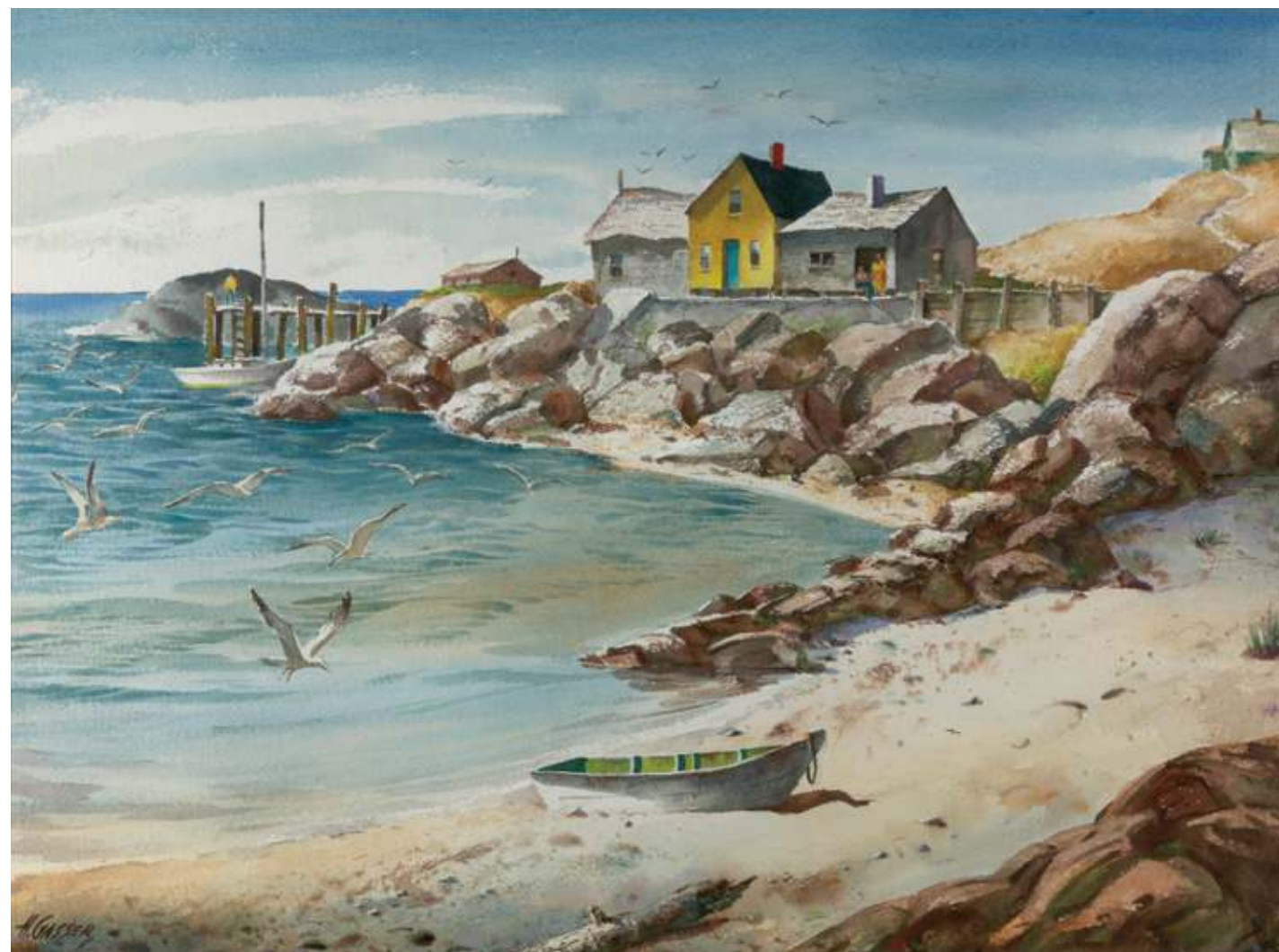


Maine Coast

Oil on canvas laid down on board

10⁷/₈ x 13³/₄ inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*;
on verso: *MAINE COAST*



Sand, Sea, and Rocks

Watercolor and gouache on paper

19³/₈ x 26 inches (sight size)

Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*



July Harbor

Oil on canvas

30¹/₈ x 36¹/₁₆ inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*; on stretcher bar:

JULY HARBOR – HENRY GASSER, N.A.



Sunlit Bay

Oil on board

20¹/₈ x 28¹/₄ inches

On verso: *H GASSER*



Seagull Haven

Casein on canvas laid down on board

22 x 28¹/₄ inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*; on verso:

#30 / SEAGULL HAVEN / "SEAGULL HAVEN" / P. 101

FULL PAGE / 10¹/₈ D. x 13¹/₂ W. / (INCLUDES BLEED)



Getting Ready, Gloucester Fishing Boat

Oil on canvas laid down on board

13¹⁵/₁₆ x 18 inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*;

on verso: *"GETTING READY"*



Harbor in Bermuda

Oil on canvas laid down on panel

7 ³/₈ x 9 ⁷/₈ inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*;
on verso: *H. GASSER*



Houses by the Lane, Bermuda

Oil on panel

10 ¹/₂ x 13 ¹/₄ inches (sight size)

Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*



Study for "Return to Slag Valley"

Watercolor and gouache on paper

18 ³/₄ x 22 ³/₄ inches (sight size)

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*; on verso: *STUDY FOR /*
"RETURN TO SLAG VALLEY" / HENRY GASSER, N.A.



Sunrise in Winter, 1942

Oil on canvas

30 x 35¹⁵/₁₆ inches

Signed and dated lower right: *H. GASSER, / 42*



Houses in a Snowy Landscape

Watercolor on paper

22¹⁵/₁₆ x 31³/₈ inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*



Winter Wharf
 Watercolor and gouache on paper
 22¹/₈ x 30¹/₂ inches (sight size)
 Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*

The Bennet House
 Watercolor and gouache on paper
 7¹/₂ x 9⁹/₁₆ inches (sight size)
 Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*; on verso:
THE BENNET HOUSE / HENRY GASSER / N.A.



Winter Path
 Oil on canvas
 20 x 24¹/₈ inches
 Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*





Montmartre

Watercolor and gouache on paper

7³/₈ x 9³/₈ inches

Signed and inscribed lower right:

H. GASSER / Montmartre



Carolina Spring

Watercolor and gouache on paper

7¹/₂ x 9⁹/₁₆ inches (sight size)

Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*; on verso:

"CAROLINA SPRING" / HENRY GASSER / N.A.



Lauren's Farm

Oil on canvas board

25⁷/₈ x 29⁷/₈ inches

Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*;

on verso: *LAURENS FARM* / HENRY GASSER



Early Winter Morning

Watercolor and gouache on paper

15¹/₈ x 12 inches

Signed lower right: *H. GASSER*; on verso:

"EARLY WINTER MORNING" / HENRY GASSER

For additional works in the exhibition
that are not illustrated in the catalogue,
please contact us to request an image.

DESIGN: Malcolm Grear Designers PRINTING: Meridian Printing PHOTOGRAPHY: Timothy Pyle, Light Blue Studio EDITING: Amanda Sparrow



Winter Day

Watercolor and gouache on paper

15¹/₈ x 21¹⁵/₁₆ inches (sight size)

Signed lower left: *H. GASSER*



QUESTROYAL FINE ART, LLC

Important American Paintings

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