

# **THE ANDREW WYETH GALLERY**

## **Andrew Wyeth**

Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009) is recognized as one of the most important American artists of the twentieth century. For more than seven decades he painted the regions of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, where he was born, and mid-coast Maine, where he spent most of his summer months.

Wyeth was the youngest of five children of famed illustrator N. C. Wyeth (1882-1945). At age 15 he began several years of intensive artistic training under his father,

who encouraged Andrew to work as both an illustrator and painter. His career as a watercolorist was launched in 1937, when the artist's first one-man show at Macbeth Gallery in New York drew critical acclaim.

In addition to being skillful at watercolor, Andrew Wyeth became a master of egg tempera, a medium introduced to him in 1936 by his brother-in-law, artist Peter Hurd (1904-1984). Egg tempera is an ancient painting method that blends dry pigments with egg yolk and distilled water. In contrast to the spontaneity and translucency of watercolor, tempera is a time-consuming process of

mixing and painting in layers that yields opaque, lustrous color and richly varied surfaces.

Wyeth was an astute observer who once noted that meaning “is hiding behind the mask of truth” in his work. He freely manipulated his subjects, transforming them in order to evoke memories, ideas, and emotions. Through a process of reduction and selection, he created mysterious undercurrents in his landscapes, interiors, and portraits.

This gallery features a changing selection of important watercolors and

tempera paintings created throughout Andrew Wyeth's long career. These works are drawn from the Brandywine River Museum of Art's extensive holdings, as well as key loans from the Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection and other private individuals.

## **Lydia Archie and the Black Community in Chadds Ford**

Located nearby at the corner of Ring and Bullock Roads in Chadds Ford are the remains of an early 19th-century octagonal structure that was once the anchor of an active Black community. Erected in 1839 by Quakers, the building served as the Bullock School until 1891 when it was purchased by Reverend Lydia Archie (1844–1932) who established a church and cemetery on the site. Reverend Archie, an ordained preacher in the African Union Methodist Protestant Church (AUMP), was a vibrant, inspiring speaker who prior to her move to Chadds

Ford had been preaching in churches in Wilmington, Delaware. She was lauded in local newspapers as one of the most dynamic and impressive preachers in the AUMP Church. By 1920, Reverend Archie had gained further recognition and was described in one publication as the most widely known female preacher in the AUMP Church.

Signifying Reverend Archie's central role in the Chadds Ford church, congregants from the surrounding Black community, as well as those parishioners from Kennett Square and West Chester, referred to the Church as Mother Archie's. Soon after her

death in 1932, the congregation disbanded, and the Church fell into disrepair.

The Delaware County government took possession of the Church and its adjoining cemetery due to back taxes in 1944 and the property was disposed of in a Sheriff's sale. Ten years later, the new owner, John G. Bechtel, donated the property to Birmingham Township (now Chadds Ford Township), as a proposed site for a town hall and administrative offices. Some members of the Black community, including Adam Johnson (whose portrait is included in this gallery), argued in court against the plan. While unsuccessful, the group was

able to prevent the cemetery from being disturbed. However, Reverend Archie's home was demolished, and the Church itself was largely razed. Ultimately the Township decided against construction on the site—instead renovating nearby Turners Mill, once one of Howard Pyle's studios and the site of his summer school. Today the Township maintains the remnants of Mother Archie's Church and cemetery as a historic landmark. Johnson, who died in 1978, seems to have been the last of the parishioners living close by the Church. It may be that some former members migrated to the Spring Valley African



Methodist Episcopalian Church in nearby Concord.

Throughout his career, Andrew Wyeth tirelessly painted the people and landscapes of Chadds Ford he encountered and interacted with in daily walks, including members of the Black community then living near Mother Archie's Church and elsewhere in Chadds Ford. His sketches of the Church date from as early as 1932 when Wyeth was 15 years old. The first section of this gallery includes examples of his paintings and drawings depicting residents of that community from 1934

through 1964. Though limited, Wyeth's is one of the only visual records of the area.

This text panel is the second in a series presenting research on Reverend Lydia Archie and the Black community of Chadds Ford. Further inquiry is underway on the subject, including on the people Wyeth portrayed. The Museum acknowledges with great appreciation the research contributions made by the following individuals: Ted Goldman, author of "Mother Archie's Church of Chadds Ford: Its People; Its Secrets; Its Beauty" (Published online at

<http://www.tgoldmanphotography.com/>;

Jonathan Hoppe, Digital Asset Librarian,  
Philadelphia Museum of Art; Carla  
Westerman, author of *Chadds Ford:  
History, Heroes and Landmarks* (2003);  
Donald McKay; and Philip Merrill, CEO and  
Founder of Nanny Jack & Co.

## *Graveyard at Archies, 1934*

Oil on canvas

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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The cemetery was established by Lydia Archie for the Church's parishioners sometime after 1891. According to a 1933 Works Progress Administration survey, there are 79 graves on the site. A scattering of tombstones still stands.

## *Burial at Archies, 1934*

Oil on canvas

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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Wyeth described himself being carried away with drama in this composition. Mother Archie's cemetery was much closer to the Church than it appears here. Though he is often referred to as a realist painter, Wyeth freely manipulated perspective and

detail in his work. Here, and in *John Lawrence Loading Fence Rails* (also in this gallery), the influence of artist Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975) is evident in the steep perspective and curvature of the landscape that is repeated in the curved outline of the group. Wyeth exaggerates the open space around the burial plot, creating a poignant atmosphere around the group of mourners.

*Mother Archie's Church Study, 1945*

Watercolor on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



## **David Lawrence (1917-1985)**

David Lawrence was Wyeth's closest childhood friend in Chadds Ford. He was the son of John Lawrence (portrayed elsewhere in the gallery) and grew up in a house just adjacent to Mother Archie's Church on Bullock Road. As young boys, Lawrence and Wyeth played games such as war and Robin Hood, often borrowing from the props and costumes that filled N. C. Wyeth's studio. Lawrence and his family moved away about 1938. According to his military registration card of 1940, David Lawrence was living in Pottstown at the time. He and Wyeth seemed to have had



only intermittent communication as adults.  
In a letter from Lawrence to the artist  
dated August 11, 1981, he describes  
himself as paving driveways and working  
occasionally for Amtrak.

## *Black Hunter*, 1938

Tempera on hardboard panel

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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In Wyeth's portraits, his sitters are often depicted with their eyes averted in some way, so it is remarkable that David Lawrence's gaze is so direct and unflinching in this work. Lawrence is posed here in the guise of a hunter, holding a rifle that Wyeth

recounted was left behind by a hunter whom his father chased off the family's property.

The vibrant, colorful palette and the composition—which places the subject in front of a landscape—parallels work by N. C. Wyeth from the same time period.

Andrew Wyeth's palette would become more subdued in the 1940s, the result of his increasing confidence in his own instincts about color.

## **William “Bill” Loper (1874-1944)**

William Loper lived just across the road from Mother Archie’s Church and was part of a large Chadds Ford family. He was also the first person from the Black community that Wyeth painted in 1932. Loper, along with his brother Ben, became frequent subjects. William Loper lost one of his hands in a farming accident and was fitted with a prosthetic hook that enabled him to continue with farm work.

## *Bill Loper with Big Tree Trunk, 1934*

Oil on canvas

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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Here Wyeth creates a dynamic composition through his handling of the rapidly shifting clouds and the transient effects of light and color. The artist painted in oils at the beginning of his career, producing works like this that were lush in

color with loose, fluid brushstrokes. These qualities would contrast greatly with the finely detailed brushwork of his paintings in tempera, a medium he turned to several years after this work. He would later remark that he moved away from oil because he did not care for the thickness of oil paint or the bluntness of the brushes.

*Old Bill Loper*, 1934

Oil on canvas

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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According to Wyeth, he had originally included Loper's prosthetic hook in this composition, but his father, N. C. Wyeth, literally wiped it from the canvas, arguing that its presence detracted from its strength. This bothered Andrew Wyeth for

over 50 years and in the 1980s he revisited the subject of Bill Loper—this time including his prosthetic hook—as one of small group of Ring Road residents in *Snow Hill* (also in this gallery).



## **John Lawrence (1886-1970)**

John Lawrence and his family lived in a house on Bullock Road adjacent to Mother Archie's Church when Wyeth painted him in the 1930s. He was the father of David Lawrence, Wyeth's childhood friend. The family moved away from Chadds Ford around 1938. John Lawrence's military registration card of 1942 indicates that by then he was working and living on a farm in nearby West Chester.

*John Lawrence Loading Fence Rails, 1934*

Oil on canvas

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



When Wyeth first began painting the men of the Black community in Chadds Ford he often portrayed them doing physical labor. At this early point in his career Wyeth already excels in capturing a solitary moment in time.

## **Adam Johnson (1899-1978)**

Adam Johnson was a recurring subject of Wyeth's for almost 40 years, beginning in the mid-1930s. He and his wife Etta lived in a house adjacent to Mother Archie's Church, having purchased it after the previous occupants—John and David Lawrence (also Wyeth subjects)—moved out of Chadds Ford. Johnson worked as a groundskeeper for local properties throughout the area. He also kept a modest farm himself, raising chickens and pigs.

After Lydia Archie's death in 1932 and the subsequent closure of the Church, Johnson took it upon himself to become a

caretaker for the building and cemetery. He was one of the leading plaintiffs in a 1955-56 battle against the Chadds Ford Township's plans to build a town hall on the church property. Although the Court of Common Pleas ultimately ruled in favor of the township, upholding their right to build a town hall, Johnson and the other plaintiffs were successful in protecting the cemetery from being disturbed. The plan to build a town hall on the church site was abandoned at some point in the decades that followed.

*Fox Grass Below Adam's*, 1934

Oil on canvas

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



## *The Pump, 1952*

Watercolor on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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Adam Johnson's home—seen here with Johnson in the foreground—was often included in Andrew Wyeth's depictions of the area around Mother Archie's Church, where Johnson was a self-appointed caretaker. The artist repeatedly depicted

the many sheds and outbuildings that lined Johnson's property, recording their rustic geometry in a number of works.

# *Adam Study*, 1963

Pencil on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection

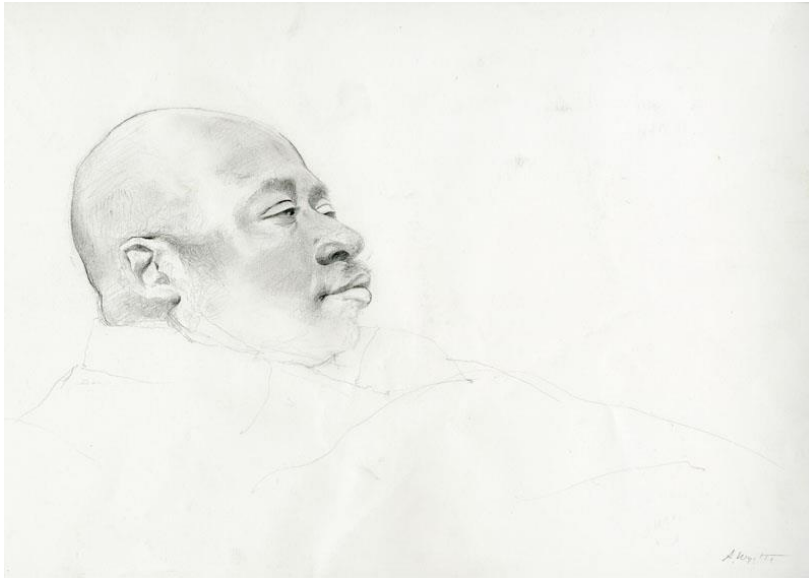




*Head of Adam, 1959*

Pencil on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



*Adam, 1963*

Tempera on panel

Gift of Anson McC. Beard, Jr., 2002



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Although Andrew Wyeth had long-term relationships with many of his models—accounts of which Wyeth shared in autobiographical publications and oral histories—the specifics of the manner in which Wyeth compensated each of his

models is not fully recorded. By the time Wyeth made this portrait, he had known and painted farmer Adam Johnson for 30 years. In one oral history, Wyeth recounted being captivated by Johnson's imposing figure and his steady, confident bearing. The sharp angles with which Wyeth renders the makeshift structures in the background contrast with the gently rounded curve of the distant hill. Wyeth conveys Johnson's commanding presence by placing him in the center of the composition, where the vivid blue of his jacket stands out against the earth-toned palette.

## *Adam Study*, 1963

Watercolor on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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This watercolor demonstrates Andrew Wyeth's practice of exploring a range of viewpoints and compositions as he worked toward the final composition. While the large tempera titled *Adam* clearly centers Johnson as the subject against the

backdrop of his property, this spontaneous study melds the model's form with the planes of the architecture. Johnson, his back turned, nearly disappears, while emphasis is placed, instead, on a brightly colored broom.

## **Willard Snowden (1926-1987)**

Willard Snowden became a long-time model for Wyeth after knocking on the artist's studio door seeking work in the early 1960s. Wyeth gave him handyman-type jobs and asked him to model as well. The artist then allowed Snowden to move into part of his studio where he lived until about 1968. He posed for Wyeth, cared for the studio, and did work for the Wyeth family at their home. Snowden became known to the public through Wyeth's paintings but the picture that emerged of him as a drifter is limiting and tells only a portion of his story.

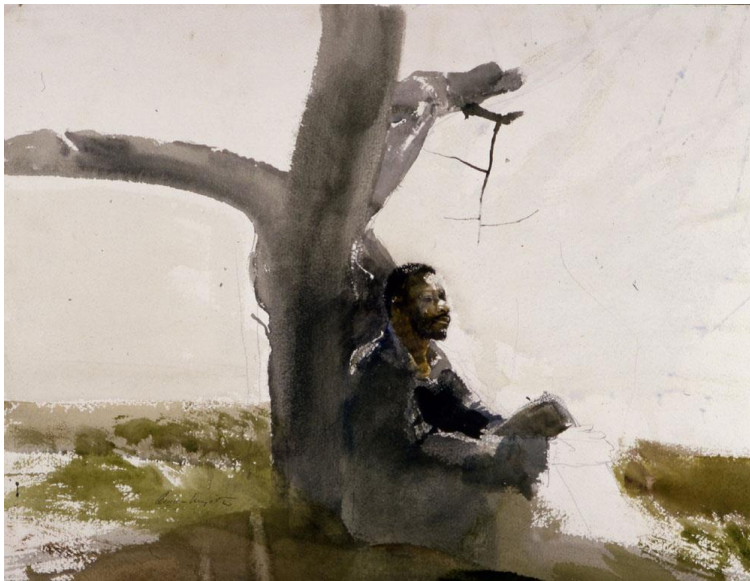
Snowden was born in Chadds Ford and graduated from West Chester High School in 1945. He spent a year at sea with the United States Maritime Services, receiving training as a mechanic before joining the Army in 1946. After his discharge in 1947, Snowden worked as a mechanic in Chadds Ford. He married in 1951 but that ended in divorce. Beyond his association with Wyeth, not much is known of his life after 1951.

Snowden spent his last years at the Chatham Acres nursing home in West Grove, where he died in 1987. He was buried at Indiantown Gap National Cemetery with full military honors.

*Family Tree Study, 1964*

Watercolor on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection





## *Studio Window Study, 1966*

Watercolor and pencil on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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Andrew Wyeth frequently included the motif of open windows in his work. Here Wyeth uses the light from the window to illuminate the top half of Willard Snowden as he stands in a darkened room. Cross-armed, Snowden stares directly at the

viewer conveying a confidence and self-awareness not always felt in other portrayals of the man.

## *Monologue Study, 1965*

Pencil on paper

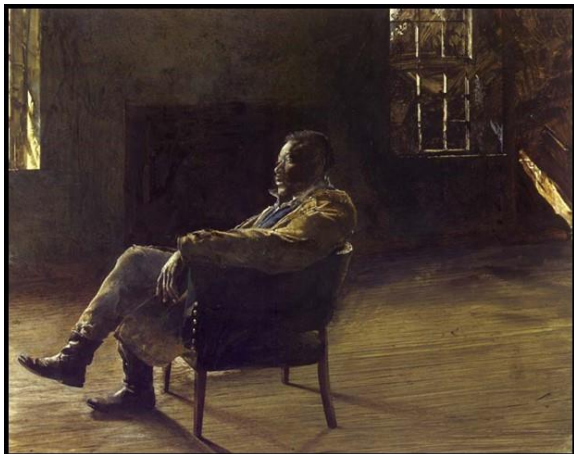
The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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Andrew Wyeth's virtuoso skill as a draftsman is demonstrated in this exquisite pencil study. Texture, light, and shadow play key roles in the rendering of Willard Snowden's expressive face highlighted against a dark background. This contrast is

carried over into the final composition of the tempera painting *Monologue* (reproduced below), which shows Snowden seated and dramatically lit. The title *Monologue* was inspired by what the artist has described as the continuous, fluid discourse by Snowden during the making of the portrait in the great empty room just outside of the artist's studio.



*Monologue*, 1965, drybrush watercolor on  
paper, Brandywine River Museum of Art,  
Anonymous gift, 1983

## **James Loper (1915-1959)**

James Loper was actually born James Stewart, but after the death of his mother in 1925 was adopted by Mary and Benjamin Loper of Chadds Ford. As a young man, James Loper worked on a mushroom farm in rural Kennett Square. At some point during the 1950s, he was hospitalized with a mental illness at Embreeville State Hospital in Pennsylvania, remaining there until his death at age 44 in November 1959. His death certificate identifies him by his birth name, James Stewart.

## *April Wind Study*, 1952

Watercolor on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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This preparatory watercolor study for the tempera painting *April Wind* (see image below) features Chadds Ford resident James Loper. Particularly remarkable in this study is Andrew Wyeth's bold gestural handling of paint and richly colored

treatment of Loper and the landscape. The varied tonal shifts throughout—from deep purple to black to gold—energize the surface of the painting. Loper's hunched posture with his collar upturned, conveys the sensation of wind blowing across the field.



Andrew Wyeth, *April Wind*, 1952, Tempera on panel, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph R. Swan, 1957



*James Loper Study, 1952*

Watercolor on panel

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



*James Loper*, 1952

Tempera on panel

Brandywine River Museum of Art

Gift of Harry G. Haskell, Jr., 1971



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In this powerful portrait of James Loper, the unusual perspective creates a sense of uneasiness in the viewer. Seen from below, Loper's body is foreshortened, causing his

head and neck to disappear behind his coat. Loper is looking up warily at something unseen in the sky, while two scythes are balanced precariously over his head. Loper's tattered clothing and shoes are matched by the worn, splintered boards of the fence and the rust-stained wood of the tool handles.

Andrew Wyeth was drawn to depicting those whom he perceived as being psychologically complex or outside the mainstream. He often focused on conveying the traits that he saw as making the subject unusual in that way. In this and several of Wyeth's other portrayals of Loper, the artist

alludes to the model's troubled state of mind owing to his battle with mental illness.

## **Thomas "Tom" Clark (1876-1962)**

Thomas Clark was a Chadds Ford resident who worked on several local farms and as a landscaper on other properties in the area. He was a frequent subject for Wyeth beginning in the 1950s and up until his death in 1962. Clark's home was located across the river from where the Museum now stands, within easy walking distance for Andrew Wyeth. Clark was also painted by Wyeth's brother-in-law, John W. McCoy, for whom Clark worked for many years.

## *That Gentleman Study*, 1960

Tempera on panel

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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Wyeth typically created numerous preparatory studies in watercolor and pencil as he worked towards a final painting.

However, this study for the painting *That Gentleman*, a work featuring the model Thomas Clark, is executed in tempera and

is more detailed than many of his other studies. Here, the pose in this study is very near to that of the final painting but rendered with much more direct light. Andrew Wyeth focused on quickly but definitively capturing the specifics of Clark's profile and exploring the various light effects on his head and shoulder.



*That Gentleman*, 1960, tempera on panel,  
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas Art  
Association Purchase

*That Gentleman Study, 1960*

Watercolor on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection





*Daybed Study*, 1956

Watercolor on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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Thomas Clark was a figure of great fascination to Andrew Wyeth, who depicted Clark as very tall with long, elegant hands and feet. Wyeth alludes to those characteristics in this sweeping, spontaneous depiction of the frail Clark at

home in his own bed. Six years later, in 1962, Wyeth took up the subject of Clark's elongated form at rest again in *Garrett Room* (see below) a highly finished drybrush watercolor that was painted in the year of Clark's death.



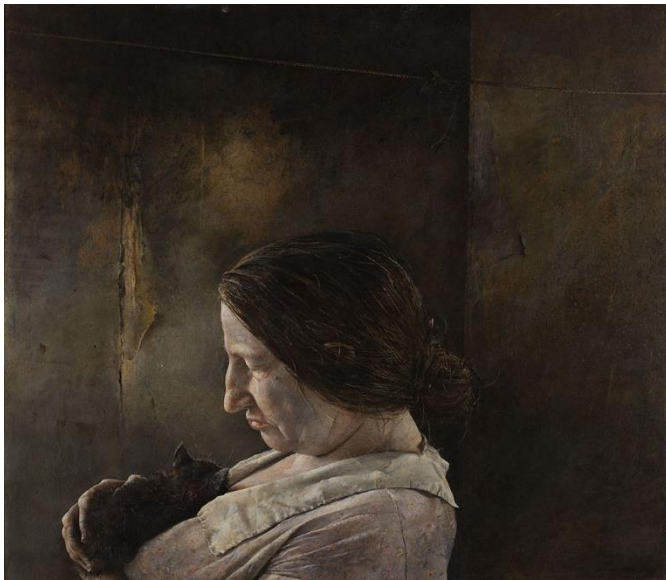
*Garrett Room*, 1962, drybrush watercolor on paper, Private Collection

## Additional Works

*Miss Olsen*, 1952

Tempera on panel

Private Collection



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Four years after Andrew Wyeth painted *Christina's World*, he created this tender portrait of Christina Olson. *Miss Olsen* is a vivid, unflinching likeness of her in a moment of quiet contemplation as she

lovingly holds a kitten tight to her chest. Wyeth humanizes this woman who, with the popularity of *Christina's World*, would achieve an almost mythic stature. Here she is portrayed as maternal and caring, in a room whose moody darkness is punctuated by the crumbling wall that reflects the deteriorating state of the Olson family home.

*Siri*, 1970

Tempera on panel

Brandywine River Museum of Art

Purchased for the Museum by John T.

Dorrance, Jr.; Mr. and Mrs. Felix du Pont;

Mr. and Mrs. James P. Mills; Mr. and Mrs.

Bayard Sharp; two anonymous donors; and

The Pew Memorial Trust, 1975



Following the death of Christina Olson in early 1968, Wyeth felt a deep sense of loss, not only emotionally but also as an artist. Young Siri Erickson of Cushing, Maine, would fill this void. Wyeth first met the Erickson family—which included George, his wife Siri, and their teenage daughter Siri—in the summer of 1967. Like the Olson and Kuerner families, the Ericksons appealed to Wyeth in their simple, stark existences. He was especially intrigued by young Siri and came to see her as “a burst of life, like spring coming through the ground, a rebirth of something fresh out of death.”

*Nicholas*, 1955

Tempera on panel

Collection of Nicholas Wyeth



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Wyeth's intention in portraiture was to convey some essence beyond the physical. Here the artist depicts his son Nicholas lost in a daydream. For Andrew Wyeth, who grew up in a household that encouraged the development of the imagination and

childhood play, such escapism was highly valued.



## *Maga's Daughter*, 1966

Tempera on panel

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



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In this portrait of his wife Betsy, Andrew Wyeth depicts her poised, elegant, and wearing an antique Quaker hat. By strictly limiting the tonal palette of the sitter's dress and the background, Wyeth focuses attention on his wife's luminous

complexion. Betsy Wyeth acted as the artist's business manager and with great precision recorded the details of every work completed by the artist.

*String and Nails, Study for Maga's  
Daughter, 1966*

Pencil on paper

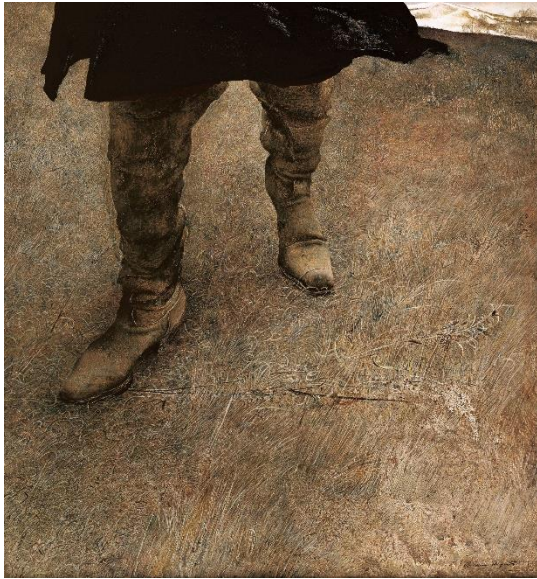
The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



## *Trodden Weed, 1951*

Tempera on panel

Collection of Phyllis and Jamie Wyeth



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While recovering from a near fatal operation to address a serious lung disorder, Andrew Wyeth took numerous walks through rural Chadds Ford wearing the French cavalier-style boots that once belonged to artist Howard Pyle—who had

taught N. C. Wyeth half a century before. Since he was a young boy, Wyeth had looked for inspiration on such walks, his head down, always attentive to nature's smallest details.

For Wyeth, this painting was an emotional one, as his close brush with death caused him to once again reassess his art and his place in the world. "You can be in a place for years and years and not see something," the artist explained, "and then when it dawns, all sorts of nuggets of richness start popping all over the place. You've gotten below the obvious."

*Osborne Hill (Crows in a Landscape)*, 1943

Tempera on panel

Gift of Elizabeth H. McCoy, 1982



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In this sweeping vista of the Brandywine Valley from Osborne Hill, Wyeth provides a literal bird's-eye view of crows as they soar over the valley. It was a viewpoint that the artist would use often to varying degrees, imparting a sense of drama and discomfort

in the viewer—as if one was hovering or floating above the scene. Osborne Hill was an important Revolutionary War site, being the highest point in the area and the place from which General William Howe directed the movements of the British army during the 1777 Battle of Brandywine. Wyeth had a lifelong fascination with war and was particularly drawn to the historical connections between the surrounding Brandywine landscape and this iconic battle with the British.

*Osborne Hill Study, 1943*

Pencil on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



*Pennsylvania Landscape, 1941*

Tempera on panel

Bequest of Miss Remsen Yerkes, 1982





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Visible beyond the branches of the massive buttonwood tree that dominates the foreground (and still stands today) in this painting is the eighteenth-century Gideon Gilpin House that served as General Lafayette's headquarters during the Battle of the Brandywine.

Wyeth combined elements in creating this work, saying, "I think of it as the whole

Pennsylvania landscape in one picture – with that marvelous buttonwood tree in the middle. I’m almost suspended, looking down. Of course it’s a composite view. I never stand in one spot when I paint a landscape. I float. I move. It’s impossible for me to be photographic.” This painting was one of eight Wyeth works chosen by the Museum of Modern Art for their landmark exhibition *Americans 1943: Realists and Magic Realists*. It was an important moment in Wyeth’s early career, bringing him national attention and praise from critics and audiences as the exhibition

traveled from New York to nine cities  
throughout the U.S. and Canada.

*Pennsylvania Landscape Study, 1941*

Watercolor on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



*Woodshed*, 1944

Tempera on panel

Bequest of C. Porter Schutt, 1995



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One windy March day in Chadds Ford, Wyeth was struck by the sight of two dead crows hanging by their feet, nailed to a shed at the Kuerner farm. Attracted by the darkness and bold shapes of the birds and their shadows against the stark whiteness

and verticality of the wall behind them, Wyeth made studies in pencil, ink, and watercolor leading to this tempera. The abstract power of the painting is matched by the chilling absence of sentimentality in this portrayal of death.

Throughout his career Wyeth was fascinated by birds—especially birds of prey—depicting them both in flight and in death. He was always drawn to the dark and unsettling aspects of life, once remarking that "nature is not lyrical and nice; behind the peace is violence."

*Spring Fed, 1967*

Tempera on panel

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Weiss



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Wyeth was viscerally drawn to the Kuerner farm in Chadds Ford, picturing all aspects of its workings. He also used these places as jumping-off points for his own self-exploration and imagination.

Represented here is the old springhouse on

the Kuerner property containing the stone sink where barrels of milk were chilled by the water piped down from the spring on the hill. Wyeth was taken by the sounds in the springhouse—the water dripping into the cement trough and the hollow clang of the metal against the wall.



*Spring Fed Study, 1967*

Pencil on paper

The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection

