

GARSTON

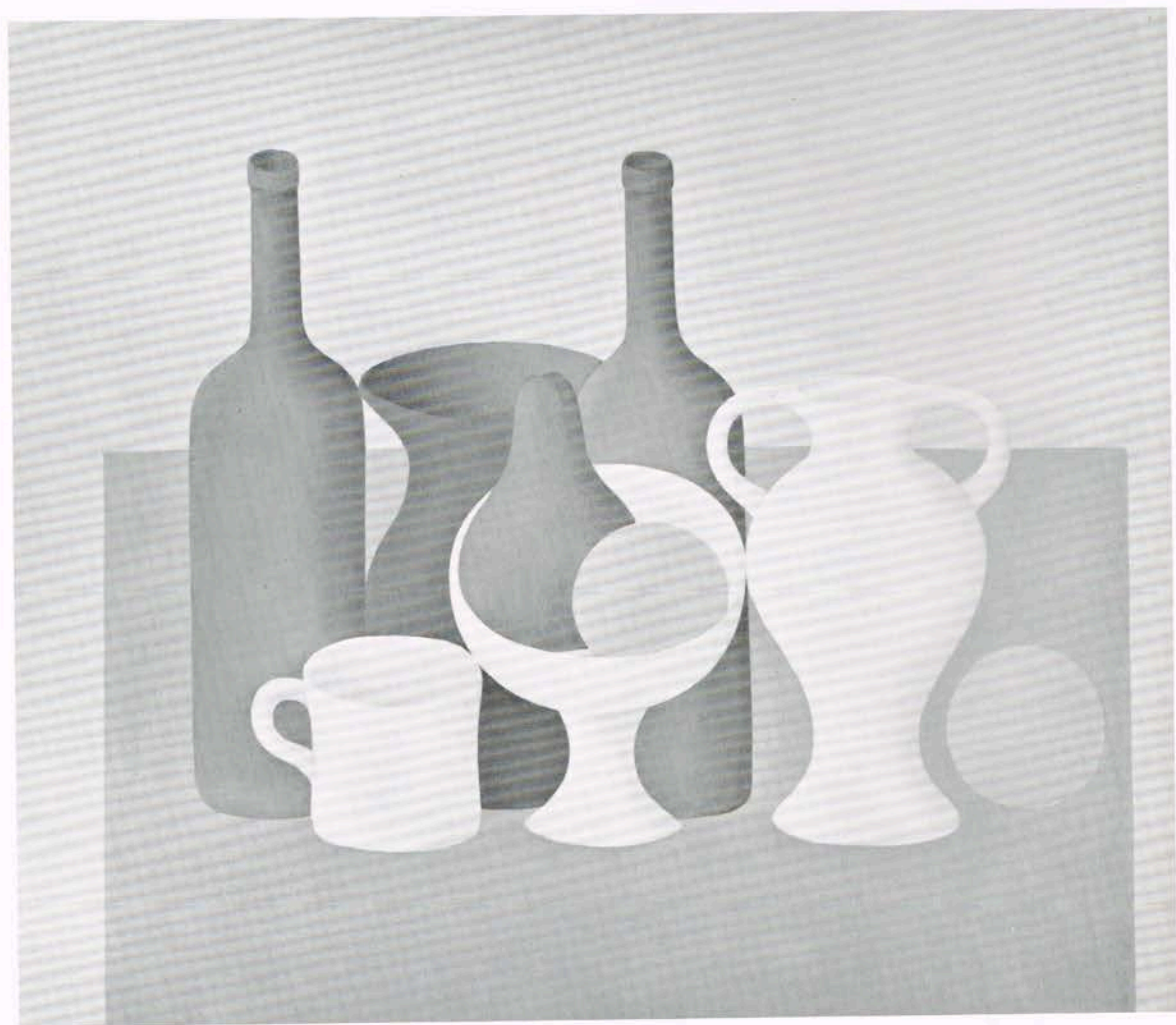
cover:
ORANGES
ink 6" x 6"



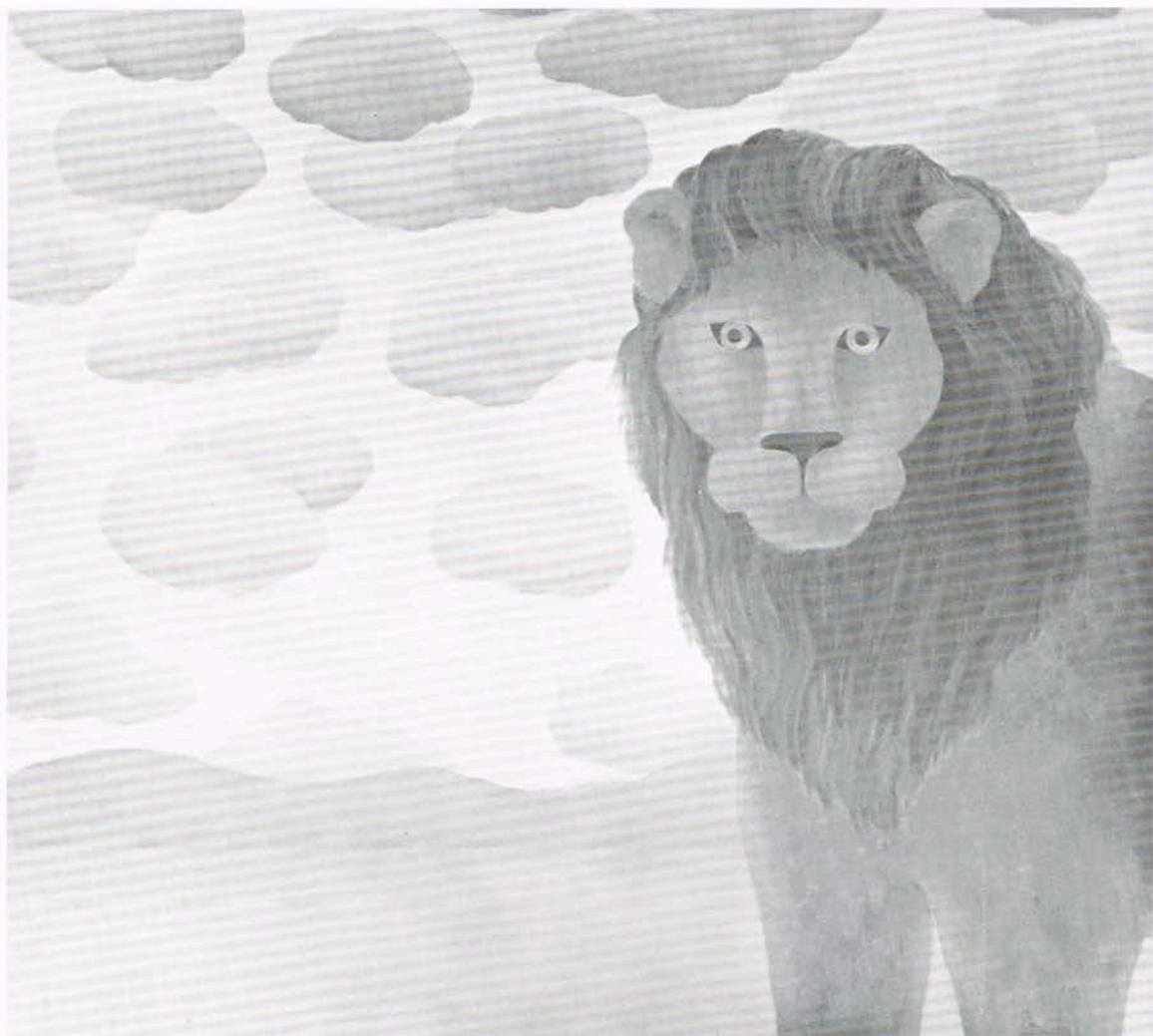
You are cordially invited
to meet the artist
at the opening
of the exhibition
Saturday 1 May 1976
from 6 to 9 pm.



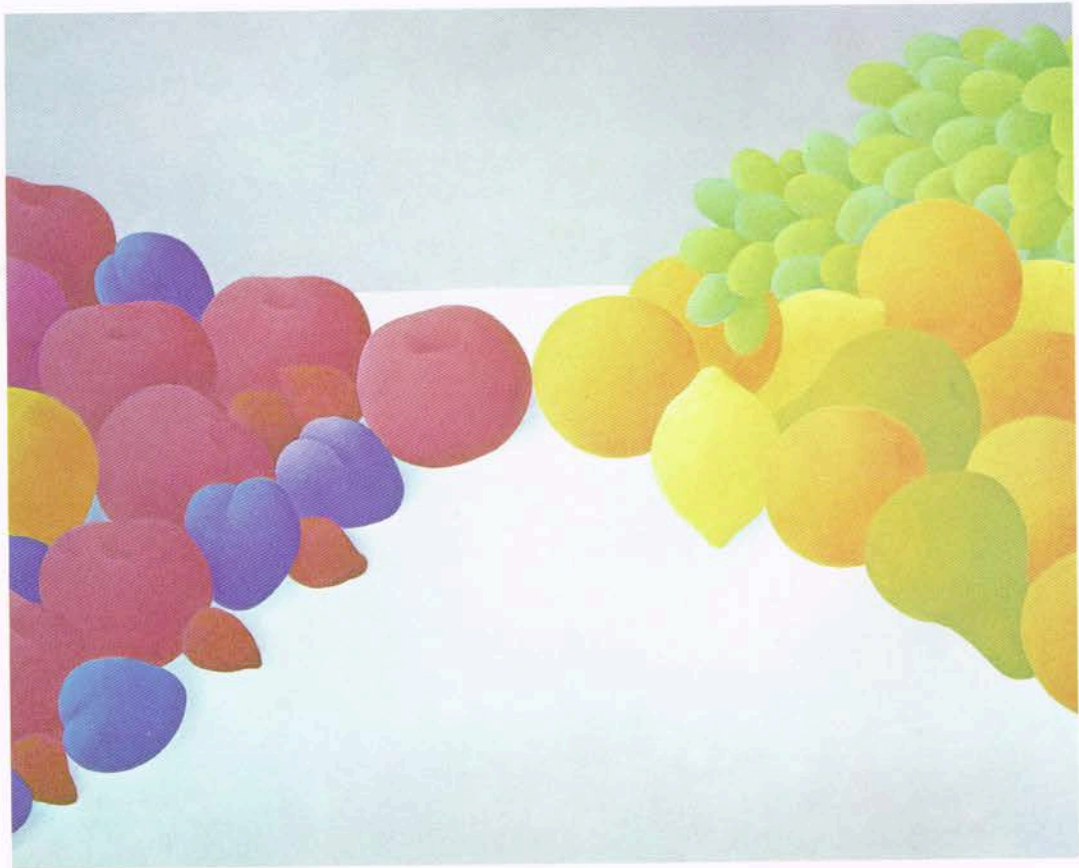
GEORGE WASHINGTON AT VALLEY FORGE
oil 48" x 60"



CLASSICAL
oil 42" x 36"



LION IN SUMMER
oil 48" x 42"



STILL-LIFE OFF THE SQUARE
oil 44" x 36"



BLACKFOOT INDIAN
oil 40" x 40"

GARSTON

Recent Paintings

Colors have a beauty of their own which must be preserved, as one strives to preserve tonal quality in music. It is a question of organization and construction which is sensitive to maintaining this beautiful freshness of color.

— Matisse on Art,
"The Role and Modalities of Color"

Matisse, the acknowledged master of color in the twentieth century, was instrumental in advancing the new awareness of color that began with the impressionists and developed through numerous permutations until, today, we speak of color in art as none of our grandparents would have understood it. Every artist who concerns himself with color must deal with Matisse, with his ideas about color as well as with the paintings. In the above excerpt are simple but profound notions which bear directly upon an understanding of the works of Gerald Garston.

A Garston painting, however casual or relaxed it may appear (a scattering of fruit on a table, a flotilla of random clouds in a summer sky) is built upon a rational and geometric structure. Within this the scheme of color, while not departing from the visible world (no expressionistic distortions of color, e.g. green faces or blue apples), assumes an independent life nurtured by its organization on the canvas. The painting expresses

through its structure and in its idealized color and forms a reaching toward a platonic world.

And what a world that is — an environment of stillness, grace, pleasure, perfection; devoid of excesses, composed of measured space, echoing with the music of an ordered mind. Such a work as **Classical** (p.2) exemplifies all these attributes; its cool color (blues, greys, and whites counter-pointed by golden oranges) evokes Aegean skies and ancient temples; while its structure with carefully considered intervals of straight and curved lines, the play of rounded against flat forms, bespeaks a rationality that welcomes the viewer like a haven in the stormy disorder of the world we live in.

Less orthodox than **Classical** but equally geometric is the construction of **Still-Life Off the Square** (p. 4). The arrangement, two groups of fruit in diagonal alignment, is totally original, yet free from any sense of trickery. With calculated wit Garston divides the canvas into near-equal quadrants of which two are the triangular placements of fruit that oppose each other. The apexes of the triangles — an apple and an orange — touch like the fingertips of Michelangelo's God and Adam; the excitement generated thereby is not religious but aesthetic, a tribute to the brilliance and daring of the composition. By squinting at the work, the viewer becomes aware of the greater weight of the left triangle of fruit; but it is shrewdly set off by the light tones of the other triangle and the grey of the wall, which are so close in value that they are read as a single larger unit. The fragment of white table above the tangent fruit and the single stray orange at left in the pile of apples and plums function like buttons which lock their corresponding

triangles in place. The predominantly warm color range unifies the painting in an envelope of light of extraordinary delicacy.

Garston clearly enjoys performing his successful balancing act between figurative and abstract painting. The formal qualities of painting, though important to him, are never allowed to rule out his sensibility. Rather, they are a vital discipline voluntarily assumed to free him to explore new ways of seeing traditional subjects as well as to refine more and more his sensitivity to color and its organization.

One would be hard pressed to think of another landscape in the history of art that takes the diamond form of **Penamaquin River** (p. 9) — and in fact, there is no such precedent. Aside from its shape, however, one is struck by the simplicity of its statement. Seldom has a landscape been so completely reduced to its essentials without losing the interest of incident. The artist's brushmarks texture the seemingly flat areas. The arcs which form the sandy foreground (the three shades suggesting both light and the qualities of wet and dry sand) are stabilized with their center on the vertical axis of the diamond, while the bright arcs of sky are playfully eccentric. Against those arcs, the firm horizontal center-line states: "*I am a landscape.*"

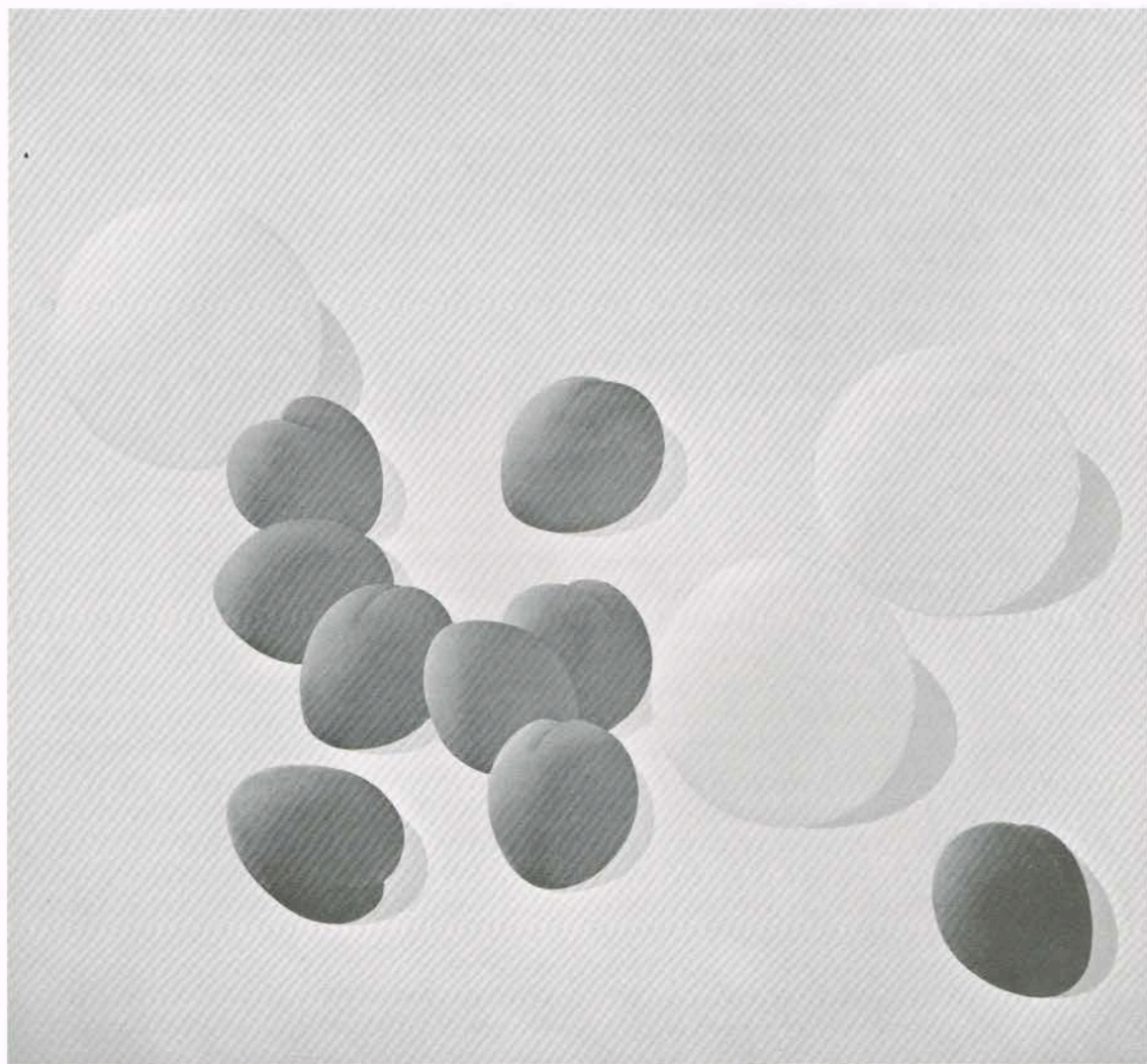
If **Penamaquin River** comes closest to pure abstraction (though it can be argued that certain of the still-life works approach it) then **George Washington at Valley Forge** (p. 1) surely stands at the opposite extreme. While Garston succeeds in idealizing the human

form (see **Blackfoot Indian**, p. 5 and **Spring**, p. 10) it is quite another matter for him to render it as pure form in the manner of his still-life objects and landscapes. And the reason for this is that the artist will not commit the act of depersonalization that would transform his figures into *mere* shape and color.

Yet Garston takes as many liberties with the figure as, say, Ingres did to emphasize the graceful if anatomically incorrect lines of his odalisques. Garston bends the first President into the hieratical Egyptian pose (frontal torso, feet in profile) and twists his arm to conform to the spiral movement (like the cross-section of a chambered nautilus) beginning with his right hand and ending at the hem of his cape. Confining the warm colors to accents of yellow on the uniform and the single red "W" of the vest, Garston radiates from this center the cool folds of the lavender cape. The snow drifts repeat those folds, as the shape of the hat is echoed in the boot tops, as the edges of the cape are resonated in the scalloped silhouette of the trees. The painting is constructed so all its parts may communicate with each other and exist in harmony with each other.

One can speak without too much difficulty of color and structure and wit in a painter's work, but the great attraction of Garston's paintings cannot be defined by analysis. They are, in the end, what art in a simpler time was supposed to be: an embodiment of the ideals of humanity in all its complexity. With his devotion to order, harmony, and beauty Garston keeps alive the hope that art may still aspire to such an existence.

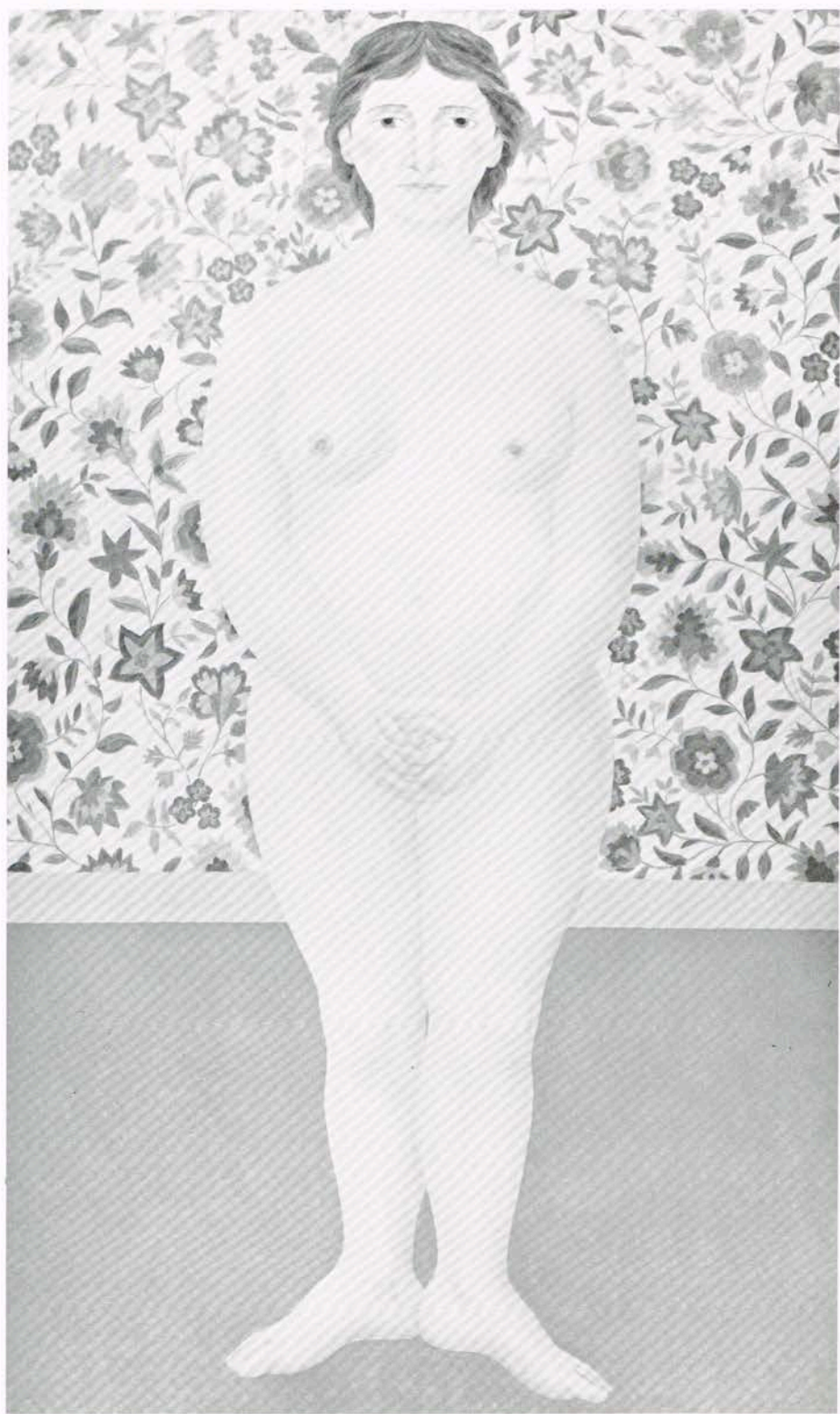
— P.T.N.



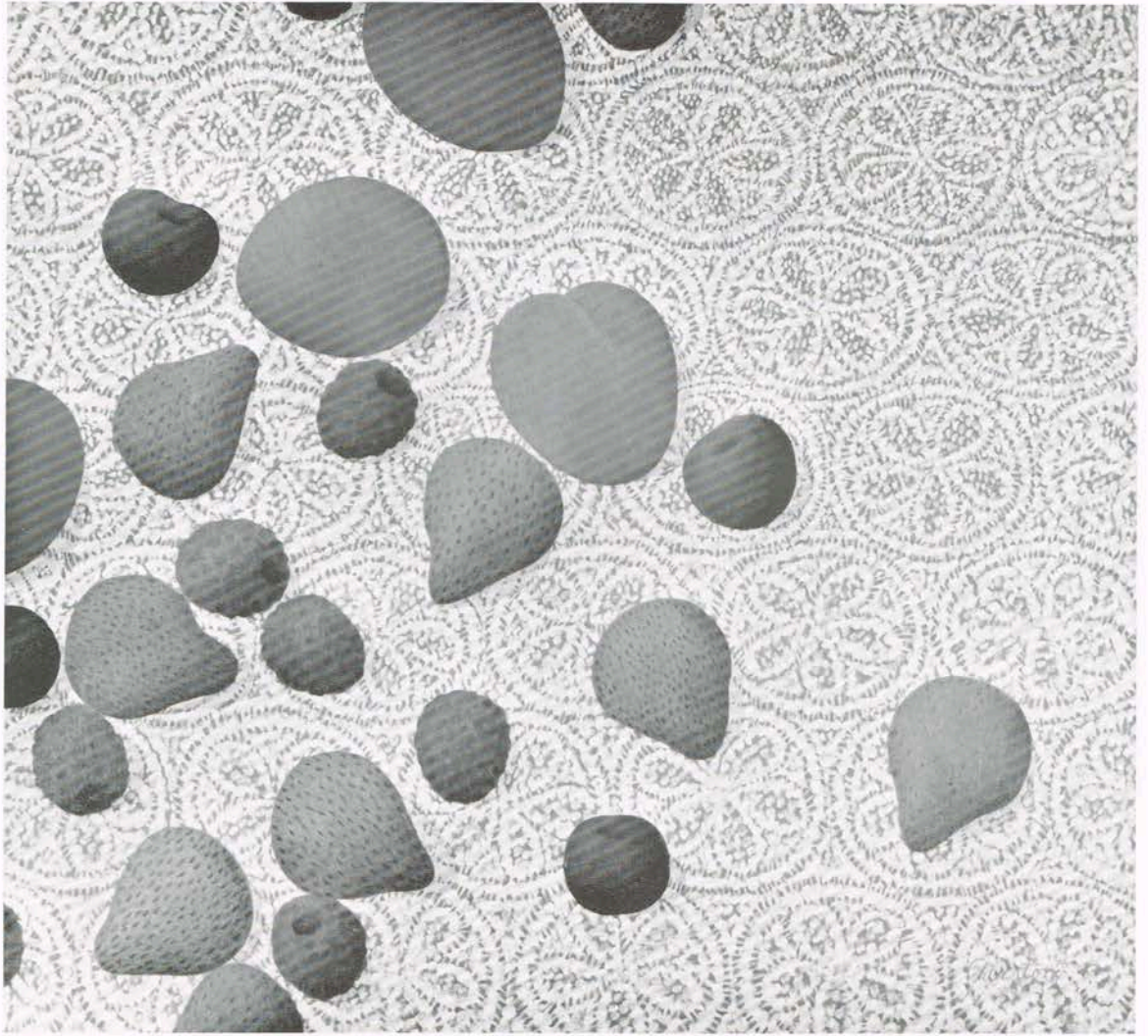
JAZZ THEME #1
oil 44" x 40"



PENAMAQUIN RIVER
oil 36" x 36"



SPRING
oil 44" x 66"



RASPBERRIES, STRAWBERRIES, CHERRIES, AND PLUMS
oil 40" x 36"



MYTHOLOGICAL HORSE
oil 60" x 36"

GERALD GARSTON

born: May 3, 1925

studied: Johns Hopkins University,
Baltimore, Maryland
Student of painter / sculptor Karl Metzler,
Baltimore
Student of painter Louis Boucher
and printmaker Harry Sternberg,
Art Student League, New York
Student of Josef Albers, Yale University

One-man exhibitions

- 1951 860 Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland
- 1954 Gallery 77, New Haven, Connecticut
- 1962 Poindexter Gallery, New York City
- 1964 Greenross Gallery, New York City
- 1965 Ross-Talalay Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut
- 1966 John Slade Ely House, New Haven, Connecticut
- 1967 Graham Gallery, New York City
- 1970 Winfisky Gallery, Salem State College,
Massachusetts
- 1970, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1976
Pucker/Safrai Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts
- 1973 Kendall Gallery, Wellfleet, Massachusetts

Other exhibitions

- 1960 Betty Parsons Gallery, New York City
- 1964 Stable Gallery, New York City
- 1965 A.M. Sachs Gallery, New York City
- 1966 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
- 1967 "Sport in Art," Pan-Am Building, New York City
- 1968 Quinnipiac College, Hamden, Connecticut

Museum collections

- Fogg Museum, Harvard University
- Los Angeles County Museum
- William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City,
Missouri
- New Britain Museum of American Art, Connecticut
- Philadelphia Museum of Art
- Rose Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass.
- Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut
- Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts

pucker/safrai gallery

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