

Henriette Wyeth's forgotten art on display at the Michener

by Anthony DiMattia

Henriette Wyeth's love of art was evident from an early age.

She learned to draw as soon as she could pick up a pencil, received her first portrait commission at 15 and enrolled in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts a year later.

Henriette's natural gift wasn't lost on her father, famed illustrator and artist N.C. Wyeth, who told his wife his oldest child "is astounding in her powers of perception and her sense of logical reasoning ... Pencils and paper will keep (her) contented practically all the time."

Yet the other artists in her life – namely her husband Peter Hurd, her brother Andrew Wyeth and her father – overshadowed Henriette's exquisite

career.

Now the Michener Art Museum in Doylestown is giving the Chadds Ford native her just due with an exhibit that explores her work that stretched from the 1920s to the 1970s.

With more than 100 pieces from private collections, "Magical & Real: Henriette Wyeth and Peter Hurd, A Retrospective," explores the professional trajectories of Henriette and Peter during their time in the Brandywine area and in Peter's native New Mexico.

"Very little attention has been given to N.C.'s role in shaping and guiding the artistic development and career of his daughters Henriette, Ann and Carolyn," said Kirsten M. Jansen, Michener's Gerry and

Marguerite Lenfest chief curator. "Magical & Real is the first exhibition to explore the work and career of N.C.'s eldest child, Henriette, and N.C.'s student Peter Hurd, whom Henriette married in 1929. It's also the first scholarly project to probe family archives to flesh out their relationships to other family members, particularly, to N.C. and Andrew."

Growing up under the tutelage of her father at their Chadds Ford farm, Henriette earned critical recognition for her "luminous and lyrical large-scale canvases of psychological presence and magic, and local recognition of her talent as a portraitist," Kirsten said.

"Henriette's painting is nothing short of phenomenal to me," said N.C. in an excerpt from a scholarly catalogue written by Kirsten and co-curator Sara Woodbury, of the Roswell

Museum and Art Center. "Her color is charming, and she can draw considerably better than I can. Something should certainly come of her ability, although this is something that I say nothing to her about."

Despite her love of the Brandywine area for its influence on her style, Henriette agreed to move to New Mexico with Peter in 1940.



Henriette Wyeth in her studio

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The sacrifice of leaving her successful career in the Philadelphia region to start a family out West left Henriette mostly forgotten, but helped Peter develop his signature style of "impressive vistas, stark rolling hills and dramatic light of the Southwest," Kirsten said.

"This exhibition engages the tensions between eastern and western art communities," she said. "Henriette's work changed substantially in both style and tone following their move to New Mexico. Magical & Real will broaden the awareness of the entire scope of the couple's work in the regions with which they are most closely associated."

Among the several pieces on display is a long-lost mural painted by Henriette in 1928 that hung from the wall of the Wyeth home before being shipped to New Mexico in the 1970s.

The piece sat in storage for years before the curators' research led to its discovery and refurbishment for the exhibit.

Now the mural can be viewed through May 6th at the Michener, 138 S. Pine Street, Doylestown, before it and the other pieces head to the Roswell Museum.

"In addition to the works coming from private collections, several pieces in the exhibition come from the Roswell Museum and Art Center itself, so this is a great opportunity to share our Hurd and Wyeth collection with new audiences," said Sara, of the Roswell Museum.

Advance tickets and group tours are available by calling 215-340-9800 or by visiting michenerartmuseum.org.

YWCA hosts 27th annual 'Salute to Women'

YWCA Bucks County will host its 27th Annual "Salute to Women Who Make a Difference" Awards on Thursday, May 10th at 6:00pm at Spring Mill Manor, Ivyland.

The "Salute to Women Who Make a Difference" is a hall-mark event of the YWCA that honors female leaders who live and/or work in Bucks County.

Each year, the YWCA "Salute to Women" recognizes women in Bucks County making exceptional contributions to their businesses, organizations, and

their communities.

Over the last 26 years, the YWCA has honored hundreds of women while raising much-needed funds to support their mission of eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

The gala event features a cocktail reception, raffles, a full-course dinner and the recognition and presentation of awards for our honorees.

Individual tickets are \$85 or a table of 10 for \$800.

Reserve your tickets today at ywca-bucks.org.

For more information or any questions contact Kristin Chapin at kchapin@ywcabucks.org or at 215-953-7793 x 112, or Erin Winkler at ewinkler@ywcabucks.org or 215-953-7793 x104.



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