

ANDREW WYETH'S TEMPERA PAINTINGS

Over a prolific career that included being considered one of the twentieth-century's foremost watercolorists, Wyeth is perhaps best known for his work in the ancient medium of egg tempera. In this challenging painting method, which he learned from the fifteenth-century treatise *Il Libro d'Arte* by Cennino Cennini, crushed mineral colors are suspended in a mixture of egg yolk and distilled water, mixed fresh daily and applied to a prepared rigid surface in successive fine layers.

There was a wider tempera revival in the 20th century, which included artists like Mark Rothko and Jacob Lawrence, but Wyeth was uncommonly committed to weeks or months of work to build up a picture in the medium in which oil and acrylic paints readymade in tubes offered far more immediate results. The benefit of such an undertaking was a highly refined enamel-like surface that served the artist's goals best for certain subjects, while he opted for the freedom and spontaneity of watercolor for others.

Maidenhair, 1974

Egg tempera on panel

Collection of the Wyeth Foundation for
American Art



The Old German Church in Waldoboro, Maine was the setting for an extended process of drafting and revision that resulted in this tempera. Earlier concepts included many figures, but in characteristic fashion, Wyeth has reduced and refined the imagery until a single enigmatic sitter remains: Elaine Benner. A regular model of Wyeth's, she appears as an isolated bride in a composition inspired by a scene the artist had witnessed.

Pentecost, 1989

Egg tempera on panel

Collection of the Wyeth Foundation for
American Art



Rightfully considered one of Wyeth's masterpieces of tempera for its refinement, austerity, and poetry, *Pentecost* depicts fishing nets drying on the Wyeths' Allen Island in Muscongus Bay. This image evokes Betsy Wyeth's commitment to the local maritime economy by allowing fisherman to use their land and wharf, but a family story also links the composition to a then recent drowning in the area. The title refers to the local lore that English explorer George Weymouth had landed on Allen Island on Pentecost Sunday in 1605 and held the first Protestant service in the Americas there.

Siri, 1970

Egg tempera on panel

Purchased with funds provided 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. 75.1.3



Andrew Wyeth started painting Siri Erickson, who was a member of a Finnish-American household in Cushing, Maine, not long after the 1968 death of his iconic subject Christina Olson. The artist described her as “a burst of life, like spring coming through the ground, a rebirth of something fresh out of death.” The young sitter’s shirt includes the traditional embroidery or ribbonwork associated with the indigenous Sámi people of northern Finland and Sweden.

Night Sleeper, 1979

Tempera on panel

Collection of the Wyeth Foundation for
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This monumental work is a portrait of both the Wyeth's dog, Nell, and of Brinton's Mill, the eighteenth-century industrial site that Betsy James Wyeth restored and repurposed into a timeless family home in a landscape rich in associations with the Revolutionary War. Like so many of Wyeth's works, the view is visionary rather than photographic, combining views of multiple sites in Chadds Ford with memories of childhood trips to Maine summers on overnight trains.

Adam, 1963

Tempera on panel

Brandywine Museum of Art, Gift of Anson

McC. Beard, Jr., 2002



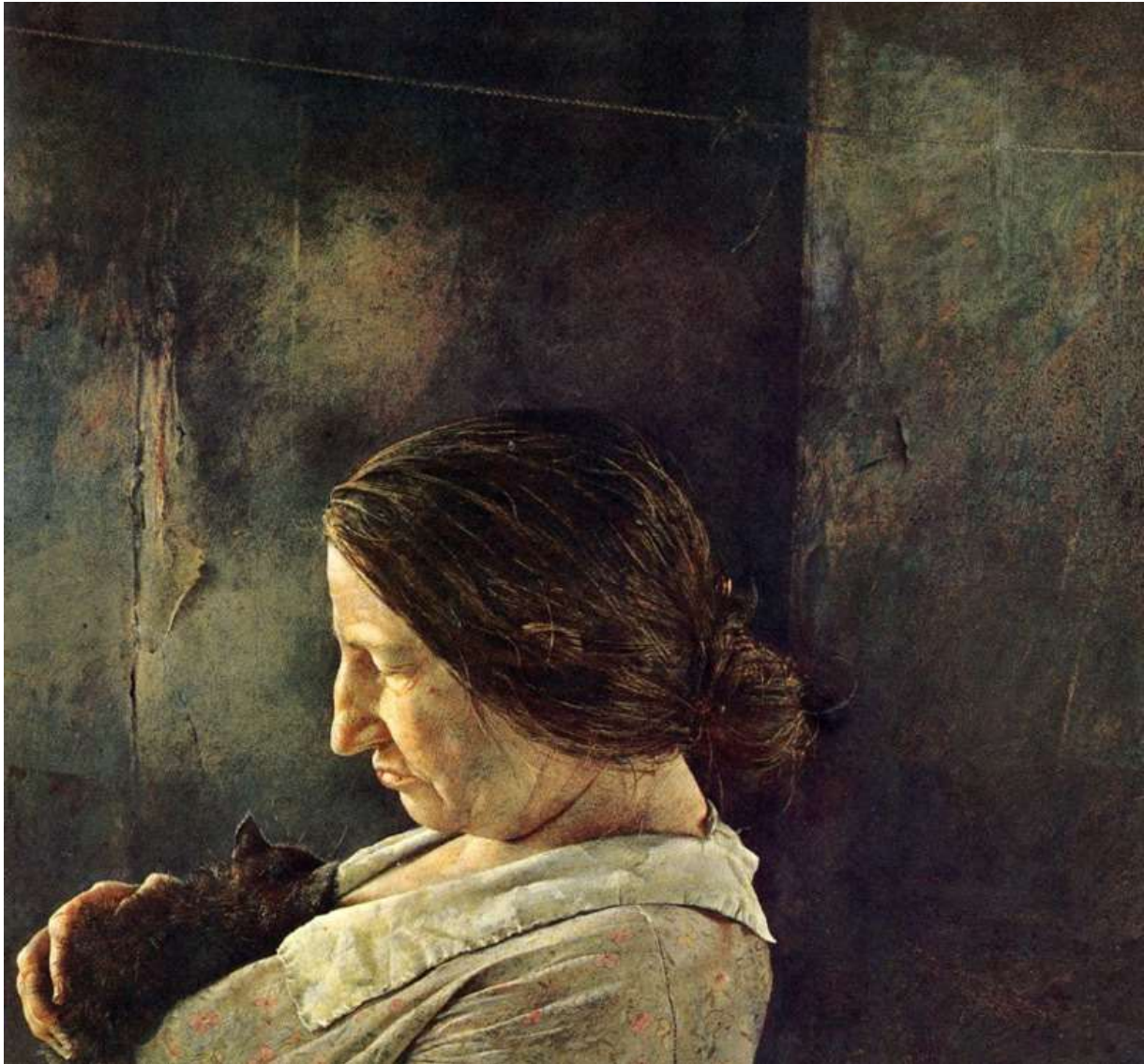
Wyeth had a sustained relationship with Adam Johnson for over thirty years and would visit him on his frequent walks through the open spaces of Chadds Ford. In an extensive oral history, the artist

recalls being drawn to Johnson as an imposing figure and one with a steady, confident presence. Johnson was a prominent member of the Chadds Ford African-American community centered on the church formed by Reverend Lydia A. Archie, another subject Wyeth painted often.

Miss Olson, 1952

Tempera on panel

Private Collection



Four years after Andrew Wyeth made Christina Olson iconic in *Christina's World* (Museum of Modern Art), he created this tender portrait of her. With extraordinary sensitivity to a seemingly straightforward subject – a woman and a cat in the corner of a worn room – he invites us to reflect on the stories this person and place could tell.

Snow Hill, 1989

Tempera on panel

Collection of the Wyeth Foundation for
American Art



Snow Hill is both fantasy and memorial,
a visual summation of the iconic places and
people of Chadds Ford that occupied Wyeth

for the previous fifty-five years. He brings them all together in a re-imagined composite view as if from the top of Kuerner's Hill, a key recurring motif in his work. By so overtly combining disparate people and places, this monumental panel clarifies Wyeth's fundamentally transformative rather than merely replicative method.

Depicted to the left are the railroad tracks where Wyeth's father N.C. Wyeth was killed in 1945, and the Kuerner farmhouse and barn, now owned by the Brandywine. Some of his most inspiring models follow: Karl Kuerner (dressed in his World War I uniform) holds the hand of his

wife Anna, who is in turn linked to Bill Loper, whose prosthetic hook is held by Helga Testorf. Rounding the circle is Allan Lynch holding the hand of Adam Johnson, who is depicted elsewhere in this gallery. Visible just beyond Helga Testorf is Reverend Lydia Archie's octagonal church, with Adam Johnson's shed and haystack to the far right.