

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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WYETH'S HELGA PICTURES ON VIEW AT NATIONAL GALLERY

Title: American Drawings and Watercolors of the 20th Century:
Andrew Wyeth, the Helga Pictures

WASHINGTON - Andrew Wyeth's "Helga Pictures" will be presented at the National Gallery of Art, May 24 - Sept. 27, 1987, as part of the series American Drawings and Watercolors of the 20th Century. The exhibition consists of approximately 140 drawings and watercolors depicting the artist's neighbor, Helga Testorf, in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. The suite was executed during the years from 1971 to 1985 and was acquired by Leonard E.B. Andrews in 1986. This exhibition is made possible by The Du Pont Company, as will be the concomitant show, American Drawings and Watercolors of the 20th Century: Selections from the Whitney Museum of American Art.

"We are greatly looking forward to this exhibition," said J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery. "This extraordinary body of work demonstrates Wyeth's process of concentration on a single subject, allowing viewers to trace the development of various themes within the suite."

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The suite consists of groups of about 30 different interrelated poses. Helga is shown standing and walking, as in the series In the Orchard, as well as nude and clothed, posed against architectural elements such as doors and windows, asleep and awake at different seasons and times of day.

"Such close attention by a painter to one model over so long a period of time is a remarkable, if not singular, circumstance in the history of American art," writes John Wilmerding, deputy director of the National Gallery of Art and curator of the exhibition. "This show marks the first time the artist has permitted into public view a large suite of sequential drawings related to a single work."

Some of the most impressive works in the series are the drybrush watercolors. Drybrush involves a layering technique that allows the artist to investigate texture and surface. Works such as Barracoon, Crown of Flowers, The Prussian, Braids, Overflow, Farm Road, and Refuge are highly finished drybrush watercolors that demonstrate Wyeth's virtuosity as a draftsman.

The full-color catalogue, which includes an essay by John Wilmerding, is published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., and is a Main Selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club[®] for July, 1987. This is the first art book ever to be chosen as a Main Selection of the Club.

After leaving the National Gallery, Andrew Wyeth: the Helga Pictures will travel to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Oct. 28, 1987 - Jan. 3, 1988), The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (Jan. 31 - Apr. 10, 1988), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Apr. 28 - July 10, 1988), the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (Aug. 13 - Oct. 16, 1988), and the Detroit Institute of Arts (Nov. 13, 1988 - Jan. 22, 1989).

National Gallery of Art

Washington, D.C.

ANDREW NEWELL WYETH

CHRONOLOGY

- 1917 Born July 12 in home of his parents, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.
- 1923-29 Educated at home by tutors.
- 1929 N. C. Wyeth, Andrew's father and a distinguished illustrator, took twelve-year-old Andrew into his studio as an apprentice.
- 1937 Successful at his first one-man exhibition in New York at age 20.
- 1939 Married Betsy James.
Met Christina Olson through his wife Betsy.
- 1943 Participated in a group show at Museum of Modern Art, New York, entitled American Realists and Magic Realists.
- 1945 N. C. Wyeth and Andrew's two-year-old nephew were killed when their car was struck by a train near Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.
- 1948 Painted Christina's World using Christina Olson as his model; acquired by the Museum of Modern Art.
- 1948-79 During this thirty-year period, Anna and Karl Kuerner served as models for Wyeth.
- 1950 Participated in group American painting show in London.
Struck by severe respiratory illness.
Change in style becoming apparent in these years: bright, spontaneous water-colors of rural scenes give way to a more symbolic and intense series of visual essays.
- 1955 Received honorary doctorate from Harvard.
- 1963 Received the Medal of Freedom.
- 1966 By this time, one of the most honored painters in America. A member of the National Academy and winner of the Merit Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
- 1968 Christina Olson, subject of more than 200 drawings and paintings, died in New York on January 28 at age 74.

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- 1970 First solo exhibition ever held in White House.
Exhibition at Metropolitan Museum of Art, March 8 - June 26.
Exhibition at Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, July 17 - Sept. 6.
Wyeth first met his neighbor, Helga Testorf, in Chadds Ford.
- 1970-85 During fifteen-year period, paints and draws Helga Testorf more than 200 times.
- 1971 Exhibition at Museum of Modern Art, New York, June 16 - Oct. 15.
- 1976 Two Worlds of Andrew Wyeth: Kuerners and Olsons exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- 1986 Leonard E. B. Andrews acquired 240 "Helga" pictures.

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