

## Celebrating Andrew Wyeth

*The American artist's centennial is being honored with two major retrospectives of his work.*

Andrew Wyeth may have been a favorite of U.S. presidents. In 1963, he became the first painter to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom when John F. Kennedy bestowed the honor. Richard Nixon once sponsored a White House exhibition of works by the Pennsylvania- and Maine-based artist, and both Bushes honored Wyeth, with the Congressional Gold Medal in 1990 and the National Medal of the Arts in 2007. At the other end of the spectrum, comic-strip character Snoopy owned a Wyeth that he displayed prominently in his doghouse. In between, the artist was alternately lauded and dismissed by critics but remained a perennial commercial favorite.

This year marks the centennial of Wyeth's birth, and two major museum retrospectives have been assembled for the occasion. *Andrew Wyeth at 100* can be seen at the Farnsworth Art Museum in Rockland, Maine, through December 31 ([farnsworthmuseum.org](http://farnsworthmuseum.org)), and *Andrew Wyeth: In Retrospect* is on display through September 17 at the Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania ([brandywinemuseum.org](http://brandywinemuseum.org)), and from October 19, 2017, through January 15, 2018, at the Seattle Art Museum in Washington ([seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)).

Son of famed painter and illustrator N.C. Wyeth, Andrew began painting early in life, with his father his only art teacher. By the time he was 20, Andrew had his first major success: an exhibition at a New York City gallery. He continued painting, exhibiting and selling his work for the next 71 years, completing his last painting, *Goodbye*, just months before he died in 2009 at the age of 91.

Wyeth's art was intimately connected with the places where he lived and the people he knew well. He lived his entire life in rural Chadds Ford, part of Pennsylvania's scenic Brandywine Valley, summering in Port Clyde, Maine, along the rugged coastline. He often painted the same subjects over and over, producing more than 100 depictions of the Kuerner Farm in Chadds Ford, for example. He painted nearly as many of the Olson family and its farm near his Maine home; among them is his most famous work, *Christina's World*, which portrays his disabled neighbor, Christina Olson, sitting on a grassy knoll and looking toward her home.

The Farnsworth was an early collector of Andrew Wyeth. It purchased watercolors from the emerging artist in 1944, four years before the museum even opened to the public. Those early works are among more than 60 showcased



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*Winter 1946, tempera, Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009)*

in *Andrew Wyeth: Maine Watercolors, 1938-2008*, the focal exhibition in a series of five exhibitions that make up *Andrew Wyeth at 100*, on display at the museum's Wyeth Center and in its Hadlock and Wyeth Study Center galleries. The centennial exhibition also includes special exhibitions centered on two of Wyeth's best-known temperas, *Dr. Syn* and *Her Room*. Wyeth's Maine drawings are on exhibit, too.

Rounding out the museum's homage to its favorite son, *The Olson House: Photographer's Muse* features photos by 10 American photographers of this favorite Wyeth subject. Museum visitors can also elect an optional tour to the Olson House, which is owned by the Farnsworth.

*Andrew Wyeth: In Retrospect*, on exhibit now at the Brandywine River Museum and later at the Seattle Art Museum, includes more than 100 works spanning the artist's career, from the charcoal and pencil on paper work *Pa with Glasses* (1936) to the rarely seen elegiac tempera *Goodbye* (2008). The exhibition examines four major periods of the artist's career, beginning with his colorful, expressive early watercolors of the Maine coast and his dramatic works of the mid- to late-1940s, continuing with his images of the Kuerner and Olson properties and his nudes of Siri and Helga, and concluding with works from his self-reflective final years.

Visitors to the Brandywine River Museum have the added enticement of being able to tour Andrew's childhood home as well as the Kuerner Farm and Andrew's long-time studio, which is now a National Historic Landmark.

—Theresa Gawlas Medoff

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