



ANDREW WYETH

(1917-2009)

Andrew Wyeth was born on 12 July, 1917, and passed away on 16 January, 2009.

At an early age, Andrew, the youngest of five children born to N. C. and Carolyn Bockius Wyeth, demonstrated a talent in art. Sickly as a child, he was tutored at home rather than attending school. While his older siblings were at school during the day, Andrew had time to explore the countryside around his home in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. He developed a vivid imagination, which his father encouraged.

In 1932, at the age of fifteen, Andrew began formal art studies in his father's studio. Under N. C. Wyeth's direction his earliest works were in oil and watercolour. He did many landscape paintings in Maine, where his family spent summers. Andrew enjoyed immediate success as an artist. His first gallery show, held when he was twenty in New York City, sold out in two days, his watercolours being compared to those of Winslow Homer.

In October of 1945, Andrew was working in Maine when he learned of the tragic death of his father. He rushed back to Chadds Ford and resolved to continue what his father, his only art teacher, had started with him. Andrew wanted to prove that he was serious about being an artist.



ANDREW WYETH (1917-2009)

After his father's death, Andrew began to work more frequently in egg tempera, an exacting and time-consuming medium. A mixture of egg yolk, distilled water, and powdered pigment is applied in layers, enabling the artist to build up colour and detail slowly, and to spend time investigating a subject. Andrew painted on Masonite board prepared with gesso, a thick, white, glue-like substance. He learned to use tempera from the artist Peter Hurd, a student of N. C. Wyeth's and the husband of Andrew's sister Henriette.

Following Howard Pyle's advice, passed down through his father, Andrew painted subjects for which he felt a closeness—emotional as well as physical—and he shapes our view of them often focusing on the people and places near his home in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, and in coastal Maine. Never using photographs he instead painted from life or memory.

This apparent realism and rich detail of Andrew's work may seem to be a contradiction to his contention that he is an abstractionist. He notes, "The shape comes first for me, then I fill in the objects." His strong sense of composition demonstrates his claim. The underlying shapes and organization of his paintings help to evoke a mysterious quality, forcing the viewer to consider a meaning beyond the representational image. Andrew summed up his feelings about art as follows: "Art, to me is seeing. I think you have got to use your eyes as well as your emotion, and one without the other just doesn't work. That's my art."



Jamie Wyeth

(July 6 1946)

As the third-generation artist in his family, Jamie is often compared to his father and his grandfather. Although his interest in depicting the complexity of life and his close relationship with the natural world around him do suggest their influence, Jamie Wyeth's style of painting and the subject matter he uses to express his understanding of the world are uniquely his own.

While he never formally studied art with his father, Andrew, much of his early instruction came from his father's sister Carolyn Wyeth. His first one-man show was held in 1966, when he was just twenty years old and featured a number of accomplished portraits.

Jamie's portraits reflect deep personal knowledge gained through hours spent sketching his sitters; well-known subjects include President John F. Kennedy, dancer Rudolph Nureyev, and artist Andy Warhol. He is however as devoted to animal subjects as he is to human subjects and has consulted with experts on various animals in order to get closer to them and observe their behaviour.

Jamie divides his time between a working farm in Pennsylvania and coastal Maine. The secluded nature and quality of the landscape on Monhegan and other islands appeal to Jamie's interest in capturing views that reach beyond the picturesque. His paintings convey the personality of the islands in all seasons and weather conditions.



Jamie Wyeth (July 6 1946)

Jamie Wyeth has depicted a variety of current events. During the 1960s, he was one of a group of prominent American artists invited by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Gallery of Art to participate in the Eyewitness to Space program. Eyewitness to Space was designed to capture the emotional impact of the space program. Artists were given complete access to Cape Kennedy and the Houston Space Center. In the 1970s, Harper's Magazine commissioned Jamie to cover the initial Watergate trial, at which no photographers were allowed. Recognizing the enormity of the scandal and the importance of his presence as an artist recording these events, Jamie asked to continue the assignment through subsequent hearings and trials. His images are powerful as historical records.

In addition to painting in oil, Jamie works in watercolour and mixed media. His mixed media works may be a combination of many things: watercolour, gouache, ink, and varnish. He enjoys experimenting with these different materials in order to create certain effects. He often paints on toned boards that are shaded tan or light brown, preferring to work both lighter and darker from this middle ground.

Like his father and grandfather before him, Jamie looks to the work of illustrator Howard Pyle for lessons in composition and the artist's creative use of imagination. Pyle's insistence on knowing a subject well and having feelings to express about a subject has influenced all three generations of Wyeth artists.



N. C. WYETH

(1882-1945)

Newell Convers Wyeth, known as N. C. Wyeth, first studied technical drawing and in 1902, he applied to study with well-known illustrator Howard Pyle at his school in Wilmington, Delaware. There, he learned many important lessons from his teacher; among the most significant was Pyle's insistence that to create an illustration, an artist had to carry out detailed research on his subject.

As a young artist, N. C. developed an interest in the American West. Following his teacher's advice N. C. traveled to New Mexico, Colorado, and Arizona in 1904. During his travels, he delivered mail on horseback, lived with the Navajo, and worked a cattle roundup. In 1906, he returned to Colorado and worked on a train in the mountains. These firsthand experiences eventually led to many commissions for illustrations.

After marrying Carolyn Bockius of Wilmington in 1906 he started to use the local landscape and familiar subjects, such as family members and local residents, as models for his illustrations. In 1911, he received the first of many important commissions to illustrate Robert Louis Stevenson's pirate adventure tale *Treasure Island*. With the proceeds from this commission, N. C. was able to purchase land in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, where he built a home and a studio later that year. He went on to illustrate many classic tales, including *Kidnapped*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Black Arrow*, and *Rip Van Winkle*.



N. C. WYETH (1882-1945)

When N. C. received a commission to illustrate a book, the publisher would send him the text and he would select the moments in the story to illustrate. He liked to search for moments that were not fully described by the author, so that the pictures would add dimension to the story.

Still, almost from the beginning of his career as an illustrator, N. C. felt frustrated by some of the limitations imposed on his work by publishers because of the technical requirements of reproducing work for books and magazines but he continued illustrating in order to support his growing family. His noncommercial work includes many landscapes, still lifes, and portraits showing various influences including Impressionism and Russian folk art.

N. C. was devoted to his five children. Three – Henriette, Carolyn, and Andrew – became artists. Daughter Ann was a musician and composer, and son Nathaniel was a scientist and inventor. N. C. exposed his children to a variety of music and literature. In addition, the children saw his work frequently, as his studio was just a short walk from the family home. Several of the children, including Carolyn and Andrew, studied art with him.

In October 1945, N.C. was killed when his car was struck by a train at a crossing in Chadds Ford. His tragic death was a shock to his family, and it, along with his art, has had a profound effect on the lives and work of subsequent generations of Wyeth artists.