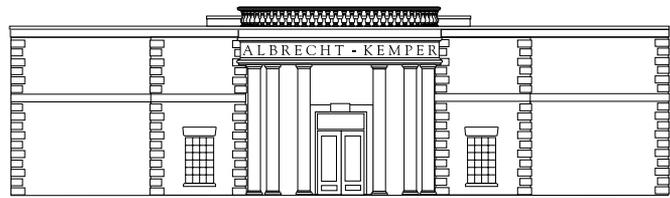




Vincent Campanella: Classical Abstractionist

VINCENT CAMPANELLA  
*Classical Abstractionist*

CAMPANELLA



ALBRECHT-KEMPER MUSEUM OF ART  
2818 Frederick Avenue, St. Joseph Missouri 64506-2903



1. *Self Portrait*, 1934

# VINCENT CAMPANELLA

*Classical Abstractionist*

The Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art

St. Joseph, Missouri

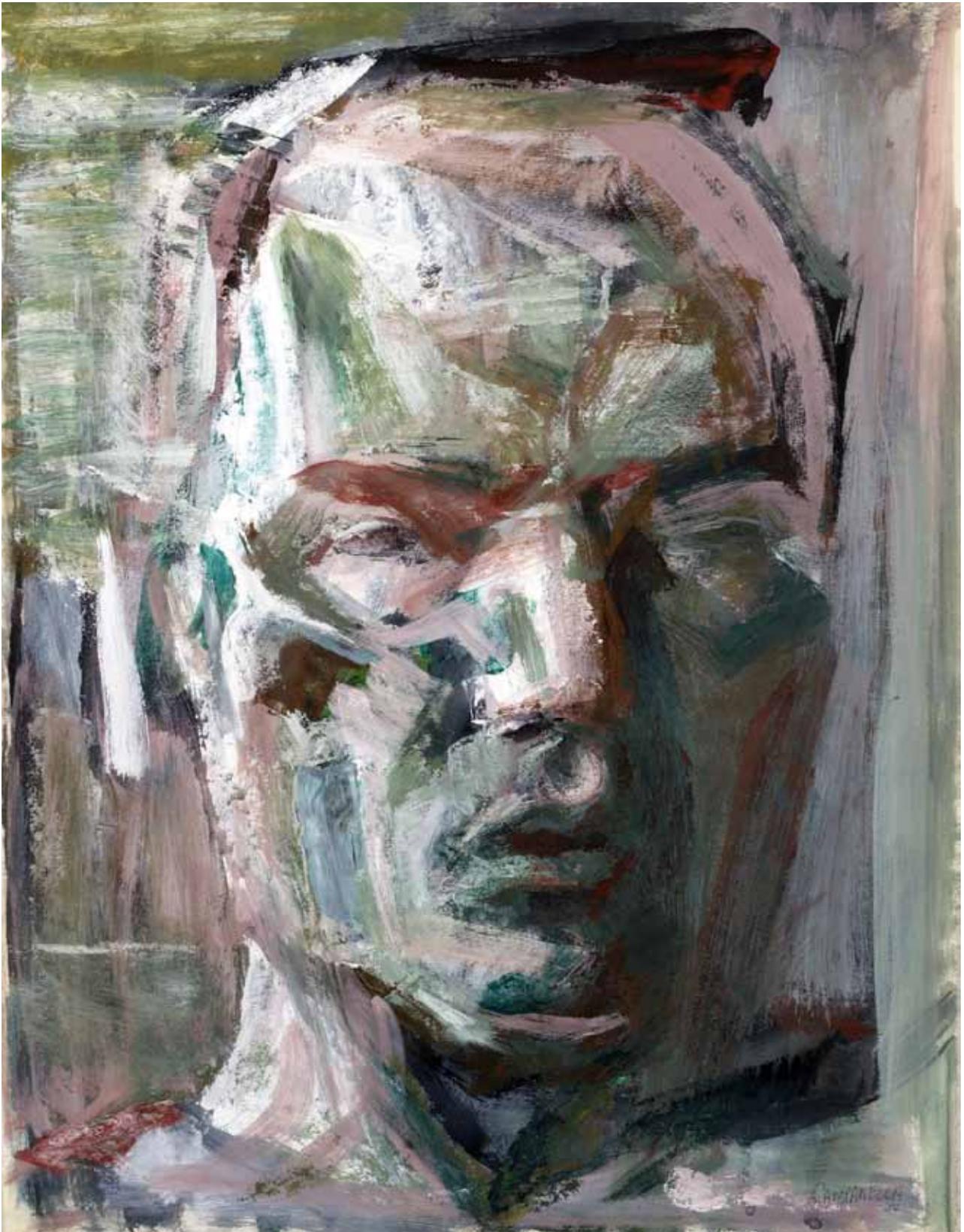
September 15 - November 4, 2007

Park University

Campanella Gallery

Parkville, Missouri

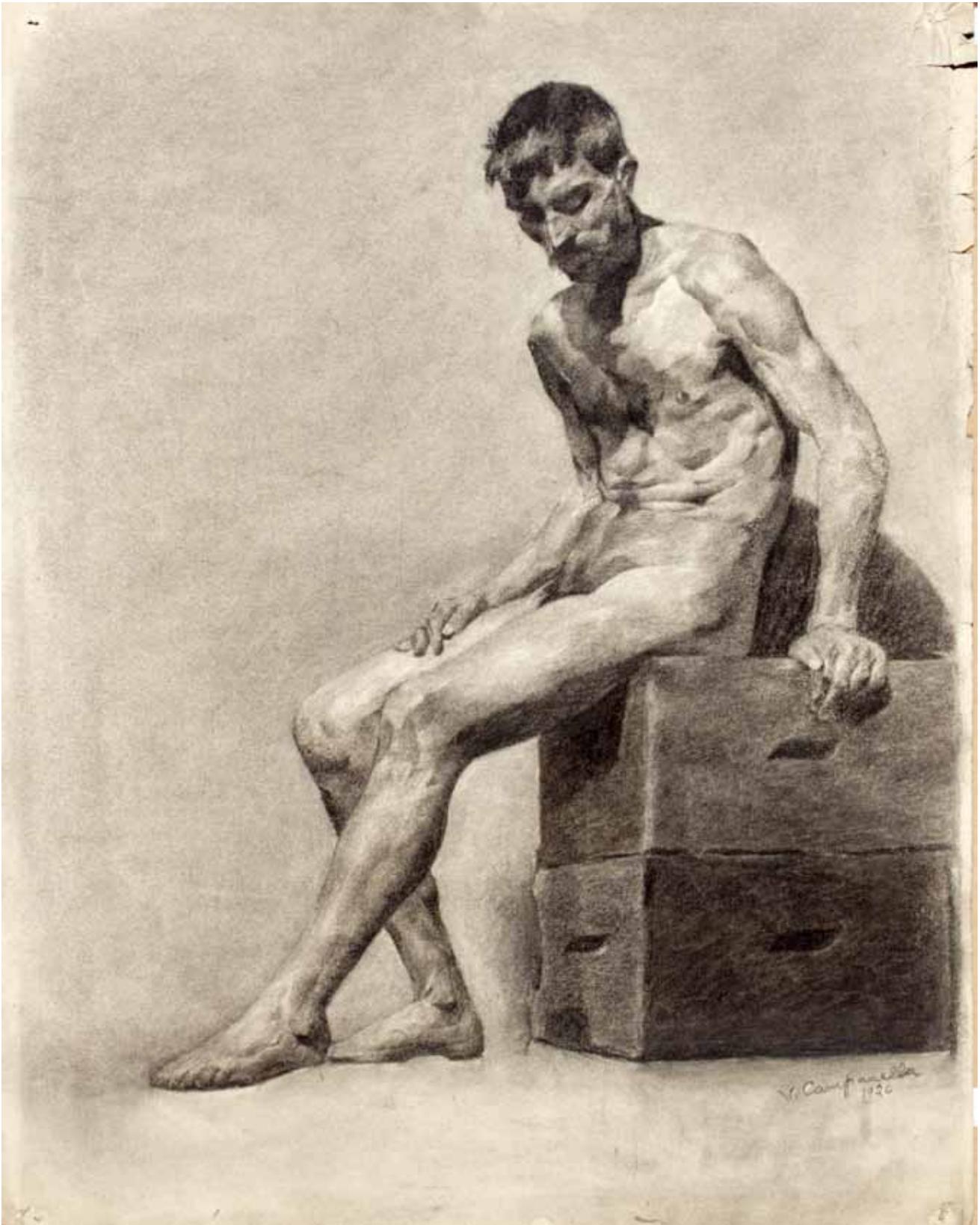
September 16 - November 2, 2007



2. *Self Portrait*, 1956

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3. Seated Nude Male, 1926

# Introduction

by *Terry L. Oldham*

It is with great pleasure that the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art (AKMA) serves as initial host for this long overdue retrospective exhibition of the artwork of Vincent Campanella (1915-2001).

The journey began with a phone call in 2005 from noted artist Wilbur Niewald, a friend whose opinion I value greatly. As I listened to Wilbur talk about Vincent and his place in the art world and more specifically his role as an art teacher in the region, I was immediately interested because part of AKMA's mission is "the nurturing of regional artists." Then began the e-mails and phone conversations with Tura Campanella Cook, Vincent's daughter, and Dr. Burton Dunbar, Professor of Art History at the University of Missouri – Kansas City and a former Campanella student and assistant.

After a visit to a storage facility containing a host of Campanella works I was really hooked. When I saw first hand the classical works of a precocious, New York City art student followed by the dramatic shift in style associated with his WPA Wyoming experience, followed by the mature work of the Frank Rehn years I was confused yet fascinated. It was hard for me to grasp that these varied art works had been created by a single individual. An invitation from Tura prompted Dr. Dunbar and me to visit her in Austin and see Vincent's watercolors of Maine and his earliest student works on paper, some done when Vincent was only ten and eleven years old. I didn't know the story but I knew it was a story that had to be researched and told.

The exhibition and this catalog focus on milestones in Vincent Campanella's life that are the key to understanding his art. The first essay in the catalog is a comprehensive biography of Vincent Campanella by Dr. Henry Adams. It recalls Vincent's time in art schools, his early work, and the changes that took place in Vincent's art as a direct result of his participation in the Federal Art Project as part of the Works

Progress Administration (WPA). Dr. Adams next discusses Campanella's time at the Kansas City Art Institute and his ongoing visits to Maine. Vincent's relationship with long-time protagonist and sometimes friend, artist Thomas Hart Benton follows. The essay concludes by examining Campanella's relationship with gallery director Frank Rehn and a discussion of Campanella's artistic legacy.

The next essay by Dr. Burton Dunbar, a former Campanella student and assistant, traces Vincent's career as a teacher. Leah Campanella, Vincent's wife, provides an intimate view of Vincent in her essay about the New York years. Finally, art consultant Keely Edgington Staley ties the work and the catalog together with her timeline, catalog checklist and selected bibliography.

This catalog would not exist and the exhibition would not have taken place without the vision and determination of Leah Campanella, Vincent's wife, Tura Campanella Cook, Vincent's daughter, and David Campanella, Vincent's son. Dr. Henry Adams, noted Thomas Hart Benton scholar, brought insight into Campanella's place in 20th Century American art history and Dr. Burton Dunbar used his long-time relationship with Campanella as both a Campanella student and later as a colleague to complete the story. Keely Edgington Staley was most diligent in her research and documentation. Phillip Geller photographed works for the catalog and Smith-Kramer was very helpful with making works available for the exhibition. Western Robidoux's insight and experience was essential in formatting and printing the catalog. Thanks also goes to the Sweetwater School District #1 in Rock Springs, Wyoming and the Newark Museum of Art for loaning works to the exhibition. It's been a long, but most worthwhile journey. Vincent Campanella's work was not adequately recognized during his lifetime, but neither was another Vincent, Vincent Van Gogh. ✨



4. Study of Thomas Hart Benton, 1973

# Vincent Campanella

by Henry Adams

Towards the end of his life, Vincent Campanella enjoyed a sort of fleeting celebrity as a “talking head” in films about the art of the 1930s. In the Ken Burns film on Thomas Hart Benton, for example, which has been shown on Public Television to an audience of tens of millions, Campanella plays the role of the Greek chorus: he is the commentator who reflects on the deeper meaning of events as the drama moves forward. His speech patterns, like those of Greek poetry, are often poetic rather than literal. He speaks pungently but cryptically, with abrupt shifts of thought. At times one loses the thread of connection.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout most of the film, Campanella is the voice of skepticism, speaking harshly of the ways that Benton lost his direction as an artist in response to the demands of fame, of manufactured success, of a well-crafted public image, of playing to the crowd. Yet perhaps the most surprising moment of the film comes nearly at the end, when he recalls hearing on the news of Benton’s death and unexpectedly starts to cry.

To a large degree, Campanella anchors the film, in part because he covers such a wide emotional range. Most of the time his comments are acidic, most of his words have an abrasive character. Like Mario Puzo’s *Godfather*, he seems rich in experience of the tough side of life. But as the tears at the end reveal, he is also willing to let down his emotional guard and let his emotions show. Behind the brusque façade, behind the stabbing remarks, lurks great empathy and tenderness of feeling.

He makes a memorable impression, and no doubt many viewers wondered what Campanella had done with his life to gain the wisdom to comment on the lives of other

people with such forceful insight. As one might guess, Campanella himself had been a painter, and for a time an extremely promising one. Indeed, while no doubt Campanella enjoyed his brief flight of fame, it must have been more than slightly galling to be called upon to talk about artists other than himself: he began his career as an artistic prodigy, and through the early 1950s he was one of the rising stars on the American art scene. But taste shifted away from naturalistic painting, and in some fashion he lost his artistic way; around 1955 he virtually stopped painting, shifting instead to work on a long treatise on politics and esthetics that he never completed.

The story has never been fully laid out, and in fact, doing so is by no means easy to do, for secure facts and dates are scant—as if at some level he actively sought out a state of oblivion. Campanella’s curriculum vitae is cursory, listing places he studied and institutions that purchased his work, but providing no dates or particulars. Most of Campanella’s paintings are untitled and undated, which makes tracing his development a challenge. What is more, he sometimes reverted to an earlier style for a particular project. His drawing of *Thomas Hart Benton* (p. 8), for example, created in 1973, is essentially in the same style as the *Self Portrait* (p. 2) he made in 1934, although most of the paintings of this period are in a completely different abstract style. As a result of these difficulties, many mysteries remain about the dating of Campanella’s paintings and the reason why his career took the turns it did. Nonetheless, there’s enough solid evidence to lay out the general framework of his artistic development, and perhaps this will encourage future scholars to track down some of the details more closely.<sup>2</sup>

## Early Work

Vincent Campanella began his career in the Italian Renaissance and ended as a kind of Post-Modernist. Throughout his early years Campanella was a prodigy who was always associated with painters five or ten years older than himself. The child of Sicilian immigrants, the youngest of four children, Vincent Campanella grew up in the Hell's Kitchen section of New York City. He was a city kid, who grew up playing on the streets, but his family was not exactly poor. While his father was a cabdriver, he had a medallion which meant that he owned his own cab. His mother came from a cultured family with landholdings in Sicily and she had a brother who was a Monsignor in the Catholic Church. Vincent's brothers attended New York University and Columbia and the family never suffered, even during the Great Depression. While Italian, they stood just a little apart from the Italian community and for some reason always lived in Irish neighborhoods. Vincent was always strongly attached to his mother, who encouraged and indulged his artistic interests and projects. She would let him use her sewing machine and when he was painting a still-life she would keep a fish in the icebox for him for days, even after it began to smell. She died when he was nineteen.

When Vincent was four his older brother gave him a watercolor set for his birthday, and from that time on art became his escape. In 1922, at the age of seven, he won his first big award, the Wanamaker prize for young artists, which was bestowed on him by Fiorello La Guardia—then a congressman, later to become a legendary mayor of New York.

Because of this success, his parents encouraged him to attend art school. His father happened to give a ride to two Italian businessmen who were talking about an art



5. *Belvedere Apollo*, ca. 1925 - 1927

school they were funding, the Leonardo da Vinci School, where the Piccirilli brothers would teach. Vincent's father asked him if he would like to attend and when he said "yes" they walked over to the school together and met with the principal to arrange things. This must have occurred around the time the school opened, in December of 1923, when Vincent was eight.

The Leonardo da Vinci School was founded by the Piccirilli brothers to provide training for poor but worthy young artists of the neighborhood, particularly those of Italian descent. The Piccirilli Brothers—there were six of them—were the sons of a skilled stone-carver, Guiseppe Piccirilli, who had a workshop at Massa-Carrara, not far from Pisa, near the famous marble quarries of Carrara. In 1887, when business in Italy was lagging, two of the sons, Attilio and Furio, came to the United



6. *Barberini Faun*, ca. 1925 - 1927



7. *Mother Embracing a Child*,  
ca. 1925 - 1927

States in search of work. When they arrived they had just twenty-five cents between them, and a few weeks after his arrival Attilio sold his only pair of pants to purchase food. Unable to go out in the street, he worked in his apartment, in his underwear. Within a few months, however, the brothers had located

steady employment, designing ornaments and carving tombstones, and after two years they had saved up enough to rent a stable and open up their own stone-carving business.<sup>3</sup>

Their timing was perfect, for enthusiasm for classical architecture was at its height, and firms such as McKim, Mead and White or Carriere and Hastings were producing state capitols, courthouses, railroad stations and other monumental buildings which required massive amounts of sculpture and ornament. Before long, they attracted the notice of the sculptor Daniel Chester French, who had so many commissions that he concentrated on producing models in clay and hired out the actual stone-carving. Their good work for him attracted the notice of others sculptors, and by 1890 they were so busy that they moved their atelier to the Bronx, where they constructed a home and two large studios. There, with the assistance of dozens of skilled workmen, they turned out amazing quantities of superbly executed marble sculpture, including many familiar landmarks, such as the lions in front of the New York Public Library and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. In addition to executing work for others, Attilio designed several monuments of his own, including *The Maine Monument* and *The Policeman's Memorial* in New York City.

At the height of the business's success, in 1923, Attilio Piccirilli established the Leonardo Da Vinci Art School, which was devoted to conservative training in the representational manner of the Italian Renaissance. For many years he served as President of its board. The school flourished during its early years, but ran into financial difficulties during the 1930s, both because of the Depression and because taste changed away from Renaissance classicism in that period, and the Piccirilli studio saw its business drop to almost nothing. The school closed in 1940; somewhat ironically, its most



8. *The Baker*, 1931

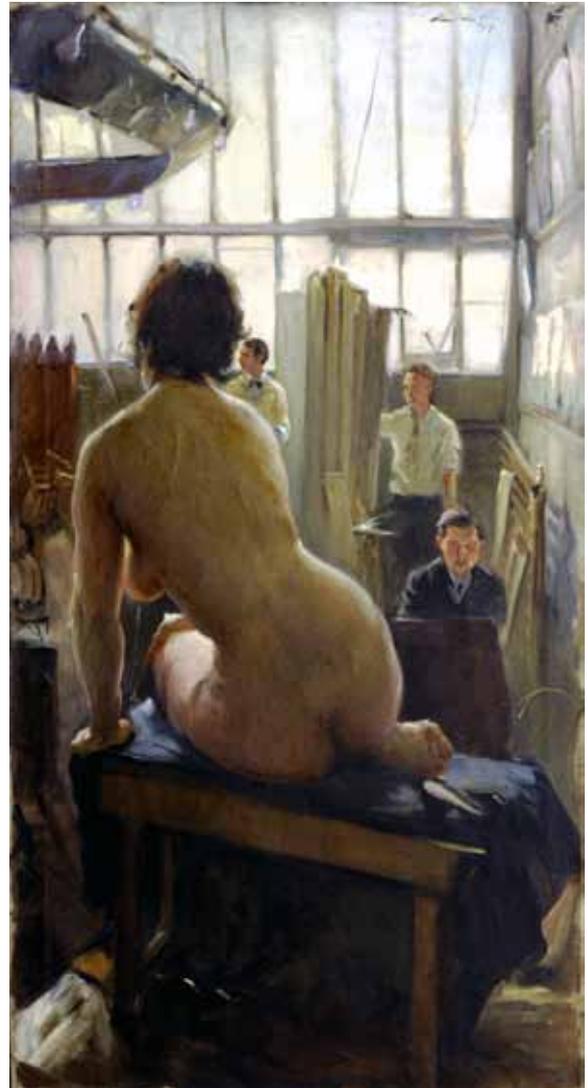
famous student is Isamu Noguchi, who turned his back on his classical training and became a modernist.

At the Da Vinci School, Campanella received rigorous academic training, in the tradition of the Naples Academy. He soon became a favorite student, got all the scholarships, and virtually lived at the school. He did his homework in the principal's office and had his own key so that he could come in and work on weekends. He also spent a good deal of time with the Piccirilli brothers, who led a bachelor's existence, both living and working in their studio (Attilio had abandoned an acrimonious marriage to come back and live in the studio with his brother). When Attilio got a commission to create cast glass doors for the Italian Consulate in Rockefeller Center, Vincent posed for a worker with a pickaxe. You can pick him out from among the other figures because he had very muscular legs.

By the age of twelve, the teachers at the Da Vinci School felt that Vincent should go to Italy for further training, but his father felt

he was too young. He was also a vigorous anti-Fascist, who didn't want his son to live in a place ruled by Mussolini. Consequently, Vincent went to the National Academy of Design for about three years, starting in 1931. There he studied with Chapman and Leon Kroll.

Several of Vincent's early drawings survive, ranging from a somewhat naïve though closely observed outline study of *The Barberini Faun* (p. 11), which must have been made when he was only seven or eight years old, to masterful renderings of light and shade, such as an



9. *Untitled (Study of a Female Nude)*, 1931



10. *Astoria Houses*. 1936



11. *Astoria Houses*, ca. mid 1930s

elaborate charcoal study of *Mother Embracing a Child* (p. 11) based on Attilio Piccirilli's best known sculpture, *Mater Consolatrix*, 1904-9, in the collection of William Randolph Hearst.<sup>4</sup> A charcoal study of a *Seated Nude Male* (p. 6) made in 1926 when he was eleven, recalls the work of the Spanish painter Ribera.

The most extraordinary painting from these early years is a view of a male nude from the back, *The Baker* (p. 12), painted in 1931 when Campanella was just sixteen. Technically, expressively, it is the work of a fully mature artist. What is remarkable is the skill with which Campanella captured the nuances of light

on the skin, never reducing what he sees to a formula but observing every square inch of the surface as something unique. The background also is not a flat plane of black but has nuance and depth. Notably, while the effect depends on close observation of surface, what gives the painting its power is its grasp of large shapes: the figure has solidity, weight, sculptural volume. As Robert Morris has written, "The flesh and bulk of the figure have an extraordinary life. The paint and human form reverberate against one another in a way that is reminiscent of Eakins."<sup>5</sup> Another one of Campanella's heroes at this time was John Singer Sargent, and this is reflected in the painting's technical virtuosity.

Similarly skillful is another painting from about the same period, showing a female nude from the back, with a group of artists at the easels in the background (p. 12). The figure is seen *contre-jour*—against the light. Technically what is remarkable is the way that Campanella enlivens a part of the design that most painters would treat as flat and dead—the shaded back of the model—which is a delicate shimmer of pinks, blues and greens, with wonderfully observed reflected highlights. At the same time, the scene captures the poetry of the moment in an extraordinary way: the contrast between the sensuous beauty of the female figure, and the drab setting of the studio, with its earnest, soberly dressed young men, struggling to master the basic principles of painting.

Already one can discern Campanella's characteristic color scheme, which is based on a contrast between colors which are nearly but not quite complimentary: a drab blue-green or green, or purplish blue, which is contrasted with a dull orange or brick red. All the colors are decidedly cool, although there's enough variation between warm and cool to provide a sort of push-pull between the shapes that



12. *Coming Over the Hoback*



13. *Vacant Building, 1934*



14. *Small Town Street Scene, 1934*

makes the designs dynamic and fascinating. While the tones vary a good deal from period to period, from painting to painting, the basic dynamic remains surprisingly consistent throughout his lifetime.

Along with mastering the art of painting, Vincent also taught himself to play music in this period. Throughout his life, Vincent was adept at learning difficult skills: he would just sit down and teach himself whatever he wanted to learn. Two of his siblings were musical: one of his brothers played the viola and his sister played the piano. No doubt partly inspired by them, Vincent taught himself to sight-read piano music and learned to do so quite well—well enough to play Beethoven sonatas, for example. He was particularly attracted to the work of Beethoven, who became one of his artistic heroes. When he lived in New York he went out of his way to attend concerts by the pianist Artur Schnabel, who gave wonderful interpretations of Beethoven, and years later, when his daughter was born, he named her Tura in his honor.

The stint at the National Academy of Design ended Vincent's formal artistic training. When he left in 1933, he was eighteen years old and determined to make his way as an artist.

For a time he had a studio in the Loft District that is now Soho; then moved to Midtown, Manhattan, to a place that had no water or heat but cost only ten dollars a month. In 1934 he talked his way into the Walker Gallery, run by Maynard Walker, whose big star was Thomas Hart Benton, who was featured that December on the cover of *Time* magazine. Walker was homosexual, and once made a pass at Vincent, an episode which still caused him distress years later. Since art didn't pay his way, he found odd jobs that kept him alive: one for six dollars a week, another for twelve. But through the Walker Gallery he got to know someone who worked for the New York



15. *Gloucester Fishermen (Men with Nets)*, ca. 1930s



16. *Silos at Night*, 1937

City Relief Department, who advised him to apply for public support. The trick was to keep applying. One application wouldn't lead to anything, but if you kept applying they would figure you really needed the money.

After his second application, someone showed up at his studio and put him on City relief. He then went down with his relief card and showed it to the people at the Federal relief program, the WPA. While often described as a "support for art" program, in actual fact this was a program for the unemployed: the goal was not to encourage art but to provide sustenance for people who were out of work. They asked him to bring some samples of his

work so he brought in an oil and a number of watercolors he had made at the Da Vinci School. They were sufficiently impressed that they put him on the Easel Project, the most desirable category, since it gave you freedom to work on your own, without supervision. He would be given an assignment and provided with three weeks to complete it if it were a watercolor and six if it were an oil. To his delight they also provided materials, such as wonderful 300-pound-weight watercolor paper, and even free models—though Vincent soon decided that naked women would be too much of a distraction. "Models meant women. Naked women. I did that only once. I figured I wouldn't have any time to paint."

The one annoyance was that you had to check in every day at 9:00 at an office in the Seventh Regiment Armory. Then you could go back home and catch up on your sleep. Ever ingenious, Vincent figured out that if you went on a painting assignment you could skip this step, so he arranged to be sent to paint in places like Gloucester and Rockport. [Some of these paintings survive: *Gloucester Fishermen (Men with Nets)* (p.15) for example, was painted in Gloucester in the 1930s.] But such assignments were not automatic—you had to lobby for them.



17. *Keep 'Em Rolling*, 1936

Strongly Leftist in his politics, he joined the artist's union and took on the task of collecting union dues. On one of these missions he met Elaine de Kooning, who was then working as a muralist's assistant. During this period in New York there were always threats that government funding for artists would be cut



18. *Riot in Front of a Church*, 1936



19. *Silver Stacks*, 1936

off, and at one point Vincent and a group of other artists were arrested while demonstrating against such cuts. At the arraignment in the courtroom they all gave their name as famous artists—Paul Cezanne, Vincent Van Gogh, and so forth—and the judge, who picked up on the humor of what they were doing, let them all off with the advice that they should go back to their studios and stay off the streets.

At this time, as was typical of artists in the 1930s, Campanella painted factories and city scenes in drab colors. His work, however, also showed an exceptional concern for the abstract organization of geometric form. Indeed, one of the things that is uncanny is how some of these paintings anticipate the work of his most illustrious pupil, the Minimal artist Robert Morris. One of his finest paintings of the 1930s, for example, *Silver Stacks* (p. 16) of 1936, shows a row of factory buildings extending down a street. What is startling about the painting, what creates its peculiar

beauty, is the minimal simplicity of the effect. The buildings look like a line of cardboard boxes, or the wooden cubes we are familiar with in Minimalist installations. Breaking up the potential monotony of the effect is a cluster of white stacks that rise behind the buildings, yet they also are strangely minimal and pure and geometric in their effect. While they stand in the distance, their light color pulls them forward, creating an interesting push-pull dynamic quality in the design. While very much a painting of the 1930s, with its rough, vernacular American subject matter, the painting is also something more than that: it holds its own when



20. *Factory*, 1937



21. *Untitled (Town Scene)*, 1940



22. *Dull Day*, 1934

we apply the very different aesthetic criteria of later decades, which cared nothing for realism or for the American scene.

Despite his Leftist views, politicized subject matter appears only rarely in his work, and when it does, as in *Riot in Front of a Church*, (p. 16), or a scene of workers repairing railroad track, *Keep 'Em Rolling* (p. 15), of about the same period, he maintains a distance from the human significance of the event. Indeed, before we make out the figures and subjects of these paintings, we read them as patterns of color and shape.

Around this time he got to know the abstract painter Ad Reinhardt, who wrote articles about painting in an abrasive style for a New York liberal newspaper, *PM*. The paper carried no ads, and predictably didn't last very long. According to Campanella's wife, Leah, one article carried a sketch of a tree with each branch named for a painter. One was named for Vincent, others for Jack Levine and Joseph Solman, both friends of Vincent from the Artists Union and WPA. Later in his career, Reinhardt would draw a famous "family tree" of modern art, which is often reproduced in textbooks on American art, which showed painters such as Matisse and Picasso at the trunk of the tree, with American abstract painters, such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, growing out from them. Regionalist painters, such as Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton, were pictured as a dead branch. By this time, Campanella was no longer included.

The friendship is interesting for Reinhardt was a theorist and skeptic, who progressively eliminated the "unessential" and "non-art" elements from his work until he had come down to a bare residuum, all black canvases which seemingly pictured nothing. There is more than a touch of nihilism to this: the problem of skepticism, of course, is that once



23. *Study for Take Home Pay*, ca. 1940s



24. *Take Home Pay*, 1946

you start questioning things it is hard to know where to stop. In a somewhat different way, Campanella's career also ended in a kind of blankness, in his case not black canvases but a sort of creative paralysis, in which he became so entranced by theory that he stopped the making art, turning instead to writing, and writing page after page of theoretic musings that he could never quite assemble into a coherent philosophical statement.

On April 28, 1938, Jacob Kainen reviewed a show of the easel and water-color division of WPA Federal Art Project, which was shown at the Project Galleries at 225 West 57th Street. He noted that the show stressed "the more modern aspect work of this division," and went on to observe that "there is obviously nothing premeditated in the heavy representation by the moderns—they simply are doing the best work on the art projects and just can't be left out of the show." Campanella's name was included in the list of artists whose work Kainen described as "first rate."

## Rock Springs, Wyoming

Devoted to the notion that artists should reach out to the people, in 1938 Campanella took on a travel project for the WPA, driving out to the mining town of Rock Springs, Wyoming, in a Model A Ford to organize a little community of 8,500 to be art conscious.



25. *Coal Yard*, 1940

Most of the people there had never seen an artist before. On the drive out he stopped off to meet the head of the art department in Laramie, at the University of Wyoming, who told him: "You're a 20th-century pioneer and your wagon is your Model A Ford. You're going out to do what nobody ever did before." And it was true.

In Rock Springs, Campanella taught an evening class in art appreciation, in which most of the questions concerned the meaning of modern art. He also taught studio classes in painting three other nights a week. As the local newspaper explained:

The aim of the class is to encourage the development of individual talents; to form art groups that will inspire active participation in artistic endeavors; to discuss technical difficulties of paints and other media in drawing or painting; to study the various phases in the history of art and art appreciation.

When the first class was over he organized a local art exhibit in which eleven artists showed a total of twenty-three paintings. The *Rock Springs (Wyo.) Daily Rocket* reported over 200 people attended the opening. Campanella completed a portrait of Miss Marjorie Muir during the evening to entertain the crowd. At the end of the year, shortly before returning East, Campanella staged a show of his own work at the Washington grade school.

One of his students in Rock Springs, Paul Horiuchi, who was slightly older than Vincent, had settled in Rock Springs to work for the Union Pacific railroad. He was a known artist who had shown his work in Seattle since 1930, but did not make his living as an artist. His wife Bernadette read about Vincent's classes in the newspaper and urged Paul to attend. The two became good friends who shared a classical art training and love for art. The Horiuchis named their third son Vincent



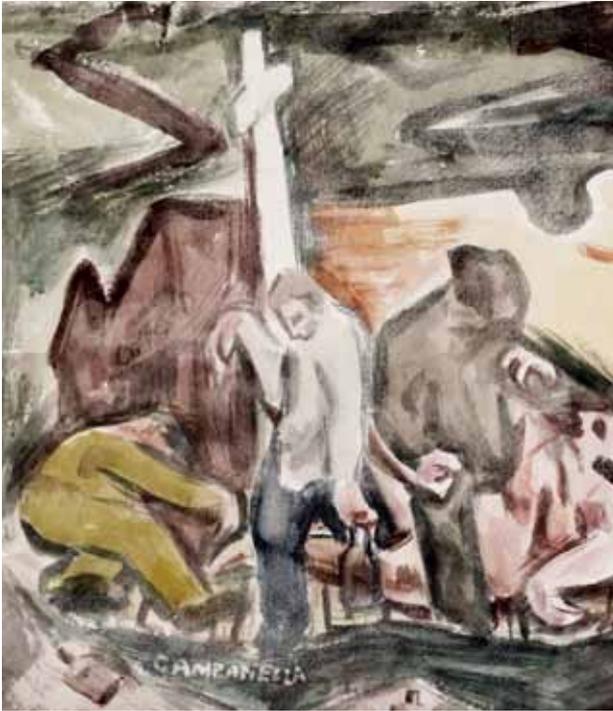
26. *Untitled*, ca. late 1930s



26. (verso), *Untitled*, ca. late 1930s



27. *Scene with Houses and Church*, 1934



28. *Untitled* (Figures with Bottles and a Cross)

in tribute to Campanella. During the war, Paul, like other Japanese Americans, lost his job and housing and suffered greatly. He returned to Seattle, first supporting himself with car repair but eventually establishing a very successful career as an artist, producing fascinating collages with unusual papers that he purchased in Japan. In 1962, he was invited to create a mural for the Seattle World's Fair.

In the spring of 1939 Vincent set out to create a permanent art center, and met with groups such as the Rock Springs Woman's Club to gather the necessary support. Four hundred citizens signed a petition to create the organization, and on March 10 of 1939, the city council voted to donate a space for it, in an unused room on the second floor of the city hall building. Remarkably, all these years later, the center still exists and is still active.

His good work attracted the notice of the administrators in Washington. When he went back east, Campanella stopped off to see Holger Cahill, head of the government art

project, who greeted him warmly. "Sit down! Sit down!" he said. "We get so many letters from Wyoming that we wonder if you're going to run for governor."

Some of Vincent's work from Rock Springs was included later that year in an exhibition in New York at the New School for Social Research, where it attracted the attention of the art critic for *The New Yorker*, Robert Coates. As Coates stated:

I thought Vincent Campanella's sharply lighted *Dark River* and Abraham Harritin's *Sunnyside in Winter* were two excellent things. The general level of the work is so high in honesty and imaginativeness that I wonder how anyone can see it and want to put an end to such an enterprise. I've always thought that as far as the art project is concerned the government is getting the best of the bargain. If it holds onto what it has, and manages it shrewdly, in a hundred years it can hardly fail.

The following year, Campanella was hired as an "emergency instructor" in the art department of the University of Wyoming in Laramie, due to the large increase in the art department's enrollment that quarter. At some point that year *The Casper Tribune-Herald* ran



29. *Wyoming Town*, 1939

an article about a demonstration he gave of egg tempera, and in which he explained technical matters such as how to prepare a canvas, how to make egg tempera, how to select and buy colors, how to lay down a ground, and other similar matters. While providing his explanations, he also painted a head in tempera, showing how to paint flesh tones over a ground in dark green, like the old masters.

During this period he was active in sending his work to national exhibitions, where it often received favorable attention. In 1941, he



30. *Rock Springs Canyon*, ca. 1940s



31. *Wyoming Cedar*, ca. 1940s



32. *Loading Logs*, ca. 1930s - 1940s

showed his work in Casper, Wyoming from May 26 through June 6, and on June 15 he received first honorable mention for a painting he had sent to the Denver annual exhibition. In addition, around this time his painting *Green Jalopy* was awarded the San Francisco Art association purchase prize of \$75 at the fifth annual watercolor exhibition. He also made mural sketches for a local hospital, but never received the commission to execute them.

Sadly, his stint as a teacher proved short lived. Local zealots started a campaign to purge the state of liberals and foreigners, and when they found an Italian name on the roster, Campanella was fired.

## Kansas City and Maine

During the war, from 1941 to 1945, Vincent worked in defense manufacturing. Because of the military importance of this work, he was exempted from being drafted. Working with an engineer, and supervising a team of a dozen workers, he developed the techniques to manufacture new military devices for the Navy: things such as bomb carriers or the hook that catches airplanes when they land on carriers. The work was beautifully crafted: in fact, the landing hook received a special commendation from the Navy for its high



33. *Road Gang*, 1945



34. *Pilot Butte, (Winter)* 1939

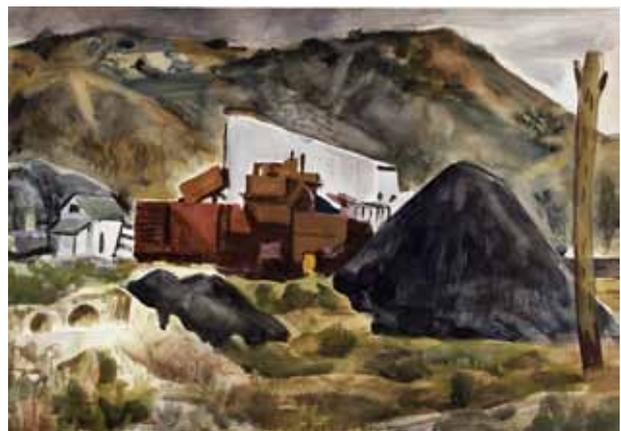
quality. In addition to supervising production, Vincent figured out costs and materials when they were bidding for new contracts. He worked very long hours—he later told stories about falling asleep while talking—and proved exceptionally gifted at finding solutions to unusual problems. When not at the plant, he enjoyed going down to Canal Street to purchase tools. No one knew that he was an artist, and he didn't tell anyone for fear that it would make them think that he was untrustworthy.

After the war he was offered various high-paying executive positions in manufacturing, but after giving the matter some thought he

declined. In addition, for a time he considered going into partnership with a Frenchman who had a patent on vertical blinds, but they could never come to an agreement about how to share profits. In the end, without regret, he decided to go back to painting, his principle love. He later noted: "What I liked about mechanical problems was that there was always a solution. What I liked about art was that there was never a solution."

Vincent met his wife Leah in 1944 and they married in January of 1945. He was 29, she was 25. Shortly after their marriage they made a western trip to Laramie and Rock Springs, and then went out to Seattle where they saw Paul Horiuchi and his family.

From 1946 to 1949, Campanella taught at Columbia University in New York City. He was eager to go back to Wyoming, whose landscape had so inspired him, and as a step in that direction in 1949 he moved to Kansas City to teach at the Kansas City Art Institute.<sup>6</sup> He got the job through Dr. J. B. Smith whom he had known at the University of Laramie, who had been just brought to the Art Institute as Dean. At this time great numbers of students were enrolling in art schools through the G.I. bill, and Smith was brought in to bring the Art Institute's program in line with accreditation guidelines.



35. *Quealy Mine*, 1939



36. *Untitled*, 1968



37. *Untitled*, from *Cathedral Woods Series*,  
ca. 1950s - 1990s



38. *Maine Trees*, 1958

It was an exciting period at the school, since abstract painting was just being introduced. The members of the faculty espoused different styles and viewpoints: among those on the faculty at the time was a gifted figure draftsman, Edward Laning, a sort of follower of Reginald Marsh, as well as the eccentric mystical landscapist, Ross Braught. Dr. Smith's efforts to regiment the school, however, did not sit well with Vincent, and eventually he was purged, along with much of the rest of the faculty—and eventually Dr. Smith.

In 1952, Vincent's contract at the Art Institute was not renewed. Fortunately, some of his night-time students, who went to Park University, arranged for him to get a job there. Over the years, as administrations came and went, he had battles at Park as well, but fortunately, soon after taking the post he received tenure and was able to just stay on and do his job. He taught until 1980 and then stayed on as professor emeritus for the next two decades. His daughter Tura was born in March 1952 and his son David in December 1953. Shortly after they were married, Leah had earned a Master's degree in social work from Columbia University. After her children were born, she went back to social work, and Vincent arranged his teaching on Tuesdays and Thursdays so that she could do so, while he stayed at home three days a week to care for the children.

During the summers, he painted on the island of Monhegan, ten miles off the coast of Maine. In the space of a few square miles, Monhegan comprises everything an artist would want to paint—dramatic surf, striking rocks, dense woods and open meadows. As a consequence, it has attracted major artists since the turn of the century, most notably the figures of Robert Henri's circle, including not only Henri himself but three of his most gifted pupils, George Bellows, Edward Hopper and Rockwell Kent.

Vincent and Leah started going to Monhegan around 1945, staying in the local hotel and socializing with other artists who also summured there, such as the New York painters, Reuben Tam, Marvin J. Lowe, and Joseph DeMartini, as well as the Kallem brothers from Philadelphia: Henry, the painter, and Herbie, the sculptor. The Kallems were also friendly with the rotund and ebullient actor Zero Mostel, who would come to Monhegan and play crazy tricks on people.<sup>7</sup>

As the children grew, hotel accommodations became less suitable and consequently, starting in 1953, the Campanellas moved to



39. *Maine Front Yard*, 1967



40. *Sweetwater*, ca. 1960s - 1970s



41. *Untitled (Landscape)*, ca. 1960s

a small rental cottage. While they had no electricity, they had a little garden and a baby grand piano on which Vincent played Chopin. They were within a short walk of the beach and the public library, where the children checked out storybooks. One summer, however, David became very ill and had difficulty breathing. At this point it became clear that it would be better to be somewhere where they could find a doctor and have access to a hospital.

Consequently, in 1957 Vincent arranged for the family to stay for a few days with a friend from the Rehn Gallery, Denny Winters, who lived in Rockport, Maine. Vincent then went on a house hunting expedition which culminated when he purchased an old house in Owl's Head, located on seven acres of rocky beachfront. The house was in a primitive, run-down state with no plumbing, running water or electricity. Consequently, Vincent did extensive fix-up work, digging a basement (and hurting his back in the process), putting in a septic tank, installing electricity and running water (cold only), and remodeling the kitchen. He put in a Franklin stove for heat and an electric two-burner hotplate for cooking. Leah painted the rooms and the trim and decorated



42. *Rock Lines*, 1954



44. *Untitled*, ca. 1970s



43. *Monhegan Island*, 1954

simply but beautifully. They never installed a telephone, which made life peaceful, although they did have a radio for the news, classical music, and baseball games (Red Sox games came through with good reception after dark). They got a small TV in 1973 specifically to watch the Watergate hearings.

The intent, of course, was for Vincent to paint through the summer. When he first arrived, he would focus on fixing the house. Then he would do some painting—many of the soft tree watercolors were painted at Owl's head, some of them right from the porch—but as the years passed his productivity declined and he often didn't do much painting at all. In the spring of 1968, he had a fellowship at the MacDowell

Colony, and this resulted in a group of reddish-purple watercolors, which evoke the haze of sunlight (for example #36, p.23). But by the 1970s, with Tura and David in college, Vincent generally came up only for brief periods, and Leah mostly stayed in Kansas City or New York, where the living conditions were not so primitive.

Along with his achievements as a painter, Vincent was a cantankerous and opinionated but encouraging teacher, who had a life-long influence on some of his students. The art historian Burton Dunbar, a noted scholar of Northern Renaissance painting, who now serves as Chair of the Art History Department at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, has commented: "Vincent Campanella was the single most influential person on my own professional career. He is the most knowledgeable person I have ever met about being a painter and being an artist. To my everlasting gratitude, Campy taught me to see."

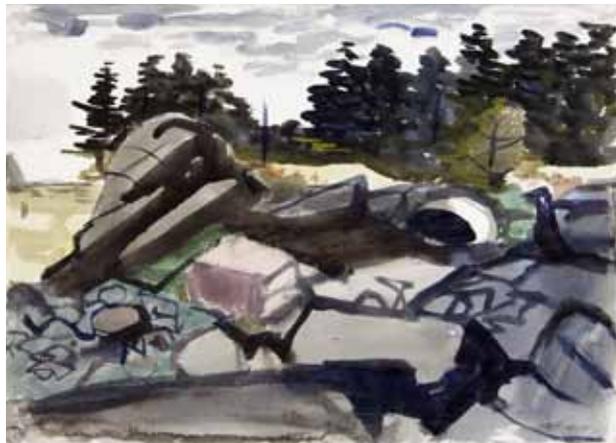
Kansas City may seem an unlikely place to generate any sort of artistic renaissance, but Campanella had two students who, no doubt partly through his influence, have achieved notable success as artists, although in quite different spheres: Chris Browne, who produces a nationally syndicated comic-strip, "Hagar the Horrible," and Robert Morris, who has become



45. *Untitled*, ca. 1950s



47. *Untitled (Maine Landscape)*, ca. 1940s - 1950s



46. *Monhegan Coast*, ca. 1940s

one of the country's most respected avant-garde artists, a major figure in both minimal and conceptual art. In rather different ways both artists reflect aspects of Campanella's personality. The rough humor of Hagar reflects Campanella's unsentimental, at times almost sardonic view of life. The conceptual rigor of Morris's work reflects Campanella's view that, at its best, art is not simply a craft but a mode of philosophical investigation. Rather courageously, a few years ago, when Morris had a chance to mount a show of an artist whose work interested him, he chose the work of Campanella.

## Campanella and Benton

While living in Kansas City, Campanella became friendly with the most illustrious artist in the city, Thomas Hart Benton. Indeed, after his death it turned out that Campanella had a trove of about 150 works by Benton—mostly pencil sketches but also some notable oil paintings and oil studies. They ranged over the full extent of Benton's career, the earliest being a Synchronist abstraction from about 1916, the last an abstract study executed the summer before he died.

Like many of Benton's friendships, his relationship with Campanella had its bumpy spots. Vincent and his wife Leah met Thomas Hart Benton in the autumn of 1949, shortly after they arrived in Kansas City. While Benton had been fired from the Art Institute in 1941, he remained friendly with many of the teachers there, and although Benton was twenty-five years older than Campanella—Benton was then sixty—they quickly became good friends.<sup>8</sup>

For one thing, Vincent was Italian. Benton's wife Rita was of Italian descent and Benton liked anything Italian—food, art, music, people. Benton also liked the fact that Vincent had studied at the Leonardo da Vinci School. In fact, he and Rita had known the Piccirilli

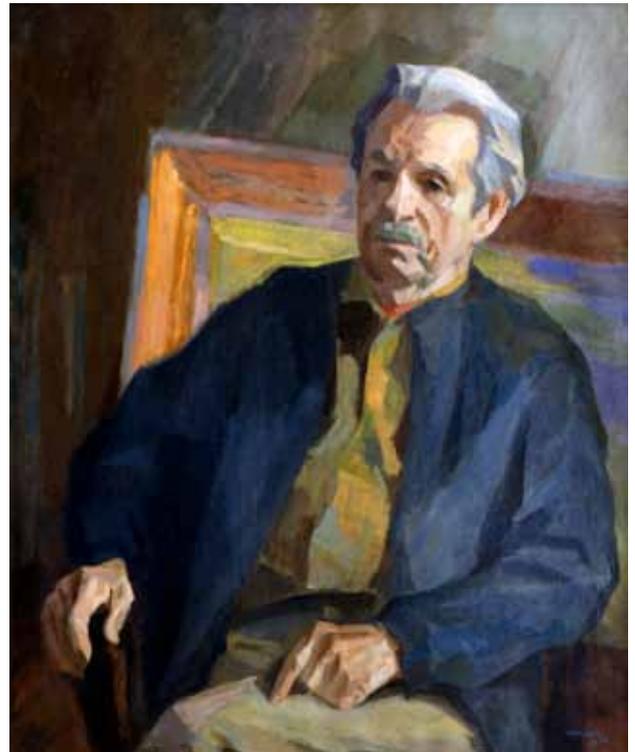


48. *Study for Benton*, 1973

brothers and other supporters of the school when they had lived in New York in the 1930s. Finally, and not least significant, he was clearly delighted to have an artist of intelligence as a companion. While Benton had dominated American painting in the 1930s, at this point Regionalism had fallen out of favor, and just two years before H. W. Janson, a well-known art historian, had compared his work with that of the German fascists. Benton had just broken his ties with his New York dealer, Reeves Lowenthal, and while his wife Rita continued to sell his paintings on a local basis, he was feeling increasingly isolated. Most of his friends were businessmen, teachers, administrators, and musicians—it was a delight to have a painter to talk to.

This friendship ended in 1951—or at least went into a long period of hibernation. On April 17 of that year the lawyer Lyman Field organized a Forum on Modern Art at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Benton was

on the panel, along with Campanella, Professor Scott from the University of Kansas City, and Sidney Lawrence from the Jewish Community Center. As the session developed, however, it quickly devolved into a heated two man debate between Benton and Campanella, with Benton representing traditional approaches and Campanella speaking for modern art. Campanella more than held his own in the debate. Afterwards, his relationship with Benton changed. Benton viewed himself as a national celebrity and was apparently miffed that Vincent was so outspoken. Or perhaps it was his wife, Rita, who was energetically partisan, who was offended. In any case, at this point Vincent's contact with the Bentons broke off. The Bentons no longer treated him as an intimate, and before long he ceased seeing them altogether. More than twenty years went by with no contact between them.



49. *Thomas Hart Benton*, 1973



50. *Untitled* (Landscape), ca. 1940s - 1960s



51. *Dawn, Rock Springs*, ca. 1940s

Then in 1973 a mutual friend invited Campanella to drop by the Benton home. Tom greeted him as if they had never had a falling out and warmly invited him to come back. He did so and before long had become a regular. In January he even shared a birthday party with Rita, since they had birthdays which were nearly the same date. One evening Benton invited Vincent to paint his portrait.

"When?" Vincent asked.

"Tomorrow."

At the time, Vincent was still teaching at Park University, but he managed to come over the next afternoon, as soon as classes were over. One day while he was working on the painting, Benton got up to get a phone call. When he returned he told Vincent that Tex Ritter, the country music star, had just called

him from Nashville and asked him to do a mural for the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Campanella's restored intimacy with Benton lasted just slightly over a year. But on January 6, 1975, while he was watching the 10:00 evening news on TV with his wife, the announcer came on and said that he had bad news. "I bet it's Benton," Campanella said to her. "He died." His guess was right: Benton had died of a heart attack that evening in his studio. It was just after 10:00 at night, on a cold winter evening, but Campanella walked over to the Benton home to ask if there was any way he could help.

Rita asked him to come back the next day, and when he did so she asked him to go out to the studio to look over the mural Benton had been working on. This portrayed *The Sources of Country Music* and had been commissioned by the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville. The mural was nearly but not quite finished. There were a number of places where the paint did not quite go up to the edges of the form,



52. *Study for Crucifixion*, ca. 1940s

leaving white canvas exposed. Since Benton had been eighty-five when he took on the project, the contract had been written in a way that allowed the Country Music Foundation to back out of the project if the work were unfinished. Rita was naturally nervous that they might reject the painting and asked Vincent if he could apply the finishing touches.

Vincent agreed, although his technique was somewhat different from Benton's, and if one looks closely one can pick out his hand in the painting. The difference between the two is that Benton tended to make shadow by simply darkening the form whereas Vincent, influenced by Cezanne, tended to change color.

Benton had worked for thirty-six years in the studio with no heat other than a wood stove. But freezing temperatures will make



53. *Crucifixion*, 1940s



54. *Rain on Top*, 1946



55. *Sawtooth*, 1945

acrylic misbehave and develop “bloom”—that is, a muddy, discolored surface—so Vincent persuaded Rita to install a gas furnace. “Can you imagine?” he commented. “When he died she got a heating system put in.”

In the course of his work, Campanella introduced just one significant change. Guitars have six strings but for some reason Benton had only put in four. A legend in country music circles tells of how these strings appeared magically, between the time of Benton's death and the time when the painting was unveiled. But of course the truth is more prosaic: it was Vincent who squeezed in two more strings.

## The Rehn Gallery

Campanella's own reputation reached its height in the period just after the war, between about 1946 and 1954 when he held three exhibitions at the Rehn Gallery in New York. Vincent sometimes implied that he just walked in off the street into Rehn's Gallery and was accepted, but it wasn't that easy. In fact, he made three visits to Rehn over a period of years before being offered a show: the first of these visits occurred in the 1930s, before he visited Wyoming, the other two were both after the war.



56. *Untitled (Wyoming Landscape)*, ca. 1940s



57. *Conflict*, ca. early 1950s



58. *Mother and Child*, 1952

The third time proved the charm. He had his father bring in a load of paintings in his taxi. When Rehn saw them he pronounced: "You are a painter" and agreed to give him a show. Rehn gave him three shows—in 1946, 1951 and 1954—the first while Vincent was still living in New York, the others after he had moved to Kansas City.

Frank Rehn (1886-1956) had grown up in the world of art, being the son of a successful Philadelphia marine painter. In 1918, after several years of experience working with other firms, Rehn opened his own gallery, and by the 1930s he had become one of the few art dealers in New York to focus exclusively on the work of living American artists. While he started handling work by American impressionists such as Childe Hassam, by the 1930s Rehn



59. *Untitled*, (abstract) 1947



60. *Kanda*, 1946

primarily displayed more sober renderings of the American scene by figures such as Charles Burchfield, Edward Hopper and Reginald Marsh. Both Hopper and Burchfield, in fact, were artists whose careers he largely created—he rescued Hopper from advertising work which he hated and Burchfield from similar drudgery designing wallpaper. Hopper had sold only one or two paintings at the time that Rehn staged the first show of his paintings, which was a sellout. Similarly, Rehn kept good on his promise to keep Charles Burchfield financially afloat simply through sales of his work, even though he began representing Burchfield just at the onset of the Depression.<sup>9</sup>

The style of the Rehn Gallery strongly contrasted with that of the other major firm dealing in American art in this period, Associated American Artists, run by the brash merchandiser, Reeves Lowenthal, which advertised in mass circulation magazines and arranged commissions for its artists from large corporations and Hollywood film studios. Rehn was quiet, modest, discrete, and his approach appealed to discriminating collectors of similar temperament, such as Duncan Phillips and Edward Root. He was also a man of progressive social views. Many of the artists he featured looked on American life with a sympathy for the poor and dispossessed.

While the most famous of the artists in the gallery were sober realists, Rehn also was interested in a sort of nature-based abstraction, related in spirit to the work of 19th-century American visionaries, such as Albert Pinckham Ryder. The connecting link of the two styles was the issue of mood. Both were sober in color and introspective in spirit. They avoided bright colors and conventional prettiness to search for something deeper.

Campanella's work seems to have spanned these two approaches. Many of his early watercolors, which transform ordinary American buildings and street scenes into monumental compositions, are quite close in effect to the work of Hopper. His later work reduces the elements of nature to near-abstract forms in a fashion somewhat reminiscent of figures from the Stieglitz group, such as John Marin, Arthur Dove, and Marsden Hartley. These paintings evoke the early work of Abstract Expressionists such as William Bazotes or Mark Rothko, although Campanella never completely lost contact with an actual subject or landscape and his style is actually closer to that of lesser known figures of this period, such as John Heliker.



61. *Agony and Sleep*, ca. 1940s - 1950s

At this time he became friendly with several artists in the Rehn Gallery, including Henry Varnum Poor, Peppino Mangravite, and George Picken. Peppino Mangravite recommended Vincent for the Prix de Rome, although he didn't receive the award. Around this time, George Picken wrote a long supportive letter about Vincent's work, praising him as a poetic painter. Still another friend was Henry Varnum Poor, who was one of the founders of the Art School in Skowhegan, Maine. Vincent visited him there in the 1950s.

Rehn was convinced that Campanella's work would sell out like that of Hopper a few years before, but these hopes were never realized. Campanella always spoke warmly of Rehn, who never charged any fees for showing his work, but none of the shows was financially successful. During this period, Campanella seems to have progressed rather quickly from a realistic watercolor style very reminiscent of Hopper to a far more abstract style based on his western experiences. Indeed, by the end Campanella was slightly out of synch with the other figures whom Rehn represented, such as Marsh, Burchfield, and Hopper, who were carry-overs from the 1930s. Perhaps if Rehn had been younger he would have succeeded



62. *Dawn in Wyoming*, ca. 1940s

in creating a new group, in keeping with the new times, but he was getting old, he had a new wife who didn't care much for art, and he lacked the energy to remain a trend setter. Showing with Rehn separated Campanella from other modernists, who had found younger art dealers. Regrettably, Campanella's work was also just a bit too adventurous for most of Rehn's clientele.

Most of Campanella's watercolors are not dated, which makes it difficult to discuss his stylistic development. But a number of pieces are strikingly similar to the work of Edward Hopper and very likely it was work of this sort that initially appealed to Frank Rehn. A case in point is a watercolor of a green church spire rising up behind a church and another building (p.19). As Hopper did, Campanella finds something monumental in an ordinary scene: there's a wonderful, somewhat cubist rhythm to the triangular shapes of the spire

and gables. The color is just slightly intensified to create a forceful clash between the purple shadows of the house in the foreground and the dull orange of the church behind it, or between the brick red of the gable of the church and the rich green of its spire. The excitement of the painting depends on the fact that it was clearly painted from life, probably at a single sitting. One can almost feel the challenge of trying to quickly capture a particular scene—the struggle at once to capture and accurately render each form, in the quickly changing light, and at the same time to pull the scene into some larger aesthetic unity. Nothing about the painting is lazy—even the sky, with its fluffy cumulus clouds, is closely observed. At the same time, the ordinary, the transient, is quietly transformed into something monumental.

As he progressed, Campanella seems to have increasingly introduced white gouache



63. *The Miners*, 1946



64. *Bathhouse T*, 1930s - 1940s



65. *Windy Afternoon*, 1945

into his watercolors. The result was to give a ghostliness to the effect, and also, as he developed this approach, to create a kind of calligraphy that floats on the surface, in a fashion somewhat reminiscent of the “White Writing” paintings of Mark Tobey. In the late 1930s he painted several figural scenes on the New England Coast, apparently in Gloucester or Rockport, such as a scene of men with nets (p. 15), and one of men beside a wharf, apparently loading a boat with a chord of wood (p. 21). The subject matter is close to the social realist paintings of the 1930s, but we are pulled back from the scene rather than pulled into its social drama, and the handling of form is more generalized, in a way that transforms the scenes into near-abstract patterns. The colors are also toned with gray in a way that



66. *Front Street*, 1944

not only infuses the images with a soberness of mood but also unifies the picture surface, reducing the sense of perspective depth and enhancing one's awareness of decorative pattern. As in the contemporary work of figures such as Morris Graves, Mark Tobey, and Ben Shahn, the mood of the pieces seems to shift from one of social statement to one of concern with deeper existential issues. Within a few years, Campanella's use of gouache had developed into a kind of "white writing." A case in point is *Pilot Butte (Winter)* (p. 22), a watercolor of a store with a false front painted in Rock Springs.

Campanella's show at the Rehn Gallery in 1951 featured more radically abstract work, much of it based on the landscape of Rock Springs, which he had revisited in 1945, and perhaps at other times as well. Many of these landscapes, however, were likely created in New York, based on sketches made on site, perhaps years before. One reviewer described Campanella as "a discrete Milton Avery who builds his composition around the natural grandeur of the Rockies." Another noted that

his watercolors "present moody interpretations of two widely-separated but similarly rugged regions—the rocky shores on Monhegan and the ranges of Wyoming." Howard Devree wrote in *The New York Times* (February 4, 1951):

Nearly five years have passed since Vincent Campanella, an engineer-artist, made his debut at Frank Rehn's. His semi-abstract impressions of the Wyoming badlands were individual but more objective than his recent paintings in which such mundane themes as poker players and a miner's bathhouse figure as material starting points; but starting point only, for they are transformed into growingly expressionist statements of great virility. *Dawn in Wyoming* (p. 32) is so economical of actual forms that it is almost obscure. *Agony in the Thorns* is a canvas of Hartleyesque vigor, lurid reds flickering upward, flame-like, in a kind of Grecoish prayer. A very personal and not prolific painter, Campanella feels his way slowly forward with an intensity and singleness of purpose that augurs well for his shows to come. For the advance since his previous show is impressive.

Robert M. Coates, *The New Yorker*,  
February 10, 1951:

More and more, artists are essaying mixtures of the abstract and the representational, and though some of these experiments are far from successful, they're all worth watching... The Campanella pieces, however, mainly based on Wyoming subjects, have an urgency and earnestness that makes up for their occasional unevennesses. I especially enjoyed *Windy Afternoon* (p. 33), *Dawn in Wyoming* (p. 32), and *Reflections on Poker* (p. 35), [*Smokehouse* is an alternative title].

Carlyle Burrows wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune*, February 11, 1951:

New paintings by Vincent Campanella, who draws his inspiration from the Western scene, are shown at the Rehn Gallery as dark, intangible shapes for the most part fitting to a natural scheme but decidedly illusive as to expressions of feeling and meaning. When he comes through into the daylight of communicability, as he does with his Marin-like *Dawn in Wyoming* (p. 32), and the reasonably processed *Bathhouse, No. 4 Mine* (p. 36) he seems to inject that spark of true poetic substance into his work that in earlier natural scenes he promised to develop. In such rather violently expressive work as *Agony and Sleep* (p. 32) he appears to us at present beyond his range.

Helen Carlson in "Gallery Previews" noted:

Vincent Campanella at the Frank K. M. Rehn Gallery so arbitrarily modifies and distorts his figures and forms they are a constant challenge to the spectator. Are those strange forms so mysteriously propelled through air in *Windy Afternoon* (p. 33) cloud formations or barn doors, and just what do those odd fragments in *Reflections on Poker* (p. 35) represent? Really it doesn't matter

too much for Campanella is such a dynamic personality he doesn't give you time to think of trivialities. Besides it is the color that sets the mood—those strange minor notes that arouse so many conflicting emotions. For those who prefer a touch of realism in their paintings there are *Agony and Sleep* (p. 32) and *Bathhouse No. 4. Mine* (p. 36), although these, too, are highly individualized performances.

By this time, no doubt in response to the new interest in abstract painting, Campanella's style had dramatically changed and he was creating paintings that were nearly abstract such as *Front Street* (p. 34), *Bathhouse* (p.36), or *Bach* (p. 38). Many of these paintings, such as *Front Street*, simplify the scene into oblong planes of colors that float parallel to the picture surface. This kind of effect can be traced back to figures like Arthur Dove and Marsden Hartley, or even the 19th-century mystic, Albert Pinckham Ryder, who simplified forms and largely eliminated perspective in order to create a direct simplicity of statement that is more powerful than conventional, detailed realism. The romantic, mystical mood of Campanella's paintings and his absorption in the spirit of nature tie his work to these 19th-century sources.



67. *Smokehouse (Reflections on Poker)*, 1945



68. *Bathhouse #4 Mine*, ca. 1940s



69. *Bathhouse*, ca. late 1930s - early 1940s

The reasons for Campanella's artistic shift at this time are various. One was simply his response to the Wyoming landscape. He soon discovered that the methods he had learned at the Da Vinci School and the National Academy of Design were no longer adequate.

Being in Wyoming changed my art life. I found in Wyoming my technique didn't work. I knew everything up close but I didn't know how to paint things that were far away—and huge. Ever been to Southern Wyoming? You look at a distant field and it's forty miles away. How do you make forty miles on a flat surface?

Campanella was also well aware of the work of forward-thinking painters. For example, he liked the work of Mark Tobey, and shortly after the war, when he visited his friend Paul Horiuchi in Seattle, he also met with Mark Tobey and did a portrait of him (p. 37).

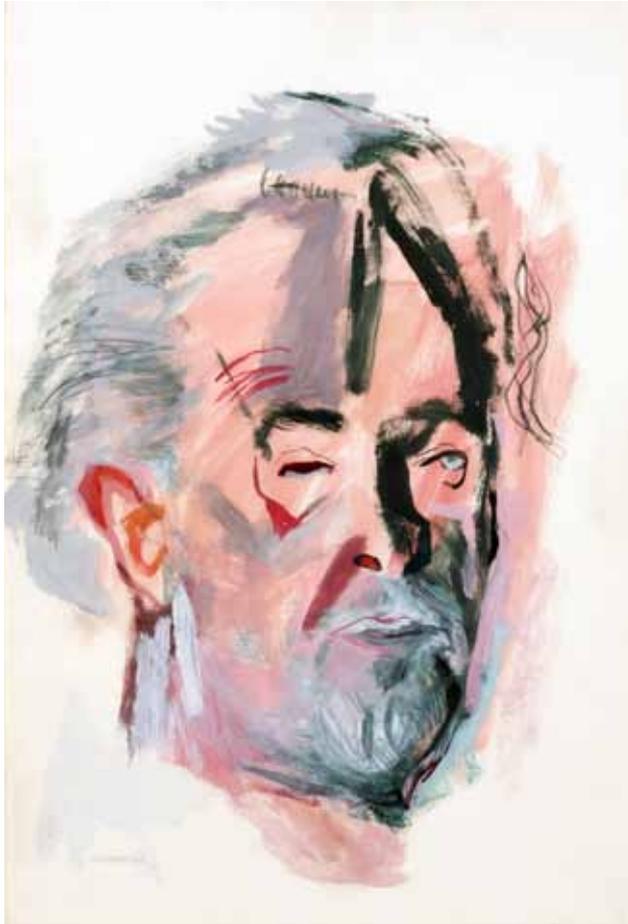
In addition, around this time Campanella became fascinated by Cezanne, whose work he studied through an influential book of



70. *Self Portrait from Touch of Thought Series*, ca. 1970s - 1980s

1943, *Cezanne's Composition* by Erle Loran. Erle Loran, who was himself a painter, had visited Provence in the 1920s, where he was able to track down the motifs that Cezanne painted and learn about his working methods from figures who remembered him. His book on Cezanne's composition juxtaposed Cezanne's paintings with photographs of the motifs he worked from. Thus, it illuminated the degree to which Cezanne introduced visual simplifications and distortions into his renderings.<sup>10</sup>

Loran's argument is difficult to summarize for it was not entirely consistent, but essentially he proposed that Cezanne modified scenes to emphasize planes which are parallel to the picture plane and that his compositions depend not on traditional perspective but



71. *Untitled (Portrait of artist Mark Tobey)*, 1950

on devices that create a dynamic sense of tension and movement between these planes. To illustrate his theories, Loran reduced Cezanne's compositions to diagrams, which illustrate such points as the use of outline, the use of tonal contrasts, the handling of spatial depth, and the direction of spatial tension and movement.

In significant ways, these diagrams transform Cezanne's designs into a very different visual statement from the paintings themselves. Cezanne's technique, for example, was based on modeling the form with fine brushstrokes, but Loran's mode of explanation largely skips over this step to focus on larger compositional patterns. Indeed, Loran seems to have been significantly influenced by Hans Hofmann, the teacher of

many of the Abstract Expressionists. One of the dogmas of his book is a principal borrowed from Hofmann: that it is sinful to create "holes" in the picture through dramatic use of perspective and recession, that the picture plane should function as a kind of electrical field and that the elements of the composition should respond to its forces of attraction.

In essence, Campanella diagrammed nature in the way that Loran had diagrammed Cezanne's compositions. Significantly, while Campanella often cited Cezanne as an influence, he never imitated Cezanne's brushwork or patient modeling of forms. Instead, at this time he created shapes that are increasingly large and simplified.

Probably the masterpiece of his period is the painting *Bach* (p. 38), so-named because it transforms the dramatic rocky landscape of Rock Springs into something analogous to Bach's musical counterpoint. Vincent's wife Leah recalls that this was Vincent's "breakthrough painting after the war." We can think of every shape and angle as something similar to a musical note, which is balanced by the placement of notes elsewhere in the composition. As in Loran's diagrams of Cezanne, there is a sense of tension and movement between the various planar shapes.

As Robert Morris has written:

A painting of a mountain (*Bach*) seems to be one of Campanella's favorite pictures and was painted in 1945 in Rock Springs, Wyoming. It is obvious that the Wyoming experience was pivotal for Campanella. Some impulse of the American Sublime that reaches back to Church and Cole may play itself out in these depictions of the crags and mountains of the West. This is a modest sublime without the bravura scale or utopian overtones found in earlier American art.

At times the controlled patterning of these paintings dissolves into wild gesture



72. *Bach*, 1945



73. *Below Rock Springs*, 1947

in a way that anticipates the Abstract Expressionists. In paintings such as *Agony and Sleep* (p. 32) a semi-abstract gesturing figure on the left merges into a landscape of strange disconnected shapes. One can sense Campanella struggling to absorb new developments in art in these works, from the work of figurative draftsmen such as Rico Lebrun to that of modern sculptors such as Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore. *Below Rock Springs*, (p. 38) for example, while it pays tribute to the western landscape, closely resembles a sculpture by Barbara Hepworth. As in the work of the Abstract Expressionists, the idea seems to be to go beyond the literal presentation of the subject to reach for a deeper, more direct

expression of the fundamental emotion. At times the image disappears almost entirely. In paintings such as *Dawn in Wyoming* (p. 32), there is nothing solid, but simply a soup of ambiguous, vaguely biomorphic shapes. Most of these paintings are subdued and brooding in color, although Leah notes that he did put a little bit of red, her favorite color, in one of these pieces, *Windy Afternoon* (p. 33).

Campanella also continued to produce remarkable figurative work, although in a slashing, expressionistic style distinctly different from his



74. *Self Portrait* from *Touch of Thought Series*, ca. 1940s

paintings of the 1930s. Two of his most remarkable paintings are self portraits, one *Untitled*, which is a study of an isolated head (p. 4), the other titled *Touch of Thought* (p. 36), which shows his nude torso with his hand bent to his forehead, as if to touch an idea. He did a series of this pose and others not in the exhibition. According to Leah, when Vincent worked in oil, he would step back and contemplate the work in this trademark pose. Watercolors, by contrast, were done quickly.

The study of a head, in Campanella's distinctive color-scheme of brick reds and olive greens (p. 4), has a blunt solidity that is



75. *Self Portrait from Touch of Thought Series*  
ca. early 1950s



76. *Self Portrait from Touch of Thought Series*  
ca. 1960s - 1980s

wonderfully evocative of Campanella's blunt, somewhat abrasive personality. It is at once sculptural and rough, like a block of wood carved with an axe. For all the forcefulness of the image, it also conveys something transient and vulnerable, for the colors of head and background are the same, as if the form might dissolve into its surrounding. At its deepest level the painting is a reflection on the fleetingness of life.

Equally impressive is *Self Portrait from Touch of Thought Series* (p. 36), which is at once a probing psychological study and an unflinching presentation of a body that has reached middle age and is just beginning to sag. Unlike the meticulous execution of his



77. *Cathedral Woods*, ca. 1970s

early academic studies, the brushwork is free, expressionistic, conveying the sense that the image might easily dissolve into nothingness, or into an incoherent pattern of brushwork. The painting boldly confronts the fundamental challenge of art: to represent an idea, a spiritual essence through the representation of concrete things.

Campanella's last major group of paintings, the *Cathedral Woods* series is one of the most remarkable of his career. The title comes from the name of the woods on Monhegan, although Campanella seems to have made paintings of this sort after leaving Monhegan and moving to Owl's Head. Essentially he reduced the interior of a forest to a kind of Minimalist expression of repetitive vertical forms



78. *Cathedral Woods*, ca. 1970s

pushing skyward. Nonetheless, the repetitive quality of the shapes is contradicted by the endless nuance of color, atmosphere and light. Minimal is not so minimal after all, but endlessly nuanced and varied. There are interesting parallels to what Campanella was attempting in works by other leading American artists: the simplified assertion of the vertical brings to mind both Barnett Newman's vertical zips and the repetitive vertical poles of Walter De Maria's *Lighting Field*. Paintings such as this almost cease to be representations of things or scenes and merge into the realm of spirit or idea.

And at this point, Campanella shifted from image-making to chasing after thoughts and words; he virtually abandoned painting to



79. *Cathedral Woods*, ca. 1970s

concentrate on theory. Vincent's last intensely sustained period of painting ended around 1955 with a series of forest scenes. After a final solo exhibition at a regional museum in Topeka in 1956 he ceased to regularly exhibit his work. When Rehn died in 1956 he did not make much effort to find another gallery.<sup>11</sup>

In this period, representational art was falling out of fashion. Leah recalls that when they visited Monhegan, Vincent's artist friends would inquire: "Have you changed your style yet?" In 1968 Vincent had a fellowship at the MacDowell Colony, where he socialized on a daily basis with other artists. Somewhat paradoxically, this experience convinced him that his art wouldn't stand out on its own,

that people wouldn't be interested just in his paintings. It was at this point that he got the idea to write as well as paint. In 1956, when Vincent was forty-one, he got a Master's Degree in Philosophy at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. For another decade he pursued a Ph.D. in Philosophy at the University of Kansas, finally abandoning the project in 1967. But for some forty-five years he worked intermittently on a book about esthetics and politics. If questioned about it he would declare "it's almost finished," but he never showed it to anyone and did not discuss it much. The project was still incomplete at the time of his death. "Art is like the ocean," he once commented to a reporter for the *Kansas City Star*, ascribing the quote to the Renaissance painter Tintoretto. "The farther you go in, the deeper it gets."

After the 1970s, Campanella had almost ceased to produce new work, but not entirely.

As Robert Morris has noted:

The picture, *White* (p. 41), dated 1992 is an exception. It is an almost completely white picture—a landscape of ambiguous shapes that recalls the style of the late '40s pictures. Perhaps it is a snow storm. Or perhaps it is a kind of ghost picture that represents all the



80. *White*, 1992



28. (verso), *Study for Red Roan*, ca. 1940s

absent pictures he did not paint for 40 years. Unidentifiable objects hover in this albino space. It is a barren but dense landscape: a haunted, reverberating space that suggests a metaphor for both mourning and bearing witness. Perhaps artists need a minimum of love and attention to go on after they have passed the fiery youthful years where the fullness of the self bulls forward with little need for support.

In the early 1970s, Leah lost her job doing social work and spent several frustrating years trying to find another position in Kansas City. Then in 1975, while visiting her mother, she learned of a grant-funded position in New York to help immigrants coming from Vietnam and Cambodia, refugees from the war there. Initially this job was supposed to be temporary, but when it became permanent she simply stayed on in the city. When Vincent retired from Park in 1980, he considered joining her, but there was nothing for him to do in New York, since his old friends had died or he had

fallen out of contact with them, and the art world had utterly changed. Instead, he remained in Kansas City, and kept an office at Park University where he would write and socialize with faculty and staff who became like a family to him. He remained in touch with his wife and family through weekly phone calls and every year he and Leah would travel together, to Europe to see art or to revisit coastal Maine or Monhegan Island. As he grew older, he paid less and less attention to housekeeping and his elegant Craftsman-style house on Karnes Boulevard grew dusty and layered with junk. By the end, in fact, he no longer had running water or heat, although somehow he remained "independent" thanks to the care and support of a group of loyal friends, including Paul Gault, Carol Hershey, his banker, Paula Warczakoski, and Vito and Cathy Colapietro at Park University.

In the summer of 2001, Vincent made a final trip to Maine, where he stayed with a former student, Joel Dempsey. When he returned to Kansas City, he was obviously frail and often mentally confused, so his friends arranged for him to fly to Austin, Texas, for a visit with his daughter Tura. He stayed in a small place near her house which he had purchased the previous year, to escape the Kansas City winters. Since Vincent always avoided medical care, when he called Tura on the Monday after Thanksgiving, and said, "I feel bad. Take me to the hospital," she knew it was something serious. At that time they learned that he not only had diabetes but advanced inoperable lung cancer which had spread throughout his body. He seems to have known of this in advance. In 2000 he had had a chest x-ray but chose to ignore the results. He was sick for a relatively short time, during which he was visited by his wife, children, and grandchildren, and received letters and phone calls from former students. He was cared for and his pain was managed. He was able to take stock of his life. His daughter Tura recalls:



81. *Study for Red Roan*, ca. 1940s

I think we all have wondered did he regret? Was he bitter? It was very difficult to care for my dad when he got old and sick. You have seen what a capable and dynamic person he was. To see him helpless was extremely upsetting. When he was dying I knew he had reached a critical level when he asked for the classical music to be turned off. He could not talk much. A few days before he died he said to me, 'I have had a good laa- laa--...'. He was struggling for words. 'Lunch?' I said, helpfully. 'Life!' he replied. 'I have had a good life.'

He lived his life the way he wanted to, almost to the very end. His art was not recognized, but apparently he made peace with that. In much of his life he was fortunate, even in how he died.

He died on December 23, 2001. After his death, Tura took on the job of settling the estate and cleaning out the house on Karnes Boulevard. Starting in February 2002 she made seven week-long visits to Kansas City, to look for his writings, save family belongings, clean out the trash, and to find and store the paintings—some 300 paintings and drawings, dating back to his earliest childhood, which were both scattered around the house and in his Park University office.

Tura recalls:

It was quite dramatic as paintings such as *Strawberry Roan* (p.44), with its strokes of electric blue, emerged from the dust and mold of the house and leaned against the stone driveway wall in the brisk winter light. I never knew this painting existed. (Leah later told me that it was based on *Study for Red Roan*, his entry in a competition sponsored by the Container Corporation. They were looking for a painting to represent each state. This was Vincent's entry for Wyoming. It didn't win.) But when I saw that painting I became committed to the idea that other people should see these paintings and learn something about the man who painted them. It was certainly a fool's errand for several years trying to find a museum interested in doing a show of an unknown artist. Until I called one of Vincent's students from the Kansas City Art Institute, Wilbur Niewald, and he made the contact with Terry Oldham at the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art.

How should we assess his life? Campanella is not an easy figure to sum up—rather, he seems the embodiment of contradictions. He was often notably sour and acerbic yet also was oddly gifted in friendship; at one moment he was self-centered, self-contained, uninterested in anyone else and at another a good friend, or good father, or even a persuasive arts organizer or factory supervisor—



82. *Strawberry Roan*, ca. 1940s

a fixer, a mediator, focused on the common good; he was generally stubbornly focused on the here and now, the practical, the mundane, and yet in the final analysis he was an idealist, a dreamer, a creator of castles in the sky.

Certainly in one sense his career traces an arc of un-fulfillment—of prodigious youthful talent that eventually dissipated into a failure to create, a kind of emptiness. Yet looked at in another way, even Vincent's most aimless periods were ones of notable accomplishment. For example, who would think that Park University, a small institution in Parkville, Missouri, would produce major artistic figures—yet several of Vincent's students went on to nationally notable achievements. In his final years, while not very productive as a painter, he became a resonant voice for the artists of the 1930s—a commentator who combined a biting critical edge with a sympathy for the fundamental value of the

artistic struggles of those decades. His voice condensed the essence of that particular artistic moment perhaps more vividly than that of any other witness. Not least, for all the years of uncertainty, he left a body of hundreds of interesting, sometimes remarkable paintings. They cover quite a large stylistic range, from the technical virtuosity of his youth to the groping of his later abstractions, which often push to the limit of what painting can do, or even pass over that edge into something that verges on conceptual art. Like wine, good paintings have an odd way of getting better as they age. They ask questions, stir emotions, become doorways through which we can enter a past that would otherwise be remote. Vincent Campanella's legacy is a large number of paintings of this sort. ✿

## Endnotes

- 1 Ken Burns, *Thomas Hart Benton*, Florentin Films, 1989.
- 2 Much of the biography, as well as any quotations that are not otherwise identified, come from the videotape of an interview with Vincent Campanella conducted by Burton Dunbar on Thursday, October 15, 1998, for his class at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- 3 For the Piccirilli brothers see Josef Vincent Lombardo, *Attilio Piccirilli: Life of an American Sculptor*, Pitman Publishing Company, New York, Chicago, 1944. See also, Henry Adams, "The Piccirilli Brothers: A Family of Master Sculptors," in *Freeing the Angel from the Stone: The Contribution of the Piccirilli Brothers to Sculpture, 1890 to the Present*, catalog/brochure for the Italian-American Museum, New York October 19 through December 15, 2005, pp. 11-15.
- 4 See Lombardo, *op. cit.*, page 120.
- 5 Robert Morris, *Modes of perception: Paintings by Vincent Campanella*, exhibition catalog, The Bertha and Karl Leubsdorff Aft Gallery, Hunter College of the City University of New York, April 5-May 13, 1995.
- 6 In the summer of 1951 they went to Mexico, where Vincent created a group of picturesque watercolors, more brightly colored than much of his work.
- 7 Henry Kallem won first prize in the 1947 Pepsi Cola exhibition for his painting "Country Tenement." Shortly afterwards, *Life Magazine* ran an article, "Freak Painting Prizes" (August 1948) recounting the controversy over awards being given to what some critics considered unintelligible modern art.
- 8 Much of the information in this account of Campanella's friendship with Benton is based on an unpublished letter from Leah Campanella to her daughter Tura, June 7, 2002.
- 9 There is no full account of the career of Frank Rehn although he is briefly discussed in biographies of Burchfield and Hopper and his papers are available in the Archives of American Art. I first became aware of his significance to American art when I got to know one of his clients, Mrs. James Beal of Pittsburgh, who on a modest budget assembled a remarkable collection of American paintings. See Henry Adams, *Toward Modernism: The Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James Beal* [exhibition catalog], Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, 1995.
- 10 Erle Loran, *Cezanne's Composition: Analysis of His Form with Diagrams and Photographs of His Motifs*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1943, reissued with revisions, 1963.
- 11 Bertha Schaeffer, a dealer who showed the work of Balcomb Greene, expressed interest in showing his work, but Vincent never followed up her overtures.



83. *Study of Two Seated Females (Demonstration Piece)*. 1962  
Painted during a 45-minute demonstration in Graham Tyler Memorial Chapel on the Parkville campus.

# The Artist as Professor

by *Burton Dunbar*

Campanella's role as a teacher was important for at least two reasons. First, he saw himself primarily as a professor of painting for about the last fifty years of his life. In that capacity, he developed a method of teaching students how to translate what we saw into two-dimensional compositions which constantly referred to the geometric structure of nature. Second, understanding his pedagogical methodology helps to understand the theoretical underpinnings of his own art.

Campanella's method of teaching was first developed during his time in Wyoming through the WPA. His early method of examining his subjects, "up close, everything in detail"<sup>1</sup> was part of his training through the Leonardo da Vinci Art School. But it was not until Campanella attempted to apply his academic training to the vast Wyoming landscape did he realize that his largely representational style could not capture his surroundings in a manner that satisfied him. It was through this realization that Campanella created a new way of seeing and analyzing nature to come up with a style that translated the western landscape into pictorial form. The result was a five-step methodology that became the basis for his teaching curriculum at both Kansas City Art Institute and Park University.

Campanella taught his students to look first at nature in the terms of shapes, not things. Thus, a grove of trees or a group of buildings could present outlines of wondrous dimensions in unusual configurations. The first drawing assignment given to students was to look at nature and present in small charcoal drawings the outlines they had discovered. A second step was to identify and recreate value, that is, the lightness or darkness of those shapes. His goal was for his students to see how many different nuances of value they could identify from absolute white to complete black. A third element was texture. Campanella wanted to see how his students would translate the variety of

textures they saw, again limited only to charcoal on paper. Next, what lines did they see and how could line, independent of form, be incorporated into their visual translations? The fifth and final element in the Campanella method was color. Here again, the tools of painting were limited, just as the tools of drawing had been circumscribed to only charcoal on paper.

This final element was of particular importance. Campanella had carefully studied the color palette of Rembrandt and the early Analytical Cubist works of Picasso. Through his examination he realized that both artists had consciously limited themselves to a palette of black, white, burnt sienna, and yellow ochre. Campanella's students were taught to look at nature from the context of coolness or warmness of color and to then translate this sensation using this limited palette.

This straight-forward method was designed to direct students how to see nature and from there to see and understand art. These principles of form explain how Campanella was able to influence generations of students. His studio was always open to all, and he was particularly pleased that his teaching method produced amazing results among all of his students, especially non-majors. A measure of the effect of Campanella as a teacher is the accomplishments of his former student, and now internationally known artist, Robert Morris, who openly credits Campanella for his influence on his art.

Campanella's aesthetic message to his students was so important to him that during the years he taught he did very little painting himself. So consumed with the progress and success of his students, Campanella's process of teaching art became the surrogate for the act itself during school terms. It would only be in the summer months in Maine when Vincent Campanella would rediscover his own abstraction in nature. ✱

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1 Vincent Campanella. Personal Interview with Dr. Burton Dunbar, October 15, 1998. Video cassette.



84. *The Meeting* (Portrait of Leah), 1947

# War Interrupts Painting

by Leah Campanella

When I met Vincent in September 1944, there were still several major battles to be fought before World War II finally ended the following year. During the four years of the War, Vincent did not paint. He worked long hours almost every day in a machine shop making parts for the U.S. Army and Navy.

As a child, Vincent had always been interested in mechanical objects and could figure out how to make things. At age eleven, he built a kayak from a sketch in *Popular Mechanics* and actually paddled it in the East River, a very dangerous thing to do. He stitched the canvas on his mother's sewing machine. He was a frequent visitor to the discount tool stores on Canal Street, too.

When the U.S. entered the War, Vincent was of draft age and expected to be drafted. While waiting for his number to be called, he went to work in a machine shop. He started at the lowest level but very soon was supervising and teaching others how to make the parts perfectly to specifications. The firm received a Navy citation for making the hook that grabbed planes as they prepared to land on the aircraft carrier deck. This work earned Vincent a military exemption as well. He loved the work despite the long hours and the accompanying stress.

As the War ended in its European phase, Vincent began to think about his future. There were a number of possibilities open to him to continue doing this work and leading to a more prosperous life. He began to consider the pros and cons of returning to his life as a painter and teacher, and I was asked for my input. For me, Vincent's persona was that of a painter whose whole life from early childhood had been fueled by art school and

exposure to the museums of New York City. He had accomplished a great deal already when the War interrupted his career. He had exhibited all over the country and received many awards. At age seven he received the Wanamaker gold medal in a citywide public school art competition. In later years, he won awards at the San Francisco, Denver and Newark Museums. But he had yet to find an agent for his work and broader recognition as an American Abstractionist painter and for his years on the WPA Art Projects that were a defining period of growth as an artist and a mature person.

I thought he should return to painting and Vincent did so by the summer of 1945. Since our apartment was also Vincent's studio, I soon learned what being the wife of a painter meant. I could not remain anywhere in the apartment when Vincent was working. My very quietest movements, footsteps, even my breathing, disturbed his concentration. During the week, I was attending graduate school at Columbia University so I was out of his way. On weekends it was another matter. He finally exploded and I was banished from the apartment when he needed to work. It was a shock at first and I suffered some mixed feelings. But Vincent's work was my first priority. I had no doubt that he was a good painter and hoped he would receive the recognition he wanted so much. After a very productive year of painting, the Frank Rehn Gallery accepted him. When Vincent brought his paintings for Rehn to evaluate, Vincent was the happiest person to be told, "You are a painter!" Rehn agreed to give him a one-man show. ✨

# Vincent Campanella: Timeline

- 1915 Born January 9th in the Hell's Kitchen area of New York City.
- 1922 Wins Wanamaker Award for best artwork submitted by public school student.
- 1923 Enrolls in the Leonardo da Vinci Art School, which he attends until 1934.
- 1928 Awarded the Life Scholarship and European Scholarship.
- 1930 Graduates Stuyvesant High School at age 15.
- 1931 Enrolls in the National Academy of Design, New York, and attends until 1933.
- 1933 Group exhibition held at Washington Square, New York. Awarded first prize at the Leonardo da Vinci Art School. Group exhibition with the American Watercolor Society.
- 1934 First Solo Exhibition at the 8th Street Playhouse, New York. Group exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum.
- 1935 Employed by the Works Progress Administration, Easel Division until 1940. Solo exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Gallery, New York. Group exhibition at the Roerich Museum, New York.
- 1938 Travels to Rock Springs, Wyoming, for the WPA. Group exhibit at WPA Federal Art Project Galleries in New York.
- 1939 Establishes the Rock Springs Art Association. Group exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the San Francisco Museum, the Denver Museum, the New School for Social Research in New York, and New York World's Fair.
- 1940 Artist-in-residence at the University of Wyoming in Laramie until 1941. Solo exhibition in Wyoming State Tour. Awarded a purchase prize from Carville, Louisiana.
- 1941 Group exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, Art Institute of Chicago, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the San Diego Art Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Denver Museum and the San Francisco Museum. Awarded a purchase prize from San Francisco Museum and an Honorable Mention from the Denver Museum of Art. Exhibits in Casper, Wyoming. Returns to New York City to work in the munitions industry.
- 1942 Group exhibitions at the St. Louis Museum and the San Francisco Museum.
- 1945 Marries Leah Ourlicht on January 6th. Group exhibitions at the Corcoran Art Gallery and the Annual Colorado Springs Exhibition.
- 1946 Begins teaching at Columbia University, School of Painting and Sculpture, New York (until 1949). Solo exhibition at the Frank Rehn Gallery, New York. Group exhibitions at the University of Nebraska, the Denver Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Brooklyn Museum.

- 1947 Solo exhibition traveling to Colorado Springs, Portland Museum of Art, and Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Group exhibitions at the Carnegie Institute, Corcoran Art Gallery, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Seattle Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the San Francisco Museum and the Indianapolis Art Museum.
- 1948 Enrolls at the City College of New York. Group exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago, Wildenstein Gallery, New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum, the University of Nebraska and the University of Illinois.
- 1949 Moves to Kansas City, Missouri, to teach at the Kansas City Art Institute. Solo exhibitions at Kansas City Art Institute and the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. Group exhibitions at the Corcoran Art Gallery, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the University of Nebraska.
- 1950 Becomes one of the founders of the Mid-America Art Association. Solo exhibition at the U.S. Army Command School, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. Group exhibitions at San Francisco Palace Legion of Honor, and the Annual Colorado Springs Exhibition.
- 1951 Solo exhibitions at the Rehn Gallery, New York, and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- 1952 Tura Campanella is born March 19th. Begins teaching at Park College (now University) and creates the art department there. Solo exhibition at the University of Nebraska. Group exhibition at Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Runner-up for the Prix de Rome.
- 1953 David Campanella is born December 29th. Solo exhibition at the University of Kansas City, Missouri (now University of Missouri-Kansas City).
- 1954 Receives BA degree from University of Missouri-Kansas City. Solo exhibitions at the Mulvane Museum, Topeka, Kansas and the Rehn Gallery, New York.
- 1955 Group exhibitions at the Annual Colorado Springs Exhibition, and the Brooklyn Museum.
- 1956 Receives MA degree in Philosophy at University of Missouri-Kansas City. Group exhibition at the "International Watercolor Exhibition," in Washington, D.C. that travels to Paris and Tokyo.
- 1968 Fellowship at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire.
- 1980 After 28 years, retires from Park University with Emeritus distinction.
- 2001 Dies December 23, in Austin, Texas.

This timeline was created with the aid of Tura Campanella Cook and Robert Morris' exhibition catalog, *Modes of Perception: Paintings by Vincent Campanella*, April 5-May 13, 1995. New York, Hunter College, Leubsdorf Art Gallery, 14-15.



85. *Trip to Spain, 1972*

# Checklist

1. *Self-portrait*, 1934  
Charcoal on paper  
19 x 16 inches  
Signed lower right
2. *Self-portrait*, 1956  
Watercolor on paper  
23 x 15 ¾ inches  
Signed lower right
3. *Seated Nude Male*, from series of 15 studies from plaster casts, 1926  
Charcoal on paper  
24 x 19 inches
4. *Study of Thomas Hart Benton*, 1973  
Charcoal on paper  
25 x 19 inches  
Signed at neck
5. *Belvedere Apollo*, from series of 15 studies from plaster casts, circa 1925-1927  
Pencil on paper  
24 x 19 inches
6. *Barberini Faun*, from series of 15 studies from plaster casts, circa 1925-1927  
Pencil on paper  
24 x 19 inches
7. *Mother Embracing Child*, from series of 15 studies from plaster casts, circa 1925-1927  
Charcoal on paper  
24 x 19 inches
8. *The Baker*, 1931  
Oil on canvas  
44 x 26 inches  
Not in exhibition
9. *Untitled (study of female nude)*, 1931  
Oil on canvas  
50 x 26 ¼ inches  
Signed upper right
10. *Astoria Houses*, 1936  
Watercolor on paper  
22 ¾ x 31 inches  
Signed lower left, "To Ted Larson 'Mr. Art School'"
11. *Astoria Houses*, ca. mid-1930s  
Watercolor on paper  
22 ¾ x 31 inches  
Unsigned
12. *Coming Over the Hoback*  
Gouache on paper  
15 x 21 ¾ inches  
Courtesy Sweetwater School District No. 1, Rock Springs, Wyoming; displayed at the Community Fine Arts Center
13. *Vacant Building*, 1934  
Watercolor on paper  
19 ¾ x 24 7/8 inches  
Signed upper right
14. *Small Town Street Scene*, 1934  
Watercolor on paper  
17 5/8 x 21 ½ inches  
Signed upper left
15. *Gloucester Fishermen (Men with Nets)*, ca. 1930s  
Gouache on paper  
15 ¼ x 22 inches  
Signed on reverse
16. *Silos at Night*, 1937  
Watercolor on paper  
22 ½ x 31 inches  
Signed lower right
17. *Keep 'Em Rolling*, 1936  
Oil on paper  
14 ½ x 21 ¾ inches  
Signed on reverse
18. *Riot in Front of a Church*, 1936  
Watercolor on paper  
19 7/8 x 25 inches  
Signed lower right
19. *Silver Stacks*, 1936  
Watercolor on paper  
20 x 26 inches  
Signed upper right
20. *Factory*, 1937  
Oil on canvas  
24 x 30 inches  
Signed lower right

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|------------|---|-----|---|
| 21.        | <p><i>Untitled</i> (town scene), 1940<br/>Gouache and watercolor on paper<br/>15 ½ x 22 ¾ inches<br/>Signed lower left</p>                                      | 30. | <p><i>Rock Springs Canyon/Wyoming Land</i>, ca. 1940s<br/>Oil on canvas<br/>18 x 24 ¼ inches<br/>Signed lower right</p>                     |
| 22.        | <p><i>Dull Day</i>, 1934<br/>Watercolor on paper<br/>11 ¾ x 18 ½ inches<br/>Signed lower left</p>   | 31. | <p><i>Wyoming Cedar</i>, ca. 1940s<br/>Gouache on paper<br/>21 1/8 x 28 inches<br/>Signed lower right</p>                                   |
| 23.        | <p><i>Study for Take Home Pay</i>, ca. 1940s<br/>Charcoal on paper<br/>9 ½ x 7 ¼ inches<br/>Signed lower right center</p>                                       | 32. | <p><i>Loading Logs</i>, ca. 1930s-1940s<br/>Gouache on paper<br/>15 ¾ x 22 ½ inches<br/>Unsigned</p>  |
| 24.        | <p><i>Take Home Pay</i>, 1946<br/>Oil on canvas on board<br/>30 x 24 inches<br/>Signed lower right</p>  | 33. | <p><i>Road Gang</i>, 1945<br/>Oil on canvas<br/>20 x 26 inches<br/>Signed lower left</p>  |
| 25.        | <p><i>Coal Yard</i>, 1940<br/>Gouache on watercolor paper<br/>14 ½ x 21 ½ inches<br/>Signed lower left</p>  | 34. | <p><i>Pilot Butte (Winter)</i>, 1939<br/>Watercolor on paper<br/>10 x 14 ½ inches<br/>Signed lower left</p>                                 |
| 26.        | <p><i>Untitled</i>, ca. late 1930s<br/>Watercolor on paper<br/>15 ¾ x 22 ½ inches<br/>Unsigned</p>  | 35. | <p><i>Quealy Mine</i>, 1939<br/>Watercolor on paper<br/>14 ¾ x 20 1/8 inches<br/>Signed lower left</p>                                      |
| 26.(verso) | <p><i>Untitled</i>, ca. late 1930s<br/>Watercolor on paper<br/>15 ¾ x 22 ½ inches<br/>Unsigned<br/>Not in exhibition</p>  | 36. | <p><i>Untitled</i>, 1968<br/>Watercolor on paper<br/>22 ¼ x 31 1/8 inches<br/>Signed on reverse</p>   |
| 27.        | <p><i>Scene with Houses and Church</i>, 1934<br/>Watercolor on paper<br/>19 7/8 x 24 5/8 inches<br/>Signed upper left</p>                                       | 37. | <p><i>Untitled</i>, from <i>Cathedral Woods Series</i>,<br/>ca. 1950s-1990s<br/>Watercolor on paper<br/>15 ¼ x 22 ¼ inches<br/>Unsigned</p> |
| 28.        | <p><i>Untitled</i> (figures with bottles and a cross)<br/>Gouache and watercolor on paper<br/>11 ½ x 9 ¾ inches<br/>Signed lower left<br/>Not in exhibition</p> | 38. | <p><i>Maine Trees</i>, 1958<br/>Watercolor on paper<br/>22 x 30 1/8 inches<br/>Signed lower left</p>  |
| 29.        | <p><i>Wyoming Town</i>, 1939<br/>Gouache on paper<br/>15 ¾ x 22 ¾ inches<br/>Signed lower left</p>  | 39. | <p><i>Maine Front Yard</i>, 1967<br/>Watercolor on paper<br/>31 x 22 ½ inches<br/>Unsigned</p>  |

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| 40. | <i>Sweetwater</i> , ca. 1950s-1960s<br>Watercolor on paper<br>26 ¾ x 39 ¾ inches<br>Signed lower center      | 51. | <i>Dawn, Rock Springs</i> , ca. 1940s<br>Oil on canvas<br>22 x 38 inches<br>Signed lower right         |
| 41. | <i>Untitled (landscape)</i> , ca. 1960s<br>Watercolor on paper<br>23 x 31 inches<br>Unsigned                 | 52. | <i>Study for Crucifixion</i> , ca. 1940s<br>Charcoal on paper<br>24 x 19 inches<br>Signed lower center |
| 42. | <i>Rock Lines</i> , 1954<br>Watercolor on paper<br>14 ½ x 21 ¾ inches<br>Signed lower right                  | 53. | <i>Crucifixion</i> , circa 1940s<br>Oil on canvas<br>29 x 38 inches<br>Signed lower left               |
| 43. | <i>Monhegan Island</i> , 1954<br>Watercolor on paper<br>15 ½ x 22 ½ inches<br>Signed lower right             | 54. | <i>Rain on Top</i> , 1946<br>Oil on canvas<br>21 x 40 inches<br>Signed lower left                      |
| 44. | <i>Untitled</i> , ca. 1970s<br>Watercolor on paper<br>15 ¾ x 23 inches<br>Signed lower right                 | 55. | <i>Sawtooth</i> , 1945<br>Oil on canvas<br>29 x 38 inches<br>Signed lower right                        |
| 45. | <i>Untitled</i> , ca. 1950s<br>Watercolor on paper<br>15 ½ x 22 5/8 inches<br>Unsigned                       | 56. | <i>Untitled (Wyoming landscape)</i> , ca. 1940s<br>Oil on canvas<br>40 x 30 ¼ inches<br>Unsigned       |
| 46. | <i>Monhegan Coast</i> , ca. 1940s<br>Watercolor on paper<br>10 5/8 x 15 inches<br>Signed lower right         | 57. | <i>Conflict</i> , ca. early 1950s<br>Oil on canvas<br>29 x 38 inches<br>Signed lower left              |
| 47. | <i>Untitled (Maine landscape)</i> , ca. 1940s-1950s<br>Watercolor on paper<br>15 ¾ x 22 ¾ inches<br>Unsigned | 58. | <i>Mother and Child</i> , 1952<br>Oil on canvas<br>30 x 22 inches<br>Signed lower right                |
| 48. | <i>Study for Benton</i> , 1973<br>Oil on board<br>14 x 12 inches<br>Unsigned                                 | 59. | <i>Untitled (abstract)</i> , 1947<br>Watercolor on paper<br>18 x 24 1/8 inches<br>Signed lower right   |
| 49. | <i>Thomas Hart Benton</i> , 1973<br>Oil on canvas<br>34 x 28 inches<br>Signed lower right                    | 60. | <i>Kanda</i> , 1946<br>Oil on canvas<br>27 x 40 inches<br>Signed lower right                           |
| 50. | <i>Untitled (landscape)</i> , ca. 1940s-1960s<br>Oil on canvas<br>36 x 54 ¼ inches<br>Unsigned               | 61. | <i>Agony and Sleep</i> , ca. 1940s-1950s<br>Oil on canvas<br>29 x 38 inches<br>Signed lower left       |

62. *Dawn in Wyoming*, ca. 1940s  
Oil on canvas  
21 x 17 inches  
Signed lower center
63. *The Miners*, 1946  
Oil on board  
29 x 23 ½ inches  
Signed lower left  
Courtesy the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art  
Gift of Blanche Carstenson, 1993.11
64. *Bathroom T*, ca. late 1930s-1940s  
Oil on canvas  
20 x 44 inches  
Unsigned
65. *Windy Afternoon*, 1945  
Oil and egg tempera  
28 x 38 inches  
Signed lower right
66. *Front Street*, 1944  
Oil on canvas  
21 x 40 inches  
Signed lower right
67. *Smokehouse (Reflections on Poker)*, 1945  
Oil on canvas  
28 x 34 inches  
Signed lower left
68. *Bathroom, #4 Mine*, ca. 1940s  
Oil on canvas  
20 x 36 inches  
Signed lower right
69. *Bathroom*, ca. late 1930s-early 1940s  
Oil on board  
16 x 33 ½ inches  
Signed lower right
70. *Self-portrait*, from *Touch of Thought series*,  
ca. 1970s-1980s  
Oil on canvas  
30 ¼ x 20 ¼ inches  
Signed on reverse
71. *Untitled (Portrait of artist Mark Tobey)*, 1950  
Gouache on paper  
23 x 15 ¾ inches  
Signed lower left
72. *Bach*, 1945  
Oil on canvas  
26 x 40 inches  
Signed lower right
73. *Below Rock Springs*, 1947  
Oil on canvas  
20 x 26 inches  
Signed lower right
74. *Self-portrait*, from *Touch of Thought Series*,  
ca. 1940s  
Charcoal on paper  
24 x 13 ½ inches  
Signed lower left
75. *Self-portrait*, from *Touch of Thought Series*,  
ca. early 1950s  
Oil on canvas  
38 x 22 inches  
Signed lower left
76. *Self-portrait*, from *Touch of Thought Series*,  
ca. 1960s-1980s  
Graphite on paper  
35 x 23 inches  
Signed lower right
77. *Cathedral Woods*, ca. 1970s  
Watercolor on paper  
22 5/8 x 15 5/8 inches  
Unsigned
78. *Cathedral Woods*, ca. 1970s  
Watercolor on paper  
23 x 15 ½ inches  
Unsigned
79. *Cathedral Woods*, ca. 1970s  
Watercolor on paper  
23 x 15 ¾ inches  
Signed lower left
80. *White*, 1992  
Oil and tempera on canvas  
28 x 39 ¼ inches  
Unsigned
- 28.(verso) *Study for Red Roan*, ca. 1940s  
Gouache and watercolor on paper  
11 ½ x 9 ¾ inches  
Unsigned

81. *Study for Red Roan*, ca. 1940s  
Watercolor and pastel on paper  
21 x 15 inches  
Unsigned
82. *Strawberry Roan*, ca. 1940s  
Oil on canvas  
38 x 32 inches  
Signed lower left
83. *Study of Two Seated Females*  
(Demonstration Piece), 1962  
Oil on canvas  
65  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 53  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches  
Unsigned
84. *The Meeting* (Portrait of Leah), 1947  
Oil on canvas  
28 x 34 inches  
Signed lower center
85. *Trip to Spain*, 1972  
Watercolor on paper  
20 x 16 inches  
Unsigned
86. *Study of Figure with Book*, late 1930s  
Pen and ink on paper  
19 x 13 inches  
Unsigned
87. *Linear Movement*, 1946  
Watercolor  
15  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 22  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Courtesy The Newark Museum; gift from the  
Childe Hassam Fund of the American Academy  
of Arts and Letters, 1950  
Image not in catalog
88. *Self Portrait at Age 16*, 1931  
Oil on canvas  
30 x 22 inches  
Signed on back  
Image not in catalog
89. *Wyoming Cemetery*  
Oil on canvas  
18 x 24 inches  
Signed lower right  
Image not in catalog

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86. *Study of Figure with Book*, ca. late 1930s

# Colophon

First Edition  
Copyright © 2007 by  
The Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art  
2818 Frederick Avenue  
St. Joseph, Missouri 64506-2903  
(816) 233-7003  
www.albrecht-kemper.org

ISBN: 0-9615372-8-0

Printed in the United States of America.

Catalog oversight and coordination: Ann Tootle

Photography:  
Phillip Geller Photography (Except *The Baker*, #8 and *Coming Over the Hoback*, #12,  
submitted photographs)

Typography, Graphic Design and Printing:  
Western Robidoux Incorporated  
St. Joseph, Missouri

This book is typeset in Optima Roman, Optima Demi, Optima Italic  
and Century Gothic fonts.

Printed in four color process inks on 100# EuroArt Plus Dull Text and  
100# EuroArt Plus Dull Cover.

Cover Image: *Bathhouse*, #4 *Mine*, ca. 1940s

Inside front and back cover: Excerpts from Vincent Campanella's journal

# Da Vinci Art Club.

## First Semi Annual Exhibition.

Name	Addr.
1 Mr. and Mrs. Richard S. Childs	
2 Carlotta Bin	6015 124 Ave. Brooklyn, N.Y.
3 Agostino de Brian	49 Chambers St. N.Y. City
4 Oscar Weinbach	155 E. 73rd St. N.Y.C.
5 Raeph E. Brown	101 Park Ave.
Joseph Della Passione	1224-53 St Bklyn
6 Selby Shell	Hotel Tevere front, Belgia Heights, Bklyn, N.Y.
7	Katonah N.Y.
8 Ralph A. Santoro	277 B'way N.Y.
9 Dominick De Lucia	175 a Nostrand Ave Bklyn 695 Lafayette Ave, Bklyn
10 Albert Pla	260 Kemp St. Bklyn
11 Mrs. Sartorius - Hirst	St Regis Ho
Mrs. Mrs. A. F. DeKee	66 Park Avenue, City
12 Vincent M. Danoff	180 Hempstead Ave. w. Hempstead
13 Joseph Gerli	
14 Evelyn Gerli	
15 Mrs. Joseph Gerli	
16 Pietro Scarcarelli	134 E. 70 St. N.Y.C.
17 Filippo Miranda	559 Grand St Bklyn N.Y. City
18 John T. Bridges	

NOTE Tempura: Yolk + 12 ML water. 3-17-37

#7 Painted with Yolk + 15 ML WATER. Used Egg white (prepared by heating and letting stand overnight) as retouching varnish. In room temp. water all was thick, and so I heated it on steam radiator; result was it was more easily applicable. "Varnish" dry: many parts peeled off taking all paint down to dry oil painting beneath: parts remained intact but well. Conclusion: Perhaps warm albumen correct feeling?

(3-37)

PANELS Gesso 24"x30 3-30-'37. 100 mesh glue. ± 1/8" Beechwood - Casco Gluc. 3-30-'37 1/2 sheet pellets skin glue + 1 1/2 glass (doubling) water: about 100. New Gesso: 2 GLASSES water to 1/2 sheet of R.S. Gluc. Gesso is very did transparent. 4-5-'37

7-'37

#8 Tempura is over crayon "painting". No crayon left showing again

#9 Did not keep to original idea. Changed colors and in places drawn

#10 Crayon with ordinary water color. Egg tempura in few fine places

#11 Used brown eggs which had very thin yolk. Emulsion had more water, dried flat. Dried tempura color was difficult to remove from marble slab. It was very thin and lay bare on table. It could not be seen through. Emulsion of brown egg used on #11 #12 #13.

#12 Last few coats were with thicker emulsion of white egg.

#13 Done completely with thin emulsion. Panel first had another scene painted on it. Cool Stream with exaggerated perspective. After about one (1) week I painted #13 over it. Sky first white and buildings dark; then I reversed them: houses light and sky dark. [such procedure is not advised in egg tempura.]

#14 Used few (about 3) coats of dark color - Noted very little. White of buildings thin glazes over gesso.

#15 Painted panel a cardboard gray - First light yellow - light red - light gray - light yellow - light green - light yellow. Then, painted over two glazes. Whites of applied over gray.

#16 After fixing drawing in India ink proceeded to paint sky light yellow then light red then light gray and gradually blue-green etc. Sky first painted in gray green then yellow then red and into natural color. Ground same as sky. All parts are underpainted in proportion.

ART FRONT appeared in Oct. 1937 Vol. 1 No. 7 P. 18.

#16 About 10 coats of used. Finishing glazes took well [better than previous]. Was able to use much emulsion and little color to give thin glazes over washed out underpainting of different blue colors. Glazes with much emulsion dry shiny. Detail like wires etc. done over prepared painting. Single application for figures. Panel was very smooth before used: It scraped with palette.

8-'37

#17 Used 3 drops of white vinegar in egg. Used several 3 or 4 coats of yellow. then fewer coats of red - vermilion & Alizarin. then more of glazings. About 10 coats in all.

RED PANELS.

Zinc and oil dependent with