Works of Parrish circled by blue pencil in this catalog are being sent to Gallery of Modern Art, New York City, on May 28, 1964 by truck.

Office copy.

MAXFIELD PARRISH
MAY 4–26, 1964
Bennington College, Vermont
CADMUS. 1907. Oil on canvas, 40 x 35”.
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust, Courtesy Robert C. Vose Jr.
CROSS-OVER

As visual communications became more abundant in the 19th and 20th centuries, the possibilities of connections between high art and popular art increased, and so did the number of artists who touched both areas. The most familiar cross-over is, of course, the poster revival of the 90's, in which Art Nouveau "modernity" kept pace with the flatness and linear play of decorative painting (Bonnard's Champagne poster, Toulouse-Lautrec, Steinlein, and others all over Europe and the U.S., including Maxfield Parrish). There was a similar connection between other artists working for reproduction and the art of the Academy or the Salon. What happened here is that the technical finesse and the traditional themes of European high art entered the mass market in book illustration and cover paintings for magazines. (Typical of this phase are Parrish's mythological paintings, with his scrupulous accounting of detail in a spatially coherent whole.) Thus, around the turn of the century, both so-called advanced and so-called academic art reached an enlarged public. The boundaries of the personal possession and the gallery viewing of art were ruptured.

INVISIBLE ART WORLD

Parrish lives at Cornish, New Hampshire, not in alienation from society but simply in retirement (he is over 90). The image of the artist as the hero of his own work, in secession from "life as we know it," does not fit Parrish, whose work has always been intended for mass consumption. On the other hand, Parrish was never an anonymous commercial artist, invisible behind his product. On the contrary, the recognition of personal authorship (a basic requirement of art since the Renaissance) has always been central to the enjoyment of Parrish's work, as when reproductions of his work were reprinted and sold out of their original commercial context.

As visual communications have increased, definitions of art have tended to get stricter and more protective, as if critics and theorists of art were on the defensive. In fact, the present situation needs to be met by the description of a more varied, rather than of a more narrow, art scene than in the past. Parrish is a central figure of an invisible art world (known only to the public), which exists parallel to the
high art distributed in galleries, museums, and art publications. It includes book and magazine illustrations, advertising, murals, all that art, in fact, which has public currency but not elite attention.

**TARGET ART**

Parrish's art, like that of the invisible art world generally, is not undertaken in a spirit of self-generated activity. On the contrary, the works exist to meet the conditions of particular occasions (a cover for *Collier's*, an ad for Mazda, a painting for a calendar). The energy of the artist is applied to satisfying the program of the commission which sets the limit of the work. This kind of painting, which might be called target art, requires (1) a functional sense of work, which Parrish certainly has in his rationality and patience, and (2) a special knack of image-making. The imagery of target art, if it is to hit, needs to condense the mood, expectations, and memories of a large audience, which the artist also shares. Common experience is the basis of target art, rather than the definition of an artist's uniqueness and originality.

The functional limits of target art do not, of course, preclude the artist from thinking and feeling the way he paints. In Parrish's case, for example, his privately-intended small-scale works (lent by various members of the Purves family) show him playing in a relaxed way with elements similar to those he organizes more fully in commissioned works (shown in the paintings lent by the Betsey P. C. Purves Trust and by other collectors). His art is full of European reminiscences, for example, and his attitude ranges from lyrical reverie on the remote past to a tougher imagery of the past inhabited by characters as funny as ourselves. This complex of images met a general interest in America in the early 20th century (which had ended by the 20's); it was, also to judge from the way Parrish stayed with it, through many variations, a personal pleasure of the artist's. Thus the paintings had a public and a personal reference. It is not enough to dismiss all this as "illustration" or "literature," and argue that high art is purely visual. Even abstract art has an iconography and Parrish fixes his observations, evocations, and statements in a visual form of great precision, delicacy, and pictorial wit.

**LAWRENCE ALLOWAY**
ARITHMETIC. 1912. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 22 x 16".
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust, Courtesy Robert C. Vose Jr.
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<th>Number</th>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Figure. 1900. Ink on paper, 11¼ x 11½&quot;. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Boar's Head. 1904. Oil on paper mounted on panel, 26 x 24&quot;.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Cadmus. 1907. Oil on canvas, 40 x 33&quot;.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Fountain of Pirene. 1907. Oil on canvas, 40 x 33&quot;.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>The Lantern Bearers. 1908. Oil on canvas, 40 x 33&quot;.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Father Time. c. 1908. India ink and crayon on board, 16 x 19&quot;.</td>
<td>Dale Purves, Philadelphia.</td>
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Mrs. Phillipe A. Thurneyssen, Lakeville, Connecticut.

22. Christmas. 1909. 16 x 21½".
John C. Purves, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

23. Fisherman, 1909. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 20 x 16".
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.

24. Tourist. 1909. Oil or watercolor on paper board, 22 x 16".
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.

25. Man with Apple. 1909. Oil or watercolor on paper board, 22 x 16".
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.

26. Present Arms. 1909. Oil on cardboard, 21 x 15¾".
Austin Purves, Litchfield, Connecticut.

27. Study for Scene from *The Tempest*: Conspiracy Scene, 1909. 15½ x 15¾".
Ralph A. Powers, Montville, Connecticut.

28. Study for Scene from *The Tempest*: The Yellow Sands Outside Cave. 1909. 15½ x 15¾".
Ralph A. Powers, Montville, Connecticut.

29. Study for Scene from *The Tempest*: The Big Magic Scene. 1909. 16 x 16".
Ralph A. Powers, Montville, Connecticut.

30. Griselda. 1910. Oil on canvas, 40 x 33½".
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.

31. Idiot. 1910. Oil, India ink on paper panel, 16 x 22½".
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.

32. Cut-out Letter. 1911. Ink and watercolor, 12¾ x 21".
Austin Purves, Litchfield, Connecticut.

33. Arithmetic. 1912. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 22 x 16½".
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.

34. Toyland. c. 1912. Oil on canvas, 24 x 28¾".
Pierre Purves, Washington, D. C.

35. Guestbook of A. M. Purves. 1913. Varnished watercolor, 8 x 10½".
Mrs. Edmund R. Purves, Washington, D. C.

36. The Millpond. 1945. 22½ x 18¾".
Ralph A. Powers, Montville, Connecticut.

**UNDATED WORKS**

37. Pan. Oil on canvas, 40 x 33½".
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.

38. Sing a Song for Sixpence. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 20 x 8½".
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.

39. Rocks (fragment). Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 5 x 7½".
Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.
42. Penmanship. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 16 x 22". $1,000. Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.
44. Artist. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 20 x 16". $1,000. Betsey P. C. Purves Trust.
45. Hunt Farm. Oil on board, 22½ x 18½". Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.
46. Deep Woods: Moonlight. 20 x 17". $2,375. Mr. and Mrs. John D. Merriam, Boston.
47. By the Sea. 10 x 23". $3,000. Mr. and Mrs. John D. Merriam, Boston.
48. Balloon Man. 20 x 16". $1,000. Mrs. A. Eustacia Grandin, Dedham, Massachusetts.
49. Sign Painter. 20 x 16". $1,000. Mrs. A. Eustacia Grandin, Dedham, Massachusetts.
50. Mr. Pickle. Mounted paper cut-out, 7½ x 11½". (to be delivered by Mr. Fiske personally). Mrs. Phillipe A. Thurneyssen, Lakeville, Connecticut.
51. Mounted Policeman. Mounted paper cut-out, 12 x 12". (to be delivered by Mr. Fiske personally). Mrs. Faneuil Adams Jr., Bogliasco, Italy.

In a few cases it was not possible to check size or medium.

Acknowledgements

The Art Department is grateful to all the collectors who kindly loaned works to this exhibition. Special thanks are due to Mr. Austin Purves for his untiring help in the preparation of the exhibition, to Mr. Robert C. Vose Jr. for supplying information, to Miss Glynn Rudich for her research on Parrish, and to Miss Alice Hildreth for her work on the catalogue.