

Andrew Wyeth

Born: July 12, 1917, Chadds Ford PA

Active: 1930s - 2008

Died: January 16, 2009, Chadds Ford, PA

Interesting Facts about Andrew Wyeth

Wyeth was the son of a Golden Age Illustrator (and Rockwell predecessor-contemporary) Newell Conyers (N.C.) Wyeth.

Wyeth was homeschooled by his father, who focused on Wyeth's art abilities. Andrew Wyeth was an accomplished draughtsman (person who can draw well) before he could read. By the time he was grown, Wyeth was assisting his father, and producing professional works.

He was 20 when he held his first solo New York gallery show. This young age for a solo exhibit is practically unheard of.



Unlike his father, who worked in oil paints, Andrew Wyeth preferred water-based paints such as watercolors and egg temperas.

Wyeth's son, Jamie, (born 1946) is also a practicing Artist, bringing the family's art dynasty to three generations. Andrew Wyeth's sisters, Henriette and Carolyn, were also accomplished artists.

In 2007, President George W. Bush awarded Wyeth with the National Medal of Arts. Both President and Mrs. Bush were admirers Wyeth, and themed one room in the White House with his works.

American painter Winslow Homer (1836 – 1910) was a major style influence on Wyeth.¹

Many people consider "Christina's World" to be Wyeth's most famous work. This image shows a young woman sitting on the ground, looking back to a distant farmhouse. What most don't know is "Christina", aka Anna Christina Olson, Wyeth's neighbor, was a real person, and she was paralyzed. Instead of staying home or using a wheelchair, she crawled anywhere she wanted to go-and she often wanted to go outside. Wyeth admired, and wanted to show, her determined spirit. Christina posed for the painting (as did Wyeth's wife Betsy, on occasion) and loved the final result. Years later, she told Betsey Wyeth, *"...Andy put me where he knew I wanted to be. Now that I can't be there anymore, all I do is think of that picture and I'm there."* Wyeth is now buried near Anna Christina Olson in the Olson cemetery near the house, and the house itself is, thanks to its age and association with Wyeth, a National Historical Landmark and museum

¹ If you have the second set of Artist and Composer cards by CC, Homer is card #27.

When you work with water-based paint, you sometimes do a ‘resist’ project. When Andrew Wyeth painted his snowfall paintings, he sprinkled the paper with masking fluid, then painted the image. Once the painting was completed, and dried, he removed the dried masking fluid with a rubber cement eraser, revealing the bright white “snowflakes” preserved under the masking fluid.

But there are different ways to do a watercolor resist. We’re going to do a form of “resist” today.

Resist:

In art, it is a process where you lay a substance on your surface to make any later paints, dyes, or colors “resist” sticking to the surface after.

When using water-based colorants like watercolors, you use fatty or rubbery substances like:

- Candle Wax
- Crayons
- Oil Pastels
- Rubber Cement/Glue
- Masking Solution

Since oil and water don’t mix, oil-based resists like Wax, crayons, and oil pastels will prevent the watercolor from sticking to the paper. The waxy resists stay on the paper when the painting is done. Rubber cement and Masking Fluid cover the surface with a waterproof, rubber-like layer, which keeps the paint from reaching the paper. These are removed later, revealing the paper underneath. Either method helps the watercolor “resist” sticking to the paper.

Etymology:

Resist (v.)

Late 14th century word which came from an Old French word *resister*, meaning, “to hold out against”. This word came from the Latin word *resistere* composed from the prefix “re-” (against) and “sistere” (“take a stand, stand firm”)

Definition drawn from the Online Etymology Dictionary

Quotes by Andrew Wyeth

“I surrendered to a world of my imagination, re-enacting all those wonderful tales my father would read aloud to me. I became a very active reader, especially history and Shakespeare.”

“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.”

Examples of resists in other art forms include:

Resist-dyed fabric The art of drawing or printing designs on fabric with wax, and then dyeing fabric is ancient. Many cultures, including Ancient Egypt, Tang-dynasty China, Nara-period Japan, India, Nigeria, Indonesia and Malaysia all created resist-dyed fabric. One common style of resist-dyed fabric is “Batik” fabric from the island of Java . *(Photo of traditional Batik on right is from Wikipedia)*



Tie-Dyed Fabric: Many tie-dye patterns use rubber bands to make their patterns. The rubber bands are a physical barrier to resist the dyes.

(Right) A Tie-dyed bundle and its result. From <http://www.bystephanielynn.com/2015/06/tie-dye-folding-techniques-16-vibrant-tie-dye-patterns-tiedeyoursummer.html> which has many other techniques for tie dye.



Pysanky Eggs: This traditional eastern Europe art form uses wax and eggs to make a special decorated egg for Easter (Pascha). Using the white egg, you draw a pattern with the wax. When the pattern is hard, you dye the egg yellow. You add more wax where the egg will stay yellow, and dye the egg orange. Continuing this way, the artist will dye the egg multiple times until the wax is heated and rubbed off. *(Photo: Wikipedia.)*

Wax Resist Pottery. In ceramics, wax can be added to pots to keep glaze from sticking to parts of a pot. Most pots, regardless of glaze, have a resist applied to the bottom of the pot to keep the glass-based glaze from melting, dripping down on the base of the pot, and sticking to the inside of the kiln.



Longquan Celadon vase from China. The terracotta medallions were coated with wax before it was glazed and fired. Vase in British Museum, London. Photo: Wikipedia



The first snow

1959, 34×54.6 cm • Dry brush, Paper
Andrew Wyeth

Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington

Each “snowflake” in this composition is a resist fluid which Wyeth sprinkled on the canvas before he started painting. He then painted the entire composition like usual, painting right over the “snow”, rather than around it. Once he was done, and the painting was completely dry, he removed the resist, revealing the white paper preserved beneath.



The Dam, 1960. Watercolor. Andrew Wyeth.

From: <https://artsdivision.wordpress.com/2012/11/15/andrew-wyeth-in-winter/>



The Granary, 1961. Watercolor. Andrew Wyeth. From

<https://artsdivision.wordpress.com/2012/11/15/andrew-wyeth-in-winter/>

Ideas to go Deeper at Home:

Sadly, there are currently no children's books on Andrew Wyeth which I could find. However, if you want to do more resist forms at home, here are some ideas:

Write a secret message: Using the same color crayon as your paper, write a message, then paint over it with watercolors to reveal the message. You can also use the technique to write something beautiful, like scripture or a favorite quote.

Glue Resist: If you have a type of bottled glue which will dry clear (I've always used Elmer's glue for this project) and some paints, colored pencils, or patels/chalk, draw something simple on a piece of paper, then trace with the glue. Once the glue dries, the glue line will act as a resist, creating cells you can color inside. This project is really fun if you have tempera paints or pastels which show up against black paper. The glue line on black paper looks like the frame of a stained glass window.

Crayon resist: Draw something on a paper, and thoroughly cover the drawing with crayons. For example: Draw an underwater scene with fish and corals. Draw a collection of fall leaves, snowflakes, or shells. Make sure that the entire composition is heavily colored in with a thick layer of crayon.

Once done, paint the remaining bare background a dark color using Watercolor. The objects you've created should generally resist the paint and remain as a brightly colored object on the darkened paper.

Videos:

Fred Rogers, of Mr. Roger's Neighborhood, was a friend of Andrew Wyeth, and invited him to his show "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood" in 1972. In 1981, Mr. Roger's showed another painting by Wyeth, and replayed a section of his 1972 visit. If you have Amazon Prime, this episode is in the "Best of Mr. Roger's Neighborhood" Season 2, Episode 8 (#1483-Title: Competition). This episode is also currently available on YouTube. Wyeth's short appearance is in the first few minutes of this episode.

Field Trips:

Many museums around the world have Wyeth's work in their collections. Some of these include:

- Brandywine River Museum, Chadd's Ford, Pennsylvania (this museum has a large collection of Andrew Wyeth's work, as well as N.C Wyeth, Howard Pyle, and other contemporaries.)
- Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine
- Greenville County Museum of Art, Greenville, South Carolina
- Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum; NYC
- Smithsonian Museum, Washington DC
- Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri
- Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock
- Internationally: National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan; Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia; Palazzo Reale, Milan, Italy; Académie des Beaux Arts, Paris, France.

Always check ahead to see whether they have a Wyeth on display (and which one it is!) before taking a long trip to see it!